

Ethiopia's ruling party prepares to elect new chairman

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September 8, 2012 (ADDIS ABABA) - Ethiopia's ruling coalition, the Ethiopia Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) is expected to hold a meeting on 16 September to elect the party's new chairperson who also will most likely be the successor of the late prime minister, Meles Zenawi.

Following the death of Zenawi on 20 August, the deputy prime minister and foreign affairs Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn has been the acting prime minister of Ethiopia.

Desalegn was supposed to be officially sworn in on Thursday however the ruling party delayed the appointment raising concerns from opposition groups and uncertainty from the public on the viability of the post-Zenawi new leadership.

Ethiopian Democratic Party (EDP), one of the country's biggest opposition groups on Wednesday said the fact that the country still remains to be led by an acting prime minister indicates the country is not in a full functional state and could create a power vacuum.

Speaking to *Sudan Tribune* some opposition groups have speculated that the delay on the appointment of country's new leader might be due to internal conflict among the heavy weights within the EPRDF leadership.

The Ethiopian government has dismissed concerns from the public that the death of the late premier could create power vacuum in the horn of Africa's nation.

According to government officials, the newly elected chairman of the ruling EPRDF party will most likely take on the government until next elections in 2015.

"We are expecting the council meeting to be on the 16th," Seikoture Getachew, the foreign relations head at the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front's secretariat, told Bloomberg.

"There will be the assignment of chairperson and deputy chairperson." He added.

Ethiopia, on 2 September, held a state funeral of the country's long-time leader.

Tens of thousands of people including dozens of African leaders and hundreds of foreign dignitaries' attended the funeral.

All leaders of Ethiopia neighbour's attended the funeral ceremony with the exception of Eritrea.

However the Red Sea nation which remains at loggerheads with Ethiopia over the unresolved border dispute has gave its respects over Zenawi's death via Binyam Berhe, Eritrea's envoy to the Africa Union.

Berhe signed at the condolences book and has also shook the hand of Azeb Mesfin, the wife of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi.

Ethiopia and Eritrea fought a 1998-2000 border war over their disputed boundary that killed an estimated 70,000 people.

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