**Eritrea-Ethiopia: New ray of hope and opportunities ahead**

I woke up early that Sunday for some reason, checked my phone for news of the homeland, and I was glued to watching Eri-Tv the whole day digesting the good news of peace for the Eritrean people. Throughout the day I sobbed multiple times watching the mothers and great people of Asmara celebrating this great leader messenger of peace arrive in our beautiful city. This was the day we have been dreaming off where the truth prevailed. At the same time, I was reminded of our celebration when Meles Zenawi came to Asmara back in the 1990’s, however, I decided to celebrate the moment at the same time not forget what happened yesteryears.

Eritreans had a myth that the TPLF of Tigray would be the friendliest group in Ethiopia to us back in the 1990’s. Eritreans and its leadership (EPLF) supported TPLF to come to power in Addis, however that myth has been shattered into pieces the last twenty years, and laid to rest in its grave the last three months. I watched the Bahir Dar, Addis demonstration in support of Dr. Abiy and I watched our beautiful flag waved by Ethiopians and I couldn’t believe it, but realized this is special time that will herald for the aspiration of the Eritrean people to see a peaceful neighborhood, so we can start where we left off on transforming Eritrea into a developed country.

My gratitude to the Oromo and Amhara parties leadership in EPRDF for bringing forth a leader and man of peace in Dr. Abiy Ahmed. This is happening because of their courageous leadership which will be remembered for a long time. Also, my appreciation to friends in the Trump administration and KSA+UAE leadership (Trump 2020 you got my vote for this).

We have been dealing with a minority junta in Addis who hated to see us prosper as a country, and I heard the new Ethiopian PM say “it would be great to see Eritrea prosper…” in his Asmara speech, which is the total opposite of the TPLF junta which preached daily that what is good for Eritrea is bad for them. They declined to use our ports because in their back warded thinking that would benefit us.

It would be a waste of time to go back and continue the blame game of yesterday now. It is a high time of supporting each other to march to the lane of progress, democracy and prosperity (medemamer Zemen)

Things that we can do to help each other prosper soon (I want to dream big for the future):

1. Put the pillars down on the border and finalize the demarcation process that will guarantee peace forever between the two people (This is a MUST for sustainable peace, and as an honor to our martyrs). The international community is willing to help with this endeavor now and the sooner the better. I understand the Ethiopian government needs a breathing room on this to tame the anti-peace (aynachew dem yemelaw yeken Jiboch) left over groups of woyane and derg in that country, but it needs to get started with a time line of completion within one year. Besides, this will help the new PM consolidate power and advance his reform agenda by pacifying his internal threats by showing who is really in charge in their country.
2. Start people to people cooperation’s between border communities on both sides of border especially those that will be impacted or displaced by the border demarcation. National security of both countries cannot hang in the air for fear of inconvenience for few villages here and there. Most of the current residents of Badme are TPLF implanted in the last twenty years.
3. Open the exchange of cultures between both peoples, open the border for trade among the local people, open universities for students of both countries, …
4. Build a rail road to Dallol of Ethiopia to a new port (that I would name Abiy port) to export the huge potash deposit there and this rail road would serve our Calluli potash for export too. Build a potash processing plant at the new port to process the raw material and export the final product
5. Expand Asseb port or build a new one that will serve southern part of Ethiopia and Massawa for the norther part of Ethiopia; we can build more ports if needed. Invite the Chinese, Arabs and others to invest in this endeavor.
6. Declare Asseb, Massawa and all Eritrean ports free trade zones for Ethiopians and other customers
7. Restart the Asseb refinery to process crude oil (imported for now, until we start pumping our own around asseb)
8. Build a joint two hydro dams (that I would call peace hydro plants) at the western Eritrean and Ethiopian boarder along the Settit river
9. Create a fair exchange rate for Nacfa and Birr currencies (avoid the use of third party currency) for trade
10. Build resorts and cruise lines along the red sea cost for Eritreans, Ethiopians, and other tourists; since Ethiopians will be allowed to pay in their birr currency for services (no need for exchange) that will give them a fair advantage over other tourists who will pay in other currencies. Allow wealthy foreigners to build mansions, vacation homes and own real estate in the Eritrean coast.
11. Thousands of Ethiopians have lost 200K plus soldiers in Eritrea in the last 50 years and allow their relatives to visit and pay respect in areas where their fathers, grandfathers or friends died. This will be good for both people to remind us all what war can do, and what peace can do so they can stop their obsession of their fathers for Eritrea.
12. After the unjust sanctions are lifted Eritrea needs to rebuild its army, air force, and navy. Having a strong defense forces “peace through strength” will bring lasting peace and respect and avoid the temptation of aggression from future Ethiopian leaders (my father told me ayEmenun eyom eziom seb)
13. And finally Congrats to the Eritrean people betri hakis tiketin ember aytisiberin, you have won the cold war of Eritrea (EPLF) and Ethiopia (TPLF). Kedami Woyane is thrown to the graveyards by its handles, and the handlers have a new horse to run in place mebalietina yigbero (yimesil).
14. Pray for Isaias Afewerki’s health and wisdom to think of building his legacy and develop the next generation of Eritrean leaders (groom the Eritrean Abiy’s for tomorrow)

With peace and strong visionary leadership, this is all possible and I want to believe in the leadership of H.E Isaias Afewerki and H.E Dr. Abiy Ahmed for the good of my beloved people.

May God give peace and sense of accomplishment to the heroes who are defending their country in the trenches

Eternal Glory to ours Martyrs

May God bless our leaders, and our people

Benny Berhane email: benbrhan@gmail.com