

Vision Over Vendetta: The Organization of Eritrean Unity's (OEU's) Scientific Path to a Free Eritrea

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The Eritrean struggle for democratic transition is currently hamstrung by a profound philosophical and scientific crisis. While the desire for change is nearly universal within the diaspora and among dissenters, the movement remains fractured, reactive, and often self-defeating. At the heart of this stagnation lies a failure to distinguish between two fundamentally different motivations: **struggling against an individual dictator and struggling for a democratic vision**. Recently, **Tesfay Alem**, the former Chairman of the Organization of Eritrean Unity (**OEU**), and currently, the Head of the



Security Affairs of **OEU**, encapsulated the solution to this dilemma in a singular, potent sentiment: "*We fight with purpose, not hatred*" (ብዕላማ እምበር፡ ብጽልኢ ኢይኩናን ንቃለሰ።).

This distinction is not merely rhetorical - it is the dividing line between a movement that can build a nation and one that merely seeks to burn down a regime. For the Eritrean opposition to succeed, it must move beyond the "**hatred**" of the person and adopt the "**purpose**" of the transition - a shift that leaders like **Tesfay Alem** and organizations like the **OEU** are uniquely positioned to lead and guide.

The Philosophical Trap: Hatred as an End in Itself

In many corners of the Eritrean opposition, the struggle against Issaias Afeworki has been elevated from a tactical necessity to an ultimate objective. When "fighting against" becomes the end in itself, the movement loses its constructive capacity. Hatred is a reactive emotion; it depends entirely on the existence of the object it loathes. Consequently, a movement fueled by hatred is often incoherent, as it lacks a blueprint for what follows the removal of the dictator.

As I explored in recent scholarship, this focus on the individual leads to the "narcissism of small differences," where various opposition factions, united only by their dislike of the regime, turn their frustrations inward (Gebremariam 2025a). Because they lack a shared "struggle for" a specific democratic future, they perceive one another as competitors for a post-Issaias power vacuum rather than allies in nation-building. This internal friction is the primary reason the opposition has failed to form a unified, formidable organization. To rectify this, the struggle must be redefined as a means to an end - the establishment of justice, the rule of law, and a constitutional order - rather than a personal vendetta. This is exactly what **Tesfay Alem**, and the Organization of Eritrean Unity (**OEU**) are fighting for.

The OEU Paradigm: Purpose-Driven Leadership

The statement by **Tesfay Alem** - "**We fight with purpose, not hatred**" - serves as a necessary corrective to this anomaly. A purpose-driven struggle is proactive. It is anchored in the "for" - *for the restoration of constitutionalism, for the implementation of the rule of law, and for the preservation of Eritrean sovereignty* as the "unbreakable shield" of the nation (Gebremariam 2026c).

The Organization of Eritrean Unity (**OEU**) represents this shift toward a "scientific" approach to political transition. By focusing on the institutional requirements of democracy rather than the personality of the oppressor, the **OEU** provides a framework that can absorb disparate groups into a unified front. Purpose provides a "red line" that hatred cannot; it ensures that even in the heat of political battle, the ultimate goal remains the integrity of the Eritrean state and the dignity of its people (Gebremariam 2025h). This approach counters the "vicious cycle of criminality" and bureaucratic malpractice that has undermined national identity (Gebremariam 2025b).

The Impact on Efficacy and National Sovereignty

The efficacy of the struggle is directly tied to this philosophical clarity. When the movement is defined by "purpose," it becomes resilient against the regime's "strategic deceptions" and "preemptive strikes" (Gebremariam 2026b, 2026a). A

purpose-driven movement does not just wait for the dictator to fail; it builds the social norms and "devolved unitary" structures necessary to replace the vacuum of power (Gebremariam 2025g).

Furthermore, a purpose-driven movement is better equipped to navigate the complex regional threats currently facing Eritrea. Those who fight out of hatred for the regime may inadvertently compromise national sovereignty if they believe external intervention will topple the dictator. In contrast, the **OEU** and its leadership recognize that democracy cannot be built on the ruins of a state. As I noted in reflections on the **OEU** proposal, defending the foundation of the nation is a catalyst for democracy, justice, and the rule of law (Gebremariam 2025d, 2025e).

Rectifying the Anomaly: A Suggestion to the "For Justice Camp"

To those struggling for democracy, justice, and the rule of law in Eritrea, the path forward requires an honest appraisal of their motivations. If the struggle is to move from a fragmented state to a unified one, the following rectifications are necessary:

Adopt the "Purpose" Mindset: Internalize the wisdom of **Tesfay Alem**. Recognize that while the current regime is the obstacle, the goal is the democratic transition. Hatred clouds judgment and invites "political rudeness" (Gebremariam 2025f); purpose sharpens the mind and invites strategy.

Support Principled Leadership and Organizations: Organizations like the **OEU** provide the intellectual and organizational "gravity" needed to pull the movement together. Leaders who prioritize the "**for**" (the vision) over the "**against**" (the person) are the only ones capable of guiding Eritrea through a stable transition.

Prioritize National Unity: The "narcissism of small differences" must be replaced by a commitment to the "Red Sea Bastion" - the idea that Eritrean sovereignty and democratic rights are two sides of the same coin (Gebremariam 2026c).

Conclusion

The Eritrean struggle for democratic transition is at a crossroads between the politics of resentment and the politics of purpose. The former has led to decades of fragmentation and "voluntary servitude," while the latter offers the only viable path to a free and just society (Gebremariam 2025c). By embracing the philosophy of the **OEU** and the measured, purpose-driven leadership of figures like **Tesfay Alem**, the opposition can finally transcend its internal divisions. We must fight for a democratic Eritrea with a clear-eyed purpose, ensuring that the fall of a dictatorship is not just an end, but the beginning of a lasting justice.

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