



Zara Selam Media: A Call to the Eritrean People

As frequently highlighted on the Zara Selam Media website (zaraselam.com), the current political climate within Eritrean society is acutely fractured, tense, and hostile. Civilized, constructive discourse has largely been replaced across virtual media by name-calling, labeling, and personal attacks. Enabled by an online environment where unverified statements can be published without accountability, this discourse inflicts deep harm on the social cohesion of our people. These political divisions are profound and have been deepening since before independence.

Zara Selam Media is fully cognizant of this reality. While the feedback we receive is overwhelmingly supportive, many commentators express a vital concern: *Can a call for peace truly succeed in such a divided environment?* Several observers have noted that while this initiative is a bold endeavor, it is an essential one—even as they warn that the platform and its founders will inevitably face attacks.

Regardless of these difficulties and the challenge of penetrating the noise of hostility, this cycle of division must be broken for the sake of future generations. Leaving behind an unsustainable culture of fragmentation would be a disservice to the future stewards of our nation.

The Loss of Cultural Heritage

The primary challenge facing our generation—and those that follow—is the restoration of our traditional cultural inheritance. The core of our ancestral values rests on truthfulness, humility, mutual respect, civic responsibility, cooperation, and fair justice. Historically, community disputes were resolved through mediation led by a panel of three elders, arriving at compromises that restored harmony. This was governed by a strong custom of community self-regulation known as ***Higi Endaba*** (ሕገ ጳጉዳባ)-the rule of elders.

The erosion of truth, generosity, fairness, and collective responsibility poses a critical threat. Truthfulness is increasingly displaced by self-interest; fairness by factional bias; integrity by herd mentality; and ethical or financial compromise is becoming normalized. Peace cannot flourish without addressing this cultural decay. Without mutual respect and humility, we cannot build a foundation where future generations can address community challenges thoughtfully and collaboratively.

Symptoms of Cultural Decay

1. The Loss of Truthfulness

Historically rooted in both faith and societal norms, truthfulness was paramount ("*Do not bear false witness*" — ብሓሶት ኣይትመስከር). Unverified rumors were actively challenged with the phrase "*Can what you are saying be repeated?*" (እዞ ዘረበ ትድገም ድያ?), requiring individuals to stand behind their words. In an era without written contracts, a person's word was their bond.

Today: Unverified claims proliferate across social media. False testimony is frequently given to protect relatives, allies, or political factions. Defamation and misinformation have become common tools, fostering a herd mentality where wrongdoings are excused to defend one's group, thereby undermining personal and collective integrity.

2. Decline of Fairness and Transparency

Traditional justice was open and transparent, typically managed by village elders or local leaders (ዳኛ ወይ ጭቃ ዓዲ) and mediated by impartial community members in public settings. If a leader strayed from fairness, the community would intervene to recommend neutral mediation.

Today: Expediency and partisan loyalty often supersede justice. Many remain silent or construct false justifications when injustices occur, prioritizing group or party allegiance over fairness.

3. Erosion of Generosity and Mutual Support

Guided by the principle to avoid envy ("*Do not covet what is not yours*" — ዘይናትካ ኣይትመኑ), traditional society ensured that no neighbor was left destitute. Communities pooled resources during hard times—sharing seeds during planting season, lending oxen for plowing, or assisting widows with harvesting. Celebrations were supported collectively, such as contributing food and local drink (ገንጽን ሓምሳን) for weddings.

Today: Exploitative behavior has increasingly emerged. Many Eritreans—particularly women working demanding jobs abroad in the Middle East and Europe—sent earnings home to build properties for their retirement. There are now numerous instances where these individuals have been defrauded or denied access to their property by close relatives or trusted acquaintances.

4. Loss of Community Sympathy

Historically, community members provided consistent support during illness and extended grief. Neighbors ensured that those mourning lost loved ones were accompanied and cared for over long periods, offering essential emotional and practical comfort.

Today: While expressions of sympathy persist, they are increasingly influenced by political affiliations, with support and empathy often reserved for members of one's own faction.

5. Absence of Humility

Self-aggrandizement and exaggeration were traditionally discouraged. Individuals who engaged in boastful behavior were given lighthearted cautionary nicknames like "*Dust*" (ደሮና / ሙዕሮ

ጉሻ) or "*Let us say that*" (ገሕና ንበልካ). Modesty was the cultural standard, ensuring information remained grounded and credible.

Today: Exaggeration and ego-driven rhetoric have become widespread. This shift hinders genuine listening, promotes misinformation, and creates barriers to constructive dialogue.

6. Decline in Civic Respect

Politeness and respect toward elders, women, community leaders, and peers were strictly maintained. Interrupting others or speaking out of turn was frowned upon, ensuring that discussions were conducted thoughtfully and attentively.

Today: Public discourse—particularly online—is frequently marked by disparaging language, personal insults, and crude rhetoric. This lack of basic respect deepens existing polarizations and hinders efforts toward collective progress.

The Commitment of Zara Selam Media

The central mission of Zara Selam Media is to highlight the consequences of this cultural decay and advocate for the restoration of our shared heritage. Tackling these issues and reviving core values of respect, honesty, and accountability are essential first steps toward constructive dialogue.

Creating an environment of mutual respect is the only viable path toward long-term peace, national unity, and honoring the legacy of those who sacrificed for the independence, sovereignty, and justice of the Eritrean people.

A Call to Action: Healing Our Divide, Choosing Dialogue Over Division, Embracing Our Collective Path Forward:

To make this vision a reality, **Zara Selam Media calls upon the Eritrean people—both at home and across the diaspora—to commit to listening to one another with open hearts and minds.** We must begin the essential work of active listening, even when we disagree on the issues before us. True unity cannot flourish without genuine engagement. By choosing respectful dialogue over hostility, we can address our current and future challenges as a united people, forging an enduring legacy of dignity and mutual respect for generations to come.

Again, Zara Selam Media invites every Eritrean, at home and abroad, to embrace a culture of listening, understanding, and respectful engagement. We urge our community to hear each other out, especially in times of disagreement. Listening is not an admission of defeat; it is the sole bridge to unity. Through civil dialogue and shared respect, we can overcome our challenges together and hand down a proud, honorable foundation to our children and grandchildren.