

Sidama: from Starbucks' brand to an Independent African Nation

Suffice it that you spend two minutes studying the map of Abyssinia, fallaciously re-baptized 'Ethiopia', and you get a crystal clear idea of the dictatorial methods implemented and of the administrative tricks employed in order to asphyxiate and ultimately exterminate the various oppressed peoples of the cruellest and harshest African Barbary.



Note: In the picture we have a typical Sidama landscape.

The supposedly republican Tigray controlled regime peremptorily introduced administrative changes in order to bring discord among Abyssinia's various oppressed peoples in an effort to eternalize the Semitic (Amhara and Tigray) minority's grip on power. This created a historically unique case of three politically different – yet tyrannical – regimes (feudal – imperial, 3rd World Communist, and 'liberal' republican) that all perpetuated in the same country the same oppression directives and guidelines against a great number of oppressed peoples of the outright Kushitic majority (Oromos, Ogadenis, Afars, Sidamas and others totaling more than 70% of the population).

Despite the fact that the administrative changes were shamelessly hailed by the monstrous Tigray dictator Meles Zenawi's Western supporters, they only contributed to worsening the social life's conditions, weakening the economic progress chances, and frustrating the political aspirations of Abyssinia's oppressed peoples.

Presently, Abyssinia's provinces are named after the peoples who inhabit them. This sounds good, but it consists only in an appearance of democratic practices; quite arbitrarily, several cities were taken out of their context and made independent 'provinces'. In the same way we

have Afar province, Tigray province, Amhara province, Somali province (: Ogaden), and Oromia, we attest bogus-provinces like Dire Dawa, Harar and 'Addis Ababa', which is a false name for the Oromian capital Finfinne. Yet, Dire Dawa is just a city, and the majority of the local population is Oromo; it belongs to Oromia in the same way any other city inhabited by a majority of Oromos. Harar is at the confines between Oromia and Ogaden, whereas Addis Ababa must be renamed Finfinne, and become part of the Oromia province.

Wolassa Kumo, a Sidama Intellectual reveals Abyssinia's Treacherous Face

The most aberrational treachery was attempted in the tyrannical country's South-Western confines where the province name was not given after the majority people, the Sidamas. That province was named "South Ethiopia Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region"! It includes the Sidamas and many other minor peoples in an effort to de-Sidamaize the southernmost confines of the loathsome tyranny through the imposition of Amhara – not Sidaamuaffo (Sidama language) – as official language, and through the discord diffused between the Sidamas and the various minor peoples.

To offer a public tribune to a knowledgeable and eloquent young Sidama intellectual, who currently prepares his Ph.D. in South Africa, and to shed more light on one of the most perverse political machinations of the Tigray controlled Abyssinian tyranny, we publish here integrally an article written by Wolassa Kumo that lets us plainly understand why the Sidama people, in their most determined struggle for National Independence and Self-Determination, reject the name, the concept, and the prolongation of the fallacious machination named "South Ethiopia Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region".

No one should forget that behind Starbucks' famous brand Sidama, there is a Great African Epic and Tragedy, widely unheard of in the Western World.

Yet, the world would gain in terms of Humanity and Dignity if everyone sipping some nice Sidama coffee realized that the Sidamas deserve our care, our concern, and our commitment.

Why Do Sidama Reject SENNPR?

By Wolassa L. Kumo

There are several reasons why Sidama and I reject the so called South Ethiopia Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SENNPR). It is the fabrication of TPLF in 1993 in order to serve the following objectives:

First, closely control and undermine the Sidama struggle for national self determination by denying the Sidama people its own regional status. The Sidama people had full regional status in Ethiopia since they lost their independent statehood in 1893 following the imperial conquest by Minelik. Although the ruling Amharas gave the bastardised name of "Sidamo" to the Sidama and other Kushitic groups such as the Guji Oromos and the Borena Oromos, the Sidama people have never had regional arrangements that denied their identity. Even the Dergue retained the Sidama administrative region although it included other Kushitic groups such as the Guji Oromos and other smaller ones. When all Oromos in the vicinity of Sidama were included into the Oromia region following the change in 1991, the Sidama region was redemarcated to include Sidama and other smaller Kushitic groups. That arrangement was okay. However, in 1993, TPLF unilaterally decided to dissolve the Sidama region and other 4 regions in South Ethiopia which were mainly inhabited by the various tribes of Bantu and Nilotic origin into one single region of South Ethiopia nations nationalities and peoples region (SENNPR) with its capital in Awassa, the capital of Sidama.

By doing so the TPLF successfully diverted and down graded the Sidama struggle for self determination into the struggle for recognition of regional status. Since 1993 several Sidamas have been killed imprisoned, tortured and forced to leave the country because of their continued rejection of the amalgamation of 45 different tribes in the south into one pseudo politico-administrative region. The may 24, 2002 Loqqe massacre is the direct result of the rejection of the SENNPR and the struggle for regional self determination. The 45 tribes belong to 4 major origins of the peoples in the continent. These are (a) the Kushitic peoples: Sidama, Alaba, Xamabro, Qeweena and Hadiya; (b) the Omotic (Bantu) peoples-Wolayita, Gamo Gofa, Kulo Konta, Dawuro, etc, (c) the Nilotic (the south western Sudanese peoples-Nur, Anuwak, etc) and (d) some groups of the Tigre and Amhara origin living in south called the Gurages. This arrangement is deliberately aimed at undermining the Sidama's quest for regional self determination. The Sidama people are the single majority ethnic group in the entire southern region. Sidama alone constitutes almost one-third of the entire population of the Southern region and include Alaba, Xambaro and Qewenna as other Sidamas outside of the Sidama boundary in the region.

Apart from this, Sidama has a long history of armed struggle and resistance against the Abyssinian oppression. Following the withdrawal of Italy after the Second World War, Sidamas waged nationwide struggle against the Amhara rule in the Arbegona, Shabadino, Bansa, Alata and Arroressa districts for several years. Notable leaders and the

Sidama heroes of the liberation struggle include Wena Hankarso, Yetera Boole, Hushala Xaadiso, Fisa Fichcho, Lanqamo Naare and Takilu Yota. The Sidama people fought the military regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam for 6 full years between 1977-1983 and were able to liberate the three remote districts of Arbegona, Bansa and Arroressa from the oppressive military rule for 6 years. The Borrichcha uprisings of 1978 in Shabadino district and the Wotara Rassa uprisings of the same year in Awassa district are the best examples of the Sidama resistance struggle. The Sidamas have not accepted the TPLF domination with out resistance either. The Arroressa battle between TPLF soldiers and the Sidama freedom fighters in 1993 was a shocking lesson to TPLF. It is because of this that the TPLF regime wants to encircle the Sidama people with 45 smaller nations and nationalities with no or limited history of resistance to the Abyssinian rules in order to tame the entire southern peoples for perpetual slavery, illiteracy and starvation.

The second objective for the creation of SENNPR is to divert central government budget from the former 5 independent regions of south Ethiopia to the booming Tigray region in the north. In Ethiopia the meagre central government budget subsidy to the regions is allocated based on the regional criteria. While all other regions in Ethiopia are based on ethnic demarcations, 45 ethnic groups in the South are forced to be in the ghetto of the SENNPR. Thus, while the Tigray region with the estimated population of 3.5 million gets direct central government subsidy of 500 million birr per year officially (and billions of birr unofficially) as of 2002 the SENNPR with over 15 million people gets 800 million birr per year. Sidama with an estimated population of 5 million gets one fifth of what the Tigray region gets. More than 10 large manufacturing industries have been built in Tigray in the past 15 years while not a single manufacturing industry has been built in the entire south since TPLF took over in 1991. This ensures continued underdevelopment, illiteracy, hunger and starvation in the southern region so that its people will continue to be at the mercy of the TPLF food handouts obtained by begging the international community. In this way the regime ensures that the Southern peoples will not be able to resist the injustices of the alternating Abyssinian rules. Apart from this, the continued darkens of the SENNPR means that the alternating Abyssinian rulers can continually exploit the rich and untapped natural resources of the South and the South will continue to be the supplier of raw materials to the booming industries in the Tigray region. This signifies the new centre-periphery relationship in Tigray dominated Ethiopia. If SENNPR is dismantled it is not only the Sidama people who will benefit from it. It is all the 45 nations and nationalities who will benefit from the change. Most of the 45 nations and nationalities are very underdeveloped even by the Ethiopian standard and are far behind even from Sidama. Sidama produces major cash crops such as coffee and is relatively better off by the Ethiopian standard. Many of the 45

tribes live in areas completely inaccessible to the modern world. And yet the leaders of these areas are forced to waste the little budget allocated to develop their areas by travelling thousands of kilometres from the Sudanese border (such as Nur and Anuak) and Kenyan border (such as Ari and Mursi Bodi) to Awassa (which is 275 km to the South of Finfine (Addis Ababa)) for two day meetings. What the waste of time and resources. The people of the South are being used as guinea pigs by the bogus TPLF regime.

The third objective of establishing SENNPR is to use the 45 tribes or ethnic groups to the South and South west of Oromia as a bulwark against the Oromo nationalism. South Ethiopia is encircled completely between the Oromia region in the north, east and south east and Kenya in the south and Sudan in the west. If 5 independent regions of the south are left to develop alone they can pose a potential menace to the Abyssinian rule because some of these regions in the south such as Sidama have closer link with the Oromo people than most of the southern tribes and can forge an alliance that can lead to a greater resistance to the Abyssinian rules. By isolating Sidama and other Kushitic groups in the south from their Oromo brothers, TPLF wants to create an anti Oromo entity to the south of Oromia which it can manipulate from a single base in Awassa town. The continued clashes between Sidama and Oromo peoples living around Awassa town for the grazing land is a typical example how TPLF instigates conflicts and hatred among the oppressed peoples to perpetuate its brutal rule.

However, the Sidama struggle for regional self determination will always continue. The Sidama people will in the near future, enjoy freedom, justice and democracy in their land.



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