

## **Regional Self Administration is a Basic Right of any People.**

By Hawaassa Teessonke

Regional self administration/autonomy is not a charity from any one. It is a fundamental right of any people who choose to live with others in peace. Where such rights are not respected people can opt for independent country of their own to decide on their destiny as South Sudan did in July last year. The Sidama people chose to live in peace with others, and as such their demand remains basic and simple: (1) right to self administration of Sidama affairs in Sidama-land, (2) fair share of revenue from central/federal government for socio-economic development : poverty alleviation, employment generation, and expansion of economic infrastructure, and so on in Sidama in accordance with Sidama's contribution to the national economy, (4) the right to develop its language and culture and preserve its history.

These rights we described above have been enshrined in the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Proclamation No. 1/1995 which entered into force on 21 August 1995. Article 39 of the constitution guarantees these rights fully as indicated below:

"Article 39 Rights of Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples

1) Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has an unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession.

2) Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has the right to speak, to write and to develop its own language; to express, to develop and to promote its culture; and to preserve its history.

3) Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has the right to a full measure of self-government which includes the right to establish institutions of government in the territory that it inhabits and to equitable representation in state and Federal governments

4) The right to self-determination, including secession, of every Nation, Nationality and People shall come into effect:

(a) When a demand for secession has been approved by a two-thirds majority of the members of the Legislative Council of the Nation, Nationality or People concerned;

(b) When the Federal Government has organized a referendum which must take place within three years from the time it received the concerned council's decision for secession;

(c) When the demand for secession is supported by majority vote in the referendum;

(d) When the Federal Government will have transferred its powers to the council of the Nation, Nationality or People who has voted to secede; and

(e) When the division of assets is effected in a manner prescribed by law.

5. A "Nation, Nationality or People" for the purpose of this Constitution , is a group of people who have or share large measure of a common culture or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, belief in a common or related identities, a common psychological make-up, and who inhabit an identifiable, predominantly contiguous territory."

Let us put aside the question of secession for now and enquire as to why the 5-6 million Sidama

people are denied of their constitutional right to self administration. The main reasons why the 5 independent regions in Ethiopia formed in accordance with Proclamation No.7 1992, were dissolved and an illegal administrative entity, i.e. Southern Regional State was formed include among others:

- 1) To use the South as a bulwark against Oromo nationalism,
- 2) To save federal revenues to be allocated to the 5 independent regions by creating a single artificial region;
- 3) To control the activities of the 56 ethnic groups in the South from one centre, Hawassa,
- 4) To appease the advocates of unity in the country by showcasing Southern Ethiopia as a model of unity in the country while the rest of ethnic groups in the country enjoy relative freedom and self administration;
- 5) To weaken and permanently undermine the Sidama liberation struggle; among others;

The regime has so far succeeded in achieving the entire objective listed above through the use of force. Heartened by this, it went as far as demanding that Hawassa, the heritage of Sidama be placed under Federal rule and Sidama administration be displaced from Hawassa. This is adding an insult on injury to the gallant Sidama people.

The Sidama people will not accept such gross abuse of their basic rights anymore. The people are pressing ahead with their demand for regional self administration and the demand will continue until the Sidama region is reinstated. The gallant Sidama people should not be deceived by people who live for their bellies. A generation that values its bellies more than its future is doomed!!