

Eritrea: Defending a nation, while securing it's future by staying true to it's principles.

This year's Independence Day theme "Bisirah Nimikit, Nigisgis" which loosely translates into let's work hard and continue to move as a nation. A strong commitment by the leaders and people of Eritrea has turned this young nation of only 19 years into a tremendously successful story, of how a nation is built from scratch. Starting in 1991 as a nation ravaged by a long war and a devastated economy to a short lived peaceful time the country heading in the right direction, faced an obstacle in 1998 when a second war was waged on it. Since then that obstacle is slowly turning into a just glitch, thanks to the defiance of the Eritrean people. That war was created to turn Eritrea into becoming an aid dependant country and one that would be crippled to the point of no return. However, Eritreans everywhere took on the challenge to defend the nation while also working very hard to secure the nation's future.

Historically the vast majority of the people of Eritrea are hard working, law abiding, god fearing people who have been able to help change their society by being inclusive and leading the way in community & nation building. The little villages throughout the country are classic examples of the quote "It takes a village to raise a child". The common bond and the secret of success for Eritreans is simply the unity that comes from the unique Eritrean culture of centuries old. This culture has since been modified and nurtured during the struggle for independence and today we are witnessing the byproduct of that hard work and dedication.

Today Eritrea despite its challenges continues to build on the plans that were put in place during the struggle years. The six visions of the EPLF are the guides by which the country will make progress into a developed nation. So far results have clearly indicated what Eritrea has been able to do in 19 years many other countries have not done in longer years. In Eritrea the government has improved people's lives by providing health care and education centers throughout the country equally.

What that does is it reduces an incredibly vast mosaic of individual life stories into an impersonal statistical model. The Eritrean system is made so that individual empowerment is the key to its victory over each of the capability deprivations that it has planned to tackle since the six visions were developed in 1994 at the EPLF congress in Nacfa town. The six visions are classic examples of a model for any nation or organization, which seeks to seriously alleviate world poverty and assert human rights without exploitation by others. For the record the visions are as follows,

1. **National Harmony.** For the people of Eritrea to live in harmony, peace and stability, with no distinction along regional, ethnic, linguistic, religious, gender or class lines.

2. **Political Democracy.** For the people of Eritrea, to be active participants and become decision-makers in the administration and conduct of their lives and of their country, with their rights guaranteed by law and in practice.

3. **Economic and Social Development.** For Eritrea to progress socially and economically in the areas of education, technology and the standard of living.

4. **Social Justice (Economic and Social Democracy).** Equitable distribution of wealth, services and opportunities, and special attention to be paid to the most disadvantaged sections of society.

5. **Cultural Revival.** Drawing on our rich cultural heritage and on the progressive values we developed during the liberation struggle, to develop an Eritrean culture characterized by love of country, respect for humanity, solidarity between men and women, love of truth and justice, respect for law, hard work, self-confidence, self-reliance, open mindedness and inventiveness.

6. **Regional and International Cooperation.** For Eritrea to become a respected member of the international community, by coexisting in harmony and cooperation with its neighbors; and by contributing, to the extent of its capability, to regional and global peace, security and development.

These visions are not only being implemented but at a fast pace. Many people did not believe that it was possible to accomplish half of the work but today Eritrea has positioned itself to even make a reality these visions and principles. In 1974 during the struggle years, a young Issias Afewerki who was then the vice general secretary of the EPLF said the following words when being

interviewed by a western journalist,

“ Today’s struggle is at the basis of our society tomorrow, for this reason the Front (EPLF) works hard in the economic, social, health, political and military fields, everything being based on the principles of self sufficiency” he goes on to say “the result, the economic problems of our people, to give them a prosperous and tranquil life, we must build a society that is free from exploitation of MAN by MAN, and independent of foreign aid”

36 years later since that interview and 19 years since independence the plan for building a strong nation continues. Thank you to the Warsai-Yikealo and thank you to the entire Eritrean people the visions of a strong country will be accomplished.

Happy 19<sup>th</sup> year Anniversary to Eritrea.

Mike Seium

“Bisirah Nimikit, Nigisgis”

Awet’Nhafash/Zelalemawi zikri swatna.