

Response to Sal Younis's article, "It's Time for Unity Government in Exile"

Global Initiative to Empower Eritrean Grassroots Movement (GI), March 3, 2021

Sal's article: <http://awate.com/its-time-for-a-unity-government-in-exile/>

Sal Younis is among the highly respected Eritrean intellectuals who had written extensively addressing Eritrean issues. We believe it is his frustration with the ineffectiveness of justice-seeking Eritreans in the Diaspora that prompted him to come up with his recent proposal advocating the formation of a "Unity Government in Exile." What Sal is proposing is the formation of a unity government in exile composed of the leadership groups of EPLF and ELF. Although we would have loved to enthusiastically support Sal's proposal, we at GI, do not think Sal's proposal is workable or practical as we will explain below.

1. Sal suggests "exiled Central Committee members of "PFDJ", and those who were Central Committee members in the last (1987) EPLF congress should convene an Organizational Congress, the 4th EPLF Congress, as soon as feasible. Its purpose is to address the hijacking (and renaming) of their organization at the 3rd congress." ELF members in the Diaspora will also convene an organizational congress to elect their leaders. The elected leaders of EPLF and ELF will then form "Unity Government," that will "temporarily" assume power once the regime is removed. We find this perplexing. Our understanding is that, it is change agents inside the country who can remove the dictatorial regime. We do not believe it is realistic to have a temporary transition government that does not include those who are instrumental in removing the regime. How realistic is the idea of convening an organizational congress of ELF and EPLF members in the Diaspora at this time? Some of Central Committee members of EPLF in exile are not even on talking terms with each other. Moreover, it is our understanding that some members of the EPLF have joined other ELF members to form new parties. Is Sal expecting these former EPLF members to divorce themselves from the new parties they have formed? According to Sal, "the idea of holding Organizational Congress is to have a democratic election where it elects its leadership, who then elect the executive team. This ensures continuity and grants the new leadership something sorely lacking in the Eritrean Opposition: **legitimacy.**" We are at a loss to understand the relevance of the "legitimacy" of the newly elected EPLF and ELF members. **What Sal is proposing ignores a big chunk of Eritrean activists including Eritrean youth who are neither members of the EPLF or ELF but who are active members of the Global Yeakel Movement.**
2. We do not agree with Sal that what we need at this time is a "unity government" composed of elected EPLF and ELF members. What we need is a legitimately elected leadership group that represents all justice seeking Eritreans in the Diaspora. To be legitimate this leadership group should be elected by all justice-seeking Eritreans in the Diaspora. This means all members of political groups, civic associations, women's organizations, youth, musicians and artists, human rights activists, intellectual and professional groups and other activists should participate in the democratic election process, starting at an all-inclusive local Baito. These legitimately elected Baito leaders

then form country-wide leaders to form Global Leaders. This is exactly what the Global Yeakel Movement is trying to achieve and it is making good progress gaining momentum daily despite COVID-19 and other obstacles from agents of the regime and others.

3. Let's be clear, the Global Yeakel movement is not a political party. It is a peoples' political grassroots movement. The role of the Global Yeakel Leadership is not to assume power once the regime is removed. Its role, to the best of our understanding, is to facilitate the removal of the regime by coordinating the activities of all justice-seeking Eritreans in the Diaspora and the formation of all-inclusive transparent and accountable transitional council. Speaking with one voice, the Global Yeakel Leadership will be able to conduct effective lobbying activities by engaging Eritreans with impressive resumes in the diplomatic arena and foreign relations. The fact that this is a legitimately elected group, with impressive resumes, will help them to be well-received by leaders of countries, and at international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), the Arab League and other settings. Of course, given the first priority is the removal of the regime which has to be done by forces inside the country, the Leaders of the Global Yeakel Movement will be expected to provide, moral, material, diplomatic and public relations to the change elements inside the country.
4. It is worth emphasizing that the Global Yeakel movement is an all-inclusive movement of justice-seeking Eritreans in the Diaspora who have formed their local Baitos of all justice-seekers in their respective localities. It is true that the conceptual framework of the Global Yeakel movement is unassailable, in terms of its being all inclusive and democratic grassroots movement. It is in the process of actively mobilizing all Eritrean justice-seeking Eritreans world-wide in spite the obstacles created due to the coronavirus pandemic and other obstacles it has been facing including from agents of the dictatorial regime.
5. The other important role of the Leaders of the Global Yeakel Movement is to prepare the necessary framework for a smooth transition to democracy after the removal of the dictatorial regime. The Global Leadership Team should work in collaboration with the Eritrean political parties, change elements inside the country, and other stakeholders, to the extent possible, to prepare the groundwork so that there will be no confusion or political instability when the dictatorial system is removed. In other words, it will be critically important to avoid the situation that happened in Somalia when Said Barre was removed or the situation that happened when Gadhafi was ousted from power in Libya. It is encouraging to see members of the political parties are having close working relationship with the Global Yeakel.
6. The Global Yeakel Leadership team should raise financial resources from its members. But in addition, it should have a fund-raising team that will approach countries to support the process of democratic change in Eritrea. Countries that have been flooded by

Eritrean refugees will find it to their best interest to support those who are trying to bring about democratic changes in Eritrea and end the flow of refugees to their borders.

7. In conclusion, GI believes that what all justice-seeking Eritreans should do is to come up with brilliant ideas to strengthen the Global Yeakel Movement that has more members than all the political parties put together. What Sal Younis is proposing is marginalizing a big chunk of activists who are serving as the backbone of the Global Yeakel Movement. What Sal seems to have overlooked is the fact the Global Yeakel Movement has a huge opportunity, potential, and responsibility to unite the diverse Eritrean Diaspora for a singular objective of Eritrean salvation and democratic transition. Just remember the Yeakel Foundation has raised over \$800,000.00 to deliver to Eritrean refugees the necessities for Covid-19 protection as well as food and supplies in an efficient and transparent manner. This amply demonstrates the potential of the Global Yeakel movement.
8. We need to recognize our first priority is to get rid of Isaias and his cronies. Eritreans in the Diaspora can play an important role in contributing to ending dictatorship in Eritrea by working together under the banner of the Global Yeakel Movement. Let's learn from our Tigray brothers and sisters who are doing miracle speaking with one voice.

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