

24 May 2020

**Ambassador Andebrhan Welde Giorgis' Address
On the Occasion of Eritrea's 29th Independence Anniversary**

Dear Eritrean People at Home and Abroad,
Heroic Eritrean Defence Forces,
Government Officials and Civil Servants,
Patriotic Resistance Forces at Home and Abroad,

On the auspicious occasion of the 29th anniversary of the liberation and the 27th anniversary of sovereign independence of Eritrea, I extend warm congratulations to the entire Eritrean people at home and abroad.

The sovereign independence of Eritrea constitutes a great historic victory of the entire Eritrean people achieved through the courageous struggle and matchless sacrifices of our freedom fighters and people. It occupies a special place in the heart of every patriotic Eritrean and will forever be remembered, honoured and celebrated.

The Eritrean people fought for freedom, justice, dignity, peace, tranquillity and prosperity. They offered their beloved children, their lives, and their belongings without reserve and endured immense sacrifices, killings, incarceration and torture for the sake of these noble objectives.

In an ironic twist of history, however, they got the polar opposite of what they fought for. With the fundamental objectives of their world-famous struggle betrayed, the Eritrean people ended up with servitude instead of freedom, injustice instead of justice, indignity instead of dignity, war instead of peace, turbulence instead of tranquillity, and penury instead of prosperity.

The primary objective of all human endeavour is to raise the standard of living and improve the human condition or people's livelihood. For twenty-nine years, the Eritrean people have heard vacuous slogans, fictitious development programmes, deceptive promises and false hopes, contemptuously repeated ad nauseum year in and year out. There is no expectation that anything different will come up during this year's celebration.

Since idle promises and false hopes cannot develop a country, create wealth, improve livelihood, and deliver bread on the dinner table, Eritrea has slid backwards: our economy has been devastated, our politics disrupted, our society suppressed, our families disintegrated, and our youth driven out *en masse*. The regional and international status of our country has fallen into disrepute, and our people reduced to indignity and ridicule.

Peace, stability and security are basic conditions for development. The Eritrean people are connected with all their neighbours by geography, history, culture and strategic interests. While preserving their national sovereignty and territorial integrity, they wish to live in peace, good neighbourliness and reciprocal cooperation with all their neighbours.

The Eritrean people have endured a state of active or cold war for fifty of the past sixty years because of the external violation of their right to self-determination, national sovereignty and territorial integrity. In order to lay a solid foundation for durable peace, Ethiopia must respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the State of Eritrea, both in word and deed.

War benefits no one. It only brings mass murder and destruction. Today, it seems possible to secure durable peace by bringing the history of wars and hostilities and their underlying causes to a definitive end and cultivate a new relationship of mutual cooperation based on common strategic interests.

In order to lay a solid foundation for the new relationship, both the federal government of Ethiopia and the regional government of Tigray must accept the principle, norm and practice of the African Union that enshrine the sanctity of colonial borders, upheld by international law, and withdraw the Ethiopian army from all occupied Eritrean territory in accordance with the colonial treaty border.

Taking this step would: (1) effectively affirm the sincerity of the desire for peace of the federal government of Ethiopia as well as the regional government of Tigray; (2) help build confidence between the two peoples as a gesture of goodwill; and (3) allow the displaced Eritrean populations to return to their home villages and build normal life.

In the event of contestation over certain areas during the demarcation of the colonial treaty border, this can be resolved through consultations with committees of elders from adjacent villages on both sides of the borderlands who know the precise limits of the land of each village and inviting the technical support of the UN Cartographic Unit. Once institutionalised normal bilateral relations are established, all outstanding bilateral issues can be settled via consultation or negotiation.

Indeed, the new bilateral relationship would require the establishment of a constitutional government in Eritrea and the stabilisation of a constitutional government in Ethiopia. Of course, the establishment of a constitutional regime in Eritrea and in Ethiopia is the responsibility of the Eritrean and Ethiopian peoples, respectively.

Our situation requires, as a matter of urgency, that every Eritrean, at home and abroad, whether an organisation or an individual, must promote coalescence, speak with one voice and work together to establish a constitutional government that avails all citizens equal liberties, equal rights and equal opportunities.

On this auspicious occasion, I pray that our people, whose prevailing conditions of living lack adequate facilities for self-isolation, physical distancing and personal hygiene, be spared of the perilous contagion of coronavirus afflicting the whole world. I commend the doctors and public health workers who, despite the acute shortages existing on the ground, are doing all they can to protect the health and safety of the people as well as the care shown and the ongoing mutual cooperation undertaken by the Eritrean people at home and abroad.

In conclusion, I would like to urge that we consolidate our unity, strengthen our coalescence and reinforce our struggle to bring about a stable democratic order based on a constitution, constituted by the free choice of the people and serves the interests of the people and the country; put an end to the dark era of abuses, corruption and bankruptcy brought about by the betrayal of the objectives of our revolution; and usher in a bright new era that delivers justice, tranquillity and prosperity; respects the dignity, the liberties and the rights of the people; develops our human and natural resources and uses them in the service of the development of the nation, the progress of society and the benefit of the people.

On the occasion of this double celebration of the anniversary of our country's liberation and independence, I congratulate the entire Eritrean people, once again.

Long live an independent sovereign State of Eritrea!

Eternal Glory to our heroic martyrs!

God bless Eritrea and its people!