

Hypocrisy: - Abuses of Constitutional Rights of the Sidama's by Meles's Authoritarian Regime

By Kambata Xoola, April 14, 2006

I. Sidama's Constitutional Rights under Threat as is their Identity.

An unfolding tragedy in Sidama region against their constitutional rights obliges me to breathe a sigh of sorrow and mourn for an unjust judgment the nation at the moment is receiving. Sidama people are undergoing agonising sufferings of all kinds under democracy galvanised Meles's regime since it's enthroned on power with gun victory over his predecessor, colonel Mengistu H/Mariam. They've exhausted all avenues in peace process based on Ethiopian constitution to take their agendas forward in the past decade and a half.

They peacefully marched on the streets of their city and towns where they received repeated brutal treatments followed by fatality due to indiscriminate forces used by government's security. No one responded the Sidamas in a manner that recognises their constitutional rights. Instead, their quests were regarded either as opposition's and individual's conspiracy, narrow nationalism or mere tribalism. This is a type of strategy designed to tame Sidamas for continued subjugation. The Sidama cadres, who were supposed to protect the rights of the Sidama people, kept working on the contrary. They paved a way for the rulers to bury the very rights of the Sidama people these cadres, in terms of moral principle, were supposed to protect.

In other parts of the country, relatively, nationalities are enjoying some sort of regional autonomy although human rights abuses are rampant as is in Sidama. The peculiarity of the Sidama nation's agony is that, their not being able to decide on their issues as a regional state compared to others nationalities those are far less than half a million. Paradoxically, more than 5million populated Sidamas are not allowed to administer their region. The shocking travail above all is that, the struggle of the Sidama cadres against Sidamas constitutional rights by killing and suppressing their own people. This is unheard of in Sidamas history and shameful acts of less than two dozens inefficient and irresponsible cadres.

II. Meles's Deceit on Sidamas Prior to his regime's election

Some weeks prior to May 15, 2005's election; Meles's regime organised Sidama cadres to preach entire Sidamas about the possibility of regaining regional autonomy, if they vote for the incumbent regime. Accordingly, the cadres conducted Sidama Zone council general assembly on 13th and 14th of May 2005 to talk on regional matters that was finalised with unanimous agreements of entire congregants without single reservation to make Sidama regionally autonomous. The Sidama Zone council decided to take the following constitutional step to guarantee their rights. The decision was taken to the southern regional state general assembly where they received a hypocrite order from PM Meles Zenawi

emphasising to follow constitutional path if these issues are raised by entire Sidamas. It was agreed to run a referendum after one year based on Ethiopian constitution.

Meanwhile, the Sidamas were breathing a sigh of relief; Meles's regime took U-turn & re-ordered Sidama cadres to re-start new forms of harassments, intimidations and tortures accompanied by killings of Sidamas to make them abandon their quest for regional autonomy; immediately after his rigged election victory. Hundreds of Sidama nationals have been targeted and thousands arrested while dozens died. Since 14th of February 2006 after Meles went down to Sidama region to tell them that it is impossible to claim regional autonomy; new forms of suppressions and tortures started to take place.

On the other hand, Sidamas didn't accept such tyranny with closed eyes. Thousands of students, farmers, civil servants and entire Sidama nation staged out on demonstrations against the U-turn of government contradicting its constitution. In this process, many students including 12 years old primary school student have been shot dead by the security forces of the regime. To intimidate and suppress Sidamas, the regime ordered special army and other security forces to remain in entire 10 Sidama districts and 550 kebeles since Meles's order of Sidamas' to abandon their regional quest. The Sidama cadres and some peoples such as former SLM leader (who is a British citizen, Mr W/A. Dubale Hankerso) are participating in the process of intimidating voiceless Sidamas on behalf of the regime.

III. Bribery used as an instrument...

To make the situation worse, the regime bribed many thousands of Sidamas with multi-million fund allocated to kill Sidamas nationalism and their quest for regional autonomy. They collected petitions from bribed groups' of peoples' to enable them to pursue their unconstitutional acts against the Sidamas while arresting and intimidating would be opposition. Anti-Sidama element cadres rigorously campaigned to guarantee illegal and unconstitutional votes to reverse previous legal decision. They conducted two days meetings on 8th and 9th of April in Awassa, inviting all bribed groups of Sidamas. Subsequently, on 11th of April they declared on government owned media to reverse previously agreed decisions on May 13th and 14th 2005 although they don't have a clear mandate to play such fatal game.

IV. The Sign of Meles's regime failure

For any government nothing symbolises its failure than disregarding its own constitution. When one government contradicts its policies, its failure will be futile and multi-dimensional. As regard to Sidamas; Ethiopian constitution puts things in black and white emphasising that, no one has got right to reverse previous decision unless Sidama people democratically voted against it. Nevertheless, that is what happened and happening in Sidama region at the moment.

Ethiopian government that theoretically has got comprehensive constitution, which supposedly recognise the rights of entire Ethiopian nationalities, repeatedly failed to respect the rights of the Sidamas. In previous three and so years, the Sidamas, failing to receive any positive and constitutional response from the incumbent regime through democratic routes & by staging out on demonstrations, where they have paid precious sacrifices of lives on May 24, 2002, while they were claiming their constitutional rights, nothing was achieved.

V. The nature of Meles's Regime and Double Standard of the West
I don't have any problem in understanding about the grave risks of human rights abuses of peoples those who live in a country where authoritarian leaders clearly and publicly brutalise their citizens. Former Ethiopian dictator, Mengistu H/Mariam makes good example for this argument. He was arrogant despot who doesn't pretend to be democrat. He tells you that he will kill you unless you comply with his rule. His regime slaughtered 1000s of Ethiopian nationalities including about 45-50.000 Sidamas during his 17 years reign until 1990/91.

My utter worry in this respect is that, when leaders' who pretend to be democrats; such as Mr Zenawi indiscriminately violate the rights of their citizens while they are regarded angels by their Western aid suppliers. It makes me insane when the leaders who are regarded by the Western powers, the symbols of democracy and good governance brutalise and compromise the very essence of humanity. It makes me to doubt about the agreement of democratic country leaders with such despots knowingly to support them to continue their implicit or explicit arrogance against helpless and voiceless civilians. This is the sad history unfolding in Sidama region today in particular, entire Ethiopia in general.

VI. Meles's regime act is illegal and crime against its Constitution.

Meles's act isn't only human rights violations of the Sidama people; but it is illegal act that entirely contradicts its constitution. The Sidama zone representative who have decided unanimously on May 13th and 14th 2005's general assembly were representatives of the Sidama. Constitutionally, no one has got right to reverse that decision unless entire Sidama people voted against it. Thus, the regime has to re-think what it is doing before it causes such damages to the very essence of constitutional rights of the Sidamas to initiate more bloodshed due to endless conflicts and discontent. It should be clear for the incumbent regime that, it can only silence the Sidamas with gun temporarily. To bring about lasting solution, people of the Sidama need to be given chance to decide on their issues instead of letting inefficient and irresponsible, two dozens of cadres to decide on 5million Sidamas quest for their futurity, integrity and identity. The west needs to stand for its values and humanity, not for despots.

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