

Idi Amin Buffoonery Reincarnated in Eritrea

Contributed by Tewelde Stephanos
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Unfiltered Notes: Idi Amin Buffoonery Reincarnated in

Eritrea

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The latest Al Jazeera interview with Mr. Isaias (<http://asmarino.com/interviews/563-talk-to-al-jazeera-president-isaias-afwerki->) was, for me, by far the most painful to watch. At one level, you feel sorry for him as he demolishes the dignity of his own person and that of the nation to shreds. Then you think of the hundreds of thousands of lives he has willfully destroyed and the initial feeling quickly fades into anger and disappointment. Every fact the journalist posed was rebuffed as a "pack of lies" not backed by "evidences". Even responding to the question about the defection of Eritrea's soccer team in Kenya and other athletes who defected in

Scotland - which everyone knows to be true - is apparently, another "pack of lies". He flatly said "this is news to me, I never heard anything like that". Whhhaat!? So who is running the country if he is that clueless? Of course, he knows better and leaves little doubt as to who is the real source of the "pack of lies" - him.

There is nothing wrong with asking for evidence. In fact, it is a responsible thing to do. But if he is so fond of "evidences" all of a sudden, then we should also turn the tables and ask "evidences" from hiim. So, to start with, where are your "evidences", Mr. Isaias, to back up your claims that your former colleagues and the journalists you have jailed for a decade are spies?

But let's not fool ourselves. After all, this is a chap whose future is sadly behind him. There is really no point in trying to make sense of what he says anymore. Barring blind believers waiting for miracles of rapture, I have to believe there are decent folks who, for one reason or another, supported the regime in the past but keep finding themselves conflicted every time Isaias opens his mouth. Here are a few points to pause over and think about that even a five year old would have no trouble debunking. The quotes are his exact words from the interview.

"We never had any problems with

Ethiopia". Good. Then why did you sacrifice tens of thousands of our youth in a bloody war with people you don't have any problems with? Aren't you the one who started the war that consumed so many lives and property to supposedly avenge the killings of a handful of Eritreans whose names you have not shared with the public yet. Oh, by the way, where are the "evidences" for that?

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Eritrea's leader? As his supporters, doesn't it make you angry that he actually knows what is good (like inclusive) never wishes those good things for his own people? In fact, not only does he not wish them for his people, he does everything he possibly can to make sure they don't ever set foot in

Eritrea's soil.

Let me go off a tangent for a bit here. I have heard arguments before that he does these things because he is truly not Eritrean. Don't believe it. Isaias is Eritrean, it is just that he is an Eritrean brute, our brute. Framing one's thoughts around what percentage of one's blood is this or that, on top of being so archaic, is also absolutely wrong. Although Woldeab Woldemariam was not 100% Eritrean by birth, he was 100% Eritrean by all other measures. I can't even imagine anyone daring to call himself/herself to be more Eritrean than him.

I was in

Eritrea for the duration of the 1998 war, the one Isaias now claims "was instigated by the

United States in the first place" -- which, by the way, is absolutely false. During one of the major breaches of

Eritrea's defenses, stories were rampantly going around town that this was the work of a "traitor", supposedly a former Eritrean tegadalai of Tigrean origin. The story smelled fishy and I asked another tegadalai I knew if this was true. The name of the guy being blamed for the debacle escapes me now, but I learned that the poor fellow was very sick and hospitalized all along. Not only that, the tegadalai I asked said he knows the so-called "traitor" in person and swore that he is no traitor and that he would do no such thing.

I venture to guess some of the "Eritreans" who were spewing this venom would not measure up to match the level of integrity or patriotism of the so-called traitor. I mention this to highlight how irrelevant differences are often cooked up or exaggerated to create divisions where none existed or should exist. The constant demonization of this group or that in our websites falls into this category. Potential allies going at each other with such misdirected energy, as CDRiE was the recipient of recently, only extends the oppression that is suffocating all Eritreans.

"There is no commodity called democracy". This is a tired phrase of Mr. Isaias and can probably be brushed off as such.

But doesn't that make you wonder why the word "democracy" is so prominently included in PFDJ's alphabet soup?

Selling a non-existent commodity and successfully getting premium currency for it through various embezzlement schemes for so long, is a sad testament to the willingness of some Eritreans, especially the highly educated ones who can't stop singing his praises, to be screwed over and over again.

Still doubt democracy actually exists? Even with the benefit of hindsight of the damning interview, many Eritreans participated in demonstrations in support of the regime. Nothing wrong with that if it is done out of deep conviction. But deep conviction is hard to fathom given the context of things these days. Folks participated in the February 22nd demonstrations, probably hurled a few insults at the democratic countries that have generously given them safe haven, went home, slept soundly (I hope) and woke up next morning with no one knocking at their doors in the dead of night to haul them off to jail. Don't you ever wonder why you can't do what you did here in

Eritrea? Doesn't that bother you?

So, you see, democracy is still a precious commodity -- except in

Eritrea, that is. It exists and you are a living proof that it does. The only difference is Isaias has made sure democracy is a dead commodity in

Eritrea and that is why he can declare it so with certainty. And many don't see anything wrong with that, unfortunately.

Eritrea is a country where "No body promises anything to anybody". This would be absolutely tragic if it was true. But it isn't. On the contrary, Isaias himself has been making countless promises all along. Didn't he promise Eritrea will be another

Singapore? Only problem is he doesn't deliver on those promises; or he delivers the exact opposite of what was promised. "Democracy" and "Justice" were indeed promised, at least by implication, when he created PFDJ -- a misnomer of a beast at whose door steps justice and democracy die every day. The question is: if he makes no promises to the nation he is supposedly 'leading', what is then the point of his "presidency" or even his own personal existence? With no vision to promise and deliver on anything, no wonder things are falling apart.

"This is a mockery of justice". Out of all God's creatures, Mr. Isaias should be among the least qualified to utter these words. He has mocked justice in

Eritrea like no other ruler before him. At a whim, he has made people disappear, to which I am sure, he would say "where are the evidences". We know Astier Yohannes disappeared from the airport as her children were waiting outside for her. I know my friend, Taha Mohammed Nur, died in Isaias' jail. We know the journalists are jailed because Isaias said they were spies, without "evidences", of course.

"Let the people talk". Kind of ironic coming from the very person doing everything imaginable to ensure people's mouths remain shut - except when it is necessary to grease his weak ego. In essence, making sure all avenues for expressing oneself are non-existent and, for the "show", declare "let the people talk". How can people "talk" when demonstration is illegal inside

Eritrea, when news and opinions are only available through propaganda-spewing regime-owned media outlets, when people are not allowed to form associations to solve their own community problems, when it is illegal to gather in groups of more than a handful, when religious leaders are appointed and fired by an atheist regime?

"Did you enjoy the show?". This was a question posed to the journalist if she enjoyed the Fenkil Festivities in Massawa after she asked why his shoot-to-kill policy is necessary. Yes, orchestrated "shows" are our answer to everything. We have "shows" to show artificial happiness the same way PFDJ is a front (as in not the real thing) for justice and democracy. When asked who do you consider to be your friends, Isaias said "the whole world outside liars". Everybody is asking why these lies, why these sanctions. How I wish he was right! Yes, we did start on the right footing in 1991 with incredible goodwill from the whole world. But squandered it all in no time to the point where "the whole world" -- our neighbors, the whole of Africa and the UN body - took a united stand against us. In spite of its small population,

Eritrea is now among the highest refugee generators in the world. But where would be the evidence for that? And the conclusion, "We are number one in this continent". This is the type of Idi Amin buffoonery that continues to haunt Africa. Unelected and unaccountable "leaders" stripping the dignity of their people willy-nilly, delivering nothing but empty slogans. Like the tigrigna saying "kebtimo wesidomen, ente xerfi gn zgedfanlom yeblanan". Isaias boastfully claims there is no food shortage in

Eritrea and we know better. Isn't that the sort of callous denial -- the refusal to feel the pain of his people -- that eventually brought Haile Selassie down?

Even the most rabid diaspora supporters of the regime are not fooled by this "number one" bull, however. They may wrap themselves in the flag for the "show", curse the very freedoms they enjoy daily, and ungratefully slap the generous hand that feeds them. But they are staying put in their safe havens. They are not moving. What, no one wants to live in the number one country in Africa? Obviously, something must be wrong with that picture.