

## **Bureaucratic Bottlenecks in the Ethiopian Embassy, Ottawa, Canada**

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### **The Plan and Motive**

A momentous **re-union of families and friends** was planned to take place in Washington DC. After that those members of the families interested in the festivities of **Tigrai Festival 2015** had planned to travel to Seattle. Then, following the Festival, those research scientists, academics, professionals, and business persons were going to travel to Addis to participate in the **Diaspora Week 2015**. The family from Canada had and still has strong capacity to contribute to successes of such civic activities. Unfortunately, only this family was unable to be part of the whole plan of the social gatherings, because of a sheer administrative failure. I was disgusted by this victimization of a family related to me. Because, I live far away from Canada in Europe, I was so eager to meet the whole family. This outcome motivated me to write this note. I hope it contributes to some remedial measures by concerned authorities of the EPRDF to usher in good governance elsewhere in the Ethiopian governance system – particularly in the international diplomatic arena.

### **The Adverse Impacts of Administrative Failures: a Generalized Overview**

An administrative failure is the worst kind of bottleneck, an impediment, to a country's development. Scholars, professionals, business people, the ordinary person, and some EPRDF's authorities have declared this impediment as an infectious disease, which has become an endemic to the current Ethiopian governance system. It must be understood that eradication of this type of diseases is a prerequisite for genuine sustainable development (GSD). GSD is a process by which human well-being is improved in an inclusive, a just, and an environmentally safe operating space. It can only be achieved through good governance, which is rooted in the following guiding principles: primacy of the rule of law, accountability, transparency, equity, empowerment, universal suffrage, collective decision-making, and much more necessary principles, depending on the culture one deals with. In the absence of these guiding principles, administrative failure reigns, exacerbating the adverse impacts of poverty.

### **Sequence of the Bureaucratic Bottlenecks: Impediments to Development**

It is unfortunate that a minor paper work that must have been done within 10 minutes reached at this level of an international incident. The issue is **renewal of the mother's ID of Ethiopian origin**. This is a very straightforward, simple, process that must have been accomplished in 10 minutes by counterchecking the new application with the original information in the Embassy's file.

Based on the information I received from the father, sequence of the sheer administrative failure to which the family was subjected to is summarized as follows:

**1st.** An official of the Ethiopian Embassy advised the family to complete Form #1 and mail it along with: (a) original of the Canadian Passport, (b) Original of the ID of Ethiopian origin, (c) money order for an amount of Cdn\$240.00 (two hundred forty Canadian dollars), and (d) passport size pictures. The family sent the whole information package by *Xpress mail*, including a paid return Xpress envelope. The Embassy acknowledged receiving the whole package.

**2nd.** An official called and advised the family that the required form was Form #3, not Form #1, for renewal purposes. The family completed and sent Form #3. After that all, the family

expected to receive a renewed ID of Ethiopian Origin for the mother. It was a wrong expectation. It was *hope against hope*.

**3rd.** An official the Embassy called and informed the family that the ID was not going to be renewed. He argued that a birth certificate, authenticated by the *Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Addis Ababa*, was required for renewal. The family asked the official, whether a notarized (legally authenticated) original birth certificate would help. He said no, insisting that she has to get the certificate authenticated by the *Ministry*. *What are the causes of these shameful bureaucratic entanglements? An absolute institutional rigidity, or a professional ineptitude, or a sabotage strategy, or hatred of anyone from the Woyane Land, or a combination of all?*

**4th.** Out of frustration, the family requested return of the mother’s Canadian passport, explaining that it was urgently required for the trip to Washington DC for the family and friends re-union. The official told the family over the phone that he did mail the passport. But, the family did not receive it. **Canada Post advised the family that “the package was being treated as a lost property; and investigative communications were going to be only with the sender, the Ethiopian Embassy”.**

**5th.** That was it, the family lost hope. Being part of the original plan of family and friends re-union, Tigrai Festival, and the trip to Addis for the *Diaspora Week 2015*, were all cancelled. The family asked the Embassy to return all documents, pictures, and the Cdn\$240.00 money order. The package, which did not include the mother’s Canadian Passport, was received. The two cases, regarding: (a) renewal of the Ethiopian origin ID and (b) the lost Canadian Passport remain in limbo, waiting for authoritative remedial measures. How many families and individuals are being subjected to such bottlenecks of a failed administration? It is easy to deduce from the evidence that there are many of them.

But, it must be reiterated here that the 2015 general elections mandated the EPRDF to address such **public grievances** effectively in accordance with the **social contract** it promised to uphold and implement.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In closing, I would like to sketch my views on the imperatives of international diplomacy. I focus on the need for fostering strong diplomatic relationship between Canada and Ethiopia. Canada is currently the most peaceful, prosperous, and highly advanced country. It is endowed with massive natural resources embedded in a *huge-subcontinental-landmass* and waterbodies (from east to west the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans and the Arctic Ocean in the north, coupled with inland systems of multiple lakes and rivers); the Canadian population is about 32 million only; and the federal system is similar to that of Ethiopia structurally. Canada’s global reputation and influence are enormous. Through effective diplomatic strategies Canada can be Ethiopia’s best partner in poverty eradication and development. To that end, however, a diplomat who is capable of forging viable diplomatic ties must possess the following prerequisites – among others –: (i) knowledge of the science of international relations, (ii) imperatives of good governance, (iii) self-esteem, (iv) effective interpersonal and public communications, (v) strong nationalism, and (vi) the imperatives of negotiation skills. Such criteria are measures of a diplomat’s capacity to break administrative bottlenecks in order to forge strong diplomatic ties between nations. In the current Ethiopian political environment, it is imperative that actions of *saboteurs* and *extremists* be monitored closely.

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