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GEDAB NEWS

Related News On Hedad Kerrar

By Gedab News (Archives)
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Several parties trying to mediate in solving the crisis

Asmara, Eritrea (Awate.com, June 25, 2001)

For weeks, there have been rumors circulating that the Government of Eritrea was about to expel two Americans, including an employee of USAid, for fraternizing with the Reformers and linking with the increasingly-independent private press. The decision to expel them was reversed under heavy pressure by the American Embassy in Eritrea. Contacted by Gedab News to comment, the Public Relations Officer at the American Embassy in Asmara, **Ms. Colette Christian**, dismissed the reports and told our reporter that "there has been no problem between USAid and the government since 1996."

Over the past few weeks, several parties have tried to mediate between the Reformers and President Isaias. Last week, Eritrean religious leaders went to the Presidential Office to meet with the president and start their mediation process. However, the president refused to meet with them and told them "to mind their business' through his messenger. Our sources said that the religious leaders are "still trying to break the impasse".

Dragon summons Moslem religious leaders to his office

Asmara, Eritrea (Awate.com, June 18, 2001)

Gedab News has learned that two weeks ago, during the Muslim holiday commemorating the Birthday of The Prophet [Mewlid ANebi] at Asmara's main mosque, several elderly citizens, including Fitewrari Hedad Kerar, accused the Eritrean Government of discrimination against Muslims. When asked to specify their allegations by the government liaison for religious affairs, Dragon, who summoned them to his office, the religious leaders complained about the lengthy delay in establishing the "Mejlis alAila" which appoints the Eritrean Mufti and the government's alleged insistence on the Muslim community to pay property tax in arrears [known as "meHwei gbri"] to regain title over Mosque-owned buildings.

Eritrean Authorities Interrogate Mediators

Asmara, Eritrea (Awate.com, July 15, 2001)

Fifty elder Eritrean citizens whose attempt to mediate between President Isaias Afwerki and the fifteen dissenting lawmakers who authored the "Open Letter to PFDJ Members" was aborted by the President's Office and have been summoned by the Eritrean Government to give an account of their motives.

The volunteer mediators were called individually and asked to report to **Mr. Musa RabA**, the **Police Commissioner**. During their private interviews, they were asked if they had been directed to act as they did. When they told their interrogators that their efforts were spontaneous and patriotic, they were informed that they had violated Proclamation 27/2 which, they were told, limits the number of Eritreans that can congregate for "political rallies" to a maximum of seven individuals. The elders informed Mr. Musa RabA that if such a proclamation exists, this would not be the first time they have violated it as many of them had organized "political rallies" to raise funds for the war with Ethiopia as well as those orphaned and handicapped during the Liberation War. Almost 20 elders were interviewed separately before the effort was called off.

In a related story, Mr. Hamed Hmed, Eritrea's former Ambassador to The Sudan and a signatory to the Open Letter, was released after a grueling two-day interrogation by the authorities beginning his first interrogation on July 6. Mr. Hamed Hmed was accused of "leaking" the contents of an *Asmarino.com* facilitated petition letter signed by thousands of Eritreans in Diaspora, as well as the efforts of the elder Eritrean mediators in Asmara, to the Asmara correspondent of a London Based Arab daily.

More Journalists, Businessman Arrested; Reformers Jailed In Dongollo

Asmara, Eritrea, Rome, Italy (Awate.com, September 23, 2001)

... In another development, on Saturday Morning, a prominent businessman was arrested by the PFDJ security forces. Not long ago, Hassen Kekia, a longtime supporter of the EPLF/PFDJ, was actively trying to reconcile President Isaias Afwerki and the Reformers. The group of elders, including **Hassen Kekia**, had tried to initiate a dialogue between the Reformers and President Isaias but were warned to "keep away from politics" by the Presidential Office.

The Eritrean Government Arrests Elderly Mediators

Asmara, Eritrea (Awate.com, October 6, 2001)

Over the last few days, the government has arrested a number of people who were among the group of elderly citizens and social notables who tried to mediate between president Isaias Afwerki and the leaders of the reform movement. Gedab News has already reported the arrest of a prominent businessman, Hassen Kekia. Two more elderly citizens were among scores jailed yesterday; **Mr. Abdulrahman Ahmed Younis and Mr. Hedad Kerrar**, both in their mid-seventies, were arrested from their homes without charge.

EU, Eritrea Still In Stalemate

Rome, Italy, (Awate.com, November 2, 2001)

... Reached by telephone, Mr. Bandini told our reporter that he "*could not comment, for understandable reasons*" the ongoing discussions but described his current status as being "*on standby*." Repeated attempts to reach the spokesperson of Italy's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Valensise, were not successful.

Hedad Kerar Arrested

Meanwhile, Gedab News has confirmed that Mr. Hedad Kerar who had been prevented from leaving Eritrea on early October 6, 2001, has been arrested. Mr. Hedad Kerar, who is in his mid-70s, was one of the elderly citizens who had attempted to mediate the conflict between the two factions of the sole party in Eritrea, the governing PFDJ.

There was some confusion on whether Mr. Hedad Kerar was arrested. He was, for one day; then, due to health reasons, given house arrest.

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