

The Great Scandinavia Festival Eritrea's cultural Bonanza!

Raised 100.000 Swedish Kronors for
Sophia Tesfamariam Legal defense Fund

When I left London to go to Stockholm to participate in the Scandinavia Festival 2009, I really did not know what I would find there. All my friends were saying that it was going to be a lot of fun and that the Scandinavian Festivals were like the Bologna Festivals before independence, so I wanted to witness it for myself. I was not disappointed. I found several things that impressed me the most about the Scandinavian Festival. The first thing that impressed me is how well organized the Festival was.

Secondly, as a father, I was happy to see the number of the young children and young



Eritreans and the activities that were organized for them. Thirdly, I was happy to listen to Mr. Abdela Jabir again as he presented his seminar. He was also in the London Festival so it was a double joy for me. The other very interesting and

informational event at the Festival was a chance to hear Colonel Abdul Idris Omer of the Eritrean Defense Forces as he described on of the decisive moments in Eritrean history..

Hearing the Colonel talking about Nadew brought a lot of memories for me. It was a chance for me and my friends to get clarification on some facts about the Nakfa front and the demise of the operation that broke the enemy's spine. As he explained the various battles that led to the fall of Nadew, and liberation of Afabet, I noticed that everyone was in deep thought. He presented his program several times and each time the tent was full of curious people. I saw Sophia Tesfamariam there and wanted to introduce myself but as soon as the program was over, she left to go to another presentation. I knew she was going to present her seminar in the afternoon so I decided to wait. Colonel Abdu's memory was amazing as he spoke about the Ethiopian offensive that was crushed by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front's (EPLF) army. He explained why it was called the 48 hour battle and gave details about how the Nakfa front was established and its expansion. Everyone was standing up and listening with great interest and it is a seminar that needs to be repeated in all Festivals in Europe and even in America and Middle-East , everyone must know the true history of EPLF and the many battles fought to liberate Eritrea .

I am sure the other visitors will have a lot to say about the Scandinavian Festival but I wanted to add my voice in congratulating the organizers for putting together a very memorable and historic event. As most people know, the Eritrean Community in Sweden has faced a lot of problems from the Swedish media and I heard from some of the organizers that they were spreading false rumors about the Festival and trying to discourage people from attending it. Their campaign must have backfired because close to 10,000 Eritreans and invited guests took part in the 4-day activities which included seminars, workshops and lots of cultural events. The group that came from Eritrea was great; everyone was dancing and jumping with them. The local talents from all over Europe were equally great and they kept the Festival going all night.

Each community in Sweden had a tent and there was a lot of different kinds of food and beverages served. The National Union of Eritrean Women (Hamade) Mama Zeinab tent was popular and always crowded. The food was exceptional and I decided to have breakfast there each morning. I also went to the tent of the community from Uppsala and enjoyed the sewa and music. They were very energetic and also seemed to be popular with the festival attendees. There were also many vendors selling coffee, berbere and other household stuff. There was a special booth where the Eritrean Association for the Deaf was also selling items to raise money. I found many beautiful T-shirts and even bought my wife and children Eritrean cultural dresses from one lady who was selling them there. There was an Eritrean cosmetics stand and all kinds of items for everyone.

As I said, I wanted to hear Sophia Tesfamariam's seminar and was not surprised to see the room filled to capacity when I arrived. I found a seat and listened as she talked passionately about Eritrea and the role of the media. Everyone was paying attention as she explained why media is important in the development of a country and in diplomacy. She talked about public diplomacy and how a country's image can be destroyed by negative media campaign. She explained the importance of using all new technologies and the internet, using sites such as Myspace,

Facebook etc. and recognizing what headlines really mean. She gave us a tool to use to help us in assessing the credibility of news or articles about Eritrea. She explained that we need to find out what the motives



are, the truth content and weigh it against what we know about our country and our people and not to become victims of the psychological warfare that has been launched against the people of Eritrea. For me the one thing she talked about that made me see clearly what she was

explaining was when she explained the use of pictures in the media and why it is important to fight back when negative images about Eritrea are distributed by Eritrea 's enemies.

At the end of the Festival the Chairman of the organizing Committee announced that the Festival participants had spontaneously raised one hundred thousand Swedish Kronors, about 8254 British pounds (\$13,600), for the Sophia Tesfamariam Legal Defense Fund which was



set up by her freinds to help her with the legal battles against the so-called Eritrean "opposition" who are working with the Woyane government to silence her. The people at the Scandinavian Festival wanted her to know that they

support her and everything that she is doing to fight against those people who want to destroy Eritrea 's image and present the Eritrean government in a negative light.

This is sending a strong message to the criminals and thugs who want to scare her and stop her from telling the truth about Eritrea . It was only a few months ago that the Eritrean public found out about a case filed against her by the lowlife criminal Saleh Gadi, owner of the website called Awate.com. The California court dismissed the case and Saleh Gadi and his partners threatened to sue her again and the people want Saleh and his criminal gangs to know that they cannot win against the truth and the people will support Sophie all the way.

I was so excited, I decided I was going to meet her and tell her how much we also appreciate her in London . There were many people taking pictures with her and I managed to get one for myself. I hope she will come to London and meet with all the other Eritrean people who also support her and stand with her against the bullies of Awate and Asmarino who are the real enemies of Eritrea and the people of Eritrea . They cannot hurt Sophie, she is a genuine Eritrean who loves her country and respects her people.

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