

**CONFERENCE AND WORKSHOP AS A MEANS TO STRENGTHEN  
AND UNITE THE POLITICAL POWER OF THE OPPOSITION  
BY EAIM {AMARE GEBREMARIAM GEBRE}**

**Overview**

Eritrean struggle for erecting nation-state has been going for years on various strategies and tactics and we believe it is finalized in 1991 with the painful sacrifices of its sons and daughters for ever to no return. The concerns and suspicion of the Eritrean people that political power or the system of governance will remain with those who romanticize armed struggle (GHEDLI) for a long time to come, whether it is the dictatorial PFDJ or the armed struggle era dominated opposition is highly probable and to some extent real. We say probable and real, “if seeing is believing”, we see it in Cuba, Vietnam, Zimbabwe, Uganda, etc. But politicians say “Political Power is not given, but taken”. Here is our view on this issue and hope will be refined through your participation in the discussion.

**POLITICAL POWER**

Power and politics are ever-present and necessary features of organizational life. Without power and politics, much of what is done in an organization, nation could not be accomplished. Power is interpersonal or inter-group relationship in which one individual or group can cause another individual or group to take an action that he or she would not otherwise take. Power involves changing the behavior of another using force or dialogue, influence and communication. Political power can be coercive like that of dictatorial PFDJ or legitimate that is evolved through democratic process.

**LIFE GOES ON**

It is fact of life that generation gap is something that has existed and will continue to exist as long as man exists on this earth. It is not restricted to certain parts of the world, to certain times of human history or to certain cultures. It is fact of life accepted by all generations, all over the world. The inevitable progress of time and technologies makes the introduction of new ideas, new beliefs and new values unavoidable. It is the above fact of social development in mind that Eritreans have to interact on how to pass political power to the young generation. Eritreans both old and young generation should be careful in analyzing the good and the bad times of our struggle for erecting our nation-state and how to reconcile them specially the era of our armed struggle. In our opinion the positives outweigh the negatives because victory of Eritrea’s freedom justifies that. Martyrdom was not in vain even though unfortunately ended up with dictatorship.

**WHAT IS THE ERITREAN CONTEMPORARY PROBLEM- OUR OBSERVATION OF 2010 CONFERENCE?**

Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all Eritrean family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in Eritrea. Political or social philosophy in which the welfare of the nation-state as an entity is considered paramount as every Eritrean recognizes..

The Eritrean entity emerged with the arrival of Italian colonization and Eritrea existed as a nation through out the Italian colonial era, British protectorate, and federal establishment and under occupation with Ethiopia.

Ever since the emergence of the Eritrean entity the Eritrean problem was political but not social, cultural, religious nor regional. The Eritrean entity has never fallen in question since its inception. Eritreans have never experienced any religious. Regional,

cultural or social crisis to date, but political crisis and as the result of political crisis we have economic set back. In the conference of 2010, our social interaction was exemplary as was seen in the demonstration, cafeteria, workshops etc. The interpersonal respect and communication was very encouraging to the futurity of our nation. The dysfunctional and mistrust among EDA members, the non EDA organizations was vivid and that is the symptom of the political crisis of our opposition organizations. That is where the cure is needed. Let us try to cure it then go to strategy to get rid of dictatorship.

#### THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE AND THE WORKSHOPS

Conference is defined as a meeting for consultation, exchange of information, or discussion especially one with formal agenda in which participants make presentations with resolutions or recommendations to happen.

A workshop is defined as an educational or series of work sessions, interaction and exchange of information among usually small members of participants meet together over a short period of time to concentrate on a defined area of concern. It is a tool used in conferences so as to solicit ideas from every one and bring it to common understanding.

Conference is agenda driven while workshop is learning process.

Objectives of a conference

--Contribute to the scholarly examination of political institutions, programs and public policies..

--Enrich political discourse and channel social science research in understandable way to political leaders

-- To place more political power into the hand of the citizens.

Objectives of a workshop

--Team building

-- Make concentrated efforts towards resolution of problems.

-- Discuss some misunderstandings, differences towards common grounds.

--- Identify a set of short-term indicators as well as reviewing and assessing the factors.

Having seen the definitions and objectives of a conference and workshop I would like to bring some activities performed in the 2010 Eritrean conference for democratic change.. For five consecutive days the participants discussed four different papers in five workshop areas. We were told to read them correct them and vote on them. That was the only time a member of secretariat seen enforcing vote count. A vote in a workshop!! What a surprise! It does not mean there were no suggestions for changing the process as well as objections, but restrained not to be looked as spoilers. We meet in the conference hall for only three half day sessions. So, were the resolutions and decisions done in the workshops or the conference hall?

As indicated in the objectives of a conference our national conference for democratic change should have been a venue for our scholars, experts, intellectuals. Indeed the preparatory committee invited Eritreans to send their study papers, researched papers on a number of issues with the end of April as dead line. Eritreans responded and I was told 50 Eritreans submitted papers, but the only person who was given the stage is Professor Magnet of the University of Ottawa of Canada. We call our intellectual to join the opposition and when they respond we slam the door.

I would like to go back and ask the secretariat how on earth in its declaration claims to have come out with elected commission when the fact is the following:

The ten EDA members appointed two each from their members. No body elected them and no member of the secretariat chaired their election process. The same is true for the non EDA organizations As for those from America, Canada, Europe, Australia, some people from each zone gathered in the campus under the sun with no secretariat member presence delegated people to fill the quota. This is the fact, and if there is any one who refutes this let me see them produce election documents and results. This is national issue and we are talking about democratic change, if we don't practice simple, doable democratic process we are simply misinforming those who did not participated. That will be the day when we hold elections rather than selections.

#### KEEP UP THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE

Fellow Eritreans calling foreign countries, organizations and political parties to put pressure on the Eritrean dictatorial regime when the opposition is disorganized, dysfunctional and disunited and with no tangible plans for democratic change is like putting the horse before the cart. What is to be rectified or to be in order?

- Let us define the Eritrean enemy. The Eritrean people's enemy is EPDJ brutal dictatorial regime. Some call him the Habesha regime, others call him the Kebesa or highland regime, some call him the Tigrigna regime while others call him the Christian regime I have heard it with my own ears those phrases, but to me he is non of those rather than brutal dictatorial regime who does not represent any one, but his regime .How do we come to the right definition of the regime as an opposition? By having panel discussion, forums, seminars etc.
- The main problem of disunity in the opposition camp is strategy for democratic change. Some would like to have strategy of politico-military or armed resistance while others would like to have strategy of politico-non violent or peaceful. Even those who prefer armed resistance, some of them do not want to join the process of one army, with multi-fronts or parties. I heard this from leaders of EDA member organizations that some EDA member fronts do not want to bring their armed wing to join the others. Then, how do we reconcile this, still the answer is let as bring these leaders to panel discussion, forums, pal talks, seminars etc. Try to have common media to reach the people so as to inform them what we have in common.
- From now on ward the opposition should think twice and try to winning political approach that embraces most if not all the political opposition family. EPDP has already rejected the commission selected in the 2010 conference and should not be die hard and stubborn to compromises. The commission of the 2010 conference is already fractured before it began, I say this because the DMLEK organization leader poke holes in to this commission formation in his interview in ASENA Radio {listen to what he said about on how to organize the Eritrean people}, also ENSF executive committee rejected one of the pointes the commission declared as an out come, the president of the Eritrean Islamic congress also said some thing to the effect. Others described the conference as chaotic. So this commission should not expect to take us to the next stage with out certain adjustment and compromise.
- At this stage we Eritreans are waging our opposition to dictatorship. In other words democratic principles or ideals to be safe guarded and flourish as soon as

we get rid of dictatorship. That is all rights of the people to be respected. Abdu Habib might call some peoples' report and analyses on the conference cheap shot, but I did not see any grain of democratic principle defended in his long article full of hotchpotch posted at Awate.com. The land issue is crucial and is sowing some bad seeds in to our social fabric. Different opposition organizations give non-satisfactory stand on the land issue. I would like to see every organization to say," The Eritrean Village society is simple and direct, serve as Caretaker of A Legacy, dedicated to retaining the character and distinction of the past, while creating a thriving and contemporary community in Eritrean Village. For many indigenous peoples the earth is sacred and holy. As such, lands not only have material value but also spiritual significance. Although, it is impossible to uniformly describe the connection that indigenous peoples have with their land, we support the principle that control over traditional territories and resources is essential to the continued transmission of indigenous people's heritage to future generations until land reform legislation is done by democratic government to the satisfaction of all Eritreans."

Fellow Eritreans the days of winking when democratic principles, procedures and processes are compromised should have been over after the victory of our armed struggle, but still we are experiencing even in the conference for democratic change of 2010. I am not doing this to be unique as some suggested, but in defense of democratic principles I would like to see prevail in my beloved Eritrea. I have nothing to lose by doing this, but every thing to gain. If Eritrea gains it is my gain and if Eritrea loses it is my loose.

We struggle we succeed  
Glory to our martyrs

Comments>> [ama766@comcast.net](mailto:ama766@comcast.net)