

Global Initiative to Empower Eritrean Grassroots Movement – Global Initiative (GI)

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

December 25, 2016

Dear Reader,

Since the release of the “Urgent Call to All Eritreans World-Wide” on the eve of Eritrea’s 25th Independence Anniversary, we have received a number of encouraging responses. We are pleased to have so far very many justice seeking Eritreans who have joined the Global Initiative, and the number is growing every day.

Despite such encouraging responses, there are some who have raised questions and concerns about the Global Initiative. For the Global Initiative to succeed in achieving its goals of ending the dictatorship in our country, we strongly believe this initiative should be supported by ALL Eritreans. We, therefore, think it is appropriate to provide answers to the frequently asked questions. We hope that this will encourage more Eritreans to join the Global Initiative. If you have other unanswered questions, please contact us, and we will do our best to answer any question you may have as transparently and as exhaustively as possible. Our email address is: gieegm@googlegroups.com.

You can also read GI documents that have been posted in several Eritrean websites by clicking on (through the link below): <http://www.snitna.com/gieegm/gieegm.html>. These documents are available in Arabic, English and Tigrigna.

We will appreciate any help to have this document translated into Arabic.

We have classified the questions into the following six thematic groups:

- Group 1. Questions 1 to 8 - ... Global Initiative: Its Aims and Objectives.
- Group 2. Questions 9 to 11 - The Process of Electing Global Leaders
- Group 3. Questions 12 to 14 - Defining Locality and the Formation of *Baito ADi*
- Group 4. Questions 15 to 16 - Membership and Eligibility
- Group 5. Questions 17 to 20 - Relationship with Civic Organizations and Political Parties
- Group 6. Questions 21 to 24 - Other

Group 1 Global Initiative: Its Aims and Objectives

1. When, why and how was the Global Initiative formed?

GI was formed after consecutive discussions conducted through teleconference and Paltalk discussions that started on February 27, 2016 initiated by a group known as *NegabaA*. The teleconferences and Paltalk discussions were attended by individuals representing *Hizbawi Mel’éal*, members of Our Voice, members of *NegabaA* and other individuals who were supportive of the idea of electing Global Leaders using the bottom-up grassroots approach. GI was formed, as a temporary body with a mission to facilitate

the grassroots efforts for the establishment of local, regional and global people's institutions - with no aspiration for itself or its members to seize power in Eritrea.

It is of high importance to note that the work that GI is doing is unique and of vital significance and not the duplication of what others are doing. Otherwise, there would be no point in devoting so much time, effort and resources in accomplishing the task. We have been propelled into action because there has been too much division, acrimony and jockeying for power in the Eritrean opposition while we have nothing in our hands to compete for. This has paralyzed our ability to mount effective action against tyranny in our country. We believe that there is the need for genuine, dedicated, non-partisan Eritreans of ability with no conflict of interest and not aspiring or competing for power to act as a key link to bring Eritreans worldwide together to decide on their own future. We believe that this is missing. Those of us who are now in GI have only started the process, and we invite all other Eritreans who subscribe to our vision to join us in our mission to bring about unity of thought and action against the dictatorship and set the Eritrean people from the present nightmare in our country. We have no other goal apart from this.

2. Is the Global Initiative a political organization or a civic organization?

GI is an organized body with a political purpose. GI is a **temporary** group of concerned Eritrean activists from various parts of the world, who are working to facilitate the process of electing legitimate global leaders using the grassroots approach. Hence, GI is a unique civic political organization, whose goal is not the retaining of power for itself, but rather the transfer of power to its rightful and legitimate owners, - the people of Eritrea.

3. What is the aim of the Global Initiative?

The aim of GI is to pave the way for all Eritreans to actively participate in contributing to the establishment of accountable and sustainable constitutional governance in Eritrea in which all Eritreans in the Diaspora participate in the creation of Global *Baito* of Eritreans in the Diaspora. This process entails the formation of local *Baitos*, Regional *Baitos*, and Global *Baito*. The Global *Baito* will draw a grand strategy and a winning roadmap of salvation and smooth transition to democratic governance. The Global *Baito* will elect an executive body with full powers of execution and implementation of the grand strategy.

4. What is the membership criteria to be part of GI?

Membership to GI is open to all justice-seeking Eritreans world-wide. Any Eritrean who believes on the need of grassroots based, Global Leadership can be a member of GI. If you are interested in joining GI, please contact GI using GI's email address: gieegm@googlegroups.com

5. As a member of GI what role can I play?

GI has several teams and anyone who can contribute in any of the following listed teams is invited to join GI and to contribute to its success.

- a. **Outreach Team:** The responsibilities of this team will include:
 - i. Reaching out to various religious leaders, Eritrean Community Centers and prominent individuals.
 - ii. Promoting an all-inclusive environment and harmony.

- b. **Mobilizing, Seminars and Conferences Teams:** Members of this team are expected to be actively engaged in mobilizing Eritreans at the local level, and to plan, organize and conduct all-inclusive meetings of Eritreans in their respective cities/localities and initiate country-wide and global conferences. Members of this team will be responsible for organizing educational conferences, seminars and workshops on the need for global leaders, their role, and the qualifications of those who are elected as leaders at all levels.

- c. **Writers Team:** The role of this team of writers will be to write educational articles, press releases, bulletins and other necessary materials that will promote the success of the grassroots movement. Members of the Writers Team are expected to assist in translating from English to Arabic and Tigrigna, or from Tigrigna into Arabic and English.

- d. **Artists, Poets and Musicians:** The contribution and role of artists and musicians during the struggle for independence was significant. Likewise, artist, poets and musicians have an important role to play in mobilizing the grassroots thereby contributing to the removal of dictatorship and smooth transition to democratic governance in our country.

- e. **Media and Communication Team:** The role of this team will be to work with Eritrean websites and radio programs to promote the grassroots movement and activities.

- f. **Financial and Logistical Team:** This team will engage in raising operating funds and resources from a variety of sources, such as Diaspora Eritreans, donor organizations and nations that sympathize with the plight of the Eritrean people. This team will also be responsible for maintaining proper accounting records and for preparing audited financial reports.

- g. **Think-Tank Group** – This group will be expected to prepare conceptual papers that will contribute to the success of the grassroots movement.

- h. **Legal Team.** The responsibility of this team will be to provide legal assistance to the grassroots movement as needed. We expect Eritrean lawyers to join the Legal Team.

- i. **IT Group.** The role of Eritrean Information Technology (IT) is crucial in helping the grassroots movement to use modern technology in all aspects of the grassroots activities. We expect Eritrean IT experts to volunteer their expertise for the success of the grassroots movement.

6. What is the relationship between the Global Initiative and *Hizbawi Mel'eaI*?

Hizbawi Mel'eaI was a movement that was initiated by those who believed in the need for a unified movement of Eritreans in the Diaspora. *Hizbawi Mel'eaI*'s full name is "*Hizbawi MeleAl Eritriawyan Semen America*". After the 2013 Lampedusa tragic incident, outraged Eritreans formed groups and committees in several cities in the US and Europe. The vigorous campaign that was waged by the late Dr. Tewolde Tesfamariam, (Wedi Vaccaro), may his soul rest in peace, especially in the US and Europe, and by Amanuel Eyassu of Assenna Foundation have contributed a great deal in mobilizing and encouraging Eritreans to unite in order to be catalysts for positive changes in our country. In the United States, for example, there are several cities that have already formed groups known as *Hizbawi Mel'eaI Eritreans Nfithi, North America* and are growing. As stated on Question # 1, GI is a result of a series of meetings and discussions which were (was) attended by various grassroots bodies including *Hizbawi Mil'eaI*.

The primary reason for the formation of GI was to strengthen the work that had been started by various groups that believed in the principle of grassroots movement and expand its scope to the global level. The main focus has been on the establishment of legitimate Local *Baitos* that interconnect with the Eritrean communities in the area that will send representatives to form Regional *Baitos* and from there, establish a Global *Baito* and elect an executive body of Global Leaders representing all Diaspora Eritreans worldwide.

Although there was some misunderstandings with some members of *Hizbawi Mel'eaI* who thought that GI was a competing movement, we have tried to make it clear to all concerned that GI's mission has throughout been only to strengthen and expand the work that has already been started by all grassroots movements in all parts of the world. As stated above, membership to GI is open to All Eritreans in the Diaspora who are willing to facilitate the election of local *baitos* and interconnect the local *baitos* to form regional *baitos* which in turn interconnect to ultimately elect legitimate Global Leaders at a conference involving Eritreans in the Diaspora at the grassroots level. Our goal is not only to work collaboratively with members of *Hizbawi Mel'eaI*, but also to invite all justice-seeking Eritrean and other activists in every corner of the world to join us. We believe that the initial misunderstanding we had with *Hizbawi Wel'eaI* has now been cleared and a spirit of camaraderie is developing.

7. Is the GI truly global? Or are you just claiming to be global?

GI is global. To make it global in nature, there was a press release issued in three languages in May 2016 signed by 5 initial members of GI, inviting Eritreans world-wide “to be a signatory of a call to be issued to all Eritreans in the Diaspora to join a Grassroots Movement whose goal is to elect Global Leaders who will represent Eritreans in the Diaspora. “GI received over 100 individuals who were willing to be signatories of an “Urgent Call to All Eritreans World-Wide.” The Urgent Call to all Eritreans world-wide was written in Tigrigna, Arabic and English and posted in several Eritrean websites, “inviting all Eritreans to join GI to facilitate the success of the bottom-up grassroots movement in order to ultimately elect our Global Leaders.” As a result of this call the number of Eritreans who have expressed interest to join the different teams within GI has increased substantially. We are still looking for more Eritreans from various parts of the world to join GI. If you are interested to support what GI is doing, please do not hesitate to contact us. Even if you cannot serve as (being) a member of the various teams listed on item #5, you can still support GI financially and in other ways.

8. What can GI do to encourage the election of legitimate leaders of Eritreans in a given locality?

GI realizes that the election of leaders in a given locality is the responsibility of the Eritreans in the given locality. However, GI will provide assistance to ensure that the election of leaders in a given locality is conducted at an all-inclusive general meeting of all Eritreans in the given locality. This will require an intensive campaign to reach out to all Eritreans in the given locality. A serious effort will have to be made to invite **ALL** Eritreans particularly those from minority ethnic groups and those who may not have access to the Internet or the Eritrean radio programs. The call for a general meeting of all Eritreans in a given locality should be written in Arabic, English and Tigrigna or any other appropriate language widely used in the local Eritrean community. GI, if requested, can help in preparing public announcements in several languages. The announcement should be disseminated in written form, through phone messages, websites, radio programs, seminars and workshops and widely distributed in places frequented by Eritreans, such as churches, mosques, community centers, restaurants and bars. It is not enough to call a general meeting; people should understand why their participation is important to save our country. To encourage participation by all sectors of the Eritrean society, meetings should be conducted in languages used by the Eritreans who come to the meetings. GI can help in providing educational written material in several languages to be used by Eritrean communities to facilitate the election process.

Group 2 The Process of Electing Global Leaders

9. What is the process of establishing the Baitos and Electing Global Leaders?

As stated in GI’s “Action Plan” which can be found in this link [”http://www.snitna.com/gieegm/gieegm.html”](http://www.snitna.com/gieegm/gieegm.html) that was posted in several Eritrean websites,

written in Arabic, Tigrigna, and English, the process of establishing the three level *Baitos* and electing executive global leaders consists of two important phases: Mobilizing and Organizing.

Phase I: Mobilizing all justice-seeking Eritreans in the Diaspora:

The Global Initiative along with others who support the grassroots – bottom up approach, will mobilize Eritreans in the Diaspora, to be part of the grassroots movement for democratic change in Eritrea. Using an effective action plan and deploying functional teams, the Global Initiative will mobilize Eritreans in the Diaspora such as those in the USA, Canada, Europe, Australia, Middle East, Africa and other parts of the world. The mobilizing activities will include coordinated efforts of preparing and publishing documents and articles for grassroots public education, conducting seminars and conferences in major cities and using electronic mass communication and an effective media strategy of information dissemination and communication using available mass communication mediums, including Paltalk public sessions.

Phase II: Organizing the Peoples Baitos and electing Global Executive Leaders:

- A. The basic and fundamental *Baito* of the Grassroots Movement is the *Baito Adi*. Justice-seeking Eritrean adults of every locality/city are eligible to be members of the local *Baito Adi*. The *Baito Adi* brings all justice seeking Eritreans in a locality/city and unites them for a common cause of justice, democracy and freedom. Moreover, it creates a platform for them to be active owners of their destiny and active participants in the decision making and implementation of national issues. The long-term goal of *Baito Adi* is to win all Eritreans to the side of the people and to serve as catalysts to bring about fundamental changes that will transition our country from dictatorship to a democratic rule. Once a *Baito Adi* is established in a given locality, it will elect the following:
- i. A speaker for the local *Baito Adi*, Executive Board members and Monitoring Board members. The number of Executive Board members and the Monitoring Board members will be determined by each locality.
 - ii. Representatives of the locality/city (*Baito Adi* representatives) to Regional *Baito*; and to the Global Conference to select global leaders.
- B. Regional *Baito*: Once Eritreans in every corner of the world elect their local representatives, the next step will be to meet and elect their country representatives which in turn will elect their regional representatives at a continental level. The main purpose of the regional *Baito* is to coordinate various local *Baito Adi* in its region. The Regional *Baitos* will coordinate the activist of the Grassroots Movements at the regional level and work to defeat PFDJ activities in their region.

C. Global *Baito*: The final step would be to conduct a global conference of Eritrean representatives of Regional *Baitos* coming from every corner of the world: Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, Middle-East, North America, South America and other places to elect the Eritrean Global Assembly or *Alemlekawi Baito Eritrawaian* that will appoint an executive body. Global Assembly or *Alemlekawi Baito Eritrawaian* is the global organ of Eritrean Global Assembly, where justice seeking people/citizens of Diaspora Eritrea unite their voices and resources to defeat tyranny and establish democratic governance in Eritrea. The elected Global Leadership will draw a grand strategy and winning roadmap for salvation and smooth transition of Eritrea to democratic governance and elect an Executive Leadership with full power of execution and implementation of the grand strategy.

10. In addition to the general goal of helping our people/country, what are the incentives for organizing and forming local *Baito*?

Local *Baitos* can also serve as Civic Grassroots Community Centers. As explained in the Urgent Call to All Eritreans, “We understand the need for Eritrean Community Centers wherever Eritreans live in large numbers. Community Centers provide a number of essential services to immigrant communities. First and foremost, they serve as meeting places for Eritreans to socialize and to network with their fellow Eritreans. Community Centers provide support for newly arriving refugees, finding accommodations, job opportunities and other necessities. One important role of Community Centers is to provide comfort to grieving members, helping with funeral arrangements, assisting during weddings, and other social events. Community Centers also serve as places to teach Eritrean children, their language and their cultural heritage among other activities. Local *Baitos* will draw a broader program for their locality that provide various services by establishing civic community centers.”

11. Instead of visiting Eritreans in other localities urging them to establish their local *Baitos* and elect their local leaders, such as what GI did visiting the Eritreans in Boston, would it have been better if you first establish local *Baitos* by mobilizing the Eritreans in the localities GI members reside in and assist them to elect their local leaders?

GI task force can conduct meetings in places outside their home town or state. However, these meetings are merely aimed at clarifying the proposal and action plan of GI to the public. GI signatories in collaboration with other Eritrean activists and justice-seekers are expected to take the initiative to mobilize their locality to establish its local *Baito* by calling meetings of the Eritreans in a given community as a first step towards holding an all-inclusive general meeting of the Eritreans in the given locality. The purpose of this meeting is to elect an Election Committee that will be charged with planning and

organizing a general meeting of Eritreans in the given locality. The election committee will have the responsibility of conducting an intensive publicity about the meeting, finding meeting place, and making all the necessary preparation for the success of the meeting. GI signatories are expected to play an active role with other Eritrean activists in their locality to call the initial planning meeting. And this is already being done in several localities.

Group 3 Defining Locality and the Formation of *Baito Adi*

- 12. When you say Eritreans in a given locality should establish their *Baito Adi* and elect their legitimate leaders in an All-Inclusive meeting of Eritreans in the given locality, are you referring to Eritreans in a given city or a given state or what?**

Baito Adi should be established where ever there are a critical mass of Eritreans, such as at city level if there is a critical mass of Eritreans in a given city, or at a state level, in the case of the US, or Eritreans in adjacent states may come together for the purpose of forming a *Baito Adi*. The established *Baito Adi* then elect their local leaders as explained above.

- 13. How can you ensure that ALL Eritreans in a given locality will come to the meeting? What happens if after making every effort to invite ALL Eritreans in a given locality, not all the Eritreans in that community or locality come to the meeting?**

After making an intensive publicity about the purpose of the meeting, the date and location, and after making an earnest effort to reach out to all Eritreans in a given locality, using all possible media of communication, elections should be conducted by those who attend the meeting.

- 14. Can the leaders of the Eritrean associations or community centers that are already formed be considered as legitimate leaders of the Eritreans in the given locality? If not why not?**

As long as the leaders in any Eritrean associations or community centers are elected with a full participation of all Eritreans in that locality, then they are legitimate leaders of the Eritreans in that given locality, which will be the *Baito Adi* of the given locality. The important factor is that an intensive publicity and campaign is conducted to reach out to all sectors of the Eritrean society residing in a given locality and are made aware of the meeting and the purpose of the meeting using various languages and all possible media of communication: fliers, telephone calls, websites, radio programs, etc. Then that meeting will have formed the *Baito* of the locality and those elected to be leaders will be the legitimate leaders of the Eritreans in that given locality.

Group 4 Membership and Eligibility

15. How can you make sure that the leaders who are elected at the local, national and Global level are the individuals who are best qualified to be leaders?

GI intends to issue educational material and to hold seminars and workshops with the intent of creating awareness about the kind of leaders who should be elected. GI hopes that the individuals who will be elected in a given locality (*Baito Adi*) are individuals who are known for their integrity, dedication, thoughtfulness and caliber. GI believes that the Global Leaders (who will surface on the top) will be individuals with impeccable credentials of integrity, dedication and caliber. The Global Leaders are accountable to the Eritreans in the Diaspora and it is understood that those who fail to meet the expectations may be replaced by others who are better qualified.

16. Can members and leaders of political parties participate in elections in their local communities?

As Eritreans any Eritrean regardless of political affiliation is expected and encouraged to actively participate in the election of local leaders in their respective *Baito Adi*. That being said, leaders of political parties will not be expected to assume leadership in their local *Baito Adi* to avoid conflict of interest. Needless to say, political organizations/parties affiliated or sympathizing with the current Eritrean regime are automatically excluded, given that they are an integral part of the dictatorial regime against which the fight is being directed.

Group 5 Relationship with Civic and Political Parties

17. What is your view and your relationship with the Eritrean political parties in general and with the Eritrean political parties that are part of *Baito* or the other political groups that are not yet members of *Baito*?

GI's view is that the priority of all political opposition parties and the civil society of Eritreans in the Diaspora should be to end dictatorship in our country. The focus of GI is in mobilizing justice seeking Eritreans in the Diaspora to elect legitimate global leaders using the bottom-up grassroots movement. GI will expect the elected Global Leaders to map out in effective operational strategy to transform our country to democracy by working collaboratively with the Eritrean political parties and forces of change inside the country.

GI wrote individual letters in Tigrigna, Arabic and English to 20 leaders of Eritrean political parties whose names and email addresses GI was able to find. GI has also posted an open letter in several Eritrean websites aimed at those Eritrean political party leaders whose names and or addresses were not available. The essence of the letters was to explain GI's goals and to seek their enthusiastic support of the initiative to empower Eritreans worldwide to participate in ending the suffering of their people. We are pleased

to have received open support from some leaders of Political Parties and we expect all political parties will be supportive of GI since what GI is doing is to accelerate the success of what the Political Parties have been trying to accomplish for years.

18. What is your view and your relationship with *Medrik*?

GI understands that *Medrik* is endeavoring to unite the various political groups so that they can focus their attention on the removal of the dictatorial regime, and GI supports this endeavor. GI believes the primary goal of all justice-seekers and political parties should be the unity of all Eritreans in order to transition the country to be a multiparty democracy.

19. What will be the relationship of the Global Leaders with the political parties?

GI will expect the Global Leaders to collaborate with the political parties and forces of change inside the country in preparing a blue print for transitioning the country to democracy.

20. Why don't you join the existing political organizations instead of trying to elect Global Leaders? Aren't Political Party leaders also elected?

GI believes that it is the right of every Eritrean to belong to any political party one chooses to join. The Political Parties, which are too many for a country of our size, have not been able to unite in ending the dictatorship in our country. GI believes that the focus should first be in removing the dictatorial regime. To this end, what GI is doing is to pave the way for all Eritreans in the Diaspora to unite in removing the dictatorial regime by establishing public institutions/*Hizbawi Baito* and electing Global Leaders who will speak, act and represent Diaspora Eritreans, something that is critically missing currently.

Group 6 Other

21. In the Urgent Call to All Eritreans World-Wide, dated May 23, 2016, you stated, “ the initiative we are taking is not motivated by our desire to assume any leadership role. All that we are doing is to facilitate the election of Global Leaders by involving Eritreans in the Diaspora at the grassroots level.” This implies that you are trying to evade taking leadership responsibility of a movement you are initiating. This does not make sense. If the Eritreans in your locality find you to be fit for leadership role, will you refuse to accept? Please clarify.

To be transparent about this issue, the reason we were compelled to insert the above quoted statement is to assure those who may want to derail this grassroots movement by suspecting our motivation. However, since the Urgent Call was issued we have received several comments that suggest refusing to accept if elected will amount to abdication of

responsibility. Henceforth, we have agreed that it will be wrong to decline if elected except for age seniority and health reasons.

22. What do you say to those who suspect that your emphasis on the Global Leadership is motivated by your desire to groom yourself to be Global Leaders?

We have made it clear that the initiative we took to form GI was not motivated by our desire to assume leadership positions. Local leaders are selected at the local level through the grassroots participation. It is those who are elected at the local *Baito* who will be regional, national and global leaders. This is the bottom-up approach of electing leaders. Global Leaders are essentially elected by the people and no one can impose leaders on the people. Hence, no one should doubt that the primary reason for the formation of GI is to enable Diaspora Eritreans to elect their Global Leaders using grassroots, bottom-up approach.

23. How can you make sure that agents of the regime will not infiltrate the grassroots movement with the intent of disrupting its activities?

GI believes that Eritreans in every locality will know who is who among them and it is hoped they will provide the best defense against infiltration by agents of the government. In addition, it is hoped that Eritreans in other localities or countries will provide with their feedbacks warning the concerned *Baitos* of the risks of infiltration by specific Government agents. This feedback is not meant to be used as witch-hunt against individuals, but to alert the *Baito* leaders to be watchful and avoid any possible negative effect on their political grouping.

24. What will be the role of Global Leadership?

The Global Leadership is expected to chart an effective operational strategy, to remove the dictatorial regime and prepare the ground work and a blue print for transitioning the country to democracy, in collaboration with the Eritrean Political Parties and forces of change inside Eritrea. The responsibility of the Global Leadership will be to gain the recognition and support of the International Community and the Eritrean people both at home and in the Diaspora. Given that the Global Leadership is elected to represent Eritreans in the Diaspora, it will have the legitimacy to speak, to act and to represent Eritreans in the Diaspora in any forum. Through an effective and intensive diplomacy and lobbying, this leadership group should be able to persuade the International Community to apply intensive pressure that will cripple the dictatorial regime and give moral and logistical support to elements inside the country to bring about the required fundamental changes