

## Rectangular Egg: Somali Region in the New Ethiopia

*Humanity craves to cure our ailments' and bring humanity together but also the opposite is happening in everywhere: brother against brother, neighbor is against neighbor and so on so forth. Death here, suicide there is all that media podcast. Peace, progress and the good side of humanity is hugely over shadowed and rarely talked about. It is really depressing. The intent of this paper is thus to briefly present about the Ethiopian Somali regional state with regards to past plights and present condition. It will particularly focus on what I personally observed from current conflict on the border areas between Oromia and Ethiopian Somalis.*

The successive rulers of this country from Imperial to Derg junta, pursued and practiced policy of segregation aimed at the majority of Ethiopians, worst of which hit our region [Ethiopian-Somalis]. Somalis were widely considered aliens who **just follow the foot of their herds** with no rights in Ethiopia. No one can imagine how severe we suffered in the hands of the succeeding rulers on all aspect you look at including; education, health, social infrastructure – you name it. Basic services were nonexistent in our region. A Somali youth had no place to aspire higher education as having a Somali name simply warranted a failure grade instantly. The only high school in Jig-jiga attests all. **A Somali in the capital city was like a white elephant in the pack, ridiculed for his cultural wear.** Pen and paper will not suffice for covering all the grievances we have felt under the past regimes of Ethiopia. To summarize – Ethiopian Somali Society were hopeless and dead - buried under tons of earth!.

However, the scene was reversed with the fruits of the long struggle and sacrifices made by all Ethiopian nationalities that finally produced federalism, equality, stronger national unity and pro poor policies as well. The right to self-administration has also unequivocally led all Ethiopians to sigh and rise from the grave to gaining. This chance was particularly unique for Ethiopian Somalis whose unique suffrages put them well behind the rest.

Unfortunately enough, those hope vanished instantly as new conflicts and unexpected confrontations erupted. Insurgent groups- Terrorists like ONLF (known as UBBO in Somali language), Al-itiihad and Al-shebab strived to keep us aback along other foreign countries with ill intentions on us. For sure, that has hit the poor Pastoralists harder and harsher. We were of course hiding for our lives let alone to demand social Services, infrastructure and developments.

Even resources on hand could not be supplied to 2009 drought affected Pastoral communities in many parts of the region due to security problems. Government and aid

agencies tied by the anti-peace elements to easily reach out to the needy people. On those harsh days, elements of UBBO even interfered the regional administration and involved in government decisions; including appointing and firing of people in main positions.

Jijjiga even experienced a lot of terrific attacks by which lives of many innocent women, children and other respected people were lost. Implicitly Somali region's security challenges were beyond region's capacity as well as a real threat to the unity and coexistence of the federal republic of Ethiopia. It was certainly because of that impasse that made the then Security adviser of the late premier to propose federal government to take over the region. There was certainly no way to gauge how all Ethiopian Somalis, including regional leadership and ESPDP central committee members all unanimously appreciated and approved that decision.

The sum of all these is indicative of the level of confusion that paraded the region. This region was thus certainly a huge burden and source of critique for Ethiopia in the international arenas. The pervasive internal instabilities created conducive conditions for foreign forces interferences on one hand and also undermined our state building efforts on the other. This mess and malaise also to the worst prompted some anti-Ethiopian countries, institutions and individuals to advocate deployment of international peacekeepers to the region, like Darfur, Somali or elsewhere regardless of our country's known reputation in international peace keeping forces. Ethiopia is among one of the first five nations that send peacekeeping forces, with highly polite, esteemed military preferred by all in Africa and elsewhere.

Owing to the level of crisis and confusions, changing region's status quo was a must and matter of life and death. Therefore new approach of security dealings was devised and developed by a visionary leadership of Mr. Abdi Mohamud Omer the then head of regional security and justice bureau and current president of the region. Even though change was expectation of very few, but things changed instantly with the establishment of regional special police forces (Liyu Police) on 2007 G.C. ***The new forces along with all federal security forces; national defense, intelligence forces and federal police have successfully reversed and changed the Augean within very short period of time.*** This has paved the way for a complete conquer of the security, better regional administration and finally accelerated multi-faceted development endeavors across the region.

In contrast to past, the region is now known and acclaimed for unconstrained efforts to enhance and improve livelihood of pastoral communities in the region. In 2016 G.C, his Excellency premier *Hailemariam Desalegn* confidently spoke out in the House of

Representatives on how current Somali region leaderships are committed to make meaningful changes on all aspects of life including how the region is handling huge projects by its own as well as how these projects are executed and administered in an efficient and effective manner. He finally urged other Ethiopian regional states and even federal institutions to learn from the astonishing achievements of the region.

It is the first time in the history of the Region that Ethiopian Somalis not only confidently internalized their Ethiopian citizenship but also fought for it in and outside Ethiopia. Good example is how Ethiopian Somalis in home and Diaspora across the world sternly reacted to the destabilizing attempt to overturn the political and socio-economic achievement of this great nation. This reality ensures how the region practically changed from being seen as one of the most volatile area that has the full potential to destabilize Ethiopia to serving as a protection wall of Ethiopians against all alien influences by its own gays with their brothers and the power behind them.

Needless to note, there is little doubt that this energetic and enthusiastic nationalistic feeling of Ethiopian Somali's has created a sort of enmity in the heart of ill hoppers. Those who deprecate and denounce our double digit economic growth, endeavor minor conflicts between brothers. The interesting and the most astonishing is the blind and baseless condemnation waged on our region, people, leaders and most awfully on (Liyu Police) not by opposition forces but inexpressibly by close colleagues.

Ethiopia was not only a home of historic antiquity but also unique nation in number of aspects; multi ethnicity, religion, culture of coexistence and diversity with unity were always its unique features. This attests that coexistence is not just a matter of public preference but something that is impeded in the deep heart and inner belief of all Ethiopians. Despite and beyond all being Ethiopian, Somalis and Oromos have long and extra historical relations. They share culture, tradition, kindred and longest border. Inter-marriage also skyrocketed similarity between the two people that it is certainly difficult to differentiate them in most aspects. But with this clashes were also always common but with relatively lesser extent, effects and interferences. However, it is not uncommon to see unexpected events as one gets older. In explaining the current conflicts in the border areas between the two people; slipped or probably strayed words have attracted the attention of many Ethiopians. It is basically unwise and unethical for a high profile and political person to go to such an extreme edge just to trigger hatred between brotherly people for merely political purposes. This utterance was to my understanding the worst words I have ever heard from a public person. Public and political leaders are persons entrusted with huge responsibilities. They are persons

expected to act attentively and behave prudently. But what senior Oromo politicians have aired from certain mass media were by any standard deplorable and dreadful.

However, there are possibly two things involved with regards to this case. It is either a sort of envy on the stability and progress the country and the region has recently made on all aspects or else a practical but clandestine pursue of the extreme and destructive ideology of some opposition groups. The latter case is likely to be the cause of current condition for basically two reasons: it was ill hoppers rather than the public Oromos that tacitly sowed the very seeds of the conflicts from the very outset by raising untimely territorial question between peaceful and brotherly people. Some people also seem to have created the current havoc for number of reasons: to perpetuate the recent failed coup by creating unnecessary conflicts or try to detract the federal government. Whatever the reason may be this was basically initiated by the same people who were responsible for the unfortunate incident that we survived before couple of months in which causeless and countless clashes claimed lives of many innocent Ethiopians and destroyed valueless public and private properties. It was inexpressibly acts of insanity that unnecessarily inflicted us a cost that we can hardly recover in the years to come. People or persons behind it may temporally differ but the idea is unequivocally from same or similar source.

In clear contrast to the president's words, the two people are indisputably brotherly as ever. There are over one million Oromos scattered across the region earning their livings amicably and with full respect not only in private businesses but also in public offices most of whom can hardly speak local language. Mind you, they earn with thousands of Somalis evicted from their birth places in Oromia state cities and towns by virtue of being Somalis regardless of how long they have been there. To your surprise most of these cannot even speak Somali language while there is no single Somali in Oromia region at this particular time. This is an indicative of two entirely contradictory policy pursued by two brotherly regions. How can then our brothers condemn Ethiopian Somalis on what had no and will not even have a place in our policies toward other Ethiopian citizens.

Unlike any city in the country "Jigjiga" is the only city where our diversity and unity can be clearly seen. It is a peaceful home for all nations, nationalists and peoples of Ethiopia. It can never be an exaggeration if we name "Jigjiga" as the bedrock of the ethnic federalism of our great nation.

It is Ethiopian Somalis that firstly strived to protect Ethiopian unity against enemies with alien ideologies, who serves as the hub of all Ethiopian ethnics. It is also its Liyu Police forces that protect the rights of all Ethiopians in the region without discrimination of any

sorts. Therefore, criticism and condemnation of our region and Liyu police forces can only come from unhealthy mind that is entirely against the Ethiopian inspirations.

Many of you who read my article may wonder why I chose a rectangular egg, because we all know for sure that egg can never be a rectangular in shape. So if we are honest, such being the ironic perspective of Ethiopia Somali Regional state among many in a different reality.

## **The reality of Rectangular**

By: Abdillahi Omer Maskin