

President! SHOULD WE ASK THE PRESIDENT?

Year in and year out for one to listen to the speeches of President Isaias Afewerki; one could conclude that these same old speeches are ritual at best. I must congratulate him for his long hours of speeches and performances that has little positive impact to Eritrean.

If the world was only ruled by political philosophy the President of Eritrea would take the number one prize, because the president seems to have a great knowledge about world politics. Unfortunately the world is led by action not by good speeches and political philosophy.

Much of the focus and the attention of the president this year seem to be on Eritrean in the Diaspora, particularly those who left Eritrea in a bad note.

During his lengthy speech the President failed to properly address the economic, political and justice disparities of his administration.

For many Eritreans in the Diaspora especially those who have a dream of returning to Eritrea the President's speech might seem inspirational. Especially where a presidential official invited those Eritrean in the Diaspora to come home without facing fear or intimidation from the Government of Eritrea, provide he/she have \$30 - \$40 thousand to invest. What can one do with \$40 thousand in Eritrea?

If true, this is indeed good, but why is the President only focused on escapees? What is his motivation? Indeed it is a good gesture to allow people to come home, but Eritrean at home should be granted passports legally so they could travel and work anywhere to support their loved ones, after all it should be their right.

The President as always failed to speak directly to his people at home and also failed internationally to address the crucial and the most important issues facing Eritrea while he had the opportunity during his visit to New York for the UN General Assembly Meeting.

Should we ask the President why he failed to address Ethiopia- Eritrea conflict while he was in New York and why he was asking to participate in person to the UN Security Council Meeting? Although the President of Eritrea was not given enough time to be granted a visa, one wonders why he did not send a representative closer to the United States like the Ambassador of Eritrea in the US.

The six hour speech given by the Present of Eritrea, I would say was too long and painful, mainly because his speech contained little or nothing of importance to the needs of Eritrean at home. What the Government of Eritrea has to do is far more than give an open invitation to escapees who have settled in Diaspora, he also need to speak to the people at home and fulfill the promises that has been made by the same president for the last 20 years.

Eritrean would like to know the whereabouts of their loved ones who have been languishing in prison. Should we ask you: Mr. President if you have any intentions of releasing the illegally held prisoners or at least to let their loved ones know of their whereabouts?

The President talked about the Eritrean National Service, and indeed he is right to say that the National Service is well known in other part of the world. Should I remind you Mr. President, the National Service is undisputed in Eritrea as well by Eritrean; the question is why not kept the 18 months' timeframe that was intended for young people entering the National Service. Keeping the young and productive generation for over 10-12 years in the National Service is unreal and unacceptable in the eye of most Eritrean.

When Eritrean run away to obtain freedom that was rightfully theirs but denied by the system, still families are held responsible for the actions of their children and the Government of Eritrean shifts the blame to the escapees whenever anything goes wrong. Now to invite escapes without any guarantee, relying only on the word of the President does not seem fair to most of us.

Should we ask the President again?

When will it be the right time for the Government of Eritrea to amend the rule of law and implement the constitution so the escapees can go back to Eritrea without fear of incarceration?

During the brutal rule of Haile Selassie of Ethiopia every year on his birthday or Independence Day those cruel leaders would release political prisoners as a gesture of good will, why don't you try that Mr. President, if you have one like ordinary people!

MR. President, without a constitution that will guarantee the safety of the people, many like me refuse to accept your words. Because we have been deceived by your words many time.

Most of all, Mr. President you need to speak to Eritrean in Eritrea. Do not worry about Eritrean in the Diaspora we already made a choice and we know the right time to come home.

Happy New Year!

Naz Yemane

Voice of Eritrea