



President Isaias Afwerki in Khartoum

PRESIDENT ISAIAS AFWERKI'S WORKING VISIT TO SUDAN

President Isaias Afwerki left for Khartoum on a working visit on Thursday, June 11, 2015.

On arrival at Khartoum International Airport, President Isaias was accorded a very warm welcome by President Omar Hassan Al-Beshir along with the Guard of Honor.

During his stay, President Isaias held talks with his counterpart, President Omar Hassan Al-Beshir, on enhancing bilateral ties of co-operation and partnership. The

two leaders also discussed ways to strengthen socio-economic ties between the peoples as well as international developments of mutual importance to both countries.

President Isaias also held discussions with the Chairman of the Sudanese National Assembly, Prof. Ibrahim Ahmed Omar and with the First Vice President of the Republic of Sudan, Gen. Bekri Hassan Saleh, on related topics.

As a reflection of their good

neighborly ties, the Heads of State of Eritrea and the Republic of Sudan maintain regular consultations and exchange of views on issues of mutual interest to both countries.

The deep ties and cordial relationship between both peoples goes back to the days of Eritrea's liberation struggle and these ties have solidified over the years since Eritrea's independence as the number of joint cooperation in areas of mutual interests increase.

LOCAL ELECTION IN LOGO-ANSEBA

The election of area administrators, managing directors and village administrative committees has been conducted in 9 Administrative areas of Logo-Anseba sub-zone.

The sub-zonal administrator, Mr. Isak Ti'um, called on the inhabitants to maintain cooperation with the new office holders. The newly elected citizens equally expressed readiness to serve with commitment.

This tradition of local elections in the different administrative zones demonstrates Eritrean society's longstanding practice of active and conscious participation in local affairs.

Whether Baito in the Tigrigna ethnic group or Di'iba in the Kunama ethnic group, among others, Eritrean people have a strong civic tradition of community-oriented involvement.



Woman voting in local election

ERITREANS IN ISRAEL DONATE USD 80 THOUSAND

In a show of strong commitment to nation building, Eritrean community members in Israel have contributed over USD 80 thousand to the Martyrs Trust Fund.

The Martyrs Trust Fund was set up in support of families who have lost loved ones during both the liberation struggle and those who died defending Eritrea's sovereignty and independence during the 1998-2000 war of aggression.

This act by Diaspora members in Israel, most of whom are young Eritreans who have emigrated to Israel in recent years, is in great contrast to the image aggressively promoted in mainstream media about Eritrean asylum seekers being anti Eritrea.

In reality, this type of commitment is one of many that prove strong and enduring ties between Eritreans, wherever they may be, and their government and people back home.

It is to be recalled that Eritrean community members living in Israel organized one of the largest May 24, Independence Day, celebrations this year.



Eritreans in Israel celebrating May 24

News Headlines

- Mother and child wellbeing workshop in Barentu
- Farmers in Foro sub-zone receive livestock support
- Soil and water conservation campaigns in Mendefera
- CMST Graduates pledge to live up to national expectations
- Ministry of Education, Ginda Branch, holds assessment meeting
- 36 females in Mendefera receive training in weaving and handicraft
- 185 youths receive vocational training in Senafe

Development

Greening Eritrea

Kesete Ghebrehiwet

The people and Government of Eritrea have been committed, since independence, to redressing the damages done to the Eritrean environment. Greening campaigns have been carried out since 1994, and this commitment was reinvigorated in 2006, in the presence of President Issaias Afwerki.

As was declared during the 9th commemoration of the "National Greening Day", we owe the coming generations a great deal of every natural resource we are making use of. We only have a right to benefit from these resources at their behest.

Different parts of Eritrea were turned to plains during the colonial times. But, all Eritrean communities have remedial solutions. Hence, they have actively been involved in the endeavors of reforestation and protection of the natural environment.

Eritreans have traditional wisdom of protecting the natural environment. Almost all of the nine ethnic groups of the country have customary laws which give utmost priority to the natural environment. The roots of Eritrean traditions have not yet eroded. Thus, a far sighted vision to which the Agriculture Ministry along with different government institutions and communities all over Eritrea has been working for is that the country's natural vegetation should not be left to extinction.

Since 2006, over 50 green clubs have, all over the country, been ac-

tive in environmental protection, which include intensive planting of seedlings. What has been practiced since the launching of the green campaign is mainly directed at empowering the participation of communities, schools, service rendering and religious institutions and other concerned bodies in the national greening campaign.

Hence, one could see different school compounds and different institutions have been turning green owing to the work accomplishment that has been carried out to date.

A committee which encompasses members from different Ministry of Agriculture's departments and mainly that of Forestry and Wildlife Authority have been working in identifying exemplary institutions and individuals who have been committed to turning their locality a green area.

According to Mr. Fitsum Hagos, Head of Wildlife Protection at the Ministry of agriculture, the committee has prepared assessment standards and carried out studies in 12 villages and thus identified exemplary farmers and individuals.

Mr. Abraha Garza, Head of Forestry and Wildlife protection, on his part said that the authority has in collaboration with people been making due contribution in increasing the number of wildlife and in extending efforts towards boosting forestry activities.



Government officials and general public during the commemoration of the "National Greening Day"

Each year, during the commemoration of "National Greening Day" monetary and in-kind reward has been delivered to individuals and institutions who worked hard in environmental protection and mainly in the planting of seedlings and ensuring their growth.

Giving life to trees means securing one's living, and securing one's living is definitely securing one's well-being, once well being is secured the growth of national economy is also ensured. Natural, personal and national well beings are all lined as part of one circle.

It is from the aforementioned outlook that the Government, com-

munities, and different institutions in Eritrea have been exerting efforts to restore the natural environment which was severely devastated during the colonial times.

The Agriculture Ministry has been nurturing and distributing seedlings to institutions and individuals who have been willing to take part in the greening effort.

The Eritrean people indeed believe its living could be secured if the biodiversity is prevented from danger. Hence, owing to such awareness, it is quite easy to mobilize communities in the greening campaign. That is why, there has been a growing

number of exemplary farmers, institutions and individuals who have been making due contribution to the overall natural endeavors.

It is quite necessary to mention that there have been a growing number of Elephant in areas around River Gash. Another area, well known for its vegetations coverage and wildlife is Semenawi Bahri. Such places are indeed sites of tourism attraction. However, suggestions forwarded from the participants of the 9th National Greening Day indicates that precautions need to be taken in the protection of elephants from illegal hunting as there have been some occurrences. The participants also recommended that the afforested versus the deforested areas should be compared statistically so as to see the pace of progress so far made in planting trees.

Commending individuals and institutions for their input in the greening campaign, Minister of Agriculture, Arefaine Berhe said in a closing remark that the ministry would continue to work diligently in the protection of trees and wildlife.

In the Commemoration of the National Greening day, each zone has presented annual work accomplishment. Individuals and institutions received monetary and in-kind rewards as well as trophies.

A total of 218 people were participated in the National Greening Day which was commemorated at Expo hall (G3) in the presence of ministers and different government officials.



Planting of seedlings

**ERITREA
PROFILE**

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Cuba-US Relations: Why the Change?



Jawahir Ibrahim

On 29 May 2015, the United States State Department announced that Cuba was no longer in its list of state sponsors of terrorism. Cuba had been inducted into that dubious list in 1982. Ironically, CIA documents declassified in 2007 have exposed that the US tried to assassinate Fidel Castro at least eight times, though Cuban sources put the figure at 600. It is no wonder that Castro once said, "If surviving assassination was an Olympic event, I would win gold medal."

The rescission from the terrorism list is the latest development in a process that has seen both countries cozying up to each other. On 17 December 2014, U.S. President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raúl Castro announced the beginning of a process of normalizing relations between Cuba and the U.S., which media sources have named "the Cuban Thaw."

The announcement of the two presidents was followed by their meeting in April 11, 2015, at the Summit of the Americas in Panama, marking the first meeting between a U.S. and Cuban head of state since the two countries severed their ties in 1961 (Since 1977, the two countries had maintained only interest sections in each other's capitals).

In recollection of the Bay of Pigs invasion authorized by President Kennedy and the Cuban Missile Crisis, which followed soon after, this news of diplomatic rapprochement between the two neighbors separated by just 90 miles of water is welcome indeed.

The White House's official website had posted "At times, longstanding U.S. policy towards Cuba has isolated the United States from regional and international partners, constrained our ability to influence outcomes throughout the Western Hemisphere."

The unfairness of the trade and arms embargo imposed on Cuba and which has still not been repealed is only illustrated by the fact that the UN General Assembly approved a resolution in 2013 condemning the U.S. embargo for the twenty-second consecutive year, with 188 member countries backing the resolution and only two—the United States and Israel—opposing.

Although the unfair embargo remains in place to a great extent due to the intransigence and paralysis of the partisan US congress—certain policies have been put into place, which will allow the visit of U.S. travelers to Cuba, facilitation of authorized transactions/remittances by US banks, investment of US businesses in private Cuban companies and sales of certain equipment in that

sector.

The White House said in its website "The expansion will seek to empower the nascent Cuban private sector and make it easier for Cuban citizens to have access to certain lower-priced goods to improve their living standards and gain greater economic independence from the state."

But the US rapprochement towards Cuba seems to be aimed at finding new markets for its various industries that are facing stiff competition all around the world rather than striving to save the Cuban people.

The Economist reported "Already American businesses such as Airbnb, the lodging website; Netflix, the internet entertainment provider; and IDT International, a mobile-phone company, have used the new rules to launch businesses in Cuba..."

The Council of Foreign Relations admitted that "despite the embargo, the United States has become Cuba's fifth-largest trading partner since 2007... the U.S. industries that stand to gain the most from expanded trade to Cuba are agriculture and telecommunications."

Meanwhile reports show that Cuba, despite the embargo, is blossoming. Since taking office in 2008, Raul Castro has initiated many reforms. Cuba's private sector has swelled as a direct result of these reforms, and in 2014 was

reported to be about 20 percent of the country's workforce. Cuban figures estimate that the number of self-employed workers nearly tripled between 2009 and 2013.

The fact remains that the US historically viewed Cuba its monopoly. In 1926 U.S. companies owned 60% of the Cuban sugar industry and imported 95% of the total Cuban crop. During the reign of General Fulgencio Batista, who was overthrown by the revolution led by Fidel Castro, American dominance in all sectors exponentially increased so much so that commentators in the 1950s said that the US ambassador to Cuba was the second most powerful man in the country.

The US sugar corporations had controlled the best of Cuba's arable land and subjected to the local people to misery and poverty. When the Cuban revolutionary government nationalised them in the early 60's, President Eisenhower imposed economic sanctions on Cuba. The embargo that remains to this day is a relic of those long by-gone days.

Let's hope that this new chapter in the history of US-Cuban relations signals a deviation of aggressive US foreign policy of imposing wanton embargoes and sanctions to expedite its overbearing and intrusive national interests.



Hospitality: One of Eritrea's Virtues

Meron Abraha

A land of undiscovered treasures, Eritrea has been endowed with a stock of diverse tourism resources. These yet unexplored natural, historical, cultural and archaeological wonders pose great potentials for the country's future in tourism, making it an ideal and fascinating tourist destination.

From the sweltering heat of the Danakil Depression to the cool mountains of the highlands, Eritrea has been deemed as the land of startling contrasts and one of the four great civilizations of early history.

Its nine ethnic groups united as one people offer visitors a hospitality that has to be experienced to be believed and the chance to discover a new dimension in exciting cultural experiences, a glimpse of a different Africa.

One thing that stands out as a distinct Eritrean feature, and one that has earned its people great praise and admiration from visitors, is hospitality.

Giacomo Lombardi is an Italian tourist who came to Eritrea for a 10-day visit and ended up falling in love with the peo-

ple and culture of the country.

When I met him, he had just returned from a three-day excursion to the Dahlak Islands and was completely mesmerized by the experience.

"While on the Dissie Island, I ventured into the inhabited part and was really surprised to find the dwellers all eager to welcome me into their homes," Giacomo said and went on saying that he lived a first-hand experience of what he had heard about Eritrean hospitality before. Seeing is believing indeed!

The Drums of Harmony

Eritreans have long been associated with the great notion of hospitality. When it comes to welcoming guests no other peoples can do it best other than Eritreans. And that radiates pride for us.

Music (traditional) always makes part of the hospitable welcome that each ethnic group accords its guests at any given time. And a common instrument that features in all the groups is the drum.

Whether hung on the shoulders or beaten by hands or sticks on the ground, its beat always emits a distinct message for every occasion --

be it for welcoming guests, launching campaigns or other activities...

During welcoming ceremonies, men sway with their swords while women ululate and dance off their feet to the beats of the drum.

As a guest you find relief and contentment with the warm reception being accorded to you and in no time you are busy exchanging greetings with your fellow country folks.

"Welcome!"

"Thank

you!" "How are you?"

As the drums keep beating the pleasantries follow, enabling you to realize that in spite of our diversity, our unity always prevails. The Eritrean culture!

Generosity

Anywhere in this country, a stranger can knock at a house and his hosts won't hesitate to prepare him a meal worthy for a king. That's the spirit of Eritreans towards welcoming guest to their homes.

Sharing your blessings is and has always been a national value well instilled in the minds of our people. They let you in their homes and offer you all they have, on top of their brotherly love and affection.

Being on a trip you resist the temptation of staying for a longer time and just linger for a while, fascinated by their hospitality. And then you proceed on your way only to find warmer receptions.

Even in the vicinities of the hottest place on Earth, or even in the extreme remote areas, warm hospitality is guaranteed. In every village the residents are very humble and hospitable and they welcome their guests with traditional music and dancing. Even if they don't share the same language as their guests, the language of love and respect brings them even closer.

There and then, you forget your differences and realize your like-

ness. And deep down inside you feel it: that can only be preserved by staying united at all times.

Beauty Never Lasts...

Beauty has its own time and place. The attire you liked, the tattoos you noticed or the appearance you admired... all have their own way of impressing you.

From the smiling Afar woman to the beaming Hidareb gentleman, the internal and external beauty enables you to take pleasure in it. You realize that you want to remain there forever and be in awe of the beauties that seem to have eluded you all this time. One thing is true: your eyes have already had their feasts.

And before you have stopped admiring all the attractiveness around you, you are reminded that you have to depart, yet to find more beauties to marvel at.

You would like to stay on for a little longer but it's just as they say: good things never last long enough...



Tigrigna Cultural Dance



Young Eritrean man playing a traditional Kunama musical instrument, Abangala

OPINION

A Political Hatchet Job Under the Cover of Human Rights



The tone, belittling the very essence of an independent Eritrea, is unmistakable. The underlying purpose, undermining Eritrea's sovereignty, is also clear. Judging by the similarity of the language the minority regime in Ethiopia routinely uses to demonize Eritrea, it looks like the minority regime in Ethiopia has invested a lot in the political hatchet job released on Monday, June 8, 2015 under the guise of a UN Human Rights report on Eritrea.

Anyone who endured reading the 484-page "report" of The Commission of Inquiry (COI) of the UN Human Rights Council will find nothing substantial, but a pile of innuendos gathered from dubious sources using questionable methodology. The information the COI is peddling to the UNHRC is neither factual, nor based on empirical findings and therefore does not reflect the reality in Eritrea. In fact, the findings are so unreal that one feels the members of the Commission of Inquiry, who have never set foot in Eritrea, and who have not had much contact with Eritreans other than few carefully selected refugees with pending asylum cases, are describing a creepy land they have created deep in their fertile imagination. In short, the COI report is nothing but a pack of lies about Eritrea.

Piling "a litany of human rights violations" from testimonies collected from nameless and faceless witnesses and without providing any evidence to verify time and place of the said allegations doesn't make a genuine report. None of what the COI wrote can pass any standard test of verification. From the little we are able to infer most of it is obtained from people who have pending asylum cases, as well as Ethiopian operatives systematically feeding the uninformed and misinformed members of the COI under different guises. For example, all of the witnesses chosen by COI to provide testimony at the Human Rights

Council in Geneva, and testimonies collected from asylum seekers interviewed in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Libya and Switzerland were prepared by dubious individuals and NGOs with long histories of anti-Eritrea campaigning.

This report from the COI is a continuation in a long series of attacks directed at Eritrea's sovereignty and against the rights of the people of Eritrea. While the highest form of a people's right, the right of the Eritrean people to live in peace and security within their own territory, is violated by Ethiopia's occupation of their land, and while the cardinal right of the Eritrean people to defend themselves from a mortal enemy armed to the teeth and financed by major powers is trampled upon by illegal sanctions, to charge an independent, peaceful, harmonious, and self-reliant Eritrea with "crimes against humanity", is not only politically motivated, but shows that it is a part of an evil scheme to derail all the achievements the people of Eritrea have made so far.

Listing the name of all Eritrean urban and semi-urban places with local or regional police stations as prison places, so as to claim the country is a huge prison, shows how disingenuous, dishonest and plain and simple deceptive to say the least, the COI report is. With that standard of listing then Eritrea, as a developing nation has less number of "prisons" than all other nations that have thousands of police stations. Furthermore, denigrating the virtuous culture of the people of Eritrea by falsely claiming that the people spy on their siblings and neighbors is patently false and a non-existent, with a racist undertone implying Eritreans do not care about their children, siblings and neighbors, a basic human trait. As the Norwegian State Secretary in the Ministry of Justice, Jøran Kallemyr, who recently returned to Norway from visiting Eritrea, put it, Eritrea is no North Korea, an anal-

ogy the COI and its sponsors want to throw at Eritrea. It doesn't fit the open and dynamic society in Eritrea.

This latest report, which is no different than the ones we have been reading for the previous years Special Rapporteur's report, also attempts to force some fabricated but sensational "news" pieces down the throat of a gullible world audience. Some of this is regurgitated "information" gathered from some Eritrean runaways and draft dodgers, and Ethiopian officials, whose arrogant stand on the implementation of the "Final and binding" ruling of the Eritrean Ethiopian Border Commission (EEBC) is contributing to the prevailing 'No peace No war' situation by refusing to abide by the rule of law, in the first place. The report would have been okay, even useful, had it been written based on some tangible and verifiable concrete incidents and with the human rights, dignity, safety and development of the Eritrean people in mind. However, lacking credibility, it simply exposes the group's evil mission to politically destabilize Eritrea, the only country that has been regularly described as the "Island of peace" in the politically unstable Horn of Africa and the rest of the "arc of crisis" region.

Eritrea is being vilified through a well-choreographed disinformation campaign, mainly coming out of Ethiopia, but in coordination with the western media outlets that have chosen to echo anti-Eritrea sentiments without verification. The truth is that Eritrea is a country working hard to get itself out of a cycle of dependence that had debilitated a lot of African countries particularly its neighbors. The UN Special Rapporteur on Eritrea and the Commission of Inquiry were established to purportedly ascertain the relevant facts relating to and elucidating a situation of human rights in Eritrea, but the latest report depicts a different picture; it seems both missions

have been transformed instead into a "regime change" agenda.

Amnesty International and Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) played a central role in the appointment of the Special Rapporteur on Eritrea and the establishment of the Commission of Inquiry, and in promoting the anti-Eritrea bias. The appointment of Sheila Keetharuth, who was a member of Amnesty International's East Africa team, which has produced unsubstantiated reports on Eritrea for the last 15 years, and has supported anti-Eritrea campaigns, reinforced this link. CSW openly boasted in 2012 how it is using its North Korea playbook on Eritrea vis-à-vis the Human Rights Council process. It is clear that many fabricated reports published by these anti-Eritrean groups and individuals during this period were meant to provide more ammunition to Keetharuth and her colleagues.

In addition to the one-sided mandate and composition of the UN group one can also see in the individuals and organizations involved in the underhanded screening of the so-called witnesses. Any impartial observer would have serious reservations about the primary and secondary sources chosen in compiling the reports on Eritrea. Ignoring the vast majority of Eritreans in the Diaspora, and instead regurgitating unsubstantiated allegations made by politically motivated individuals and groups, undermines the COI's impartiality and neutrality and therefore renders it suspicious at best.

The COI's report reflects a pre-determined conclusion about the situation in Eritrea and the information gathered was designed to fit this pre-conceived agenda. The information gathered was not gathered independently, was biased and not objective, or even lawful and ethical as it violated the rights of asylum seekers and refugees by de-

luding and coercing them into providing political opinions and statements under difficult situations in Ethiopia, Libya and the Sinai.

In each of these aspects, the Commission of Inquiry has violated the London-Lund guidelines for fact-finding committees, including strict adherence to objectivity, transparency, neutrality, and professionalism.

The lies and distortions in the report are so many it is impossible to rebut in such a short writing; however, here below are brief excerpts from the November 2014 Danish report* on Eritrea to show the extent of the absence of merit in the Commission of Inquiry report:

- "During the stay in Asmara, the delegation was able to watch CNN and BBC at the hotel and at restaurants. The delegation observed many people using smartphones. Internet was available at the delegations hotel, including in the lobby, where many non-residing guests seemed to be using it." This contradicts the allegation that Eritrea is "controlled or silenced" society.
- "Most people who leave Eritrea do so for economic reasons and because of lack of livelihood opportunities and not because of political repression. ... A UN agency in Eritrea confirmed that hardly anyone leaves Eritrea for political reasons." This is in direct contradiction to what the COI tried to insinuate about Eritrea and why some youth are leaving Eritrea for Europe and North America.
- "The Western embassy in Eritrea went on to explain that 'on completion of their higher or further education, they perform National Service in a civilian capacity in a profession linked to their qualification – for example an engineer might work in the Department of

continued on page 6

Local News Continued...**TERAIMNI DAM UNDER RENOVATION**

Teraimni Dam is under renovation following deterioration in water impounding reliability, coupled with sedimentation. The task involves an expenditure of Nfa 5.2 million.

The dam has been in service for the past 30-years. Eng. Tewolde

Beraki, in charge of the renovation task, explained that 30% of the scheme has been finalized.

There are 4 major dams, 9 medium-sized dams, 17 micro-dams and 15 water ponds in Dubarwa sub-zone.

ERITREANS IN COLOGNE TO SET UP A NATIONAL COMMITTEE*Eritreans in Cologne*

Members of Eritrean organizations in Cologne city, Germany, have conducted workshop with a view to setting up a National Committee.

The participants held extensive deliberations on ways and means

of reinforcing their role in State affairs. They particularly reaffirmed determination to exert resolute endeavors as regards portraying Eritrea's correct image.

Similar workshops were also conducted recently in the cities of Frankfurt, Hamburg and Munich.

The State of Eritrea**European Development Fund
National Authorising Officer****Ministry of National Development****PROJECT: Capacity Building for the Public Administration of Eritrea****Contract Title: Supply of Furniture and Fixtures for ERCOE****Publication Reference: EuropeAid 136-990/SUP/ER**

The Government of the State of Eritrea represented by the National Authorising Officer intends to award a supply contract for furniture and Fixtures ERCOE/Eritrea with financial assistance from European Development Fund. The tender dossier is available from:

Eritrean Centre for Organisational Excellence (ERCOE)

Asmara office

Hday Street 748-1

Dembe Sembel –Green Building Block A first floor,

Asmara, Eritrea

Email: natna121@yahoo.com

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and will also be published on the EuropeAid website:

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/online-services/index.cfm?do=publi.welcome>

The deadline for submission of tenders is July 16, 2015 at 18:00 local time.

Possible additional information or clarifications/questions shall be published on the EuropeAid website.

A Political Hatchet Job ...*Continued from page 5*

Public Works, an accountant in a state-owned bank or financial institution. ... People in the National Service are not overworked or working under slave like conditions beaten, subjected to torture or suffering from malnutrition.”This is nature of National Service in Eritrea, not “slave labor”.

- “One Western embassy stated that ‘a broadly shared perception is that the government has eased its approach to National Service. Today it is easier to be released from service and for young people today National Service seems to be limited to a couple of years.’”This is in direct contradiction to the anchor charge of the COI of “indefinite service.”

- “A Western embassy

stated that presently, there are no reports on returning deserters being imprisoned or otherwise severely punished. ‘An International organisation in Eritrea stated that there were no known examples of systematic prosecution of people that had left Eritrea illegally.’”This is also in direct of the disinformation the COI is peddling to the UN Human Rights Council.

In conclusion the hundreds of thousands the Eritrean Diaspora across the globe, fresh out of its celebrations on the occasion of the 24th Anniversary of hard-earned Independence Day, and at a time when it is getting ready, as it annually does every June 20, to honor and remember all those brave sons

and daughters of Eritrea who paid the ultimate price to ensure that the human rights, dignity, safety and development of the Eritrean people is respected, not only totally and unequivocally rejects the IOC’s report on Eritrea as a pack of lies, but warns it is a political Hatchet Job Under the Cover of Human Rights of the minority regime in Ethiopia and all those powers, but primarily the Obama Administration that is enabling Ethiopia to violate the human rights of the people of Eritrea. The Eritrean Diaspora is ready to defend the honor of its people and beloved country with all legal means to counter the fabricated and baseless allegations piled in the COI’s report.

ERITREA in Mainstream Media

An Orchestrated Media Blitz: What Gives?

Sophia Tesfamariam

It would not be an exaggeration to state that has been an orchestrated media campaign accompanying the release of the report on 8 June 2015 by the Commission of Inquiry on Eritrea. Almost immediately after its release, the western media and its tenacled networks produced scathing headlines and “cut and paste” excerpts from the COI report without providing their readers with context or any kind of reasonable analysis. Within an hour, it looked like there were over 100 such reports worldwide. To the average naïve reader, the flurry may have come off looking like some important news alert, but to the astute observers and jaded members of the reading public, it was clear that a media blitz was being orchestrated for some political effect—nothing to do with news, or the truth. The mainstream western media and their tutelage wanted to give the COI report unprecedented “flood-the-zone” coverage. The question is why?

The recent concentration of misleading media about the State of Eritrea and its people has reached a screeching crescendo, nothing new there, the problem is perennial. Eritrea and its leadership have been under constant assault by distorted, contorted, titillating, and insipid headlines for the last 15 years. But the headlines must have “shocked and awed” other readers—that was in fact, its intent.

A number of factors contribute to this troubling pattern of omission and misrepresentation of issues relating to Eritrea, one of them is a persistent case of anti-Eritrea bias, cow towing the official line and tone, and the other is the barrage of misinformation and negative impact of uncritical reliance on claims and allegations proffered by marginal political Eritrean groups and their partners in the international NGOs community with an ax to grind and the unhelpful role played by academics—especially some anthropologists who have made it their forte to denigrate Eritrean and its leadership.

As has been documented in the past, the many of the NGOs, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Voice of the Martyrs and others that influence policy-making have distorted Eritrea’s

nation building strategy and have endeavored to portray Eritrea in a negative light by repeating unsubstantiated and unverifiable. The narratives of these NGOs and their unverified allegations are repeated without independent confirmation and are almost always substituted in place of data provided by official sources—which are summarily dismissed. Despite the problematic nature of these organizations and their anti-Eritrea agendas and claims, the allegations were repeated without independent corroboration, in the latest Commission of Inquiry report, and repeated without independent corroboration by the mainstream media in tow. This orchestrated media blitz was a poor attempt at obscuring the truth about the COI report and its authors.

Grant Cardone, once wrote: **“...I fear the media’s perpetual sensationalizing of bad news more than I do the threat of pandemic flu’s, wars and a faltering economy combined...The media knows that murder, sex, conspiracies, company failures, fear, and scandals sell papers and advertising. They further fuel the fires of chaos and hopelessness as they continue to disseminate the negative with no regard for the effect their reporting has on the public’s emotional and mental state...The media thrives on and depends on bad news for its survival, like a parasite eating away at its organism, sucking hope from entire populations of the people they call viewers. It rotates its coverage from one sensational event to the next until the story wears out, and then it searches for the next fear-provoking story...”**

As Eritreans, we have become accustomed to reading negative and insulting stories in the mainstream media and are not surprised by the latest “blitz”. No doubt a lot of resources have been expended to help give weight to the Commission of Inquiry’s otherwise weak and partisan report, but did it warrant the media explosion witnessed in the last few days? Was the level of negativity and contempt warranted? If we are to search for meaning and intent of such a concerted media effort, we would come up with precious little. That is not to say its intentions weren’t big. While the intense negativity and exaggerated presentations are part of an elaborate 15-year long multi-pronged psychological warfare directed at

Eritrea, there is absolutely no doubt that this particular blitz had a singular intention. To break the morale and spirit of the Eritrean people, especially the strong willed and united Eritrean Diaspora, its undeclared nemesis.

This misguided media frenzy that has ensued as part of the smear campaign waged against the people and the government of Eritrea by the UN Commission of Inquiry, does nothing further the cause of human rights in our world, or in Eritrea, nor does it inform or educate the public on the issues raised by the Commission of Inquiry. The headlines were confusing and contemptuous of the readers, who should have been provided with easy to comprehend analysis on the deluge presented in the 484 page COI report and its 28 page summary. Instead, the media blitz resembled a marketing strategy designed for a defective and bad product. Upon reading the long winded collection of hearsay and innuendo that make up the COI’s report, its flawed methodology and questionable sources, no doubt the readers would soon realize that it was indeed an undesirable product, desperate for coverage. The COI report, despite the media blitz, was

deemed dead on arrival.

The hyperbolic headlines elicited nothing more than a roll of the eyes and a shaking of the heads from the average Eritrean, and an equally perplexed response from non-Eritreans. The recent reports on Eritrea produced by the UN Development Program, which has presence in Eritrea, and the reports presented at the side events at the United Nations in New York a few months back, simply did not jive with what the COI was reporting on Eritrea from its distant quarters.

So what did the media blitz accomplish? For starters, it has reinforced the public’s distrust of the mainstream media and has in fact brought renewed interest in Eritrea and its people and opened up opportunity for greater understanding between the peoples who are chatting and sharing in cyberspace. The cyber spatial forums provide an exchange of views and opinions absent in the agenda setting mainstream media networks. For Eritrea’s enemies, the headlines provided the tonic that sent some on a drunken media stupor. Tomorrow’s headlines and the truth, will provide the antidote, the truth, a cure for all

media related hangovers.

Unfortunately, the mainstream media was hijacked for the dissemination of a blatantly false, unfiltered, and defamatory anti-Eritrea report and the public was left bewildered and aghast. Judging from the many questions received via email and on social media following the release of the report, the average reader is questioning the veracity of the information and wondering why the majority of the Eritreans seem to reject it outright.

From the halls of government, to refugee agencies, to the NGOs networks, to the news media, and the disgruntled members of the Eritrean Quislings League (EQL)—everyone has skin in this game and will do whatever it takes to get under ours.

Not this time... Fool me once, shame on you, fool me twice, shame on me...

In about a couple of weeks the Commission of Inquiry will deliver its Report to the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva, Switzerland. No doubt, there will be another coordinated media blitz following that event. Eritreans know how to respond...





“I have been encouraged to pursue my profession since my childhood”



Seid Brhanu mastered playing the traditional music instrument (Kirar) from the early stages of his childhood. He performed his very first song “Hamde’e” that he presented on the stage was during the NUEW Jubilee celebration, when

he was nothing more but a passionate teenager. That song received wide acclamation by the audience and still it is popular among the youth. Today at the age of 26, Seid Berhanu, is now at the climax of his carrier.

About you

I was born in Godaif in 1989. I was a good student and always loved singing Tigigna oldies. I still remember how in my neighborhood, my friends and I, used to

almost every day sit around older neighbors and hear them play kirar. I was so attracted to it that mastered the instrument in no time.

to release; the melodies of two of the songs are mine.

International performances

Yes! I have been to the Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Australia, Qatar, as well as many European countries. It is always a big source of energy for me to feel accepted by many people. As far I know I have many admirers that always encourage me to do more.

Future plans

I believe I still have a long way to go. I am still young and have so much to learn. I am looking forward to develop my profession and become one of the renowned artists Eritrea has produced.

Good luck!

Thank you very much!

“I have been able to assess my talent through the films I direct”

Awat Seyum was born in 1975 in Asmara. He is known for his directing skills proven in many films out of which some have been nominated for different National Awards and even REMmy Award. Currently he is in Switzerland taking training in directing.

Early passion

I had been acquainted with filming at an early age. There was a Zenith camera in our house that belonged to my grandfather. With that camera I took countless photographs every single chance I got. That was the beginning for me: for my passion and desire of working with cameras.

Professional directing

In 2005 I took six months training on the usage camera. I soon after started working at the Eritrean Video Service, and before I even realized it I stayed there for about six years. And with that I got the opportunity to develop my profession. The first movie I filmed was

the “Newih Ketsri” (the long wall) written by Rev. Teame. I realized then the big difference between a film director and camera director: a film director is one that changes a written script into action, whereas the camera director documents the action through camera as it is while following the instructions of the film director. So, I decided to stick to my childhood plan and so far I’ve filmed, as a camera director, up to 12 films.

Favorite one

I think I like the most the film “Aklasia” written and directed by Daniel Tesfamariam that received a REMmy Award. It actually stood first to receive the award contending more than 3500 movies from throughout the world. The other motion picture that I keep in mind is “Tigisti” produced by Biniam Fesehatsion and directed by Daniel Tesfamariam. This one also received a gold medal at the REMmy Awards.

Future plans

My colleagues from three different countries and I, are currently collaborating in the production of a new film. 50% of the filming is already over.

Best of luck!

Thank you very much!

