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Independence Anniversary 2020 in Asmera

As we celebrate the 28th anniversary of our independence, it is a sad commentary that the human condition of the Eritrean people is in its worst ever state since the end of Italian colonial rule. For nearly two decades now, the Eritrean people have endured the ‘systematic, widespread and gross’ violations of their basic human rights and fundamental freedoms. Whether in the urban or the rural areas, they are denied rudimentary human security and adequate access to basic needs. They suffer from an acute shortage of food, potable water, housing, electricity, medicines, etc. The self-serving regime’s wrong policy choices, mismanagement and wasted opportunities have immersed the Eritrean people in a wretched state of extreme poverty.

Eritrea’s cities and ports portray an unseemly image of ghost towns; its physical and social infrastructures are dilapidated; and its economy lies in shambles. The complete monopoly of PFDJ parastatals has squeezed out the once thriving private sector. Eritrea’s subsistence and commercial agriculture, manufacturing industry and services have been ruined. A kleptocratic regime, in league with unscrupulous foreign investors, continues to steal the proceeds of its highly lucrative mining sector.

Eritrea today is littered with the shards of broken expectations, broken promises and broken hopes of freedom, justice, and progress. Twenty-eight years past *de facto* independence, the Eritrean people continue to endure, and large numbers of Eritrea’s youth strive to escape, the caprices of despotic rule, harsh oppression and perennial insecurity. The malevolent regime has forfeited Eritrea’s great potential to grow into a prosperous regional *entrepôt* of commerce and a flourishing hub of industry and services.

The declaration of peace with Ethiopia, albeit unstable, and the lifting of the UN sanctions have removed the regime’s main pretexts for imposing *de facto* military rule; perpetrating forcible indefinite active national service; and running a command coupon economy. The removal of the two pretexts must necessarily lead to an end of the nightmare of Eritrea’s economic ruin, political paralysis and societal disruption. Eritrea must start the inevitable move towards a new democratic dispensation.

Beyond the regime’s betrayal of the original objectives of our people’s hard and protracted political and armed struggle, there now hovers a dark cloud of treachery over Eritrea’s sovereignty under the guise of ‘*peace and friendship*’. It is high time that all Eritreans work in unison to rise up to the challenge and foil the conspiracy. Let us march in unison with our youth with a high sense of national responsibility to do away with the treacherous regime and transform the wave of ‘*Enough!*’ into ‘*Change Now!*’

An independent sovereign State of Eritrea is here to stay. Regimes come and go. The present authoritarian regime is in its twilight moment. Surely, change is coming in Eritrea, and coming sooner rather than later. Can Eritrea’s political elite position itself to catalyse a home-grown and Eritrean-driven process of change? Most importantly, are we, as a people, fully aware of the huge, complex and multifaceted challenges of transition to a constitutional, democratic and accountable system of government and adequately preparing to meet them?

If we coalesce on the basis of common goals and work wholeheartedly, we can surely celebrate our 29th Anniversary of Independence in Asmera!

Eternal Glory to Our Martyrs!

Long Live an Independent Sovereign State of Eritrea!