

**ETHIOPIAN PEOPLES REVOLUTIONARY PARTY[D]**  
**EPRP[D]**  
**POLITICAL PROGRAM**

JANUARY 2008

**INTRODUCTION**

The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) held its 4<sup>th</sup> Congress in April 2006 and adopted the program contained herein. This program was amended in January 2008 following the separate emergence of EPRP[democratic]. The program reflects the main tenets of the EPRP[d].

The EPRP, formed in April 1972 to respond to the needs of people's struggle for a political organization, has fought for more than three decades for the right of the Ethiopian people to be masters of their own destiny. The EPRP[d] is continuing with this lofty and historic struggle because, at present as in the past, the Ethiopian people are deprived of their basic and inalienable human and democratic rights.

The EPRP was formed at a time when an autocracy had exhausted its tenure in power by refusing to respond to the popular demand for change in the system. Land to the Tiller, Education for All, Equality of all Nationalities and other popular demands bearing on the sovereignty of the people and the country were ignored by the rulers. The 1974 popular revolution swept away the autocratic regime and paved the path towards a better and democratic future. It was indeed a revolution in which the majority of Ethiopians, irrespective of class or nationality, gender or religion, participated and paid the necessary sacrifice to achieve their objectives.

During this period, the EPRP was as yet not strong enough to play a determinant role in such a way as to block or avert the impending danger of a coup d'etat and the usurpation of the revolution by the army. The army, led by officers and NCOs later to be called the Derg, assumed power and blocked the triumph of the revolution. Draconian and repressive laws and edicts were proclaimed to counter the people's demand for power, for democracy, for meaningful change. The ancient regime was swept away and yet, in a way, reborn in the dictatorial Derg.

The struggle for democracy continued and it is in this period that the EPRP emerged clearly as the organization of the vast majority of the people. Organizing itself clandestinely all over the country, it mobilized the people for the political struggle and peacefully challenged the ruling military. The call for the formation of a broad based provisional and popular government, for a multi-party system, for the peaceful resolution of the Eritrean war, for free and fair elections, etc... these and other stands of the EPRP were that of the people and as such received the massive support of the majority.

As the military regime, led by Mengistu Haile Mariam, resorted to violent repression of the peaceful struggle, the EPRP, which had stated in its 1975 program that it will struggle peacefully so long as there was the possibility to do so, was forced to resort to self defense. The military regime declared the EPRP "public enemy number one" and

unleashed a campaign of repression against it. In the urban areas, this led to massive killing sprees, to the infamous "Red Terror" and the massacre of a generation by blood thirsty officers backed by the Soviet superpower. EPRP's self-defense was no match for the brutal military regime, and the party has made a genuine self-criticism of its lengthy self-defense when it should have quickly folded its urban counter-operations.

In the rural areas, the military regime's anti-EPRP repression was equally savage. Furthermore, the EPRP was attacked by the narrow nationalist duo of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (the TPLF) and the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (the EPLF). The EPRP was forced to withdraw from Tigray into Begemdir (Gondar). The combined onslaught by the military regime, the TPLF and the EPLF did lead to the weakening of the EPRP but did not result, as its foes had anticipated, in its total disappearance.

The EPRP supported the right of nationalities to self determination and fought for democracy and equality long before the TPLF saw the light of day as an EPLF-sponsored organization. In fact, many EPRP members lost their lives demonstrating in support of a peaceful and democratic resolution of the Eritrean war, calling for the peaceful resolution of the war. However, the EPRP did not adopt the baseless and false contention that Ethiopia is a colonial power, that Eritrea is a "colony", that Eritrea "was a sovereign state even in the past" etc... EPRP's position did not sit well with the EPLF which labeled the EPRP as "chauvinist" and groomed the TPLF against the EPRP. Subsequently the TPLF, on its part, refused to heed the EPRP's persistent call for cooperation and coordination or tolerance of difference and instead decided to go along with the EPLF to "destroy" the EPRP so as to have an uncontested field of activity in Tigray. Set on this devious goal, the TPLF and the EPLF in the late 1970's up to the early 1990s, waged war against the EPRP in Tigray, which was subsequently followed by the TPLF crossing into Gondar region (Wolkait) and launching another attack against the EPRP. The war campaign was accompanied by a concerted anti-EPRP propaganda campaign by the EPLF and the TPLF.

The EPRP's unwavering decision of not bowing to any foreign master also led to some foreign forces joining in the anti-EPRP campaign. Yet, the EPRP was able to overcome its internal difficulties and to defeat the external attacks. In 1984 it was able to hold its second national congress in its own operational zone (Quara, Gondar). In this congress, the EPRP assessed and examined its past history and activities and corrected its errors. It adopted a political program which clearly stipulated that pluralism and a democratic system that is characterized by the full respect of the rights of the people, multi-partyism, respect of private ownership (in land, etc...), and decentralization of power so as to effectively empower the vast majority of the people, the respect of the rights of nationalities to equality and self administration..., are the panacea for the ills of the Ethiopian society. It was at this 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress that Marxism-Leninism was dropped as the party's ideology.

At present, the EPRP[d] continues with its tradition of struggling for the respect of the democratic and human rights of the people, rights which have been basically denied by the one-ethnic based government of the TPLF. The EPRP[d] continues to stand with the

civic society calling for the respect of the rights of trade unions and associations to exist and function legally without being forced to be appendages of the government. The EPRP[d] continues to call for the unity of the people and the country on the basis of democracy and equality, for the respect of the economic rights of the people, for the establishment of an independent judiciary, for an armed and police force that is multi-ethnic in composition and non partisan to any political party or organization.

For the EPRP[d], the struggle continues because not much has changed fundamentally. The TPLF/EPRDF not only launched another war campaign against it in Gondar and Gojjam regions but it refused to answer its call for the right to struggle peacefully and legally. The EPRP was outlawed along with other major independent organizations while the TPLF/EPRDF cloned itself by giving birth to very many fake "parties" and "fronts" so as to maintain the illusion of multi-partyism. The TPLF/EPRDF continues with its repressive acts against the EPRP and all freely organized opposition forces as it strives to impose totalitarian and absolute control over political power.

The present Ethiopian reality is characterized by the rule of an ethnic chauvinist group (the TPLF/EPRDF) whose ethnic politics has divided and weakened the country. The ruling group plays the democratic game to satisfy donors while it has instituted what amounts to a dictatorship based on the notion of the primacy of one organization (TPLF/EPRDF) over all others. As in the past, the prisons are full of political prisoners, many dissenters disappear, the state owns all the land, it owns the media, it controls the judiciary. The army and the police are (re)organized in such a way as to make them totally loyal politically and ethnically to the ruling group, etc... The EPRP[d], which is part of the Union of Ethiopian Democratic Forces, strives with other opposition forces to struggle peacefully. The Paris Conference for Peace and Reconciliation, the Addis Ababa Conference which followed up on this and set up the Council of Alternative and Democratic Forces (CAFPDE), the various negotiations efforts undertaken to seek peaceful solutions, etc... had all the full support and active participation of the EPRP. The TPLF/EPRDF, however has not been willing to lend its ears to the wisdom of such peace initiatives and calls. Relying on its brute force, confident that its absolute control on political power will last, it has resorted to provoking the opposition, to daring it to "fight it out", to "die for its beliefs".

This political program is the fourth program for the EPRP. As stated above, it was adopted in April 2006, one year after the TPLF regime was defeated at the polls and rigged the election to stay in power. The first political program was adopted in April 1972 and the second in August 1975, and the third in August 1994. The current program takes into account the change in the political reality, it responds to the primary call of the people to save the country, to end the rule of divisive and anti-democratic force that has currently taken state power in Ethiopia by force. Under the prevailing circumstances the EPRP[d] will struggle clandestinely since it has been denied legal existence. It will struggle with and alongside the people.

The political program of the EPRP[d] defines the party, its aims and objectives, the reasons for its continued struggle against forces of division and tyranny. The struggle for

a pluralist and democratic Ethiopia, for a country united on the basis of equality, for progress that cherishes the welfare and dignity of the majority, for a peace that assures security and well-being of the citizens continues. And the EPRP[d] political program shows that the organization is standing with the Ethiopian people and Ethiopia to fight for the noble aims of the ongoing popular struggle for democracy and the rule of law.

## I

### *Objective*

To establish a federal democratic republic through free and fair election, a republic in which the rule of law and the democratic rights of the people shall be respected and the unity of the people and the country maintained on the basis of equality.

## II

### *Constitution*

1. The Constitution of the country shall be drafted by a Constitutional Commission made up of the representatives of the various political parties and sectors of the society, delegates of unions and civic associations, religious leaders, legal experts, elders, distinguished personalities (in the field of arts, science, other professions).

2. The people shall freely discuss and amend the draft constitution which shall be adopted by a country wide referendum.

3. The tenure of power of the government to be set up by a free and fair election, in accord with the constitution, shall be of a specific duration.

4. The EPRP believes that the Constitution should include the following major principles and tenets:

a/ that the power, functions and responsibilities of the executive, the legislative and the judiciary be separate and clearly stipulated;

b/ that the parliament (the legislative to be set up by free and fair election) be bi- cameral and that one chamber of the people's representatives be determined by the number of people in the electoral districts while the other be based on the ethnic composition of the federal structure and that each chamber have equal representation and the representative for both be elected directly by the people;

c/ that the democratic and human rights of the people be recognized in detail and in full;

d/ that there should be articles clearly recognizing self administration within a federal setup which is based on the geographic and economic ties of the people and recognizes the equality of all nationalities and the unity of the Ethiopian people;

e/ that a political system based on multi-partyism be established;

f/ that the government to be set up by free and fair election should have a tenure of only four years;

g/ that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ethiopia should be clearly recognized;

h/ that the citizenship right of Ethiopians shall be respected and is inviolable.

## III

### *The Transition Period*

1. To help establish a transitional government composed of the representatives of the political parties, civic society, unions, elders, etc.. and to prepare the way for the government to be set up by the country wide free and fair election;

- 2.a. During the transition period, the participation in the government shall be based on the democratic discussion, relations and agreement of the participants;
- b/ During the transition period, all political forces shall have the right to peacefully campaign for their programs;
- c/ The transitional period shall not last longer than three years;
- 3. Though the transitional government can decide on social, economic, etc matters through democratic discussion and resolution by the representatives it has no power of decision on fundamental matters affecting the sovereignty of the country;
- 4.a. A professional (non partisan) army and police force to safeguard the territorial integrity of the country and security of the people shall be set up from amongst the armed contingent of the various political forces taking part in the transition and from volunteers based on recruitment criteria agreed upon by the political forces themselves;
- b/ As soon as the above mentioned professional army and police force are established, all armed forces/contingents/militia of the political organizations shall be dissolved;
- 5.a. The transitional government has the responsibility to respect and to assure the respect of the democratic and human rights of the people during the transitional period;
- b. the structure and makeup of the transitional government shall be determined by the agreement of the participants.

#### IV

##### ***To assure the full respect of the unrestricted democratic and human rights of all citizens in the future democratic and federal republic of Ethiopia.***

- 1. To respect the freedom of speech and of the press; the right to stage strikes and peaceful demonstrations; the right of choosing and changing one's domicile and working place; the right of travel within and outside the country; to form or be part of associations and unions which shall be free from government interference and control; the right to form political organizations, to take part in such organizations; the right to elect and to be elected, the right to gain and own private property, the right to safeguard one's language, culture, etc...
- 2. To respect the right of all political parties to exist and to function peacefully and legally so long as the ideology is not based on racism and on using religion as a political philosophy;
- 3. To assure the functioning of the judiciary free from government control; to assure the rule of law; the equality of all citizens before the law; to prohibit arrests without warrants and detention for more than 48 hours without a court order; to stop unlawful search and seizures, to assure that the accused are innocent until proven guilty in a court of law; to protect the right of bail, the right of defense, the right of property; to prohibit the opening of private mail and the bugging of private phones and electronic media; to prohibit the use by the State of the private property of individuals without their freely given consent;
- 4. To prohibit all kinds of cruel and unusual punishment and to punish legally all those who carry out such punishments;
- 5. To legally prohibit all discrimination on the basis of race, nationality, sex or religious differences;
- 6. All citizens who have reached the age of 18 shall have the right to vote and all those who are 25 years old or above can be elected to a public office.

## V

### *To assure the respect of the self determination right of nationalities, to assure their equality...*

1. To recognize/respect the self administration rights of the nationalities, their right to use their languages, to develop their culture...
2. To struggle for a unity based on the equality of the people;
3. To assure that there is no discrimination as concerns nationalities in their participation in the political, economic and social life of the country;
4. To give preferential treatment/special focus to those regions particularly affected in the economic field, that lack schools and health facilities, etc...

## VI

### *To Separate State and Religion*

1. All religious institutions shall carry out their spiritual work with the help of their followers;
2. The State shall not interfere in religious affairs and religion shall not interfere in affairs of State (the State shall be secular);
3. The freedom of belief of all citizens shall be fully respected.

## VII

### *To Build the National Economy*

1. To build a national economy based on the market and on national development and which includes and gives primacy to the interest of the people of the country;
2. In the field of agriculture:
  - a. since agriculture is the mainstay of the economy and the livelihood of the people all efforts shall be made to develop this sector;
  - b. to recognize and respect the land ownership right of the peasants so that they can, if they so desire, mortgage, lease or sell their land;
  - c. in accord with the community to seek ways of giving land to the landless peasants;
  - d. the State shall give land concessions, in accord with limitations to be set by law, to those who have the willingness and the capacity to set up large- sized modern commercial farms;
  - e. to increase productivity and to improve the livelihood of the peasants, the State shall provide the necessary services and aid (seeds, fertilizers, tools, etc..), make available credit facilities, build feeder roads, schools, clinics, provide vocational training, help in providing clean water and in building irrigation systems, etc...
  - f. to help the nomads and semi nomads in their temporary abodes and, with their agreement, to help them settle in appropriate places and to assist them in engaging in animal husbandry or farming; to provide health and educational services;
3. In the field of Industry:
  - a. to encourage and help the industrial sector to develop on the basis of the principles of the market economy;
  - b. to allow private ownership and activity in all the industrial sector with the exception of those put under public ownership due to their strategic significance for the country or because private investors have not been interested in them; to encourage private investors and to back local industry by favorable taxation laws;

c. to allow foreign investors to invest in the industrial sector in a way that does not go against the national economic interest of the country and to encourage them to expand their investment;

d. to encourage the setting up of industries and factories all over the country where conditions and the availability of raw material permit; to discourage the concentration of factories in limited areas;

#### 4. Trade

a. to develop the exchange of commodities in the various sectors so as to develop the internal market and encourage local business people;

b. to give priority to local importers and exporters in the import and export trade;

c. to encourage increase in the production of goods for export;

d. to take adequate measures to halt illegal trade;

e. to carry out mutually beneficial trade with all countries except those embargoed by the United Nations, the AU or other regional and international bodies in which Ethiopia is a member;

#### 5. Transport and Communications

a. To give adequate attention to the development of transport and communication as this is of vital importance for the growth of the national economy;

b. the State shall provide the necessary services by building roads, railway lines, airports, post and telecommunication links, etc...

#### 6. Bank and Insurance Institutions

a. to put the National Bank under State control;

b. in accordance with laws to be promulgated by the government individuals shall take part in the banking and insurance sector; to encourage such participation;

#### 7. Urban land and property

a. everyone has the right to own, to lease, sell or mortgage urban land;

b. to reduce the housing problem the government shall attempt to build houses for low cost rent and encourage the private sector to do the same;

c. as concerns previously nationalized urban land and houses a joint committee composed of government and owners' representatives shall seek solutions in a way that gives justice to the owners and takes into account the welfare of the majority of the dwellers.

## VIII

### *To safeguard the welfare and interest of the working people*

1. to promulgate and put into effect a Labour Law drafted with the full participation of the labour unions;

2. to respect the right of workers to organize; to respect the freedom of trade unions and the right of workers to stage strikes and to engage in negotiations with employers and the State on questions of workers' welfare, wages, social security, insurance, better working conditions, etc...

3. to prohibit by law the employment of those below 16 years of age in factories and mines;

4. to promulgate that the daily working hour shall not exceed 8 hours and that the workers are entitled to a weekly 48 hours rest.

5. assure that workers get an annual leave period and adequate sick leave or leave for medical care and union activities; pregnant female workers shall have one month prenatal

leave and two month leave after birth.

6. to determine the minimum wages of workers in relation to the cost of living, the capacity of the employers and the level of the economy; to amend the same in relation to changing economic situations;
7. to strive to reduce unemployment; to help the unemployed in a way and to the extent the country's ability permits;
8. to help those who have been, for various reasons, disadvantaged or displaced;
9. in terms of employment opportunities to give priority to qualified Ethiopians;
10. to strive to assure all citizens decent livelihood and to avoid death destruction wrought upon them by famine, by lack of clean water of adequate shelter...

## **IX**

### ***To Institute an Educational System Favoring National Development and Progress***

1. to seek ways in which education shall develop in accord with the history, cultures and interest of the peoples of the country; to make education adapted to development and production; to strive to eliminate illiteracy; to legally require that all school age children should go to school;
- 2.a. to strive to expand free education; to favor the opening of technical and vocational schools, night schools and universities;
- b. to coordinate the educational work in various regions;
3. to give special attention to those regions denied educational opportunities; to try helping those students forced to interrupt their schooling due to lack of material support;
4. to improve the salary and training of teachers, to assure them better working conditions and facilities;
5. to respect the right of students and teachers to organize their free unions; to make sure that educational institutions are administered by a joint committee of teachers and parents;
6. to give special attention to the expansion of education in the technical, agricultural and scientific domains; to give aid to research institutions on science and technology, to assist scientists, men and women of the fine arts, etc..
7. the State shall give special attention to the welfare of children and thus shall establish or assist kindergartens and pediatric institutions;
8. to assure the participation of private schools in the educational system in accordance with the law.

## **X**

### ***A Health and Medical Care System Benefiting The People***

1. to intensify health care action both in the urban and rural areas; to open up clinics in the rural areas, to wage coordinated campaigns and vaccination drives to eradicate epidemics; to train health officers in large numbers;
2. to seek ways to give free medical care to the needy;
3. to seek ways for the implementation of traditional medical herbs and techniques after scientific study and research;
4. in accordance with the law, to create the conditions for the participation of private clinics and hospitals in the medical system of the country;
5. to coordinate and supervise the various health care plans and services adopted by the regions;

## **XI**

### ***To Assure the Equality of the Sexes***

1. to assure the equality of the sexes in the political, economic and social fields, in education and health care, etc...
2. to assure equal pay for similar work;
3. to assure the right of women to freely organize themselves;
4. to promulgate marriage and family laws which enhance the interest of the society for development and freedom; to ban the practice of underage marriage; to assure the right of women to practice birth control;
5. to strive to remove the conditions leading to the spread of prostitution; to give other work and training to those forced in this trade.
6. to undertake rural development that particularly alleviates the burden of women, such as drinking water accessibility, irrigation methods, biofuel/substitutes accessibility and easy availability of mills.

## **XII**

### ***To Protect Natural Wealth and the Environment***

1. to assure that the rivers, lakes, waterfalls streams remain under public ownership;
2. to carry out joint government and community actions to curtail the deforestation, the pollution and the overall degradation of the environment;
3. to give particular attention to areas where there has occurred an ecological imbalance leading to famine and other disasters;
4. to open up new national parks and to preserve those already in existence, to set up a special police force to protect the forests and wild life;
5. to wisely use the natural wealth for the benefit of the people, to avoid degradation of such resources and the environment; to expand the use of electricity and other means which would reduce or eliminate the extensive use of trees for cooking purposes;
6. to promulgate a country wide environmental protection law that has to be respected by all including industrialists;
7. to promote tourism which shall not infringe on the respect and cultures of our peoples and to use the income for environmental protection activities; to encourage local tourism and to facilitate its extension (building hotels, roads, etc..);
8. to launch a country wide awareness and educational campaign on the why and how of protecting the environment...

## **XIII**

### ***To Establish an Armed Force Which Shall Defend the Territorial Integrity and Sovereignty of the Country and Shall Respect the Will Rights and Interests of the People Enshrined in the Constitution; to Set Up a Police Force to Maintain the Peace and Security of the Public***

1. to establish a professional army made up of volunteers from all nationalities of Ethiopia, an army which shall be answerable to the Ethiopian people or to the government set up by their free election; to establish a police force to maintain public order and security and owing its allegiance to the Ethiopian people and the government elected by them freely;

2. Both the armed forces and the police shall be composed of volunteers.
3. The members of the army and the police shall be prohibited by law from engaging in politics;
  - a. the participation in politics of the members of the armed forces and the police shall be limited to voting during elections and referendums;
  - b. political activity by political organizations shall be prohibited within the armed forces and the Police; members of the armed forces and the police cannot be members of any political organization;
  - c. members of the armed forces of the police who want to take part in political activities or wish to run for elections should first resign from the armed forces of the police;
4. to safeguard the welfare of the members of the armed forces and the police, to respect their pension rights, to help the families of those who lose their lives in line of official duty;
5. to help those soldiers and police personnel, as well as their families, who genuinely served their country but have been dismissed from work arbitrarily and displaced or impoverished consequently;
6. to prohibit by law the opening of any foreign military base on Ethiopian soil; to prohibit any military dependency on any foreign country.

#### **XIV**

##### ***To Follow a Foreign Policy of Neutrality and Peaceful Coexistence***

1. to uphold the interests of Ethiopia and to have and to strengthen relations with all countries except those embargoed by the UN or the AU;
2. to follow the policy of peaceful coexistence with all neighboring countries
3. to cooperate with all the forces struggling for African political and economic unity and to strengthen the AU and other such institutions;
4. to express Ethiopia's solidarity with all peoples struggling for justice, democracy, human rights and liberty.