

THE UNMAKING OF KINIJIT MOVEMENT IN THE DIASPORA

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The emergence of Kinijit as a multi-ethnic organization that transcends ethnic and religious frontiers has been a much awaited thing. The Ethiopian political landscape during the last 45 years was dominated by a small group of self-styled political elites¹ who have hardly any knowledge of the realities of Ethiopian society but who by virtue of their vocal nature have assumed the vanguard role in Ethiopian politics. These groups were peddling around a political ideology which claimed to liberate the people of Ethiopia through a centralist vanguard party of the oppressed. The practice of the last 32 years under the Dergue and the TPLF now has abundantly made it clear that the effort of these groups has been anything but democratic. Conspiratorial political methods reminiscent of the Byzantine and communist eras, behind-the-back dealings which are anathema to a transparent system of organizational functioning, creation of organization within organization, etc are some of the hall-marks of undemocratic and left-leaning political organizations that preceded Kinijit. What uniquely puts Kinijit on the political landscape of Ethiopia is the fact that it is a party which has been catapulted to the fore by making a clean break with the political ideology of a vanguard party which has dominated Ethiopian politics for the last 45 years. Kinijit has put a high premium on openness and derives its strength from the trust it has put on its followers. This fact along with the clear agenda of change it has embarked upon endeared it to the Ethiopian population leading to the overwhelming vote of confidence it registered at the polls during the 15th of May 2005 election.

The Kinijit Europe Coordinating Committee and its London-based Secretariat

On December 10, 2005, Ethiopians who came from different Western European countries came together in London and set up the Kinijit Support Organizations in Europe (KSOE). At this meeting it was decided to set up a secretariat which coordinates the Kinijit movement in Europe. After the formation of KSOE, all agreed to back and organize support organizations in their respective countries. We decided to create the Europe-based Kinijit Council. The council would be set up democratically from bottom-up. To this effect, each Kinijit support group in each country would send three democratically elected council members. The activity of the London-based secretariat would be coordinated by members elected to the European Kinijit council. The European Kinijit council would oversee the work of the London-based secretariat. On the basis of this agreement Kinijit support groups in six countries i.e. UK, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Sweden and Norway participated in setting up the council by sending the names of three representatives each.

A by-law² governing the setting up of the secretariat and the conduct of its activities was drafted and sent to us (for comment and amendment) on the 25th of December 2005 by the able secretary of the secretariat engineer Getachew Alemayehu³ of London, UK. But from the start, the work of the secretariat has faced several set backs and its work has been deliberately sabotaged by the UK Kinijit electees the majority of whom have formed a common front with Andargatchew⁴ and who has a different agenda for Kinijit.

Ideas of organizing the secretariat were circulated in writing by Ato Getachew Alemayehu several times. A copy was given to the UK Kinijit branch and followed up with verbal appeals of Ato Getachew Alemayehu to strengthen the London-based Secretariat that has been set up to coordinate the work of KSOE. At this stage, Andargatchew was not engaged in any activity meant to strengthen the London-based KSOE secretariat. Ato Getachew has to try all what he could on his own to move forward the work of the secretariat and has to send out numerous communications to his Kinijit UK colleagues. But all that was to no avail. The elected representatives of Kinijit UK never took any interest and were not prepared to put proposals on matters of strengthening the secretariat. For them their own alternative agenda was more important than strengthening and organizing the Kinijit Support Organizations in Europe. In summary, the way some of the support groups participated or stayed away was dictated by the sub-agenda they were advancing and not based on the interest of developing a European Support Organization as such. This is what is happening now and fits in well with the KIL agenda those in some of these support groups such as UK, Germany, Norway and Sweden have been pushing.

The UK Kinijit support group, which is working in cahoots with Andargatchew Tsge, chose to frustrate the very able person in whom we have put our trust. They tried to push him to the point of abandoning his activity in the UK Kinijit support group and by extension in the KSOE secretariat. They used to deny him any cooperation refusing to answer his request for discussion on pertinent matters concerning the Kinijit secretariat. It was not unusual for Ato Getachew Alemayehu to experience the discomfort of not receiving any response to the e-mail messages he sends to the UK Kinijit support group electees for weeks on end. All these slights and negative reactions were meant to frustrate Ato Getachew to the point of abandoning his activities and leave the UK Kinijit support group. The conspiratorial supporters of Andargatchew, who are in the majority in the UK Kinijit support group, have been unnecessarily dragging their feet for months on end until this group positioned itself to take over the Kinijit organization in the Diaspora by announcing the birth of the Kinijit International Leadership. In this effort, equally conspiratorial and ambitious elements of dubious background from among the ranks of the German Sweden and Norway Kinijit support groups have forged a common front with Andargatchew. An instance of the foot dragging is exemplified by the failure of the German, Sweden and UK groups to send the names of their 3 representatives to the Kinijit Europe Council early on although these groups have been established long before our meeting of December 10, 2005. Kinijit support groups such as those from Switzerland and Holland which were only formed later at the end of January 2006 were

the first groups in forwarding the names of the three individuals who represent them in the European Kinijit Council. The Norway group falls also within this latter group.

Now having sabotaged the work of the secretariat by dragging their feet for months on end, the conspiratorial group which originated from the four countries (UK, Germany, Sweden and Norway) and which sees itself as being constituted by “party members” with a special mission within the Kinijit movement, decided to launch the so-called KIL which is the brain-child of Andargatchew Tsge here in Europe. This is how this group which was scheming behind the scene heralded the birth of KIL as a movement within the Diaspora Kinijit supporters. These self-styled party members and extremely power-thirsty individuals from Europe joined hands with like-minded individuals across the Atlantic to prepare the ground for the launching of KIL.

Whence comes the idea of creating Kinijit International Leadership?

Between April 13 and 14 2006, a meeting of so-called party members of CUDP in Europe was held in Frankfurt, Germany. This group of individuals came from the UK, Swedish, German and Norwegian Kinijit support groups. In addition to this one individual from Belgium where there is not even Kinijit support group much less Kinijit party structure was also present. Those of us in Kinijit support groups of Europe do not still know how these self-styled individuals have come to call themselves as Kinijit party members. This group of individuals came to deliberate on the need of creating a Kinijit International Leadership. A 32 pages-long paper written and authored by Andargatchew Tsge⁵ was presented and subsequently approved by his foot-soldiers who came together to deliberate on the question of jump-starting the KIL issue at a closed meeting in Frankfurt Germany. At this meeting, this cabal calling itself “Kinijit party members of Europe” passed a resolution supporting the urgency of creating KIL. Subsequently Andargatchew Tsige told an individual who happens to be member of the Kinijit support group in Holland by saying that this 32 pages long document he wrote has been sent to Ethiopia and is waiting for the approval of the Kinijit leadership in Ethiopia. Sure enough, 4 weeks after the so-called party members of Kinijit Europe deliberated on the urgency of creating KIL, their counterparts in USA tried to impress the Kinijit North America support groups delegates gathered at Washington DC on the 14th and 15th of May 2006 with the idea of creating KIL. At the Washington annual meeting of North American Kinijit support groups, I was surprised to hear Berhane Mewa quoting the so-called “Europe Kinijit party structure” as having supported the creation of the KIL. Berhane Mewa’s announcement reminded me of the proverbial Ethiopian story of “Ye Ayet Mesikir Dembit”. Berhane Mewa told the participants of the Washington DC meeting by saying that the imprisoned leadership in Ethiopia has given the go-ahead for the creation of KIL. The story sounded controversial and as such Major Yosef Yazew was instructed to verify the veracity of this information which is claimed to have originated from the Kinijit leaders incarcerated at the Kaliti prison⁶. Surprisingly, it was the Ethiopian Review and not the Kinijit leadership in the Diaspora or its official website which first publicized the story of KIL by announcing the list of the six individuals that have been “appointed by the imprisoned Kinijit leaders” to form part of the KIL.

Birds of a Feather Flock Together—the Trans-Atlantic Alliance

The very idea of KIL which has been the brain-child of Andargatchew Tsge and his likes in Europe and North America was, it seems, smuggled through the heavily guarded walls of Kaliti and reached the Kinijit leaders. Having passed through the Kaliti prison walls, it came back from Kaliti prison after having been packaged in the form of an “authorized message” from these imprisoned Kinijit leaders. Thus KIL was graced with the blessing of the Kinijit leaders at Kaliti who, we are led to believe, have anointed this “chosen leaders” to take care of the Ethiopian herd in the Diaspora that needs the custodial care of KIL. This was how the KIL leaders would henceforth get the “legitimacy” that they badly needed to shine as the heirs of the real KINIJIIT leaders held in dungeons of TPLF. In all this orchestrated and stage-managed exercise which bears the hall-mark of a surreal act, a lot of effort was made, we surmise, by these power-thirsty individuals to lobby family members of the imprisoned Kinijit leaders in and outside Ethiopia so that the latter may support the KIL project. The effort of those individuals hoping to assume the leadership of KIL in mobilizing family members⁷ of the imprisoned leaders by way of increasing their acceptance by the broad Ethiopian public is very contemptible to the say the least and reeks of an anachronistic tradition reminiscent of the imperial political order buried 32 years ago. What is more, reducing a nascent organization which aspires to bring democracy to Ethiopia to an entity that works on the basis of personal messages that allegedly filter down through the Kaliti prison walls and are then transmitted by family members to the Diaspora KIL leaders, is self-contradictory at best and self-defeating at worst. What we witness today is scheming and conspiratorially power-thirsty individuals in the Diaspora manipulating family members to come forward with messages that allegedly originate from the imprisoned Kinijit leaders in support of the KIL cabal.

In this way Kinijit has degenerated into an organization which is being manipulated by exceptionally deceitful and unscrupulous individuals like Andargatchew and co thereby allowing them to divide the Diaspora Kinijit movement through subterfuge and divide et impera policy. We cannot allow an organization committed to the institutionalization of democracy in Ethiopia to be reduced to none entity that is dictated by the whims of power-thirsty individuals who constantly bombard family members of the imprisoned Kinijit leaders with requests prodding the latter to transmit messages that suit the political ambitions of the self-styled Diaspora KIL leaders. Democracy cannot be cultivated in this manner nor can democracy thrive in an environment where the whims of scheming and power-thirsty individuals override the common interest of an organization and the wider public this organization claims to represent.

Kinijit Europe Conducts a Telephone Conferences at the end of May 2006

The Kinijit Europe support groups conducted two teleconferences at the end of May 2006 and deliberated on two issues i.e. KIL and AFD. During this same telephone conference we resolved to take up the two burning issues of the day i.e. AFD and the KIL by inviting members of the so-called KIL to the conference to be organized in Holland. The idea was seconded by those who took part in the teleconference of 30 May 2006. Ato Getachew Alemayehu of the European Kinijit Secretariat was charged with the task of drafting a letter to be sent to the KIL office in Washington asking them to come and address substantive issues related to AFD and KIL. The next day, Ato Getachew Alemayehu of the London-based secretariat sent us the draft letter in which he summed up all the

important issues we discussed during the telephone conference. To our chagrin and discomfoting surprise, Ato Getachew Wanna protested at the very mention of the KIL issue which was raised in the letter. He rejected out of hand the very idea of calling into question the KIL by Kinijit support group members. The following is what Getachew Wanna from Kinijit Support Organization in Sweden wrote to the secretary of the KSOE Ato Getachew Alemayehu on May 31, 2006.

“Dear Ato Getachew,

I totally disagree the way you formulated the letter especially regarding the nomination of the New party leadership. In this regard we are supporters and who ever the party chooses its leadership it is not our concern. I strongly ask for a new teleconference to discuss on the whole issue before you send any letter to the leadership in NA.

**Thanks,
Getachew Wanna⁸”**

Getachew Wanna was challenged to present his argument to substantiate his case⁹. He could not marshal any arguments which justify conducting another telephone conference. It was very clear that Getachew Wanna, the person who has been promised to be included in the list of the KIL leaders did not like the issue of KIL to be raised at the conference which we are planning to organize in Holland¹⁰. The diffident Getachew Wanna, who is very adept at conspiratorial machinations, was not able to defend his case openly when challenged by one member from the Holland Kinijit support group. He was not also able to come up with an alternative either. He turned tails and ran away and we never heard from him ever since. Later we heard that he has become one of the 12 individuals forming part of the KIL¹¹ something he and his close associate Memo Yihune were privy to as witness their reference to plans being afoot to increase the list of the KIL leaders from 6 to 12 members during our teleconference¹² held on May 30, 2006. With the benefit of hindsight, we can clearly understand today why Getachew Wanna was emphatically opposed to the sending of a letter of invitation to KIL regarding the pertinent issues we raised about the very concept of KIL and the AFD agreement. We were told that the letter¹³ sent by e-mail from London to the Washington DC office has not been received by any one including Berhane Mewa and another office worker who are supposed to have access to e-mails reaching Kinijit office in Washington. It seems that the letter, which may have unruffled the feathers of KIL leaders, has “mysteriously disappeared” before it reached the “august” body of KIL. Subsequently, a copy of the letter was faxed to Major Yosef from Sweden by a member of the Kinijit support group in Sweden upon learning the fact that neither Shaleka Yosef nor the other KIL leaders have received the letter of KSOE. To date, we have not received any response to our letter (which was sent by Kinijit Europe secretariat to KIL on June 3, 2006) from KIL although Shaleka Yosef had promised to do so by word of mouth.

The Power Struggle Within the so-called KIL in USA

In the run up to the announcement of the creation of KIL, a power struggle ensued within the ranks of those individuals vying for position within KIL. The organizationally manipulative force represented by those claiming to represent Keste Demena such as Andargatchew Tisge and Berhane Mewa, etc (also known as the leftist wing of Kinijit) were perceived as being on the verge of taking over the KIL. Alarmed by this threatening prospect of a total take-over by the so-called left-wing of KIL, the so-called right wing group which traces its origin to what was once the AEUP sounded the alarm bell to its constituency in USA. This group led by Shaleka Yosef and his associates was perturbed and tried to stop the “leftist wing”, which is adept at organizational manipulation and conspiracy, from taking over the organization. At this point, the “right wing” within Kinijit mobilized its constituency that happens to be preponderant within the Ethiopian Diaspora in North America. After a show of force by the former AEUP supporters, the issue of demarcating the boundary of their respective turfs was settled, albeit temporarily. Also the question of who gets what in the newly created KIL was resolved to the satisfaction of all as we were told later through their press release¹⁴.

This fear on the part of those who think they have the support of the majority of the Kinijit supporters in North America, impelled them to refuse the domination and take over of the organization by the group to which Andargatchew and Berhane Mewa belong. In fact the opposition which began to mount against this movement led the North American Kinijit office to issue a statement stating that the issue of KIL has caused division and differences within the North American Kinijit Support Groups thereby necessitating a further deliberation which would prepare a new list of individuals forming part of the KIL¹⁵. In fact, at this moment Shaleka Yosef seemed to be opposed to the very idea of KIL and acknowledged the undemocratic nature of KIL in a telephone conversation which he conducted with a Kinijit support group member in Holland¹⁶ on June 21, 2006. Then Shaleka Yosef said that he whole heartedly stands behind the position of this Kinijit supporter from Holland who is categorically opposed to the very idea of KIL as an illegal and undemocratic outfit.

As things turned out later, it seems that once his fear of the KIL leadership being taken over by Andargatchew and Berhane Mewa has subsided and a new modus vivendi guaranteeing the inclusion of his trusted supporters to the list of the 12 men arose; Major Yosef changed his mind and chose to jump on the KIL bandwagon. After striking a deal by accepting this new modus vivendi, Major Yosef’s erstwhile commitment to the institution of a democratic mechanism within the Kinijit party evaporated into thin air. Subsequently he and his supporters, who hitherto opposed KIL, decided to embrace the illegally, if undemocratically, constituted KIL. It appears that he was satisfied with the agreement once his position as a chairman was guaranteed and the inclusion of his clique in the 12 man KIL committee was accepted. With the benefit of a hindsight what was uppermost in the minds all those who joined KIL like him was not so much the institutionalization of democratic mechanisms within Kinijit as their assumption of senior position as KIL leaders. The stakes turned out to be high and the KIL leaders have to embark on a new modus vivendi or marriage of inconvenience which, we are afraid would, be haunted by a specter of mutual suspicion and paranoia in the coming weeks and months. This false start, we are afraid, will render the very functioning of this

undemocratic and illegal outfit impossible. With such a false start, the new version of the KIL with its 12 members that have entered into a marriage of inconvenience is doomed to failure as it lacks even the most rudimentary elements of democratic organization and structure. If anything KIL may prove its mettle by way of being a divisive force within the Diaspora Kinijit movement thereby dampening the hope of Kinijit supporters at home. It will be a structure which would be characterized by internal bickering and one in which a miasmatic atmosphere of mutual suspicion would prevail and gnaw at the very root of Kinijit. If anything, we will continue to witness a cat and mouse game within the KIL and that would prove damaging and deadly to the Kinijit movement in the Diaspora.

Deconstruction of Kinijit as a Unified Party

The sad thing about this whole affair of internal power struggle by undemocratic elements which created KIL is the fact that those who created KIL rolled back the gains of Kinijit by resorting to the picking up of the KIL leaders from among the pre-election constituent parties of Kinijit such as AEUP, EDP-Medhin and Kestedemena. This was a major reversal for Kinijit which claimed to have embarked upon a new political course by assuming the form of a unified political party that is not characterized by sectarian factions and tendencies. In fact it was the fierce and principled opposition which the merged Kinijit leadership has shown and its firm decision to suspend Lidetu Ayalew who came to assume the role of a Trojan horse within the Kinijit movement thereby obstructing the merger process that partly explains the incarceration of Kinijit leaders. Today, KIL leaders have achieved what Lidetu has failed to do by way of deconstructing Kinijit. Actually KIL represents the undoing of Kinijit as a united political party which we have known since September 25, 2005. The likelihood of KIL leaders endlessly redefining the size of their political turf on the basis of non-existent parties such as AEUP, EDP-Medhin and Kestedemena is all the more present in the event of future internal bickering. It is very surprising and sad that those who are ululating to the tune of KIL have even failed to realize the crystal clear reality of KIL being emasculated as a vibrant unified party representing the hope and aspirations of millions of Ethiopians.

Taking Measure of the Damage Caused So Far To the Diaspora Kinijit Movement

If anything, the political developments that came right on the heels of KIL:

- 1 – have created division among the Kinijit support groups
- 2 – have thrown the movement into confusion
- 3 – have introduced elements of mutual suspicion within the Kinijit movement
- 4 – have opened wide vistas for conspiratorial elements to come forward and ride roughshod over the Kinijit movement in the name of KIL.
- 5 – have shifted the focus of the Kinijit support groups from the real target i.e. Weyane to an internal power struggle that is spelling disaster to Kinijit.
- 6 – have fed the apathy and a sense of resignation among Kinijit supporters who hitherto chose to support Kinijit.

7 – have led to the deconstruction of Kinijit as a united political party by reverting to the practice of constituting KIL by picking up its 12-man committee on the basis of antedated party affiliations such as AEUP, EDEPA-MEDHIN and Kestedemena.

8 – have led to the diminution of the stature of Kinijit as a pan-Ethiopian political party that has elicited the support of a very significant percentage of the Ethiopian population during and after the election of May 2005.

Weighing the Arguments For and Against KIL

Having acquainted the reader with the convoluted political process leading up to the emergence of KIL, in what follows we enumerate the arguments for and against the KIL project.

I - Arguments in favor of Kinijit International Leadership:

The arguments put forward by promoters of KIL in launching KIL are the following: Following the beheading of the Kinijit leadership, the struggle of the Ethiopian people at home has come to a standstill. So the KIL is created to:

1 – fill in the leadership vacuum left by the imprisonment of Kinijit leaders

2 – to serve as a legally recognized body to represent Kinijit in its dealings with foreign governments and other opposition groups¹⁷.

II - Our Arguments against KIL are enumerated below:

1 – Formation of KIL Amounts to Forcing Kinijit into Exile

KIL presupposes forcing the leadership of Kinijit into exile thereby depriving it of the it's dynamism which drives from the support it gets from the Ethiopian people who matter most in the struggle. We maintain that the people of Ethiopia back home who directly suffer under the TPLF ethnic dictatorship have the highest stake in the struggle to replace the incumbent ethnocratic regime by a democratic legal order in Ethiopia.

2 – Problem of creating a party leadership in the Diaspora:

An opposition party like Kinijit or its so-called international wing known as KIL cannot legally establish itself in the democratic Western countries and recruit members from among Ethiopians many of whom are holders of foreign passport as the issue of double political loyalty is apt to crop up. As such the very concept of dichotomizing Ethiopians in the Diaspora into party members and support group members has no legal basis. It is important to remember that all legally operating Kinijit support organizations in the Diaspora in the Western world are registered as non-profit organizations or foundations. As such it can only function accordingly and not as Kinijit party branches run by party members. Our experience in Holland attests to the fact that we can only register in this country as support group or foundation and not as a branch of an opposition political party based in Ethiopia. I stand to be corrected on this issue if there are those who think; otherwise.

3– Appointment of Leaders by Imprisoned Kinijit Leaders

The KIL claims that it is established on the basis of the expressed wish of the imprisoned Kinijit leadership and is accountable to the imprisoned Kinijit leaders¹⁸. We argue that this claim is suspect given the lack of communication between Kinijit leaders to arrive at such weighty decision. Even if this message was to be true, the very act of hand-picking individuals to assume the leadership of Kinijit is very undemocratic, illegal, highly authoritarian, and does not square or tally with the very democratic tenets which Kinijit claims to embrace.

4 – The Issue of Accountability of KIL

A body such as KIL cannot be held to account by any one but the imprisoned Kinijit leaders. And for any sensible person, the task of holding KIL accountable to the imprisoned Kinijit leaders becomes impossible given the geographical distance separating KIL and the imprisoned leaders. Such an appointed authority is not subject to any mechanism of democratic control and can not be held accountable by any one. What is more, the existence of such an appointed body as KIL is at loggerheads with the principles of checks and balance that characterize a democratic political movement such as Kinijit. The fact that the KSOE and the Kinijit Support Groups in Canada have failed to illicit any response from the KIL leaders to the letter they wrote more than 10 weeks ago abundantly corroborates the lack of responsiveness and accountability of KIL to any one here in the Diaspora. After all why should an appointed body like KIL respond to Kinijit supporters as it does not represent them?

5 - Inability to give a flexible leadership to the democratic struggle

A body like KIL which operates thousands of miles away from Ethiopia would not be able to collate, asses and analyze the facts on the ground on a day-to-day basis. This reality prevents it from giving a flexible and appropriate leadership by way of directing the struggle of the Ethiopian people. An example from the recent past can illustrate this problem. When the Kinijit leadership called a week long strike in late September 2005, the TPLF regime brought in thousands of heavily armed soldiers to crush the protest. Recognizing the ruthlessness with which TPLF was determined to kill civilians, Kinijit timely called off the strike and changed the three day strike into a sit-in strike. Such kind of flexibility and political plasticity which demands acting on new developments in a matter of hours cannot be realized by a leadership which is located thousands of miles outside Ethiopia.

6– KIL introduces a divisive dichotomy between party & support group members

The reality of international law dictates that Kinijit, as an opposition political party, cannot operate outside Ethiopia as a legally registered political party. As such, the very attempt to introduce a dichotomy between so-called party members and support group members has no any legal basis. What is more such an attempt at creating a dichotomous organizational structure would introduce fission and division thereby putting the cohesion of the organization in jeopardy launching these two categories of Kinijit members on an incessant course of altercation.

Dictatorially centralist political control as hall-mark of the KIL

In a paper¹⁹ which Andargatchew Tsige prepared for the so-called European party leadership that met in Frankfurt, Germany between the 13th and the 14th of April, 2006 he expounded his grand plan of creating a party structure whose members would be embedded in the various support groups and give leadership to the support groups. This plan has been worked out in detail in an 18 pages long Amharic document entitled “**ሰለ አለም አቀፍ የቅንጅት አመራር የድርጅት ጉዳይ ኮሚቴ የውጭውን አደረጃጀት በሚመለከት የቀርቦ ሰነድ**” recently released by the organizational head of the self-styled KIL leadership²⁰. This method of controlling and manipulating support group members is reminiscent of the centralist and dictatorial method of control typical of the communist political system. This grand plan introduces a hierarchic structure of party bosses and passive support group members the latter of which are expected to kowtow to the dictates of these party bosses. This method of control which is at loggerheads with the very concept of a democratic practice will allow KIL to ride roughshod over the back of the Kinijit support group members and is accordingly intolerable.

There are few categories of Kinijit constituencies inside and outside the country. These constituencies are being embedded in one another for ease of organizational handling and political manipulation. The Ethiopian people, Kinijit members in Ethiopia, members outside Ethiopia, supporters in Ethiopia and those outside are all different categories of constituencies. One may ask if there are members outside Ethiopia. We have not seen any one calling himself/herself as party member on the ground until the recent movement to launch KIL started. What is the essence of an outside party membership especially when one is not in a position to vote or be elected? In as far as membership outside Ethiopia is concerned, it now appears to us that Kinijit party members have been embedded within support groups emulating centralist forms of organization and influencing the work of support groups. Some of the appointed individuals (who later claimed to be party members) in KIL were simply presenting themselves as supporters till recently. We would not like to delve into the dual citizenship issue and its implications for those claiming to be party members outside Ethiopia.

What are the next moves of KIL

Despite persistent opposition from support groups based in Canada, USA and Europe, KIL has defiantly gone ahead with determination of zealots to create a party structure and network outside Ethiopia. This move, as we argued above, is illegal, undemocratic and fraught with dangerous consequences for Kinijit. The KIL project and the KIL leaders that spawned it have already created fission within the Kinijit support groups and may have created confusion within the ranks of the Kinijit supporters. The unilateral decision of Andargatchew Tsige, who has now positioned himself as a head of organizational matters within the KIL hierarchy in deciding to go to Calgary Canada, to address a meeting organized by his foot-soldier there is a case in point. As is known the Canada Kinijit groups overwhelmingly voted not to recognize KIL and demanded a closed meeting of Kinijit support groups in Canada and USA to discuss the KIL issue. The Calgary Kinijit support group, which was outvoted in its support of KIL reneged on the democratic decision of Kinijit Canada and went ahead with its support of KIL by issuing a panegyric statement in favor of KIL. Subsequently the Calgary Kinijit support group invited Andargatchew Tsige before the very issue of KIL has been settled and the

repeated call of the Canada Kinijit support groups' plea for a closed face to face meeting of Kinijit chapters in Canada and USA to deliberate on the KIL issue was addressed. This clearly corroborates what KIL's priority is.

In Europe individuals like Andargatchew Tsge, Getachew Wanna and Mammo Yihune are toying with the idea of creating satellite or rival Kinijit support groups in countries where they fear strong resistance to their KIL project. The KIL leaders like Andargatchew have already embarked on a propaganda stunt trying to depict those of us who are opposed to the KIL project as being anti-Kinijit and or even worse as working in league with TPLF²¹. Andargatchew and co have embarked on a propaganda campaign that depict us as being anti-KIL by alleging that our opposition to KIL stems from the fact the names of some of us are not included in the 12 man list of KIL members. This is the most ridiculous accusation as our opposition to KIL does not stem from such selfish concerns. **We oppose KIL because it:**

a) replaces the political leadership in Ethiopia thereby forcing Kinijit to act like a fish that finds itself outside its natural environment i.e water which is the synonymous with the tens of millions Ethiopian stake holders based in Ethiopia who want to rid themselves of the TPLF rule.

b) is undemocratic as it does not stem from the expressed will of its supporters;

c) is not a body that is accountable to any constituency as it should be the case with all democratic organs.

d) creates unnecessary dichotomy within the Diaspora Kinijit movement by introducing a centralist and dictatorial mechanism of controlling support groups by so-called party members (who do not have any legal existence and are not controlled by any democratic mechanism as witness the case of KIL) who are embedded within support groups. This is anathema to the principle of democratic organization and does not tally or square with the democratic tenets of Kinijit.

Today any one who does not enthusiastically embrace KIL by ululation and chanting the new hymn of KIL is branded as anti-Kinijit in a manner that is reminiscent of the cadres of the Dergue and the Weyane era. It is only surprising that Andargatchew, the former EPRDF cadre, has not forgotten his trade after officially repenting his sin and claiming to be a supporter of a democratic organization like Kinijit. A few days ago, Adargatchew and his loyalists within the UK Kinijit support group have tried to throw out Ato Getachew Alemayehu who happens to be the chair person of the support group by

criminalizing (in a ግምገማ they conducted) him for being against KIL, for giving interviews that are critical of KIL on radio, etc. We are proofing the foretaste of Andargatchew's rich experience gained while working in cahoots with the EPRDF by way of criminalizing an individual of impeccable political track-record whom he has now chosen to subject to a litany of accusations that do not hold water.

The announcement made by the so-called Kinijit North America support Groups Council on Sene 28, 1998 EC is a very telling illustration of the dictatorial and conspiratorial method of the new KIL²². In the statement released on the said date we are led to believe that the North American Council has resolved to support, among other things, the recently concluded AFD agreement and the newly installed KIL leadership. We are led to believe that a council whose constituent chapters (17 in all) have not even discussed the issue of KIL and AFD has whole heartedly agreed to lend its unanimous support to KIL and the AFD agreement. This high-handed approach of political decision making, whereby the minority imposes its will on the majority, corroborates the thin veneer of democratic tradition obtaining within the ranks of the so-called KIL leaders and some of their loyalist yes-men who rubber stamp such resolution the consequence and ramification of which they neither perceive nor understand. This undemocratic method of decision making by self-appointed "omniscient" political cadres is reminiscent of the practice of Dergue and Wayne cadres that consider the Ethiopian people as a bunch of flocks who are always at their beck and call.

What are our alternatives & how do we get out of the current impasse?

The democratization of the Kinijit movement is the first thing which we have to embark upon. As such, the KIL as it is known now should give way to the emergence of a leadership that is democratically elected from among the ranks of those organized as Kinijit support groups. We believe that support groups need to democratically elect their leaders. Each democratically elected Kinijit support group in Europe, Canada or USA, Australia can elect 3 individuals to represent it in the European, Canadian, US or Australian Kinijit council. From among the ranks of these democratically elected council members, a body which coordinates the Kinijit movement at international level will be elected democratically. There would be no such dichotomy on the line of so-called party members and support group members as no party member can legally operate outside Ethiopia as a member of a legally registered Kinijit party. In this way, those elected to coordinate the activity of Kinijit on an international level become accountable to the council which has elected them. This group becomes accountable or answerable to the council and the council in its turn is answerable to the constituencies which gave rise to it. This is the only way we can prevent the emergence of a conspiratorially dictatorial group such as KIL. We believe that a well coordinated Kinijit movement in the Diaspora should facilitate the emergence of an alternative leadership within Ethiopia to spearhead the struggle of the Ethiopian people from within. It is only such indigenous leadership based in Ethiopia that can guarantee the success of the struggle initiated by the now imprisoned Kinijit leaders. The financial, diplomatic and moral support which a well organized movement of Ethiopians in the Diaspora can extend to a locally based Kinijit leadership can contribute to the liberation of Ethiopian society from the clutches of

ethnocratic rule. **Any attempt by the Diaspora Kinijit movement to replace the Kinijit leadership based in Ethiopia by an outfit like KIL is a disdainful act which insults the intelligence of our people back home. In sum the task of the Diaspora Kinijit support groups is to complement the work of the Kinijit movement within Ethiopia and not to replace it as that is fatally suicidal.** Finally it is important to remember that Ethiopia and Ethiopians have suffered in the hands of mediocre individuals due to the fact that the majority of Ethiopians chose to be onlookers than active participants in the affairs of their country. During the last 32 years, the political field in Ethiopia was left to undeserving mediocre individuals with no scruple or moral fiber.

Kinijit has been set up by individuals many of whom are known for their high moral standing and integrity and are averse to a political movement which is inspired and led by Diaspora politicians²³ who live far removed from the social reality of Ethiopia they passionately want to change. However, being a mass party Kinijit has now attracted to its ranks unscrupulous individuals of dubious moral standards and ethics who will resort to subterfuge, deceit and manipulative machinations to quench their thirst for power. We believe that every democratic minded Ethiopian needs to realize this fact and join and strengthen the Kinijit movement by actively taking part in it from within and preventing the take over of this organization by undeservingly unscrupulous lots as we are witnessing now through the actions of individuals like Andargatchew and co.

The current silence on the issue of KIL while this undemocratic outfit is dealing a severe blow to the Kinijit movement in the Diaspora is tantamount to fiddling when Rome is burning. We have to come out in the open and say enough is enough to those champions of KIL who have launched the Diaspora Kinijit movement on the path of fission, mutual suspicion and atrophy. Today the Kinijit supporters in the Diaspora find themselves on the cross roads. For far too long, Ethiopian Yilugneta has prevented an open confrontation with the unscrupulous group that has remained wedded to the KIL project. But things can not continue like this as our continued acquiescence would only embolden KIL leaders and increase the damage being done to the Kinijit movement in the Diaspora and by extension within Ethiopia. This long silence or obmutescene on our part would only result in the eventual atrophy and death of the Kinijit movement in the Diaspora. If the current trends are allowed to continue for the next 6 months, there will hardly be any Kinijit movement to speak of. We have to either rise up to the challenge confronting Kinijit in the Diaspora and stop this divisively cancerous growth by the name of KIL that is eating away the Kinijit movement in the Diaspora or succumb to its destructive mission of extinguishing Kinijit as the beacon of hope to our people. There is no any middle road!!!! Let me say that, personally I have not yet pulled my punches with regard to the many disastrous projects that self-styled KIL leaders like Andargtchew and co are involved in. Should push comes to shove, I shall be forced to challenge some of these KIL leaders by exposing the very detrimental moves they have undertaken so far without the knowledge and consent of Kinijit supporters and behind the back of the supporters they claim to represent. The destructive role played by some of the KIL leaders by dealing with forces that are inimical to the national interest of Ethiopia should not be

hidden from the Ethiopian people in the name of keeping organizational secrecy when the latter is destroying the very cause of Ethiopia. In dealing with the bigger interest of Ethiopia, what counts most cannot even be the interest of one organization as the interest of the country. This is the more so when it becomes abundantly clear that some of the self-styled KIL leaders have been engaged in a detrimental activity that undermines the cause of Ethiopia which Kinijit seeks to promote. As I was planning to send this paper, I received the 18 pages long Amharic document paper entitled “ሰለ አለም አቀፍ የቅገጅት አመራር የድርጅት ጉዳይ ኮሚቴ የውጭውን አደረጃጀት በሚመለከት የቀርቦ ሰነድ” has been released by KIL’s organizational committee. A cursory foray into that paper has only convinced me of the dictatorial course KIL has chosen to embark on and has only confirmed my fear and worry encapsulated in my paper. Most of the substance of the outlined in this 18-pages long discussion paper, far from building Kinijit Diaspora is a document which will prove inimical to the very cause of Kinijit and is at loggerheads with the very democratic tenets encapsulated in the Kinijit manifesto. If anything, most of the ideas contained in this paper fittingly match the EPRDF style of party organization. For me this is one more reason to fight tooth and nail the cancerously deadly behemoth by the name of KIL which has to be killed before it punctuates the life of Kinijit. All those who have cast in their lot with Kinijit and the bigger goal democratic goal it has charted need to rise up to the KIL challenge facing us here in the Diaspora. If we do not act today, KIL will ruin extended stretches of our hope that Kinijit represented. I will take up the threads related to this latest KIL document in another paper. Let me pen off here for the moment.

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¹ - Here we are referring to those flaming radicals of the 1960’s and the political movements which grew out of those movements ranging from Marxist groups (EPRP, MEISONE, etc) to the ethno nationalists (ELF, OLF, etc) some of whom have now assumed control of state power in Ethiopia(TPLF) and Eritrea (EPLF).

² - Getachew Alemayehu, Notes on the formation of the Secretariat for Kinijit Support Groups in Europe, December 25, 2005

³ - For those of you who do not know engineer Getachew Alemayehu, the following is in order. Ato Getachew was until 1974 a lecturer at the engineering faculty of Addis Abeba University. In 1974 he left for London for higher education. He has not returned to Ethiopia ever since. But both during his student years and later in Europe, Ato Getachew Alemayehu is known for his principled commitment to the cause of Ethiopia. In 1981, following the political disarray and disillusionment that set in after the severe political repression and mass killing that culminated in the Red Terror, Ato Getachew was one of the few patriotic Ethiopians in the Diaspora who did not give up the idea of defending Ethiopian national interest. He along with few individuals was instrumental in launching the “ETHIOPIA PROFILE” a London-based publication of the Diaspora which sought to engage Ethiopians in the national discussion to seek an alternative to the two contending parties i.e Dergue and its ethnonationalist opposition such as EPLF, TPLF, ELF etc. ETHIOPIA PROFILE proved to be the only voice of the Ethiopian Diaspora which

earnestly dealt with the political and socio-economic problems of the Ethiopian society by engaging Ethiopians in the Diaspora and inside Ethiopia. This publication was unique in that it laid bare the danger Ethiopia was faced finding itself between Scylla and Charybdis as it was caught between two dictatorial forces i.e the Dergue and the ethnonationalist fronts such as EPLF/ELF and TPLF. ETHIOPIA PROFILE came off print from 1981 till the end of 1989. After the assumption of power by the Weyane government, Ato Getachew Alemayehu has remained a vocal figure in UK by taking up the cause of democracy and human rights as he has always done selflessly and altruistically unlike the former cadres of EPRDF who joined Kinijit at the 11th hour to only wreak havoc on it as we are currently witnessing.

⁴ - Andargatchew Tsge is an Ethiopian who has lived in London since 1979. His name was catapulted to the fore when he jumped on the Weyane (TPLF/EPRDF) band-wagon in 1991. Around the time TPLF/EPRDF was assuming power in Ethiopia, he used to produce a leaflet supportive of TPLF in London, UK. This leaflet was called Gureza and supportive of TPLF. Subsequently he was rewarded for his vocal support to the TPLF/EPRDF by becoming the 3rd high ranking official of the Addis Abeba municipality in 1991. Later in 1993 he produced an Amharic booklet entitled “የአጣራው ህዝብ ከየት ወደት” in which he regurgitates the narrow nationalist views of TPLF en Toto. After he broke ranks with the Weyane in 1993, he came back to London where he used to lead an uneventful life. His life after his return to the UK was not characterized by any opposition political activity worth the name. Just a few weeks before the May 2005 elections, he again jumped on the Kinijit band-wagon. Following the June 2005 unrest that came right on the heels of the May elections, he was imprisoned at Zway for some 3 ½ weeks. He was duly released and left Ethiopia and came back to the UK. He is not an elected member of any constituency of Ethiopia. He continues to claim that he belongs to the 60-members strong central council of Kinijit. It should not be forgotten that currently there is

⁵ - Andargatchew Tsige’s paper on the need of setting up a Kinijit party structure in the Diaspora – undated paper April 2006.

⁶ - What is sad about the whole issue of KIL was the fact that there was no one in that meeting which challenged the legality of the so-called KIL which happens to be an undemocratic outfit supposedly put in place by the imprisoned Kinijit leadership.

⁷ - Ethiomedia website, 21st of May 2006

⁸ - Response of Getachew Wanna to the draft letter of KSOE, dated 31 May, 2006

⁹ - To this effect Getachew Wanna was challenged by the Holland Kinijit support group committee to present his arguments and argue his case in a write up which we released on May 31, 2006. The diffident Getachew has no rational legs to stand upon and argue his case thereby choosing political hibernation till his name cropped up in the list of the 12 KIL leaders.

¹⁰ - When the first 6 members of KIL leaders was announced, it was none other than Getachew Wanna and his close associate in the former Medhin Party, Mamo Yihune who were fuming at the absence of their names from the KIL list. But once, they were assured that their names would be included, they became strong defenders of the KIL project only proving the fact that these are individuals who are bent on power and not having any loyalty to matters of principle and democratic procedures.

¹¹ - Statement by the Kinijit International Leadership about the appointment of the new KIL leaders, dated June 24, 2006.

¹² - Mamo Yihune information he divulged during our telephone conference of 30th of May, 2006. By the way both Getacew Wanna and Mamo Yihune were formerly loyal lieutenants of Goshu Wolde when they were members of the Medhin party. Following the merger of Medhin with EDEPA, they became part of the Kinijit movement.

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- ¹³ - Letter of KSOE sent by the London-based secretariat of KSOE to the Washington DC office of Kinijit, dated June 2, 2006
- ¹⁴ - Statement by the CUDP North America Support Group Council, June 24, 2006.
- ¹⁵ - A statement issued by the Kinjit North America Support Group Coordinating office with regard to KIL, June 21, 2006
- ¹⁶ - Telephone conversation of Shaleka Yosef with Assefa Negash, member of the Holland Kinijit Support Group June 21, 2006. We wonder why the statements of Shaleka Yosef are contrary to the very practice he has indulged in by participating in the creation and sustenance of KIL along with Andargatchew, Berhane Mewa and co.
- ¹⁷ - Andargatchew Tsge, undated paper he presented at the closed meeting held from 13th to 14th of April 2006 in Frankfurt Germany by the so-call party members of KInijit Europe,
- ¹⁸ - A statement issued by the Kinjit North America Support Group Coordinating office with regard to KIL, June 21, 2006
- ¹⁹ - Andargatchew Tsige, undated paper he presented at the closed meeting held from 13th to 14th of April 2006 in Frankfurt Germany by the so-call party members of KInijit Europe,
- ²⁰ - See the paper entitled “**ሰለ አለም አቀፍ የቅጥር አመራር የድርጅት ጉዳይ ኮሚቴ የውጭውን አደረጃጀት በሚመለከት የቀርቦ ሰነድ**” released by the organizational head of KIL Anargatchew Tsge.
- ²¹ - We refer to Andargatchew and Berhane Mewa’s frantic effort during an interview which they respectively conducted with a pal-talk group and an Ethiopian radio station in Toronto, Canada.
- ²² - Statement by the CUDP North America Support Group Council, July 5, 2006.
- ²³ - One of the main architects of the Kinijit political movement, Professor Mesfin Wolde Mariam, whom I have come to know closely during the past 15 years, has always questioned the misplaced wisdom of those in the Diaspora who try to lead the struggle of the Ethiopian people from afar. Today, it passes belief to state that the likes of Professor Mesfin Wolde Mariam suddenly changed their long time conviction about the uselessness of Diaspora-led political struggle and support the launching of KIL as the leaders of KIL are at pains trying to impress upon us through the various communiqués they issue.