

MESSAGES OF CONGRATULATIONS



President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey, President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of Egypt, President Zoran Milanovic of the Republic of Croatia, Crown Prince Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah of the State of Kuwait, President Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera of the Republic of Malawi, President Marcelo Robelo de Sousa of Portugal, President Patrice Talon of the Republic of Benin, as well as King Salman bin Abdulaziz of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia sent messages of congratulations in connection with the 31st

Independence Day anniversary.

In their messages, the Leaders and Heads of State wished good health to President Isaias Afwerki and peace and prosperity to the Eritrean people.

In his message, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan expressed his firm belief that bilateral relations between Turkey and Eritrea will be further strengthened in all aspects through mutual efforts of both countries.

President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi on his part expressed readiness to develop mutual friendship and cooperation for the benefit of the peoples of the two countries and the region.

All leaders also expressed readiness and willingness of their respective countries to strengthen relations and cooperation with Eritrea.

INDEPENDENCE DAY SEMINARS

Seminars in connection with the 31st Independence Day anniversary are being given to youth workers in the port city of Massawa.

The topics of the seminars include the history and contribution of the Eritrean Naval Force, Marine Resources of Eritrea, intangible cultural heritage, as well as contribution of the EPLF before and after independence.

The seminars are being given by members of the Eritrean Naval Force, the Ministry of Marine Resources, and office of culture and sports of the PFDJ in the Northern Red Sea region.

The seminars that started on 16 May will continue until 23 May.

NATIONAL UNION OF ERITREAN WOMEN EXHIBITION

Foreign Minister Osman Saleh opened an exhibition yesterday, 20 May, organized by the National Union of Eritrean Women in connection with the 31st Independence Day anniversary celebrations.

Noting that the exhibition staged at the premises of the central office of the union is part of the Independence Day celebrations, Ms. Senait Mehari, Head of Socio-economic Affairs of the Union, said that the exhibition was prepared by women who were provided one year training on weaving.

The exhibition will stay open until 21 May.



PREPARATIONS TO CELEBRATE INDEPENDENCE DAY ANNIVERSARY

Ambassador Zemed Tekle, Commissioner of Culture and Sports, indicated that preparations to celebrate the 31st anniversary of Independence Day inside the country and abroad has been finalized.

Pointing out that this year's Independence Day celebration is being conducted under the theme "Independent Choice-Backbone of Our Pride", Ambassador Zemed said that the every year Independence Day celebration, 24 May, is a day in which we pledge commitment and readiness to effectively implement the national development programs.

Ambassador Zemed went on to say that the 31st anniversary of Independence Day celebration will start on 21 May with various cultural and artistic programs in Asmara Cinema Halls and the official ceremony will be held at Asmara Stadium and will be broadcast live by Eri-TV.

Similarly, preparations to celebrate the 31st anniversary of Independence Day have been finalized in Gash Barka, Southern Red Sea and Southern Regions.

Noting that preparations for the Independence Day celebrations started in April, Mr. Idris Saleh, Director General of Culture and Sports in the Gash Barka region, said that the celebration will include artistic and cultural programs depicting the lifestyle and traditions of the people in the region.

Mr. Idris also said that already environmental sanitation popular campaigns are being conducted in various parts of the region in connection with the event.

Moreover, the Director General of Culture and Sports in the Southern

Red Sea Region, Ms. Hawa Mohammed, said that preparations to celebrate the 31st anniversary

anniversary have also been finalized in the Southern Region.

Head of the National Holidays



of Independence Day has been finalized.

Ms. Hawa noted that so far sports and educational activities are being conducted in the port city of Assab as well as in other semi-urban centers in the region. At regional level, the Independence Day celebration will be held in the port city of Assab from 23 to 26 May featuring cultural and artistic programs.

Similarly, preparations to celebrate the 31st Independence Day

Coordinating Committee in the region, Mr. Girmay Gebru, said that the Independence Day anniversary celebration will be conducted at regional level at Mendefera Stadium on 22 May featuring cultural and artistic performances as well as calisthenics show in which 400 students will participate.

Mr. Girmay went on to say that the official celebration of the Independence Day commenced in the region on 16 May with the lighting of the Independence Torch at the Dekemhare Front.

NATIONALS IN GERMANY CELEBRATE INDEPENDENCE DAY ANNIVERSARY

Eritrean nationals residing in the German city of Karlsruhe celebrated the 31st Independence Day anniversary with patriotic zeal under the theme "Independent Choice-Backbone of Our Pride".

The celebratory event was highlighted by cultural and artistic performances.

According to report, the Independence Day celebration was conducted virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic and in this year 150 nationals participated in person in the celebration.

Indicating that Eritrea's Independence was realized and safeguarded by heavy sacrifice of its citizens, Mr. Tekle Fisshaye, chairman of the national committee in Karlsruhe, said that celebrating Independence Day has strong meaning and flavor.

Mr. Tekle also congratulated the Eritrean people inside the country and abroad.

Independent Choice-Backbone of our Pride

Statement by National Council of Eritrean Americans (NCEA)

On behalf of a terrorist Ethiopian group Congressman should stop dragging the US into another intervention in Africa

The Council of Eritrean Americans (NCEA) strongly condemns California's 30th congressional district Representative Brad Sherman's unfounded accusations and smear campaign against Eritrea. His misrepresentation and distortion of facts unfolding in Ethiopia and the Greater Horn of Africa is deplorable, to say the least. He has repeatedly been calling for US military intervention in the Horn of Africa on behalf of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), a group declared terrorist by the Ethiopian parliament. To give the TPLF an upper hand in the regional conflict, Sherman has chosen to recklessly target Eritrea. Here are some of his comments from the US House of Representatives hearings in the past six months:

- May 17, 2022 "the Eritrean government let's nothing in. ... two [Ethiopian & Eritrean] governments are deliberately starving hundreds of thousands of civilians to death. ... I suggested to pressure the Eritrean government which has the ports that could be used particularly by interrupting sea traffic."

- December 2, 2021: "... Maybe somewhere in the high seas, a ship bound for [Eritrea] may be asked to turn around by a U.S. Naval ship? The fact that

Eritrea would use its military to intervene in order to commit a genocide on the Tigrayan people and what's obvious to all is to blockade a starving people, ... To say that Eritrea should be able to carry out open trade with all the countries in the world while participating in this genocide in blockading those that are dying of starvation strikes me as unfair."

- October 10, 2021: "...The American navy could interrupt Eritrea's commerce on the high seas at any time and it would be just to do so; as long as Eritrea blockades humanitarian aid to the people of Tigray..."

Representative Sherman's statements are not grounded in fact. It is a matter of record that Eritrea had never used and didn't it ever believe in using food as a weapon of war even at the bleakest point in its thirty-year struggle for independence:

1. After liberating the port of Massawa in 1990, Eritrea was magnanimous enough to allow food aid to pass through its liberated areas to northern Ethiopia that were under the total control of the Ethiopian military regime.

2. Eritrea is also known for its humane treatment of over a hundred thousand Ethiopian POWs when the International Society of the Red Cross, for fear of offending the brutal communist Government of Ethiopia at the time, had refused to acknowledge their existence. Not only did the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) that is now the Government of Eritrea, took care of POWs taking away food and medicine from the little its own freedom fighters had, it chose to provide them with classroom education in its liberated areas taking away from its meager resources.

3. When Tigrean-dominated Ethiopia declared war on Eritrea in May of 1998, out of ill will, the TPLF regime chose to boycott Eritrean ports and in its zero-sum mentality, its late prime minister, Meles Zenawi, boasted that their boycott of Eritrean ports was intended to turn them into "waterholes for camels." Ever since Ethiopia hasn't used Eritrean ports which is twenty-four years ago this May.

4. When the TPLF-led Ethiopian government deported

nearly 100,000 Ethiopians of Eritrean origin, in what legal experts of international and humanitarian law called ethnic cleansing, Eritrea didn't choose to retaliate in kind. Eritrea's response what that, "conflicts come and go but neighborliness is forever, and Ethiopians should feel free to live in Eritrea and no one should disturb them." At the same time, unlike the disturbing hatemongering that has been continuously coming out of TPLF leaders' mouths for nearly twenty-five years, there has not been a single message of hate coming out of Eritrea. This is a fact anyone can check.

5. In 2002, when the current TPLF leaders were in control of Ethiopia, and when nearly 14 million Ethiopians were "facing food shortages due to a prolonged drought in the region," Eritrea "announced it will allow the use of its Red Sea ports of Massawa and Assab for the delivery of emergency food aid to Ethiopia." Eritrea "conscious of its humanitarian obligations in the midst of a humanitarian crisis of huge proportions and because it has no desire to penalize destitute populations in Ethiopia for the wrongs done by their government" had expressed "its goodwill to facilitate the international effort to assist the famine victims in Ethiopia by providing the services of its ports for expeditious delivery of humanitarian assistance." True to their nature TPLF leaders rejected Eritrea's humanitarian offer of allowing food aid through Eritrean ports.

6. Eritrea's legacy of humanitarian compassion is still continuous; as was it was publicly stated through its Embassy in Washington, DC on December 3, 2021, Eritrea stated that: "To set the record straight, Eritrea has never blocked humanitarian aid, nor has it become a hindrance to the flow of humanitarian aid into Ethiopia. The supply routes in operation have nothing to do with Eritrea. But more pointedly as a matter of conviction, Eritrea firmly upholds the fundamental principle on the obligation of all States to ensure the provision and facilitation of humanitarian aid to needy populations in times of natural or man-made calamities and irrespective of the prevailing political/conflict situations." At the time, Brad Sherman had confirmed, through his Twitter response, Eritrea's offer, and

he knows well no one has approached Eritrea about using its ports for food aid.

7. Brad Sherman also knows well that TPLF leaders rather see the Tigrayan people starve to death rather than see Eritrea's ports being used for humanitarian access to help the poor people of Tigray. Yes, such is the zero-sum mentality of the TPLF. That's why TPLF commandeered thousands of WFP food aid trucks for its war efforts rather than sending them back to bring more food aid for the needy. Sean Jones of USAID Ethiopia is also on the record saying: "The TPLF, every town they have gone into they have looted the warehouses, looted the trucks, they have caused a great deal of destruction of the villages they visited, and it's of great concern for humanitarians. Humanitarians have fled for their lives. I do believe that TPLF has been very opportunistic. Maybe they have been stealing from citizens, we don't have proof of this of course. What we do have proof of is that several of our warehouses have been looted and completely emptied in the areas, particularly Amhara, where the TPLF soldiers have gone into. Yes, we know that that is a fact."

Did Representative Sherman, or Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, or US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield, or USAID czar Samantha Powers, condemn these egregious and appalling TPLF crimes? Not at all, not even a word.

This means, regrettably, Representative Brad Sherman by blaming Eritrea is barking up the wrong tree. He is accusing Eritrea of acts it has never been part of. His repeated statements from the US House of Representatives Hearings are not designed to help the people of Tigray, but in his own words: "to ask and have them [Eritreans] say 'no, we would like to have blood in our hands, we want to see as many Tigrayans as possible die from famine; we will not allow our ports to be used.' Just to put it on the record."

The people of Tigray are not in need of people like Sherman who shed insincere tears but in need of good and genuine people who could help them bring about peace; living in peace with their neighbors is what the people of Tigray have been yearning for

the half a century they have been under the TPLF's firm grip.

We also don't think Mr. Sherman cares about asking how much of the food aid that is getting to Tigray is reaching those in need. Had he asked he will find out that the TPLF commandeering food and medicine and possibly armed with weapons smuggled under the cover of humanitarian aid, is again beating war drums. To this end TPLF leaders are forcing every Tigrayan household to contribute one more child to the 3rd round of war it is preparing to launch any time now. These leaders are shouting war chants while their children are living in luxury in the USA thanks to the billions they stole from the Ethiopian people and the identities they stole from Eritrean refugees. As if the more than 300,000 soldiers, many of them underage children, that the TPLF acknowledged of losing in the two wars it waged against the central government of Ethiopia is not enough, it is once more now boasting that it is ready to go to war to breakup Ethiopia and annex Eritrea as part of its "Republic of Tigray" agenda. So it is neither the Eritrean government nor the Ethiopian government starving Tigrayans but the TPLF.

We thus urge Mr. Sherman to be sober, act responsibly as a legislator, and refrain from further straining US-Eritrea relations by punishing Eritrea on trumped-up charges that is coming out of the terrorist TPLF camp and its lobbyists wanting to drag America into another unjustified intervention. Instead, we urge him to call upon his TPLF terrorist friends to stop the war, disavow their ambition to declare "The Greater Republic of Tigray" that it openly stated is designed to incorporate historical territories of their Amhara and Afar neighbors in Ethiopia, and across an international boundary incorporating sovereign Eritrean territories.

Finally, Mr. Brad Sherman should also stop accusing Eritrea of committing "genocide" without an iota of evidence. If he cares for human lives, he should publicly acknowledge and condemn what TPLF did in the Humera, Afar, and Amhara regions it tried to occupy.

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Independent Choice - Backbone of our Pride



Simon Woldemichael

On 24th May Eritrea celebrates its birthday, a date that binds Eritreans together with a shared national pride. Independence Day is the most venerated national holiday Eritreans, inside and outside of the country, celebrate in unison.

Eritrea's political and military campaign for independence was one of Africa's longest struggles for independence and one of the world's most protracted campaigns for self-determination since the founding of the United Nations. Eritreans made great sacrifices to determine the future of their country as free people. The long war of liberation has given the country the audacity to face the daunting challenges that came with independence.

Eritreans use Independence Day celebration as an occasion to pay tribute to the brave heroes and heroines of Eritrea. The celebration of Independence Day is also an occasion to rededicate ourselves and renew our commitment to work for the national interest of Eritrea.

Eritreans had conducted an exceptionally long and complex struggle for independence and self-determination that have shaped the national pride, national identity and destiny of the country. National pride and independence served as a source of motivation and determination throughout the half century political and armed struggle.

The theme of the 31st Independence Day, "Independent choice -- backbone of our pride," is very telling about the Eritrean experience. 'Independent choice' is visible in many aspects of the Eritrean life. At individual and collective levels, Eritreans are guided by the principles of self-reliance and self-sufficiency. They are known for their preference to chart their own paths. Before and after independence,

Eritrea has made historically significant decisions that show its determination to follow an independent political line. Following Eritrea's liberation in 1991, the government vowed to build a country based on its principle of self-reliance.

The government reaffirmed its commitment to pursue an independent political line while critically examining the experiences of other countries and relating them with the realities and experiences of the Eritrean society. The audacity of the government to undertake an independent choice makes Eritrea stand as a confident and independent sovereign member of the international community.

Eritrea's history, to a great extent, affects the pervasive feeling of national pride among its citizens. The nation's successes, such as winning the armed struggle for independence (1961-1991), successful resistance against the Western backed TPLF aggression aimed at undoing the hard-won independence and the achievements in various fields, including education, health, sports, and arts are just few examples. The national pride of Eritreans has resulted from the multiple social and historical processes of past and current national achievements.

Independent choice, among many other factors, has contributed to the shaping of the national pride of Eritrea. National pride can generally be defined as a sense of esteem that a person has for one's nation and the pride or self-esteem that a person derives from one's national identity. The celebration of Independence Day is an expression of the strong feeling of patriotism and nationalism of Eritreans.

Eritreans have never accepted any form of colonization, which Sheik Ibrahim Sultan made known



to the international community in 1950 at the United Nations. Sheikh Ibrahim said: "If a wrong decision is taken forcing us to

people of Eritrea. The oppression of the Eritrean people by Western and Eastern backed Ethiopian expansionist regimes remains

and for its effective leadership in promoting the policy of "Unity in Diversity."

Thanks to Eritrea's leadership that Eritrea is a united country that has used its diversities as its strength. Eritrea is a country in which the nine ethnic groups, center and periphery, men and women are equally touched by progress and development. Although problems associated with development exist in various forms, the country has managed to lay the foundation for its citizens to live a life of dignity, self-respect and hope, where every citizen feels proud to say - I am Eritrean.

The vision of Eritrea is one the gifts of the thirty-year struggle for independence. The generation that brought about independence has stated its vision in the National Charter of Eritrea: "We must pass on to our children a country that is free from war and conflict, a country of which they can be proud, a country in which independence, peace and prosperity prevail."

Over the past 31 years, Eritrea has demonstrated its commitment to translate the vision into reality by making independent choices. An independent choice fosters Eritrea's ability to be self-reliant and do what is necessary to create fulfilling lives. Any attempt to force Eritrea to submit by military and other means is only wishful thinking. Great powers that remain guilty of denying Eritreans the right to self-determination must leave Eritrea alone to chart its own path and walk freely. Long live Eritrea's Independence achieved through Great Struggle and Sacrifice!



struggle to safeguard our identity and obtain our independence, then the members of this Committee will shoulder the responsibility for the hostilities that arise in East Africa."

Great powers have inflicted untold suffering and pain on the

fresh in the memory of the people. But Eritreans are proud of the fact that these outrages triggered resistance that later brought about independence. In the same vein, they are also proud of the achievement of the Peoples' Front and its capacity to safeguard the national interest of the country





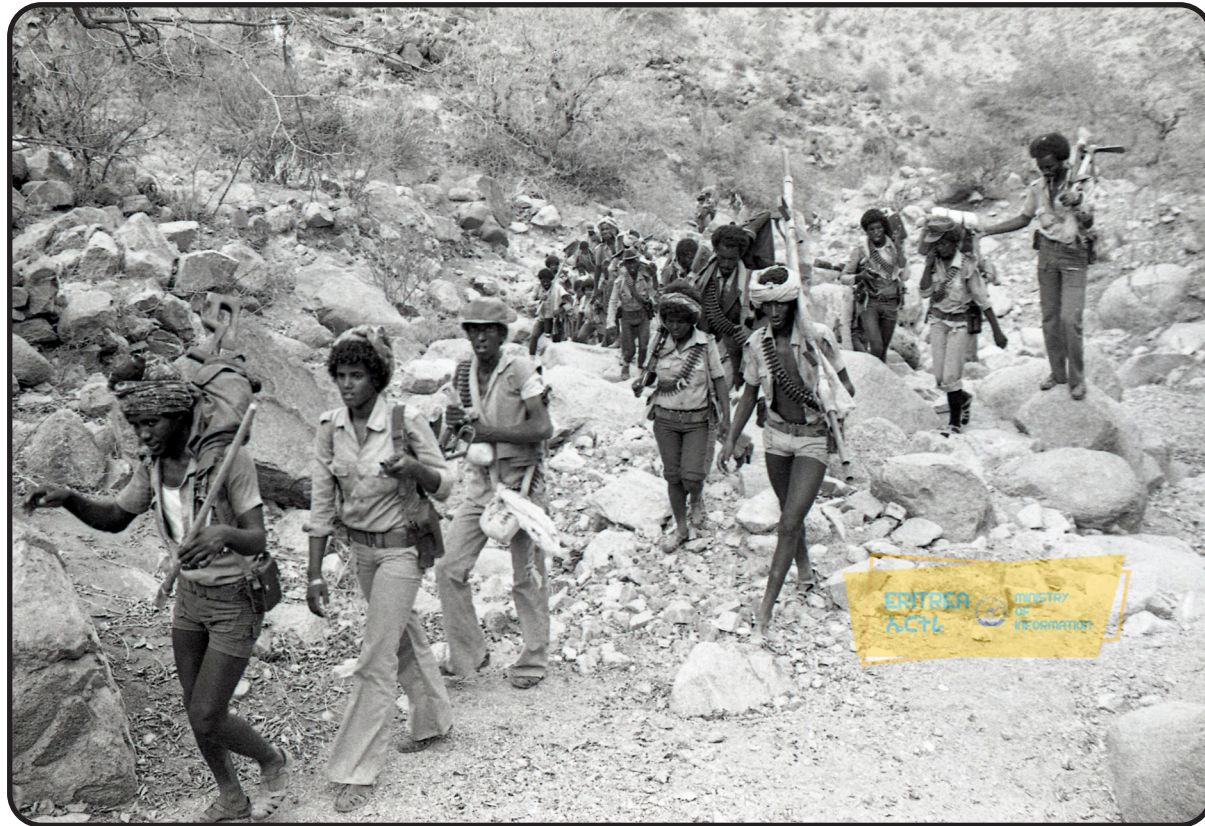
'Enday Aytihetu'!



Milka Teklom

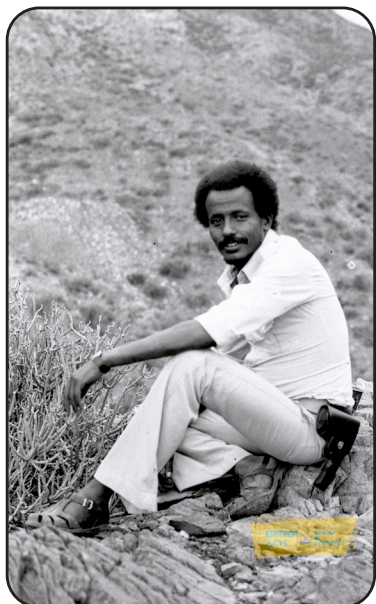
I have recently heard Enday Aytihetu, a song I used to hear on Shewit when I was a kid. Shewit was a television program for kids that was aired on Eri-TV in the early 2000s. It was directed by the late artist, Isaias Tsegay, a well-known writer and film director. The program was very entertaining and educating.

The song, Enday Aytihetu, is sung by two young boys and a young girl. Representing Eritreans, the girl gives answers to the question the two boys ask her about her identity. The girl responds by telling the boys that she is the daughter of Eritrea's



in the lyrics. I will write here briefly about some of them.

One of the heroes mentioned in the song is Ibrahim Afa. Ibrahim Afa was born in Massawa. His friends described him as funny and outgoing. He was a member of the Ethiopian navy and very much aware of the oppression Eritreans were experiencing. He witnessed every day that Eritrean workers were treated as second class citizens in their own land. He left his job and joined the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) in 1967.



Ali Ibrahim

Ibrahim was not happy by the way the ELF was administered and was one of the fighters who decided it was time for change, but his open criticism was not acceptable by the ELF leaders. Along with some of his comrades he fled to Sudan, and he got back to Eritrea through a difficult route.

The group was soon joined

with the other groups that split from the ELF to form the EPLF

When he was in the ELF he was sent to Cuba for military training. His knowledge about military strategies and his experience have made him a prominent leader in the EPLF. His role is said to have been crucial in designing the strategies of liberating seven major towns in 1977.

The other hero mentioned in the song is Berhe Kidane, aka Xaeda. Berhane was born in Tserona and was a herdsman. His fellow fighters describe him as outspoken and intolerant to lies and injustice. He was a courage and tactical fighter. He is known for leading the battalion that liberated the town of Nakfa. The fight to liberate Nakfa lasted six months, and after several failed attempts by other EPLF units it was Berhane's battalion that was finally able to capture the town. Once liberated in 1976, Nakfa was never ever controlled by Ethiopian forces despite their many attempts to recapture it.

Weldeab WeldeMariam is mentioned in the song several times. I was astonished by the number of assassination attempts he had to endure. An attempt on your life once is supposed to scare you and cause you to run for your life. But that's not what our hero, Weldab WeledeMariam, did. He firmly stayed his ground and continued to struggle in Asmara. He wrote on Hanti Eritrea newspaper demanding independence for Eritrea. He

worked day and night to raise the political awareness of the people by focusing on the young.

Weldeab never pressed charges against the assassins, dismissing them as distractions, and his main intention was to mobilize people that would lead Eritrea when it gets its liberation. He did not hold any grudge against the assassins saying they were brainwashed and had not realized the significance of free Eritrea. Woldeab WeledeMariam finally sought refuge in Egypt only after surviving seven attempts on his

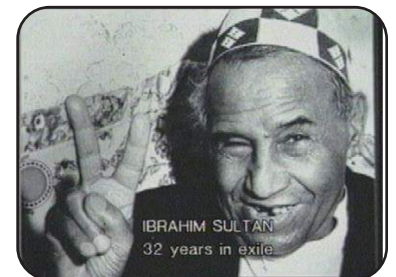


Ibrahim Afa

life.

On Hanti Eritrea newspaper issued in 1944 Woldeab wrote these words, which I believe describe the true meaning of patriotism. He wrote: "A human being doesn't belong only to the household he was born into; he doesn't belong only to the family that gave him his name; he is bound to experience and belong to a bigger house which is the country. He has bigger families and friends who are his countrymen." His words will always inspire generations of Eritreans to come.

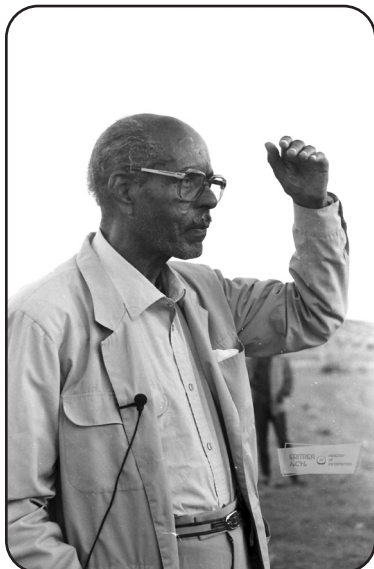
The song, Enday Aytihetu,



Ibrahim Sultan

ends by presenting the singer, representing all Eritreans, as the daughter of the courageous Eritrean heroes: the daughter of Ibrahim Afa; descendant of Berhe Kidane, the lord of Nakfa front; an offspring of Ibrahim Sultan, the symbol of unity; the child of Weldeab, an advocate of patriotism; and the seed of Awate, the pioneer of the armed struggle.

Indeed, Eritreans are daughters and sons of all Eritrean heroes who have left their footprint on the Eritrean history that gave birth to the liberation of the country.



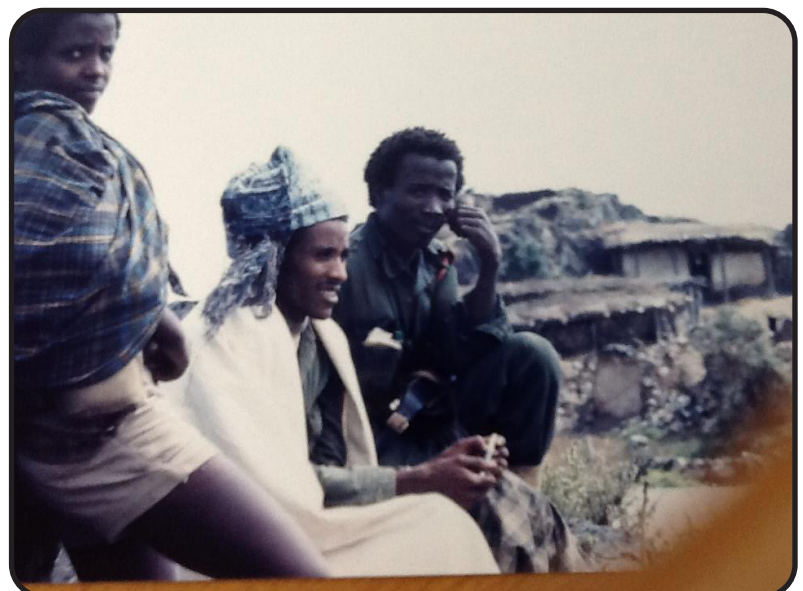
Weldeab WeldeMariam

heroes and mentions historic figures, their heroic deeds and contributions to Eritrea's Independence, which we are celebrating in a few days.

When I was reliving the song as a grown up, I realized I didn't know as much as I should about the heroes mentioned in the song. I decided to find out more about them and why they are mentioned



Berhe Kidane



SpotLight

Eritrea's Agricultural Sector: A journey of 31 years in Brief

Q: Let's start with the statistics of potential land for Agriculture and currently cultivated area.

A: Generally, it is estimated that Eritrea possesses around 2.1 million hectares of potential land for rain-fed agriculture and around 600,000 hectares for irrigation. According to 2021 Ministry reports, around 500,000 hectares of land are cultivated, out of which 93% is under modified rain-fed farming (cultivated with on-farm soil and water conservation measures).

And the rest 7% is irrigated. The cultivable land is kept as such because the focus is more on intensification rather than expansion.

Q: What is the sector's development strategy to fully address the country's potential?

A: The Agricultural development strategy mainly focuses on the following areas: conservation and development of natural resources; expanding irrigated and supplementary irrigated agriculture; constructing dams and ponds of different sizes; increasing agricultural productivity through crop/ livestock intensification and integration, introducing appropriate production technologies and inputs such as improved seeds, fertilizers (bio-fertilizer), pesticides (biopesticides), mechanization, etc. Moreover, the Ministry has got a clear strategy to promote agro-processing and efficient post-harvest management, and establish an effective Research and Extension systems, among others.

Q: Having these strategies at hand, what are the opportunities and challenges of the agricultural sector?

A: The sector has got a lot of opportunities like a committed and hardworking farming community, availability of diversified agro-ecological zones which enable farmers to grow diversified crops, existing of enormous plant and animal genetic resources, and the existence of agricultural colleges and Technical/Vocational training centers, high acceptance of research outputs by farmers as well as the availability of regional and international partners. And when it comes to the challenges, the country's low and erratic rainfall, and land degradation are the major ones. Low usage of required agricultural inputs, inadequate technical skills, and not fully developed institutional capacity are also among the major constraints of the agricultural sector.

Q: What are the major achievements of the sector in the past years of independence? Let's start with agricultural resources management.

A: As I mentioned it earlier, Eritrea receives low and erratic annual rainfall. This situation is also aggravated by land degradation caused by the country's rugged terrains and tree cutting for different purposes. For this reason, the Government and the people of the State of Eritrea have been involved in different on-farm and off-farm soil and water conservation activities, afforestation programs as well as the construction of different sized water-holding structures. One of the major achievements over the past 31 years

Eritrea is celebrating its 31st independence anniversary. In connection with this event, an interview has been conducted with Mr. Bereket Tsehaye, Director of Planning and Statistics Division at the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) on major achievements of the Agricultural sector throughout those years.

is the substantial increase in the number of different-sized dams and ponds. At independence, there were only 138 ponds and dams throughout the country. Currently, the figure has reached 785. Thanks to this progress, the total area of irrigated land for vegetables and fruits has increased dramatically. Ministry reports indicate that a total of 257,000 hectares of land has been treated with different kinds of structures and around 4.5 million cubic meters of check-dams constructed by different popular campaigns since 1991.

To minimize tree cutting and health hazards, an improved traditional stove was designed by the Ministry of Energy and Mines, and has been disseminated by the Ministry of Agriculture. Since 1998, around 170,000 of these stoves have been installed all over the country, mainly in rural areas.

Q: What are the major achievements in cereal production?

A: During the first years of independence, cereal production and productivity were at their lowest stage due to a number of reasons. The unavailability of improved seeds accounted as one of the major hindrances in this sub-sector. For this reason, the National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI), since its establishment in 1994, has conducted many trials seeking to develop and distribute crop varieties which are resistant to drought, resilient against disease, and high-yielding. As of yet, the institute has conducted trials and released 45 crop varieties (16 varieties of wheat, 10 varieties of sorghum, 7 varieties of barley, 6 varieties of pear millet, 3 varieties of maize, 2 varieties of legume, and 1 variety of oilseed). For most crops,

these improved seed varieties along with other agronomic practices and inputs have increased productivity by at least twofold.

Q: How does the proportion of cereal crops look like in terms of their proportion?

A: According to the five years strategic plan of the Ministry, the goal is to cultivate cereal crops in the following ratio: cereals (50%), pulses (25%) and oil crops (25%). Currently, the proportion of these crops has reached 87%, 9%, and 4% respectively, and the Ministry is making considerable efforts to speed up reaching the goal as soon as possible. For instance, there is a plan to upscale rapeseed (an important oil crop) cultivation up to 1000 hectares just in the coming season.

Q: Let's pass to the horticultural production

A: Thanks to the considerable efforts made in the construction of dams and ponds; provision of agricultural inputs which include improved varieties and effective extension services; the number of farmers who were engaged in the production of fruits and vegetables on a semi-commercial basis increased from around 1500 to more than 11,500. As a result, since 1991, the total horticultural area has increased by 4 times. When it comes to production, the total production of fruits increased by 71 times, and that of vegetables by almost 6 times.

In this sub-sector, one of the notable achievements has been the tangible improvement in potato production. More than 70 varieties of potato were imported for adaptability trials. Out of these, the most successful varieties were distributed

to farmers. Currently, Eritrea has secured adequate potato seed all year round and started growing potatoes even in the lowlands. Taking its high nutritive value into consideration, the production of sweet potatoes is also among the priorities of the Ministry. The country is also trying to exploit the potential of date palm cultivation. So far, around 21,000 date palm trees have been planted mainly in the Northern and Southern Red-sea regions. The Ministry's plan is to reach 200,000 date palm plants by 2026.

Q: Livestock production is also considered one of the potential areas of the country. Could you tell us about the progress in this sub-sector?

A: When we talk about promoting livestock production, there are three main issues that need to be addressed: health, feed, and breeding.

If we start with the animal health aspect, at independence, one of the pressing challenges for farmers was livestock mortality. Starting from Rinderpest eradication in 1997 (though officially certified in 2005); the Government of Eritrea expanded its programs to offer a regular and annual free and compulsory vaccination program for major animal and zoonotic diseases. Since 2013, an average of 2.5 million livestock have been vaccinated annually, and as a result livestock disease and mortality are currently very low.



Mr. Bereket-Tsehaye



Continued on page 6



Congratulation

**Red Sea Bottlers Sh. Co. Coca - Cola
Congratulates the People & Government of Eritrea
on the 31th Anniversary of Eritrean Independence
Day.**

Red Sea Bottlers Sh.Co. Coca - Cola

Eritrea's Agricultural Sector . . .

Continued from page 5

With regards to breeding, the Ministry has taken a number of initiatives to improve livestock breeds; mainly the dairy cattle. Currently, artificial insemination (AI) in dairy cattle and horses is registering satisfactory progress. Moreover, commendable efforts are undertaken to improve swine and poultry breeds. The Ministry is also promoting bull selection in every village to improve cattle breeds throughout the country.

The other issue is animal feed. Even though considerable efforts have been exerted to promote livestock feed and nutrition, these issues remain among the bottlenecks in this sub-sector. However, the Ministry is promoting green feed through various programs such as forage development and seasonal grass collection, as well as securing contingency animal feed during droughts, and hope to get this problem behind us in the next cycle of our 5-year strategic plan.

Q: How is the poultry sub-sector contributing to improving rural livelihoods and nutrition?

A: Reports indicate that poultry production, prior to independence, was mainly restricted to local

chicken rearing by rural households. Over the past 30 years, the MoA in collaboration with some semi-commercial farmers distributed over 6 million chicks. Most of the chicks were locally reproduced in the newly constructed hatcheries and some of them were imported. Since the distribution of chicks has become part of the Ministry's Minimum Integrated Household Agricultural Package (MIHAP) – a strategy for small-holder farmers, it is contributing a lot to improving the livelihoods of many rural people, mainly the female headed-households. Many of Eritrea's communities which were never involved in poultry production before independence, are now acquainted with this business and are supplying chicken and eggs to the market even in urban areas. In 2020-2021 the Ministry distributed one million chicks to 40,000 households at a rate of 25 chicks per household. There is a plan to increase this number to 1.5 million to 60,000 households.

Q: Is there any significant development in the beekeeping sub-sector?

The number of bee farmers, bee colonies, and honey production has increased significantly over the years. However, the only way we can fully exploit the potential of this sub-sector is by empowering every rural

family to have one or two hives and especially the top-bar hive which can be made with local materials but that can still produce, at least, twice that of the local hive.

Q: What are the future prospects of the agricultural sector with regards to food and nutrition security?

A: Until 2013, Eritrea, like other countries, was striving toward food security – a phenomenon that mainly focuses on promoting cereal or grain production. Starting in 2013, the world started to talk about 'food and nutrition security. In the same year, the Ministry of Agriculture developed an integrated and nutrition-sensitive development strategy known as the Minimum Integrated Household Agricultural Package or MIHAP. The package incorporates, among other components; a dairy cow or sheep or goats; frame and top-bar hives; crop, fruit, and vegetable production, and improved traditional stoves. As part of the nutrition-sensitive agriculture, the Ministry has also conducted various awareness-raising programs on value addition as well as improving the production and feeding habits of farming communities.

To upscale small-holder farmers into small and medium commercial farmers, the Ministry has also



designed a clear strategy (the small and medium commercial farmers' strategy (SMCFS) and is making the necessary preparations for its implementation.

Moreover, the Government of Eritrea has initiated a number of relatively big agricultural development projects that include the construction of strategic dams, intensive horticultural production, dairy production, agro-processing, cold stores, and so on.

By 2021, the Ministry of Agriculture leaped from 'food and nutrition security into 'safe and nutritious food security. For that matter, the Ministry in partnership with the Ministry of Marine Resources launched a safe production and distribution of bio-fertilizers and bio-pesticides.

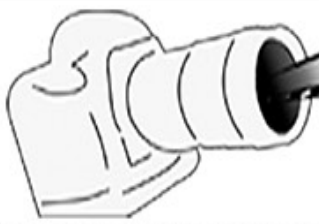
Q: How do you evaluate the role of development partners in improving the sector during the past 31 years?

A: As I mentioned earlier the availability of many regional and international development partners is one of the opportunities for the sector. Therefore, their constructive engagement with the government and their role in the aforementioned achievements are highly appreciated.

Q: If you have the final words to say?

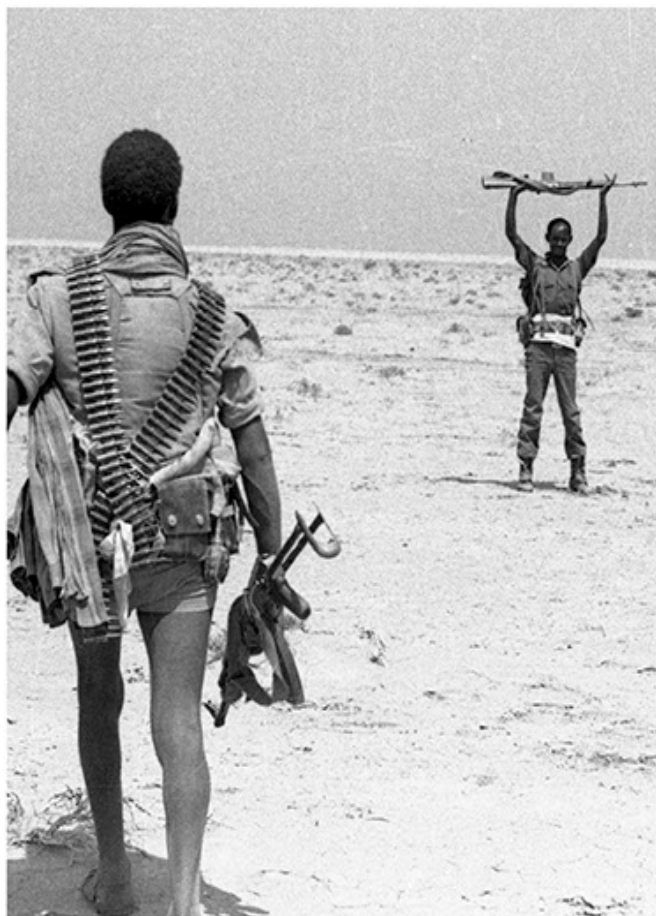
A: It is to be noted that the Ministry of Agriculture has outlined 17 important priority areas (most of which are addressed in this interview), and has printed and made them available to all experts up to the village level. Hence, in the name of my Ministry, I urge all experts to instill these priority areas in the minds of the farming community so that the country can achieve its immediate goal of achieving safe and nutritious food security.

*Public Relations Division
Ministry of Agriculture
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Designer: Taezaz Abraha
Photos: Archives

Independent Choice-Backbone of our Pride





If There is a Will, There is Always a Way

Mussie Efriem

He is an ardent young cartoonist, custom shoe and T-shirt designer, animator and comic book writer. He has currently joined a group of youngsters of similar skills who formed a group called 'Hlim creative art work.' Accordingly, he has been playing his part on the growth of caricature both on the print and motion picture. Q&A's guest today is Mr. Naod Yakob.



Thank you for your time, please introduce yourself to our readers?

Starting from my childhood, I always admired the works of graffiti that I watched in movies.

and animations?

What was your first comic story about?



Naod Designs

My name is Naod Yakob, I was born and raised in Paradiso, Asmara. I studied my secondary school at Keih-Bahri and went to Sawa with the 26th round. Then I finished my bachelor's degree in biology at the Eritrean Institute of Technology in Mai-Nefhi. I currently work as a teacher at my alma mater, Keih-Bahri secondary school.

I have learned that you are also an artist. Can you tell us something about your art work?

Yes, along with my fulltime career as a teacher, I am also a cartoonist. Besides, I have also developed a big inclination these days towards designing custom shoes and T-shirts (drawing cartoon characters on shoes and T-shirts). I also make animated short films along with my crew, and I have written several comic books starting from 9th grade.

Let's talk about your designs first, how do you come up with the idea?

Having my inspiration from the movies, I watched tutorial videos on YouTube and then when I become a high school student, I tried the 3D scripture and cartoon drawing on my bag and shoes. Having been my first experience, I didn't do a good job at first because my design was washing away easily because I didn't use the right paint. Eventually, it took me almost three years to figure out the perfect mix of paints, then finally I made that combining several elements, and later it became a source of income.

How much time do you need to finish a pair of shoes?

Most of the time, it depends upon the request of the customers, whether they choose cartoon drawings, abstract paintings, writing designs or whatever they want. But I am glad to paint the cartoon characters and the 3D writing styles. Normally, it takes me 2 to 4 hours to finish a pair of shoes.

How about your comic books

As I told you as a kid, I was very fascinated by cartoons and animated films I watched on TV and starting from 3rd grade, I began drawing cartoon characters and showed them to my classmates. I knew then from the feedback that I had the talent and I started exercising the drawing on my exercise books. Then as I grew up, I gained more experience and met friends with similar interest and we started designing cartoons together. Later, we studied on how a comic book is prepared and I released my first comic book at the age of nineteen. The book targeted students from elementary and junior levels. The feedbacks were encouraging, and I went on to write 20 comic books so far, but only a few of them have been published.

In line with that, I also started making animation short films, mostly the hand-drawn animations. First we were working with my friend Temesgen Kidane and later we joined the Hlim creative art work crew along with other animators, because animation is a team work. We have produced several animation dramas together and one of them was nominated at the Shamot national award, few months ago.

It's a story about a funny character called Anthony and, it recounts the challenges he faces on his way of life, and it's written in the way which reflect our culture, plus it tries to convey a moral message to the young.

Any challenges on the way?

Let's start with the custom shoe design; at first it was frustrating because everything I tried was a failure and I struggled for years to find out the persistent color chemistry. And on the animation, the equipment required are very expensive, we don't have an experienced animator to seek an advice from, because we all are amateurs. There was no prior animation works to refer to, all we have is the foreign animations and it doesn't fit with our life style. On top of that, making animation demands a lot of time, and we all have other full time jobs, so it makes some pressure. For instance, I am a teacher and I have to prepare for my classes and

other teaching stuffs, and the same is true with the others.

You have an application "Naod designs" tell us something about it?

It contains the gallery of the shoes and T-shirt designs, I prepared that in order to make my works public and user friendly, and it is programmed in a way that anybody can contact me through it with SMS or a phone call.

Any future plans?

I have a plan to open my own custom designs shop, plus I and my partners have a plan to create TV animation series based on the Eritrean way of life. As I said earlier I have many unpublished comic books, so I will have them published and I have a plan to launch a comic magazine.



Naod comic book