

President Isaias Afwerki:

“No Force Substitutes the Littoral States of the Red Sea”



President Isaias Afwerki paid a five-day official working visit to the Arab Republic of Egypt (October 30-November 4, 2025), during which he participated in the Inauguration of the Grand Egyptian Museum and held talks with President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. To shed light on the visit and its outcomes, Eri-TV's Salahadin Husien conducted the following interview with President Isaias. Excerpts follow:

Q. Your Excellency, let us begin this interview with your participation in the inauguration of the Grand Egyptian Museum. How was this historic event?

The museum and the inauguration ceremony were truly magnificent. The artistic preparation, movement, lighting, and all the accompanying effects were outstanding. We must benefit from this experience and from Egypt's rich and ancient history, and work to promote such ideas and cultural expressions. It is an opportunity to launch new perspectives and benefit from these artistic capabilities. Such experiences should be publicized through the media so that citizens can draw lessons from them. By all standards, the inauguration ceremony was a spectacular event, as we witnessed.

Q. Mr. President, you met with President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and held discussion. What were the outcomes of this discussion and their role in strengthening the historic bilateral relations between Eritrea and Egypt?

The bilateral relationship is important also in terms of its regional dimensions and ramifications. Our areas of cooperation are not limited to bilateral matters alone; we also discussed the region and the wider neighborhood, as well as the issues affecting Africa and the broader region. Our shared strategic vision focuses on how to emerge from the quagmire of marginalization, external interventions, instability, and wars, and to contribute to creating a conducive environment to address these challenges.

Our discussions covered detailed aspects of current issues and the prevailing situation, so that we can renew our commitment, develop joint plans, and engage others in order to include all stakeholders in the region. We emphasized raising strategic awareness, clarifying goals, and utilizing available resources — a process that requires continuous effort. The political culture we are instilling in our bilateral and strategic relations is of great importance, because the goals are long-term and the challenges are significant. The task accordingly demands coordination between regional objectives and the global context.

The bilateral consultations will continue as a strategic relationship is not merely about, or confined to, issuance of joint declaration on a shared stance. It demands serious, practical work, to ultimately foster genuine relationship.

Q. Sudan has always been present in your discussions, given that both Egypt and Eritrea share borders with Sudan. What is the shared vision between the two countries for resolving this crisis and overcoming the tragic situation there?

The problem in the Sudan is indeed the biggest challenge in our region. Nevertheless, we are determined to strengthen our contribution in the quest of the Sudanese people to find solutions to their problems without external interference. What is happening in Sudan as often depicted as a civil war. But in truth, Sudan is facing a conspiracy — an invasion, both overt and covert. This is extremely saddening.

The Sudanese people staged a spontaneous popular uprising to move toward a better future after three challenging decades. Unfortunately, the conditions were not conducive for that transition. The Sudanese could have charted out a roadmap for the post-transitional phase, but external interventions complicated the process,

creating new problems and effectively leading to acts of invasion. Since the popular uprising, valuable time and opportunities have been lost, even though solutions could have been found within two or three years after the uprising. The crisis still lingers.

Therefore, Egyptian-Eritrean efforts, alongside those of other parties, are indispensable. We must work seriously. Media distortions and the falsification of realities often serve as justifications for external interventions. For example, the Egyptian initiative consisting of Sudan's neighboring countries was aimed to confine the matter to those directly concerned and most familiar with Sudan's existing realities and capabilities, enabling them to contribute to solving the crisis. And indeed, those countries had much greater familiarity with the crisis in Sudan and capability of solving the crisis. However, this initiative faced obstacles, as was indeed the case with other regional initiatives.

In spite of all these obstacles, we remain persistent and determined in our efforts as neighbouring countries to help a Sudanese-owned solution. Because there are strategic common interests between Sudan and the peoples of the region. And as such, it is incumbent on all the governments in the region to work in this direction and support the Sudanese people in overcoming this crisis.

Q. The issue of the Red Sea — its security and stability — is also a major concern, as Eritrea and Egypt are members of Red Sea littoral states. What is the shared vision and effort to create a mechanism of coordination among these states?

This is a complex matter that requires time to fully expound its dimensions. The Red Sea is not merely the property of the coastal states — it is an international waterway of immense geopolitical importance, more so than any other maritime passage, whether in the Indian or Pacific oceans. The Red Sea places great responsibility on the shoulders of the littoral countries bordering it, including Egypt and Eritrea. Without delving into details, ensuring the security of this maritime corridor is a strategic issue, not only for the countries of the region but also for international powers.

The problem arises from different postulates advanced by various quarters and that augment interferences. As a coastal state, Eritrea's position is clear. The proposal we have presented on various occasions, which includes twelve points, revolves around the following:

First: every littoral State must possess the internal capacity to safeguard its coastlines and maritime endowments. These nations might perhaps need additional capabilities and resources to effectively fulfill their obligations. Nonetheless, there is no external power that can substitute the internal capabilities of each littoral State. In this spirit, and even if there may be different perspectives here and there, I hope that this task will constitute the fundamental and shared demand of all of us. Each littoral State and its people must be committed to the fundamental principle of safeguarding, as a sovereign entity, its maritime endowments through its own internal capabilities

Second: there must be a cooperative mechanism among the littoral States to combine their strengths and collectively secure this international waterway through a shared legal and institutional framework. This process does not require foreign military bases or the interference of regional or global powers; rather, the sustainable security of the Red Sea should be ensured by the nations of the region themselves and for posterity.

Thirdly: in the hypothetical case in which the littoral States prove incapable of protecting the maritime route, there may be a role for international cooperation within a clear legal framework. Nonetheless, this does not mean that each littoral State can make agreements with great powers or regional countries under the pretext of protecting its maritime territory. Such acts cannot be acceptable as they are fraught with further complications and challenges. These acts must accordingly be governed within the boundary or framework of international law. If the littoral States require an additional and alternative mechanism to bolster the modalities of cooperation that they have developed to guarantee the security of the maritime route, they would need to work out a supplementary agreement among them that would be submitted to the UNSC or UN for endorsement.

Outside this vision, there is no justification for proposals on the establishment of foreign military bases or for direct military interventions targeting any Red Sea littoral State under the pretext of protecting the security of the maritime route. Such interferences cannot be productive as they are indeed unlawful and unacceptable. In this perspective, both Eritrea and Egypt are prepared to play their part in promoting a cooperative environment among all the littoral States of the Red Sea. This is not a matter of preoccupation for Eritrea and Egypt alone but one that concerns the entire region. I believe this is a realistic approach that requires no complications or external involvement. We must continue to advocate for this as a comprehensive proposal. This framework ensures that the Red Sea remains a global waterway serving the interests of all nations and peoples of the world.

Q. Somalia has always been part of the Eritrean–Egyptian discussions, and a Tripartite Summit between Eritrea, Egypt, and Somalia was held in Asmara. What are the joint efforts underway to help preserve Somalia’s sovereignty, rebuild its national institutions, and restore its unity?

The bilateral discussions were not confined to matters regarding the Red Sea only. The Red Sea is linked to the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and the Gulf of Aden, and these are connected to Somalia’s shores and the Indian Ocean — all are geographically and strategically interrelated. The geopolitical importance of this entire region is interconnected.

As I mentioned in an earlier interview, Somalia possesses a coastline of nearly 3,000 kilometers. The key question is how to help build Somalia’s capabilities to protect its territory, airspace and coasts. The challenges that Somalia is facing — with weak sovereign institutions to defend its national interests, airspace, coastlines, and territories — are palpable. The imperative of for bolstering Somalia’s internal capabilities is accordingly evident.

We have long been working, even before Eritrea’s independence, to support Somalia’s ability to establish such institutions. No one can substitute what the Somalis have to do on their own to build and buttress their o build their State institutions. But the process requires time and resources.

The same applies to the security of the Gulf of Aden — which straddles Somalia, Yemen, and Oman. However, what is disconcerting today is the attempt by external forces to secure positions of dominance in this specific region. There are efforts to establish bases in Socotra — which is part of Yemen and located in the Horn of Africa — and similarly, attempts to build bases on Mayun and Zuqar islands in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. Viewing this geography — from Socotra to Mayun — and the attempts to balkanize Somalia, it is clear that the ultimate objective is to create a conducive atmosphere for installation of foreign military bases in that segment to advance certain policy objectives.

The instability in Yemen also stems, essentially, from the ambition of global powers to establish military presence. These machinations constitute a continuous danger to the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Indian Ocean coastlines. As such, they require coordinated regional and local efforts to avert looming threats. And even in the absence of a comprehensive regional agreement on the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Indian Ocean shores, the imperative for promoting regional stability is indisputable. From this perspective, and taking into account the strategic depth and interdependence of this region, the necessity of regional cooperation and solidarity among its peoples and governments is crystal clear. This is not indeed a matter of choice but a historical obligation.

Thank you, Your Excellency
Nov 12, 2025