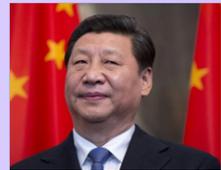


Liberty

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

YEAR 2021 ENDED BUT NOT TAKING WITH IT THE AGONIES OF THE HORN

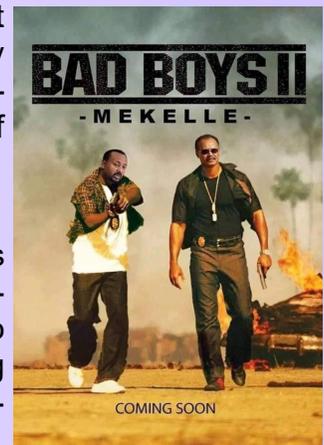
All wars finally end because of one or multiple factors. Some of the factors can be new weapons like the Atomic bomb or other smaller weaponry turned deadly when the means of its delivery is sharpened by new inventions like the drones, be they Chinese, Turkish, Iranian or whoever possessed them because of newfound wealth like that of UAE. The avoidable war still raging for no good reason in northern Ethiopia has already cost hugely in terms of human lives and the suffering of millions. Like the year just ended, the war in Eritrea's southern neighborhood will also end one day but without reassuring the peoples of the region that it will NOT resume in a decade or two.



For now, the most immediate necessity for the warring parties is to listen to the sane world and stop the senseless fratricide. The second step must be for Ethiopians and the rest in the region to sit around tables and find out what is wrong with them!! As existing generations in Eritrea and Ethiopia can remember, they have not been in peace for the past 60 years. Lack of peace has not been limited to Eritrea and Ethiopia but included the on-and-off changes in North Sudan and the continually bleeding Somalis and South Sudanese. And for how long can this situation with its extremely harmful agonies continue in the Greater Horn of Africa region? (Contd. on p. 2)

IS ETHIOPIA BECOMING ANOTHER ERITREA?

To many people, It now appears to be almost real that Ethiopia is gradually but surely becoming another Eritrea, another N. Korea in Africa in many aspects – so many ugly aspects that Ethiopia opted to make them her own, as misled by an unlikely advisor of its young leader who did not in the first place know how countries survive by promoting peace among their different communities. (Contd. on p. 2)



November –December 2021

Issue # 72

IS ETHIOPIA BECOMING ANOTHER

(Contd. from p. 2): Eritrea's belligerent leader is still around and is the main actor, with his footprints all over the battle fields in Northern Ethiopia. Some people find it difficult to imagine how, a dictator from a small, poor state that he almost killed it at its birth, can be such a threat to regional peace for quarter of a century. But that is the truth on the ground.

At times, Eritreans wonder how come Ethiopians couldn't see what was to come and what was happening to their state since 2018. At that time, 20th of June 2018 to be exact, the warmonger Isaias came out from his hiding place in Addi Halo near Asmara, and told his war-fatigued nation that there will be another war across the border. That was the day he shouted "Game Over" to Chifra Woyane (translation: 'the TPLF junta'). Eventually, even the word 'junta' had to be exported to Ethiopia. Eritreans can suspect but still don't know exactly what 'Big Secret' Isaias promised to the gullible, expansionist and too ambitious leader of Ethiopia to convince him indulge into what he (Abiy) has been doing and saying ever since their first unreported meetings three and half years ago. Eritreans have reasons to worry from the language and actions of both "bad boys".



The project of "Game Over" involved exchange of each other's Special Forces to be stationed in the two capitals. Units of Ethiopia's national defence forces were also secretly stationed in a number of key locations in Eritrea long before

the start of the war on 4 November 2020. The rest is history in Isaias Afeworki's other war inside Ethiopia.

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Today, as noted earlier, both Eritrea and Ethiopia have become Africa's North Korea: no free press, like in N. Korea, both big jailers of journalists like in Kim-land; the West is the No.1 enemy to Asmara and Addis, like it is to Pyongyang; human rights advocates and the UN system are simply agents of the Western powers, as Pyongyang papers would put them.



The list of similarities of Eritrea/Ethiopia to N. Korea is inexhaustible. Also only the other week, Eritrea's 'allies' in the UN Human Rights Council voted on the side of Ethiopia. As one can imagine, they are mostly the illiberal members of the Council.

Maybe the two big differences are that those related to nuclear warheads and vaccination. It is a fact that both Eritrea and N. Korea are the only states in the world today that did not yet start vaccinating their peoples against the killing Covid-19 pandemic and its variants while Ethiopia is different in having started vaccinations. (Contd. on 9)

EPF DIPLOMATIC TEAMS FACILITATE UN ENVOY'S MISSION TO HOLLAND & ITALY

UN Human Rights Rapporteurs assigned to monitor the situation in Eritrea have not been allowed to enter Eritrea since the UN Human Rights Council created the mandate nine years ago. Like his predecessors Ms Sheila Keetharuth and Daniela Kravetz, the current mandate holder, Dr Abdelselam M. Abiker, was refused entry visa to Eritrea and therefore had to travel and meet Eritrean victims of human rights in their places of exile.



In his latest mission of early December 2021 to the Netherlands and Italy, Dr. Babiker and his team were assisted by many Eritrean activists in these countries in locating the rights victims who can tell their stories of suffering and abuse in the hands of Eritrean authorities.

In the Netherlands, a diplomatic team representing the allied Eritrean Political Forces (EPF) made sufficient preparation and efforts in finding potential Eritrean regime victims in a number of Dutch cities. The EPF diplomatic team, consisting of Messrs Tsigheyohannes Kidane, Teclesenbet Ghebremariam and Mehari Tesfamariam, also prepared relevant information and documents of Eritrean regime abuses and human rights violations during the past three decades.

On his part in Italy, Mr. Desbele Mehari, EPF diplomacy staff member, organized potential interviewees in the Milan and Bologna regions who could provide sufficient information of how they were victimized by Eritrean regime officials.

Other than this, the UN Human Rights Rapporteur for Eritrea, held extensive meetings with many other Eritrean victims and human rights actors during this mission. Dr. Babiker and other human rights rapporteurs to several countries with bad human rights records are expected to present oral updates every March to the UN Human Rights Council and written reports in June regular sessions.

LIKE LONDON'S HYDE PARK, ASMARA FINALLY HAS A SPEAKERS' CORNER

Eritrea of course remains Africa's North Korea with no freedoms of any type one can think of. It is currently the biggest jailer of journalists in Africa south of the Sahara, followed by Ethiopia as its second in this infamy. But there was something new in Asmara during the year 2021: a Speakers' Corner that can be referred, albeit remotely, as Asmara's version of what the British had in



London's Hyde Park. Asmara's freedom corner is the US Embassy in the Eritrean capital.

As it has been doing during the past year, the US Embassy in Asmara on 23 December 2021 urged Eritrea's repressive regime "to



live up to its international obligations and stop exploiting its citizens in forced labor – i.e. in human trafficking – in its compulsory national service and citizen militia by forcing them to serve for indefinite or otherwise arbitrary periods." The Embassy also suggested that the national service "should return to 18 months as set forth in the national proclamation" that was issued many decades ago. (Contd. p. 5)

The December 4 statement from Asmara’s “Speakers’ Corner” rightly reprimanded the inaccuracies and falsehood contained in releases of Eritrean regime, adding: “the Eritrean forces in northern Ethiopia have blocked access to humanitarian assistance. They have also committed serious and widespread human rights abuses, including rape and the killing of children, as documented by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, the Ethiopian Attorney General, and numerous others... Eritrea’s continued misguided military involvement in the conflict in northern Ethiopia is destabilizing the region, exacerbating an already dire humanitarian situation, and hindering efforts to achieve a negotiated solution to the conflict.”

This and similar strong-worded calls on the deaf regime in Asmara by the US Embassy in Eritrea are welcome pronouncements simply because of the location they come from. Otherwise, such calls without any positive results have been familiar to the victims of the untold repression in Eritrea. Anyway, thank you US Embassy in Asmara for installing a Speakers’ Corner in Asmara, but what if the words you utter from inside Eritrea do not make any difference!! At the occasion of this New Year, Eritreans victimized by their homegrown tyranny, are renewing their appeal for serious support from global actors like the United States, the European Union and the UN system - among them the UN Human Rights Council - by translating words to meaningful action that can help bring change in Eritrea.

EPDP ORGANS IN ACTION



With the disastrous war in Eritrea’s immediate neighborhood and the Covid-19 pandemic affecting every aspect of life, the year 2021 was another hard time for EPDP members and their compatriots at home and abroad. Yet, given Eritrea’s situation, the Party’s rank-and-file had no choice other than continuing their struggle as ‘business as usual’, though behind Zoom screens. Following the adoption by the EPDP Central Council of annual action plans for each Executive Office in August, Party organs launched the work ahead with renewed energy. Taken as priority task was the building of a more robust Party that can play a significant role in the struggle to get rid of tyranny in Eritrea. As part of briefly telling the work of its tireless Party grassroots in different parts of the world in the past four months, let us start with the New Year message and an earlier end-of-year briefing made by Party Chairman Tesfai Woldemichael (Degiga).

EPDP Starts Year 2022 with Chairman’s Passionate Call for Unity, Resolve & Hope!



In New Year eve address to Party members, compatriots in the camp of change seekers as well as to the entire Eritrean people, EPDP Chairman Tesfai Woldemichael (Degiga) made a historic call for unity and perseverance in the struggle for democratic change with the firm belief and hope that Eritrea shall be rebuilt over the ashes of the destructive clique that so far blighted its achievable lofty dreams.

After solemnly remembering and saluting all Eritrean victims of repression at home, those killed in unwarranted hostilities across national borders and the fatalities of the Covid-19 pandemic without state protection and criminal rejection of vaccinations, the EPDP Chairman dwelt on the chain of abuses perpetrated by the Eritrean regime during the past year and long before that. (Contd. on p.6)

He said the worsening plight of Eritrean refugees worldwide and the dramatic increase of suicides and domestic violence among Eritreans in exile are other extremely worrisome phenomena to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

The EPDP Chairman also underlined that his party's strongest message of appeal for 2022 is for more serious work by the Eritrean Political Forces (EPF) to finalize their overdue aim of creating a national umbrella whose draft documents are now awaiting adoption and action.

EPDP CHAIRMAN CONDUCTS END OF 2021

BRIEFING FOR TOTAL PARTY MEMBERSHIP

Following a highly important consultative meeting with his Executive Committee team on 28 November, the Chairman, Mr. Tesfai Woldemichael (Degiga) had also to prepare himself for covering comprehensively all what the Party organs performed during the past year. This was done at a 6-hour session on 11 December 2021, with many party members attending in spite of time differences in the five continents where Eritreans are, sadly, scattered.

The Chairman's annual briefing to all party members made effort to explain:

- 1.the general condition of the party that included mentioning the major performances of the nine Executive Offices during the year;**
- 2.The state of the Eritrean opposition camp in exile;**
- 3.The one-year old catastrophic war in Ethiopia with Eritrea's unwarranted interference in neighbor's affairs;**
- 4. How the EPDP skillfully balanced and handled relations with all regional actors: both governments and parties.**



Regarding the EPDP, Mr. Tesfai Degiga said that although the party is in good shape, yet there is no place for complacency because it has to be build much more stronger to face the challenges for us all Eritreans to bring about change and then have a successful transition to the post-dictatorship period. He said he and the rest of the leadership are very much proud of the commitment of every party member and still, he expected each and every one to submit oneself to agreed upon party rules and thus play a role in building a cohesive and strong party worth the name. He said the struggle for positive change

in Eritrea cannot be won if the different organizations in the camp of justice seekers remain weak.



The EPDP Chairman reiterated the party's commitment to unity and joint work with all formations in the struggle for change but did not hide the fact that the efforts for creating an effective platform of the Eritrean Political Forces (EPF) did not yet fully materialize. Although the necessary tools like a common charter, a roadmap and a constitution have been drafted within the past two years, the documents have not yet been reviewed by all the EPF members. He said the EPDP sees no alternative to a joint work of all and hoped something would be done within the early months of the New Year.

In his comprehensive presentation, the Chairman mentioned a number of new sub-coalitions being formed within the political organizations but expected them not to be obstacles to the establishment of an all-inclusive umbrella of change seekers.

This was followed by a lengthy talk about the senseless war and its consequences in northern Ethiopia. Mr. Tesfai Degiga said the EPDP and sister organizations stood against the war from the start and appealed for a peaceful resolution of differences through dialogue and that this remained his party's position to this day.

(Contd. on p.7)

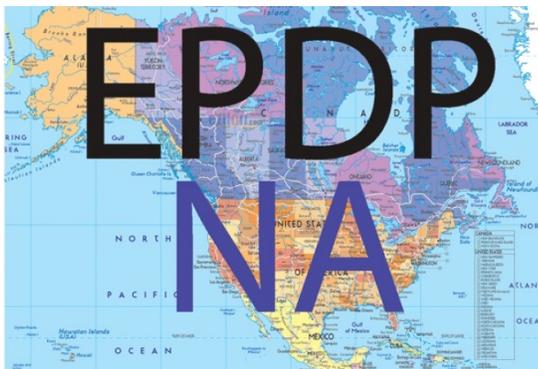
He deeply regretted the suffering of so many innocent people in the war and hoped that independent investigations will identify the perpetrators of those horrendous crimes and make them accountable. Likewise, he urged the Eritrean people to ask their own repressive regime about the fate of their sons and daughters in the Defense Force who were forced to be involved in a war that had nothing to do with Eritrea and its people.

The EPDP Chairman and his executive committee team alternated in explaining the position of the party in the current conflict and related matters. It was made clarion clear that the principle of “non-interference in the internal affairs of others” is always respected by the party and that there has never been any justification for it to be partisan in the affairs of other states, be it Ethiopia or the Sudan. However, we duly condemned human rights violations perpetrated by any actor in the region.

EPDP NORTH AMERICA ZONE LAUNCHES 'YOUNG GENERATION FIRST' CAMPAIGN

Continuing its focus on two major tasks of rejuvenating EPDP by promoting new youth programs and strengthening its financial resources, the Party's bellwether zone in North America on 27 November organized a public meeting via Zoom open for all compatriots, mainly the young, who were told why the Party deserves their help for its worthy social activities in the Sudan as well as its diplomatic, mass media and organizational efforts for the sake of the people's cause.

In addition to its other fund-raising events announced at the occasion, the NA Zone released the results of a lottery cast on a single laptop that generated 12 times of original price, thanks to the participation of so many young people in the effort.



It is to be recalled that earlier on 9 October; three panelists from the NA Zone made highly effective educational presentations on problems faced by young Eritreans in diaspora and why they are not fully part of the struggle of their parents for a better Eritrea.

Ms Asghedet Mehreteab, a top NA Zone leadership member, talked about the problems of youth born in Eritrea but had to find themselves disoriented by being forced to flee the country of their origin. NA Zone Chairman Desbele Kahsai spoke about the problems

of 25-40 years old Eritreans who grew up in exile where they had no well organized communities to help them have good guidance.

On his part, Yassin Ibrahim Neberai, head of the EPDP Executive Committee for Youth Affairs, handled the overall situation of young people from Eritrea as well as the entire Horn of Africa region. All three speakers used highly valued sources and examples in making clear the existing problems of Eritrean youth in forced exile that they and their parents are condemned to face.

EPDP SOUTH SWEDEN BRANCH HOLDS ITS ANNUAL CONGRESS

The second EPDP branch in Sweden, which is known as one of the most active party branches in Europe, on 17 December held its annual congress via electronic media. Attended by branch members located in eight Swedish cities, the meeting had an added significance for being addressed on current issues by the head of the EPDP executive office for organizational affairs, Mr. Menghsteab Asmerom.



Following the opening statements, the meeting heard, discussed and adopted reports of the outgoing branch committee and approved a new work plan that included financial support to the Arabic-Tigrigna language radio broadcast from their location. Before the closing session, the congress elected a three-person committee to run the

branch for the next 12 months as guided by party constitution.

EPDP SWITZERLAND HOLDS END-OF-YEAR 2021 MEETING

Following its annual congress of 21 August, the EPDP branch in Switzerland held its second online meeting on 19 December. Following opening remarks by chairman of the branch, Mr. Dawit Abraham, Messrs Tesfagaber Ghebre and Mehari Amar, who are in the branch committee, made reports on the organizational and financial matters.



The two EPDP Central Council members in the branch, Messrs Yohannes Werede and Woldesus Ammar, also spoke extensively about issues related to the branch, the party, the camp of justice seekers as well as the hot Horn of Africa regional developments.

The branch leaders closed the meeting by making strong appeals for more committed participation of every member in the branch.



Another highlight of the period under review was a strengthened effort to upgrade Bahgina Media with the involvement of more colleagues in the region. This latest EPDP social media program was started six months ago initiated by another indefatigable Party leadership member in Norway, Mr. Medhane Habtezhgi. Active participants in this new weekly release of broadcast of news and views include Party colleagues in Europe who have excelled in doing similar work for long decades. One of the much awaited pieces in Bahgina is the well researched weekly EPDP Editorial from the Information Office headed by another tireless freedom fighter, Mr. Debessai Beyene. Apparently, Bahgina is becoming a big plus to the existing Party's information media like the local radios beamed from Sweden and Germany.

IS ETHIOPIA ANOTHER N. KOREA? ANOTHER ERITREA?

(Contd. from p. 3)

If readers still have doubts as to real actors of the war and its causes, one can strongly recommend that they read articles of one of the best friends of the Horn, whom rulers while in power see him as their enemy. Below are excerpts from Martin Plaut's article of 6 December 2021. Good reading.

Eritrea's role in the origins of the Tigray war

"Ethiopia is at a Crossroads. Eritrea is a key player in this. A confident President Isayas of Eritrea declared on the national Martyrs Day 2018, two weeks before the Joint declaration of Peace and Friendship between Eritrea and Ethiopia: "Game Over".What we can now reconstruct is that the alliance between Abiy and Isayas was a declaration of war against TPLF, the government of the regional state of Tigray, which shares a common border of a thousand kilometers with Eritrea.

"While Abiy and Isayas denied for months that Eritrea was involved in the war, not only was Eritrea involved inside Tigray, it had also prepared to move into Tigray prior to November 4. An Eritrean told me: "The government was telling us, we have a problem with Tigray. We knew before 4 November a war would happen, we just didn't know when."...

"Not only were Eritrean troops mobilized, it appears that also Ethiopian troops were mobilized within Eritrea. An interviewee from Forto stated: 'Before November 4, the ENDF was in our school and hospital.'

"In an interview of February 7 2020, President Isayas (ruling over a country whose Constitution he has set aside, and where there have never been elections) dismissed the Ethiopian Constitution. At the same time, the Tigray government followed the Constitution art 39(3) in arranging regional elections. That the elections were a trigger of the war, is confirmed by an observation of an Eritrean respondent: Especially after the elections in Tigray, there was movement of heavy and mechanized forces around the Senafe border.

"These preparations do not match the narrative that the Law and Order Operation was a response to the Tigray Government attacking the Northern Command. Instead, it appears the war started when the Ethiopian federal government sent Special Forces to arrest the regional government of Tigray on November 3, 2020. The timeline suggests that Eritrean forces were standing ready to invade Tigray. Eritrea attacked Humera on Nov 6, after which Tigray fired missiles on Nov 12.

"The involvement of Eritrea was further confirmed by observations from within Eritrea:

"Within a week after 4 Nov, the town of Senafe was flooded with ENDF forces and military equipment. Some of them came from the Zalambesa border side, and others from inside Eritrea, after being transported from Addis Ababa to Eritrea....This is consistent with a video from 5 November 2020, showing that Ethiopian federal forces handed a range of Ethiopian mechanized heavy equipment to Eritrean military. Mobilization was supported by irregular flights between the two countries.

"Eritrean soldiers have been widely implicated in severe human rights violations in Tigray. Eritrean soldiers perpetrated massacres. Eritrean soldiers have been accused of widespread sexual violence against women, summary and extrajudicial killings of civilians, and the forced deportation of refugees. Towns, which most likely did not hold many combatants at that point, were bombarded by Eritrean forces. Eritrean soldiers have been accused of shelling religious sites. The mosque of Al Negash, one of the oldest mosques in Africa, was shelled by Eritrean troops as well as Debre Damo, a 6th century monastery

."The reports available show despicable and horrific acts on sexual violence committed with impunity. What is reported is the tip of the iceberg. Nevertheless, it appears that these crimes are widespread and characterised by their extreme and sadistic nature. The reports include: abduction, gang rape of women, rape in front of relatives including husbands and children, the forced rape of women by their relatives, burning of genitals and forcing of objects into the vagina. This may be qualified as a weapon of war used against the civilian population, and committed, in part, with genocidal intent. The following testimonies are examples that speak to the genocidal intention, in which the TPLF (called 'the junta') is equated with the entire civil population of Tigray and the systematic sexual violence is committed to eliminate the Tigray people: The soldiers said "that's good, let's remove the 'junta' inside her, and replace it with our own race. Two of them opened her legs forcefully and the other brought a rough stick and inserted it into her vagina and stirred it with the intention of aborting her pregnancy.

"Another witness reported: 'The Eritrean soldiers took turns raping the three women for hours, after that one of the soldiers pulled out a metal from his Kalashnikov and put it on fire and then inserted it into her uterus, he then said: now you will never give birth to a baby of the 'junta'.

The following grave violations of human rights have either been confirmed, or at least credibly reported. Many of these violations were allegedly perpetrated by or with assistance of the Eritrean military forces:

- (i) Perpetration of massacres, including massacres of civilians in the areas of Mai Kadra, Aksum, Mariam Dengelat, Debre-Abay, Bora-Selewa and Cheli;**
- (ii) The looting and destruction of factories, universities, educational facilities and shops and the removal of the loot in an organized way to be transported to Eritrea;**
- (iii) The deliberate destruction and looting of cultural and religious heritage, resulting in irreversible damage to objects and sites of great importance in Tigray culture;**
- (iv) The widespread and pervasive use of rape as a weapon of war, where credible reports have emerged that the most brutal and violent cases of rape have involved Eritrean soldiers with the aim to break the morale of the Tigray people and to dishonor them;**
- (v) The destruction of health facilities in Tigray resulting in few of existing health facilities functioning during the COVID-19 pandemic;**
- (vi) The use of starvation as a weapon of war;**
- (vii) The deliberate destruction of refugee camps. Refugees under international protection, were forcibly returned to Eritrea, those who were regarded as 'opposition' put in prison and others forcibly deployed in conscription including in Tigray.**

"The actions of Eritrea qualify as crimes against humanity and/or war crimes as defined in inter alia Articles 6 and 7 of the Rome Statute. There is no possible justification for any of these actions and the offenders should be prosecuted to the maximum extent of the law. When looking at all actions taken together and noting reports that Tigray civilians and the Tigray culture have been specifically targeted, the actions may constitute the crime of genocide as defined in Article 6 Rome Statute.

"Eritrea's actions in Tigray may very well constitute the crime of aggression as it has used its armed forces within the territory of another State. While Eritrea and Ethiopia agreed to this use of Eritrean forces, it is unthinkable that the commission of crimes against humanity was within the conditions of this agreement (and as such Article 8bis under 2(e) Rome Statute is violated). Conversely, if Ethiopia did not agree to Eritrean military presence within its borders, Eritrea has invaded Ethiopian territory and taken actions which likely qualify as war crimes and/or crimes against humanity, which is a manifest violation of the Charter of the United Nations. It can be concluded that the situations in Ethiopia, Tigray and Eritrea are inextricably inter-linked. It appears highly likely that Eritrea has made an export product of its widespread human rights violations."