

"Ethiopian Solutions for Ethiopian Problems"

March 23, 2017

The following is a response to an article written by Ato Abdul Mohammad that appeared on Aigaforum on March 19, 2018 entitled "Ethiopian Solutions for Ethiopian Problems". Ato Abdul is optimistic as expressed by his soft tone and positive expectation regarding the current Ethiopian crisis. He thinks it can come to an end if only we looked for solutions through what he calls "Ethiopian solution to Ethiopia's crisis". He believes "we haven't yet collectively debated our national crisis in a way that allows us to reach a shared solution". He compares our Ethiopian political crisis to other countries ranging "from Brazil to Thailand, from South Africa to Turkey" that suffer from crises due to a leadership that has become "comfortable with power" and a generation of youth whose "expectations aren't being met". Additionally, he seeks the "... middle ground" to create a chance for a "patriotic way ahead...". He implores that our problem should be approached as "an Ethiopian problem not an Oromo, Amhara..." problem etc.. and hence the need for "an Ethiopian solution". This view somehow misses or doesn't address our past and current experiences with the TPLF/EPRDF government. As nice as his statements sound, the facts of our recent political experiences rebuke his views and makes his approach to our current crises/ problems like approaching to clean up a stormy muddled scene in white suit and gloves. I would like to remind Ato Abdul our recent history when Ato Meles reportedly took a "calculated risk" and allowed national debates on TV and opposition election campaigns. It resulted in the TPLF/EPRDF losing the 2005 elections. It's too recent to forget we collectively debated our national crisis running to the 2005 elections. Parties in government and in opposition, seeking shared solutions through debates/discussions in the media and nation-wide political campaigns; that was a phenomenon that captured the democratic imagination of our nation. The TV debates, unprecedented in their format and degree of fairness, was the closest we came to debating our national crisis in a way "that allows us to reach a shared solution" to use Ato Abdul's words. Opposition parties made compelling arguments for democracy and as Ato Abdul knows/ remembers, the debates broke new grounds in discussing problems and it got wide approval among the people. He must also remember in the end, the TPLF/EPRDF lost the 2005 election but reversed it by force and the outcome was supported by 20-30 foreign embassies in the TPLF/EPRDF's favor. Once on the saddle again, the TPLF/EPRDF followed by enacting draconian laws squelching any free media, opposition parties, etc., and narrowed the political space through repressive declarations. We witnessed two sham elections since then resulting in 96% and 100% victory in 2010 and 2015 for the TPLF/EPRDF coalition. Ato Abdul, that is an experience we can't soon forget. That period and the subsequent developments laid the grounds for today's Ethiopian crises. Why Ato Abdul thinks we did not have a "collective debate" then or another one will make a difference with the TPLF/EPRDF government

is not easy to comprehend other than through his blind faith. As Ato Abdul knows, to all political problems, the TPLF/ EPRDF's government response has been "shoot first and ask questions later" and the government has been perfecting this murderous approach overtime. I'm not sure who Ato Abdul is appealing to with his proposal. Hopeful Ato Abdul must know that TPLF hasn't budged from its beliefs, political/policy positions and is acting in the same way today. Since 2005 and more so over the last three years, the politics/crises have gotten stormier as shown by the ever angrier mass movements and the open power conflicts within the ruling coalition. Aside from a brief window of opportunities in 2005 elections, Ato Abdul, there hasn't been (and in my view there will never be) a collective debate of our national crisis "that allows us to reach a shared solution", to use your words, under the TPLF/EPRDF's government. Ato Abdul must feel the pain of our terrorized, displaced and hungry Ethiopian people that the TPLF/EPRDF government is running aground. The TPLF/ EPRDF government has created more nationality/ethnic/ conflicts in the country since its ascent to power than its predecessors and the mass movements in Ethiopia's Gambella, Konso , Oromia and Amhara regions involve over sixty percent of the majority of the country's population. The TPLF/ EPRDF government has not addressed or remedied the "deep seated wrongs" of the nationality/nation problem. We have not become "...this great multi-national country with equal rights" . Today's Querro, Fano, Zerma , etc. uprisings that are here and the new ones that are bound to come as a result of the TPLF/EPRDF's repression, demonstrate that the people and the opposition parties are left out of the invitation list, barring them from sitting at the table of TPLF's stake holder's meetings and debates. Furthermore, this exclusion recently has started to include enlightened party leaders in the OPDO and ANDM and government media personalities. What is happening is the youth and the people rocking the country are responding by rejecting the TPLF/EPRDF's rule and it seems that the mass of Ethiopian people for the first time have grasped from and through their own experience that TPLF/EPRDF's government should be rejected, hence the chant "down down Woyane" across Ethiopia. Ato Abdul , to begin with, the TPLF/EPRDF's parties had a narrow social base of support in Ethiopia and now they have completely lost legitimacy of power and the will of the people. There are also indications that , other than itself, the TPLF will not allow OPDO, ANDM, SEPDM in its coalition or any opposition political party or group to think in terms of an "Ethiopian" problem. Its clear to see TPLF's disabling network of conspiracies on OPDO and ANDM exacerbating the unity of its coalition. Furthermore , OPDO and ANDM are having problems exercising their regional powers/ authority granted by the 1995 constitution . The "nation of nations ..designed " to solve the equal rights of nationalities has not materialized in practice. Sure the youth's expectation is unmet in Ethiopia and yes our nation is still poor ...but the absence of rudimentary democracy in Ethiopia and the cruel repressive government cannot be compared to the political crisis of other countries ranging "from Brazil to Thailand ,from South Africa to Turkey or "to the political crisis in India and Brazil". Ato Abdul, it is unfair to compare us like you have done with these countries. The shores of EU countries are not

crowded by refugees from these countries but by our own Ethiopians and Eritreans. By Tentag Tegley. author can be reached at

tentagtegley@gmail.com

<http://www.aigaforum.com/article2018/Ethiopia-in-transition.htm>