

Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia in General, in Sidama Particular

To understand human rights condition in today's Ethiopia, It is important to revisit the history and investigate the prevailing system in the country. Genuine human rights did not exist in Ethiopia since its formation in the last quarter of the 19th century as all regimes conducted slightly in different forms of control on its subjects grossly violating human rights.

During the imperial reign, Emperor Menelik established serfdom (gebar system) upon the conquered nations, the system which totally denies all rights for the serfs. In this barbaric condition, human rights was unthinkable for the serfs as they were not considered as human beings, but as object for possession and usage. Consequently, all rulers after him (Menelik) followed his footsteps until the Italian occupation.

However, upon his return from exile Emperor Haile Sellase proclaimed reformation in which he banned slavery and serfdom. But as he expanded feudalism instead of serfdom, human rights never respected for the majority of Ethiopian population, except for few feudal lords. Consequently, the proclamation brought no change for those disadvantaged people. In some quarters, feudalism might be considered as a progressive system compared to serfdom, but the same inhuman and cruel acts had been applied to the majority of Ethiopian population. In short, human rights had been abused by all imperial rulers despite their claims for moderation

When Derg came to power, they seemed that they would work in the interest of the people, and promised many changes. Therefore, many people expected that they would heed the people's grievances. But, instead they became more oppressive than its predecessors by killing and imprisoning numerous people. During the derg there was no freedom of speech, no freedom of assembly, no free organization, no free movement from one area to another place. As a result, Ethiopians became prisoners of their conscience. In other words every thing was under absolute control of the derg. So, derg ruled the country with iron rod, and therefore human rights condition has gone from bad to worse during the derg's period.

When the incumbent TPLF regime came to power by the barrel of gun in 1991, not only portrait itself as a champion of human rights and democracy in Ethiopia, but also tried to appear as a redeemer of oppressed nations in the country. However, sooner than later, it is classified as worst of all regimes who ever existed in that country for its human rights records.

We can recount from the above definition that human rights condition in Ethiopia has gone extremely bad during the Woyane's rule exceeding all its predecessors. Woyane started killing any person who asks for their basic rights since it assumed power by force. For instance, in 1992 they killed more than 60 people old and young, women and children including pregnant women in Araka market in the Wolayta zone, simply because the former soldiers demonstrated for equal distribution the resettlement money provided by the US. Similarly in 2002 they killed more than 100 people in hawassa, in the Sidama zone, because the Sidama people demonstrated against the government's decision to take away Hawassa town from the Sidama people. In the

same manner, in 2003 more than 300 people were massacred in Typee in Shiekchoe zone.

These are just a few mass-murders. Killing individuals or a group of people who have asked their legal right has become a daily occurrence of the TPLF government. Thus, killing, imprisonment, terrorization and intimidation by the incumbent regime has become the main methods to silence the Ethiopian population.

In short, there has never been any human right in Ethiopia from the very beginning. The situation has gotten worse. There is no freedom of speech, no freedom of assembly, no freedom for organization, no free movement from one place to another, no justice at all. Consequently, the human rights condition completely absent in Ethiopia today. And it is time for all Ethiopian oppositions to rethink their positions and find solution for the prevailing misery of the country.

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