

# About me!

- Left Eritrea at the age of 12. The push factor to that was war and civil unrest.
- Graduated from the University of Örebro, Sweden in Political Science.
- 1997-2001 working at the University of Örebro.
- 2001- 2010 Advisor in the Swedish national parliament in foreign policy.
- Member of the national board of the Swedish Left Party.
- Filed a Habeas Corpus, a first of its kind by an Eritrean citizen against the government of Eritrea 2002.
- 2011 Horn of Africa analyst and international policy advisor.

# From Liberation to Repression

Mussie Ephrem



# Background

- **State of Eritrea** ኤርትራ (*Hagere Ertra*).

- **Geography**

Eritrea is located in the Horn of Africa, bordered by Ethiopia, Djibouti and Sudan. It covers 117,600 km<sup>2</sup> square kilometers (45,405 square miles) (101st) , with a 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) coastline along one of the world's busiest shipping lanes in the Red Sea.

- **Official languages**

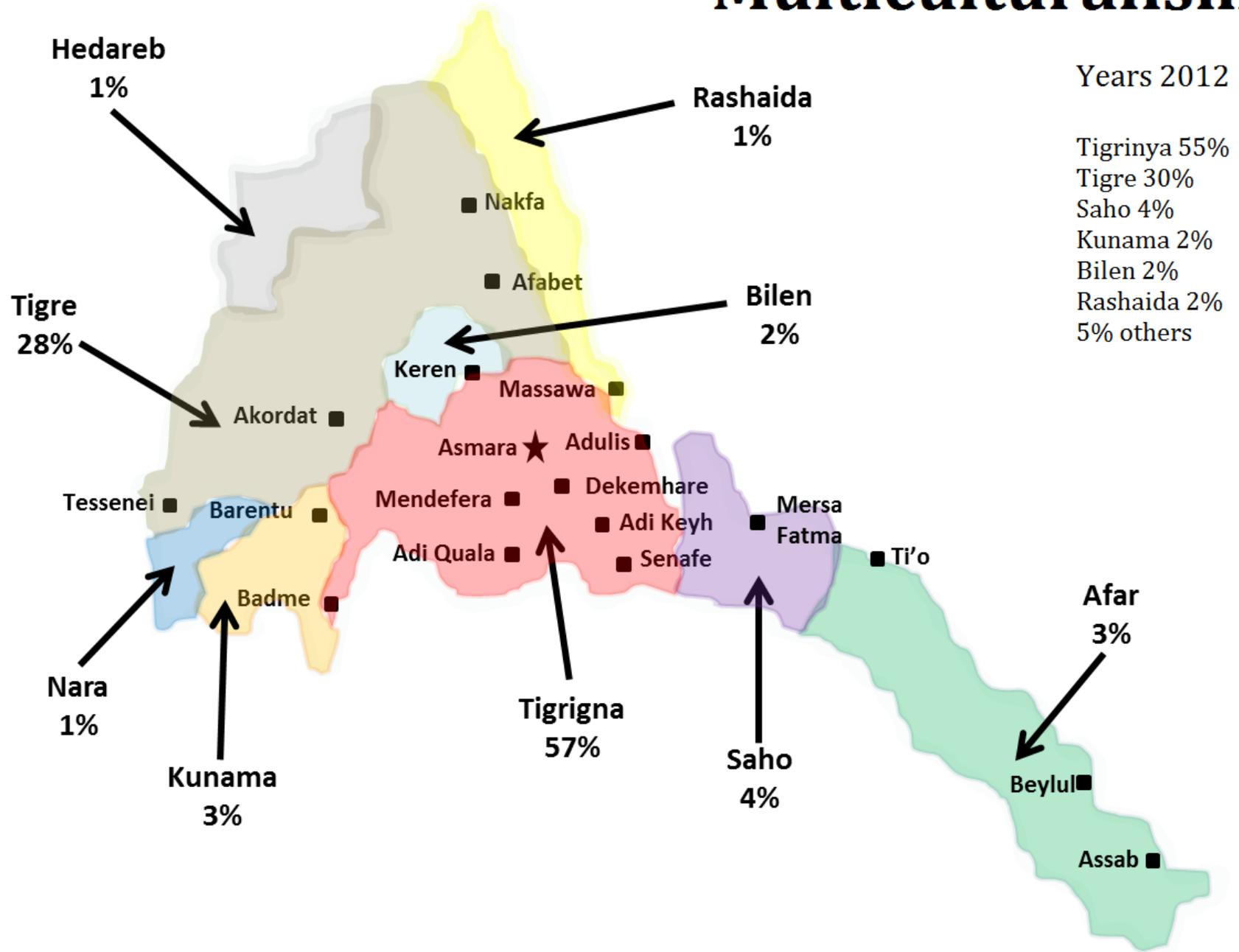
Tigrinya and Arabic are the most widely spoken languages of the nine officially recognised in the constitution.

- **Population**

6,536,000 (107th) 2014 estimate

5,291,370 (2008 census)

# Multiculturalism



# Government

- Single-party state  
Presidential republic
- President (Eritrea has been led by Issaias Afeworki since independence 1991).
- Legislature  
**(National Assembly** [unicameral] (150 Seats)  
Term limits not established.
- Eritrean administrative regions
- Sub-region



# History of Eritrea

- Eritrea was an Italian colony from 1889 to November 1941.
- British protectorate after Italy was defeated in World War II's east Africa campaign. End of United Kingdom mandate 1951.
- In 1952, it was awarded to Ethiopia as part of a federation

**390 (V). Eritrea: Report of the United Nations Commission for Eritrea; Report of the Interim Committee of the General Assembly on the Report of the United Nations Commission for Eritrea**

A. *Recommends that:*

1. Eritrea shall constitute an autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian Crown.

2. The Eritrean Government shall possess legislative, executive and judicial powers in the field of domestic affairs.

3. The jurisdiction of the Federal Government shall extend to the following matters: **defence, foreign affairs, currency and finance, foreign and interstate commerce and external and interstate communications, including ports.** The Federal Government shall have the power to maintain the integrity of the Federation, and shall have the right to impose uniform taxes throughout the Federation to meet the expenses of federal functions and services, it being understood that the assessment and the collection of such taxes in Eritrea are to be delegated to the Eritrean Government, and provided that Eritrea shall bear only its just and equitable share of these expenses. The jurisdiction of the Eritrean Government shall extend to all matters not vested in the Federal Government, including the power to maintain the internal police, to levy taxes to meet the expenses of domestic functions and services, and to adopt its own budget.

- 10 years later November 1962 the Federation was officially dissolved and Eritrea was annexed by Ethiopia.
- This was in direct contravention of the UN Resolution 390-A(V) which had established the Federation.
- The annexation sparked a 30-year struggle for independence that ended in 1991.

# The struggle for independence

- The Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) was the main independence movement in Eritrea for independence from Ethiopia during the 1960s and 1970s.
- **Opponents:** Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) was an armed organization that fought for the independence of Eritrea from Ethiopia. It emerged in 1970 as an "intellectual left-wing group" that split from the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF).
- After achieving Eritrean independence in 1991, it transformed into the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ, ህዝባዊ ግንባር ንዲሞክራሲን ፍትሕን), which serves as Eritrea's only "legal" political organisation.

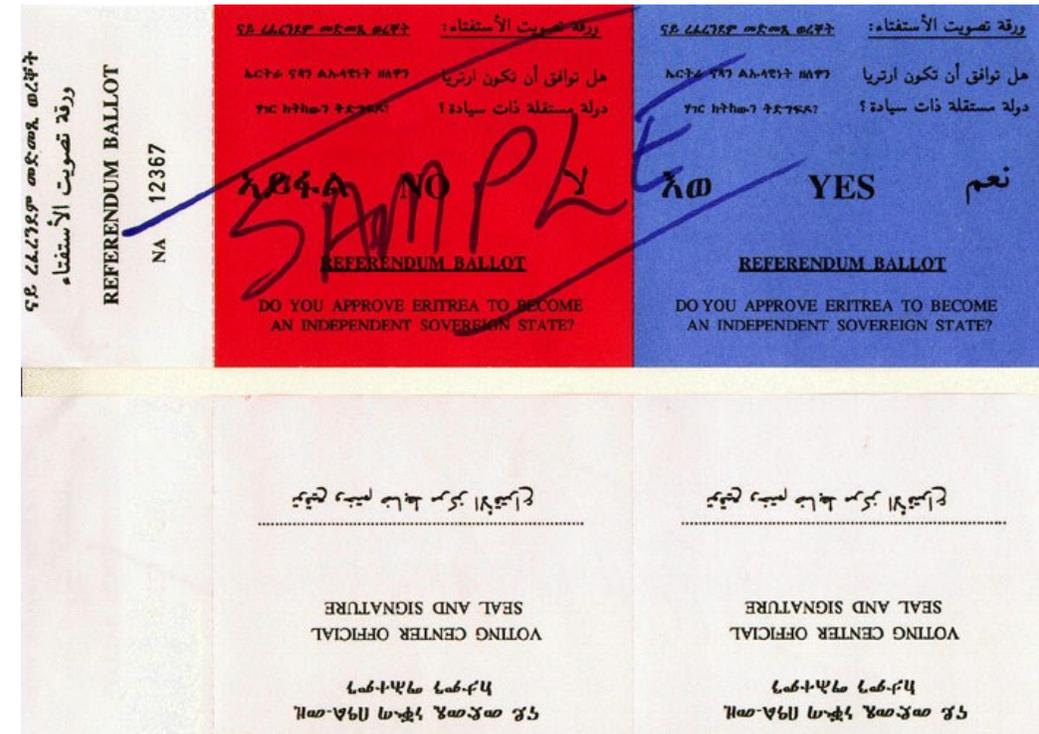


# Nation building process

- Eritrean independence referendum, 1993

Choice	Votes	%
For	1,100,260	99.83
Against	1,822	0.17
Invalid/blank votes	328	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,102,410</b>	<b>100</b>
Registered voters/turnout	1,173,706	98.52

Source: African Elections Database and *Eritrea : från ockupation till självständighet / Mussie Ephrem, Mårten Fintling.*



# Constitution-making process

- The Eritrean constitutional process included one of the most extensive programs of public participation.
- The program included a public education phase, which consisted of a series of seminars conducted at the village level by more than 400 specially trained instructors.
- The second phase included a consultation with the population on their response to the proposals prepared by the Constitutional Commission.
- In the third phase, the Commission received comments on a draft constitution from regional assemblies, localities, and members of profession and civic organizations as well as individual citizens.
- The Constitution was ratified and adopted by the Constituent Assembly on May 23, 1997; however, it has not yet come into force.

# Eritrean-Ethiopian border war

- The Eritrean–Ethiopian border war from May 1998 to June 2000 between Ethiopia and Eritrea.



- Algiers Agreement (2000). The agreement established two neutral commissions: the Boundary Commission, and the Claims Commission.

# Years 2001

- **Big grievance and irritation**

1. The delay of the implementation of the constitution and transforming to legitimate legislative.
2. National Assembly elections scheduled for December 2001 were postponed indefinitely.
3. The electoral- and party laws, was presented in the end of February 2001.
4. The departure from the Fronts earlier principles and unwillingness to live up to the expectation of forming a democratic system expresses 2001 in active blocking of the democratisation process.
5. This has directly resulted in that the Front is divided in two political positions.



# African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

- The issue of the 11 detained Eritreans had been brought to the attention of the African Commission.
- The complainants alleged that eleven former Eritrean government officials were illegally arrested in Asmara in violation of Eritrea laws and the African Charter.
- Had also been a driving force behind the European Union's protest against the worsening of the human rights situation in Eritrea.

# Thousands of Eritreans flee the regime through the...

An average of 1,800 Eritreans escape the country monthly, fleeing towards Ethiopia, Sudan, Libya and Egypt.  
Since 2006 about 18,000 Eritreans made their way to Israel.

During their journey Eritreans are subjected to kidnappings, torture and systematic rape by the Bedouin smugglers who demand a ransom of 10,000-20,000\$ for each person.

# Eritreans flee the regime

- Recently, a boat carrying an estimated 545 migrants mainly from Eritrea sank off the coast of Lampedusa in Italy, drowning some 359 migrants.

