

31 August 2020

**Statement of Amb. Andebrhan Welde Giorgis  
On the Occasion of the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2020**

**Beloved People of Eritrea at Home and Abroad,  
Heroic Eritrean Defence Forces,**

On the auspicious occasion of the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2020, the 59<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the launching of the armed struggle, I congratulate the Eritrean people at home and abroad.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1961, patriot Hamed Idris Awate took a courageous national initiative in leading a few companions to declare the birth of the Eritrean people's armed struggle for liberation. The sound of the first bullets shot on that historic day against Ethiopia's annexationist force on Mount Adal, Gash-Barka, reverberated loudly in the hearts and minds of Eritreans. It generated a new hope and awakened and nationalist sentiment among the entire Eritrean people and especially the youth.

War, however, was not the choice of the Eritrean people but it was forced upon them by the closure of all peaceful avenues to self-determination. As President Kennedy stated, "those who make peaceful change impossible will make violent revolution inevitable", our people rose up in arms to counter colonial violence through revolutionary violence when they were denied a peaceful alternative. The armed resistance was thus a continuation of the ongoing political struggle for self-determination. Politically, self-determination embraces two complementary rights: the right of a nation and the right of a people.

The struggle started by a small band of patriots under the heroic leadership of Hamed Awate gained broad popular support and participation and gathered momentum. The bitter war of national liberation, which overcame extremely difficult challenges with ups and downs, including a fratricidal civil war, and exacted heavy sacrifices, gradually engulfed the whole country spreading like a prairie fire whose revolutionary flames dealt total defeat on the Ethiopian annexationist army on the thirtieth year and achieved sovereign independence.

The Eritrean people fought to gain independence and establish a democratic government. They paid immense sacrifices in life, limb and property and endured untold atrocities for the sake of independence and liberation. Sovereign independence, made possible through the valiant

struggle and matchless sacrifices of our patriotic freedom fighters and people, constitutes a great historic victory of the entire Eritrean people.

Following the triumphant conclusion of the armed struggle and the declaration of an independent sovereign State, however, the people of Eritrea have as yet been unable to freely elect their own government; to determine the political organisation of their society; to participate in a democratic process of governance; or to manage their economic, social and cultural affairs as they deem fit.

With the betrayal of the basic objectives of their struggle, they have been reeling under the vagaries of authoritarian rule. Denied all opportunities to develop their resources and improve their livelihood in their own country, they find themselves today, after twenty-nine years of independence, languishing in an indignity of extreme poverty and mass migration. Hamed Awate and his companions did not rise up in arms in order for the Eritrean people to become irregular migrants *en masse* after independence. Our martyrs did not give their lives so brutal oppression and extreme poverty would afflict the Eritrean people post-independence.

As the regime wishes to make people believe day in and day out, empty claims bear no fruit; propaganda does not develop a country; and idle talk cannot turn into a meal, for it is neither edible nor drinkable. Unfulfilled promises and false hopes cannot develop an economy or improve a people's livelihood. Since no productive work is undertaken beyond repetitive talks, our country's development potential has been squandered ranking Eritrea, according to all criteria, among of the most backward and poorest countries in Africa.

It is a tragic irony that an enterprising and hardworking people who own the fertile soil of the Highlands and Lowlands, huge mineral deposits, rich waters of the Red Sea and seaports of great regional value, suffer from the scourge of starvation, the misery of mass irregular migration and the attendant indignity everywhere. Even though those who have no respect can feel no shame, the regime itself should be ashamed of creating this sad reality.

Worse still, at a time when the national lockdown and total shutdown of economic and commercial activities due to the Covid-19 pandemic pose a grave threat of starvation, the regime has imposed an usurious exchange rate way out of proportion to the real relative value of the Nakfa in order to extort dual predatory revenues for private coffers from our people who conscientiously send help from abroad and our people who desperately need help at home. I call upon our people to keep up with and intensify their mutual caring and cooperation and the

international community to pay due attention and provide emergency assistance to help enable our people to overcome the present adversity.

A just peace, stability and security are basic conditions for sustainable development. The Eritrean people are closely linked with all their neighbours through geography, history, culture and strategic interests. They are a people who wish to preserve their national sovereignty and territorial integrity and live in peaceful coexistence, good neighbourliness and reciprocal cooperation with all their neighbours.

The Eritrean people have been locked in either a hot or a cold war for fifty of the past sixty years fighting against or fending off external violations of their right of self-determination. Laying the groundwork for durable peace between Eritrea and Ethiopia requires Ethiopia to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the State of Eritrea in word and in deed. Such a stance would enable the cultivation of a new relationship of reciprocal cooperation based on common strategic interests.

Obviously, the new bilateral relationship would require the establishment of a constitutional government in Eritrea and the stabilisation of a constitutional government in Ethiopia. Certainly, the task of establishing a democratic government by ensuring a stable transition in Eritrea and in Ethiopia is the responsibility of the Eritrean and Ethiopian peoples.

In the ongoing struggle for democratic transition, unity is a decisive factor of victory. Today, more than ever, we must be consciously aware that our distinct Eritrean national identity and national unity, developed in the process of resistance against successive colonial rule and steeled in the course of the armed struggle and fending off foreign aggression, is facing concerted attack and that we should effectively confront this challenge in unison. In this regard, our youth, in particular, are called upon to make an indispensable conscious contribution today as during the armed struggle.

Let us work to realise the objectives for which Awate and his companions started the armed struggle and the tens of thousands of our martyrs who followed them and sacrificed their lives. It has become the most urgent demand of our time that all patriotic Eritreans, at home and abroad, strengthen the unity of our ranks, muster our resources and fight for a common objective to establish a constitutional government that guarantees equal freedoms, equal rights and equal opportunities to every Eritrean citizen.

On this auspicious occasion, I would like to appeal that we strengthen our unity, reinforce our coalescence and intensify our struggle in order to bring about change and democratic transition

that establishes democratic governance based on a constitution and formed by the free choice of the people to cast away the impending shadow of treachery hovering over our sovereignty; to transform this dark era of oppression brought about by the regime's betrayal of the fundamental objectives of our revolution into a prosperous era of justice; to respect the liberties and rights of the people; to utilise our natural and human resources in the service of the development of our country and for the improvement of the livelihood of our people.

Long Live Our Independent Sovereign State of Eritrea!

Eternal Glory to Our Heroic Martyrs!

God Bless Eritrea and the Eritrean People!