



Press Release

125th Anniversary of the Victory of Ethiopia Over Italy at Adwa

2 March 2021 marks the 125th anniversary of the victory of the Battle of Adwa by Ethiopia over Italy. It is a victory that emphatically reaffirmed the continued freedom and independence of Ethiopia. The Adwa Victory of Ethiopia in 1896 against the invading colonialist Italy became a trailblazer for the anti-colonial and anti-discrimination struggles in many parts of the world.

The last quarter of the 19th Century was a time in world history when Europeans colonized large areas of foreign lands, partitioned Africa among themselves and subjugated its peoples. It was a period when the invincibility of European might and the civilizing mission of Europeans was exalted, and the colonization of Africa was justified.

The humiliating defeat of the colonial power Italy at the hands of Ethiopians sent shockwaves throughout Europe. Ethiopian victory at Adwa reverberated in major European capitals and soon European emissaries started trekking to Addis Ababa to initiate trade and diplomatic ties. Adwa demonstrated that even a well-armed European army can be defeated by a people with limited resources determined to defend their freedom and dignity. Adwa thus heralded the inevitability of the demise of colonialism and racism. Adwa is not only a source of pride and dignity for Ethiopians, but it also became a source of inspiration and hope for Africans under colonial yoke and Black People subjected to racism and deprivation especially in the Caribbean and the Americas.

The outstanding leadership of Emperor Menelik II and Empress Taytu was decisive in securing victory at Adwa. Menelik managed to raise and lead one hundred thousand strong army and the gigantic task of managing the coordination and delivery of supplies was the work of Empress Taytu. They both personally participated in the battle front and Taytu had an army contingent directly under her command. Adwa is the outcome of extraordinary unity exhibited by Ethiopians in the face of foreign aggression. Infighting for power and influence among the nobility was temporarily shelved and everyone marched to the battle front.

The victory of Adwa bestowed on Ethiopia and Ethiopians respect and honor. Modern day Ethiopia earned its place as an independent sovereign state among the community of free nations of the world. Adwa also helped to arouse Ethiopians for change and development. Nonetheless, four decades later, this initiative was thwarted by a second invasion followed by five years of occupation by Italy.

The years following victory over the occupying Italian forces were not accompanied by economic and political progress matching the expectations of post war generations. Hence, political unrest and upheaval followed by the ethnocentric policies pursued during the last three decades have undermined the shared values and common heritage of the Ethiopian people and endangered the continued survival of the Ethiopian state.

Today, as we commemorate the 125th anniversary of the victory of the Battle of Adwa we should bear in mind that it was made possible by the common endeavor and sacrifice of all the peoples of Ethiopia in defense of the country's sovereignty. It is, therefore, the solemn duty of the present generation to stand united and carry forward the legacy of Adwa and ensure the continued survival and transformation of Ethiopia into a democratic and prosperous country.

Honor to the fallen heroes of Adwa!

24 February 2021