

Hizbawi Mekhete Seminar in London: A Resolve to Promote Food Security in Eritrea



On Sunday 09 May 2010, Eritreans in London UK, held a meeting at Hammersmith Town Hall, as part of the ongoing campaign to have the US led illegal, unjust and unfair UN Resolution 1907(2009) imposed against the people of Eritrea, to be annulled and repealed.

May and its significance to the Eritreans is now being commemorated in a way that highlights the future of Eritrea and its development prospects. It is with this fortitude that the purposeful seminar in London was conducted with the objectives of a greater mobilization, higher organization and creation of nation capacity building among the Eritreans in the UK. The seminar was a platform where extensive discussions, critical reflections and responsible participation in current Eritrean affairs took place.

Dr Tewolde W/kidane, Chairman of the EPCC (Eritrean Public Campaign Committee) opened the seminar by a one minute silence of remembering the Eritrean Martyrs.

As a background a video which was aimed at recollecting the thoughts of the Geneva Europe level Eritrean demonstration that took place in February 22, 2010 was being played on a big screen. The video showed the strong resolute rebuff of the Eritreans and all justice loving people that convened in Geneva from all over Europe. The message was clear where the people of the Horn of Africa in particular expressed deep dismay at the sanctions which were imposed on Eritrea in the name of the UNSC. A follow up to this event was organized by members of the YPFDJ who got were involved in making sure all participants of the seminar signed the petition letters that will be sent out to President Barrak Obama.



Following the opening, a brief report was submitted by the Chair of the UK Geneva Demonstration Task Force, Sirak Bahlbi in which he detailed the sequence of events, the mobilization done, the organization involved and the lessons learned with regards to the demonstration. He further stated that the demonstration in Geneva not only sent out a powerful message of resilience and resolve but also indicated the dynamic unity between the Government and the Eritrean people.

The report further indicated that crucial lessons have been learned, and critical experiences have been gained for future community led mobilization.

Among the attendees of the seminar was 13 year old Yonathan Daniel who had also participated in the Geneva demonstration. He took on to the stage to share his experience and in a very touching way; Yonathan expressed his strong feelings on how attending at the demonstration taught him about his community, and further strengthened his Eritrean identity. He further stated, *“I did not expect everyone at the demonstration from every coach to interact with each other, but as soon as we got off the coaches every Eritrean from everywhere started to eat and interact with each other. That proved me wrong, and I learnt that the Eritrean community is like a big family...”* .

Similarly Semhar Gebreab representing the YPFDJ (Young People’s Front for Democracy and Justice) also gave a full outlook of the role of the Eritrean youth worldwide demonstrations and in particular the youth of UK. Semhar also gave a brief reflection of the 6th YPFDJ Conference that took place from 1 to 5 April 2010 in Berlin.

A current affair seminar on Eritrea under the theme of Mekhete Negeda: Mekhete Nmihyal Hagerawi Aqhmi was presented by Ambassador Tesfamichael Gerahtu. The Ambassador updated the participants on the current state of Eritrea, the extensive diplomatic campaign to rebuff the sanction resolution imposed on Eritrea, the development endeavour to strengthen and expand the national capacity as a guarantee for the national security of the nation and the activities and tasks planned for the Eritrean Hzbawi Mekhete in the UK during 2010-2012.

The Ambassador further outlined the measures that have been taken to date to annul and repeal the shameful sanctions resolution attest to the strength of the nation internally and that Eritrea is not isolated from the rest of the world, and it has been constantly working towards an effective developmental diplomacy. A comprehensive outline of the diplomatic efforts of the last few months starting from the imposition of the sanctions resolution on Eritrea was presented to shed light on extent and scope of the achievements and the challenges. In this respect, he outlined Eritrea’s stance on the UNSC Resolution 1907/2009, Ethiopia’s continued occupation of sovereign Eritrean Territories and its implication, on relations with Djibouti, on peace in Somalia, The Ambassador also mentioned that the failed policies US Administration policies in the Horn of Africa and that Eritrea has been made an escape goat.

Eritrea’s development priorities and the centrality of national capacity building as reflected in the Road Map outlined in the November 2010 Cabinet Ministers meeting was also discussed in the seminar. The discussion in particular focused on food security as priority of priorities and an outline of the preparation undergoing this hear towards that end was presented. The discussion was very instrumental in raising a call upon all Eritreans in the UK to strengthen the national contract (***hagerawi qalkidan***) that can effectively enhance the total mobilization, organization and creation of an Eritrean national capacity and thus raising the importance of developing modalities and mechanisms to effectively participate in national development through various projects.

At the end of the seminar the Eritrean mission in the UK and its endeavours to raise the efficiency and effectiveness of the services was outlined for discussion by participants.

Towards the end of the seminar the Ambassador and the ENCC panel gave detailed answers and elaborations to the questions asked and the comments forwarded relating various matters and issues. After a deeper discussion on ways of getting involved in the national development activities, the participants of the seminar concluded with attendees agreed to initiate a project that will strengthen the food security programmes in Eritrea and hence the establishment of **the Eritrean Food Security Fund – UK**. The project will run for a minimum of three years after which its development and contribution will be evaluated and transformed in its use accordingly. A minimum yearly contribution of £50 per year was agreed, the need to encourage all Eritreans to be members of this project and contribute to best of their compatibilities, promote special modalities to encourage children and students to be part of the project, devise ways of involving Eritrea's friends and partners. The EPCC will come with an overall framework to manage the project and will be submitted soon for discussion and implementation.

The general atmosphere of the seminar can be described as one that demonstrated true patriotism of Eritrean in the UK. The seminar ended by singing of the national anthem.

EPCC Information & Communication Committee
May 9, 2010