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Joint Congratulatory Message by Eritrean Political Forces on the Occasion of the Eritrean Independence Day

Eritrean political forces warmly congratulate the Eritrean people on the anniversary of the 29th year of independence as they continue to dialogue and work cooperatively to advance the common national interest.

This year's Independence Day is occurring at a time when over 5 million people are globally affected by the coronavirus, so far claiming well over 300,000 lives, and more are continuing to die from it. When the whole world is at a critical junction due to this health crisis, we are deeply concerned for the livelihood of our people, and convey our good wishes for the safety of the Eritrean people, and the entire mankind.

There is no doubt that Independence Day is a day of pride and adulation for Eritrea, because it was truly a historic day in which our people achieved a great victory over the injustice and persecution under the hateful colonial occupation, which caused our people pain, tragedies and mass exodus. May 24, 1991 was an important milestone in the march of our people and their sovereign country to enter a new and promising era. Today, looking back to what happened to us in the past 29 years, we can only remember and honor our martyrs, and extend our salutations and appreciation to the wounded of the liberation war and to all the veterans who had a great role in achieving victory and freedom for our people, and we renew our covenant to them that we will follow their path with unrelenting determination.

Our Struggling People,

Despite the victory and the liberation of the national territory that has been achieved, and the world's recognition of the national sovereignty of our country, the Eritrean people have not been freed from oppression and tyranny, and their tears and sorrows have not ceased. Our people had hoped to annually commemorate this day in a country in which peace, security, and freedom prevailed. Our people aspired to have a country without political prisoners and refugees. Unfortunately, our 29th anniversary falls at a worse period for Eritrea, in which its citizens live in dire conditions where there is a complete collapse of the economy, lack of basic services, disturbance in social relations, and continuing cases of violations of human rights in the absence

of the rule of law, as well as the emergence of threats to national sovereignty and continued exodus of its people.

Needless to say, this anniversary calls for further intensification of the national struggle and the mobilization of the masses in order to achieve freedom, justice and lasting peace. The intolerable conditions in which our people live must be a call for all of us to rise for the occasion. This year shall be a strong impetus for cooperation and synergy among all forces of change in order to overthrow the dictatorial regime and put an end to the suffering of our people. With this vision, we in the Eritrean political forces continue serious dialogues to reach advanced common platform in order to save the country and achieve victory over the dictatorship.

On this great occasion, we appeal to the members of the Eritrean security forces, which, like everybody else, are victims of the dictatorial regime, to contribute with all other pro-change forces in the ongoing national struggle to save the Eritrean people and maintain national sovereignty.

This year's Independence Day is also celebrated at a time when relentless attempts are being made by regional and international powers to interfere in the affairs of our country. Their declared and undeclared agreements with the dictatorial regime are for sure threatening Eritrea's national sovereignty. This was apparent from those with expansionist aspirations claiming the "right" to have access to the Red Sea and attempting to achieve these old and renewed dreams at the cost of our people's inalienable right. Opposing these dangerous indentations were also good people calling for the creation of good-neighborly relations based on mutual interests. In this context, as we celebrate the glorious Independence Day anniversary, we would like to reassure the entire world that the liberation of Eritrea that has been achieved through tireless struggles and unparalleled sacrifices cannot in any way be sidestepped and challenged. There is no need to emphasize our people's readiness to make all the sacrifices for preserving the national sovereignty of our great land. At the same time, rooted in respect for our national sovereignty, we will continue to strive to create cooperative relations with all countries and achieve common interests of our peoples.

*Long live free and independent Eritrea!
Glory and eternity to our martyrs!*

Eritrean political forces:

- Eritrean National Council for Democratic Change (ENCDC)
- Eritrean National Front (ENF)
- Eritrean People's Democratic Party (EPDP)
- Organization Unity for Democratic Change (UDC)
- Unity of Eritreans for Justice (UEJ)