

Part I
Answers to Your Questions by EPDP Chairman,
Mr. Woldeyesus Ammar



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(Editor's Note: Readers' questions may sometimes be rephrased for the sake of brevity and clarity).

Question: I am one of those looking for results. Therefore, I wish to ask these: What is EPDP's vision? What are its measurable goals for 2010? Can EPDP aim to take a leading role in the struggle? Shouldn't this Party concentrate on presenting its political program to the people instead of discussing issues coming from others ... PFDJ and other opposition organizations? (Yousef Abraham, member of EPDP).

Answer: You have posed very relevant questions, Yousef, and I will try answering them as much as possible briefly and in clear terms. Let me also acknowledge at the outset that a congratulatory letter received from Melbourne, Australia, immediately after the announcement of the formation of EPDP said it all when the well-wisher, compatriot Omar Jaber, said that the formation of this Party is "not only a step forward in the struggle against the dictatorship but also a pillar for democracy and constitutional Eritrea in the future".

Like any political organization, EPDP has short- and long-term visions which must be stated as of now for our people to digest and appreciate them fully. The overall objective is to build a prosperous democratic state that promotes peace, equality, and justice in the society; a constitutional state that serves and preserves the Eritrean people's unity in diversity; and one that safeguards Eritrea's territorial integrity while fully respecting international treaties and agreements in order to help promote peaceful co-existence in the entire region. These objectives, which are part of our long-term vision, are enshrined in the Party Political Program in great detail.

However, these noble ideals cannot be promoted while a dictatorship is in place in Eritrea. Therefore, we are obliged to concentrate our energies to

remove the regime. Your second question looking for measurable results in 2010 is, thus, answerable within the short-term vision we have. To remove the dictatorship, we need to mobilize and organize the vast majority of our people on the side of the opposition. When we say opposition, we should not mean a mass of unorganized folks engaged in endless condemnatory words against the regime. What we mean by opposition force is the building of meaningful political parties/organizations that can first win the hearts and minds of our people and then engage them in real action, in real resistance, mainly from within the homeland. We need more than one Party, starting today, that our people can consider as acceptable alternative political force(s) to bring about real change in post-dictatorship Eritrea. In short, we in EPDP aim to accomplish, inter alia, the following tasks within 2010:

- **Building EPDP:** Within 2010, we envision to consolidate EPDP into a solid Party that can play an effective role in the present struggle. We shall see to it soon that everybody who was in the long membership lists of ex-EDP; ex-EPM, ex-Gash Setit and ex-EPP is a real Party activist contributing in many different ways to the current struggle for change. On top of that, we aim to multiply many-fold Party membership in the diaspora and within the homeland. A great emphasis shall be made to win a good number of the young generation, men and women, to the Party. We believe these are achievable aims within the current year.
- **Augment Party Activities:** We aim to intensify diplomatic, mass media action and other activities at different levels. Diplomatic visits are scheduled to different places. Diplomatic committees of EPDP members and sympathizers have been formed in many places under the Department for Foreign Relations in order to contact governments, political parties, human rights groups and other bodies that can support our cause for change and democratization in Eritrea. The UN imposed sanctions shall be made good use of in our diplomatic action. Our radio broadcasts in Arabic and Tigrinia from Europe and the Horn of Africa are already being overhauled to make big impact in the mobilization of our people inside Eritrea. Regional radio and TV stations in some European cities are being upgraded for increased impact; Party magazines and recorded message shall be made to reach many people, including villagers inside Eritrea, and our website, Harnnet.Org, will reappear soon in a multi-functional shape. These, together with other ongoing Party activities will, we believe, give measurable results this year. The dictatorship shall be removed by People Power, and this is something to be expected to happen within measurable time-frame.
- **Building A Strong Opposition:** The building of viable opposition organizations that we encourage is the sure way to success of our people's cause. Until recently, the Eritrean national umbrella organization remained ineffective because we as member organizations did not prove to be effective instruments in the struggle for change. The birth of EPDP and the reorganization of other opposition organizations into solid functioning bodies shall directly

translate into strengthening of the national umbrella. We in the EPDP shall work seriously towards changing the national umbrella into a more effective tool in the struggle.

Dear Yousef: Any well organized Party/organization or civic/civil association can play a calculable role in the opposition camp. Therefore, everyone can have a leading role in the struggle we are in. We are not in need of one Party or bloc of parties imposing a leadership role in the umbrella organization.

EPDP is doing enough to expound its political program to the people, but it also believes that giving attention to what is done by others is important in the struggle. It is important to dissect and expose the language and the acts of the PFDJ, and also engage with fraternal parties in the opposition towards creating a better working atmosphere both for individual/singular and multilateral action.

Question: Do you have any plan to give a statement on EPDP policy to the general public? Secondly, if there is one important thing to reform EDA, what is it in your opinion? (Tesfai Kahsai).

Answer: Dear Tesfai, In effect, you are asking me if the Party and I are to come out with more explanations and clarifications on the various policies and objectives of the EPDP. As the chairman and official spokesperson of the Party, yes I can come up with a public statement as the need arises. But the task of clarifying Party policies is already underway at many levels. Our media outlets are doing it on timely basis. Within the last three months alone, I appeared at the Eritrean paltalk rooms on the unity process and on objectives and policies of our new Party. I will come up with more public talks through different channels on this subject. In fact, all the 24 members of the EPDP Executive Committee, who are located in different parts of the world, and other leadership and senior Party cadres, will continue holding meetings to this effect.

You also ask my view on the single most important reform that the EDA is in need of. My quick response should start with the need for EDA to realize that it is weak will remain ineffective for a long time and until it naturally dies out if it does not accept change. The structure of our national alliance did not work well in the past 11 years and cannot be expected to do much if it is not revamped. In very simple terms, the structure is in need of change and not reform. I may come back to this subject again because I see many related questions queuing up for my responses/comments.

Question: Selam WadAmmar: I am one of those who keep close to the Horn of Africa region and always obtain many of the whispers first hand. The latest piece of information or, may be 'gossip', I heard is that Mr. Bashir Ishaq, an EDA leader, openly presented a gathering (may be an official EDA meeting) of the opposition, the following accusation: "Waldesus WadAmmar described

you, Eritrean Muslims, as Talibans, and insulted you, nationality-based organizations, as placards/tabelatat". There are no secrets that can be kept away from our public, my brother; we are a very small nation. Please let us know the truth. But if you do not like my question, just drop it out ([Derbush.K](#)).

Answer: Thank you, Derbush.K, for your straight forwardness and your care to keep close to developments in the Horn of Africa region. The allegations are serious and, unfortunately, it is true that they were very recently said at an important occasion by the very EDA top leadership member you mentioned by name. I prefer to come up with responses to your important question next time. But, until then, let me drop a quick note to you: I have not never ever charged Eritrean Muslims as 'Talibans', nor did I refer to nationality-based organizations as 'placards'. You will see how these dangerous distortion of facts were concocted for cheap and irresponsible political game.