

The Hawassa Industrial Park a Pretext for Land Grab in Sidama!

Press Statement

By Sidama National Liberation Front, 12 September 2016

The Industrial Parks Development Corporation (IPDC) of Ethiopia has been building parks in various parts of the country. Hawassa is one of the pilot corridors for this ambitious project which is headed by Arkebe Equbay. Nonetheless, the practices of the IPDC in the Sidama region remains anti developmental for several reasons:

First, the plot for the park in Hawassa, the capital city of Sidama, is taken from the land legally owned by the Sidama Development Corporation (SDC) without consultation and any compensation. The land was used by the SDC for agribusiness developments. Expropriation of land without compensation is not only illegal but also anti-developmental. The Sidama people will view the Hawassa Industrial park not as a development corridor but as a weapon to economically marginalise them.

Secondly, many Sidama farmers are displaced to provide additional space for industrial park leaving them destitute. Worse still many more are feared to be displaced sooner or later, as far as 'Malga Wondo', although known as 'Wondo Genet' for further expansion of the so-called corridor development imposed on the Sidama society from the top. No adequate compensation and rehabilitation were provided to the poor Sidama farmers and nothing is in sight yet.

Thirdly, the local people are not consulted about the project. Hawassa is the Sidama land. The federal government cannot build projects on Sidama land without consulting the local people as doing so is constitutionally illegal as long as the constitution of the country hasn't been revoked. Practically, the TPLF's government as always is operating in Sidama land illegally and unlawfully. The local people do not feel any sense of ownership of the so called 'industrial park' in Hawassa. They consider it as a project imposed on them for and with malicious intents.

Fourthly, in spite of the construction of the park on the Sidama land, the Sidama people have not benefited at all in terms of job opportunities. The Sidama people have not been employed even as daily labourers by this project. This cements the Sidama belief that the objective of the project was not to develop the Sidama region in the first place. Therefore, in reality, the objectives of the said project are deliberately impoverishing and systematically enslaving the nation whilst enriching TPLF's officials and their loyalists.

Fifth, no industrial spaces have been allocated to the Sidama businesses. The government builds an industrial park on Sidamaland but denies the Sidama people any industrial space in the park (in their own legitimate land).

Finally, and worst of all, sources indicate that a Wolayita woman was appointed directly by Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn as the manager of the park in Hawassa. Sources further indicate that the cadres from the Sidama zone are opposing the move, but there is no guarantee for their success since the lady is appointed by the Prime Minister.

Conclusion and Call for Urgent Action by TPLF/EPRDF's Government;

The foregoing evidence indicates that the Hawassa Industrial park was not meant to industrialize Sidama for the benefit of over 5.5 million populated Sidama. It was a pretext

for a land grab to develop the priority region in the country. It is a usual method of resource extraction from the periphery by those in power for the last 25 years -at the centre.

Therefore, the Sidama National Liberation Front strongly calls on the TPLF/EPRDF government to take an urgent action on the following:

1. Immediately consult the Sidama people about the whole aspects of the project to agree upon its benefit for the key stakeholders, the Sidama people.
2. After the agreement has been reached, provide an equivalent land for the Sidama development activities on the side of the industrial park immediately.
3. Compensate the Sidama Development institution for the illegal land grab by IPDC immediately.
4. Compensate the Sidama framers that have been displaced to provide for additional space for the park.
5. Unconditionally halt further expansion of dubious projects in Sidamaland and attendant evictions of poor Sidama farmers in and around Hawassa.
6. Unconditionally ensure that the Sidama people benefit from the park in terms employment and industrial spaces for business development.
7. Unconditionally reverse the appointment of a 'Wolayita' person as the manager of a Sidama industrial park as long as no Sidama person is appointed as a manager in a Wolayita or Tigray parks.

Failing these, we will assure the IPDC that your project designed to marginalise the Sidama society will be targeted at any time as a centre for the oppression and deliberate marginalisation of the Sidama society.

The Sidama activists will share this demand with the IPDC using their contacts below on social media and directly.

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