

## ETHIOPIANS, STAND AGAINST ETHNIC VIOLENCE AND THE KILIL SYSTEM

ይች ጥሬ ካአደረች አትቆረጠሃለሁ።

Tecola W Hagos (24 August 2018)

**DEDICATED TO ALL VICTIMS OF MOB VIOLENCE AROUND ETHIOPIA, FOR YOU HAVE INVIOABLE RIGHT TO LIVE ANYWHERE IN OUR COUNTRY OF ETHIOPIA. TWH**

### 1. In general

Yes, we Ethiopians are in big trouble, especially those of us who are emotionally, spiritually, intellectually, and metaphysical connected with the unity and sovereignty of Ethiopia. The current political situation in Ethiopia leaves no room for optimism. The first problem was generated by the new untested Prime Minister when he used the eye-catching phrases of “forgiveness” and “medemer” with disturbing mix of holiness with pious sentimentality in his public addresses. Nevertheless, the victims of ethnic hatred in Ethiopia and the destruction of their property cannot be ignored. There are few solutions and remedies that the Federal and Kilil Governments must do that I have suggested below in various sections below.



The current political situation in Ethiopia leaves no room for optimism. The first problem was generated by the new untested Prime Minister when he used the eye-catching phrases of “forgiveness” and “medemer” with disturbing mix of holiness with pious sentimentality in his public addresses. Nevertheless, the victims of ethnic hatred in Ethiopia and the destruction of their property cannot be ignored. There are few solutions and remedies that the Federal and Kilil Governments must do that I have suggested below in various sections below.

I offer here as an example, to dampen our pain to some degree, the critical situation of other people in other countries in big trouble just like us Ethiopians. But the company of miserable people cannot minimize the suffering of any. Believe it or

not, the “other people” I am referring to are none other than the great people of the United States of America. Americans that we all acknowledge to be far advanced in technology, far richer than most, astronomically more powerful, and far more democratic than the people of most countries in the World, certainly way ahead of Ethiopians, are faced with a great challenge to their democracy and constitutionalism. President Donald Trump is heading into a show-down against most Americans due to the Special Prosecutor investigation and possible findings of impeachable offences. The subsequent filing of such Report with the Justice Department might trigger the impeachment process in Congress, on possible charges of violations of the Election Laws and other related charges of conspiracy.

The challenging problem here in the United States is the possibility of civil rebellion by Citizens (representing about thirty to forty percent of the population of the United States) that are the core supporters of Trump. These Trump supporters are mostly violent xenophobic racist bigots just like Trump and would challenge all judicial or Congressional process if instituted against Trump. Do not be alarmed, for such percentage of biased bigots is the mean in all nations around the World. This standoff here in America is no little matter, for it challenges the very foundation of the United States. The 1861-65 Civil War was started by seven Southern States out of thirty-four total Union States, which is much less than that percentage of the population in support of Donald Trump. Ethiopians are faced with no less challenging political turmoil at this time of the Leadership of Abiy Ahmed and his supporters in the EPRDF.

Since the time of the takeover of the EPRDF of the Ethiopian State destroying the Military Regime, and with the leadership of Meles Zenawi, the unity and sovereignty of the State of Ethiopia has been

spiraling down towards the ultimate evisceration of Ethiopia in the Government of PM Abiy Ahmed. The alarming deterioration of national identity and security was even faster after the death of Meles Zenawi in 2012, which compounded with the corruption of high Government Officials. If I hear a single word that Meles Zenawi was a great Leader, I will vomit. He was not. He was the worst leader with mean spirit and reptilian viciousness (remember Tamrat Layne and Seye Abraha). The monumental problems of ethnic divisive politics that we are faced with right now in most part is his doing. The irony in the Government of Meles Zenawi is the fact that such negative political process has its inverse in a booming economy. Yes, he has done a couple of things worth noticing in his over two decades Leadership. Mind you, even a broken watch can tell time accurately twice in a 24 hours cycle.

## **2. The problem: misapplication of the concept of forgiveness and “medemer”**

Since my last article, events in Ethiopia are getting worse and out of control. I believe that Ethiopia is a very complex country where ordinary logic does not work that well. Earlier in another article I had written that weak and/or despotic societies “forgive,” but powerful/democratic communities dispense justice. Abiy Ahmed’s introduction of “forgiveness,” rather than the pursuit of justice, as the guiding principle for the new government totally undermined law and order and eroded public confidence resulting in the current state of anarchy and horrible attacks of thousands of individuals who happened to be minorities in specific communities all over Ethiopia. Gedu Andargachew with every single official in the Amhara Kilil is responsible for the death of minorities mostly Tygreans in Amhara Kilil.

To date there had been no arrest or judicial process against those individuals who committed such crimes in the Amhara Kilil. Those Amhara officials of ANDM, such as Gedu, Demeke et cetera seem to me active participants in such mob-based atrocities. They must be held accountable and proper retaliatory steps must be taken against them as individuals and against their supporters. I would go to the extent of advocating for an insurrection by TPLF forces to control such atrocities in Amhara Kilil. Similarly, in the Oromo region OPDO officials are responsible for the atrocities against Amharas, Gurages, Somalis, Tygreans to a lesser extent et cetera in that Kilil. [As a side remark, I have much more faith in Lemma Megersa than In Abiy Ahmed.] However, in case of Oromo Kilil, arrests are being made, and law and order is being restored. Despite the danger of having terrorist groups, such as OLF being allowed to organize in Oromo Kilil, there is relatively less persecution of minorities.

If we assume, for argument sake, that to forgive a criminal individual or a criminal organization (community) that had committed some harm to an individual, a family, or a community is an ethical act, and may even be considered as a courageous religious/spiritual behavior, there are certain conclusions that flow logically from such assumptions that we may not endorse. I have no objection if Abiy Ahmed forgives individuals who have harmed him or his family members, even then that act of forgiveness will not shield the culprits from being prosecuted by the state according to the penal code of the state even though the private act of forgiveness is commendable. However, in running a state government the obvious question that comes to mind is why the victims and their families should bear the burden of a difficult moral judgment to benefit the rest of society, especially when such society had failed to protect them from atrocities to begin with.

What Ethiopians hunger for is/was “justice” not some pseudo religious posturing of “forgiveness.” Equally disconcerting idea of “medemer” is the operational side of “forgiveness” where individuals and groups irrespective of their political orientations or previous criminal activities are allowed to be part of the new Ethiopian social and political mix. I am not being fastidious or parsimonious, but simply reporting with an open mind what I see all forms of opportunism and

dishonesty creeping back into the political milieu of Ethiopia. In connection with the subject-problem I am discussing herein, I applaud greatly the superb Blogger Yonas Muluneh for his insightful observations and commentaries in standing up for Ethiopia and all Ethiopians without distinction of division by ethnic identity. He is just one too few a patriot. Well Done My Brother! I hope you continue your fearless challenge to injustice and victimization of Ethiopians due to their ethnicity.

### **3. Genocidal Criminals: Demeke Mekonnen, Gedu Andargachew, Abdi Omar (Abdille)**

Horrifying atrocities were instigated or allowed by the Leaders of Amhara Kilil against Tygreans in Gondar, Belesa, Kobo and Woldia; uncontrollable Mob against Amharas in Oromo Killil; organized para-military attacks by Somali forces against Oromos and Amharas in Somali Killil et cetera. The three individuals, **Demeke Mekonnen, Gedu Andargachew, and Abdille** must be considered as international criminals and must be tried under the Genocide Convention. I am not writing here simply seeking vendetta or vengeance, but justice. It is impossible to build a civil society without taking steps against criminals who violate the rights of individuals in the guise of political goals and state craft. We cannot afford to allow such known criminals go free after they have committed horrendous crimes against innocent individuals. Pardoning them is the worst thing to do, and it is like murdering and torturing the victims all over again.

There are precedent setting international conventions such as the Genocide Convention and others through the United Nations system that are relevant to the resolutions of conflicts. For example, international customary law principles such as the Nuremberg Principles, the Japanese war crimes Commission, the Rwanda Commission, the decisions of the International Court of Justice, the recent International Criminal Court process et cetera that maybe used as the basis for setting standards to effect justice in the world before implementing a system of forgiveness and reconciliation. I have heard several Ethiopian political leaders citing the case of South Africa and Mandela as a model for peaceful resolution of conflicts. Such assumption is totally wrong, for the Mandela model did not resolve the economic and social inequality in South Africa, but simply postponed the solution to be made in the future that might never happen.

The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide adopted by Resolution 260 (III) A of the United Nations General Assembly on 9 December 1948, provides in Article 1 that "genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and to punish." I contend that ANDM Leaders and the President and all high officials and police commanders of the Amhara Kilil have committed crimes under the Genocide Convention and are international criminals. The meaning of Genocide under the Convention is clearly stated in Article Two.

"Article 2: In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

The Convention further stated what is punishable as a crime under the Genocide Convention in Article Three.

"Article 3: The following acts shall be punishable: (a) Genocide; (b) Conspiracy to commit genocide; (c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide; (d) Attempt to commit genocide; (e) Complicity in genocide."

Furthermore, the Genocide Convention in Article Four identified those individuals that are punishable under the Convention.

“Article 4: Persons committing genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in Article 3 shall be punished, whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals.”

[Ethiopia signed and ratified the Convention in 1948/1949.]

The silence of Tigray Kilil Leaders and the Leadership of TPLF in the face of such horrible crimes against their citizens in Amhara Kilil is totally baffling and unacceptable. Their reluctance not to challenge the criminals may be considered as a form of genocidal crime after the fact. I strongly condemn the TPLF Leaders and the Officials of Tygrei State for their lack of concern when members of their ethnic group are brutally murdered by Amhara mob and organized Amhara criminals.

#### **4. “Deep State”**

The conspiratorial narrow ethnic based power structure that is currently in power with Abiy Ahmed as its face is constantly undermining the EPRDF/TPLF, which seems to me based on irrational ethnic hate and genocidal ideations. Here is a clear example that illustrate my abhorrence against the system of language-based state structure into Kilils. Abiy Ahmed and his tiny group within the EPRDF are now the “deep state” that promote the hateful process against the TPLF and Tygreans. In order to carry out such genocidal scheme of ethnic cleansing, they have invited Issaias Afeworki into their conspiracy. The recent invitation extended to Issaias Afeworki by the Amhara Kilil Leaders to visit Bahr Dar seems to be part of such conspiracy. The idea is to launch a military insurgency into Tygrai at some point in the future to liquidate the TPLF and render Tygreans completely defenseless victims of oppression.

The current Ethiopian leaders seem to understand that the Ethiopian military is heavily dominated by Tygreans, thus cannot be relied upon for a full-scale attack and insurrection into Tygrai. Therefore, the Deep State conspirators came up with a brilliant strategy by creating a counter-force that would threaten Tygrai’s northern frontier and neutralize the well-armed and experienced Tygrean militia. The Deep State conspirators, thus, staged the euphoric peace agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea and the State visits of the leaders of both countries. However, such strategy has major tactical flaws, for it does not take into account or fully appreciate the battle tested very effective warriors of Tygrai who can easily overrun both Eritrea and the rest of Ethiopia in matters of few weeks.

I was told that the premature order by ANDM’s Demeke Mekonnen to arrest the former head of the Ethiopian Military industries fizzled out when the security members sent to arrest the General were themselves arrested promptly, by the order of the Leadership of Tygrai Kilil, when they arrived at Mekelle Airport. I warn the TPLF never to hand over its retired generals or any member of its fighting forces to the current Leaders in Addis Abeba, for they have no good intentions but a corrupted hunger for ethnic based power. I was watching the interviews of armchair strategists who had fled the war-zone of Ethiopia with their tails between their legs in the waning years of Mengistu Hailemariam, making such bold statements that TPLF is finished. I laughed at the foolish remark of Derg military men who should know better and bit their tongues before making such blanket statements.

#### **5. Self-defense and Self-determination (Liberation)**

Ultimately, the life of the individual stands alone as the point of reference in the validation of self-defense. What is there to add to this truism except maybe the concept of “the state” as a community with such visceral right to self-defense. I make a distinction between concepts of “self-defense” and

“self-determination” as stated in Article 39 of the Federal Constitution. The defense of one’s own life is a preemptory right that cannot be abrogated by any other superior right.

Every human being has the inalienable right to life and personal physical and mental integrity. If the individual in a community is derivatively threatened by actions of third parties whether as individual or as groups that self-defense right is still the base for organized resistance by such individuals against threats of annihilation or threats of any degree of harm. Such resistance might grow into a political right of self-determination. In the case of the current situation in Ethiopia where the Government of Abiy Ahmed seems to be targeting Tygreans for some form of liquidation, every Tygrian has the right to self-defense and ultimately self-determination.

The individual’s right of self-defense could be the basis for further self-determination when there is a threat against the life of the individual as part of a community, and I hold such a right as fundamental. However, one should not jump to such state of resistance for mere violations of individual rights that can be resolved through civic participations. In other words, there is no need to declare independence and secede as Eritrea’s EPLF did in 1991. At that time, the EPLF Leadership suffered from lack of expansive vision and settled for a scrap of land when they could have a vast “empire” of the whole of Ethiopia in 1991. And now they are clawing their way back in to a relationship with Ethiopia with the new peace agreement of 2018. I applaud Issaias Afeworki for such decision on reconciliation with Ethiopia and I hope he knows he is also being pulled into a quagmire of conflict between ANDM and TPLF. Now, I hold him also to a much higher standard of statesmanship and expect him to behave and not get manipulated in to the scheming of Amhara Kilil Leaders in their rabid hate of Tygreans that they dream to liquidate. I understand the concern of a number of Tygreans due to the unappetizing and totally unacceptable conspiratorial attack against TPLF and Tygreans in general by the Amhara Kilil leadership.

I do not blame the TPLF Leaders for having the idea of setting up a Tygrei State independent of the rest of Ethiopia. Unlike the pipe-dream Oromia state, or Somali State, or Sidama State et cetera. On the other hand two Ethiopian Communities can maintain a state structure within their respective territories: Shoan Amharas in Shoa and Tygreans in Tygrei. Even though a Tygrean independent state is possible and viable too, but not worth the effort in my view. My argument against such fragmentation is similar to my argument against the independence of Eritrea in 1991—why settle for a postage-stamp sized territory when you can have a subcontinent with untold wealth right underfoot? With the same degree of effort required to set up a new state, the TPLF could launch what I call “the 3<sup>rd</sup> Woyane Rebellion” and take over the current OLF surrogate and narrowly ethnic based Government of Abiy Ahmed.

The ANDM and the Amhara Kilil Leaders, such as Gedu, Demeke, et cetera are just paper-tigers with nothing more than the temporal power to organize mobs. They have no legitimacy nor organization with membership of well-trained armed militia. They are conspiring to have Issaias Afeworki to be involved in the attack of Tygrei/TPLF. One single reason why I suggested a couple of weeks ago to constitute a third Woyane rebellion was to counter such genocidal moves by the leaders of ANDM and the Amhara Kilil. I must caution that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Woyane movement will not repeat the error of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Woyane movement of Meles Zenawi in fragmenting Ethiopia with deeply flawed ethnic based federalism and it must discipline itself to avoid corruption. Such past flawed ethnic based political state structure led to the present degenerated situation that the current Ethiopian Leaders are trying to fix, but with even worse ethnic augmentation.

## **6. Some Remedies for Victims of Kilil Violence**

No amount of apology can restore a shattered life due to violence instigated by ethnic hatred and fanatical belief in one's righteousness. Thousands of Ethiopians have been victimized not only because of hate but due to misguided ethnic based Federal divisive Kilil system. The 1995 Constitution of Ethiopia is not clear on the responsibilities of Kilils in the protection of their nationals living in other Kilils. The first civilized approach on such problems is to file detailed complaint with specific events of harm done to a citizen of a Kilil to his or her person and /or property and demand restitution on behalf of such citizen of the particular Kilil.

As head of the Ethiopian Federal Government, Abiy Ahmed must put in place as policy that would require a Kilil government where a citizen of a different Kilil residing or passing through is harmed/killed and/or his/her property is destroyed or looted to be compensated to the full extent of the damage thus suffered by such individual by the Kilil government where such harm occurred. The responsible Kilil may need to impose higher tax and collect from the population whose mob action has caused the damage in the first place. This form of responsible concern for victims of ethnic hatred will effectively stop lawlessness because such acts of violence and destruction of property has biting consequences. Mob action must be stopped by all means including using deadly force.

If the Kilil government leadership is not forthcoming and is not discharging its duties to protect citizens from within its Kilil, such leaders must be considered as criminals and proper steps must be taken by the Federal Government. Here we have a serious flaw in the 1995 Constitution for it leaves it to the Kilil Leaders to invite the Federal Government to interfere where there is a breakdown of law and order. It is a silly provision, for it has no rational for such prohibitive provision. Article 51 (14) states, "It shall deploy, at the request of a state administration, Federal defence forces to arrest a deteriorating security situation within the requesting State when its authorities are unable to control it." The consequence of such idiotic provision resulted in the delay of the Federal Ethiopian military forces from entering Somali Kilil to stop the horrendous atrocities committed by armed Somali thugs on the civilian population.

There are many troubling questions in connection with the concept of forgiveness especially if the implementation of which ends up freeing individuals or groups who have committed serious crimes of murder, torture, and imprisonment in the name of national security or political change. Obviously, what is needed in such situations is justice in accordance with the criminal law of the state of jurisdiction and/or the use of international legal concepts that are peremptory norms of customary international law and practices whether derived from treaties or judgments of international courts, tribunals, or arbitration forums.

Foremost, in the discourse underway at political forums, universities, civic organizations et cetera on the issue of national "reconciliation," there may be serious confusion or misunderstanding of conceptual terms such as "forgiveness," "amnesty," "mercy," "immunity," and "clemency" in association with truth and/or reconciliation commissions. There have been several truth or reconciliation commissions (tribunals or committees) in the last thirty years in many parts of the world in almost all of the Continents. However, I do not believe the human condition has improved at all due to such efforts. Very many well intentioned individuals inadvertently have polarized the issue of justice with their advocacy of forgiveness and reconciliation. There is a degree of confusion in the approach of placing the idea of forgiveness as part of the process of political and legal solutions to the injustices suffered by many in Ethiopia or elsewhere in the World.

## **7. Conclusion**

When the atrocity or criminal act is a result of civil disobedience, it may be far more difficult to withhold special considerations such as forgiveness or mercy. However, even under such circumstances of civil disobedience, philosophers, such as Rawls, suggest that those who participate in activities of civil disobedience must not commit any violence or expect immunity from prosecution for their activities.

As indicated in my introduction, the granting of “pardon” or “forgiving” the criminal acts of an individual or that of a group that violated international standards under the Genocide Convention or any other bilateral or multilateral treaties may itself be considered a violation that may be a subject of sanctions imposed by the international community. The Rome Statute has created the International Criminal Court, and the Court is already fully functional. Thus, signatory states to the Rome Statute have the obligation to cooperate with the International Criminal Court in the prosecution of individuals who have committed such crimes such as genocide or crime against humanity. If individual states negotiate with criminals and grant “amnesty” or “forgive” such crimes, such states would undermine the role of the International Criminal Court. The question is whether we are putting the cart before the horse with such ideas of forgiving criminals? It is impractical and counterproductive to use the concept of “forgiveness” or “pardon” as a legal remedy or as public policy.

Let me remind you that there is more in seeking justice than mere rhetorical argument in philosophy and legalism—the psychological components in resolving injustice are as important. In other words, it is not only “forgiveness” that allows the human inner self to clean itself of polluting feelings to move away from the confinement and negativity of victimhood, but properly conducted retaliation or “catharsis” would do as well. For the sake of our sanity, for the sake of the wellbeing of future generations, and for the continued existence of our beloved and ancient Ethiopia, we must punish criminals such as the brutal and violent convicted criminals of the Derg, errant leaders and members of liberation movements that hurt people, and the new wave of mob criminals and their enablers. At any rate, the State must take care of those hurt by mob violence. They must be made whole no matter the cost. Ω

**Tecola W Hagos**

(24 August 2018)