Remembering the Past and Present, Planning for the Future: Is there a Future for Democracy in Eritrea?

May 14  2013

On May 24, 1991 citizens of the East African country of Eritrea celebrated their long-awaited independence following a victory over the unjust occupation of their land by neighboring Ethiopia. Eritreans from all walks of life, regions and ethnic background sacrificed their lives and struggled for more than 30 years to eventually realize their right to self-determination to finally become a sovereign state.

But as the 22nd anniversary of this historic day nears it has become clear that the promise of freedom, justice and equality following Eritrea’s independence has failed utterly.

The long-held hopes and aspirations of Eritreans to taste the sweetness of a free and democratic state have been shattered by a tyrannical regime whose horrors, atrocities and depravities mark the saddest story in the modern history of the Horn of Africa — if not all of Africa.

The Peoples Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ, formerly EPLF) whose rebel forces captured Asmara, the capital of Eritrea has ruled the country since.

The country's unelected President Isaias Afewrki has turned this hopeful new nation into a repressive, murderous police state. World opinion is united in condemning Eritrea for its gross violations of its citizens’ human rights. Human Rights Watch describes it as “a giant prison” and the "North Korea of Africa"; Reporters Without Borders calls Eritrea “the most repressive nation on Earth” and the Committee to Protect Journalists call the country “the most censored nation in the world for press freedom."

Correspondence from the U.S. Embassy (released by WikiLeaks) describe President Afwerki “an unhinged dictator.” The United Nations has condemned the Eritrean regime and initiated sanctions which Canada, Australia, UK and other countries have applied since 2012.
The Eritrean regime is ethnically cleansing the Red Sea Afar from Dankalia (ancestral homeland of Afar people) and colonizing the area with others.

The Red Sea Afar are an ancient people who have mainly lived as pastoralist nomads in Dankalia or the “Afar triangle” at the convergence of what are now Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti. The Red Sea Afar's right to live peacefully across the traditional Dankalia region has met with violent resistance from the Eritrean regime which is systematically evicting the Afar from their homeland and colonizing the area with others. To remove the Afar, Eritrea is using mass murder, terror, humiliation, assimilation, intimidation, kidnapping, disappearances, imprisonment without charges and other forms of violence. Put simply, Eritrea is destroying the Afar economy, their way of life, their language and their history.

The Afar are fleeing Eritrea by the tens of thousands to Ethiopia and Djibouti. Nearly three-quarter of the more than 600,000 Afar living in Eritrea prior to independence have left Eritrea since the crackdown began in the early 1990s. Eritrean security personnel have orders to shoot to kill the Afar as they attempt to cross the border to places of refuge. Many Afar have perished trying to escape Eritrea by sea.

The Afar were blessed to live since time immemorial in Eritrea’s most precious real estate - a strategically positioned coastal strip of land from Massawa to Assab by the Red Sea. The Eritrean government is now reselling and/or leasing this previously unexplored but rich in resources and minerals region to multinational corporations such as South Boulder Mines Ltd., of Australia and other foreign governments, including the Gulf state of Qatar, without the consent, recognition or knowledge of the Afar people.

This is an outrageous and shameful crime against an entire ethnic group, whose case is now being closely examined by a special U.N. committee. The world community must be better informed in order to act decisively to prevent the Afar people from being wiped-out in their homeland in Eritrea.

To shed light on this shameless situation we would like to reveal the ugly aftermath of the historic day in Eritrea 22 years ago by sharing presentations, video evidence and other documents to highlight these unprecedented crimes against a minority indigenous people.
Please join us for an informative evening about the Red Sea Afar people. Protests are planned across the world and Eritrean Afar Refugee camps in Asayita, Barhlee, Logiya in neighboring Ethiopia to mark this day.

**What:** “Remembering the Past and Present, Planning for the Future: Is there a Future for Democracy in Eritrea?” a public discussion about the status of the Red Sea Afar people inside Eritrea.

**When:** Saturday, May 25th, 2013

**Where:** 2000 Jasmine Cres., Ottawa Ontario, Canada

**Event program**

- **6:00 pm** Introduction
- **6:15 pm** presentation By Warren Creates (Pres. of Can Go Afar Foundation)
- **6:20 pm** Presentation by RSADO Mission, and more
- **6:50 pm** presentation by Brad Mackay (Writer and journalist)
- **7:00 pm** Presentation by Prof. Joe Magnet (Lead counsel for Afar People)
- **8:00 pm** Dinner and Discussions

For more info please contact us:
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