

# Liberty

*Bi-Monthly English Organ of the  
Eritrean People's Democratic Party - EPDP*

## **MASSIVE GENEVA DEMO REPEATED IN NEW YORK CITY** (p. 3)



## **EPDP CHAIRMAN HOLDS OFFICIAL AND PUBLIC MEETINGS IN**



**NORWAY  
&  
SWEDEN**  
(p.5)



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## FATHER MUSSIE'S CANDIDATURE FOR NOBEL PEACE PRIZE HIGHLIGHTED GRAVITY OF SITUATION IN ERITREA

The name of the Eritrean priest and human rights activist, Father Mussie Zerai, was reported to be among the top five nominees in this year's Nobel Peace Prize awards alongside the other big names of Pope Francis, Chancellor Angela Merkel and US Secretary of State John Kerry.

No regrets that the Prize for this year deservedly went to a quartet of Tunisia civil society groups that contributed enormously in the ongoing democratization process in that home country of Mohammed Bouaziz, whose martyrdom sparked the Arab Spring in 2011.

Yet, the very nomination of Father/Abba Mussie Zerai to this distinguished prize was in itself a big success story for Eritrean human rights and democracy activists and a recognition at international level of the ever worsening political, social and economic situation in Eritrea.

Father Mussie has been helping Eritrean refugees since the mid-1990s. By 2003, his mobile number was known in many refugee camps and places of danger. His Agenzia Habeshia formed in 2006 expanded his communications and advocacy that saved many lives. We cannot say how many but Father Mussie helped save thousands. He indeed merited at least the nomination that put him in the top list. Thank you so much, Abba Mussie, and keep up the good work!



## **Thousands from USA and Canada Demonstrate at UN New York Against Brutal Regime Abuses in Eritrea**

As the UN Commission of Inquiry on Eritrea submitted its damning report to the UN General Assembly on 28 October, well over 3,000 Eritreans from all walks of life in the United States and Canada flooded the streets of New York on 29 October demonstrating their support to the report and expressing their condemnation of the brutal acts of the repression in Eritrea that were described by the UN Commission as “systematic, widespread and gross violations of human rights” that may amount to “crimes against humanity.”



The New York demonstrators spoke with their placards and chants calling on the UN and the international community to give fuller attention to Eritrea and help its people end the curse that befell them in the form of a home-grown dictatorship.

The massive New York demonstration was a repeat of the June 26 demonstration in Geneva that brought thousands of Eritrean justice seekers from all corners of Europe and beyond.



Mr. Mike Smith said that while Eritrea is not in a state of war or unrest, its people are fleeing in significant numbers "to seek life free from fear". He said this is "an extraordinary indictment of the government that has controlled Eritrea since independence more than 20 years ago".



Mr. Smith listed factors forcing the “alarming exodus”: he said, “no elections since 1993. No independent press since 2001. Ongoing restrictions of all freedoms: movement, expression, religion, association. Arbitrary arrests with no fair trials or charges...”



He also noted that the report presented to the UN Human Rights Council in June of this year, “goes a long way to explaining why the number of Eritreans fleeing the country towards Europe has grown steadily since 2001 and has accelerated with a growth of more than 150 per cent between 2013 and 2014.”

The UN Commissioner added: “The international community, in the form of the Human Rights Council, has responded to the dramatic nature of these findings by reiterating its deep concern at the ongoing reports of grave violations of human rights”.

Besides the chairman, the other two Commission members are Mr. Victor Dankwa, and UN Human Rights Rapporteur for Eritrea, Ms Sheila Keetharuth, who also submitted a separate report to the UN General Assembly. Her report laid emphasis on the regime’s policies and actions that are causing the disintegration of the social fabric starting with the integrity and well being of the family.

## EPDP Chairman Meets Norwegian Labour Party, Swedish Officials; Holds Public Meetings in Oslo and Stockholm

Mr. Menghesteab Asmerom, chairman of the Eritrean People's Democratic Party (EPDP), who was on tour to Scandinavia in October, met the Norwegian Labour Party in Oslo, Swedish Foreign Ministry in Stockholm, and held public meetings for Eritreans residing in those countries.



On 12 October 2015, an EPDP delegation led by the chairman met the Norwegian Labour Party in Oslo and extensively discussed the ever worsening political and human rights situation in Eritrea. Accompanied by a delegation consisting of Mr. Medhanie Habtezghi, head of the EPDP Office for Youth Affairs, as well as Messrs Osman Jaber and Dawit Araya of the branch in Norway, the EPDP chairman explained the vision and objectives of his party and the most immediate requirements from the Norwegian *Arbeiderpartiet A/Ap* and other fraternal parties in the world to help Eritreans overcome the problems facing them at home and abroad.



Mr. Menghesteab Asmerom also asked the Norwegian Labour Party via its international secretary, Mr. Odd Inge Kvalheim, to do all what it can to pressurize the Norwegian Government to correctly understand what is going on in Eritrea and give appropriate sympathy and support to Eritrean refugees fleeing from a very bad situation at home. He also stressed the need of supporting Eritreans struggling for democratic change.

It was soon upon his arrival in Norway that the EPDP chairman attended and addressed the Norway branch congress on 9 October and led public discussion on Eritrean issues on 10 October.

The branch congress was opened by its outgoing chairman, Mr. Dawit Araya, who warmly welcomed congress delegates coming from different places in Norway and commended the commitment being shown by the veterans of the Eritrean struggle as well as the young members of the party in the struggle for democratic change in our country. A message from the Europe-Zone secretary, Mr. Isaac Woldemariam was read by the outgoing Norway branch secretary, Mr. Medhanie Habtezghi.



When the branch congress successfully wound up its agenda items, the EPDP chairman seized the opportunity to talk in great length to branch members on important current issues related with their party and our people's struggle against the repressive regime which held the nation as its hostage for so many long years.

Mr. Menghsteab Asmerom briefed the branch congress participants on recent party activities including the recent party congress held in two places last July and the colourful annual festival conducted in Germany in the presence of important guests and leaderships of Eritrean organizations.

On 10 October, the EPDP chairman had another opportunity to discuss the burning national issues with other compatriots in a public gathering in Oslo. At the end of his exhaustive presentation,



meeting participants raised key questions that create disquiet to many compatriots at this time. The questions included challenge of defeating the entrenched dictatorship which is leading the nation to the brink of total societal collapse, and the how the post-dictatorship vacuum could be filled without danger.

All pertinent questions raised at the meeting were responded in different perspectives by the party chairman as well as by Messrs Medhanie Habtezghi and Dawit Araya, who are incidentally members of the young generation and university graduates with promising leadership capacities.



On 21 October 2015, a delegation led by the party chairman met with the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and briefed the government on the ever worsening political, economic and social situation in Eritrea, further highlighting that the sole cause of the dangerous crisis in Eritrea is the repressive regime and its erroneous policies.

The delegation, that consisted of Mr. Rezene Tesfazion, EPDP Executive Committee member in charge of the finance office, and accompanied by a Swedish friend of Eritrea, Mr. Carl Lindberg, emphasized that there will never be a correction of the ongoing societal and state breakdown in Eritrea unless the oppressive regime is replaced by a democratic system that can guarantee the prevalence of the rule of law and respect of political and human rights of the people.

on 31 October, the EPDP chairman held a public meeting in Stockholm at which literally all Eritrean political movements with branches in Sweden were represented.



Mr. Menghesteab Asmerom pointed out in detail the major crimes being perpetrated by the Eritrean regime against its own people inside the country and mentioned instances of the suffering and death encountered by Eritrean refugees in many places in the world.

## SWEDISH CITY HOLDS SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC AWARENESS SEMINAR ABOUT ERITREA

On 23 October, 2015, social workers, language instructors for refugees, political figures and members of the public in the Swedish City of Gutenberg had the rare occasion of being fully briefed on the plight of Eritrean refugees and on what has been going on in that country for the past several years before the people forced to take risky escapes and dangerous trips to the unknown.



Mr. Rezene Tesfazion, former member of the Swedish Parliament and currently Executive Committee member in the Eritrean People's Democratic Party (EPDP), spoke in great length about what is happening in the political, social, economic and military spheres in Eritrea and why Eritrea without being currently at war has a frightening rate of refugees comparable to that of Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan.

His presentation was followed by accounts given by two young Eritrean refugees who experienced the horrors of escape and the dangers faced on the way until those who survive reach a safer place. Ms Meron Estefanos, an Eritrean journalist and human rights activist, was the next speaker



who spoke on what she went through under the repressive regime in Eritrea and the saddening stories of Eritrean refugees she has been covering in the past several



years. Her presentation was accompanied by pictures and a short film on human trafficking of Eritreans.

Eritreans including Mr. Zehaie Keleta, a Gutenberg resident, were among those who helped make this superb awareness seminar and public diplomacy a big success.



## EU MAY GRANT AID TO ERITREA; RESEARCHER CALLS IT WRONG ACTION; MOGHERINI BEGS ASMARA REGIME TO REFORM

The European Union has the intention of granting this year €200 million to the Eritrean regime with the hope of reducing refugee flow from the country.



On the other hand, a German researcher, Dr. Günter Schroeder, stated at a seminar in London on 10 October that no amount of money given to the existing regime can change the situation in Eritrea. He explained that: **what Eritrea needs is not money but massive change of direction..change of attitude, change of mentality of the government — a radical political, social and economic change in Eritrea before talking about aid and money.**

On the other hand, on 20 October in Addis Ababa, Ms Federica Mogherini, the EU Commission Vice-Chair and High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, urged the regime in Asmara "to have respect for human rights". She further stated the urgency and "relevant need for important reforms inside the country" to improve the human rights record and the living conditions of the population. **"An Eritrea that is reformed from within would be very beneficial not only when it comes to the issues related to migration flows but also to the overall stability and security of the region"** the EU High Representative explained. Other EU officials including Mr. Christian Manahl, the current envoy to Eritrea, also recently regretted the Eritrean authorities' denial of entry to Eritrea of the UN Commission of Inquiry as well as the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights on Eritrea.



Mr. Neven Mimica, EU Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, admitted in Nairobi on 22 October that negotiations with the regime in Asmara over the so-called national indicative programme, are being delayed by Brussels' refusal to allow the government to manage the money because of its human rights record.

"We do not see our development projects would successfully be implemented through government channels," he said. "Our approach would be to take steps to assist with concrete programmes that would target the concrete needs of the people in Eritrea."

"By the end of this year we should have a clear decision or refusal on a national indicative programme," the commissioner said.

In the meantime, Eritrean political and civil society actors are due to discuss in Brussels on 9 November this intended EU grant to Eritrea. The EU parliamentary hearing, organized by the External European Policy Advisors (EEPA), intended to inform EU parliamentarians that it is not shortage of money but the absence of the rule of law and right policies that have pushed Eritrea to the brinks of a failed state.

## UN Security Council Extends Targeted Sanctions on Eritrea

After considering report of the UN Monitoring Group for Eritrea and Somalia, the UN Security Council in late October extended the targeted sanctions on Eritrea. However, the sanctions are strictly limited to illicit banking and travel facilities to key regime officials (a list not even yet made) and the sale and purchase of arms by the belligerent Eritrean regime

However, it is true that the Asmara regime continues to spread the false claim that the refugee flow from the country is caused by the impact of UN sanctions on Eritrea.

The Security Council studied the of the Monitoring Group and voted 14 to 1 (the one being Venezuela) to continue the targeted sanctions.

Below are a few excerpts from the Monitoring Group's Report about Eritrea:



“....[Recently] Eritrea forged a new strategic military relationship with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates that involved allowing the Arab coalition to use Eritrean land, airspace and territorial waters in its anti-Houthi military campaign in Yemen. The Monitoring Group understands that, as part of the arrangement, Eritrea has received compensation from the two countries, including monetary compensation and fuel supplies. Any compensation diverted directly or indirectly towards activities that threaten peace and security in the region or for the benefit of the Eritrean military would constitute a violation of resolution 1907 (2009). Moreover, the Group has received credible information that Eritrean soldiers are embedded with the United Arab Emirates contingent of the forces fighting on Yemeni soil. If confirmed, this would constitute a clear violation of that resolution.

“The Monitoring Group investigated a consignment by the Red Sea Corporation aboard the Shaker 1. The vessel docked at the Eritrean port of Massawa in January 2015 after leaving Port Sudan with weapons en route to an arms exhibition in the United Arab Emirates. The Group has in the past documented the role of the Corporation in trafficking weapons from the eastern Sudan to Eritrea, as well as its practice of mislabeling containers in order to conceal their true content from detection. While the Group found no violation of the arms embargo, it did find inconsistencies in the information that it uncovered about the stop in Massawa and noted patterns consistent with the Corporation's

“The Monitoring Group understands that Eritrea continues to maintain an informal economy controlled by the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) involving hard currency transactions through an obscure, non-transparent network of business entities that are owned by the State and managed by senior officials of the Government, PFDJ and the military, just as most companies in Eritrea.

The lack of financial transparency continues to create structural difficulties and limits the Monitoring Group's ability to assess the country's compliance with resolution 1907 (2009). The Group is especially concerned at the overall lack of public financial transparency at a time when international and multinational organizations are pledging monetary aid to the Government.

The Monitoring Group has received testimony from multiple sources in the Eritrean diaspora and

host country authorities that the Government continues to impose extraterritorial taxation requirements on Eritrean citizens living abroad. It appears that citizens are now advised to submit payment directly to Asmara. As previously found, a refusal to pay the tax often results in a denial of the services offered at consulates and embassies.

"The Monitoring Group notes that the Government continues to maintain a complete lack of transparency with regard to mining revenue. The Group has closely monitored a court case filed in Canada over the alleged use of forced labour and inhumane treatment at the Bisha mine in Eritrea, which is operated by a Canadian company, Nevsun Resources Limited. According to the complaint, the Government forced conscripts to provide labour to the following government contractors: Segen, owned by PFDJ, and Mereb, owned by the Eritrean military. The Group found that Nevsun had hired Segen and Mereb to provide labour in an arrangement where they paid workers far less than the amount that they were charging Nevsun for the labour. It is suspected that the difference is being withheld by Segen and Mereb, and thus, by extension, by the Eritrean military and Government.

".. the Government of Djibouti provided the Group with a list of names of Eritrean prisoners that it claims to be holding, as well as prisoners of war from Djibouti whom it claims are missing in action as a result of the border clashes of 10 to 12 June 2008 between the two countries. The Government of Eritrea has yet to acknowledge that it holds combatants from Djibouti or to provide any information on their current condition".

## ERITREAN EMBASSY IN SWITZERLAND CHARGED OF CRIMINAL ACT ON ALLEGED COLLECTION OF 2% TAX

The Federal Police (FedPol) of Switzerland has officially registered a criminal charge against the Eritrean embassy in the country for alleged illegal collection of 2% tax from asylum seekers and



others of Eritrean origin residing in the country, according to wide coverage of Swiss media on 27 October 2015. But collection of evidence from Eritreans may prove difficult because of their fear of regime reprisals against their families back home. The reports confirm that the charge has been received by the Federal Attorney General's office which will require from the Federal Police evidence on the collection of the 2% tax and other alleged fund collections and extortions practiced by the Eritrean embassy in Switzerland. The FedPol's investigative arm, the Federal Criminal Police, will now rigorously start collecting evidences on the charge it leveled against the Eritrean Embassy. The current President of Switzerland, Simonetta Sommaruga, is also the head of the Federal Department for Justice and Police. Ms Sommaruga is a member of the Swiss Social Democratic Party, the second largest political formation in the country. Swiss laws prohibit any foreign state from collecting taxes on Swiss territory.

## **ERITREANS REMEMBER LAMPEDUSA TRAGEDY; EPDP REMINDS ITALY ABOUT PROPER BURIAL**

Eritreans in many parts of the world solemnly marked the second anniversary of the Lampedusa tragedy on 3 October that claimed over 360 Eritrean lives, symbolizing the chain of tragedies Eritrean refugees have been facing in the dangerous voyages they made to escape the intolerable situation in the country.

On its part, the Eritrean People's Democratic Party (EPDP) marked the event by addressing a memorandum to the Italian foreign ministry by recalling the failure of giving proper burial to the Eritrean victims whose bodies still remain "just numbers in unnamed graves".

Dated 1st October and addressed to Italian Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni, the EPDP memorandum intended not to accuse but to remind the Italian Government of the pledges it made soon after the Lampedusa disaster as well as the historical and moral responsibility Italy should have towards Eritrea and its problems. The memorandum reiterated the deep appreciation Eritreans expressed to Italy after the tragic incident and the marking of its first anniversary last year that was organized in Lampedusa in the presence of dignitaries from Italy and the European Union. The EPDP regretted that "both Italy and EU have this year failed to hold a second memorial day this October at least as a sign of respect and recognition to the tens of thousands of Eritrean and other lives that perished in the Mediterranean Sea while crying for help from Italy and the rest of Europe".

Likewise, the EPDP also found it pertinent to point out that the pledges it received from the Africa Committee of the Italian Parliament in December 2013 have not yet seen the light of the day. It is to be recalled that following messages addressed to the two chambers of the Italian Parliament only two months after Lampedusa, an EPDP delegation was able to meet with the Africa Committee of the Italian parliament which then promised to draft a special project on Eritrea expected to study ways of providing concrete support for Eritrean democratic forces opposed to the dictatorship in Asmara in addition to formulating an enhanced assistance to Eritrean refugees both in Italy and in the Horn of Africa region. Regretably, the Italian Parliament has not yet discussed such an issue

The EPDP memo concluded by once again appealing to Italy to address the requests submitted to it through its foreign ministry with copies to the two chambers of the Italian parliament.



## **'WE THE YOUNG MUST TAKE RESPONSIBILITY NOW, NOT TOMORROW!'**



"we usually hear many Eritreans saying that the young generation is tomorrow's successor of the elder generation. But I say no. It is not tomorrow or the day after that we wait to receive the torch of succession from the older generation. It is today and now that we take it". Kubrom Andom

Youthful Kubrom Andom was one of the young party members from Germany who represented his branch at the Second Congress of the Eritrean People's Democratic Party (EPDP) that was finalized on 30 July, 2015, at Wiesbaden, Germany.

On 6 September 2015, his Frankfurt branch held its regular meeting at which he briefed meeting participants about the congress, what he learned from it and what his generation should do at this moment in

time.

He told the meeting that the EPDP congress was a great learning process to him and that he really understood what democracy means in practice: "You can disagree, and say whatever you think and feel but at the end, you agree to abide by what the majority agrees".

He went on: "we usually hear many Eritreans saying that the young generation is tomorrow's successor of the elder generation. But I say no. It is not tomorrow or the day after that we wait to receive the torch of succession from the older generation. It is today and now that we take it".

In his forceful message at the branch meeting, young Kubrom also urged those supporters of the repressive regime who have been hostages of their small investments and purchase of government bonds to forget about their past mistakes and join their compatriots in removing the regime through People Power.

### **EPDP Frankfurt Branch Holds Monthly Meeting; Youth Office in 3rd Session Since Party Congress**

On 25 October 2015, the Frankfurt and environs branch of the Eritrean People's Democratic Party



(EPDP) held its regular monthly meeting in the German financial capital while the EPDP Executive Office in charge of Youth Affairs on that day met for the third time since the party congress held in two places (Ethiopia and Germany) last July. The branch meeting was opened by welcoming remarks of Ms Feven Ghideon, EPDP Central Council member and secretary of the branch, who also called for a minute of silence in memory of youthful Habtom Zere who was murdered in recent weeks in Israel in a brutal and racist manner.

The meeting started by streamlining certain internal administrative matters. This was followed by extensive presentations on the vision, objectives and mission of the EPDP as adopted in its second congress. Also widely discussed for awareness of the young meeting participants was the current situation in Eritrea, the plight of young refugees in exile and developments in the camp of justice seekers trying to bring about democratic change in Eritrea.



The branch leaders also raised for discussion the ways of defeating fear from the regime and the basic principles and effectiveness for success of non-violent struggle for democratic change.

The meeting considered ways of creating sufficient awareness for the young generation and laying down programmes that can encourage them to take active in the struggle with greater commitment and transparency. Recommendations were listed for further seminar and related educative sessions for youth.

Also on that same day (25 October), the EPDP Executive Office of Youth Affairs, headed by young Medhanie Habtezghi, held electronically its third meeting since the party congress of July 2015. Meeting participants, living in different countries and continents, exchanged current developments affecting the struggle for Eritrea's democratic change.

The Youth Office discussed several administrative and programme issues but more importantly underlined the significance of education for political awareness of the young generation who are supposed to take over the responsibility of re-organization and leadership in the current struggle for change as well as in post-dictatorship Eritrea.

The meeting listed recommendation that would realize the required awareness among all concerned: both the veterans of the struggle and the young generation who must inherit only the good part of what the old generation can bequeath.