

DR. YUSUF BURHANU IN A HIGHLY-UNUSUAL PUBLIC DISCOURSE IN TORONTO:**(BRIEF REPORT)**

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Dr. Yusuf Burhanu, Chairman of the Political Bureau of the Eritrean National Salvation Front, who is in a tour in North America, had a fascinating meeting with Eritrean-Torontonians on May 6, 2018. The well-organized event took place amid the conditions that kept our people torn apart by the nostalgia about the past or the Eritrean unity during the armed struggle, and the anxiety about the future, hungry to know what is going on inside the Baito, which many people thought was in life support. As my weapon of choice is the keyboard, there is nothing more deserving my time than walking the readers through the amazing scene of hope, I had the honour to sense in one of the most unforgettable public meetings for many Eritrean-Torontonians.

The presentation of Dr. Yusuf was both in Tigrena and Arabic. One would touch the linguistic value, the civility, the depth, the compassion, and the abundance of caution in judgment, and the responsibility, in the presentation, which is on the social media for anybody to listen to (link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ggu91kf0kZ>). Nonetheless, I have few remarks on the overall view about it.

The presentation was not dogmatic or driven by ideology or partisanship. It was rather, something bigger, constituting a coherent vision of what dangers our country is facing, as a state and people, resulting from the piled up crimes and the dangerous path the ruling gang is following, the positive and negative regional developments that could impact our struggle, the ideal and the real methods of interacting with them, the limitations of the opposition and the way forward.

These were among the major threads that went through the presentation of Dr. Yusuf.

It is worthy of mention that it was vividly manifested by Dr. Yusuf that we have to put all secondary issues aside, be it political, cultural, ethnic, religious, or regional, and focus solely on removing the regime, whose urgent removal he stressed as a pre-requisite for the resolution of all other issues, urging that we should not lose sight of the fundamental threat hovering over the country. In other words, the patriotic message was loud and clear that we have to do the first thing first, otherwise, we would fall into the trap of twisted priorities of wrangling or having a complicated dispute over secondary issues, engaging us in secondary contradictions that will never be achieved before removing the regime or resolving the primary contradiction, which is the contradiction of all Eritreans, without exception, with the regime. Dr. Yusuf reminded us explicitly that wrangling over secondary issues, while putting the primary contradiction at the back seat, is a great win for the regime and handing the ruling gang a political weapon to use to prolong its life. That was of tremendous public interest and undoubtedly went hand in hand with the popular support. It was so because every Eritrean never fails to realize that our people back home (the biggest prison) are eager for liberation and want the monkey off their backs. I would not make a different presentation or put my fingers on different things, if I were Dr. Yusuf.

The presentation was followed by a question-answer session, which was to me a brain storming session that reflected a healthy diversity of opinions of our folks. During this session, Dr. Yusuf, who, through the handling of things or in practical terms showed that every Eritrean aspires for a better Eritrea, though people could disagree on what that entails on how to get there, felt the pulse of the people, entertained their questions and comments, dodged none of their questions, did not show any unconscious bias, and was very careful to the feelings of those who asked questions or had comments, holding back judgments, though some questions and comments could have been spontaneous utterances, as expected in any public meeting. That refined approach and social etiquette, in short,

energized the public, was respectful of the positions of the participants, and mindful of not offending anyone in anyway, promoting smooth and friendly conversation. In few words, it was really a total joy to listen and interact with Dr. Yusuf, who was heard telling some attendees, during the break time, that there is nothing like meeting the people face-to-face to learn what matters to them, and engage them in give-and- take conversation.

With all of the above in mind, it is appropriate to ask: ***What would be the impact of Dr. Yusuf's tour on the national struggle and locally at the level of Toronto?*** In general, as his presentation also contained aspects of whistle blowing concerning the mounting danger internally piling up in Eritrea, where Isias has become emperor for life, has eliminated the other opinion or confiscated the will of the Eritrean people, in addition to the developments in the Red Sea and the region as a whole, time has come that like-minded patriots get informed and engaged enough to save the country from the internal and external danger. Second, as the Baito, which is the national umbrella is in total disarray, the fear of a possible vacuum in the country at the event the monster loses his iron grip is increasing daily, qualifying it to give the desired leadership and rallying behind it are the essential tasks dictated by the urgency of the matter. Further, as working together has become an unattainable goal among many justice seekers everywhere, we hope the conversation with Dr. Yusuf would remove the debris that has made the running water slow down, putting some momentum on the desire and efforts of Eritrean-Torontonians to work together, confirming to the Eritrean people that they are ready to revive the good name they had earned.

As the public learned a lot from the presentation and the question-answer session with Dr. Yusuf Burhanu and went out of the hall more determined and committed to solidify their unity further, coordinate their common activities better, and qualitatively and quantitatively upgrade the amount of their efforts and styles of joint work, leaving secondary differences aside, Dr. Yusuf left the hall with flying colours, hopeful of repeating the success in his next leg of tour, and excited to report the results of his tour to all his colleagues in the Baito, urging them to do

the follow-up with their party branches for remarkable progress. We hope better days are on the horizon. =====