

# The lion of Aiga too scared to roar at G20

By Abebe Gellaw

It may be too disappointing for some folks to be told that a hyena or a fox is not expected to behave and act like a lion. If a poor hyena gets a chance to mix up with decent lions, the hyena may get puffed up and try to roar and walk like a lion. But all the effort is futile as no great cosmetic surgeon or a revered magician can do a miracle of transforming the poor beast into the king of the jungle. This is a reality of life that even the most ardent admirers of the hyena, those like the silly cheerleaders and propagandists blowing trumpets from mount Aiga, should live with.

Meles Zenawi is a despot, who has been committing heinous crimes against defenceless civilians in Ethiopia. This is a well-known and well-substantiated fact. No amount of hand shakes with leaders of great nations, queens or kings can wipe his blood drenched hands. Nothing can obliterate the harsh truth that he has to face wherever he goes. The pains of facing the haunting reality are understandable but at the same time it should be noted that they are all self-inflicted with his countless misdeeds.

Ethiopians all over the world could have descended in London during the G20 summit, not for a protest rally, but to honour Zenawi holding his images, not effigies to torch, chanting nothing but praise. The crowd could have paid homage to him had he been a true leader who has not caused all the untold grief and pains against the suffering people of Ethiopia. They have no fanciful desires other than having a decent meal without fear of being killed, jailed, mauled or strangled in their own country.

Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Genocide Watch, Reporters without Borders, Committee to Protect Journalists, World Organisation against Torture, the European Parliament, even the benevolent US State Department... Ethiopians all over the world, all those who have been condemning Zenawi's atrocities, individuals or organizations, are not a bunch of moronic conspiracy theorists out to tarnish his image. All the smart kids and upright old men are not reciting figments of their own imagination. They are reading from the dark books of atrocities written by the dictator himself through his misdeeds.

If at all attending the G20 summit will exonerate Meles and transform him into a lion, as his mindless Aiga cheerleaders are trying to blatantly hoodwink us into believing, we should wish them good luck and feel wholehearted pity for their desperation. When they tell us that their 'lion' roared in London, no one does not need to hold any grudges against the desperados who have been exhausted over the years as a result of their futile efforts to defend his long list of atrocities. The psychological impact of trying to hide and cover the blood and wounded flesh of the countless victims of torture, genocide, senseless wars and executions must be too immense to bear. Deep in their hearts, they probably feel sad, ashamed and guilty. That is human nature, if at all they have human hearts pumping enough blood to reach their brains to function.

It is an open secret that Africa is a continent badly misruled by so many corrupt tyrants. Why would it tickles anyone and cause excitement to see Meles misrepresenting the tragic continent at the G20? It was just a few weeks ago that the same African rulers, who gathered in Addis Ababa in early February, elected Gaddafi by acclamation to lead the continent as African Union Chairman. Emboldened with the unanimous endorsement by his peers, the Libyan tyrant immediately named himself “King of Kings of Africa” and advised African rulers that “democracy in Africa leads to bloodshed.” According to him, the best model for Africa is Libya, a country he has been brutally misruling since he came to power in a coup d’état forty years ago, before the majority of Africans were born. After all, life expectancy in Africa is far shorter than the time most African rulers cling to power.

In his little book called the Green Book, which every Libyan is forced to study even if it reveals nothing but his weird tantrums, he wrote, “Parliaments are the backbone of that conventional democracy prevailing in the world today. Parliament is a misrepresentation of the people, and parliamentary systems are a false solution to the problem of democracy. A parliament is originally founded to represent the people, but this in itself is undemocratic as democracy means the authority of the people and not an authority acting on their behalf.” For Gaddafi, the solution to rectify the shortcomings of democracy is a one-man rule. That is exactly what African rulers like Meles love to hear, anything that justifies their abhorrent tyranny.

The same Africa Union summit endorsed the request of Meles Zenawi to voice African concerns over the global financial crisis at the G20 Summit in London. In fact, he was peerless, nobody being like him among the G20 leaders. He was the embodiment of failure, corruption, indignity, crimes and tyranny. In a way, that was a true representation of African rulers, but on the contrary all that doesn’t reflect the aspirations of ordinary Africans. Nonetheless, for the handful of citizens in Aigaland, this was a great victory that will shame those who have been voicing dissent against Zenawi’s misrule and tyranny. And then, there was another great victory! The “statesman” of Aiga was seen mingling and shaking hands with some famous decent people and that was enough to spin them in hysteria. “Our lion has roared,” they sang pasting his pictures all over their websites. But the American economist Milton Friedman once said: “One man’s opportunism is another man’s statesmanship.” That seems exactly the case!

Leaving the desperate spin-doctors aside, it might be good to put a simple reminder. Statesmanship is not measured by mingling with great leaders. Neither oratory nor acting proves skills of leadership. A sincere effort to improve the fate of others, even if doomed to fail, is much better than a successful endeavour to promote one’s selfish agenda to prolong the misery of fellow human beings. Meles Zenawi has spent his entire adult life fighting his endless wars with his countless enemies, dividing people, wreaking havoc in the Horn of Africa, causing bloodbath, large scale displacement, death and destruction. What did he achieve after he replaced the brutal dictator before him? Nothing but eighteen years of one-man rule, competing with his inspiring friends like Gaddafi, Al-Bashir and Mugabe. While he was at the G20, Genocide Watch was appealing to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to investigate the atrocities of Meles to help the ICC nail him down like his Sudanese friend, the demon of Darfur, Omar Hassan Al-Bashir.

According to his faithful followers, Meles Zenawi is a great leader who is committed to pulling Ethiopia out of grinding poverty. That can only be true if facts don't contradict the illogical assertion. Is there any leader in the world who willingly landlocked his country denying nearly 80 million people their rightful access to the sea dismissing them as colonialists? Is there any leader in the world who squanders nearly a billion dollars per year on port services in another country while the entire export revenue of his poor country is far less than a billion dollars annually? Does that make a business or economic sense? Is there any leader in the world who redraws borders to the detriment of his country? If there is such a leader, he must be a rare fictional character, like our own Peter Pan, ruling a nation called Neverland. In Neverland, they say Peter Pan never grows up. May be in Neverland, they blame all the moronic blunders of a tyrant that has caused scarcity of hard currency on coffee exporters and farmers whose entire effort has become meaningless as it cannot even pay for the cost of using a port of a tiny neighbour. This can happen nowhere else on earth except in Ethiopia, whom a tyrant may think is a land of fools.

Anyway, the lion of Aiga had a great time in London. He met the queen of England, talked to Obama, Gordon Brown, Sarkozy et al but nothing has changed. He has flown back home where his oppressed victims, prisoners, emaciated children on the verge of death, sick and wounded citizens are cursing him for all what he is doing against them. He flew back home to sleep in his palace as if nothing had happened, as if judge Birtukan Mideksa and so many thousands of others were not suffering in his dungeons. Nothing has changed... it is the same old story. He may have escaped the curses of protesters in London who were on CNN, ITV, Channel 4, Sky News, CBS, VOA, BBC and many more global media outlets demanding justice, an end to his brutal rule and the release of Birtukan Mideksa and all prisoners of conscience. Can he escape the inconvenient truth?

In a way, Meles is a fool for being too quick to be where he doesn't belong. His profit is mostly attracting unnecessary attention and bad publicity. According to news reports, he even cancelled a scheduled press conference at the G20 after the media blitz by his countrymen calling him to account to his crimes against humanity and genocide. He seemed too scared to face inconvenient questions. If Meles Zenawi had been a real lion, he would have jumped out of his car, mauled and devoured all those noisy protesters in London who were watched on TV by hundreds of millions of people across the world cursing and condemning his crimes. But the lion of Aiga was in a country where the rule of law is too scary to violate.

Meles should have rather been inspired by leaders like Obama who have won the will and trust of their people. They are cheered and admired everywhere they go. There is nothing in their record which hints their tendency of tyranny, corruption, brutality, crimes or stupidity. They are extraordinary and bright people who have been elected to lead their people. Unfortunately, Meles has a different record. It is his record which is making life too miserable for him. The protesters condemning him in Europe or America are not lying. They are just ordinary people reading his own records. Whatever they chant is true, however sad it may be to the trumpeters of Aiga, who have a difficulty of understanding the fact that there are much worthier things in life than trying to sell a fake African lion and liberator hiding in free countries.

Those who filter the truth and his accomplices would help the poor lion, hyena or whatever they call him and do him a favour if they teach him how to accept the realities of life in stead of telling him that no matter what he does, he is always right. In any law, hiding the crimes of an outlaw or trying to tamper with evidence is a crime. As the French philosopher and essayist, Charles Peguy, said: "He who does not bellow the truth when he knows the truth makes himself the accomplice of liars, criminals and forgers." So the simple message for the trumpeters of Aiga should be simple: don't join any crowd, just join the truth which saves a great deal of time and energy spent in futile endeavours.

Did anyone hear any fake lions roaring in London? Nobody did because only real lions roar. Apparently hyenas laugh, hypos bray, monkeys chatter and foxes yelp but none of them can roar like lions. That must be sad for the trumpeters of Aigland, the fairyland of tyranny where despots never fall sick or die.

Anyway, the cat among pigeons show at this year's G20 summit was quite entertaining as the international media gave it a good amount of airtime. I bet Aiga will soon try to nominate for Oscars the lead actor, Meles Zenawi, who outshone everyone as the fake lion of Africa that never roars. What a futility!

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