

Why Ethiopia's Unity Is Imperative And Beneficial To All

June 6, 2017 22:21

–An urgent plea to change the paradigm of thinking– Aklog Birara (Dr)



Over the past quarter century, the narrow nationality based narrative of negating Ethiopia's remarkable history as an independent political entity embracing a diverse population and religious community; and degrading its world renowned continuity as a beacon of freedom for all black and colonized people everywhere has been pronounced by the TPLF as anathema to both democracy, inclusive, sustainable and equitable development. The TPLF that wields political, economic, spiritual and institutional dominance today over Ethiopia's 104 million people wants us to believe that its political and economic development architecture can lead all Ethiopians to the "Promised Land." This make-believe narrative of divide and rule is deceptive and has only served the cunning TPLF and its allies while marginalizing millions. Ethiopia's continuity is imperative for all its diverse population.

The challenge before us is to provide a compelling narrative on political, social, economic and spiritual inclusion and a democratic architecture to sustain it perpetually. A truly democratic and inclusive state and government avert constant civil conflict, reduces waste and corruption and engenders sustainable development by including all citizens.

Last year's revolt in Oromia, Amhara, Konso and other places should have informed each and every one of us that the current system is both degrading, dehumanizing and anti-democratic. Renaissance without public voice and participation is a joke. Equally compelling is the premise that Ethiopia's demise will serve the cause of freedom and democracy for any group.

Secession and sectarianism have never proven to be a panacea for social ills. Somalia illustrates the fallacy. By all measurements and indicators the TPLF cunning policy of harmony and renaissance to advance ethnic equality while crushing freedom and equality has instead created an unequal and unjust social system and deep mistrust among citizens in which a narrow band of ethnic elites or state thieves led by the TPLF have literally captured Ethiopia's fiscal, financial and natural resources for the benefit of those in power.

Those in power are buffeted by a whole set of global actors (investors, diplomats, foundations, NGOs, the UN system) whose national interests are intrinsically connected with the TPLF and its coalition of beneficiaries within the EPRDF. Who then protects the interests of the Ethiopian people?

The TPLF is remarkably adept at persuading and endearing these actors that it serves a global good by fighting terrorism in the Horn of Africa. In the process, the TPLF sacrifices Ethiopian soldiers to preserve its hegemony while enriching its club of robbers and Mafia like thieves big time. In the process, what is abnormal is normalized and sold in the market place of ideas and diplomacy. Trust me; there are buyers of this fallacy.

Readers would recall a Forbes commentary that admonished these thieves of state and questioned the audacity of the group to ask for \$1 billion in support of drought victims. How does one justify more aid when the entire \$30 billion Americans offered the regime was taken out of Ethiopia illicitly? What guarantee is there that the next quarter century won't be the same as the last that is characterized by suffocating and inept governance, waste of public funds, untold atrocities, killings, maiming, torture, forcible disappearances of and imprisonments of thousands, institutionalized and state sponsored or at least condoned theft and graft? Ethiopians need freedom, the rule of law and respect for human rights more than they need handouts. This is a system of incurable diseases!!!

The argument in this paper is that ethnic divide and rule won't serve any person or group. The global community, especially Western governments are wrong to assume that the current regime that crushes dissent is a reliable long term ally against fundamentalism and terrorism in the Horn of Africa. In fact, the current system breeds these. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace presents Western

governments and actors a compelling picture that Ethiopia is sliding into fragility further and deeper than ever before. It is happening in front of Western eyes. “The EPRDF position of power remains fundamentally fragile owing primarily to the internal contradictions of the EPRDF regime” itself.

Central to this fragility is the unresolved and simmering issue of lack of freedom and respect for human dignity and rights that continue to serve as the hallmark of the regime. A regime that crushes the human spirit cannot renew society. A regime that bolsters hatred debilitates creativity and productivity.

No amount of self-assessment and self-criticism (ግምገማ) by the regime itself would address the root causes that compelled the TPLF to declare a state of emergency and renew it. No amount of economic transformation and renaissance would empower citizens who cannot bargain or negotiate their fate and make their lives better. No amount of public preaching would feed those who go hungry or are sick or have no proper shelter or whose children have to flee Ethiopia in search of better alternatives. No amount of self-aggrandizement and IMF led celebration of growth without equity would change the structure of the Ethiopian economy and raise per capita income from the current \$795 per annum compared to Kenya’s at \$1, 516 per annum. No annual celebration by TPLF embassies squandering public funds to honor make-believe growth would change the fact that 750,000 Ethiopians are stuck in Saudi Arabia again because there is no Ethiopian government that cares for them or wants them back in their home country. The TPLF and its allies have literally nothing better to offer them.

Is this not a shame for all Ethiopians regardless of ethnic affiliation? This is where the UN Declaration of Human Rights comes in handy. Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of US President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Chair of the UN Commission that wrote the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 put it succinctly and clearly. “In small places, close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.” The key to

realizing human dignity is a “concerted,” coordinated and sustained effort by all Ethiopian citizens who place a premium on human worth and dignity!!

So, why are we Ethiopians oblivious to the notion that “every man, woman and child seeks justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination” in all Ethiopia if not in all the world? Does it make any difference whether the person is Amhara, Oromo, Konso, Afar, Gurage, Annuak or other? The binding narrative is the universality of human dignity and justice irrespective of ethnic or religious affiliation. The sooner we embrace and internalize this narrative by setting differences aside the better for all Ethiopians and for Ethiopia.

It saddens me to no end that we go to the U.S. Congress and other human rights forums with separate flags and identities. This diminishes our capacity and resolve to stand up for justice and genuine equality under the law.

Who benefits? It is the illegitimate TPLF and its cohorts that benefit. Why? The one group that rules Ethiopia today with an iron fist and benefits materially from this assault is the TPLF. Because we are divided along ethnic and religious lines, one of the pillars of support of the TPLF, namely, namely, Western governments were for too long convinced that Ethiopia does not have a viable alternative. A dictatorship is preferable to that of potential chaos. This is no longer true. There are encouraging signs that Ethiopians within and outside the country who are making every effort to bring about a unity of purpose and the organizational means to deliver results on the ground. People have no choice but to rise up as they did last year.

The road ahead is not easy; but is brighter than ever before. However hard it might be, fundamental change must come from each one of us. We must be ambassadors of change!!

What we can do together

The global system is not created for the weak and for the fragmented and divided. It never was and never will be. The TPLF led and dominated police state has gotten away with murder because we are weak, fragmented and divided. We are often beguiled by the superficial and material. The agenda we follow is made by the oppressive regime that kills, maims, murders, tortures and imprisons our “brothers and sisters.” In many respects we do not have anyone else to blame but ourselves.

The cohort of TPLF supporters, including the U.S. A. side with and provide security and military assistance to the police state because they are afraid that Ethiopia will be

the next Somalia, Sudan or Syria. I do not blame them for serving their own national interests first. Dictatorships are more often than not more reliable allies of Western democracies than nascent civil societies and weak opposition parties. It is the present that guides policies. Egypt's Morsi failed to represent all Egyptians; and in his place Sisi emerged as a nationalist leader against terrorism. Russia is hardly an example of democracy; but it is a nuclear super power that America cannot dictate. Cuba is a one party state that Obama embraced to the American fold. It is self-interest that dictates policy.

The UN Security Council that governs the UN Human Rights Council and Commission has a hard time distinguishing what is in the interest of the Council and the real interests of hundreds of millions of people who suffer under a variety of dictatorships. Choices in policy are dictated by members of the Security Council on the basis of national interests and at a cost of human dignity and human rights.

As the UN Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley wrote in a Washington Post editorial comment, the Human Rights Council is often marred by its membership of dictatorships such as Venezuela, Cuba and Ethiopia that commit crimes against humanity and violate human rights on a recurrent basis. How do they get away with these violations? Because they are part and parcel of the Council's decision making body. They cannot make judgements against their own self interests.

In fact, they spend resources defending their positions with impunity. "When the world's preeminent human rights body is turned into a haven for dictators, the idea of international cooperation in support of human dignity is discredited. Cynicism grows." Ethiopia is among the "havens for dictators" that America continues to support. It is therefore our obligation to form a coalition and change diplomacy at its core.

If human rights is to have meaning; those who are victims of the TPLF and its allies must be resolute and fight in unison. It is then that the world body would begin to recognize them; respect them; listen to them; and take them seriously. This is the reason why I would argue that a divided and fragmented opposition and advocacy won't be taken seriously. For once, let us think outside the box. Let us also stop abusing and misusing social media to spread hate and division among Ethiopians. It only serves the TPLF and its allies.

In the meantime, the reader should understand that the TPLF led regime continues to

use public funds to feed global cohorts with poison pills that paint a dark and ominous picture that without the TPLF the country would fall apart. Ethiopia won't disappear unless we become willing partners of its demise!!

The TPLF narrative of Ethiopia's demise without the TPLF is in itself insulting for a country that has immense and diverse human capital capable of running the country better than the regime. Potential is meaningless unless it is unified and transformed into a social force of sustained and coordinated advocacy in support of those who are dying for human dignity, inclusion, justice, the rule of law and democracy. There is No other choice than a unity of purpose and a resolution to act.

It is time that, together, we offer a more compelling alternative than periodic shouts, protests and endless meetings. United, Ethiopians can accelerate the democratization process. United Western democracies will have an optimal choice of an anchor country named Ethiopia with it immense human and other natural resources capital that can contain extremism, fundamentalism and terrorism not only in the Horn of Africa but in the entire Africa.

United Ethiopia will serve as a land of opportunity for all its citizens rather than a country mired in destitution and perpetual dependency!!

June 6, 2017 22:2

Ras Dejen

June 7, 03:49

Sure, divided Ethiopia can never survive. United Ethiopia is a solution to all.

Not only ownership of land/territories and other claim issues but also survival as independent states is mere illusion. (Solid) Democratic United States of Ethiopia (DUSE) can be a good HOME to all.

But we need to remove the TPLF junta, re-institute the political system and brush away the junks inflicted by TPLF into our social systems and various treasures. Besides, in the process we need to well realize that ex-TPLF as well as active TPLF minds (entities) are ever anti Ethiopia and anti Ethiopians. They are indescribable criminals.

I wish snakes like Aregawi Berhe are excluded in the struggle. All TPLF entities (ex and active) should first face justice. They committed extreme crimes against all Ethiopians. Though the Amharas have been their prime targets, even the people of Tigray were killed and suffocated for strategic reasons.

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