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IS TODAY'S RECYCLING OF THE WOYANE (TPLF) CRY OF 1943: "THERE IS NO GOVERNMENT," A NEW STARTING POINT TOWARDS A NEW ETHIOPIA?

In what was called the **Woyane Rebellion of 1943**, in (Ge'ez: ህዝባዊ ወያነ ሓርነት ትግራይ), more commonly known as the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the resistance cry of the Woyane of Tigray against the Imperial regime's corruption, greed and centralization of power at the top was: **"There is no government, let's organize and govern ourselves."**

Ironically, this same cry could be voiced even more loudly and boldly today, as "those Woyane or TPLF, now at the top of power," have created a ruling government based on one-ethnic group domination, corruption, greed and violence in a time where the stability and future wellbeing of Ethiopia is at stake.

The truth is obvious, tyranny under anyone, including Woyane, is still tyranny and none of us want it. It is in the nature of human beings to seek freedom for ourselves; yet, unfortunately, it is too often in the fallen nature of human beings to seek to dominate over others, a definition of tyranny. When the Woyane took over Mekelle, they proclaimed, "Our governor is Jesus Christ....and our flag that of Ethiopia....".

Had Woyane not recycled the same tyranny, instead of working for the good of all and reclaiming the "flag of Ethiopia" for everyone; how different things might be for all of us today. The tyranny that led to the Woyane Rebellion of 1943, has been perpetuated by the Woyane of today and we also reject it. Therefore, we can also state, "There is no government today that is for the people under the current leadership of the Woyane. So, how might we organize and govern ourselves?"

In other words, is the government in Ethiopia so dysfunctional and so strongly disliked that meaningful inclusive reforms are imperative if we are to save all of us from a worsening calamity? How can Ethiopians emerge from the present crisis with a win-win solution for all our people, including the people of Tigray, without resorting to the worst scenario?

In 1943, the Imperial regime used drastic measures, the aerial bombardment of the Woyane. Are the Woyane of today willing to do the same, to use full force against the non-Woyane Ethiopians? It slowed down the rebellion for awhile, only to come back full force many years later. What a waste of life, time and resources to have rebellion from every direction for decades instead of meaningful change, recognizing the rights of all the people. Self-delusion and self-deception are dangerous right now when level-headed wisdom and restraint are so critically necessary. We all, including the Woyane, should face the truth: **the EPRDF has lost all legitimacy as a government.**

Once again the Tigrayan Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF)-dominated coalition of the ruling Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) has rigged a vote, this time in the Ethiopian Parliament, which manipulated the votes in order to give falsified approval to the recently declared State of Emergency (SoE). Because of its implementation, there has already been needless violence, harm and the killing of innocent people at the hands of federal security forces. Additionally, because of this falsified result, a national dialogue leading to democratic reforms and more sustainable solutions to this crisis will be obstructed; a consequence that may trigger a dangerous and destabilizing reaction.

In rigging this vote for a SoE, the TPLF/EPRDF violated truth, justice, the rule of law, the Ethiopian Constitution and the integrity of the entire system. This is a crime of significant proportions that requires accountability and correction.

Was it not enough that 100% of the seats in the Ethiopian Parliament were claimed in the 2015 national election by one party—the EPRDF? Not one opposition member sits in the Ethiopian parliament today. Worse yet, even though the EPRDF monopolizes all political space in Ethiopia, EPRDF parliamentary members are still strictly controlled, and can face consequences if they depart from the party's position on any issue, especially issues such as the SoE.

Furthermore, all members of the coalition are expected to follow the dictates of one of the four ethnic-based coalition members, the TPLF, who in turn is under the authority of its Central Committee, made up of approximately 45 members, all of one ethnicity (6% of population) in a country of over 80 different ethnic groups and in leadership for 27 years.

So, the question of today is why that degree of control seriously failed to produce the votes necessary to pass the SoE. Keep in mind, ALL members of the parliament are members of the EPRDF. Why, under these already heavily “rigged” conditions, was it embarrassingly necessary to rig the vote? In the past, the TPLF/EPRDF was mostly able to bully or bribe its members into compliance; but now, it appears a rising current of strengthening resistance is now openly challenging the TPLF/EPRDF status quo.

WHAT IS HAPPENING TO THE TPLF/EPRDF?

The TPLF/EPRDF is losing its credibility, its legitimacy, its support and its viability. The TPLF/EPRDF is an idea that has failed. It is based on false, illogical and self-centered thinking of Ethnic federalism or that has proven itself wrong. It requires the dehumanizing of others and is unsustainable. The TPLF/EPRDF as an ideology cannot be saved; in fact, to try to save it will require force, not more lies, deception or persuasion, as it is a morally and mortally wounded construct. The public has become familiar with its characteristics, especially the lying, deception, shedding of innocent blood, incitement of division and the accusations of blame against others for that which they do themselves, like their own failure to uphold the rule of law and the Ethiopian Constitution.

This time the voting results were rigged in favor of the passage of a required parliamentary vote to approve the State of Emergency, declared on February 16, 2018. It failed to meet the necessary votes on March 2, 2018, which led to the chairman's action in changing the vote. This happened even after parliamentary members were threatened with serious repercussions if they failed to vote “yes”.

Despite all the pressure, many members of the parliament resisted it by either voting “no,” by abstaining, or by boycotting the vote entirely by staying home. It is now the people of Ethiopia who demand **truth** instead of lies, **justice** instead of ethnic or party-based partiality, the **rule of law** instead of impunity for cronies and power holders, compliance with the **Ethiopian Constitution** instead of manipulating it for self preservation or self-advancement, maintaining the **integrity** and **equitability** of the entire system instead of threatening or bribing members of the Parliament, rigging the votes or elections, imprisoning opponents, covering up illegal acts, indulging in corrupt acts and favoring yourself, your “tribe,” and your cronies.

Ethiopia, one of the countries viewed as strategic in Africa, especially in the Horn of Africa and in the Middle East, is brewing turmoil that could boil over to affect not only Ethiopians, but also neighboring countries and those beyond their region. Should this happen, it could also lead to a humanitarian catastrophe, not counting the likely loss of lives, the destruction of property and the flood of refugees to other countries that would surely follow.

Ethiopia has been considered a symbol of stability, but much of this perception is based on deception. Lies have been sold to outsiders, especially to donor countries, who in varying degrees bought into the exaggerated claims of economic growth, misinformation surrounding the land grabs and forced displacement, denial surrounding rampant human rights abuses, repression and numbers of political prisoners, and minimization of the rising ethnic tensions within the country, much of it directed against the TPLF. Some experts estimate that ten million refugees could flood surrounding countries, including Europe, within one month!

In 2010, the International Crisis Group, foresaw the rise of ethnic tensions and warned that Ethiopia was like a ticking bomb ready to explode. Other human rights groups have also noted the danger of implosion, all of which has been gaining momentum over the last two years as can be seen from the growing resistance and ongoing protests, particularly strong in the Oromo and Amhara regions. It led to a more serious crisis within the last two or more weeks.

In what appears to be a defensive and desperate measure to silence and stop the rising momentum of the people, the government declared a State of Emergency on February 16, 2018, and set it up to be approved by the Parliament at the next session— before the new prime minister would be appointed. It is interesting to note that this vote on the SoE took precedence over the appointment of the prime minister, as was expected.

This all led to a state of confusion among the people as well as among a number of government officials, who saw no need for the SoE, seeing it as an unnecessary repressive measure. International voices, such as the US spokesperson for Ethiopia, agreed; yet, the SoE was called anyway.

According to some reports from parliamentarians, they were pressured and threatened by federal security or intelligence agents, who told them to vote for the SoE or they would lose their benefits or “something” would happen to them. Some were also allegedly bribed, being told that if they wanted Abiy Ahmed to be the next prime minister, they should vote in favor of the SoE.

On March 2, the parliament assembled for the vote of approval on the SoE. According to the Constitution, two-thirds of the parliament members, numbering 547, had to approve it; however, in the case of the vote, the numbers were not there. Over 100 members had boycotted the vote or for other unknown reasons, not shown up. Seven members had abstained and 88 members had voted no.

The Speaker of the Parliament announced that the vote had passed, only later determining it had not passed because the number of votes required amounted to less than the required two-thirds of all members. They had justified the vote in assuming that the number of votes needed were two-thirds of members present instead the actual requirement of two-thirds of all members. That required at least 365 votes rather than the 346 yes votes they had announced. Strangely, the outcome was later changed to 395 yes votes, which only then, met the requirements of the law, even though they were falsified results.

The whole system was set up to rig the outcome considering there is not one opposition member within their entire membership. What is quite remarkable and encouraging is the numbers of EPRDF parliamentarians who resisted the pressure to vote yes, an outcome that was intended to buy some extra time for the TPLF to regain power and control. There may have been fewer yes votes if there had not been so much pressure; yet, it still did not pass and required rigging of the numbers in order to appear to have passed when in fact, it did not. Everyone knows this now although they were warned not to leak the information.

Overall, this is a serious and debilitating defeat for the ruling party. It demonstrates a strengthening resistance within the ranks of the TPLF/EPRDF against the ruling regime’s power holders and instead indicates their desire for genuine democratic reforms. Additionally, a State of Emergency, according to the Ethiopian Constitution and international standards, is not meant to be used to suppress the peaceful resistance of citizens who are attempting to bring democratic change to the country, but it is to be used in a state of war or in response to a national disaster.

In summary, integrity is in short supply, as is sadly apparent in this rigged vote that actually failed to approve the SoE. As also can be noted in some of the pictures of the actual vote, some members of the parliament raised both hands for an extra vote or turned their heads as they voted, as if they wanted to hide their identity. Who does not feel shame voting for something wrong under pressure, threats, bribes or rigged manipulations. This clearly demonstrates the reason why increasing numbers of Ethiopians can no longer put up with the deception and corruption of the entire system of government. Let us be honest; there is no justice or democracy in Ethiopia, only the attempted appearance of it—and that no longer works. Over a hundred persons boycotted the vote, 88 persons voted no and 7 abstained. This is moral courage that challenges the current corrupted system, something that seems to be spreading.

In reality, the vote did not pass, even among these EPRDF members. If the vote had been done, freely and fairly, among the people of Ethiopia, the results would have been overwhelming defeat for the EPRDF as the people have had enough of the government-perpetrated killing, imprisonment, torture, human rights abuses and restrictive laws such as anti-terrorism laws that accused, silenced and imprisoned democratic voices and members of the opposition and civil society as terrorists. Additionally, the EPRDF has maintained control by fomenting division among the people, including inciting ethnic hatred as a means to maintain domination over others.

Now, though in effect, the SoE is not working, but is backfiring, creating increased resistance and protest. How will the TPLF/EPRDF respond? Will they simply crackdown all the harder on the people, using increased levels of violence, and bringing more death and destruction?

The TPLF/EPRDF has lost its legitimacy to govern. The majority of the people are uniting against them, including many within their ranks. There is an opportunity to change the downward direction of this conflict even now, before options for a peaceful solution disappear and civil war erupts into ethnic-based violence or other kinds of violence that will entrap the country, making them a possible failed state.

It is time for all who are interested in the stability of Ethiopia and the Horn to put pressure on the EPRDF to come to the table. The only win-win solution for all is through genuine democratic reforms, starting with the release of ALL political prisoners. Now it is an opportunity for the TPLF/EPRDF and all stakeholders to initiate plans for an inclusive national dialogue that will lead to reconciliation, meaningful reforms and restorative justice for all.

The vote on the SoE was rigged in order to slow down the increasing momentum of the peoples' demand for change; however, it cannot be ignored for it will not simply go away. Will we take the path to a better Ethiopia or to the destruction of our country and people? It is impossible to maintain the status quo.

Let us humbly come together to serve each other as agents of change, bringing: TRUTH, JUSTICE, THE RULE OF LAW, THE CONSTITUTION OF ETHIOPIA AND INTEGRITY to their proper positions as pillars of Ethiopian government and society, for the sake of every one of us. May God help us!

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