

Have You No Shame? A reminder to Major Dawit Woldegiorgis Part 2 of 2

By Tibebe Samuel Ferenji 02/14/2020

“Time for machetes”: This is the title Dawit chose for his article. Think about this for a minute and let it sink. What is the message here? I have no doubt Dawit and his “cheerleaders” are “inviting us” to a civil war. If you have any doubt, read between the lines and pay attention to the details. Ironically, these are the same words uttered by the depraved monsters who committed the Rwandan genocide. Dawit’s “The sky is falling” type of allegation is nothing but “will-o’-the-wisp”. Dawit is someone who should know better than throwing allegations that are contrary to the universal standard of what genocide is. In the past, Dawit and his apologists alleged that Abiy is weak and his inability to take action has put our nation on a dangerous path. It is not clear to this writer how one can leapfrog from alleging someone is weak to a genocide.

During the Red Star Campaign in Eritrea, one of the most vicious campaigns against the EPLF where Dawit was one of the officials who played a critical and leading role, Dawit witnessed when the use of force against those who allegedly supported the EPLF backfired. Because the campaign targeted the Eritrean youth and isolated the Eritrean people, the EPLF was able to recruit more “soldiers” than at any time in its history. The use of force was not the solution then, and it will not be now. We are supposed to learn from history; yet, we willfully ignore the facts that our own history teaches us and act not to know where we went wrong. Instead of jumping from the distribution of machete to farmers to prediction of genocide in Ethiopia, those who are wishing our nation a doomsday for their own pathetic political satisfaction, they should work towards bringing people together. We all have the opportunity to change the political discourse in Ethiopia today more than at any time in our history. I am amazed by the likes of Yemane G, who published an article titled “Is Ethiopia a new Congo in the Making?”, Berhane Kahsay who published an article titled “Abiy’s high stake politics could trigger Yugoslavia type disintegration” and Major Dawit. If these people truly believe what they are saying and have no malicious intent, why aren’t they doing anything for peace and reconciliation? Why they all suggest the removal of Abiy is the ultimate solution to the challenge we are facing. They all use “the sky is falling allegation” to further their own political objective without worrying about the consequences of their dangerous propaganda.

To make his point, Dawit invoke Article 2 of the Geneva Convention. As we have seen in part 1 of this piece, in article 2 of the 1948 Geneva Convention, the key term for an act to be defined as genocide certain elements must exist. These essential elements are “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group...” Major Dawit cannot provide any evidence what so ever that indicates Dr. Abiy and his administration which includes many ethnic Amharas have acted with the intention of destroying in whole or in part any ethnic group. The word genocide is used to ferment hate and elevate the political tension with the objective of smearing and demonizing Dr. Abiy Ahmed. If you accept Dawit’s “genocide” standard today, would you apply it equally when someone you support takes power? If you think this piece is just in defense of Abiy, you would be wrong. The issue here is what standard are we using to state genocide is committed in Ethiopia? Is this standard going to apply equally to others in the future? These are some of the questions we must answer when we examine such important issues. If you accept this standard as true; then you must also accept the allegation that the military regime committed genocide in Eritrea and Tigray. Such claims are as empty and as political propaganda as Dawit’s claims are. The military regime was engaged in war with the TPLF and

EPLF, not with the people of Tigray and Eritrea. There is no evidence the military regime had any intention of destroying the people of Eritrean or the people of Tigray.

As I write this, I am wondering what happened to Major Dawit? I have disagreed with most of his conduct in Ethiopian politics but admired his efforts and dedication to bring Eritreans and Ethiopians together. In 1980s, Dawit went as far as asking Issaias Afewerki to be the president of Ethiopia hoping to prevent the separation of Eritrea from Ethiopia. This may say a lot about a lack of his judgment, but he also formed an association with Eritreans to bring Eritreans and Ethiopians together which is admirable. When Dr. Abiy came to power, I expected individuals like Major Dawit to play a vital role to bring people together and lead a reconciliation agenda in Ethiopia not to engage in hyperbolic political rhetoric. Major Dawit went to Eritrea's war front to meet with the EPLF leaders to oust the military regime hoping for lasting peace in Ethiopia; however, it is puzzling to me why he is unable to pick up a phone or travel to Addis Ababa to speak to the OLF and other Oromo led organizations to bring peace and stability in our nation. Why can't he hold a meeting with other opposition groups and discuss how we can unite our nation if he is so much interested in stabilizing Ethiopia. Why can't he go to the Amhara and Tigray region to bring the two regional administrations together to find a peaceful solution to the issues that are challenging them? One must wonder why? Why is Dawit less "compassionate" when it comes to Oromo politicians? Why is he engaged not only in the Anti-Abiy campaign but also in the "anti-Oromo" campaign? Why is he instigating and spreading the Oromo phobia conspiracy theory without any merit? These are questions for Major Dawit's soul to answer. What Ethiopia needs now is not people who take chapters and verses from the failed political playbook of the "blame game". We need serious people who dare to work to bring people together. If you think that the problem we are facing in our nation can only be solved by the government, you are dead wrong. We all are part of the problem and we all need to be part of the solution. The question is are we going to continue to be loyal to individuals, political groups, ethnic groups, or to our country? Are we going to stand for principles and the truth or political opportunities? These are the questions we must answer.

In his article, Major Dawit States the following: "According to 'FindLaw 'composed of legal experts, "Complicity is the act of helping or encouraging another individual to commit a crime. It is also commonly referred to as aiding an[d] abetting." Anyone who knows anything about the law understands there are no bases to accuse Dr. Abiy with "complicity" based on this definition. The problem with Dawit's assertion is there is no evidence to substantiate neither Dr. Abiy nor his administration is involved in any "complicity". Dawit throw words that have no bearings in current Ethiopia. He formed his opinion without facts and he is "fishing" for terms and statements hoping to find anything that fits his alternative facts. In my first year of law school, in criminal law class, the first thing I have learned is the importance of classifying what constitutes a "crime" and what the elements are that define it. For any layman, the killing of another human being may be considered only as a "murder", but for anyone who attended criminal law class, a murder has different stages of classifications from first-degree murder to involuntary manslaughter. Mainly, these classifications are done based on the intent of the person who committed the crime. In any crime, with the exception of strict liability, the element of intent is a determining factor in the process of crime classifications. Dawit's allegations of genocide and complicity have nothing to do with the facts on the ground in Ethiopia because the Prime Minister does not show any intent to "destroy" any ethnic, political, or religious group. If anything, his efforts are to bring Ethiopians from all walks of life under the banner of ETHIOPIAWINET. The facts are Dr. Abiy and his administration are working very hard to form a more inclusive society.

You may disagree with his effort to minimize the use of brutal and forceful act knowing this is the path that we have traveled through in the past with a disastrous result. Should we continue to do the same thing time and again and expect a different result or should we try a new method that might bring lasting peace in our nation? No matter where you stand on Abiy's approach, you must ask yourself where the elements of genocide and complicity are that proves Dawit's allegations.

As Dr. Bahiru Zewdie recently stated, we grew up in a culture of war and use of force to solve our problems. The tremendous challenge we have is changing this "culture" and adopting a new way of looking at our problems and seeking solutions that fit the problem. This new approach has become very difficult to swallow for likes of Dawit. Ergo, they are doing everything in their power to discredit and demonize Dr. Abiy. Major Dawit's article failed to provide an iota of proof that indicates Dr. Abiy and his administration are engaged in genocide or have the intent to engage in genocide in any shape or form. Dawit is throwing everything including the "kitchen sink" to see what sticks for anyone he can lure. His allegation does not pass any legal and universal standard test which indicates a genocide exists in Ethiopia. Sadly, there are those who buy into his nonsense and act on it. That, ladies and gentlemen, is a danger to our nation. If we fail to recognize this, we better be ready for "a rude awakening" down the road. Our society should expect better from the likes of Dawit, Berhane, and Yemane; we deserve a compelling argument and substantial evidence when such serious allegations are asserted; otherwise, this should be considered as an assault on the dignity of our nation and the reform agenda.

May God Bless and Protect Ethiopia and her people!