

## JOINING THE YOUTH IN SUPPORT OF 'ENOUGH IS ENOUGH' MOVEMENT

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In Eritrea, 1991 was the year of jubilation and rejoicing of the victory of the 30-year of relentless armed struggle for the national independence and liberation. It was the year of heroic triumph and majestic advance and entry of the gallant EPLF army to Asmara. It was the agony of defeat and humiliation of the huge Ethiopian army and its supporters and it was the end of the final chapter of colonial occupation and aggression in Eritrea. 1993 was equally the year of joy and celebration of the beginning of the national independence and the official recognition of Eritrea as a sovereign state by the United Nation. For a few years after the declaration of national independence, Eritrea started to show a blink of sign of economic change and social progress. However, the honeymoon of the glimpse of freedom and liberty did not last long before the Eritrean independence was hijacked by those in power and turned the hopes and desires of the Eritrean people upside down. It has been observed that the transport facilities, water supplies, energy sources, sewage systems, health care, education services, and other necessities gradually deteriorated and declined far below the minimum level of African standard. When Nacfa currency became in short supply and when the supply of basic needs slowly disappeared, the prices of basic commodities soared high and as the result the Eritrean people could not tolerate the unbearable cost of life. The great expectation of the Eritrean people for a democratic and progressive state gradually diminished and finally the high hope of the people for milk and honey was crushed into piece beyond repair. This was followed by an immediate transformation and replacement of the state governance by the absence of the rule of law. When life in Eritrea became harsh and unbearable hundreds of our younger generations crossed the border to migrate to foreign countries. Many families are uprooted from their respective villages and towns and ended up in refugee concentration camps, mainly in Ethiopia and Sudan. It is very unfortunate that the Eritrean people are betrayed, and our martyrs are totally ignored and forgotten. The massive exodus of our younger generations from Eritrea to foreign countries is a big threat to the survival of the national sovereignty of Eritrea because the remaining older generations are too old to defend against any foreign aggression or against any hidden agenda signed between the Ethiopian government and the government in Eritrea. In view of the objective reality in Eritrea, the short story of a young boy and an old man narrated below is a typical example to illustrate and reflect the adverse impact of the deplorable condition in Eritrea affecting the lives of the Eritrean people, particularly our very young and innocent children.

Once upon a time there was an interesting conversation that took place between an eighty-year old man, Aboy Fekadu and a five-year old boy, Arkebe in a certain village in Eritrea. Aboy Fekadu was a distant relative and neighbor of Arkebe's family. Aboy Fekadu kindly asked Arkebe, *"What would you like to be or do at this young age?"* Arkebe answered without any hesitation, *"I would like to go abroad."* Aboy Fekadu was surprised of his spontaneous and immediate reply and asked him again, *"Why do you want to leave your family and village and go abroad?"* Arkebe replied with great respect, *"Well, I do not really want to go away from my village. But, I see everybody is going away and nobody is coming back to the village. If I stay behind, the hyaena will eat me."* It is obvious that the whole situation in Eritrea is too big a political and socio-economic issue for Arkebe to understand and know the dynamics of his surroundings. It was even too complicated and confusing to understand and know what was happening in his own respective village. Arkebe would not be able to know what and who

caused the unsettled situation for his village people to go away and never come back to the village. However, the young boy was very keen to observe and understand that many people were disappearing from the village, particularly the younger generations and no one was returning to the village. Arkebe seemed to be psychologically and mentally disturbed and in his own little mind he knew that if he stayed behind in his village, he would be the good lunch or dinner for a hungry hyaena. The honest and innocent response of Arkebe reflected the kind of anxiety, apprehension, and mental disturbances that exist among many Eritrean youth, even the very young ones. The story illustrates the real-life situation in Eritrea and the emotional and mental disturbances that make our younger generation agitated and restless. The situation in Eritrea forcefully pushed the youth to go away and migrate to other countries.

We, the older generation, directly or indirectly are all responsible for all the ugly situations and miserable conditions that have been happening in our own country because we have failed to defend and advocate for the welfare of our own people. We did not question the government in Eritrea when the G-15 were taken away and stashed them in the ditches and trenches of the so-called *Era Ero*; when the Eritrean journalists and private newspaper editors and writers were put in the same horrible prison; when Minister Berhane Abrehe was dragged from his house to his prison cell; and when Bitwoded Abraha was put back to prison after he was out for a few days. We did not react against the cruel and inhumane act of the government in Eritrea when Aboy Haji Mussa Mohamed Nur and Aboy Haji Abdu Ahmed Younis died in prison; when Wodi Ali and some of his gallant fighters were gunned and some of them were put in prison. We did not show any humane sympathy when some innocent disabled Eritrean warriors were killed in Mai Habar and when the body of the 50-year veteran fighter, Naizgy Kiflu could not even be buried in the land of his own country. We did not raise our collective voices and shouted to say 'stop ግጥጥ', with the exception of some churches, against the government in Eritrea when His Holiness Abune Antonios, Patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox Christian church, was unlawfully demoted and confined on house arrest for the last 13 years and when some prominent spiritual leaders and members of other religious institutions were incarcerated and suffer in prison cells for many years. We did not question the government in Eritrea when hundreds of Eritreans, including very small children and mothers, were drowned in the Mediterranean Sea, particularly the Lampedusa tragedy and when many Eritrean young men and women were perished in the Sahara and Sinai Deserts. We did not react against the evil government when we witnessed gross human rights violation manifested by hateful and despicable human trafficking and smuggling of our younger generations who were molested, raped and brutally killed after their vital organs were ripped off. Who questioned the government in Eritrea when our only University was completely closed and when the government has been preparing numerous prison camps, prison containers, prison ditches and trenches, and prison underground cells instead of building schools and clinics in the country? Nobody boldly challenged the government in Eritrea when all these and other horrific crimes have been taking place in front of our eyes for many years. For this reason, we all deserve to be called cowards and spineless people. It is time now to come to our senses and be brave enough to make our collective voices heard far and near.

It must be clear to all Eritreans in Diasporas that the unelected government in Eritrea is basically the PFDJ government. The PFDJ leadership is composed of a dominant leader and a

few faithful gang members who do not question or hesitate to do what they are told to do either to please their leader or to honor his command. Obviously the unlawful PFDJ leadership has clamped down the national affairs and allowed no room for any kind of opposition from inside and outside the country. Eritrea then became a police state that leaves Eritreans in constant fear. The Eritrean people have been manipulated, controlled, and monitored, even from a distance to those of us living outside Eritrea. To explain the magnitude and extent of control by the government inside the country, an ordinary citizen living inside Eritrea boldly says, "*When I am in Eritrea, I feel that I cannot even think because I am afraid that people can read my thoughts and I am scare.*" This was one sample witness who told to a member of the U.N. human rights inquiry. It is sad to tolerate such hateful situation in Eritrea because the PFDJ leadership exerts and practices arbitrary arrests and detention, with torture and even enforced disappearances to be a part of normal life in Eritrea. According to the report of the U.N. human rights inquiry, Eritrea is classified among the most closed countries in the world characterized by indefinite military service, torture, arbitrary detention, and severe restrictions on freedoms of expression, association, and even religion. Considering the worst reputation of the PFDJ regime in the world, when it comes to human rights violation, it is quite unavoidable reality to call Eritrea as the North Korea of Africa. It is evident that all of us should be blamed for the situation. The PFDJ leadership was very skillful to manipulate and maneuver the Eritrean people and to create an avalanche of pain and sufferings to the Eritrean people. The PFDJ leader as such is not one person. He has never been alone to do what he has been doing all these years. Any evil leader can never be successful to survive and sustain as an evil leader for a long time without building, molding and having a powerful political entity and the support of its followers. The PFDJ leader has been supported, praised, adorned, and overwhelmed by the support and devotion of his top military staff and army generals, Ministers, religious leaders, members of the mass organizations, and the so-called scholars and professionals. We have been all stooges and blindsided supporters of the PFDJ leader and his inner circle for many years. We cannot deny now that we have clapped our hands and hailed to the top of our lungs to cheer and show our unconditional support to the PFDJ leadership in many occasions and events. It is time now to repent for all the sins we have been doing for many years and bend down to our knees and ask the Eritrean people for their forgiveness and pray to the Almighty God for His mercy and kindness. We must put the historical facts and experiences together and try to understand them by relating to the current situation in Eritrea and pull our efforts together to make a positive change.

We need to be aware that the PFDJ leader and his gangs managed to survive in leadership for many years with the help and support of all of us. It took us a long time before these devious individuals are identified for who and what they really are. We must be either the dumbest and ignorant people or the PFDJ leader must be the most gifted person to put us all on the palm of his hand to control and twist us to any direction of his interest and baldly survive for many years in one position before his wicked intentions and desires are clearly perceived by all of us. The PFDJ leader and his gangs have been very abusive and destructive to the country and wreak havoc in the personal lives of the Eritrea people by breaking our homes, disconnecting our family ties and destroying our extended family system. The PFDJ leader must have an insatiable craving for admiration and approval from the Eritrean people and recently from the Ethiopian people. The PFDJ leader must be the kind of person who seeks a grandiose self-importance, preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited personal glory, a driven desire for attention and admiration, an intolerance of criticism, and disturbed self-centered interpersonal relations. In view of these attitudes and personal behaviors, it is evident that the PFDJ leader and his gangs

cannot have the slightest desire to pursue or fulfill the people's demand for the demarcation of the border with Ethiopia. The PFDJ leadership has no intention to release unconditionally the unlawfully detained political prisoners (G-15) and members of the mass media; to implement the national constitution; to restore the life of the national parliament; to initiate public election of its leader; and to end or limit the forced national military service. Given the above list of facts of life in Eritrea, we all have a common ground to bring ourselves together in unity because we are all in favor of the rule of law and the immediate termination of all kinds of human rights violation. It is quite clear that the PFDJ leadership is not and will not be willing to make the necessary change or to meet the urgent demands of the Eritrean people because it is a matter of life or death situation for those in power. We should not expect the PFDJ leadership to introduce a radical and positive change in Eritrea any time in its remaining short life. We need to realize that we have been in bondage to the PFDJ leadership of Eritrea for too many years. We have been captivated by our trust and loyalty to the PFDJ government. We have been confused and misled by the false political propaganda, corruption, betrayal, and deceit of our PFDJ leadership. The PFDJ leader was groomed and highly respected by the Eritrean people like a king from heaven. His words were taken for grant like the divine sermon from an angel. At that time many people would not hesitate to walk through a glowing fire, or to sacrifice their lives at any situation for his own sake. Instead, the Eritrean people have been terrorized by intimidation, fear, and persecution for no apparent reasons for many years. It is time now for the Eritrean people to come together in unity and do the right thing.

Considering the unfavorable situation in Eritrea, we need to join the Eritrean youth in the movement for '*Enough is Enough*' campaign. Now, it is enough to be silent and pretend to look unconcerned and disinterested in the welfare of the Eritrean people. It is enough to hide in our closets or behind the curtains of our houses. It is enough to hibernate in our homes and shelters. It is enough to stand on the sidewalks and simply watch what others are doing. It is enough to create separation and division among ourselves by fabricating ethnic, regional and religious differences and frictions. It is enough to hate, quarrel and even insult one another for having different political perspectives and perceptions. It is enough to blindly support the PFDJ regime and engage in unlawful political propaganda campaign when the Eritrean people is in the history making moment. It is enough to sabotage and discourage our younger generations who have the courage and initiative to start and galvanize the people's movement for the liberation of the Eritrean people. It is enough to procrastinate and make layman excuses to run away from participating in the national affairs. Some of us do not intend to participate in the current youth movement because we are afraid that we might put members of our family in Eritrea in great danger. Some of us do not want to jeopardize the opportunity of going to Eritrea every now and then to visit our aging parents and to check about our houses built for retirement. Some of us prefer to closely associate ourselves with the government in Eritrea for the simple reason that our support would reflect and strengthen our regional belongingness and solidarity. Some of us might even expect and hope that the PFDJ leadership to come to its senses and make a radical change. However, we need to understand that members of our family in Eritrea have always been under the cruel rule of the government; our retirement houses will not go anywhere any time; the government in Eritrea is not interested in regional identity other than using regional affiliation for creating inter-regional unrest and mistrust; and the PFDJ leadership will never change its mind to do the right thing. To this effect, silence, absenteeism, and making all types of excuses are the reflection or signs of coward behavior or opportunistic attitudes. We need to grow up and identify our behavioral weaknesses and evaluate our state of immaturity. We need to rise and

walk together with our vibrant Eritrean youth for a change. The Eritrean communities and religious institution can serve as the home base for the '*Enough is Enough*' campaign motivated and sponsored by the youth movement. The Eritrean scholars and professionals can serve as the fountain and sources of wisdom and advice for the youth who are leading the movement for a positive change in Eritrea. Enough is enough; it is time for a change. We are winners knowing when enough is enough, to walk away from bondage and move on to join the people's movement which is more progressive and productive. Knowing that silence is not right is not enough; we must react. Willing to react is not enough; we must do our part because action speaks louder than words. The Sudanese people have been successful in removing their notorious leader from his position because they have a strong united people's movement led by young men and women. They will keep their united people's movement intact for a while until the current military government is replaced soon by a civilian or people's government. The Eritrean people can learn the most valuable lesson from the wonderful experience of our neighbor, the Sudanese people's movement. The most crucial and heroic thing we can do at this volatile and memorable moment is to come together in unity to safeguard and secure the sovereignty of our beloved country Eritrea.

At the present crucial time we need to be aware that we cannot waste our precious time anywhere knowing the prevailing undesirable situation in Eritrea. Right now, is the right and best time to come together and keep ourselves united and join the youth in support of the people's movement with dignity and integrity so that our country remains strong and respected by friends and foes alike. The dynamics of our youth movement together with the support of the older generation, can serve as a stepping stone and platform in developing the most appropriate strategy to support our people in Eritrea in removing the current political leadership and installing a democratic people's government in Eritrea. If we fail to join and support the people's movement and miss the train of freedom, justice and peace, like the young boy Arkebe's anxiety, we would likely be swallowed by the hungry hyaena, namely the PFDJ government. However, the current on-going '*Enough is Enough*' people's movement in many countries needs to be inter-connected at inter-regional and inter-continental levels in North America, Europe, Australia, and Africa by forming a United Eritrean People's Committees consisting of elected prominent members who are devoted and committed to undertake the already overdue national obligations. A united and well-coordinated people's movement led by the young men and women is the only best way and strategy that can deliver victory and success to the Eritrean people. Thus, no more bears and no more cheers in the street bars enough is enough and it is time for a change of moods and attitudes. No more tears and no more fears enough is enough and it is time for a change of gears to remove the government in Eritrea carefully. Since bloodshed does not serve the purpose, it is about time to have a smooth and peaceful transition or transfer of political leadership to the Eritrean people. Referring to President Kennedy's words of wisdom, "*Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.*" Referring to Helen Keller's words of encouragement, "*Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.*" Thus, we cannot afford to spare the time and the energy to give in and to give up now, but to know exactly when enough is enough and join and support our people's movement. We must wake up from our day dreams and get up from our comfort seats and step forward in support of the youth movement to say from all directions loud and clear '*Enough is Enough*' and no more. "Learning when '*enough is enough*' is the discipline of a lifetime." God bless Eritrea and its people!