

History repeats itself...!

Written by Mela Ghebremedhin

Each year, starting from the month of April until June, history tends to repeat itself in Eritrea. This time of the year correlates with regular misgivings and assiduous external adversity to Eritrea and its diplomacy.

In retrospect, the beginning of the year is tilled with the memory of several historical events that took place during the armed struggle. To mention a few, the Fenkil Operation that began on February 10, 1990 and ended with the liberation of the Port City of Massawa. Following that March 23rd, this year marked the 40th anniversary of the liberation of the symbolic town Nakfa.

Various voices used this specific time of the year to divert the attention of the public from the fifteen-year long Ethiopian violation of the EEBC decision by continuing to occupy Eritrean sovereign territory since the 13th April 2002. Indeed, this specific time of the year often correlates with the proliferation of various accusations, allegations and campaigns.

In fact, Google alerts has recently been filled with links entitled “Eritrea facing sanctions on its navy for buying defense materials from North Korea” while other links are even more satirical on Eritrea by entertaining the idea of “famine prevalence” in Eritrea.

An article written by Selam Kidane and her friend, Martin Plaut, “The famine the Eritrean government doesn’t want you to know about” stipulated that, “a devastating famine has hit the Horn of Africa. El Nino has taken a terrible toll on the people across the region and Eritrea is no exception”. A provocative article accusing the Government of letting its people suffer by refusing aid. Even though, such signs of famine remain nonexistent in the country, the fuss continues by those so-called self-acclaimed “connaisseurs” on Eritrea.

April, hence, was full of surprises but through time, Eritreans are ready to confront such narratives at this time of the year onwards. While the people celebrated the Easter holy days two weeks ago, the outside is looking at facts to point fingers on.

Responding to constant accusations and allegations has become routine to Eritreans and it is more interesting to hear such accusations from the outside while actually based in the country. Further to these, as mentioned in previous editions of Eritrea Profile, Eritrean youth conference, YPFDJ, was also disturbed by similar groups attempting to violate the rights to association for diaspora groups in Europe.

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While Eritrea is in the middle of preparations for independence celebration, the month of April comes in with headlines depicting a negative Eritrea aiming at isolating it. Conversely, diplomatic engagement multiplies in which the State of Eritrea received credentials from ten countries including the Netherlands, Rwanda and China.

That's not all! These several diplomatic endeavors continue to transpire. Foreign Minister Mr. Osman Saleh, along with Mr. Yemane Gebreab, Political Adviser to the President, paid a working visit to China and South Sudan while Ambassador Saleh Omar presented his credentials to several countries of the Southern Africa region including Madagascar and Swaziland.

Diplomacy carries on with the visit of the Egyptian Business Delegation on April 5th to the Eritrean President, H.E. Isaias Afwerki. Eritreans remain at work with the Art Deco Exhibition held in Cape Town and Nairobi.

Diplomacy and partnership building are ongoing. At this time of the year, history tends to repeat itself. As we have seen in the past two years, the Commission of Inquiry (COI) used to start campaigning aggressively from this time until the UN Human Rights Council meeting by the end of June. The repeated slogan of slavery or national service have actually failed the COI's credibility; yet the trend in discrediting the image of the country and its diaspora persists.

Another actor coming back on the table at this time of the year is the Somali-Eritrea Monitoring Group (SEMG), which seems persevering to find particular wrongdoings because of "no replies to its official requests for cooperation on investigative and substantive matters [...] to its formal requests for an official visit to Asmara" (SEMG 2017). Interesting and inquisitive...! In fact, Mr. Amanuel Giorgio, Chargé d'Affaires at the Permanent Eritrean Mission to the UN, gave a clear response to the SEMG's complaints at the 7925th meeting of the UN Security Council (UNSC): "The monitoring group has itself ascertained the absence of any indication of Eritrea's support to al-Shabab. In these circumstances, Eritrea does not see any real value in a visit by the Monitoring Group to the country".

Surely, SEMG albeit its lack of proof of Eritrea's support to al- Shabab for the third consecutive year SEMG's perseverance is quite ludicrous. Extending the mandate of the group is another evidence that history is repeating itself. In addition to the SEMG's insistence, the current sanctions imposed on Eritrean navy is another added negative element despite a call from China at the SEMG meeting this month to call on the monitoring group to come up with a proposal on recommendations for lifting sanctions imposed on Eritrea (Solomon April 2017).

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Although Eritrea's detractors are creating stories in an attempt to portray the country in negative light, Eritrea continues to prevail and is getting ready for its independence celebration in a few weeks.