"INDEPENDENT ERITREA"
A CRUMBLING NATION AND A TRAGEDY,
BORN OF BASELESS FEAR,
MEANINGLESS HATRED
AND A MOUNTAIN OF LIES

(PART 1)

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"Independent Eritrea"

A crumbling nation and a tragedy, born of baseless fear, meaningless Hatred and a mountain of lies

For the leaders of this people cause them to err, and they that are led by them are destroyed.

Isaiah 9:16  (KJV)

On the 19th of November, 2012 and 23 November, 2012 Asmarino.com run a couple of articles entitled Asmara’s Crumbling Buildings: Let the pictures speak - Part I and Part II which showed the pitiful state of disrepair that the city of Asmara is in today. Like all things in Eritrea, the pictures do show that the land and people of Eritrea are on the verge of demise with no or little hope of rescue. The writer Bana, from Asmara (which by the way I would like to congratulate for the excellent expose, and a job well done) describes the total destruction this way:-

"Asmara is only a shadow and a skeleton of its former self. Asmara’s acclaimed beauty and cleanliness is being reduced to a myth under the PFDJ gang in the face of increasing decay of its buildings, dilapidation of its infrastructure and fetid streets. A city that was spared the onslaught of battling armies in 1991 is now under the serious threat of disintegration in the hands of the so-called its own sons and daughters", and asks the question "What is the PFDJ up to?"

The decay and total destruction of the capital city reminded me also of the complete destruction and annihilation of the Eritrean people by the so called liberation struggle "Sewera Eritrea". These so called liberators step by step waged a sinister and fatal campaign against all segments of the Eritrean people for over half a century. Not only the city of Asmara but also the Eritrean people are only a shadow and skeleton of their former selves now. Who is really to blame? Is it only the PFDJ, EPLF, ELF or the people of Eritrea collectively.

One can say that this tragic situation came about sometimes with the direct support and participation of the very people who are the victims now. Sometimes it took the form of tacit approval by the Eritrean people who never thought of questioning the motives, agendas and actions of the leaders of the so called "Eritrean independence movement".
As things deteriorated from bad to worse the people kind of gave it silent consent and accepted the state of Affairs without any meaningful objection. Some were even apologetic for the actions of the very mafia group which was devouring them and their children.

A significant portion of the Eritrean people with or without understanding gave the Asmara mafia group an unrestricted power and unconditional authority to act at its own discretion during the 30 years liberation struggle and during the last 21 years as a government of a sovereign nation. This Carte blanche authority bestowed upon Isayas and his hoodlums enabled him to impose upon them his own agenda unrestricted.

Eritrea as a nation and its people find themselves at a cross roads. Their young nation which appeared on the map of the world as a sovereign state only a couple of decades ago is on its death bed breathing it's last breath. The so called “independence war” which was supposed to bring an end to the "suffering of the people" has in fact aggravated the agony of the people to such unprecedented and hitherto unheard level. In fact Eritreans are worse off than when they started the liberation struggle.

Courtesy of their so called liberators, Eritreans have either become slaves and surfs in their homeland, or are languishing in the countless prisons and dungeons or have been forced to be stateless sojourners scattered around the globe. Tens of thousands were killed and maimed in the adventurist war of the Asmara government or perished in the Sahara desert, their organs harvested in Sinai, or drowned in the high seas of the Mediterranean.

Eritrean parents, stunned by the turn of events and the tragic fate of their beloved sons and daughters, are groaning in despair and wailing in agony day in and day out. In their twilight years their life filled with tragedy are going down to their graves with sorrow. In some cases there is no one to give them a decent burial. Their children who were supposed to take care of them and bury them in dignity are either dead, imprisoned or somewhere in the world looking for asylum. Thousands of parents most of them aged and infirm are imprisoned accused of facilitating the escape of their children.

Every Eritrean in all walks of life is affected severely. Like cancer, suffering and misery has spread in every life of Eritreans. The demise of the Eritrean nation, barring an unforeseen supernatural miracle, looks inevitable. Eritreans who were a free people before the start of the so called liberation war, are now slaves of their own revolution (Sewerana), centuries after slavery was abolished in the world.

The simple act of worship and prayer to the almighty is a criminal offence and needs the blessing and permission of the supreme leader Isayas Afeworki who does not tolerate anyone who considers their highest allegiance to God. Thousands including the Aged Patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox church, are incarcerated just for their belief.
The basic and fundamental God given human rights, like the freedom of opinion and expression, peaceful assembly and association, religious freedom, freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention, freedom of mobility, the freedom to freely elect and change their government are unheard of. To ask for the respect of these human rights and civil liberties would be to commit suicide. Freedom of speech is suppressed to such a degree that people are jailed not only for criticizing the government but also for supposedly “thinking of criticizing” the government.

The Asmara regime’s coercion and subjugation machinery are unparalleled. It has built countless and mysterious network of jails and prisons all over the nation and has more prisons than schools. Prisons are filled beyond capacity and empty containers are used to house the overflow. It has perfected the art of torture to such a degree, that the violence, horror, and crimes that are committed in these prisons are very horrendous. No one actually knows the number of detainees in these secret prisons, it is estimated they are in the tens of thousands.

The economy is in shambles, mainly depending on smuggling and illegal arms trade and human trafficking. Health Care facilities have decayed to such a degree, that it is better to die at home than attempt to get any medical care.

Begging has become commonplace in the streets of Asmara. At bus stations, and churches on street corners, children and women are seen begging. These are respected people who had a dignified life, but were reduced to beggars due to the death or conscription of the bread winner of the family and the misguided policies of the Asmara regime.

Prostitution has become rampant in Asmara and Massawa. Young girls of Eritrea had to engage in the world's oldest trade to augment the incomes of their families. Asmara has become the flesh market for Sudanese tourists.

After half a century of meaningless struggle and sacrifice Eritrea has become a vision out of hell and have harvested a bunker crop of misery, death, destitution and degradation. In short just like the buildings in the city of Asmara, the nation and lives of its people has crumbled beyond repair.
As Yosief Gebrehiwot in his article "The Circular Journey in Search of Eritrea: A "World Distance" that Never Was" put it;

"What makes the revolutionary journey that Eritreans have embarked on in the past 50 years a March of Folly is that, after all the prohibitive human cost it required to reach the destination, it turned out to be a circular one that ends exactly at the very point where it all started – and that is, under best scenario. If not, the desperate attempt not go back to the starting point, by prolonging the Ghedli detour indefinitely, will be the end of Eritrea as a nation. Already that quixotic fight against gravity has been the main cause for all the major disasters that has befallen Eritrea in the last five decades. And the latest attempt by Shaebia to do just that (as in the Ghedli detour enforced in the National Service) is unraveling the nation at a dizzying pace, as it is being hollowed out demographically, militarily, educationally, economically and socially".

Yes, Eritrea was hollowed out in every aspect by its own children (deqina) the very revolution (Ghedli) that promised it heaven on Earth after independence.

The name Eritrea has become synonymous with refugees the world over. In Western capitals if someone says that there are a lot of refugees in a given area, it simply means there are a lot of Eritrean refugees in the area. I for one would not be surprised if English word dictionaries like the Oxford English dictionary begin using Eritrea as an example to describe the word refugee. Such is the degree of degradation of the Eritrean people at present.

How did this come about. Why is it Eritrea a land of death and destruction, agony and despair? Why is it that the very "Ghedli" (revolution) which they supported and nurtured as "deqina" (our children) turned on them and is devouring them? and who is going to rescue the people and their land from a sure demise?

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains: from whence shall my help come?" cries King David the psalmist on Psalms 121:1. The verse denotes a condition where there was imminent danger where no help or aid was visible. We can utter the same cry that the Psalmist did and wail by saying "Eritrea from whence comes your help?" unless we wake up, identify and expose the half a century of deception by the Eritrean revolution "Ghedli".

On the one hand there are the fanatic Isayas loyalist who are staunch supporters of the regime mainly from the Diaspora who even in the face of such calamities are blaming others (CIA, Ethiopia, etc.) for the colossal failure of the Asmara regime. These "Meat Heads" to borrow a phrase from the 1970s American sitcom "All in the family" are "dead from the neck up". They are dull and stupid individuals who have no brains of their own, and repeat like parrots whatever the Asmara government tells them during the numerous seminars and festivals.
Next to the security apparatus of the Asmara regime, this group is by far the most dangerous one, because of their financial and political support to the regime. They also double up as an extension of the spy network of the regime around the world. They assist the regime in spying, harassing, reporting on the Diaspora and fund raising. They are equally responsible for the crimes of the Isayas regime in destroying the Eritrean people. So no rescue is expected from this angle.

There are also the traditional opposition groups who are members of numerous toothless organizations with no meaningful support or constituency. These aging, powerless and crippled group which are mainly remnants of the ELF and EPLF are split into more than 40 factions and are simply a pathetic and weak excuse for a political movement. Thus no rescue is expected from them too. They need to do a lot of house cleaning before they amount to anything.

There are also a new breed of Eritreans that have appeared on the opposition movement arena in the last few years. Most likely inspired by the Arab spring uprising and emboldened by the UNSC sanctions on Eritrea they have flourished in all corners of the world wherever the Eritrean Diaspora lives. All of them have the prefix “youth” in the naming of their respective organizations. They have staged demonstrations, have done their share of exposing the nature of the Eritrean regime and surprisingly, have also taken some bold actions in physically confronting PFDJ officials and operatives in different parts of the world.

Even though these groups label themselves as youth, they actually are not. Mostly they are in their mid thirties and early forties. In general terms, youth is defined as the period of transition from childhood to adulthood. The UN General Assembly first defined youth in 1985 for the international Youth year “as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24, without prejudice to other definitions of Member State (A/40/256 paragraph 19). The Commonwealth of Nations, formerly known as the British Commonwealth, defines youth as persons between the ages of 15 and 29, adults being those between 30 and 64.

Based on the above, it appears that the youth groups that are popping up with new energy on the Eritrean opposition stage are in actual fact adult organizations. These “youth groups” tend to keep their distance from the traditional opposition and prefer to work separately on their own. But they still have not managed to attract the vast majority of their own age group nor of that of the youth which are under 30 years of age.
Neither have they so far been able to come up with any sort of document, program, charter or manifesto detailing their objectives. They are still at their infantile stage. They have not seriously assessed or diagnosed the root cause of the Eritrean problem and most seem to be striving to reform the EPLF and continue the so called "legacy of the martyrs". They are attempting to solve the problem with the same way that miserably failed for the last 50 years. As Albert Einstein said "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results". They seemed doomed to failure from the start unless they prove to us otherwise.

And there are the silent majority mostly the youth. Those Eritreans who are under the age of 30 which happen to constitute the majority of the Eritrean people. This group is absolutely silent and does not identify itself with any of the opposition group, nor the so called "youth groups". It is expressing its opposition to the Isayas government by abandoning the nation in droves. This is the group that has been victimized and is paying the highest price as a result of the state of affairs in Eritrea. These youngsters were practically toddlers (under the age of 10) when the EPLF captured Eritrea and declared independence.

For this age group the very word Eritrea means suffering, war, death, slavery, forcible recruitment. They have no romantic attachment to the "Zebene Gedli" the struggle era. Their nationalist feeling is very low. In their minds the word Eritrea simply means suffering and death and want to run away from it as far as possible by any means possible. They have no point of contrast with which to compare current situation in Eritrea as they were too young to remember the Ethiopian (Haile Selassie or Derg) era.

They have no lost love for Eritrea and do not care what happens to their home land. Eritrea for them is a nation of stolen youth, camouflaged slavery and a land of one vast military camp celebrating death. One thing they want is to somehow escape to some corner of the globe, find asylum, get married and live their lives in peace.

They have been voting with their feet for a decade, telling the world in their silent way that their so called "independent nation" is hell on earth and not fit for any human being to live in. They are very daring and willing to pay any sacrifice to escape and have dared the Sinai desert, paved a road through the Sahara, boarded rickety fishing vessels to cross the Mediterranean Sea, at enormous risk for their lives to find a safe haven in some corner of the globe.

In their country of asylum they are daring enough to ask for the respect of their rights as refugees and have even staged demonstrations as witnessed in Israel. But they will not participate in demonstrations or other political activities to expose the regime that caused their sojourn.
The words "Struggle, Country, Eritrea, Flag, Nationalism" are empty phrases and do not mean anything to them. They have no confidence in the opposition, for them the opposition and the government are only two sides of the same coin. They measure the so called "Eritrean struggle for independence" by its end result or it's fruit. They are result oriented and "Tegadilekum entay ametsikum" What did you bring by struggling is their answer. There is no quantifiable advantage or benefit that the Eritrean revolution "Sewera Ertra" brought about for them to see. Therefore in their eyes it was a complete waste and a futile exercise in meaningless military adventurism of which they do not want to have any part of. By far this group seems to have a better understanding of the meaningless struggle for independence. No rescue is expected from this corner too at least for the time being.

It is time for Eritreans to begin thinking out of the box that the era of struggle for independence “Zebene Ghedli” defined for us. It is time for soul searching. Circumstances dictate that it is time to propel to the forefront and discuss the hitherto taboo topics and issues that have thrown the nation and its people into an abysmal situation that they find themselves in today.

Have Eritreans ever owned the revolution during the past 50 years or were they used as tools to achieve the personal goals and ambitions of individuals who had an axe to grind? Were they used by people like Woldeab Woldemariam, Abdelqader Kebire and Isayas Afeworki, that are driven only by hate and individual self-interest, with hidden agenda? Who runs Eritrea now and where is it headed? These are some of the topics which Eritreans need to discuss in earnest and define before their demise as a people.

Who were the main actors who embarked the Eritrean people on this destructive journey. Who actually were the so called "heroes or fathers of the Eritrean revolution" like Woldeab Woldemariam, Abdelqader Kebire, Hamid Idris Awate and Isayas Afeworki? We can probably be able to use deductive logic based on their background and persona to arrive at their motives. Why did these people embark us on such a destructive road. And why did Eritreans get gripped gradually with a collective madness and followed them with religious fervor.

How and what should be done to rescue Eritrea and Eritreans from the brink of destruction both as a people and as a nation.
We can safely say that the following individuals played the most dominant role in the Eritrean struggle and could represent the different groups and other actors in the Eritrean revolution.

1. Abdelqader Kebire - propelled by extreme hate of the Christian Abyssinian Empire

2. Sheik Ibrahim Sultan - representing the Muslims of lowland Eritrea and who was motivated by fear of being subjugated by the Christian Abyssinian Empire

3. Woldeab Woldemariam - consumed by extreme hate to Amharas and the Shoa dynasty

4. Hamid Idris Awate - A criminal outlaw "Shifta" who shot the first bullet in the name of the revolution

5. Isayas Afeworki and the students from the Christian highland who joined the struggle in droves from the middle of the 1960s up to the mid 70s, and who carried the revolution to the conclusion of its declared objective i.e. secession.

(To be continued in Part 2)