

# The Need for and Process of Forming a National Force for Democratic Change in Eritrea

## Document Prepared by Facilitating Body

### *The Facilitating Body*

The Facilitating Body originated from the open discussions of concerned Eritreans that held weekly discussion about the dire situation in Eritrea. The open discussion started in 2021 under the name of Kufut MeAdi Zete (Open Dialogue Forum). The forum comprises Eritreans who are mostly living in Switzerland, Germany and other European countries, as well as in the United States, Canada, Australia and the Middle East. The weekly meetings were open to any Eritrean interested to share their ideas and concerns on Eritrean issues.

In November 2022, *Kufut MeAdi Zete* invited different entities that were engaged in similar efforts of uniting the Eritrean opposition camp with a view to exploring different options that the Diaspora Eritreans can do to end the suffering of the Eritrean people. This conversation led to a common agreement on the need for forming a national force for democratic change in Eritrea.

Convinced of the need for a body that can legitimately represent justice-seeking, pro-democracy Eritreans, a *Facilitating Body*, whose responsibility is to facilitate the process of forming an *Eritrean National Force for Democratic change* was formed. The Facilitating Body has issued the attached document written in Tigrigna and Arabic, that has been posted in some of the Eritrean websites.

### **The purpose of this document**

The purpose of this document is to address some issues that were not covered on the initial document; and to answer some questions that have been raised. The *Facilitating Body* believes that the initiative, capitalizing on the experience of past similar initiatives, has the potential to be successful, if all the various groups and activists agree on the need for a *National Force* that will have the legitimacy and the mandate to represent Eritreans in the Diaspora, who are opposed to the current regime. In this document, we will explain:

- a. the need for an *Eritrean National Force (ENF)* that will have the legitimacy and the mandate to represent Eritreans in the Diaspora,
- b. the role and the responsibilities of the *ENF*,
- c. the need to form a Registration and Election Commission to forming the *ENF*,
- d. how this current initiative is different from other similar initiatives in the past,
- e. the expected role of political opposition parties,
- f. the role of Eritrean media outlets, and

- g. what the *Facilitating Body* plans to do to ensure the success of forming an *Eritrean National Force*.

### **Why do we need to form an *Eritrean National Force*?**

The simple answer is forming an *Eritrean National Force* will make it easier for Eritreans in the Diaspora to bring about positive changes in our country. So far, Eritreans in Diaspora have been operating in a fragmented manner that proved to be ineffective to save our people and our country. Countries which are sympathetic to the plight of our people need a representative group that can speak and act on behalf of the Eritrean people. To this end, we need to form a National Force that can speak for all pro-democracy and justice-seeking Eritreans in the Diaspora with one voice and coordinate our activities.

In order to be accepted as a legitimate representative of justice-seeking Eritreans by the Eritrean people in the Diaspora, and by the International Community, the *ENF* should be formed by all those in Diaspora who are opposed to the current government, and who believe in Eritrean sovereignty and territorial integrity. Election has to be done in an expeditious manner that is all-inclusive, democratic, and transparent, using appropriate voting technology. The one-person, one-vote, election process should contain a mechanism that will also ensure the diversity of the Eritrean people.

### **What should the role of the *Eritrean National Force* be?**

The primary goal of the *ENF* should be:

- a. To help map out an effective strategy that will expedite the transformation of Eritrea to become a democratic nation.
- b. To represent all justice-seeking, pro-democracy Diaspora Eritreans in any national, regional or international forum on behalf of the Eritrean people, be it at the African Union, United Nations, European Union, and the Arab League etc.
- c. To speak with one voice to the International Community on behalf of the Eritrean people.
- d. To conduct diplomatic effort and lobbying particularly with Governments, such as the United States and the various governments in Europe and Africa, that can help the Eritrean people.
- e. To prepare the groundwork required for orderly transition to democratic rule in the aftermath of regime change. The *National Force* will also be expected to prepare a Transition Charter to ensure a smooth transition to a democratic rule.
- f. To work towards the establishment of a constitutional government through the drafting and preparation of draft codes for the forthcoming Constitutional organs: (1) Rules of

Parliament (2) Judiciary (3) Offices of Attorney General (4) Auditor General (5) National bank (6) Election Commission (7) Election law (8) Party laws, and (9) Civil Service Commission.

- g. **Fundraising.** The *ENF* should be able to raise funds through registration fees, soliciting for financial help from well to do Eritrean professionals, and businessmen to cover the operating expenses of the *ENF* and to provide financial assistance to the forces of change inside the country. In addition, the *ENF* should approach NGOs, governments and International Organizations that provide funding to promote democracy. The *ENF* should particularly approach countries that have been hard hit by the influx of Eritrean refugees.
- h. **Helping Eritrean Refugees.** Another important role of the *ENF* is to partner with the UNHCR and other international organizations to assist Eritrean refugees who are facing extreme hardship in Sudan, Libya, Ethiopia and other countries.

### **What should the process of forming the Eritrean National Force be?**

For the *National Force* to be a legitimate representative of the justice-seeking, pro-democracy Eritreans in the Diaspora, it is critically important that all the various stakeholders who are actively engaged in opposing the current regime participate in the formation and election of the *National Force*. Although other options can be explored, the *Facilitating Body* believes that a more expedient approach is to form a *Registration and Election Commission*.

*The Registration and Election Commission* will be responsible to devise an internet-based registration process that will register every justice-seeking, pro-democracy Eritreans in the Diaspora, who is willing to participate in the formation of the *Eritrean National Force*. Once registration is completed, nominations should be made that will be followed by elections in a democratic, and transparent process.

Those who may not have access to the internet will be allowed to participate in the election process using alternative method. It is important for the *Registration and Election Commission* to make sure that it has necessary controls to ensure the integrity and safety of the *Registration and Election* process.

Gathering of demographic data should also help the *Registration and Election Commission* to ensure that the *ENF* will reasonably reflect the diversity of the Eritrean people by exercising an affirmative discretionary power in such a way that the members of the leadership of *ENF* are a representative group in terms of gender, religion, age and ethnicity.

### **What the Facilitating Body to Form National Force for Democratic Change in Eritrea Should Do to Ensure the Success of the Initiative it has taken?**

In order to ensure the success of the initiative, the *Facilitating Body* intends to reach out to the various Eritrean political parties, other organized Eritrean groups, such as the Eritrean Women's

Association, the Eritrean intellectual groups religious groups and political activists as well as the Diaspora Eritrean community at large.

Once agreement is reached on the need to forming a *National Force*, the Facilitating Body believes that it will be easy to agree on the method of forming the *National Force*. We just need to follow the democratic ways leaders are elected in the countries that they live in, which will be the same process the Eritrean people will follow to elect their leaders in free Eritrea.

### **Previous Initiatives to Form a *National Force***

The *Facilitating Body* acknowledges and is thankful for several other initiatives that have been proposed in the past, with the aim of forming some sort of a *National Force or Government in Exile*. The *Facilitating Body* plans to capitalize on the challenges and experiences of the past initiatives and hopes to get their support.

### **How this new Initiative is different from previous initiatives?**

What makes the current initiative to facilitate the formation of an *Eritrean National Force for Democratic Change* different from other previous initiatives is that:

- It will encourage all members of political parties, and other organized groups and associations, and every pro-justice, pro-democracy Eritrean in the Diaspora, who believes in the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Eritrea, to participate in the election process as Eritrean citizens, in an all-inclusive manner, and in a democratic, one-person, one-vote, basis.
- It is expedient and transparent, in the sense that registration and election process will be conducted using appropriate technology that will have built-in mechanism to prevent hacking and interference from unwanted elements, and particularly from agents of the dictatorial regime.
- Another advantage of this initiative is that it will allow discretionary affirmative action to ensure that the composition of the leadership of *Eritrean National Force* is a diverse group in terms of religion, ethnic identify, gender and age.

By paving the way to all pro-justice, pro-democracy Eritreans in the Diaspora to participate in the election process, it will have united the Eritrean people in the Diaspora for a common goal which will also make it possible for all Diaspora Eritreans to be involved and be engaged in the process of rebuilding the country in the aftermath of regime change.

### **Appeal to Members of Opposition Political Parties and Political Groups**

The *Facilitating Body* urgently appeals to the various Eritrean political parties and other groups to support the initiative so as to accelerate the victory they have been tirelessly striving for decades. Eritrea will, no doubt, need political parties once it becomes a multi-party democratic country. But the process of ending dictatorship in Eritrea should not be left to the political parties alone.

At this stage, the participation of all those who are opposed to the regime working as united body, with one leadership, the *Eritrean National Force*, is what we need to transform our country to be a multi-party democratic country. Hence, our appeal to all the political parties and political groups is, “keep your parties and urge and encourage your members to fully collaborate in supporting the initiative so that we can form the *Eritrean National Force* without any further delay”.

### **Appeal to All Eritreans Particularly to those who may have given up on Eritrea**

Though it is difficult to imagine of an Eritrean who does not feel the pain of what is going on in Eritrea, there are many Eritreans in the Diaspora who may have simply given up on Eritrea, believing there is nothing within their power to change situations in Eritrea. But giving a deaf ear and a blind eye to all the atrocities that are going on in Eritrea, is not an option.

We owe it to our people to do everything within our powers to end our people’s suffering. Thus, the *Facilitating Body* would like to urge you in earnest to support the initiative to form an *Eritrean National Force* by actively participating with your compatriot justice-seeking Eritreans in the registration and election process.

### **Our Appeal to the Eritrean Social Media Outlets**

Credit is due to all the Eritrean Websites and media outlets that have sacrificed so much of their time and resources to provide a forum for exchange of information and ideas and to be the outlets for voicing the frustrations and disappointments of our people. The *Facilitating Body* would like to urge these websites and media outlets to support the initiative so that we can form an *Eritrean National Force* that will end the misery of our people without delay.

In conclusion, dear pro-justice and pro-democracy fellow Eritreans, if we are to end the misery of our people, let’s all support the initiative taken to form an all-Eritrean *National Force for Democratic Change* by actively participating in the registration and election process. In our view, a *National Force* and a leadership that is duly elected by the justice-seeking, pro-democracy Eritreans in the Diaspora, will help solve one of the most serious obstacles that our people have been facing, and bring an end to their suffering under the ruthless dictatorial regime.

**Victory to the Eritrean People!**

**Glory to Our Heroic Martyrs!**

**The Facilitating Body**

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