ERITREAN AFAR NATIONAL CONGRESS

EANC POLITICAL PROGRAM – JUNE 2018

"Restoring the Self Determination and Dignity of Eritrean Afar"

"Eretriyah Qafarih Amoh-Baxaqa Kee Konnabna Daabisenno"

MAP OF AFAR STATE OF DANKALIA

Indigenous, Ethnically Federated and Prosperous
1. **Introduction**

1.1. **Tha Afar Nation**

The Afar People are one of Africa’s long-established and culturally homogenous indigenous people who have lived in the Afar Triangle, at the convergence of what are now Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Eritrea since time immemorial. The Afar Triangle is also the treasure trove of early fossil remains, including “Lucy, Australopithecus Afarensis” dating back to 3.2 million-years-old—one of humankind’s earliest ancestors. Many Paleontologists refer to afar homeland as the “cradle of humanity”.

Most of the 3.5 million Afar continue their traditional way of life as indigenous pastoralist people engaged in animal husbandry, fishing, trade and traditional salt extraction. The northern region of the Afar’s traditional homeland is known as Dankalia which lies along the strategic and resource-rich coastal area in what is now known as Eritrea. The people in Dankalia region are known as Eritrean Afar. The indigenous Afar are heavily attached to their land and their environment. The Afar have a distinct culture and their unique economic pursuits and livelihood are dependent on their traditional territories and resources.
The Afar Nation are followers of the Islamic faith. Some historian credit the introduction of Islam into continental Africa through the Afar region in Dankalia in a place called “Mideri” and near Dahlak Islands. When the companions of Prophet Muhammad (PBOH) fled from Makkah, Saudi Arabia, after persecution, they have arrived in coastal areas of Afar territories where Islam was mixed with their indigenous traditions.

Afar Sultanates of (AWSA, RAHAYTA, BIRU, TADJOURA and GOBAD) governed Afar land territory throughout these regions prior to current colonial borders and independent states. The Afar region have been organized and self-governed autonomously into independent Afar territories, each ruled by its own Sultanate, Sheikdoms and legal customary law known as “Madqa”. When conflict arose between Afar and neighboring nations and nationalities over territories and resources, Madaa was enacted to resolve conflicts and peace treaties were signed according to Afar traditional law (Madqa).

During the European colonialism "Age of Discovery" at the beginning of the 15th century and later during the time of “the Scramble for Africa”, the Afar regions have seen numerous foreign occupations and colonial rules such as the Ottoman Empire and fascist Italian invasion at the end of 1800 century. Similarly, the Afar Nation fought off numerous internal regional aggression and attempts of violent territorial takeovers by feudalist Abyssinian kings.

In Dankalia, The Afar resistance to Italian occupation was led by Sultan of Girrifo (Bidu), Sultan Haysma Ahaw and his sons Sultan Mohamed Haysama and continued to the days of Sultan Yassin Haysama. Afar Anti colonialism sentiment and resistance struggle by the Afar people against the Fascist Italians would go on for the next 30 years were thousands of indigenous Afar lost their lives and prevented Mussolini forces from penetrating the Afar hinterlands and territories into modern day Ethiopia.

After fierce battles against Mussolini forces, the young Sultan Yassin Haysma, at the age of 39 was captured and killed in a village of Bidu, Dankalia in 1931.

The defeat of Sultan Haysma cleared the way for Italy to take control and begin to construct the main artery asphalt road to link the highlands of Ethiopia to the sea outlet in Eritrea. Assab to Addis- Ababa - Desse, road was built in 1935. In the early 1950’s- 60’s, the Eritrean Afar Heroes like Mohamed Omar Akitto, Abdulkadir Kabir were the pioneers of Eritrea’s liberation struggle.

In May 20, 1995, following in the footsteps of his previous Afar resistance fighters, Martyr Ahmed Humad Igahle, from small village of Abbe in central Dankalia, has led a new rebellion against current Eritrean regime. He took up arms struggle to fight for Afar self-determination with an aim of establishing the right for Afar self-determination and rights to self-rule in Eritrea.

**1.2. Afar Homeland of Dankalia**

**Geostrategic, Economic, and Geopolitical Importance of Dankalia**

Dankalia is on the most sought after and prime real estate in Eritrea and the Horn of Africa. Dankalia is strategically situated on international shipping routes between the strategic passages at the heart of the red sea near Bab-el-Mandeb in close proximity to Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Dankalia presents key geo-
strategic asset for Afar and Eritrea to link the continent of Africa to Middle-East and Europe for global trade and investment opportunities, scientific research and intercontinental partnerships for economic development.

The Afar homeland (Dankalia) is over 40,000 Square Kilometers in size, stretching from the northern tip of Bori Peninsula near Massawa to southern town of Rahyta. The coastal regions of Dankalia stretch up 1000 KM and contain historic villages, ports, and islands. Dahlak Island, for example, contains over 300 islands which have served as the traditional fishing economic base for generations.

The land, the coastlines, the seaways and the vast deserts of Dankalia holds the majority of Eritrea’s of economic future with untapped natural resources, various minerals, precious metals, potash, natural gas and a huge potential for tourism.

Assab port in Dankalia is an international capacity port that has a unique capability to link international shipping line and cargo that would link Europe and the Middle East and it can potentially become the next free zone port on the coast of the red sea. Moreover, the growing demand by neighbouring Ethiopia with over 100 million populations with no access to seaport makes Assab port even more attractive for interregional trade and economic growth.

Geopolitically, Dankalia is seen by international actors as a crucial region for international security and a key area of interest for the global fight against religious fundamentalism affecting regional peace and the development in the Horn of Africa.

2. Crimes against Humanity and Ethnic Persecution (SAMAD BAYSA)

Following the independence in May of 1991, the approximately 800,000 indigenous Eritrean Afar population of Dankalia have faced unprecedented persecution, prolonged marginalization, and tyranny at the hands of the current Eritrean regime. The Eritrean regime is removing the Afar from Dankalia and colonizing the area with others. In order to remove the Afar, the regime is using mass murder, rapes, kidnapping, political assassinations, and extrajudicial killings. The government of Eritrea has committed cultural genocide against the Indigenous Afar.

President Isaias Afwerki and his military ruling junta, the People’s Front for Justice and democracy (PFDJ) has deployed systematic and racist policies to destroy Afar identity through Tigrigna assimilation, discrimination on the bases of ethnicity, denying the Afar the right to own and live off their traditional lands, territories and resources, destroyed the basis of Afar economic activities such as fishing, trade and animal husbandry, and by has confiscating thousands of Afar businesses and properties. These policies are posing the existential threat to Afar people's continuity as an indigenous nation in Eritrea.
The Afar leadership in exile have filed numerous human rights complaints against the State of Eritrea, exposing heinous crimes of ethnic persecution to the United Nations Human Rights Council, the UN Special Rapporteur and the UN commission of inquiry in Eritrea.

In June 2015 and 2016, The UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (COI) confirmed that Eritrean officials have committed crimes of persecution, a crime against humanity, against Eritrean Afar population since 1991.

The COI stated the actions by Eritrean authority “may be construed as an intentional act to dispossess them [the Afar] of their ancestral lands, their livelihood and their culture” (Paragraph 56) and that:

*The killing of members of the Afar ethnic group and reports of the existence of Mass-graves... have also triggered their displacement from their lands within the country and across borders to Ethiopia and Djibouti. This has posed great difficulty to their livelihoods as they depend on their traditional lands for the sustenance as an indigenous ethnic group,*" (Para 1120b).

The COI also “confirmed” that:

*Land traditionally belonging to or used by the Afars was seized in the framework of the Land reform and afterward by a decision of the Government, without consultation of the impacted communities; (para 1157)*

*Paragraph-295 of COI Report reads as follows: “The Commission also has reasonable grounds to believe that Eritrean officials have intentionally and severely deprived Eritrean Kunama and Afar of fundamental rights contrary to international law on ethnic grounds.*
http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoIEritrea/A_HRC_32_CRP.1_read-only.pdf

3. **Eritrean Afar National Congress (EANC)**

Eritrean Afar National Congress (EANC) is an exiled Eritrean Afar political organization dedicated to self-determination and self-rule of Eritrean Afar people in the coastal homeland of Dankalia, Eritrea, where the indigenous Afar are subjected to marginalization, persecution and ethnic cleansing at the hands of the current Eritrean government. EANC is the voice of the Eritrean Afar people. EANC draws its mandate from the political and traditional Afar leaders, the leadership of Afar women and youth groups, the Eritrean Afar Diaspora and Eritrean-Afar refugees.

3.1. **Our Vision**

EANC aspires to establish a democratically elected autonomous Afar state in Dankalia, Eritrea. Our vision is to foster a multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious democratic federation between pluralistic Eritrean societies founded on the principles of ethnic equality, rule of law, fundamental rights and freedoms, and respect for the human rights of all citizens of Eritrea.
3.2. Our Mission

Our mission is to prepare the necessary groundwork for a transitional phase leading to Eritrean Afar self-government in the Afar Home State of Dankalia within federated Eritrea; to develop the human capital of the Eritrean Afar people through education and sustainable economic growth; to establish a system of governance through unity within diversity for the people of Eritrea which will ensure peace, equality, democracy and sustainability in Eritrea; and the creation of an economic environment and foreign policy that encourages international investment, development, peace and security in the region.

Our mission is to:

1. Exercise our people’s right to self-determination and to have the right to Self-government and autonomy in matters relating to our internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing Afar autonomous functions.
2. To preserve the rights of Eritrean Afar indigenous people in the region; Implement Afar Language (Qafar-Af) as official language of Afar State(Dankalia) in Eritrea, to promote its impact on local economic development, while recognizing the cultural diversity of Eritrea and respect all of its ethnicities, its social, religious, economic, political and ecological factors.
3. Create a governance model to grow the human capital of Eritrean Afar people by promoting and protecting Afar political freedoms, and fulfilling the human rights of women and men to ensure their economic, social and cultural wellbeing.
4. End human rights violations against Afar in Eritrea, strive to end forcible displacement, achieve capacity building, and enable the right of return and the reintegration for the displaced Eritrean Afar.
5. Develop macro-economic policies that give adequate attention to the empowerment of the Eritrean Afar people and contribute to the economic growth through trade and employment.
6. Encourage responsible natural resources policy that provides indigenous Afar the rights to land and resources, rights to dignity and promotion of economic aspirations and to motivate the investment in Afar education and health sector.

4. Political Program of Eritrean Afar National Congress (EANC)

4.1. Ethnic Federalism

Eritrea’s nationalities are distinguished by ancient, diverse and distinct languages, which are superimposed on cleavages of religion, ethnicity, economy, culture and a way of life. Eritrean nationalities are old, rooted in ancient histories and cultures. Eritrea, by contrast, is a new political construct, fashioned in 1993.

The PFDJ concept of Eritrea as “One Heart-one people”, “Hade Libi, Hade Hizbi”, (the current mantra) of the Eritrean government must be abolished. Unity without recognition of diversity is a recipe for
prolonged conflict and insecurity. The regime’s ideology drives its politics and their excessively centralized policy is incompatible with a deeply diverse nation like Eritrea. The current Eritrean regime’s agenda is racist and is systemically designed to destroy the unity of Eritreans and its social fabric. It is designed to subdue the smaller nationalities and weaken them in favor of a ruling majority Tigrigna nationality. These policies by the current Eritrean regime have caused a collision between Eritreans within the country and in Diaspora.

Inclusive and sustainable policies must be devised to protect Eritrean societies and the nation from enraging in prolonged conflicts, insurrections and even the breakup of the state in the aftermath of the regime’s collapse.

Eritrean Afar people are bearing the brunt of the Eritrean regime’s assimilation agenda and are being stripped of their ethnic identity which had evolved historically as a self-conscious and a strong self-sustaining ethnicity in Eritrea. Our policy calls for Ethnic Federalism in Eritrea. Eritrea is a deeply diverse nation.

Our policy will implement multi-ethnic federalism in Eritrea where every ethnicity’s right is recognized and its self-governance rights as a people are preserved at the federal government level.

4.2. **Self-Determination**

The Eritrean Afar identity has evolved with its own distinct history and cultural, distinct way of life and traditions and indigenous values and beliefs systems since time immemorial. EANC and Eritrean Afar will struggle for the of their self-determination rights and the rights to self-rule model based on their indigenous identity, their long established history and culture and freely self-determine Afar political, social, cultural and economic freedoms.

Throughout history, Afar indigenous self-reliance and traditional economic pursuit, their long-established customary laws and their way of life have sustained their identity from being wiped out in the Afar region.

Our Indigenous rights policy charts a new beginning for the Eritrean Afar People that will guarantee their autonomous self-rule over their societies, control of their land and resources, rights to economic freedom and development, carry out their traditional day-to-day economic activities without interference.

A. **Indigenous Rights**

A strategic priority for Indigenous Afar Self Determination in Eritrea

1. Re-Instating Indigenous Self Rule
2. Restoring Afar Land, Sea, and Natural Resources rights
3. Preserving Afar Indigenous Way of Life and Economy
4. Afar Customary Law and Traditional Representation (MAJLIS AL-AYAAN AFAR)
5. Investing in Afar Education, Language, health and Cultural Infrastructure
6. Protecting the Environment, Indigenous knowledge, and Early Warning Systems
B. Autonomy

Autonomy has been the natural human rights of Afar people in Eritrea. The Afar way of life, traditional economy and culture cannot survive without autonomy.

The Eritrean government continues to commit serious human rights violations against ethnic Afar citizens including the rights to freedom of movement, freedom of assembly, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, mass killings, rapes and forced labour. Afar border community and blood relations have been cut-off. Eritrean Afar international borders have been turned into military zones. Currently, the Afar region (Dankalia) has been divided into two parts without the consent of Afar people and renamed by the present regime as Southern Red Sea zone and Northern Red Sea zone.

The autonomous rule is an indispensable right for the survival of our indigenous nomadic pastoralist people. The rights of freedom of religion, conscience, political opinion, expression, assembly, equality, mobility, association, and liberty shall be guaranteed;

4.3. Constitutional Policy

Eritrea's nationalities are distinguished by ancient and distinct languages, which are superimposed on cleavages of religion, economy, culture and more general way of life. Eritrean nationalities are old, rooted in ancient histories and cultures. Eritrea, by contrast, is a new political construct, fashioned in 1993.

Though Eritrea’s constitution presently remains unimplemented, the current government of Eritrea is unofficially using the policies and the texts from 1997 constitution to further its agenda of marginalization and assimilation by exploiting the Afar people’s land and resources.

Below are some of the deeply flawed texts in Eritrea’s unimplemented 1997 Constitution:

- The 1997 Constitution contains no chapter on minority rights.
- The rights of the national communities are nowhere guaranteed. The Constitution neither provides for any measures for autonomy or self-government of the nationalities nor does the Constitution provide for guarantees for the small nationalities to participate in central institutions of the state.
- Art. 31 of the Constitution ensure Eritrea’s central institutions will be dominated by large nationalities as they are now.
- The 1997 Constitution contains no guarantees for the autonomy or rights of the regional authorities. Art. 1(5) gives the Central Authorities full control over the regions, with "carte blanche" over Afar economies, resources, governing structures, and societies.
- Centralized power has been used to reorganize the regions and depreciate their powers and territories. Dankalia, for example, has been reduced in size and parts of it subjected to rule by others.
- The reality of the 1997 Constitution is that the excessive centralization of Art 1(5) creates and makes Eritrea’s small nationalities dependent on the large nationalities.
- Art 23.2 of the 1997 Constitution declares "All lands and all natural resources below and above the surface of the territory of Eritrea belong to the State. “The interests’, citizens shall have in land, shall be determined by law”. This article expropriates the indigenous rights of Afar people to the soil,
contrary to international law. It allows the central authorities to appropriate the traditional lands and resources of the Afar pastoralists and sell them to foreign resource extraction companies. It allows the large nationalities to displace the small nationalities from their rightful and guaranteed traditional lands and pursuits.

Our constitutional design policy calls for new Eritrean constitution that should resemble the makeup and the diversity of Eritrea’s nationalities. The new Eritrean constitution must model itself and recognize the following rights:

- Ethnic Federalism, Rule of Law, Democracy and Fundamental rights
- Rights to Self Determine, Self-rule and Autonomy
- Power sharing constitution between Eritrea’s ethnicities
- Protection for Indigenous lands ownership and resource rights,
- Freedom of Pluralism and equality of nationalities
- Rights to Self Determine, Self-rule and Autonomy

4.4. **EANC Economic Policy**

The Eritrean regime is destroying the basis of Eritrean Afar traditional economy, namely fishing and animal husbandry, and confiscating Afar businesses. Afar families are fleeing their homeland by the tens of thousands into nearby Ethiopia, Yemen, Sudan and Djibouti for safety. Those who aren’t captured or shot by Eritrean security (who have orders to shoot Afar on sight) wind up in UN refugee camps, which are bursting at the seams with men, women, children, and elders.

The government of Eritrea considers Afar region of Dankaila a no-go military zone, with war and no peace Policies. All borders in and out of Dankalia's immediate neighbors remain closed in an effort to deliberately prevent Afar economic contacts, foreign aid and international aid agencies from assisting affected Afar communities.

The Eritrean Afar, the owners of Dankalia and vast natural resources and geostrategic wealth remains one of Eritrea's highly impoverished communities in the country. Excessive militarization of Dankalia is causing unprecedented suffering and threatening the livelihoods of tens of thousands of Eritrean Afar. Afar women have the highest maternal mortality in Eritrea, 1-10 Afar women die during childbirth.

The inspiration for our economic plan for Eritrean Afar people and Dankalia emanates from our people's self-determination rights in Afar economic freedoms in Eritrea. Our economic plan stems from age-old expertise in traditional economic activities in this region, Afar indigenous values, self-sufficiency and self-reliance.

Our economic policy is pro-development, pro-social justice and fair play. Our policy promotes open, non-discriminatory and equitable trading systems that will enable all nationalities in Eritrea to improve their economic opportunities and improve the standard of living for all Eritreans.

Our economic policies for Dankalia will combine modern technologies and leverage our strategic ports, create industries; leverage traditional Afar expertise, especially our extensive knowledge of our economic environment in the region. This can be accomplished through:
1. Harnessing Eritrean Afar Economy by building capacity and strong Self-sustaining communities to strengthen Afar indigenous experience as seamen, traders, and businessmen while preserving the traditional pastoralist way of life.

2. Develop macro-economic policies and programs that give adequate attention to the empowerment of Eritrean Afar women and contribute to the economic growth through trade and employment.

3. Investment in Afar traditional coastal communities and economies development programs, micro-financing and loan programs for local small business initiatives such as the traditional Afar economies of animal husbandry and Agro-Pastoralism, salt mining, Afar fishing economy and cross-border trades.

4. Leverage the proximity of Eritrea’s red sea coast to international trade and harness the economic capital of Dankalia as a free market economy.

5. Encourage free trade, an international investment that enables economic prosperity, development assistance and foreign aid.

6. Investment in Dankalia’s strategic infrastructure such as Assab ports, refineries, and roads that are crumbling due to neglect and excessive militarization.

7. Promote Tourism and Culture of Dankalia.

Our Economic policy will put an end to exploitations and marginalization and will fight harmful practices such as corruption and extortion critical for fighting poverty alleviation. Our policy will fight poverty of Afar and will open up Dankalia for Eritreans and the world.

4.5. EANC Foreign Policy

EANC’s foreign policy vision is to leverage Dankalia’s geopolitical, commercial and socioeconomic potential for the promotion of international and regional partnerships. EANC policy calls for an environment that encourages economic growth, free trade, foreign aid and enables the human potential and the development of Eritrean people through education and economic expansion. Our foreign policy encourages international investment and locally driven sustainable business initiatives.

Our foreign policy will be based on the following:

- Common interest and mutual understandings with neighbouring and regional states and the international community.
- Promote good working relationship with those across the red sea, especially Yemen and Saudi Arabia.
- Promotion of regional peace, stability and fight radicalization.

4.6. EANC Land And Natural Resources Policy

Afar homeland of Dankalia has unparalleled natural resource advantage in Eritrea and the horn of Africa region. In much of Africa, conflicts over natural resources have been the leading factor behind instability and impediment to growth. Our natural resources and extraction policy for Eritrea promotes an environmentally responsible, just and fair productive resource extraction and management framework that is equitable in its distribution of wealth to all stakeholders of Eritrea, in particular, in Dankalia.

The wealth generated from natural resources and its social impacts should be beneficial to all nationalities even if they stem from Dankalia. EANC deplores the current land and sea expropriations and exploitation policy by the Eritrean government. The present regime is now selling and/or leasing Dankalia’s natural
resources and strategic ports to foreign governments and multinational mining corporations, without the consent, recognition or knowledge of the Afar people.

The current Eritrean regime has the complete monopoly over the wealth of Afar region (Dankalia) and control over its natural resources. The exploitation and revenues generated from Dankalia are used for personal enrichment by the elites of PFDJ, the Eritrean Generals and helping build a political base for the ruling class to maintain an iron fist over impoverished population and threatening their livelihoods. Our plan will revisit agreements made with multinational corporations and other foreign actors in respect of their social corporate responsibilities policies and make them responsible for securing community-based programs and local initiatives such as education system, Health Care, Jobs creations and the environment.

Our policy for economic reform in Eritrea will put an end to the exploitation of natural resources. EANC Land and Resources Policy will transfer the land and resources ownership a back to its rightful indigenous owners. The Eritrean Afar people will own and maintain control of their lands and resources including surface and sub-surface resources, sea coasts, airspace and other precious minerals such as potash, gold, natural gas, and salt. Our Natural Resources policy is committed to delivering a fair share of natural resources revenues stemming from Dankalia for development and economic empowerment for all Eritrean populations.

EANC believes such process will prevent conflicts between regions and nationalities in the future. With agreed upon revenue sharing initiatives, in addition to the creation of resolutions and policies for resource management, a new social cohesion and coexistence between diverse nationalities will be created and a balance for economic power between all nationalities of Eritrea will emerge.

**Key strategies for land and natural resources and Revenues sharing in Eritrea**

- Reinstate the ownership of land and resources to indigenous ownership in Eritrea
- Setup national framework for natural resources and revenue sharing between Eritrean people and federal states in Eritrea
- Devise a strategy to recognize inequalities and marginalization for disadvantaged groups, regions and prioritize the creation of jobs, socio-economic programs to address the neglect and economic marginalization and adequately address the needs of local communities
- Re-evaluate and re-negotiate contract agreements with multinational corporations, mineral extraction companies, and foreign governments and hold them accountable for their corporate and state responsibilities and establish social programs for local populations and programs for economic empowerment and invest in schools, health centers, clean water facilities for local populations

Our Land and Natural Resources policy will eliminate “the Have-and-Have Not” regions in Eritrea
Eretriyah Qafarih Agatih Koboxu

ERITREAN AFAR NATIONAL CONGRESS

Eritrean Afar National Congress (EANC)
Eretriyah Qafarih Agatih Koboxu