

The Manifesto of the League of Eritrean Democratic Forces

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We the Eritrean people, who fought heroically for thirty years for the liberation of our country, and have been denied the elementary means of life sustenance and good governance by a retrogressive dictatorship, outline our aims in this Manifesto.

The first aim of the Manifesto is to preserve the independence of our country; establish plural-democracy; build a self-sufficient economy; and enhance regional Union.

The second aim of the Manifesto is to plot the course of our future in the political, economic, educational, and resource (human and material) development fields.

The third aim of our Manifesto is to call all Eritrean democratic forces to National Unity.

1. Let Us Build a Democratic Eritrea

• We Shall Establish Constitutional Democracy

We shall struggle for a constitution based on popular autonomy; universal and equal rights; free elections based on a multi-party system; and the secret ballot.

We hold that all political power emanates from the Eritrean people and is exercised by agencies elected by them.

We shall strive to establish freedom of expression and the press.

We shall fight for religious liberty.

We shall endeavor to preserve our right to personal integrity and privacy; as we shall guard jealously our freedoms of association and assembly; our right to organize trade unions, and civic associations.

• We Shall Uphold the Principle of Separation of Powers

In democratic Eritrea, the executive, the legislative, and the judiciary shall have separate and defined functions.

The judiciary shall be autonomous, of high moral standard, and impeccably professional.

The Rule of Law shall be based on free and independent courts of law; universal equality before the law; and legal safeguards for the individual.

We shall agitate for the legislation of a Bill of Rights (that embodies all individual and human rights) as a covenant between the Eritrean people and the Eritrean state.

- **We Shall Strive for Gender Equality**

We shall fight for the equality between women and men.

Women and men shall have equal rights, obligations, and opportunities in all matters of common concern.

The equality of Eritrean women and men shall be based on the principle of equal wages for equal work.

Motherhood in Eritrean society shall have the highest value and shall occupy the centre stage in Eritrean family building.

2. Let Us Build a Vibrant Economy

We shall base our economic system upon the principles of private property, the free market, the participation of the public sector, and state ownership of national resources.

We shall introduce anti-trust and anti-monopoly, and anti-corruption laws in our new constitution.

We shall strive to develop an economy that does not deplete natural resources; waste human potential; and does not expose the environment to degradation.

We shall, in a sweeping Land Reform, privatize village land and distribute it among its inhabitants.

We shall develop food security based agriculture.

Our industry shall be organized around agriculture.

We shall develop co-operative fish production.

We shall plan for hydrological security, reforestation, anti-desertification, and alternative sources of energy.

Our taxation policy shall be designed to raise funds for national goals without punishing capital.

- **Tourism and Services**

Areas assigned to the tourist industry shall be allocated.

Tourism that pursues foreign exchange at the expense of the Eritrean environment and

seacoast corrals; and diminishes the worth of the Eritrean individual, shall be avoided.

Eritreans shall have free access to Eritrean nature and holiday spots.

- **Traffic and Infra-structure**

We advocate the planned development of transport and communications.

Traffic policy shall be attuned to regional needs in order to build a public transport that caters to the countryside.

Safety and environmental requirements shall be the cornerstone of traffic, tourism, and other productive services.

We shall redouble our efforts in building the infra-structure of our country.

- **Labour Market**

Our labor policy shall be based on the principle that all Eritreans have the right to work, irrespective of class, religious, ethnic, regional, gender, and age differences.

The state, as an important employer, shall improve skills and education via state re-education institutions and re-training programs.

The work environment must be designed to protect the health and safety of the workers; likewise, the personal dignity and vocational development of employees must also be protected.

Trade unions shall have the right to negotiate with employers' organizations in matters related to wages and workplace democracy.

- **Distribution and Consumers**

Huge differences in income and wealth create class antagonism; minimise the well-being of the majority; and diminish economic growth. For this reason equal work shall merit equal pay.

The right to social security and fair income shall be protected via the instrument of taxation.

We shall enhance the influence of the working people by increasing their productivity as well as their earning capacity.

The quality of goods and services shall be protected from unfair industrial and commercial practices.

Prices of basic needs shall be protected by public agencies and consumer organizations.

3. We Shall Focus on a Thinly Spread Health Creation

A curative health program shall be spread thinly to serve the entire population, so that the poor shall receive health services and medicine with care and dignity.

We shall create health and develop it by making clean water available; and by improving the hygiene, nutritional, educational, housing, and environmental standards.

We shall, likewise, give high priority to protective health in order to prevent the outbreak of diseases.

4. We Shall Provide a Broad-based Education

Focusing on the eradication of illiteracy, and providing basic education to all, shall constitute our basic educational strategy.

School education shall be compulsory, open to all, and available in all regions and localities.

An important objective of our educational policy is to break the vicious cycle of generational poverty, by preparing the Eritrean youth for a decent working life and further studies.

Our aim is to develop a high quality Eritrean human resource. To achieve this aim, teacher colleges shall be upgraded to prestigious institutions - with high salaries attached to this noble profession.

Higher education shall be based upon increasing technological knowledge. We shall also select relevant technology (in agricultural, reforestation, water conservation, and electronics) that avoids redundancy and unnecessary replication.

We shall pursue the policy of regional co-operation, and launch a solicitation campaign for international assistance earmarked for R&D.

Sport and physical fitness activities shall be cultivated as important aspects of education.

5. We Shall Develop our Resources

- **The Eritrean Child**

Children shall be at the centre of our of human resource development strategy.

The central objective of our family policy is the pursuit of welfare for children.

Towards this end, economic support and service shall be made available to families through subsidies and tax-returns; in this way parents may combine the duty of bringing up their children with the imperative of earning a living.

Another aspect of our policy is related to the provision of kindergartens, pre-schools, schools, and health care centers.

The provision of books and other school materials is equally important to disadvantaged children.

Housing, urban development, and traffic shall be planned with children in mind.

- **Housing**

Our long range housing policy is to provide a home for each Eritrean family; while the short term objective is to provide a roof over every Eritrean head. Expressed differently, members of co-operatives must own their farms; wage workers and salary earners must have stable jobs; and all must own their homes.

The villages of Eritrea shall be the cornerstone of our housing strategy in order to encourage even development and discourage the flight to shanty towns.

Our building strategy shall be based on raw materials that are available at home, and are locally produced.

6. Fellow Eritreans Let us Stand United! Let us not Fall Divided!

The League of Eritrean Democratic Forces calls upon all Eritreans to establish the widest possible coalition of political forces against despotism. Fellow countrymen let us seal our coalition at a Unity Conference and derive democratic legitimacy from it.

Let the aims of the all-inclusive unity conference be:

- To raise the slogan of: 'Down with the dictatorship! Democratic elections now!'
- To replace the idea of 'provisional/military government' by the principle of 'plural democracy'.
- To replace the Eritrean failed state by a successful, democratic, and anti-terrorist state that shall deny terrorism a foothold in the Horn of Africa.
- To establish a secular, unitary, and decentralized state.
- To protect the rights of national groups.
- To make a pledge for the return of Eritreans in the Diaspora and Refugee Camps so that they may partake in the rebuilding of our country.
- To respect cultural diversity and strengthen Eritrean national and social bonds.
- To accept the principle of peaceful co-existence, progressive co-operation, and non-interference in the affairs of others, as the guiding principles of the Eritrean state with its neighbors.

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League of Eritrean Democratic Forces

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