



THE VOICE OF ETHIOPIAWINET

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Tigray Liberation Front/Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) & Ethiopian Sovereignty

The geopolitical architecture of the TPLF/EPRDF continues to take a toll on Ethiopia's sovereignty, national interest and identity. Since it seized political power with the active support of external and internal forces almost 17 years ago, the TPLF/EPRDF has taken decisions on the geographical and territorial make up of Ethiopia that will have adverse impact on generations to come. These decisions have taken place and, continue to take place with impunity and without any meaningful dissent within the Ethiopian people. Civic organizations, independent and free media, political opposition parties, nationally oriented intellectuals and human rights organizations have been totally muzzled. Local and regional institutions have been emasculated to a level unprecedented in the country's modern history. Opposition parties have been broken up into new and meaningless groups and factions; made dysfunctional or subordinate to the wishes and commands of the ruling party; or, simply evaporated into thin air. The vacuum in meaningful political opposition has facilitated the decisions of the ruling party to do what it wishes, as it wishes, when it wishes and with whom it wishes. The tragedy is that decisions on Ethiopia's geographical make up, territorial integrity and sovereignty that were established at huge sacrifices on the part of all Ethiopia's mosaic of nationalities, affect and impact on all Ethiopians. Any abrogation of Ethiopia's legitimate territorial integrity and national sovereignty should be every body's concern. It is no longer acceptable to ignore a tragedy that occurs in one part of the country.

Ethiopians and foreign observers will recall the internal redistribution of land and resettlements which have been designed, promoted and implemented by the TPLF/EPRDF in the Gondar, Wollo, Afar and other areas of the country despite objections and protests from local citizens who have legitimate claims to the land. What happened in Gondar, Wollo and what is happening in Afar will be remembered in Ethiopian history as the epitome of ultra ethnic or narrow nationalism gone to absurd levels, rewriting history and redrawing maps in order to weaken local communities and to gain favors from others. The short sighted policy ignores the fact that future generations on all sides have no choice but to live together; to benefit one another; to trade with one another and so on. Punishing one group to gain favors from another is not a lasting legacy. What is lost through illegitimate means will be recovered in due course.

Late last year, it was reported by Sudanese sources that the current authoritarian regime led by the TPLF/EPRDF is said to be negotiating to cede land from the Gondar region to the Sudan. If true, the TPLF/EPRDF is going further and further in the destruction of Ethiopia's national sovereignty and territorial integrity as it has in the past. According to Sudanese sources, the TPLF/EPRDF has been conducting a series of bilateral negotiations with the Sudanese Government and has now agreed to cede more than 1,600 Square Kilometers of Ethiopian land to the Sudanese Government. The land being turned over has been a legitimate part of Ethiopia as documented by well known historians. No previous regime ever ceded Ethiopian land to the Sudan or to any other country.

Nationals of the Gondar Region who inhabit and use the land were not consulted. If true, a regime that has little regard for Ethiopian public opinion on any subject that affects Ethiopian sovereignty, territorial integrity and long term national interest, must have simply announced the decision to placate Sudanese authorities. In doing this, it will be repeating the same historical and strategic mistake it made earlier when it also sponsored the separation of Eritrea from Ethiopia making the country land locked.

TPLF's/EPRDF's short term gain is Ethiopia's long term loss:

Ethiopians in the Diaspora and the Ethiopian public at home should recognize the fact that the ruling party's interest is short term peace, economic and commercial ties with the Sudanese Government. We believe that the long term interests of the Ethiopian and Sudanese people require respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both countries. Handing over Ethiopian land to the Sudanese authorities without considering the impact of ceding land that belongs to the Ethiopian people in exchange for political favors, including the deportation of Ethiopian political refugees from the Sudan to Ethiopia, will have no legitimacy.

All Ethiopians in the Diaspora who care about Ethiopia's national interest, sovereignty and territorial integrity must seize this moment and show their solidarity with the people of Gondar, Gojjam, wolega, and Ilubabor. It is time to close ranks on such critical national issues.

Where is the opposition to this latest development?

While we were not totally shocked by the behaviors and actions of the leaders of the ruling party, what also stunned and troubled us is the silence of Opposition parties, critiques of the regime, intellectuals, academicians, opinion makers, broadcasters, radio personalities. With the exception of one opposition group which denounced the action of the Ethiopian government, others have continued to remain silent on a subject that affects Ethiopian territorial integrity and sovereignty. The Ethiopian people paid huge sacrifices in defense of their homeland. A ruling party that dismantles Ethiopian land with impunity is every ones moral responsibility. At minimum, those who believe in democratic unity, freedom and territorial integrity must demonstrate that an affront to the dignity of any segment of the Ethiopian population is an affront to all Ethiopians.

Long live the unity, territorial integrity of the Ethiopian people. May, 2008

