



Afar Forum Virtual Conference 2020

Afar Forum is pleased to announce that the biennial conference will take place on October 24 - 25, 2020. The conference will be held online as a video conference using the Zoom software. The conference will be broadcasted live on Facebook. The conference dates and times are listed below:

October 24, 2020 15:00 – 19:00 Western European Time
8:00am – 12:00pm (EST) North America and Canada
16:00 – 20:00 Djibouti and Eritrea
10:00 o'clock Ethiopian Time in the afternoon

October 25, 2020 14:00 – 18:00 Western European Time
8:00am – 12:00pm (EST) North America and Canada
16:00 – 20:00 Djibouti, Eritrea
10:00 o'clock Ethiopian Time in the afternoon

On each of these dates, various academics, personalities, and organizations will present their presentation within the context of this year's conference.

Conference Theme: Afar Culture: The Source of Our Unity & Solidarity

The Horn of Africa has been tormented by identity politics, which is a major factor of instability. The very source of ethnic political identity can be attributed to decades of subjugation and marginalization. Afar people are among the hard-hit people that are facing multiple crises simultaneously such as political, economic and environmental challenges in the Horn of Africa. They have been victims of almost all ideological and territorial conflicts. Meanwhile, the lack of good governance, democratic legitimacy, social inclusion and economic equity remains a major political concern. Therefore, this uncertain and unstable environment requires thorough analysis and understanding. Afar Forum recognizes that the Afar people inhabit three countries, however, their fate is interconnected. The colonial boundaries should not be the barriers to our kinship and solidarity as the Afar people could serve as a bridge to achieve peace and stability in the Horn of Africa.

In this conference, Afar forum will explore the essence and the meaning of Afar identity, recognize fundamental understanding of factors that nurtures and contribute to a strong social bonding and social capital. One of these factors is the Afar cultural heritage “Qafar Qáda” that unites and binds the Afar people in time and space. Afar Àda (Qafar Qáda) is a traditional system of governance used by the Afar people in Djibouti, Eritrea and Ethiopia. Afar cultural heritage contains customary laws (Madqà) developed from knowledge gained by community experience over generations. The system regulates political, economic, social and religious activities of the community. It serves as a mechanism for enforcing moral conduct, building social cohesion, and expressing forms of community culture. Nevertheless, this precious cultural heritage is getting eroded due to different factors and creating a huge socio-cultural disruption as an outcome. This conference will highlight and identify enabling factors to preserve and protect our cultural heritage, which is a legacy of wisdom and pride that should be inherited by the next generation.

The conference will focus on how to preserve the Afar cultural heritage that is homogeneous throughout the Horn of Africa. The Afar cultural heritage held us in the past and could help us in the future to maintain our unity and solidarity while recognizing administrative state borders. The presentations and discussions will focus on evaluating the current situation and recommend future perspectives and the way forward. We hope that the conference will help to generate understanding in the following areas:

- Highlight the danger of tribalism and regionalism
- Revitalize the importance of culture, identity and solidarity beyond a national boundaries
- Perpetuate and popularize Afar culture among young people; Encourage researchers and academia to take more interest in Afar culture
- Fighting assimilation process that is destroying the cultural values

Afar Forum is a civic and opinion molding organization, which does not subscribe to any political organization in and outside Djibouti, Eritrea and Ethiopia. However, since its foundation in 1991, the Afar Forum has been functioning as a vibrant non-partisan platform for exchanging dialogs, where the social, political and economic aspects of Afar people are addressed and analyzed in Djibouti, Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Afar Forum
September 17, 2020