**We Are All Isaias Afewerki and He is us**

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There is a Facebook group, which I belong to, called:” We Are All Isaias Afewerki”. From the start, there were discussions about why we are all Isaias Afewerki and the answers were all the same worded and presented differently.

We are because he is the embodiment of what Eritrea is all about. We are because he is and has been the face of Eritrea past, present and has set a precedent for the future. We are because he is what Eritrea is all about; grit, determination, perseverance, commitment and he is a finisher. We are because he is like every one of us; humble and determined to leave within his means while focusing on the future sacrificing a great deal. We are because of his commitment to honor the martyrs by building a nation worthy of their sacrifices and, the list could go on…

One of the most important foundations to life is thankfulness to God/Allah for the small blessing. It is only then that the blessings multiply and recognizing those small blessings is a blessing in itself.

Eritrea was dealt many disadvantages. However, those disadvantages that we were dealt-with turned out to be blessing. For example the fact that Eritrea was denied independence when all African countries were handed their “freedom” turned out to be a major blessing. It gave Eritrea the opportunity and time to see the entrapments that are laid-out ahead in plain day light. Eritrea learned from them. There is a saying in Tigrigniya, “let him give you an example and not make you one.” Eritrea was lucky to have-had examples of how not to be.

Eritrea needed direction on how to chart directions away from the failing of the others that regressed for many reasons including corruption with few on the top echelon sucking the foundations-away from the people to ruins. These indiscretions are rampant around the world particularly Africa.

The struggle for the independence of Eritrea was a blessing in a sense because it became a struggle for freedom not only from the chains of colonialism but also from the mental slavery that the west placed upon Africans.

The struggle gave Eritrea a space to deal with the political upheavals Eritrea faced during the first half of the struggle that could have undone the revolution. The ethnic, religious and regional divisions the Eritrean revolution inherited was paralyzing. These divisions and differences led to a civil war that lasted for years frustrating many that wanted to see Eritrea focus on the enemies. The infighting triggered massive exodus of Eritreans into Sudan and other places around the globe.

Eritrea also had nothing in terms of organizational structures, resources and support to start the struggle. There was no standing organized army. The tasks at hand seemed impossible or insurmountable, and the odds were stacked against Eritrea. The possibilities that Eritrea could eject Ethiopia a country backed by US, Israel and the USSR was almost unthinkable to the world. Then as now Ethiopia received massive military, political, financial, diplomatic and other assistances at the expense of Eritrea.

What Eritrea had were determined people that want independence, peace and life of their choosing. Eritrea had people willing to work hard, to sacrifice and pay all that they have in life that is necessary for freedom. Eritrea had people that are willing to endure the rigors, hardships and pain necessary for victory. Eritrea is blessed by people that want to chart their own course using uncharted ways and strategies.

It was miraculous because what Eritreans carried was a stick compared to the tanks that they fought against. One can easily say that Eritrea had only sling-shots to throw stones to fight war planes. That was all they had. Eritreans used ingenuity and illusiveness to elude the enemy and fought against organized armies with rifles.

In the process Eritreans learned to scavenge/rip-off the enemy’s arms and used it against them effectively. For the first time in the history of Africa, a well-trained and armed army was outmaneuvered by rebels armed with determination, brilliance and will.

At the end, Eritreans armed themselves with armaments they took away from enemy soldiers that they killed and captured in battle and used it to build a national army.

Eritreans fought Ethiopia and the superpowers with everything they had. They fought Ethiopian soldiers and intelligence from within Ethiopian-held cities and territories risking their lives. They fought the fight for freedom from every corner around the globe. They were resourceful, brilliant and dedicated.

That became yet another blessing that benefited independent Eritrea. It created a network of organized Eritreans in every corner of the world. The traditions and values that were established then are serving Eritrea in this challenging world in ways unseen anywhere. It is saving Eritrea from many threats that are threatening to wipe clean the history of the martyrs and to undo the hard won independence.

Central to these struggles was a group of Eritrean women and men that are farsighted, brilliant, dedicated, imaginative and fearless. They were humble, down-to-earth and cognizant on the fact that Eritrea’s number one asset is her people. They lead the struggle with a realistic approach to life grounded around established traditional, ethical, religious and cultural values.

They exploited those values and harnessed a work ethic that became a way of life in Eritrea. That work ethic was designed to empower the people and free Eritrea from handouts. They taught Eritrea only collective efforts can yield desired outcome, victory.

They supported their aim with a slogan that reflects the true nature of Eritrea, “Victory to the Masses.”

They trekked the hard unpaved roads of Eritrea believing, “Our struggle is long and VICTORY certain.” They trekked unfazed by distractions meant to derail the struggle.

They ignored the noises then as now saying,” let the DOGS bark as the camel strides.” And they arrived. They arrived into a new nation victorious led by Bitsay, Tegadalay, His Excellency President Isaias Afwerki.

As a new nation, Eritrea required her leaders to meet certain requirements. The leader needed to be strong, visionary, committed, selfless and experienced. It required a strong character with unshakeable faith on the people of Eritrea. It required incorruptible character that will not sell the people as they do all over Africa. It required someone with a military-like discipline, with a work ethic, unfazed by the glitziest and glamour. It required someone that knows the people of Eritrea and has personal attachments, understanding, compassion and genuine affection. It required someone that understands the anguishes, hardship and painful struggles that Eritreans endured to get her.

Eritreans needed someone who knows their homes and families; someone who is like them. Above all, they wanted someone that will honor their sons, daughters, mothers and fathers that perished. They needed someone that can carry the mantle in their honor everywhere.

What makes for a great partnership between a country and leadership and make everything work even when things look bleak and at their worst is that all Eritreans assume their roles effectively. Every Eritrean plays his or her part. That is what brought independence, what saves Eritrea during hardships and enable it to persevere. Eritrea does not need a ruler. Eritrea needs someone that can be a captain of the Eritrean ship in uncharted waters.

In that regard Eritrea is blessed by a unique leader that the world has ever seen. His Excellency President Isaias Afewerki is one of the greatest gifts Eritrea is blessed with. It is not common in Eritrea to praise a leader. Eritreans are squeamish since all have contributed mightily and equally. It is understandable because there are those that have given their life, their entire families, and limbs. Eritreans have lost their near and dear to worship anyone.

President Isaias met all the requirements that Eritrea required and more. He is the source of strength, unity, the voice, the parental figure, the brother and warrior in trenches. He is the guide that points Eritrea in the right direction. He led the mothers in a distant field toward the water that can quench the thirst of child. He is a farmer roaming throughout the entire country greening the land wherever he goes. He is the teacher that believes all kids deserve and must have the same opportunities to learn. He wants all Eritrean kids to thrive in life and in the process lift Eritrea to the highest of standards. He is the friend of the doctor that saw a nation’s health as a national imperative and built medical schools and facilities throughout Eritrea. He is a man that knows military strategy, intelligence, security and geopolitics. He is the man that spearheaded one of the strongest armies in the world and created a national service program to ensure perpetuity.

In the last 50 years Eritrea achieved miracles with brilliance of Eritrea’s leaders and a leader. When the history of the world looks back on this era and particularly relative to African nations, Eritrean leaders led by His Excellency will be looked at as the greatest role models. Their commitment to freedom and will to build a nation by relying on itself is unmatched. What is even mind-boggling is the simplicity of the formulas they employed.

It is a formula that just focused on the masses. It is formula that taught to be aware, organize and get armed, for life.

In life, the average person is limited to certain accomplishments mainly personal. Eritrea’s leaders have done wonders. And President Isaias epitomizes the best of them. He is selfless, focused, brilliant and a true Eritrean who made Eritrea, his life’s work. He lives Eritrea. Eritrea is his mission, his way of life and life. He has dedicated his life to Eritrea.

That commitment is the reason why he was able to oversee Eritrea transform through critical stages that propelled Eritrea into the world stage that we are witnessing today. He saw the beginning and lived the transformation. He experienced all the ups and downs of the Eritrean revolution from atop. He lived through the hardships to see the independence of Eritrea by defeating enemies. He directed the overthrowing of the Derg regime and facilitated a regime change. He ushered Eritrea into a new Era of independence through the referendum and produced the signature that engraved Eritrea at the United Nations.

Soon after independence, Eritrea was challenged as a nation militarily, politically, economically and in every conceivable way by enemies that wanted to reverse a hard won independence. His Excellency again guided the nation with strength, and showed Eritrea the way-out onto a new platform.

The simplest way to describe it will be to liken it to a nuclear submarine navigating through the darkest and most hostile of deep waters under extreme pressures. The President has guided Eritrea through the deep waters into freedom.

To say we are living in the most hostile part of the world is understatement. All one has to do is think of Djibouti, Yemen, Somalia, Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia and think about the internal strife in these nations. Think about the geopolitical interests of the superpowers that want to destroy any semblance of nationalistic attitudes anywhere in the region. Think about the greedy that want to exploit our riches at the expense of the people. Yet, only Eritreans are truly enjoying their nation in its truest of form as one communally in unison with President Isaias in observance.

Not to say that Eritrea is unaffected but relative to the raging fire and destitution plaguing the region, Eritrea is peaceful because of leaders that bought Eritrea time and anchored the people in united purposes. That is the hard truth that the enemies are finding hard to swallow and forced to accept.

In an effort to subjugate Eritrea and make the people of Eritrea kneel and bow; with the idea, if you cut the head the body will fall; the enemies of Eritrea waged major demonizing campaigns against His Excellency President Isaias Afewerki and wanted to the takeaway the president from the people.

In a sense they said the President Isaias is Eritrea. The reality however, where Eritrea is today is the cumulative result of the hard work of the people. I am and we are Isaias Afewerki because we all stand for one common purpose, Eritrea

Hence, His Excellency President Isaias is Eritrean representing Eritrea, his people. And the people are saying yes! Eritreans are flocking to New York from Europe, Canada, and West coast and all over US to show him support. They are flocking in busses, planes and cars spending thousands to say “We are All Isaias Afewerki. He is us, we are him and we are Eritrea and, nothing can change that”!

This piece was done in September of 2011 when President Isaias came to New York. I found it relevant today as well.

Eternal Glory to Our Martyrs

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