**Tesfay Aradom, Ph.D.**

**Eritrea: A beacon of stability and hope in a troubled region.**

**On May 24, 1991, the indomitable forces of the EPLA liberated the people and the land of Eritrea from the protracted and brutal colonial rule of successive Ethiopian regimes. The feudal and later self-proclaimed socialist Ethiopian regimes, despite their decisive numerical superiority, would not have been able to hold their colonial rule on Eritrea had it not been for the continual and massive flow of sophisticated arms and training provided by successive US administrations and Soviet Union. Furthermore, these nations, along with their Western and Eastern allies, continued to offer their client state all the necessary diplomatic cover throughout the duration of our war for independence. In a characteristic display of magnanimity, the EPLF led Eritrean Government established diplomatic relations with several nations including those which demonstrated their determination to deprive the people of Eritrea their inalienable right for self-determination.**

**Soon after Eritrea became a de jure independent nation in May 1993, several legal, political and military challenges transpired that tested the Government of Eritrea’s (GOE) ability and determination to defend its sovereignty and protect its territorial integrity. Faced with such events the GOE consistently adopted a constructive conflict resolution approach: to forego violence and resolve issues through negotiations, arbitration or adjudication. However, motivated by a sinister political agenda, several actors opted to unnecessarily prolong the conflicts and causing enormous human and material challenges on this nascent nation. Needless to say, such intrigues have also contributed significantly to the instability and volatility that prevails in the Horn of Africa today.**

**The first legal and territorial challenge to the nation occurred in December of 1995 when Yemeni troops occupied, by force, Eritrean land in the Hanish Archipelago. This illegal action led to further military confrontation as Eritrea was forced to defend its sovereignty. Eventually,despite its reservations,Eritrea acquiesced to the 1998 Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) ruling. It is important to note that this situation transpired only six years after its de facto independence in the aftermath of a protracted and costly, both in human and material terms, war for independence. The timing of this provocation could not have been more inauspicious since the nation had just begun implementing a much needed massive national reconstruction program.**

**A year before the resolution of the Eritrean-Yemeni conflict, the Ethiopian Government under the leadership of its deceased prime minister, was involved in insidiously provocative illegal actions both in the western and south-eastern part of the nation. They, among many, included the dismantling of the administrative structures of the Eritrean Government in the sub-region of Adi-Murug, removal of border markers implanted by the Italian colonists, encroachment on Eritrean villages and issuance of an illegal Ethiopian map which included large swaths of Eritrean territory.**

**Emboldened by external forces, the Ethiopian regime launched three unprovoked military offensives between May of 1998 and May of 2000. In December of 2000, the two nations signed a comprehensive peace agreement (CPA) in Algiers, Algeria. The AU (African Union); the EU (European Union); the UN (the United Nations) and the USA witnessed the event as guarantors. This was followed by the establishment of the EEBC (The Eritrean-Ethiopian Border Commission) in collaboration with the PCA (Permanent Court of Arbitration) in The Hague.**

**It is noteworthy that article three of the CPA calls on the AU to carry out an investigation by an independent and impartial body to determine the genesis of the conflict. This body was to be appointed by the Secretary General of the OAU (currently the AU) in consultation with the Secretary General of the United Nations. To this day, the AU has failed to shoulder its responsibility and produce a report. In April of 2002, the Border Commission rendered its previously agreed upon final and binding verdict and awarded Badme, the casus belli of the conflict, to Eritrea. Although the Ethiopian Government professes to have accepted the EEBC decision “in principle”, it refuses to allow the demarcation of the border and continues to illegally occupy sovereign Eritrean territory including Badme and its environs. In their characteristic desire to appease Ethiopia and thereby promote the economic and political regional strategy of the US, several high ranking US officials attempted but failed to introduce alternative “solutions” in blatant violation of Eritrea’s territorial integrity and national sovereignty.[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**In their relentless effort to diplomatically isolate Eritrea for its independent and constructive regional policy and unwavering adherence to a principle of social justice at home, the now deceased prime minister of the minority government in Ethiopia as a principal architect, in collusion with and senior US administration officials, hatched plans to wreak havoc in the country and bring about regime. As a result, the prime minister became the principal architect was not reticent in his claim that he was instrumental in the imposition of two illegal, unjust and punitive sanctions on Eritrea: (UNSC 1907) in 2009 and (UNSC, 2023) in 2011. The “evidence” for the sanctions such as links to Al-Shabab, providing to support to Ethiopian opposition groups, the recovery and rehabilitation tax (RRT) and the Eritrean-Djiboutian “conflict” was provided mainly by Ethiopia, disgruntled Eritrean individuals and forces bent on destroying Eritrea. With regards to the latter conflict for instance, the US administration, consistent with its past pattern of behavior, was quick to denounce Eritrea as the guilty party. However, in June of 2010, the Presidents of Eritrea and Djibouti signed a comprehensive agreement mandating the Emir of Qatar to facilitate the resolution of all outstanding issues between the two countries. Eritrea remains fully committed to the agreement and processes thereof.**

**It is an open secret that these conspiracies were aimed at holding Eritrea hostage, sow dissension among its population and seriously compromise its national integrity. However, the GOE, undaunted by such desperate intentions, continues to make impressive strides with regard to social justice as well as the political and economic conditions of the nation. Young children and the youth have access to free educational opportunities at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. The adult literacy rate in Eritrea, which stands at 80%, is higher than those in Ethiopia; South Sudan; the Sudan and Djibouti.[[2]](#footnote-2) Currently, at least 18 thousand Eritrean youth are receiving tertiary level education in Colleges spread over several regions of the country.[[3]](#footnote-3) Needless to say, this will be a remarkable boost to the nation’s human resource potential. Life expectancy in Eritrea is 66 years compared to 36 in 1991, and an average of 54 for the entire African continent.[[4]](#footnote-4) The rate of HIV/AIDS at 0.6% is the lowest in Tropical Africa.[[5]](#footnote-5) With regards to the Millennium Development Goals ( MDGs), the country achieved** **Gender Equality, Reduction of Child Mortality (MDG4), Improvement of Maternal Health (MDG5), Combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases (MDG6) before the target date and has been on track to achieve goals 2, 6 and 7.[[6]](#footnote-6)**

**In its June 2014 report the SEMG (Somali-Eritrea Monitoring Group) stated that there is no credible evidence that links Eritrea to Al-Shabab. However, Eritrea’s historical enemies are leaving no stone unturned to prevent the lifting of the illegal sanctions. Hence, they concocted of a ludicrous plan to accuse the GOE of unfounded human rights violations. Notwithstanding the fact that the GOE was actively involved in the UPR (Universal Periodic Review), which the it considers a valid mechanism in enhancing constructive dialogue and cooperation among member states, , the Human Rights Council proceeded to appoint Sheila Keetharuth as a special rapporteur (SR), in October of 2012. Despite the fact that her reports were based on outlandish accusations by disgruntled and discredited former officials bent on demonizing the GOE, economic migrants who were primarily motivated to seek political asylum in various Western nations, and elements of dubious Eritrean nationality, the Council decided in June of 2014 to escalate its abuse and established an International Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights (COI). Adding insult to injury, the COI included Sheila Keetharuth, the SR whose professional credibility and personal integrity were seriously tarnished as a result of her woefully flawed and politically motivated report, Mike Smith from Australia and Victor Dankwa from Ghana.**

**It is noteworthy that, inspired by US President Obama’s statement[[7]](#footnote-7) and former US Ambassador to Eritrea’s preposterous comments [[8]](#footnote-8), UNHCR officials in collusion with Senior US administration officials made a concerted effort to classify Eritrean economic migrants as political asylum seekers and secure them legal status in Western nations. It seems as if the squandering of very much needed financial and human resources on futile projects and flagrant breach of ethical standards are normal practice at the UN institution and eroding its integrity.**

**A few Western Nations have become increasingly concerned with the accuracy and objectivity of the HRC initiated and sanctioned reports and have, therefore, conducted their own inquiries and reached their own conclusions which are significantly at variance with the politically motivated SR and COI reports.[[9]](#footnote-9) One hopes that, as a result of their findings, these nations will revisit their policies regarding Eritrean migrants and their diplomatic relations with Eritrea.**

**GOE’s demonstrable political maturity, steadfast determination to pursue a policy of social justice and principled, consistently independent and forward-thinking diplomatic interventions have enabled the nation to become a beacon of stability, peace and hope in a region mired in chronic ethnicity and religion based strife. As Eritreans, we have demonstrated our strength and tenacity as a people and as a nation through our tested ability to stay the course even in the face of relentless adversity and intrigues and determination to continue to pursue our aspirations of a prosperous, stable and truly democratic nation. Collectively and individually, we should be neither motivated nor feel the obligation to adapt to and embrace an essentially unethical, plutocratic[[10]](#footnote-10) and sociopathic[[11]](#footnote-11) international political and socio-economic system. Furthermore, we should not exalt duplicity, voracious greed and callous disregard for the needs and rights of others as virtues that we and our future generations must emulate.**

**Wetru Awet N’hafash**

1. John R. Bolton, Surrender is not an Option. Threshold Editions, p. 347-348 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. UNICEF, 2014 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. NOKUT, 2013—Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. WHO, 2012 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. UNAIDS, 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. UNDP, 2014 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Speech at the Clinton Global Initiative Annual Meeting, 9/26/2012 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Amb. Ronald K Mcmullen’s statement on 5/5/2009 (Wikileaks) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. UK Home Office-Country Information and Guidance- Eritrea: National Military Service, March, 2015

   Eritrea: Drivers and Root Causes of Emigration, National Service and the Possibility of Return-

   Danish Immigration Service, August/October, 2014 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Noam Chomsky, N. Foreword to Derber, C. Sociopathic Society- A people’s sociology of the United States [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Derber, C. Sociopathic Society- A people’s sociology of the United States (Paradigm Publishers, 2013) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)