



**A Call for**  
**Eritrean Renaissance**  
**through Peace, Justice and Reconciliation**

Prepared by concerned citizens of Eritrea

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# A Call for Eritrean Renaissance through Peace, Justice and Reconciliation

## Summary

Independent concerned Eritreans from inside and outside the country are calling for peace and reconciliation within our community. For too long, we have been deeply divided along regional, religious, political and other disruptive lines. The time is now for us to achieve the dream of a peaceful and prosperous Eritrea.

To achieve this dream, we need to band together to ensure we safeguard the following rights that have been disregarded by the current establishment.

- **Release of Eritreans unjustly imprisoned without due process of law**
- **Scheduling of General elections**
- **Establishment of a functional National Assembly to represent the people**
- **Limiting National Service duration**
- **Right to assemble and form social and political organizations**
- **Freedom to practice any religion**
- **Unrestrained participation in business and other economic activity**
- **Transparency and accountability of government affairs**
- **Demarcation of unresolved borders by UN cartographers**
- **Opening independent media outlets and supporting freedom of speech**
- **Right to legally leave and return to Eritrea without fear of physical harm or imprisonment**

Not only is it our right, but our duty to work together to end one of the darkest chapters of our nation and turn Eritrea into a progressive nation where all citizens can celebrate peace, prosperity and dignity. Let us take leading roles in shaping the future of the Eritrean political and economic landscapes. These efforts can start with the scheduling of meetings and conferences focused on forgiveness, reconciliation and confidence building.

We call upon well-meaning Eritrean government officials and the military, to do your part to transition Eritrea into becoming a country that is governed by the Constitution and the rule of law. We pledge to support you and call on you to uphold the promise of Eritreans' long struggle for independence and liberty, and to do your part to return power to the people.

We commend international governments and entities who issued messages of support toward the Ethio-Eritrean peace initiative. Your support should not stop there. Now, the two countries must be encouraged to immediately demarcate the border. Furthermore, agreements and deals that Isaias is signing are entered into out of the public eye and without scrutiny by responsible government bodies. We will seek every legal avenue possible to reverse agreements signed by an illegitimate government that is deemed to rob the wealth, land and property of the Eritrean people. Lastly, as a result of the political problems in Eritrea, Eritreans are scattered worldwide as refugees, they deserve every help they can get to temporarily settle where they are seeking refuge.

**We, the undersigned independent concerned citizens of Eritrea, support all efforts that lead us toward harmony, love, respect and collaboration and we will play a positive role in bridging differences and building trust. We urge you to join us and pledge to work towards achieving this dream.**



## I. ERITREA AT A CROSS ROADS

Eritrea is once again at a crucial juncture of major opportunities and threats - and which path it takes will have serious and enduring ramifications. It is a choice that will affect all involved parties and it should accordingly be decided by all involved parties. The prospect of a lasting peace with Ethiopia should not be allowed to threaten Eritrea's hard-won sovereignty or interests. This peace must be preceded by peace and prosperity for Eritreans. A genuine peace and the settlement of disputes would create better lives for Eritreans and Ethiopians, while its failure endangers residents of both countries with the prospect of never-ending conflicts and misery. It is therefore essential that peace-making and a transition to democracy be waged simultaneously.

The stakes are too high for Eritreans to be complacent. It is necessary that we as a people rise to the challenge and direct the course of our future toward eliminating tyranny in all its forms. The goal is to see a better Eritrea that is worthy of the 50-plus years of struggle and sacrifices. That is why we the undersigned Concerned citizens of Eritrea call upon a new generation of Eritreans to carry the torch of the brave generation before it and ensure that the current situation leads to a new chapter of peace, tolerance, forgiveness, reconciliation and justice by following concrete and actionable plans.

### **Peace with Ethiopia**

The ultimate goals of Eritrea's long struggle for self-determination and independence were peace, economic prosperity, democracy and justice. The tens of thousands of sacrifices made by Eritreans in their efforts to advance the cause of freedom during the liberation struggle were made so that future generations could enjoy lives worthy of their sacrifices. Peace has always been at the heart of Eritreans' enormous sacrifices. It is also for this reason that Eritreans have wholeheartedly welcomed the end of the No-War/No-Peace stalemate after nearly two decades. Given the concerns that are listed below, we the undersigned Concerned citizens of Eritrea are cautiously optimistic about the end of hostilities between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

As Eritreans and Ethiopians welcome peace, it is also equally important that they ensure the seeds of future conflicts are not left in the ground. The full and immediate demarcation of the border would not only ensure the end of the conflict but also eliminate the possibilities of future conflicts. The success of the July 9, 2018 Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship between Eritrea and Ethiopia needs to be predicated on the full and transparent implementation of the border demarcation.

### ***Causes for Concern***

- One month after the peace agreement is signed, no measures have been taken to ease the tension at the border.
- There is no definite timeline and no details have been set regarding when UN cartographers will begin the border demarcation process, nor have details concerning how the UN will be involved been determined.
- There is no timeline for when residents may be able to return to their homes.
- The public has been kept in the dark regarding details of agreements that have been made.
- Because of the ongoing regional alliances, there are fears that Eritrea and Ethiopia may be dragged into regional conflicts.
- The agreement signed between the two countries may cause Eritrea to become involved in Ethiopian internal affairs.



## **Reconciliation among Eritreans**

The impact of the war, a lack of good governance, economic hardship and internal and external displacements have all been reasons for the atomization and fragmentation of Eritreans. Eritreans are deeply divided along regional, religious, political and other divisive lines.

It is long overdue that all Eritreans come together and work toward reconciliation, healing, forgiveness, and renewal. Part of the value of preserving Eritrea's future is to re-establish harmony and mutual respect among the people. We, the undersigned Concerned citizens of Eritrea support all efforts that lead us toward harmony, love, respect and collaboration and we will play a positive role in bridging differences and building trust.

### ***Causes for Concern***

- **In the last 20 years, Eritrean communities in the diaspora were divided by region, religion, and political affiliation.**
- **Vocal demands by extremists in both camps have contributed to the silence of the majority.**
- **The presence of a police state in Eritrea has instilled fear and mistrust among the people and the government continues to follow a divide-and-rule strategy.**

## **II. GOOD GOVERNANCE**

### **Transparency**

Transparency is an important indicator of a country's good governance. When key and major decisions are made, it is important to keep the decision-making process transparent and keep the public well informed along the way. The Eritrean government is known for secrecy and there are countless examples that show its lack of transparency with devastating effects such as the Border War of 1998-2000; the imprisonment or dismissal of government officials; the closure of independent media outlets; and the handling of other national affairs. We the undersigned Concerned citizens of Eritrea advocate for and seek to bring about transparency in any government action that impacts the lives of Eritreans.

### ***Causes for Concern:***

- The Eritrean people are always kept in the dark in all national matters.
- Eritrea is supposedly making deals and agreements about port usage and other military treaties with the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and possibly other countries without involvement of the relevant government agencies and informing the public. Without the necessary deliberations, there is great concern that Eritrea's national interests are not properly safeguarded.

### **Accountability**

Checks and balances ensure that matters of national importance are handled appropriately. Good governance requires that leaders are accountable to the people they serve. Eritrea does not follow a legal framework in which the president is accountable to the National Assembly or other entities. At this important juncture in our history, we the undersigned Concerned citizens of Eritrea demand that a new generation of Eritreans take it upon themselves to stand united and work together to install a system of governance that is accountable to the people.



### ***Causes for Concern:***

- It appears that Isaias Afwerki is increasingly making irrational decisions on his own, and there is no evidence that cabinet members are reversing those decisions.
- As critical national and regional issues are decided, the silence of ministers, commanders, administrators, high-level party members and national security personnel creates a state of confusion and fear and discourages the active participation of Eritreans.

### **Rule of Law**

It is almost impossible to expect good governance in the absence of the rule of law. Transparency and accountability encourage people to trust their government and one another. Stability, economic progress, social harmony and the freedom of citizens cannot be guaranteed without the rule of law. That is why we the undersigned Concerned citizens of Eritrea are willing to work with anyone who is ready to contribute to the cause of Eritrea building a government that submits to, obeys and is regulated by the rule of law.

### ***Causes for Concern:***

- If the country continues to be ruled without law, there is a strong possibility that problems will continue to grow to the point of no return.
- Indefinite national service and the incarceration of senior government officials, journalists, and religious leaders continue to plague the country and rob it of any belief that good governance might lie in the future.
- The rule of one man is not only subjecting Eritreans to crimes against humanity but also corrupting our people's cultures and traditions.
- The state of lawlessness poses a threat to the very existence of Eritrea as a nation.

### **Economic opportunities**

For the past two decades, Eritreans have not been able to actively participate in investing and creating jobs for their fellow citizens inside the country. Instead, many of them have ended up creating enterprising companies elsewhere in Africa, the Middle East and beyond. Now, with the Ethio-Eritrean peace agreement, better economic opportunities may come, but Eritreans are at a great disadvantage. Eritreans who have been serving in the National Service, and by extension their families, are at a disadvantage in having little to no means of competing against foreign investors. The rush for a short-term gain may also put investors at the mercy of nonexistent fiscal, monetary, trade and regulatory policies. We the undersigned Concerned citizens of Eritrea call upon all professionals and academia to organize by area of interest and to work with the change seeking community to advocate for Eritrea in a way that embraces advances in higher education, business, technology, medicine and other professions.

### ***Causes for Concern:***

- Unless Eritrea experiences a complete transformation and a new generation of Eritreans is empowered both economically and politically to turn around the direction of our nation, there is a strong possibility that Eritreans may continue to be treated as second class citizens in their own country.
- The indefinite nature of national service has imposed a tremendous burden on the country and many Eritrean families. So far, the government has shown no readiness to change its policy, which means that the exodus of Eritrean youth will continue.
- Inviting Ethiopian business communities to invest in Eritrea before opening investment opportunities to Eritreans is a recipe for further complications in the political environment between Eritrea and Ethiopia.



### **III. CALL TO ACTION**

#### **Message to the New Generation of Eritreans**

The government of Eritrea has completely failed to provide basic human rights and economic opportunities for its citizens. The time has come for all concerned parties to work more than ever to end one of the darkest chapters of our nation and turn Eritrea into a progressive nation where all citizens can celebrate peace, harmony, prosperity, dignity and equality. In addition, this is the time to press forward for change and leave a big mark. It is high time that we take leading roles in shaping the future of the Eritrean political and economic landscapes. Rapid succession must take place to introduce new ideas and new styles of leadership. These efforts can start with organizing meetings and conferences for forgiveness, reconciliation and confidence building. We the undersigned Concerned citizens of Eritrea are here to work with you to fulfil our obligations, focus on the main challenges and positively contribute toward change in Eritrea.

#### **Message to the Eritrean People**

It is always better when the people and their government are working together for the betterment of the country. It is also important to remember that governments should be designed to serve the interest of the people and not the other way around.

- It is only your active participation and involvement that can bring change.
- You must demand more information about the current events in Eritrea, including the peace process and business dealings with Ethiopia and other countries.
- You shouldn't have to wait to be given permission in matters that concern your homeland. You must speak up and protest for your rights.
- You have a proud history of succeeding against all odds and you can do that again.

#### **Message to Eritrean Government Officials and the Military**

As you know, the Transitional Government of Eritrea, formed in 1994, has been rendered nonfunctional. As a result, Isaias Afwerki and his small number of confidants have been making decisions that have far-reaching implications for the country, threatening its future. We the undersigned Concerned citizens of Eritrea call upon you, the well-meaning military and civilian officials inside Eritrea, to do your part to transition Eritrea into a country that is governed by the constitution and the rule of law. We once again call on you to uphold the promise of Eritreans' long struggle for independence and liberty, and to do your part to return power to the people.

#### **Message to the International Community**

We commend the governments, international bodies and non-governmental organizations that issued messages of support toward the Ethio-Eritrean peace initiative. Your support should not stop there. The two countries must now be encouraged to immediately demarcate the border and transition to democracy so that a lasting peace can begin to take root.

All types of deals that Isaias and his confidants are signing do not meet the minimum requirements of a legitimate and functioning government. In addition, all these deals are signed out of the public eye, with no scrutiny by responsible government bodies. We the undersigned Concerned citizens of Eritrea call upon the international community dealing with Eritrea to respect the sovereignty and interests of the Eritrean people.



We will seek every legal avenue possible to reverse agreements signed by an illegitimate government that is intended to rob the wealth, land and property of the Eritrean people.

Because of the political problems in Eritrea, Eritreans remain scattered all over the world in search of safe refuge. As refugees, they deserve all the help they can be provided so that they can live without fear or misery until the conditions improve in their homeland and their safe return.

## **IV. PAVING THE PATH TO LASTING PEACE**

Eritreans now stand at a significant crossroads. We can continue to be silent and uninformed observers of our fate or be active participants in guiding the course of our future. A new chapter of peace and prosperity can begin only if we take necessary steps to work for it. We urge you to participate in your capacity to bring positive change for Eritrea.

Let us stand together for Eritrea and Eritreans!

Concerned citizens of Eritrea

