

September First 2023

**Message on the First of September 2023**  
Ambassador Andebrhan Welde Giorgis

Today the First of September 2023 marking the 62<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the launch of the Eritrean people's armed struggle is a historic occasion that we commemorate with pride. The First of September 1961 signified the qualitative transformation of the Eritrean people's struggle for self-determination and heralded the aurora of national independence. Our armed struggle concluded with total military victory 32 years ago last May. Total victory brought about sovereign independence.

Sovereign independence, however, has not translated into sovereign power for the people. Our people continue to aspire for the realisation of the programmatic objectives of the armed struggle for which they made immense sacrifices, the implementation of the rule of law, and the enjoyment of freedom, justice, security and prosperity.

During the last 32 years, Eritrea has continued regressing backwards instead of marching forward. It is true that the government of Eritrea has, especially during the last twenty years, endured external hostility and an unjust arms embargo. Under the circumstances, the restitution of its hitherto occupied territory and the foiling of a dire threat of aggression constitute a remarkable victory. Notwithstanding the adversity, the government had a great possibility to bring about socioeconomic development through adherence to the rule of law and the pursuit of a prudent economic policy which embraces a legal framework that encourages domestic investment and attracts foreign direct investment (FDI).

In contrast to the penury of the coupon economy, development could have delivered basic foodstuffs, water, education, healthcare, energy, electricity, transport and communications. Had the government not banned the construction and maintenance of houses for about twenty years, there would have prevailed no acute shortage of housing.

Instead of the excellent initial prospects for development, there has prevailed the imposition of the capricious rule of man, severe domestic oppression and repression, and brutal suppression of dissent. There has been a proliferation of prisons instead of schools. It is incontestable that all Eritreans who have been forced to flee the country or to reside abroad are victims of the regime's political and economic despotism. The youth, in particular, have been pushed to flee

the country en masse by utter despair of the possibility of a normal life or prospects of a prosperous future in their country due to indefinite national service (undertaken in clear contravention of the provisions of Proclamation 82/1995), lack of proper education and the absence of gainful employment.

Most Eritreans in the Diaspora, oblivious of the main cause of their flight and irregular migration from the home country and their attendant predicament in exile, have fallen victim to the divisive policies of the regime and the sectarian machinations of hostile foreign forces. Badly splintered and fragmented between regime supporters, regime opponents and passive spectators, they remain locked in constant bickering and reciprocal recrimination.

Ignoring or overlooking the regression of the country and the misery of the people, the supporters have turned into blind fans of the autocrat. Some in the so-called opposition have lost their compass, abandoned the cause of their own country and people and made common cause with hostile foreign forces. Some have even gone to the extent of resorting to aimless violence, brandishing the defunct federal flag of Eritrea, and become outright tools of foreign forces who are bent of undermining Eritrean national identity and reversing Eritrean sovereignty. Abandoning the ranks of the opposition, others have gravitated toward the supporters of the regime.

As I have repeatedly reiterated on various occasions, the proper objective of genuine national opposition, whether at home or abroad is, to offer an alternative to the government's policies and practices that have regressed the country during the last 32 years, and strive to crystallise constitutional governance that is based on the rule of law; safeguards the basic rights and freedoms of the people; builds human capital through modern science, technology and knowhow; manages public finance, national assets and natural resources in an accountable and transparent manner; pursues socioeconomic development; improves the livelihood of the people; and safeguards freedom; administers justice; and produces prosperity.

I would like to underscore here that the struggle for constitutional governance, which every prodemocratic and patriotic Eritrean should align with and work for, requires serious political work based on clear common principles, a shared vision and a pragmatic programme guided by solid organisation and supported by a broad coalescence.

At this juncture on this auspicious occasion, I cannot proceed without underlining that the orchestrated attacks perpetrated against participants of Eritrea Festivals in North American and European cities during the last few weeks constitute terrorist acts that violate the laws of the concerned host countries which allow the right of peaceful assembly. A proper investigation of the perpetration of the violent attacks is in order and should be undertaken. Those who funded, planned, mobilised, supported, facilitated or committed the terrorist violence must be made to duly account for the harm and damage inflicted on the peaceful participants and bear responsibility commensurate with the gravity of their actions in accordance with the laws of the host countries where the attacks took place.

It is true that Eritreans who participate in the events are not only the supporters of the authoritarian regime. However, it is beyond contention that Eritrea Festivals in the Diaspora serve the propaganda objectives of the dictatorship. It is also incontestable that the organisation of the events by the operatives and cronies of the predatory regime and serve as tools of its propaganda indicate, at least in part, the weakness of the Diaspora opposition trapped in a vicious cycle of reciprocal recriminations.

Nevertheless, the festivals provide a forum for cultural entertainment and an occasion to get together for many our people who, forced to separate from their beloved parents, families and childhood friends and live far away from their beloved country, suffer from loneliness, isolation and alienation. They also enable those who sought refuge at a young age, or the youth born and brought up in the Diaspora to get to know each other and establish personal friendships and social relations. As such, prodemocracy Eritreans must firmly oppose all violent acts perpetrated against peaceful Eritreans. We must fight to bring the errant into the nationalist fold, encourage the upright and mobilise all prodemocracy Eritreans into the ranks of effective political opposition.

Otherwise, violent attacks or intra-Eritrean violence in the Diaspora would harm rather than help and retard rather than advance the just political struggle to bring down the autocratic regime and establish constitutional governance and a democratic government in our country through empowering the agency of the Eritrean people. Truth be told, the mob violence, instigated by an alien adversary and partaken by many non-Eritreans hostile to Eritrea's sovereign independence, disrupts the unity and diverts the focus of Eritreans from the domestic tyranny, maligns the image of the Diaspora opposition and serves hostile foreign objectives. It is important to bear in mind that opposition to the predatory regime centred on Eritrean

nationhood and sovereignty is a responsibility of enlightened citizenship and a personal decision based on one's conscience and consciousness.

As I often explain on different occasions, Eritrea belongs equally to every Eritrean. An Eritrea under constitutional governance would be the common homeland where every Eritrean lives in equality under the law. The respected communal festivities of our people, such as September First, Independence Day, Martyrs' Day, Christmas, Easter, Eid Mawlid, Eid al Fatir, Eid al Adha, etc., are great public celebrations that belong equally to all Eritreans at home and abroad, irrespective of their political perspectives or affiliations. These great public holidays signify the common values and strong unity of the Eritrean people and should be celebrated in unison and harmony.

As overcoming the authoritarian regime through Eritrean agency would ensure the security of Eritrea and the Eritrean people and serve the interests of the great majority of the Eritrean people at home and abroad, the principal political work of prodemocratic opposition should be to strengthen the agency of the Eritrean people for change.

Otherwise, it is quite shameful to observe those who, while aware of the misery of the Eritrean people, support the autocratic regime act like blind fans applauding the promise of donation of food aid after 32 years of independence and praising sky high the hypocritical rants of a tyrant, who himself has trampled law and justice in his own country, complain about the absence of international law and justice. That the rule of man reigns in Eritrea and the rule of might prevails in the world is quite incontestable. To credibly preach about the need for international law and justice, however, one must first and foremost apply the rule of law and administer justice in one's own country. After all, as the saying goes, "charity begins at home".

As we proudly commemorate the auspicious occasion of September First today, let us strive in a coordinated national struggle to realise the aspirations of our people for the rule of law, constitutional governance, freedom, justice, security and prosperity.

Long live September First, the harbinger of an independent sovereign State of Eritrea!  
Eternal glory to our heroic martyrs!  
God bless Eritrea and the Eritrean people!