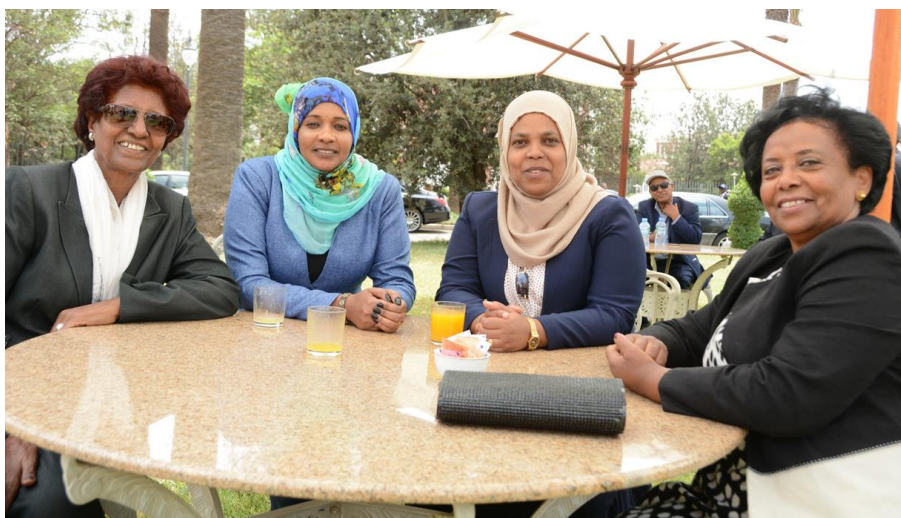


Eri- Ethio women government officials



Askalu Mekerios, Keria Ibrahim, Mufteriat Kamil, Fowzia Hashim

By: Billion Temesghen

Sunday day morning, 8th of July has been a historical day for Eritrea and Ethiopia, after a hearty official welcome, the Ethiopian delegation led by Ethiopian Prime Minister, Dr. Abiy Ahmed, headed to the Presidential Palace in Asmara. The women government of both countries were sitting and chatting around a table in the garden of the Presidential Palace, under the warm sun and soft breathe of Asmara, when they allowed me to interview them in connection to the historic day of peace and love between the sisterly countries.

Here follows their thoughts and messages of congratulations.

Minister Askalu Menkerios. Mister of Tourism, Eritrea. Congratulations on such a day Minister.

Congratulations to us all. My wish is that the world sees and accepts that the only thing Eritreans yearn for is peace. Both of us despise of hatred and hurt. Moreover, Eritreans have been always unwavering in the stance of peace, liberty and respect. In fact, respect and equality, is the emblem of Eritreans no matter where and what. The official welcoming ceremony of Prime Minster Abiy and his delegation has been incredible. Eritreans gathered from all over the city and vicinities have been out in the avenues of our capital waving flags of both Eritrea and Ethiopia out of respect for the Prime Mister who came with the news of acceptance of peace. I am afraid my words won't be enough in expressing the atmosphere of joy that is dominating Asmara. And just like my people I also

want to sincerely welcome our Ethiopian counterparts, our dear brothers and sisters.

Like you said, Minister, peace, liberty and respect have been notions extremely dear to the people of Eritrea. So much so, that heavy prices have been made in order to attain and sustain them. You were a young freedom fighter and later on advanced to several political posts... from a young enthusiast ready to die for freedom alongside thousands of young Eritreans to a political figure... You have seen it all. What is the journey of Eritreans towards peace?

I am an Eritrean. I never did anything more than any other Eritrean. Being Eritrean is a duty we all fulfill to the maximum of our human capacity. And so did I. It gives me utmost pleasure to have walked the journey “towards peace”, as you call it. Eritreans never wanted war and destruction. Our forefathers have held great history in being adamant for our country’s Independence and our people’s unity foreseeing any diversities. For sovereignty Eritrean forefathers turned even to the UN. Many called the Eritrean armed struggle for Independence a rebellion against the federation. But it was not. It was a unique humanitarian revolution in which Eritreans fought for principles of freedom, equality and respect. However, Eritrea has been a victim of foreign policies and mockeries to our own identity. The armed struggle for Independence and, later on, for sovereignty are instances that demonstrate Eritrean resilience. I hope “resilience” fits to be the answer of the question you just asked me.

Congratulations to the Eritrean and Ethiopian people. I hope we jointly move forward on a new chapter of long-lasting love and understanding. The last twenty years have greatly harmed the Eritrean people and now what I am wishing most for is peace of mind, especially to Eritrean youth. These young men and women who welcomed the Ethiopian delegation today, were children of five to six years old when Eritrea was first liberated. We promised them peace and freedom when we thought it was over in 1991. Instead, they had to answer the call of National Sovereignty selflessly giving their youth and lives. But now I believe it is really over. I want to dearly thank the Eritrean youth for serving its people through better and worst with altruistic love. And I wish for them a stable and bright future so they can lead their lives to their desires. Eritrea and Eritreans are lucky to have a youth as rare as ours. Congratulations!

***Mrs. Keria Ibrahim. Speaker of the House of Federation, Ethiopia.
Welcome to Eritrea. Do you feel at home?***

I feel very welcome and extremely grateful to be here in Eritrea in the warmth of our Eritrean brothers and sisters. The longing and desire for love were truly reflected in the way Eritreans greeted us today. I didn't expect every Eritrean in Asmara to be out in the streets to greet us. I knew Eritrea's culture is welcoming but to actually be at the receiving end of such honor feels different. Thank you for welcoming us with such honor. It has been emotional since the minute we landed. People run alongside the motorcade we were in for more than ten kilometers. Both sides of the avenues were packed. Praise and ovations came from every corner and I am speechless. All I can say is 'thank you'.

Your Excellency, since the Prime Minister's answer for peace, what have been the sentiments of the Ethiopian people as regards to the peace signing agreement which has brought us all together on this historic day?

Today's event has taught me, us, that the people of Eritrea and Ethiopia shouldn't be separated. There is so much love amongst them. Today is a remarkable day. The welcome we received today shows that the Eritrean people has been eagerly looking forward to this day. And the reaction of the Ethiopian people to Prime Minister, Abiy Admed's news of readiness to peace agreements was also emotional. Therefore these two people shouldn't have been even separated for ten minutes let alone twenty years. We learned that the outcome of twenty years long segregation was a big mistake and that the war was a huge mistake that required heavy and heartbreaking prices from both the Eritrean and Ethiopian people. There is no good that comes from war and hatred. H.E Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's stance on this has brightened the hearts of Ethiopians and the willingness of Eritrea, followed by the invitation of H.E President Isaias Afwerki, has made this day possible. My wishes of growth, peace and stability go to the brotherly people of Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Minster Fowzia Hashim. Minister of Justice, Eritrea. How do you feel about being part of this historic day in the history of Eritrea and Ethiopia?

Similar to what my colleagues have been saying, I am, too, exceedingly happy and proud to be witnessing a day we Eritreans have been awaiting for long. I believe households were empty this morning. From the airport to the center of the city there wasn't a spot that wasn't crowded. And such a day seemed so far not long ago due to interference of all kinds that prevented Eritrea from full filling its ambitions of self-drive, development and regional harmony.

Speaking on grounds of lawful directives, how would you explain the Eritrean people's awareness on the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea?

The uncalled for “interferences” witnessed as the conflicts between Ethiopia and Eritrea evolved were secondary agents that created a gap of segregation between the two countries. Had there been integrity and respect of mutual principles and agendas, maybe, it wouldn't have taken twenty years for these people to reunite again. However, things have turned for a better future now. With mutual consideration and esteem, I am, like all Eritreans, certain that both countries will console each other in a future of shared compassion and brotherhood.

If I am to tell you about law's awareness and practices, I am to appreciate the Eritrean community for owning great knowledge of law and its practices. It is incontestable truth that our forefathers understood their lawful right of self-rule on their lawful proper land and fought for it for the people to live in it in harmony beyond any cultural and religious differences. Close to two centuries later, now, still the awareness is there and self-control to abide by law is unparalleled.

I hope the future of Eritrea and Ethiopia brings stability to the Horn of Africa. There is a lesson for young Eritreans to learn from their forefathers and mothers.

Ms. Mufteriat Kamil, Speaker of the House of Peoples' Representative, Ethiopia. Welcome to Eritrea. Can you say something about this historic day?

It has truly been a remarkable day both for the Eritrean and the Ethiopian people. The welcoming ceremony we were received by today shows the respect the Eritrean people have for the Ethiopian people. Being part of such regard makes me feel proud to have such loving neighbors. The Ethiopian Prime Minister, H.E Dr. Abiy Ahmed, has been looking forward to this day and the response of Eritrea's President, H.E Isaias Afwerki, has welcomed it sincerely. And so here we are today representing message of love from the Ethiopian people, which has been received with utmost respect by the Eritrean people. My experience today in Eritrea has been exceptional and exceedingly unique.

From your point of view what does the future look like for the people of Eritrea and Ethiopia?

These two people are people that love each other. The suffering that came out of these past years has hurt them greatly. I am most certain that our leaders' talks and desires for love and peace will lead both of the people to economic and social development. Our future will be of peace, growth and democracy.

Eritrea Profile,

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