

SYSTEMATIC MARGINALISATION:

More than 2000 plots of Sidama land are said to be distributed among non-Sidamas:

Case of Awassa, Sidama December 4, 2003

By Kambata Xoola

I. Marginalization from points of Economic and Socio-political genocides.

Today I am writing not the question of ordinary political persecution, but of the Abyssinians' use of systematic mediaeval methods to encroach upon and exterminate the Sidama people and take control over their lands and resources. I am writing about the systematic clearance of the Sidamas from their capital city. It's about a legacy of colonialism and its brutality. It's about repetition of our ancestors' sufferings. Mothers were raped by the colonizers army and fathers were terribly brutalized. At present, the same history is repeating. And these all inhuman acts against the Sidamas basic rights are about a violation of fundamental elements of legal justice, freedom and democracy.

The main reasons for the current problems in Sidama are: ignorance of international community on a very nature of Abyssinian colonizers brutality, disability of global community to exert its pressure against the regime; and Abyssinians deep rooted repugnance towards the Sidamas and other subjugated nations since their colonization to permanently make them subservient to their heinous colonial rule.

I think the international community doesn't properly know that the Sidamas and other nations are under Abyssinian colonization and are enslaved permanently.

No wonder, if the global community thinks that Ethiopia hasn't been colonized and Abyssinians and other nations are of similar nature. If they think that the name 'Abyssinia' is for all Ethiopian nations; it would be conceivable from their points of view. Because they mostly don't know the hidden face of these 'Black Colonizers' of the planet, apart from those scholars who have immensely contributed to this end and have written precisely about Abyssinians colonization.

At present, in the world of 21st century, it's sad to see nations under Abyssinian Empire struggling for their emancipation from colonial yoke without international community's recognition and support. The former colonized nations all over the world have gained their freedom and independence since 1960s. Their independence and emancipation from colonial yoke is said to have contributed to the process of human rights respect in the world. However, in this part of the world, nations under the said Empire are still undergoing a hidden slavery and unrecognized brutality. The quest of freedom, democracy and independence of the colonized nations of Ethiopia, therefore, is mitigated by powerful nations undermining their struggle of freedom and democracy. Severities of the pain which the colonized nations are undergoing are not yet felt by the global community. Socio-economic and political marginalization of these nations must have been an issue of international agenda. People, such as of the Sidamas, Oromos and other nations who are sharing the same fate have been and are striving to make their voices heard although their quests are overshadowed by different circumstances.

It's evident that, in different parts of the world international community and powerful nations do act differently to resolve the human rights violations and crisis of nations of given country despite the similarities of the problems. This philosophy, according to many critics is due to geo-political interests of the region by the powerful nations who can put pressure on colonizers despite prevailing facts. Making use of the region's geo-political importance at the expense of subjugated nation's indiscriminate human rights violations, while those nations are paying bloody sacrifice would be completely inhuman and immoral. It will be worthwhile to act practically rather than just rhetoric on the issue of human rights respect.

To come to my previous point; to make their successful intrusion over Sidama land and make effective plunder of resources, the Abyssinians had used and are using various means. Some of these are direct and indirect violence, fraud and manipulation, imprisonment and killings, harassment and intimidation, and recruiting their loyalists from the nation by bribery. At present, they are ousting the Sidamas from their capital city to marginalize them systematically:

By prohibiting them from owning plot of lands in their capital city for whatever the purposes.

By giving all lucrative business to rulers and their loyalists.

By restricting the Sidamas movements from place to place in the City and even in their localities (farmer's associations).

By prohibiting the Sidama language from being spoken in their land and not to be an official work language.

By prohibiting them not to exercise their cultural rights and not to celebrate any new events including New Year celebrations all over the region for the past two occasions since the massacre of innocent peaceful Sidama demonstrators on May 24, 2002.

By making the people to leave their lands and move to where they think appropriate for the people forcefully without their consent and will so that they develop relief mentality and are controlled by the security forces of the regime in confined places.

By sacking all responsible Sidamas from governmental and non governmental offices and substituting them with their surrogates who in turn intimidate the Sidamas.

By restricting them of freedom of free Speech and Expression.

By imprisoning, harassing, and causing disappearance to a number of Sidamas to unknown locations.

By plundering all available resources.

By giving all administrative status of the city to virtually non-Sidamas and etc.

I.A Tangible proofs for the plausibility of above arguments:

The brutal regime of TPLF/EPRDF had convincingly ousted the Sidamas from their land and capital city since they conducted the massacre of innocent and unarmed peaceful Sidama demonstrators who were expressing their opposition and anger over the planned administrative shift of their land and city on May 24, 2002. Since then, no one was held responsible for the massacre of the innocent civilians apart from those additional Sidamas jailed in allegation. The administrative and political power of their capital city which helps them to incapacitate the Sidamas is given to the other virtually non-Sidamas.

The Capital of the Sidama, Awassa (by natives also called, 'Hawaasa/Adaare), had had 14 administrative sub-regions for more than 40 years. At present, the TPLF/EPRDF merged these 14 sub-regions to 7 administrative sub-regions (Kifle Ketema). In each sub-region, there are three political appointees to run the administrative issues of those areas. From those 21 appointees, there are only three Sidamas from that itself most of them are the loyalists of the regime, whereas others are purely non-Sidamas.

During the pre-planned administrative shift of the Sidama capital city, the regime tried to deceive the Sidama people saying that, they are going to make the 'Awassa city, one of the best cities in east Africa for the benefit of the Sidama people. In practice, the appointees of the sub-regions witness their potential to contribute to this end. The following are the lists of the appointees with their given sub-region, level of education and their original ethnicity. They are listed in their power order from top to bottom:

1. 'Addis Ketema' which was 1/07 and 1/03
 - A Fanaye Muluneh, Amhara, Grade 12 (High School complete)
 - B. Tadele Kebede, Amhara, Diploma Graduate
 - C. Tesfaye Filtamo, Alaba Xambaro, Diploma.

2. 'Hayik Dar' which was 1/02 and 2/05
 - A Berhanu Lire, Hadiya, Diploma
 - B. Belayneh Geletu, Mareqo, Diploma
 - C. Eshetu Elias, non Sidama but brought up in Sidama, Diploma

3. 'Mehal Ketema' which was 1/07 and 1/03
 - A. Mihret Mengiste, Amhara, Grade 12
 - B. Elias Gelan, Amhara, Diploma
 - C. Berta Dawit, Wolayita, Diploma

4. 'Bahil Adarashi' (used to be 'Sidama Bahil Adarash') which was 1/04, 1/05, 1/06 and partial part of 2/01
 - A. Mathewos Dido, Sidama, Diploma
 - B. Addise Amito, Kembata/Xambaro, Diploma
 - C. Kedir Mohammed, Kewena, Diploma

5. 'Misrak Ketema', which was 2/02, 2/03
 - A. Workineh Duramena, Yemi, Diploma
 - B. Kasech Gebremichael, Kembata/Xambaro, Grade 12
 - C. Endalemahu Tezera, Gurage, Diploma

6. 'Menaheria', which was 2/04, 2/06, & partial part of 2/05
 - A. Alemayehu Wachamo, Sidama, Diploma
 - B. Demise Sewena, Wolayta, Diploma
 - C. Asamenech Assefa, Amhara, Grade 12

7. 'Tabour,' which was 2/07 & purely which has is habited by the Sidamas
 - A. Aero Bati, Wolayta, Diploma
 - B. Demise Erjebo, Wolayta, Diploma,
 - C. Tesfa'ab Latamo, Sidama, Diploma

The above mentioned are the people who would make the city of Awassa 'one of the best cities in east Africa!' Terrible 'Mouse-Cat' game!! Such reckless act of the TPLF/EPRDF's deceitful regime against the Sidama nation is just to incapacitate the Sidamas economic, socio-cultural and political powers in their cities and land. The Sidamas are told not to say a word and show any sign of resistance or opposition. And they are emphatically warned by the regime to keep quiet and accept all these cruel acts against their human rights. Land ownership in their city is becoming far from the reach for the native Sidamas whereas non Sidamas are given full rights to landownership and basic human rights.

The Sidama capital city as a whole itself is led by their loyalists who are completely obedient to their rule and intimidate the Sidamas. Those higher political cadres of the Sidama capital city are listed on their authority order from top-to-bottom, and with their respective ethnicity:

1. Legessie Wolde, who doesn't like to be called Sidama, but Sidama, since he was a student due to identity crisis, the Mayor of the city
2. Gebremeskel Chala, Wolayta, Deputy
3. Teshale Belhu, Gurage, third person
4. Yishak Aza'j, Kembata, fourth person
5. Gumachew Kussie, Konso, fifth person
6. Bereket Ki'e, Sidama, sixth person
7. Legessie Haile, Amhara. The seventh person is the main key player to spy others to make sure their subservience to the rule of Abyssinians.

II. Marginalization from points of Cultural genocide:

II A. Genocide of Language

After the brutal conquest of the Sidama nation by the Abyssinians in 1893, the nation lost most of its democratic and egalitarian socio-economic and socio-political systems. They were subjected to an alien domination of all kinds after the conquest. Alien culture and language were imposed on them while their culture and language were relegated as 'uncivilized and backward'. The current strategic elimination of the language of the Sidama from their land is the philosophy of Abyssinian colonizers which had been in place since then.

However, there have been encouraging achievements after the long and endurable struggle of the Sidama people for their international rights. The language of the Sidama was able to be an official work language since 1991/92, immediately after the

failure of derg regime which was similar to the current successor apart from its name. And this has been practical until the massacre of peaceful and unarmed Sidama demonstrators who were claiming their international rights on May 24, 2002 by the security forces of the regime. In effect, the language once again has been totally banned. An alien language imposed on the nation. The children of the Sidama are no more allowed to speak their mother tongue in schools. Official working language in Sidama land is once again made to be the colonizers'. The only primary school left to be run by the Sidamas in their respective language in Awassa city is currently put at risk. There are mounting speculations that the only remaining one itself might be closed within couple of weeks or months unless international community intervenes to protect the nation's rights of exercising their own language.

It became illegal for the Sidamas to speak their language in their city, particularly at nights. Nobody freely moves from place to place if he is known to be a Sidama. Nobody from Sidamas dares to go to pubs or bars to entertain oneself at night unless s/he is loyalists to the regime. Every one is confined at home and wonders what tomorrow would bring. During the day times itself people are intimidated and told off in a degrading manner by non Sidamas, who are residents of Awassa. Therefore, the people of the Sidama are obliged to hide their identity to go to offices and elsewhere in the city.

II. B Genocide of Culture

The Sidama New Year, 'Fichchee' which ought to be celebrated on Thursday of November 18, 2003 in different parts of the Sidama region is strictly prohibited by the regime not to be celebrated for the fear that it may cause popular unrest in the region. There were a number of security forces during these periods to take whatever the action and intimidate the Sidamas not to celebrate their new year. In addition to that, there are specially designed groups of people who denigrate the culture of the Sidama and promote an alien culture all over the region. They publicly demean the Sidama language, culture and propagate this saying 'the Sidama culture is uncivilized and backward'. The last new Year's event also wasn't celebrated. It's evident that more than 4.5 million people don't have any entertainment and media whereas other nations who are less than a million have got one. On top of that, restricting the Sidamas movement in their capital City is a systematically planned program to marginalize the Sidamas from all kinds of basic necessities and depriving them of basic human rights.

III. Conclusive Discussion.

The philosophy behind TPLF/EPRDF's regime brutal act against the Sidamas basic rights is racially motivated discrimination which gives the regime upper hand over the Sidama land, resources and socio-political life. There are numbers of documented and undocumented reports on daily human rights abuses against the Sidama as a whole and individual Sidama natives simply because they are Sidamas. Without legal grounds and court orders, policemen of the regime who are 100% non-Sidamas in Sidama capital city and other towns put the Sidamas in prison without justification and release them after several days with no evidence. If anyone tends to ask 'why he is imprisoned', s/he would be re-arrested and kept both hands cuffed and legs wired. This appalling act is the day-to-day life of the Sidamas.

Outright massacres have taken place at different times since 1889s and as recently as in May 24, 2002 by the Abyssinian security forces. A number of Sidamas who are in prison are dying at an alarming rate without any medical access. The imprisoned people are tortured, murdered or made to disappear. Economic infrastructures led by Sidamas in their capital are made to serve others or made to be led by the loyalists of the regime so that they don't represent the Sidamas. Totally, TPLF/EPRDF's brutal regime is in the process of eradicating any thing which symbolizes the Sidama nation in their capital 'Awassa' and substituting them with their own people under the name of 'Federalization of the cities' as it has been discussed above. In this way, almost all the articles on declaration of the general assembly of 1948 and the UN convention on abolishment of all forms of racial discrimination are jeopardized.

It is illegal and contradicts international convention of human rights, denying the Sidama people's rights to land ownership, economic and political powers in their land in group or as individuals. These are fundamental resources for human life and pre-requisites to an indigenous development of their culture, institutions, language and artifacts. All these also constitute principles which have been manifested in international convention:

International Convention on Economic and Social and Cultural Rights.

The International Labor Organizations Convention No. 107.

International Convention on Civil and Political Rights.

These important international laws and conventions concerning native peoples' rights are seriously jeopardized in today's Sidama land. I know that the problems are not the absence of international legislations or conventions. In real life, the problems are their implementations and controlling mechanisms to see whether those are effectively adhered to. Those all give a precise emphasis on landownership rights, rights to participation in decision affecting them, their own culture, language, religion, political and economic rights and their way of life. These are main elements of international rights abuse by the Abyssinian colonizers.

Thus, the need for international community's involvement to save the Sidamas political, economic, cultural and social life is paramount. People or nations who value democracy and understand the essence of humanity and freedom need to act on time to save the Sidamas and other subjugated nations under Abyssinian Empire without international attention.

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