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- **Dissecting the Construction and Precise Meaning of the Ethiopian Election Under TPLF Leadership**

**By Maru Gubena**

The TPLF leader, Meles Zenawi, and those surrounding him, who have carefully studied, checked and tested the mindsets and political culture of Ethiopians – who in the eyes of the regime are the least informed among all African nations on issues of nationhood, modern politics and the indispensability of collective interest, who have no “sticks” and do not know how to use “carrots” effectively when presenting their cases and grievances to the diplomatic or broader international community and who, sadly, seem to have collectively, unambiguously and firmly pledged and agreed with each other not to work together peacefully and harmoniously when it comes to the issues and common goals of our country – have told them time and again that:

“We, the rulers of the land of Ethiopia, are in Addis to rule you forever. We are not here because we have been invited by the people of Ethiopia. Instead, we are here and have achieved our current military and political power and economic position by spilling an incalculable amount of the irreplaceable blood of our own young men and women from a single province – Tigray. It is imperative that we make this crystal clear to all of you, to all Ethiopians, so that you can understand precisely what we mean and do not have the illusion, the dream, of sharing power with us or changing our status quo. We therefore kindly but also strongly request that you be submissive to our rules and laws, rules and laws that we ourselves have constructed and produced with the full intent to impose them on you, by bowing your heads to the ground for as long as we are alive and in power. To accomplish this we have our own constitution, our election board, our courts, our armed forces, including our Agazzi special force, trained especially for exceptional purposes and events and to show you our strength, our real power, and let you understand what we can do to you stupid Ethiopians when you try to mess around with us. The police force and media are all ours and are working tirelessly day in and day out for us, maintaining our law and order. We want to tell you in crystal clear language to respect their actions and decisions and be submissive to them. They are all our men and women and are our indispensable voice, protectors and life support. If you, however, disagree with the way we rule and prefer to leave Ethiopia for another country, you may do that as well. Under our rule and administration, leaving Ethiopia for another country is possible and even easy. You must understand that we are not as cruel and inhuman as the Dergue regime, under which all of you have had very painful experiences and in whose hands your precious children and other irreplaceable family members perished. In case you Ethiopians disagree with our kind, wisely stated advice and suggestions and our clear statement of our uncompromising position, we have some even better advice for you, for all Ethiopians. As is known, one among our many objectives is to provide you unreservedly time and again our most helpful, constructive advice. We would therefore like to say this: follow our footsteps on the road we traveled, all over the country, during the 16 or 17 years of struggle we waged, not just to free ourselves – the people of Tigray, but also you, all Ethiopians – from the inhuman, most destructive regime of Mengistu Hailemariam, who made your country literally a killing field. Then you can change us. Then you can overthrow us and take power from us. You won’t do that – you don’t dare to go through the deadly *Chaka* and fight against us? If you don’t dare to endure the deadly, cold and hot Ethiopian mountains and forests to face and test the strength we have built up through our painful experiences, then you should just keep quiet, and we will continue to rule you for as long as we are well and alive.”

This is more or less what Meles Zenawi and his ethnically oriented and trained cadres have been saying since they physically entered the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa. Yes, they have been and are still telling the God-fearing people of Ethiopia in crystal clear language and repeatedly, openly and publicly, without the slightest reservation and with no shame at all, using the most disparaging words, evil-spirited and contemptuously constructed statements. On the other hand, however, due to the end of the Cold War, which was responsible for the sudden, accelerated disintegration of the well-known, highly respected and feared Ethiopian armed forces and for the abrupt disappearance of the most repressive, most inhuman and most hated ruler of Ethiopia and its people, Mengistu Hailemariam, from the land of Ethiopia – and which greatly helped the TPLF rebels, shortening the long road to the Minilik palace in Addis in May 1991 – there was a complete absence of economic and political superpowers other than the wealthy western industrial or rich nations. The TPLF leadership therefore felt it had no other choice than to adapt, doing its best to construct election policies and establish an Election Board and a judiciary system, which were creatively fabricated to operate under its own rules, purely with the intention to trick the western nations upon which TPLF's survival, including its economic and political structure, are entirely dependent. Yes, the elections that the repressive regime of the TPLF has been and is organizing and holding are undoubtedly a direct response, meant to fulfill the requirements, policies and ill-spirited and ill-conceived demands of wealthy donor countries, just to support its usual tricks. Nothing more and nothing less.

Yet, while the statements above, based on what Meles Zenawi himself, his own families and his economic and war comrades have firmly and repeatedly stated, are so abundantly clear and so far beyond Ethiopian socio-economic and political realities, as has been shown, tested and proved, not once but three or four times – and even though the picture these statements represent will never change as long as the TPLF leadership is ruling my country – surprisingly and even shockingly, a small section of Ethiopian society has remained willing and ready to choose the simple short-term goal of advancing their personal, family and group interests above the collective and long-term interests of Ethiopia and the well being of its people. To these ends, they are willing, not just to participate in such fabricated elections and judiciary systems, but also to serve as indispensable tools and witnesses, supporting the creatively invented court charges, cases, words and statements of the repressive TPLF leadership regime, thereby prolonging the lifespan of the ethnic-oriented ruler. Instead of speaking decisively with a single, irreversible voice and saying to TPLF leaders, *“No, what we Ethiopians want is a collective freedom and the commencement of the process of democratization. We don't want to be used as tools, as judges, prosecutors, or leaders of your small, ineffective and fruitless opposition political parties, or employees of false election boards and journalists for one-party-controlled media outlets. No, we don't wish to be your tools and witnesses anymore. No, enough is enough.”* But our people do not dare to say such things boldly and decisively to the repressive TPLF leadership, not because they are afraid of Meles and his cadres, but because of their short-term interests, economic or otherwise, which have been the cardinal enemy of Ethiopia and its people in the past, and remain so today.

A few among my readers will disagree with my views and assessments, but I nevertheless will continue to argue logically and relentlessly that as long as we remain weak and unable to correct our behaviours, rearrange our arrogant, simplistic, culturally shaped and imposed mindsets, and unable to resist and fight against our own personal short-term greed and self-centered attitudes, then the creatively invented TPLF policies, judiciary systems, rules and elections will continue to operate, functioning to the satisfaction of the TPLF leadership and those behind it. And that handful of conscious, determined Ethiopian compatriots who may dare to show their true Ethiopianess and their opposition to the repressive policy and rules of the TPLF will instantly lose their lives, leaving their immediate family members not just behind, but impoverished and helpless. Worse still, and much to our disbelief and shock, it may not be long before we can watch Meles Zenawi on western television screens, not just shaking hands with the current US President, but also sitting comfortably in the Oval



**“.....It may not be long before we can watch Meles Zenawi on western television screens sitting comfortably in the Oval Office, laughing with Barack Obama, in effect at all of us – at Ethiopians..”**

Office, even laughing with Barack Obama, in effect at all of us – at Ethiopians who act as if we have made firm promises and irreversible agreements that we will not agree and not work together, but instead remain as divided and hostile to one another as we are today.

In closing, I would say that my conclusions today are not and should not be different from the conclusions I reached yesterday, last year or even fifteen or twenty years ago. They are the same, not because I am arrogant or rigid, but because I believe in logic and in the day-to-day phenomena of socio-political change in Africa and throughout the international community, which show that without an irreversible unity, without resisting repressive and inhuman regimes in a single voice, there will not be political and leadership change in any country, including ours. The statements I have made here reflect my thoughts in a recently published article, where I said “The willingness of Ethiopians to remain divided and keep their heads buried in the sand, while women and children are being shot to death on the streets of Ethiopian cities and towns and opposition political leaders and artists are being endlessly harassed, arrested and convicted, shows clearly that Ethiopians are most concerned with their personal and family well being, and that the winds carrying the torches for collective well being, freedom and democracy are far remote from the skies and high mountains of Ethiopia.” (Maru Gubena, Reviewing the Damaging Effects of Ethiopian Politics,.....” 28 February 2009.) This acceptance of our divisions is our enemy, something that we need to fight against, working both individually and collectively to tirelessly wage both direct and indirect wars.

Maru Gubena

Readers who wish to contact the author can reach me at [info@pada.nl](mailto:info@pada.nl)

- See also my previously published article, [“Lessons for Ethiopians from the Downfall of US-Supported Dictators: An Urgent Need for Mature Mechanisms.”](#)