



## UNODC WORKSHOP TO STRENGTHEN POLICE COOPERATION IN EASTERN AFRICA

A three-day workshop aimed at strengthening international and regional police cooperation in Eastern Africa, co-organized by the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Eritrea, IGAD, and Interpol, was held from 30 January to 1 February, at the Asmara Palace Hotel.

Speaking at the opening of the event, Colonel Mehari Tsegai, Commander of the Eritrean Police, said that no country in the world is immune from crime and that the East African region faces various challenges and threats, including human trafficking and smuggling, as well as drugs and small arms

trafficking.

Colonel Mehari underlined that if left unaddressed, the crimes will threaten the social, economic, and political stability of the region and that it is the joint responsibility of the countries of the region to secure the safety and security of their citizens.

Colonel Mehari went on to say that the governments and their police forces need bilateral agreements based on legality and cooperation to overcome the problems they are facing.

The workshop, sponsored by the UNODC and which was attended by senior police and criminal justice officials and practitioners

from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, and Uganda, covered a number of topics, including digital investigation, financial investigation, organized crime, human trafficking, and smuggling of migrants.

Participants conducted extensive discussion on fighting transnational organized crimes, human trafficking, illegal financial transactions, international conventions, and other issues related to the safety and security of citizens. They also exchanged experiences on crime prevention, exchange information on the activities of human trafficking and related crimes.

## CENTRAL REGION ASSEMBLY CONDUCTS 18<sup>TH</sup> REGULAR MEETING

The Central region Assembly conducted its 18<sup>th</sup> regular meeting on 30 January. The meeting, held in Asmara, was convened under the theme “Conjoint Stride for Sustainable Development”.

At the meeting, in which Major General Romodan Osman Awliyyay, Governor of the Central region, Mr. Yousuf Saiq, chairman of PFDJ branch in the Central region, heads of departments and branches of line ministries, as well as administrators of sub-zones took part, Mr. Abraham Semere, chairman of the Assembly, stated that the meeting was particularly notable since it coincided with the recent unfolding of peace and the lifting of sanctions unjustly imposed on Eritrea. He also underscored that the Assembly of the Central region has been exerting efforts to implement planned development programs alongside

concerned institutions.

At the meeting, reports by committees of economic development, social services, culture and tradition, and law and regulations were presented. The participants conducted extensive discussions on the reports presented and adopted recommendations.

Speaking at the event, Major General Romodan Osman Awliyyay indicated that efforts will be exerted to implement projects according to their priority through active participation of the public and stakeholders.

The Assembly concluded its regular meeting by issuing a 19 point joint statement which covered a number of topic areas, including strengthening soil and water conservation and renovation of roads and sewerage systems, among others.



## CALL FOR PRACTICING CROP ROTATION

The Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Arefaine Berhe, called for the judicious utilization of land resources and for farmers to practice crop rotation. Mr. Arefaine made the calls at an activity assessment meeting held in Barentu on 29 January.

Noting that soil and water conservation have significantly contributed to increasing agricultural production, Minister Arefaine called on administrations, agricultural experts, and the public to conduct integrated efforts for better outcomes.

He also called on agricultural experts to provide the necessary consultation and professional support to farmers in order to help increase agricultural output.

According to reports, in 2018, over 219,000 hectares of land was cultivated through summer rainfall, commercial farming, and irrigation and 850,000 quintals of crops, 1.5 million quintals of vegetables, and 708 quintals of fruits were harvested.

The participants at the meeting conducted extensive discussions on the reports presented and adopted recommendations on various issues, including the expansion of sweet potatoes and bee and poultry farming.

Speaking at the meeting, the Governor of the Gash Barka region, Mr. Fesehaye Haile, called for expanded water and soil conservation activities in order to address environmental challenges and boost agricultural production.

## VARIOUS DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITIES BY ERITREAN NATIONALS ABROAD

The Eritrean Ambassador to South Sudan, Mr. Yohannes Teklemichael, met and held talks with the Deputy Foreign Minister of South Sudan, Mr. Deng Dau Deng Malek, on developing bilateral relations.

At the meeting, held on 29 January, the two sides discussed the developments registered following the visit of President Salva Kiir Mayardit to Eritrea.

Commending the support the

Eritrean people and government extended to South Sudan before and after its 2011 independence, Mr. Deng Malek called for more support in the efforts being exerted to bring peace and stability in South Sudan.

Likewise, the Charge d’Affairs at the Eritrean Embassy in Kuwait, Mr. Humed Yahya Hali, met and held talks with the Kuwaiti Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr.

Hamid Suleiman Al-Meshal. The meeting focused on bilateral relations.

Meanwhile, in Milan, the Eritrean Ambassador to Italy, Dr. Fesehatsion Petros, conducted a seminar on 27 January for Eritrean nationals residing in the city. The meeting covered developments in the homeland and the ongoing progress of peace and cooperation in the region.





# REPORTAGE

## Asmara, UNODC Workshop to Strengthen Regional Police Cooperation

*Billion Temesghen*

As it describes itself, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) “is a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime. Established in 1997, through a merger between the United Nations Drug Control Programme and the Centre for International Crime Prevention, the UNODC operates in all regions of the world through an extensive network of field offices. It relies on voluntary contributions, mainly from governments, for about 90 percent of its budget and is mandated to assist countries around the world in their struggle against illicit drugs, crime, and terrorism. In the Millennium Declaration, countries also resolved to intensify efforts to fight transnational crime in all its dimensions, to redouble the efforts to implement the commitment to counter the world drug problem and to take concerted action against international terrorism.”

With the aim of enhancing effective criminal justice responses to trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants in Eastern Africa, among other cross-border crimes, the UNODC, in partnership with the Eritrean Ministry of

Foreign Affairs, IGAD, and Interpol, recently conducted a regional workshop. The three-day regional workshop, conducted from the 30<sup>th</sup> of January to the 1<sup>st</sup> of February, 2019, gathered some thirty participants from ministries, attorney general offices, police forces and prosecution authorities from Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, and Uganda.

Transnational organized crime, including activities such as human trafficking, smuggling of persons, movement of illicit drugs, weapons, natural and counterfeit goods, and money laundering between countries and continents, as well as cyber-crimes, is a universal phenomenon harming countries and societies across the world. As an ongoing global issue, the UNODC seeks to address transnational crime through a variety of responses and measures.

The recent workshop held in Asmara reflects Eritrea’s and the region’s readiness to address transnational organized crimes commonly seen in the region. It saw the cooperation of Eastern African countries and stakeholders, who came together for the first time to share information and join forces to strengthen regional cooperation and coordination on combating transnational organized crime.

The workshop was held in an encouraging atmosphere, coming during a period in which Eritrea has established much diplomatic cooperation initiatives. Following the peace agreement with neighboring Ethiopia, Eritrea has achieved, in late 2018, diplomatic victories in the region and beyond.

Notably, the workshop coincides with Eritrea’s appointment to serve on the UN Human Rights Council. As well, with the latest regional developments, the workshop will



certainly serve as a positive stepping stone for Eritrea’s further regional and international cooperation. During the opening ceremony, the Acting General Director of Desks in the Eritrean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ibrahim Osman, highlighted Eritrea’s commitment to ensure safety and security, as well as its readiness to cooperate with other countries in the region.

Organized crime is a universal phenomenon that negatively impacts countries around the world. In fact, according to documents shared during the workshop, “Organized crime, including trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants, is a complex, changing flexible phenomenon. Many of the different aspects of globalization, such as easier and faster communication, movement of capital and movement of persons, have created opportunities for transitional organized criminal groups to develop, diversify and expand their activities at the international level. Traditional, territorial-based criminal groups have evolved or have been partially replaced by more flexible networks with branches across several national jurisdictions. Victims, suspects, organized criminal groups and proceeds of crime maybe

located in different States, hence the need for strengthening and regional cooperation in criminal matters accords the region [...] The primary purpose of the workshop is to strengthen the capacity of criminal justice practitioners for their effective, timely and appropriate communication across boarders in criminal matters, as well as understand the importance and benefits of existing police communication system, legal frameworks, and digital and financial investigation tools and mechanism in line with the United Nation Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and its supplementing Protocols.”

The three-day workshop was filled with a broad array of programs and activities. Discussions and presentations on were organized. Topic covered included: the IGAD Security program; the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its related mechanisms of international cooperation (focusing on human trafficking and smuggling); Interpol tools and technical assistance aimed at international cooperation and law enforcement information sharing; and the importance of financial investigation in human trafficking

and smuggling cases, among other issues.

Noting that the workshop is part and parcel of Eritrea’s longstanding partnership with EAPCCO, the Head of the Eritrean Police Force, Colonel Mehari Tsegai, gave a briefing about two operations that police in the region have been undertaking. According to the Colonel, Operations USALAMA and FAGIA are Interpol-backed operations against cross-border and transnational crimes. He further noted that the recent workshop, conducted through the support of the UNODC, will reinforce previous efforts and initiatives taken by the region’s police forces.

Important remarks were also made by Johan Kruger, UNODC’s Head of Transnational Organized Crime, the German Ambassador to Eritrea, Gerald Wolf, the British Ambassador to Eritrea, Ian Richards, the Charge d’Affaires of the EU Delegation to Eritrea, Dr. Nicole Miller, among others. The workshop was concluded on February 1st, after offering participants a useful platform for mutual understanding and cooperation.

The recent developments toward peace and cooperation in the region are, without a doubt, highly encouraging and welcome. However, the need for stronger security and safety measures is ever-present. Almost no country in the world is protected from the harms of organized crime. Henceforth, Eritrea’s role, alongside the other countries in the region, as well as the UNODC’s Member States, in combating various criminal threats and ensuring peace, security, safety, and stability, is vital.



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## SpotLight

# A Quick Overview of the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review

*Dr. Fikrejesus Amahazion*

Earlier this week, on Monday 28 January, Eritrea submitted its Third Cycle Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Report to the 32nd Session of the Working Group in Geneva. The report, which was presented by a delegation led by Tesfamichael Gerahtu, Ambassador at Eritrea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, elicited responses and recommendations from almost 100 countries, the vast majority of which were positive and constructive.

The UPR is a unique mechanism of the 47-member, Geneva-based Human Rights Council (HRC) aimed at improving the human rights situation on the ground of each of the 193 United Nations (UN) Member States. Through the UPR mechanism, the human rights situation of all UN Member States – regardless of size, wealth, or power – is reviewed every 5 years. 42 countries are reviewed each year during three Working Group sessions dedicated to 14 states each. The reviews are conducted by the UPR Working Group, which consists of the 47 members of the HRC. It is important to note, however, that any country can take part in the dialogue with the country being reviewed. Each review is assisted by groups of three states, known as “troikas”, who serve as rapporteurs. The selection of the troikas for each state is conducted through a drawing of lots following elections for the HRC membership in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

The UPR was established when the HRC was created on



*The UPR is a unique mechanism of the 47-member, Geneva-based Human Rights Council*

15 March 2006 by the UNGA through resolution 60/251. Recall that since its creation in 1946, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) served as the functional commission mandated under the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to act as the UN's principle mechanism and international forum concerned with the promotion and protection of human rights around the world. However, the body was often criticized for its excessive politicization, selectivity, and double standards.

In a 2005 report, then-UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan criticized the UNCHR and called for the establishment of a new human rights body to replace it. He noted how the UNCHR's “capacity to perform its tasks has been increasingly undermined by its declining credibility and professionalism,” and that “a credibility deficit has developed, which casts a shadow on the reputation of the United Nations system as a whole.”

Subsequently, in 2006, the HRC was established to replace the Commission, and mandated to “undertake a universal periodic review, based on objective and reliable information, of the fulfillment by each State of its human rights obligations and commitments in a manner which ensures universality of coverage and equal treatment with respect to all States.” The first UPR session was held in April 2008; since then, all 193 UN member States have been reviewed twice within the first and second UPR cycles.

As noted above, as one of the main features of the HRC, the UPR is designed to ensure equal treatment for every country when their human rights situations are assessed. It provides an opportunity for all states to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries, to fulfill their human rights obligations, and to overcome challenges to the realization of human rights. The UPR also includes a platform for sharing of best human rights practices, which can be a significantly positive force for capacity-building and technical assistance. Currently, outside of the UPR, there are no other universal mechanisms in existence, and the UPR is also the first human rights mechanism to ever achieve 100% of participation – twice – by UN member States. In addition, due to its very nature, the UPR permits civil society to advocate and to take part in implementation of human rights obligations.

For many countries, including Eritrea, the UPR mechanism is regarded as the main mechanism of intergovernmental cooperation to examine human rights issues at the national level in all countries, without distinction. One of the main reasons that so many countries actively participate and cooperate with the UPR is because it functions as a cooperative mechanism with a non-adversarial and interactive dialogue-centered approach. Moreover, it maintains a focus on promoting the universality, interdependence, and indivisibility of all human rights and the equal treatment of all countries. Importantly, like most UN Member States and almost all developing countries, Eritrea strongly opposes double-standards as well as counterproductive selective, politically-motivated, country-specific approaches. Instead, Eritrea strongly believes that the promotion and protection of human rights should be based on impartiality, genuine dialogue, constructive engagement, and close cooperation in order to strengthen the capacity of states to comply with their human rights obligations.

Previously, Eritrea submitted national reports to the UPR in 2009 (November) and 2014 (February). Its next review is expected to be in January 2024. The three country representatives serving as rapporteurs (the troika) for the review of Eritrea during the current reporting cycle were the Bahamas, Bangladesh, and Rwanda. There were a number of highlights in the report presented

during this reporting period.

For example, in regard to the 92 accepted recommendations from Eritrea's Second Cycle UPR, 80 recommendations (85.87%) were fully implemented, while 12 recommendations (14.13%) were partially implemented. As well, there were significant efforts made to improve standards of living in the country, including: land for housing has been continuously distributed and houses have been built; accessibility to electricity has been increased to 43.5% (urban 81% and rural 22.6%); road transport has expanded by 62% and 85% of villages are covered; clean water access has shown remarkable progress with 85% rural coverage and 92% in urban areas; and despite economic challenges, a new remuneration system that substantially increased civil service salaries was introduced and is gradually being expanded. Notably, Eritrea is party to 108 international conventions and instruments; in recent years, it acceded to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. Many other important developments and significant improvements were also disclosed during the review. Of course, at the same time, Eritrea, like all countries, faces human rights challenges, and there is still much work ahead in order to ensure better and higher human rights standards.

Notably, the vast majority of countries praised Eritrea's efforts and progress on human rights. For example, Russia stated that, “Eritrea has progressed significantly in the sphere of human rights,” while China declared that it, “Highly appreciates Eritrea's progress in the promotion and protection of human rights.” In addition, Mexico expressed praise for, “the progress made [by Eritrea], including in the increased registration of girls in schools,” while South Africa was, “encouraged by [Eritrea's] efforts to promote the development and wellbeing of children.”



*The UPR is designed to ensure equal treatment of every country*





# I went to the dentist...the horror!

Natnael Yebio W.

I had to go to the dentist the other day. Upon arriving at 10 am, I found that a lot of patients had been waiting since 9 am. After an hour, I was ushered to the dentist's office and directed to sit on the dentist's chair. Soon, the dentist would remove the tooth that had been bothering me for nearly a month. As I sat there, I thought of how blessed chickens are, since they will never know the pain associated with teeth. A pain so terrible that it causes brave men to weep and wise men to go insane.

I know of a certain man in the countryside who, unable to bear the raging pain caused by a decayed molar, took a big stone and struck his cheek with a heavy blow. In doing so, he knocked out the bad tooth, along with two good ones. He didn't fully understand what he had done until he saw blood oozing from a hole in his cheek.

When we grow old, we are lucky to lose all our teeth, molars and all. Good riddance! No more toothaches and no more dental appointments. Don't bet on that yet, say some religious people. When you go to hell, the demons will be there waiting for you with sets of teeth on a platter to be distributed to the toothless. Why, you ask? Well, how else do you expect the damned to grind or gnash their teeth in pain as they

roast in the blazing fire?

The problem starts with teething. It itches, doesn't it? Could that be nature's way of making fun of us? It may be itching now to herald its arrival, but wait just a little and it is going to hurt heralding its departure. The Eritrean child is given *kitcha* or a similar product in order to alleviate the terrible itch.

When we were kids and saw our milk teeth falling one by one or had to have them pulled out by our brothers, father, or the dentist, we threw them in the direction of your place and in the name of St. Mary, we said, "I give you a bad tooth, you give me a good tooth." We knew nothing of the tooth fairy.

As we grow old, we can sense the desire of some of our teeth to leave us for good. But some of our elder brothers did not wait to get old to part with some of their teeth. A simple fight did the job. The punishment for not listening to Pa or Ma was that they could not smile as long as there was a gap in their set of teeth. But once they could somehow manage to have the gap filled with gold teeth, they laughed the whole day to show their newly-acquired gem.

Still young, I came to realize that girls, unlike boys, made good use of their teeth when threatened. I have seen a friend who was unfortunate enough to

*I went to the dentist  
and heard the drill, so  
I done  
a runner and didn't  
pay my bill*

lock horns with one of the girls in our neighborhood. If I hadn't separated them, he might have been chewed alive. "Come and fight without your nails and teeth if you are a real man," he said to the girl, shaking with anger. The girl laughed at being called a man.

and gnawed on *akat* (fruit of the *Doum* tree).

In the countryside, youngsters still use charcoal to scrub their teeth. You take a piece of charcoal, scrub every tooth with it and rinse. The fleshy inside of a lemon can also be used for the same purpose.

I remember meeting a foreign dentist who came to Eritrea to practice dentistry. He had been here for a year and told me that as long as Eritreans kept on crunching *kolo* (roasted chick peas) and *kitcha*, there was no

The blacksmith or anyone who had a strong stomach would arrive with a pair of plier or pincers and that was more or less a declaration of war on the bothersome tooth. After wrangling with the tooth for hours – sometimes even falling over backwards with empty pincers and swearing by God to get that stupid tooth even if it took him forever – the blacksmith would succeed and the operation was over. The hero of the day held the bad tooth, dripping with blood and small pieces of flesh. Quickly, he'd put some cloth or even a lump of soot in place of the tooth in order to stop the bleeding.



She had seen him biting right and left during previous fights with boys his age.

In our culture, next to good looks and long hair, a beautiful set of teeth is a valuable asset in a marriageable damsel. Girls should have a set of teeth as white as milk, say most suitors. How about them? Do you think that girls do not care about boys' teeth?

About thirty years ago, there was a famous poster of a Beni Amir boy whose set of teeth made the producers of Colgate or Signal think twice before embarking on a new formula for tooth decay. What did that shepherd boy eat or drink to have such marvelous teeth? Most probably, he drank goat milk all the time, ate sugarless food, brushed his teeth with various twigs, washed his mouth with water and salt, ate lemons,

future for him.

As biscuits and candies slowly invaded the country, accompanied by ice cream, pastry, and other sweets, the clinic of the said dentist was filled by scores of patients. And he lived happily ever after.

"What were Eritreans doing before the coming of Italian dentists?" I once asked my aunt. "Eating meat and crushing sheep or goat bones with one's molars during holidays kept one's teeth healthy," she said. "It was with the introduction of sugar that the problem arose," she added.

She told me that if people ever suffered from tooth pain, there were herbs that took care of that. "How about a decayed tooth that needed pulling out," I asked. "The blacksmith was around to conduct the operation," she said.

Mr. Haile is an old man. He has no teeth. But then he uses his gums to crush roasted beans and recounts his exploits when he was young. "I used to crush bones with my molars when I was only sixteen," he likes to boast. No bone from an Easter sheep was spared. Tarzan, his dog, never forgave him for that. "I used to open beer bottles with my teeth," he continues. He never waited for the barman or barwoman to go and fetch the bottle opener. Given the opportunity, other impatient boozers availed of his free services which eventually caused his teeth to fall, one by one.

"I didn't know at the time that I was making a mistake," he admits. The toothless lion is now waiting for his children in America to send him money to repair the damage he inflicted on his teeth when he was young.



Molar was always scared of going to the dentist.



# Book Review

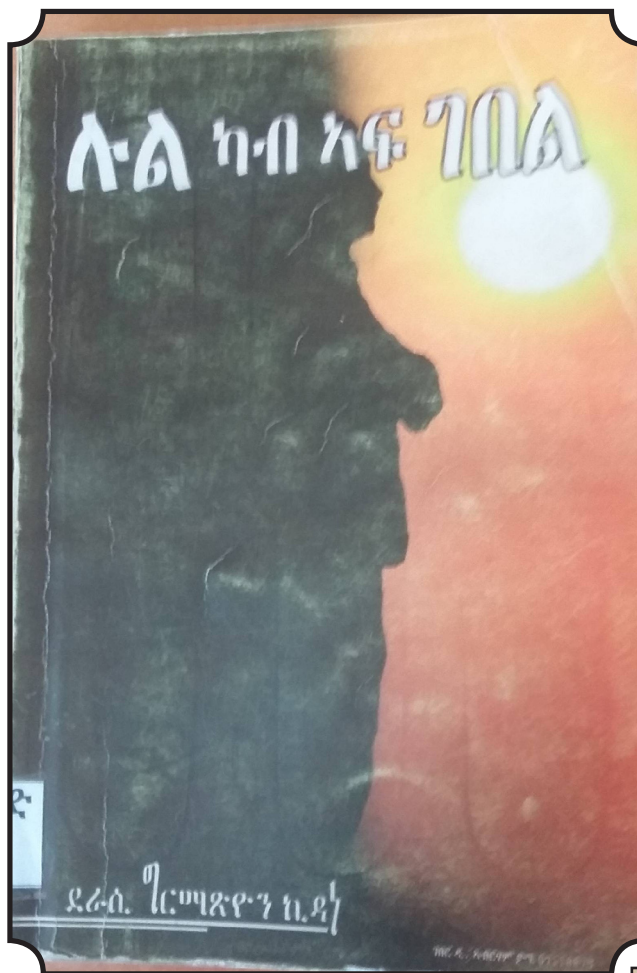
## Lul Kab Af Gebel - A Tribute to the Fedayeen of the Armed Struggle

Abraham Habte

“Mr. Ghirmazion has lauded the role of women during the armed struggle in his ‘*Lul Kab Af Gebel*’ and has richly rewarded us, women,” states Ms. Ghenet Seyoum (Shigom), commenting on *Hanqewta*, a collection of short stories by Michael Debrezion and Ghirmazion Kidane. “I exhort all women to refer his books,” she adds.

Is this book by Ghirmazion Kidane like the other stories I have so far read about the armed struggle? Is it like those books in which women use their feminine beauty and charm to get secrets out of unsuspecting Ethiopian army officers? Or does the story present another kind of woman? How will Mr. Ghirmazion’s book be different from the others written about the role of women during the armed struggle? I was hooked and decided to read the book to find out answers for my questions.

*Lul Kab Af Gebel* (literally translating as “A Pearl out of a Python’s Mouth”) recounts the experiences of a fictional young man named Estifanos Michael. Leaving the peculiar issue of his search for his identity aside, it can be taken as the biography of most Eritrean youngsters living in Asmara during the 1980s and early 1990s. Estifanos, a student at Asmara Comprehensive Secondary School and brought up by a woman, has no clue about who his father was or about his father’s whereabouts. Due to an incident in his classroom, Estifanos got arrested and was taken to a police station, where his classmates’ parents came to their children’s rescue. Estifanos had no one. His mother had died four years before and his father didn’t know if his son was alive or not. Neither did Estifanos know whether his father was dead or alive. Seeing the peculiar way that he answered his questions, the interrogator (at the police-station) orders Estifanos’ immediate re-arrest. In Mariam Ghibi, the infamous prison in Asmara where he was kept, he meets a man whose influence brings a complete change on Estifanos, and he is released a



changed man.

The book also narrates the story of a woman named Sara, to whom Ms. Ghenet refers, whose husband gets killed in what looked like an accident. She had no doubt, however, that the Ethiopian Government was behind his killing. Therefore, she decides to open a bar, which she uses for her own purposes. This doesn’t come as a complete surprise to readers as much as it does to Sara’s family. Mr. Ghirmazion has successfully hidden her thoughts from readers and we do not know why she, a respectable Eritrean woman, should disgrace herself and her family. Unless, readers are made to conclude, Sara has some weighty purpose, she cannot take such a dangerous and shameful decision. It must be for such a purpose, we conclude, that she decided to bring up her daughter, Hiwet, Estifanos’ classmate, and later sweetheart, in such an unhealthy and dangerous climate.

Our conclusions are proven correct when Belih, an undercover Eritrean freedom fighter based in Asmara, whose background we are given through bits and pieces of conversations, begins contacting Sara. Through a note

of a ferocious fire-spewing dragon. The scene in ‘Shrek’, in which Shrek goes to the dragon’s castle to free Princess Fiona, best describes the image the title conjures up in the reader’s mind. The dragon of the Ethiopian colonial army tries to swallow Sara, Belih, and their comrades in Asmara. As the story shows, the dragon had swallowed many, and would devour many more, if unstoppable. Sara, Belih, and their comrades want to do just that. Stop the dragon and drive him out.

In telling the story, Mr. Ghirmazion, though he foreshadows the final events of the story, such as the Ethiopian policeman’s secret activities and the cruelty that visits Belih’s

left by an Ethiopian policeman, which we read in its entirety almost at the end of the story, we are given information that confirms our suspicions.

The title of the book conjures up the image of a man or a woman, inadequately armed to snatch a precious pearl out of the clutches

family, doesn’t give the events the coverage that they deserve. In other words, the events are only foreshadowed and do not receive the emphasis that Hiwet’s, Sara’s, and Estifanos’ experiences do. The significance of these events is kept hidden from the reader, preventing him or her from assessing how they impact the other characters. For example, Mr. Ghirmazion keeps the reader in the dark about the identity of Estifanos’ father until the last few pages, which makes the story less believable. In short, we are made to believe that Mr. Ghirmazion has chosen to use the *deus ex-machina* of classical Greek drama to resolve complications of the story.

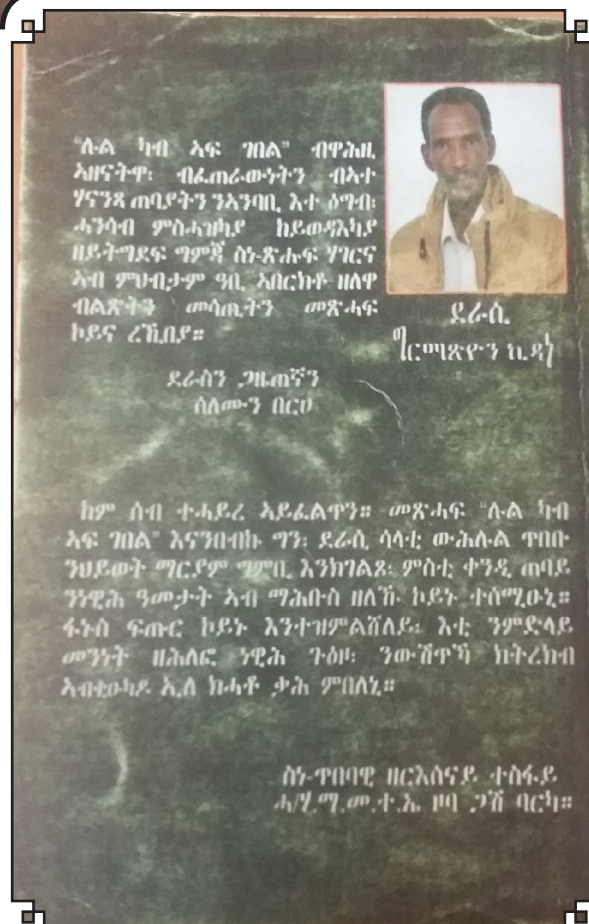
In the story, Mr. Ghirmazion describes a scene in which two Eritrean thieves plot to frighten and rob Estifanos and Hiwet.

such as Tadesse, Fekadu, and Belih, especially in some critical parts of the book. Ultimately, this hurts the credibility of the ending.

*Lul Kab Af Gebel* is a fictional work based on real events. I suspect that Sara, who reminds me of Weizero Ethiopia in Engineer Tsegai Teclemichael’s *N’Mntay*, who also owns a bar and keeps it for the EPLF, is based on a real Eritrean woman. She serves as the Front’s eyes and ears in the bar, which is frequented by Ethiopian military men. Sara and Weizero Ethiopia work in such similar ways that one comes to the conclusion that the two stories were likely based on two very similar real stories. In other words, in an attempt to stay true to the original story, Mr. Ghirmazion has been unable to free himself from the oppression of the real events he describes. I believe that, to some extent, the real events which he recounts have undermined his creativity, particularly since he could have created another kind of woman who doesn’t use her feminine beauty and charm in her service to the armed struggle.

I think it is unfair that Eritrean women are often portrayed as bar women, as if they didn’t serve the Revolution in other capacities or through other ways. It can be argued that whether they served as bar women or as freedom fighters, they served the Revolution. But it should not be forgotten that art greatly influences our attitudes. It should also be recalled that such portrayals of Eritrean women (especially in our books) is degrading. It creates the impression that women cannot serve in other capacities and, therefore, cannot be equal to men. This is an attitude that many countries, including Eritrea, are trying to eliminate.

It is true, as stated by Ms. Ghenet, that “Mr. Ghirmazion has lauded the role of women during the armed struggle in his ‘*Lul Kab Af Gebel*’ and has richly rewarded us, women.” However, the story would have been more powerful if the author had given some serious thought about its narration and portrayed women in a broader, more creative light.



Knowing the intentions of the robbers, we follow their actions with interest and are keen to find out the results. By showing the intention of the two robbers, he keeps us in suspense and we continue reading with interest. Mr. Ghirmazion doesn’t give us such an opportunity with Belih or Tadesse, or during Estifanos’ life as a baby. He fails to reveal the thoughts of important characters



# Strong Families, Strong Country

*Simon Weldemichael*

It makes a lot of sense to write about family today because in Eritrea January is a season of marriage. As the scripture says, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). Similarly, in Eritrea, many Eritreans are taking steps to form a family of their own. Marriage is at the heart of our civil laws. In Eritrea, while there are many forms of marriage, there are conditions common to all of them. Article 522 (1), for instance, stipulates that, "A man and a woman who have not both attained the full age of eighteen years may not contract marriage." Marriage is a fundamental part of our social system with detailed guidelines. Although the focus of this article is the family, I used marriage as an introduction since it is the only way to bring a family into existence.

A nation is built on and secured by values, not just by the might of soldiers and intellect of scientists. In the case of values, families are the first place where values are nurtured, acquired, and transmitted. Just like the performance of students is a reflection of the curriculum, the state of a country is a reflection of the state of its families. The first task of the family is to be the first school where important social values are learnt. The family is at the service of nation-building when parents educate their children to love their country, respect humanity, love truth and justice, respect the law, work hard, be confident and self-reliant, and other essential values. The primary responsibility of parents should be to inculcate values that help children to become good citizens. What should families teach to our sons and daughters so that they can survive and thrive in 2050 and become the heroes of the future?

Eritrean families, more than ever, should teach their children to distinguish right from wrong, to treat others with respect, to disregard distinctions based on regional, ethnic, linguistic, and religious lines, to think freely and act with discipline, and to take responsibility for their actions.

In many ways, Eritrea is one big family. We share common

values. In Eritrea, the family is the nucleus of the community. Prior to any educational institution, family is the vital institution where citizens are raised and nurtured. When we plan and discuss the future of our country, we must not forget the fact that our future will be determined by families. Nurturing good citizens hinges on the effectiveness of families. Dysfunctional families can lead to wider social breakdown and upheaval. Stable, well-functioning families on the other hand are the bedrock and foundation of a cohesive and successful society. If the emotional bonding of individual family members is strong, then the national unity of the country will likely also be strong.

Strong families are the foundation of strong communities and a strong country. World leaders are focused on terrorism, climate change, and economic issues, while overlooking the global epidemic of impudence and indecency. Dealing with the menace of terrorism, while not being concerned about the dangers of family breakdowns does not bode well for communities or humanity. Is it justifiable to fear terrorism more than divorce and individualism? Have you ever measured or compared the problems caused by family disintegration versus terrorism? The current international system quickly responds to terrorism,

while it is slow to respond to family disintegration and the degradation of values. We have frequently observed politicians lose elections because of terrorist attacks but not because of the increase of family disintegration or immorality in the society. When we look at the consequences, we observe that it rarely has practical benefits for the people. In his book, *21 lessons for the 21st century*, Yuval Noah Harari states that, "In most cases, [the] overreaction to terrorism poses a far greater threat to our security than the terrorists themselves."

In this age of technological revolution, we see how the "divorce revolution" has wreaked havoc on children and left society disillusioned. Many adults, infected by the disintegrative and destructive virus of individualism, have resorted to having children out of marriage. The anticipation of greater freedom has led to lives of poverty and distress. As contraband businesses can adversely impact the national economy, the situation of children conceived via "unethical" relations can pose significant challenges for society. Although I lack concrete data, it seems that in Eritrea the numbers of children born outside marriage, as well as rates of cohabitation and divorce, which were previously taboos, have increased.

It is important that these issues receive our attention. We shouldn't

be comfortable that they may still be "small" or "insignificant" figures. Remember that an epidemic usually starts out "small", with only a few cases, before spreading rapidly. We should defend and regard the family as a divine institution. We should not forget that it can contribute to socio-economic growth and wellbeing. Many factors have contributed to the delay of marriage and the weakening of the family. To successfully win the battle of nation-building, we must ensure the health and integrity of our families.

The importance of family in Eritrean society is reflected in various government documents. The National Charter of Eritrea states that, "our vision is for Eritrea to preserve its identity and uniqueness, develop commitment to family and community care." As well, the prelude to the new Civil Code of Eritrea states, "... the Civil Code provides protection, unity and harmony to the natural and basic unit of the society - the family." When we think of a country, we should not only think about the size of its territory, the population, or its natural and physical characteristics. Rather, we should also consider the characteristics of its people. In understanding any country, an understanding of its family system can prove more useful than knowing its geography or political

system.

If you view the homeland as home, the citizens as relatives, and the government as parents, a country resembles a family in many ways. The government's duty to citizens and the parent's duty to children are similar. A disciplined family, with solid laws, looks much the same as a stable and secure country. A hard-working family and a self-reliant country are analogous. The obedience of children to their parents' order and labor with diligence is like the law-abiding civilized society. In an attempt to promote Eritrean development, we must keep the ideal traditional Eritrean family intact. We have to rediscover, protect, and promote our value of the family. Our marriages and our families must be promoted and defended from every possible perversion.

Responsible men and women, coming together through marriage and consenting to and form a family in unity and equality, is an important aspect in establishing a developed nation. Some of the first requirements of nation-building are unity and equality. Therefore, the triumph of our developmental aspirations and the principle of unity in diversity can only be celebrated when we form united, fair, and stable families. The strength of the nation depends on the strength of its citizens. One of the things that a strong family can do is to set an example of ethical and moral behavior. Parents should guide their children by example.

Behind every political, social, and military victory that Eritrea has scored has been a strong family that guides, commands, and nurtures its children. Eritrea's family system contributed greatly during the struggle for independence and the defense of Eritrea's sovereignty during the TPLF-led invasion. Now, as ever, a functional family is vital to helping us achieve our lofty ambitions for a strong and prosperous country. Although the future is uncertain, we can safely say that the Eritrea of 2050 will be built, led, and guided by the children that are being born and raised today. The development of a nation depends on the discipline and industriousness of its citizens. However, disciplined and industrious citizens are only possible through strong, cohesive families.



*Strong families are the foundation of strong communities and a strong country*



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VACANCY

ANNOUNCEMENT

Bisha Mining Share Company is inviting applicants for the following position for Bisha site project.

**Position:** Safety Officer  
**Department:** Safety and Occupational Health  
**Section:** Safety and Occupational Health  
**Number required:** (02)  
**Contract Type:** Indefinite

- Primary Purpose**
- - Control “Safety & Health” in order to ensure employees, equipment and facility risks are minimized.
- Major Duties and Responsibilities**
- Planning**
- Ensure policies and procedures are in place. • Ensure mine is compliant with legislative and regulatory requirements.

• Assist with the “Safety & Health Management System.
- Implementing Safety & Health**
- Inspect the workplace for potential hazards. • Respond to and investigate accidents and emergencies. • Liaise with on-site contractors to ensure compliance with safety regulations.

• Coach and advice employees regarding Safety & Health. • Identify unsafe acts, conditions, hazards and investigate root causes as well as identifying corrective action.

• Enforce on-site safety, health and emergency compliance to programs to minimise/prevent incidents and investigate incidents/accidents.

• Conduct planned inspections/audits and Co-ordinate monthly Safety & Health meetings.
- Reporting**
- Complete, daily, weekly and monthly reports and Report any incidents/accidents and risk assessments.

Qualification	
.Grade 12, Certificate in Occupational Health & Safety, emergency	
Knowledge & Experience	
2-3 years previous experience in Health & Safety & Emergency Response	
Technical Skills	Behavioural Skills
Computer Literacy (MS Office – Intermediate, Excel )	Communication (English and local language )
Supervisory and Analytical skills	Assertiveness and High level of accuracy
Attention to detail	Flexible and Organising skills
Physical fitness & problem solving skills	Integrity, Discretion & Self-Discipline
Driving License	
Plan, organize & execution skills	Ability to work towards strict deadlines

**General Information and other requirements:**

**Place of Work:** Bisha.

**Salary:** As per Company salary scale.

**Type of Contract:** Indefinite

**Additional requirement for Nationals:**

■ Having fulfilled his/her National Service obligation and provide evidence of release paper from the Ministry of Defense.

■ Present clearance paper from current/last employer.

■ Testimonial documents to be attached (CV, work experience credentials, a copy of your National Identity Card etc.).





Q and A

*"This Workshop is a very Strong Message to the Region and the world that Eritrea, and the Horn of Africa, are Serious about Encountering Organized Crime."*

Billion Temesghen

*The United Nations Offices on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in partnership with the Eritrean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, IGAD and Interpol successfully held a three day regional workshop in Asmara, Eritrea. UNODC's Head of Transitional Organized Crime, Illicit Trafficking and Terrorism Programmes, Mr. Johan Kruger talks to Q&A.*

**Migration has been there for always. How does UNODC consider the concept of migration? And, of course, the crimes related to migration?**

UNODC is a specialized entity within the UN Secretariat that doesn't specifically focus on migration per se. We work on crimes related to migration and other crimes for that matter. As custodian of United Nations convention against organized crime and its protocols on trafficking and smuggling, we look at those criminal syndicates who profit from people's misery, despair and aspiration to move and find better life in new places. The focus of UNODC is not so much on people moving or not; rather on those criminal syndicate who benefit from it.

**What can you tell us about UNODC current engagements with a focus on activities of East Africa?**

We have a number of offices in East Africa; our regional office in Nairobi. We cover 13 member states including the whole of the Horn of Africa and we implement our global mandate under the

regional program for east Africa. Currently, the programming cycle is from 2016 to 2021. In other words, UNODC mandate has crystallized, by the Member States of East Africa, into a program of action that fits into the needs and priorities of East Africa. We have been active across the region for the past two and half years.

**Which is presumably why you have been coming to Eritrea from time to time. Tell us about your working ties with the Government of Eritrea?**

We have been working exceptionally well with the Government of Eritrea; with various Ministries as well as with the Eritrean Police Force. It has been mutually productive. Local authorities and Ministries have been forthcoming in terms of compliance with the Convention and related Protocols. We have been working extensively both on the policy side and the capacity building side. WE have seen great progress. Not only within Eritrea but also within the context of the Horn of Africa. And in that framework, we are delighted that the workshop we have hosted today in Asmara for the region

has, in one sense, put a stamp of approval on the progress we have made both by the Government of Eritrea and the region as a whole.

**Because we are talking about transnational organized crime, how would you explain the importance of having east African countries working together and sharing information? What are UNODC's expectations from this particular workshop attended by several East African countries?**

By it is very name, we are talking about crime that crosses borders. You cannot counter this kind of crimes if you don't work together. This workshop is in essence about mechanisms of regional law enforcement; of police coordination in east Africa. It is the first of its kind in Eritrea; and that by itself, is a very strong message to the region and the world that Eritrea, and the Horn of Africa, are serious about encountering organized crime. UNODC is delighted to host this workshop in Asmara, together with the Government of Eritrea. I am glad to be back in this beautiful city. But more importantly, it sends a very strong message that Member States in the region are ready to



work together to counter organized crime. We hope and envisage that this workshop will be impacting in terms of outcome; to pave the way for enforcement of practical ways of improving cooperation in the context of Interpol. It will enhance mechanisms and practices of sharing information and pooling of resources within the region. Whether in terms of academic research, law enforcement, information or intelligence sharing, it is absolutely critical that there is a strong bond among Member States.

**Your office obviously possesses data and records of crimes that are relevant to the region. What is the broad picture?**

The range of organized crimes that occur are not really unique to East Africa. Obviously, human trafficking and related smuggling of migrants feed on the innocent aspiration of individuals in quest of a better future elsewhere. For us, movement of peoples out of the Horn of Africa by criminal syndicates remains a key focus. We don't focus on the migrants; but on the syndicates who take money from the migrants. Another key concern is drug trafficking into the Horn. The many dimensions of drug abuse in the region affect the youth and the people as a whole. It is a critical concern to us. We

address the criminal side. Who is supplying the narcotics? Who is transporting them and who is selling them? But at the same time, we also work on the awareness of the problem. We try to help people get engaged and involved in many forms. We help in terms of reintegration, health care, alternative livelihoods... So, it is not solely about law enforcement it is also about the humanitarian side of it. On top of this, there are activities that include the movement of money. Money laundering always goes hand in hand with organized crimes. Where there is illegal trade there is illegal money. And similarly, on the rise in East Africa is cybercrime; meaning, the use of digital platforms to commit and direct crime. I hope that this workshop will engage the member states in a conversation that will be fruitful in terms of sharing experience and learning about the crimes that we should combat together.

**If there is anything you want to shed light on before we conclude our interview Mr. Johan Kruger.**

As a South African working in East Africa, it is always wonderful to come to Eritrea. To be part of its people and what they stand for is amazing. Being from Africa myself, it is home. It is wonderful not only as an international civil servant but to commit the values and principles of the UN that I believe will benefit the people of Africa in a very practical way. That is at the heart of everything I do in the region; to address the problems to make a difference in the lives of many and not to address it from an academic point of view only but from a systematic point of view.

**Thank you!**

My pleasure.

