

Professor Alemayehu G Mariam: Do your justice!

By Obang Ujilu

I have had the pleasure of reading “**Of Lies, Promised Joy, “Shimagles”, Pardons and Bananas**” of Professor Alemayehu G. Mariam article posted on web and listened to an interview formerly broadcasted by Addis Dimtse and VOA Amharic service with professor Ephraim Isaac and Prof. Alemayehu himself.

Following the arrest of CUDP leadership, members of the free press and human rights activists in Ethiopia, there was an attempt to secure the release of these prisoners of conscience through local mediation traditionally called ‘SHIMGILINA’. After lengthy and painstaking experience some of the prisoners are able to walk free and the remaining are hoping to follow suit. However, out of the prison cell a new war of words is unfolding between two professors (one Ethiopian a resident in America and the other born Ethiopia may be US citizen) concerning the handling of the mediation and other interferences that supposed to come with it. Both professors seem to advocate to the benefit of their Ethiopian roots but differ in the way they see what is best and effective. It may not be necessary to elaborate the core issue that brings these professors at loggerhead as most of my readers may be well acquainted with it, but it is worthwhile to mention their difference arises basically from the rational thinking that Alemayehu used to have unwavering stand that the might of the outside pressure will deliver the required impetus to bring down the dictator regime, while Ephraim is adamant to accept foreign interference and ardent promoter of national means to resolve national problems.

Given to the psychodynamics, the emotional and motivational forces that affect behavior and mental state of an individual may explain the rational thinking they put behind their effort to end the crisis in Ethiopia. It is not surprising when Alemayehu ventured to an American solution and Ephraim to home grown one. As an Ethiopian, I am entitled to support what I believe right and defend or criticize what I believe wrong on issues that matter my own country. My assessment will focus on the core points of the article in which Alemayehu appears to be the accuser.

In his own words, Alemayehu told us Blair and Clinton, (both of whom are from the west) made terrible mistakes in eulogizing and backing the tyrannical and despotic regime of Zenawi to ride free on Ethiopian interest. If that is the case, it is ironic to me blaming Ephraim for his recklessness on this respect.

True, Alemayehu did make good point on contemporary Ethiopia that is experiencing the worst situation ever under the rule of TPLF/EPRDF. I am sure no body will argue with his portrayal of EPRDF regime in any way. With second hand information, professor Alemayehu’s enlightenment

for us is not that bad and I remain appreciative to his analysis. However, I beg to differ accepting his WORLD INFLUENTIAL NEWS PAPERS at face value. First of all the papers are plagued with lack of indigenous knowledge and racist point of view when it come to Africa (spare me from calling xenophobic). Secondly, they are motivated by selfish drive of money-grubbing than accepted moral precepts. Last but not least, they always see things through their own special interest and hidden agenda than its intrinsic nature.

Nevertheless, he is US learned scholar, I am not fascinated with his omnipotent references being always the outsiders. Why he is reluctant to name even one Ethiopian as exemplary to support his argument? Why he is totally detached from his roots and prescribing outsiders for all evils? In the first place who is misinforming, destabilizing and brainwashing us? Where has been this so called 'influential' when the Meles regime brutally massacred AAU students, Ethiopians in Awassa, Gambella, Gondar and most recently Addis Ababa in 2005? That time do really these bunch of western media acted to influence the US law makers for the sake of humanity or what they may call democracy?

He is talking all about the US congressmen, senator A, senator B, etc, but what about those Ethiopian civil right defendants, political parties, civic organizations and their assertive leaders, and intellectuals? He is too obsessed with foreign idols. I never heard him calling the great leaders of *Axum, Lalibela, Gondar, Harar* and *Shewa* civilization, historians, artists, scientists and the men and women who gave their all to their nation that would have been impressed us.

It was difficult for me to reconcile the example of Mandela's global elders view with Ephraim's mediation. First of all we have to be clear with the perception that South African's success **was not** simply made possible by a **resolution passed in the US congress** or by an **outsider mediator**. South Africans liberated themselves through consistent, united and painstaking popular struggle. There is no **Carter** or **George Washington** to inspire them, but their own black **Mandela**. Similarly, they fixed the rest of the evil that was carried forward from Apartheid, through the local means, **The Truth and Reconciliation Commission** which was spearheaded by a local religious man **Abuna Desmond Tutu**. Mandela's global elders are simply citizens of the global village, not from other planet. Mandela's vision is for a much broader picture than local issue. Of course, if they have time and energy, even in the local level they can greatly contribute as long as **there is no string attached with vested interests**. I think the point of Professor Ephraim is not all about mediation simply initiated by foreigners, but **interference** by **representatives of foreign governments** who used to screw the outcome to their own advantage. Period!

Be it for what ever purpose or in whatever conditions, the prisoners (partially) had been secured their own release after having signed a certain document with content that themselves only know. All Ethiopians from coast to coast cheered their release and earnestly looking forward to see the

release of the remaining prisoners of conscience **without prejudice** around the nation. I think we are embarking in a beginning of a new chapter and make no sense to go back and spray fuel to flare tension all over again without any reasonable concrete plan to salvage the nation. Make no mistake about the inherent characteristics of the regime. It doesn't require special training to expect face saving propaganda theatre will be staged for a while. **As the leopard can't change its colors, can Woyane change its behavior?**

In his paragraph "of the four big lies", Professor Alemayehu shared with us his professional brilliance in depth and breadth. Although it is too late to bring any significant solution, I am satisfied with legal implications and jurisprudence interpretations of the case. I personally agree with the notion that they (prisoners of conscious) shouldn't have been put behind bars in the first place. If justice has to be served, the killers and oppressors of their own citizens should have been put before the court of law. There is no such a word CRIME where there is no a crime scene and evidence that lead to someone called a suspect to be arraigned. Their incarceration is totally absurd and has no valid explanation.

Needless to say he is sympathetic about the situation, the professor looks flying overboard in defending their signing as blatant and baseless. I wish he could leave this particular issue to the people who make this wise decision to defend themselves. For me, under whatever circumstances they may be, their decision to free themselves and join the resistance is the **only viable option**. Stirring at the expense of others is not some how commendable. What I mean is the dictator is brushing up sarcastically that their release is conditional. Make no mistake, the dictator, will mean it.

I have some displeasure on his comments under Big lie #3. I don't buy the idea of MY WAY IS THE HIGHWAY. This people have been imprisoned well for about 2 years. Since their arrest there were plenty of massive demonstrations, candle lighting all over the western world and so many high profile tour to Capitol Hill and Europe relying solely on Payne and Ana Gomez with a lot of promise that never been delivered.

In the past, Ethiopian Orthodox Church was known to intervene whenever there is confrontation in Ethiopia. However in our times, the church changed its role from preaching peace and gospel to a willful tool for sinners and killers.

At this low point of our time, a handful of concerned citizens volunteered to act and diffuse the tension by facing the unthinkable. Most of these elders are genuine and successful Ethiopians who may not be suspected of personal enrichment or immoral drive. As deeds speak louder than words, for example, professor Ephraim demonstrated himself as a proud Ethiopian for about 45 years thousands miles away from his home country. When most of our professors throwing a gala

party for getting US papers and shopping for Armani and expensive ties to look FERENJI, he resisted the temptation and consistently proved to value his own country tradition and citizenry. He is a rear breed Ethiopian who invested his time on practical action rather than empty rhetoric.

When Ethiopian elites (mainly in Diaspora) were bogged down on IF CONDITION and squabbling at each other, this practical group of citizens went ahead and showed us tangible results. We should have been happier and supportive instead of being judgmental and hairsplitting. We shouldn't forget with whom we are dealing with - **Master of the devils is on the throne**. How the hell are we going to convince the evil by placards and slogans in the US streets? Whether we like it or not, for the time being, the elders are doing a superb job. Discrediting their effort is not appropriate and sensible. Let us think for those souls still languishing in hell holes. Instead of being judgmental, let's ask a question to ourselves, when are we going to be appreciative positively? I remember some time ago the bashing and denigration of heroic members of EPRP by immature, do nothing new brand bullies. It was primitive and cruel to ridicule our brothers and sisters, a courageous and selfless men and women who abandoned the generosity of life and personal achievement in order to liberate their nation from the grip of a dictator at the cost of their precious life.

Cornering and muzzling individuals or group of individuals who may not share similar point view become a major concern with the emerging dilapidated Diaspora politics. With the advancement of Information Technology and unaccountable self made gutter press paralyzed and strained the good spirit of cooperation among Ethiopians. Some intellectuals who are thought to be great caliber and sophistication are turned radical militant waging a cyber war to defame and intimidate self starter volunteers who would like to contribute for the common good of Ethiopian people.

When our attitude is positive we entertain pleasant feelings and constructive images, and see in our mind's eye what we really want to happen. Then we walk tall and the voice is more powerful. Positive and negative thinking are both contagious. All of us affect, in one way or another, the people we meet. This happens instinctively and on a subconscious level, through thoughts and feelings transference and through body language. People sense our aura and are affected by our thoughts. Negative thoughts, words and attitude bring up negative and unhappy moods and actions. This is the way to failure, frustration and disappointment. People are more disposed to help us if we are positive. They dislike and avoid anyone broadcasting negativity. Is it any wonder that we want to be around positive persons and shun negative ones? Let's think positive for the sake of positive outcomes!

I found it nauseating to read on a part that Alemayehu went as far as deriding the Ethiopian culture and tradition and parroting the supremacist racist propaganda. It looks like he got an opportunity to prove his loyalty to USA as an insider by helping the dirty cleaning of **AMERICA KNOWS EVERYTHING FOR YOU** mania. My question is if the good professor lacks confidence and pride

in his former country (Ethiopia), why then he has to muddle up in Ethiopian affairs? His reference was the usual foreigner Ambassador Yamamoto, the man who was known for defending Zenawi's government at a congressional hearing some time ago.

I have personally listened to the entire interview by Addis Dimtse as well as VOA with Ephraim and Alemayehu. Especially Addis Dimtse looks like deliberately planning to frame and embarrass professor Ephraim exactly in similar fashion as he did for Solomon Tekaligne (who abandoned the Diaspora struggle soon after that framing). While the interview was conducted with Ephraim, without his knowledge, Alemayehu was waiting on the wing. In the mean time Abebe Belew put on Alemayehu after a short gesture of excuse to Ephraim. The shrewd professor cleverly accepted the uninvited guest. For the first time I came to know Alemayehu how he is novice and unpolished compared to Ephraim. Instead of engaging in constructive dialogue, he jumped on accusations and investigation as if he is a police.

Ephraim tried to be humble, diplomatic and want to keep his mission to himself, knowing that he will endanger the souls that are under the hands of a dictator. Needless to say, Alemayehu could not get Ephraim's intention and challenging him adamantly and provocatively. It was simply laughable to ask Ephraim how the hell you don't read 10 pages of paper as a Harvard professor. I think Alemayehu needs some diplomacy and Ethiopian history courses if he wanted to be prudent politician in Ethiopian affairs.

I can imagine Alemayehu took this issue so personal due to the fact that the failure of the passage of this bill mean an end to his debut political carrier that brought him closer to influential lawmakers in Washington DC. Amazingly his idols, the Americans reconsidered and pushed the marking up date of the bill by reasoning if there is a window of opportunity that Ethiopians could be able to settle their own differences.

Well, the argument of professor Ephraim regarding sovereignty is not new phenomenon at this particular time. Former leaders of Ethiopia (with the exception of Meles Zenawi) had been strongly resisting any foreign interference within their own sovereign nation. Taitu's revocation of the Wuchale Treaty and the arrest of member's of the British consular by Emperor Tewodros are few examples to cite. Call it dictator or government of the people, in most cases foreign interference is a recipe for destabilization and the resulting government will be a puppet willingly manipulated by foreign domination. And resisting domination is not Xenophobia as Alemayehu claimed.

It is not secret that the US foreign policy is always dominated by **Raison de guerre** to protect and further its interests. The consequences of this blunder may not be limited to EPRDF regime, but also will spill over to the next generation of governments to come. There is no any logic to convince us to allow our independent nation to be manipulated by outsider, because we hate the regime. Politics is a dynamic process that needs long term and strategic thinking. During the

Ethio-Somalia war and at the demise of the Derg regime, US had already betrayed Ethiopia. The architect of London conference was the US right hand man Herman Kohl who gave the blessing to a tribalist gorilla to run our nation.

Go and ask any where, from Japan to Nigeria or from Iceland to Papua New Guinea everybody will respond “NO OUTSIDER INTERFERENCE IN OUR DOMESTIC AFFAIRS”. The reason is simple as that foreign hand is a menace to the very survival of their nation. Dependence on outsiders sucks the energy and the spirits of citizens to perform by their own. It is depressing to have our expectation dashed when a serious dependency syndrome plagued our professors that we consider them exemplary and inspiring mentors.

Aside the national sovereignty issue, the first phase of reconciliation could only take off with temporary suspension of hostilities. It is naïve to assume peacemaking while the warring parties are battling to score against each other. Hence, it is not surprising Ephraim and his team felt uneasy on the backdoor offensive mounted under tutelage of Alemayehu in US that may derail their 18 months effort. If Alemayehu was genuine he would have been given Ephraim some time to demonstrate his success. Then, if Ephraim’s mission failed there may have been ample reason to push the bill.

What really went wrong with professor Alemayehu may be the confusion of his law training in US and the role of traditional African peacemaking. The educational standard, the cultural make up and the societal fabric of the US and Africa is entirely different. The emergence of conflict and its means of resolution are greatly subjected to the sphere of society that belonged to it.

In democracies (like in America) those who exercise power are in a sense stewards and must be able to show that they have exercised their powers and discharged their duties according to the stipulated law. They are accountable to the people through the mechanism of election and there is system of justice that oversight the administration of law. In US durable political institutions, due process, fair trial and equality before the law are already in place and there is no need for elders to intervene in conflict resolution.

In Ethiopia, most governments are totalitarian and installed by the barrel of guns. Natural rights or civil liberties are rejected in favor of the government’s right to rule by command and backed by all the force it needs. Command and obedience, inflexible rule and denial of the legitimacy of oppositions and free press are the culture. The system stresses on perfect willingness to obey from above, ruthless intolerance of disobedience from those below and an unquestioning attitude to the justifying ideology.

It was at this time where there is no democratic establishments and accountability to the people; the time tested “**elders council**” of conflict resolution fills the gap and served as a rule of thumb to

turn looming bloodshed, political crisis and human sufferings around. Does this mean that Ethiopian way is inferior to that of Western? Here we are talking about an Ethiopian perspective which is completely alien from American system that needs of course an Ethiopian wisdom and methodology to bring about lasting peace.

Unfortunately, the most part of professor Alemayehu's paper is dedicated on faultfinding and disparagement. It lacks the essence of fairness, composure and intellectual wisdom. By far it sounds extremist that distances itself from acknowledging the success of others while finger pointing on points that deemed to be weaknesses. I don't think Alemayehu scored against Ephraim, as he claimed, rather it backfires. It could have been constructive if professor Alemayehu took time and conscientiously examine the cost and benefit of Ephraim's work vis-à-vis his argument reinforced by comprehensive public opinion and present the case decently and honorably before landing to ridicule an outstanding professor. It is just all about discouraging goodness and respectability.

Accommodation is a willingness of others at the expense of one's own needs. The accommodator often knows when to give in to others, but can be persuaded to surrender a position even when it is not warranted. Accommodation is appropriate when the issues matter more to the other party, when peace is more valuable than winning. Avoiding conflict is appropriate when victory is impossible, when the controversy is trivial, or when someone else is in a better position. Parties in a dispute who hold extreme, strongly held, convictions about the right positions and solutions in a conflict will seldom make any progress to resolve conflict. Emotional responses such as anger or elation often contribute to paralyze conflict.

However it can leave people feeling bruised, unsatisfied and resentful, tempering the confrontation is worthwhile and beneficial in the long run. Compromise is useful when the cost of conflict is higher than the cost of losing ground and everyone is expected to relinquish some thing. This was a point at which conflicting parties **stuck** and no longer able to find effective solutions to make compromise. Definitely, the intervention of traditional peacemakers turns this impasse around.

Certainly I will not assume the mediators are in a position to influence the dictator as an impartial third party to facilitate the resolution of conflict, instead they used tactics to get the dictator on board by the way of appeasement. It is an intentional systematic problem solving method employed by which effective responses are sought to difficult situations. There is no problem to employ normative power familiar with cultural norms to get things done. I have no problem with expressing one's feelings assertively, without devaluing or blaming others. Empathy, the ability to put oneself in another person's position and understand that point of view is very essential before arriving at any conclusion. It is unethical to question the integrity and competence of the

elders' council as long as their substantive concern was how to free the prisoners. To label professor Ephraim and his team as snake oil salesman and xenophobic sounds imprudent, unpolished and an attempt of self-aggrandizement.

In his words professor Alemayehu admitted his **exoticness** to the Ethiopian context of peacemaking "SHIMGILINA" and **expertise** with hard-nosed adversarial system of the American legal system that lawyers battle in the courtroom. It is understandable where the crux of his conception emanated from. Practicing law to represent others in the court is a business purely for the purpose of profiteering or making a living. Where as Ethiopian SHIMGILINA is a voluntary service to make peace, minimize loss of human life and promote friendship and brotherhood. SHIMAGLES in Ethiopia do not work for dollars to exonerate criminals by bending and screwing the law. Instead they work for clemency, redress and compassion out of humanity. Which one does reflect high standards of moral principles and integrity, the American lawyer or an African Shimagle? I leave this for my readers.

Personally I do not care if the US withdraw the support to EPRDF government, but the question is do Woyane care to expropriate the national budget for education, health, infrastructure, etc to its military and security machinery? Does the Professor's club in US have a contingency plan to rescue poor Ethiopians? Do they mind when the already staggering school and health system collapse? At the end, the one who is going to suffer are ordinary citizens, not professor Alemayehu and his direct family or Meles Zenawi and his cronies. Be realistic sir!

No body argue on the contents of the bill (as a paper work), but I do not trust it as a miracle drug to heal my country ills. The pretext of WMD (with the impetus Iraqi's in America) was used to invade Iraq. Dozens of fictitious and doctored satellite images was shamefully presented as an evidence to convince the United Nations. The invasion left hundreds of thousands dead, many wounded and untold misery. Iraqi's embark on sectarian strife with no hope at the end. Iraqi oppositions feeding wrong information about WMD just because they hate Saddam's regime ended up destroying their own country.

It is inept to expect democracy fatherhood from a country that rejected the democratically elected Hamaz in Palestine. This is a country with a long record of deception and manipulation. A one time friend during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan is now a sworn enemy put on his head 25 million dollar for informant leading to his capture or dead body. Regardless of US's trustworthiness, even if the bill passed for that matter, will it move a stubborn dictator an inch from what it stands for?

Let's have a closer look at the following possibilities:

1. What if Woyane simply misappropriate the chunk of national budget to build and maintain the security machinery in defiance of the loss incurred by HR 2003?

2. What if Woyane simply raises more tax for nationals to overcome shortage of funds and collect compulsory contributions like YENAT HAGER TIRRI during the Derg regime?
3. What if Woyane sell Ethiopia on discounted price to competing emerging powers waiting on the corner, such as China and India?
4. What if Woyane sacrifice another national interest to please US just like what was doing in Somalia? Who knows if they invade Sudan under new pretext? The recent hijacking of LUCY in a dead night is another glaring fact.
5. Woyane is a wounded tiger who will react heinously and brutally till buried deep in the ground. But my question is who is going to shoulder that vengeful brutality? The Diaspora campaigners or poor Ethiopians inside the country? Certainly the Diaspora is not.
6. For whatever motive behind we may shun the past, but history kept on recording every detail of truth to be a lesson for generation to come. More than 40 years of severe embargo and alienation did little to humble Cuba's Dictator Fidel Castro's regime and Kim Jon IL of North Korea. The state of Burma is also other living example. Meles Zenawi is an inherently identical ruthless dictator who rules a police state on the other corner of the world. Do we still foul ourselves a dictator will back down by way of outsider pressure without effective popular resistance within? Absolutely not! The world never witnesses a dictator who abandoned its inherent character for the sake of saving a couple of millions of American bucks.
7. World Bank's loan drama was a recent lesson, but to my dismay still we have professors who do not yet get it. Let me ask a question, who is going to stop Americans if they copy World Bank's tactics and continue on supporting Zenawi's regime? How do we come to trust outsiders while we saw them cheating us on the face?
8. Since the advent of this accountability bill, EPRDF is pumping taxpayer's money to lobbyist firms in US to crush the bill at any cost. I can imagine how Americans are smiling at us discovering the power of intimidation under the guise of Human Rights bill could generate a lucrative business from foreign countries.
9. Last but not least, if Woyane's down fall is eminent, as Sibhat Nega told us, they may embark on creating chaos, civil unrest and hand over our nation to another round of tribalist rule waiting on the wing. But, the question is, do we prepared to effectively respond and handle a possible mayhem in case it happens? Do we have dependable Ethiopian Army to defend us, maintain peace and order while the secessionists are arming to the teeth and displaying their military muscle inside and outside the country?
10. The emergence of this controversial bill may lead to another round of division between supporters and those who oppose it will ultimately slow our progress to act together.

Notwithstanding the understandable hatred for TPLF, we need to genuinely think what will be good for the future of our country. I was over enjoyed when UEDF rejected the formation of AFD from the out right. A feeble thinking of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" will not necessarily hold substance. Without thorough examination of the costs and benefits of the alliance, you can

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not simply jump in a bandwagon that matters the life of 77 million Ethiopians. The leadership of UEDF used its superb reasoning power to disassociate itself from unholy alliance that gave legitimacy to militant separatists, despite the bullying of fanatic and tumultuous AFD cults. I also appreciated Ambassador Imiru Zeleke for his candid insight to enlighten the uninitiated.

I don't believe temporary fix will bring lasting peace to our country. I wonder when my Diaspora compatriots are effective to carry placards, blow horns and beg for the powerful nations instead of making peace within themselves, organize and act in unison to bring about lasting solution by their own hands. Dependency syndrome killed our spirit, heroism, self confidence and creativity. This new born parasitic culture brings us no where for the past 40 years. Worshiping foreign ideologue, abandoning century tested local conflict resolution and disdain to elders the curse that drags us to abyss.

Even though Ethiopians in general and a good number of oppositions in particular call for the need of all inclusive alliance to act in unison, I never heard a word from Alemayehu G Mariam who devoted dozens of pages to ridicule one professor. A disenfranchised action will certainly be translated as strength to the dictator regime of Meles Zenawi. The only way out from this impasse is to unify Ethiopians under one common ground, Ethiopianism and face the evil in coordinated manner from within and abroad. The wise will not cultivate enemy but more friends.

With respect

Long live Ethiopia