

# Arrivederci Esayas

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Eritrea is at it again, and as usual the tiny state will get away with murder. The utter humiliation of Ethiopia continues and shows no sign of abating. Why oh why do we allow Eritrea to trample all over us? Why is the EPRDF government not taking action to stop Esayas from sending surrogate organizations to destabilize Ethiopia? For how long do we have to put up with this? Is there no end to it? Why should innocent tourists who were minding their own business be murdered in the most barbaric way possible? Is this not an act of war? Why were the tourists left to their own devices in an area frequented by terrorists that are trained and armed by Eritrea? Not long ago European tourists were kidnapped from the same locality, and it seems no lessons were drawn from this and other experiences that are causing immense damages to the images of Ethiopia.

Stability is an essential prerequisite for the inflow of foreign capital necessary to drag the country out of abject poverty. Why would a tourist loaded with hard currency consider visiting Ethiopia if his/her safety could not be guaranteed? Why would a potential investor contemplate setting up a business in an unstable country? Is this not obvious to our leaders who come up with grandiose projects like the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) the necessity for the creation of a conducive climate that would entice tourists and potential investors to flock to the country in droves? Why should Eritrea be tolerated when it is doing its utmost to scupper all efforts to bring about a meaningful change to the lives millions of our people? What needs to be done in order to alter the situation? Should we just wait for the Eritrean people to rise up and remove the dictator, and in the meantime, things continue as previously? Or do we simply wait for the inept 'Eritrean opposition', funded by the Ethiopian government, to do us a favour in disposing of the tyrant? The last time we heard, the 'opposition' had a heated discussion that lasted for weeks in the comforts of Addis. The agenda was to ascertain whether Esayas was a dictator or not? All their expenses in the metropolis and return flight tickets from Europe, America and the Middle East were covered by the government. Clearly these people are having a huge laugh at our expenses, and for some unknown reasons, they continue to have the confidence of the EPRDF. The Ethiopian government should instead assist the Kunamas, with a large swathe of fertile land,

to amalgamate with their brothers in Ethiopia, and the Red Sea Afar Democratic Organisation that is fighting for a possible session from Eritrea.

In reaction to the recent massacre of European tourists, the Ethiopian government released statements of its intentions to take proportionate retaliatory measures against Eritrea. The government said the same thing during the last incident but we are still patiently waiting for some sort of response to the Eritrean aggression. Dispatching weeping diplomats to plead with the UN every time Eritrean surrogate organizations attack Ethiopia is very embarrassing indeed. So what do we do if change is not brought about by the Eritrean people and the opposition? Should we hand over Bademe and hope the tyrant would leave us alone **or** continue to keep Bademe and put up with the destabilization that comes with it and move on **or** remove the dictator from power by all means possible and bring about a lasting peace to the Horn region? If we opt for the last option, what would be its implication on the tremendous economic progress the country is registering? What sort of messages would this send to potential foreign investors? Would it leave a lasting negative impression of the country in the eyes of the international community? Could the removal of the dictator be short or a drawn out process? Is the country equipped to sustain a lengthy conflict with Eritrea? Has the leadership got what it takes to finish the job in a short space of time? Could the EPRDF leadership capitulate as happened before? How could the Iran/Iraq war scenario be avoided? Can the government count on the support of the people as it did during the 1998 border war that was ignited by Eritrea? Which side would the international community be, bearing in mind that Eritrea is the aggrieved party with regard to the Hague boarder judgement?

It is pretty clear that as long as the Eritrean dictator remains in power, the destabilization of Ethiopia would continue. From his palace in Massawa, he will keep ordering the OLF, ONLF and Ginbot-7 to continue with their usual destructive activities. The government will in turn arrest their 'supporters' and be on the 'bad' books of Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. Tourists and foreign investors would go to other countries that are stable and safe, and not Ethiopia where innocent tourists are routinely murdered and returned to their homes in body bags. Our old foe is not only causing havoc to our fledgling democracy, but he is also succeeding in scaring away potential tourists and investors from making their ways to Ethiopia. Even those who have already heavily invested could start to doubt if it would be prudent to continue with their businesses in a climate of uncertainty. It took 17 years of hard struggle and over 60,000 lives to overthrow the notorious junta and establish democracy; but the Eritrean dictator is preventing it from moving forward, and at times he is coming perilously close to completely derail it. No matter what the reaction of the international community is going to be, the moment has arrived for the EPRDF to take decisive action against Eritrea to ensure the survival of Ethiopia as a single, democratic and progressive entity.

For a starter, the EPRDF government should consider taking incisive and surgical action deep inside Eritrea including Sawa to disperse the forcibly conscripted youth, the airport, electrical installations and the presidential palace as Ethiopia has aerial superiority which she used effectively during the last war. Eritrea is unlikely to respond, and if it did, it would be tantamount to declaring war which it is not in a position to maintain. Let us not forget that this is a country that can't provide enough bread for its own people let alone sustain a costly long winded war. Esayas is no longer receiving financial support from Egypt and Libya as his former masters have

been unceremoniously removed from power. Qatar is not as generous to him as it used to be, and the 2% 'blackmail' tax from the Diaspora can no longer be guaranteed. Esayas is hoping to use the revenues generated from the gold mining in Bisha to continue with his dirty deeds, but he will have none of it if the electrical installations were to be put out of use by Ethiopia. To top it all, the comprehensive UN sanctions imposed on Eritrea will further ensure its coffers are empty, and the cumulative effects will render the dictator extremely vulnerable and wide open to be wiped mercilessly until he is down and out.

The long overdue action by Ethiopia will also act as an inducement for the Eritrean populace to rise up against the dictator as the fear factor that is holding them back could completely be dissipated. The dictator, who is making the lives of his own people unbearable, is unlikely to withstand the waves of anger that have been brewing over the years. In case Esayas does the unthinkable and start a full scale war, the Ethiopian ground forces ought to be let loose to cause maximum damage and withdraw as quickly as possible, and let the armed Eritrean opposition groups finish the job. Esayas is facing the wall and it is now time for prompt action and not dithering; the EPLF and its leader should be consigned to the dustbin of history as Tanzania did to President Idi Amin Dada of Uganda in 1979. In the meantime, happy 37<sup>th</sup> birthday to the TPLF, and it is pretty certain that birthday celebrations of a rejuvenated TPLF will take place all over the world for many more years to come.