

# The Brussels Conference: Who is Coming to Dinner?

By G. Ande

First and foremost, I would like to congratulate all those involved in making the Brussels Conference possible. At a time when the Eritrean human spirit has hit rock bottom due to the excesses of the regime in power, any effort that aims at soothing and comforting our people by even the faintest flicker of hope in the horizon is all welcome. The Eritrean story has to be told to all that have ears to listen. The agonies and suffering of our people need to be told and retold a thousand times over especially to those world bodies or powers whose indiscretion and bias, in years past, on matters detrimental to the fate of Eritreans, accounts for a lion's share of much of the suffering our people are sustaining at the present time.

To overcome prodigious barriers and to be able to bring the Eritrean case to a hearing involving people of great influence and political clout is something the splintering opposition groups have not been able to accomplish for years. That's why many well meaning Eritreans are perplexed by the negative reactions of the so called opposition groups and other pundits to the Brussels conference. Even the axis of evil who were rattling their scimitars and spreading their divisive venom to harm our people in [awate.com](http://awate.com) are expressing their anger on why they were not invited to participate in the conference. In spite of all the foul cries, the fact remains that it is the story told that is more important than who told the stories. Secondly, those who are claiming to represent the Eritrean people and thus consider themselves as the only legitimate advocates need to reexamine their own track record and revitalize their organizational effectiveness instead of fuming to downgrade the achievements of the Brussels Conference.

The Brussels Conference has stirred a lot of emotion and commotion. By doing so, it may serve as a powerful catalyst to jump start a process that may awaken the Eritrean people from a deep slumber. It is not an overstatement to assert that the Eritrean human spirit is at its record low in history. And the sad thing is that very few people saw that coming. For the most part the Eritrean people were carried away by the euphoria that national independence brings along with it. And the ruling junta faced little or no resistance as it kept on escalating its creeping and misguided policies and punishing the very people that received it with open arms in 1991. The experience that the Eritrean people are going through under the repressive rule of the junta were narrated by the Brussels Conference invitees with a passion and glaring elucidation that perhaps rocked

their audience from their chairs. I say a job well done to the participants of the conference.

However, any effort that does not filter through to the grass root level will only remain as a speck in a chain of historical events instead of becoming a flame that will light many candles of valor and steadfastness in a long and bitter struggle against oppression and dictatorship. Thus, the Eritrean people should follow up through the noble initiation exemplified by the conference and roll their sleeves to undo what has been done by the regime.

This is going to take a lot of sacrifice. And it is going to take more than merely forming real or imagined opposition parties whose leaders are better known for their pumped up ego and being bereft of moral rectitude than for their effectiveness in consolidating a stiff and effective resistance against the dictatorship. The Eritrean people are crying for sound leadership. Who is going to provide what the people are craving for now?

Well, when the going gets tougher to people, when the end to their suffering is not in sight, when confusion and in fighting reigns among those who are expected to deliver the people from evil, where can the people pledge their hope on to? On some supernatural power? This question begets more perplexing questions. And the answer is in the offing. But one thing is for real. And that is, the Brussels Conference, and anything that resembles it, is welcome news to us all in spite of what our obstructionists may say or do. The appetizers are on the platters and we should not mind who is coming to dinner as long as we have an engaging and fruitful rendezvous.