

# **“EARS TO HEAR AND EYES TO SEE”**

**By**

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Democracy is a matter of survival and not a matter of choice in almost all developing nations; much so in Africa and certainly this fact is true here in our country Ethiopia. This fundamental right has been well identified by the current government of Ethiopia and it has been priority number one of this government since it came to power. This has been so because the Ethiopian people have made enormous sacrifices in order to attain and achieve this and many other fundamental human rights issues for many years. All the sacrifices the Ethiopian people made bore fruits when they got rid of those former regimes that deprived them of their fundamental human and constitutional rights for generations. They endured all hardships imposed upon them by those autocratic and dictatorial regimes of the past. It has been over twenty five years now that the Ethiopian people began to enjoy peace, democracy and good governance and focus on sustainable development in order to get rid of another chronic enemy: Poverty and under development.

The country has been going on the right track since this government came to power and most importantly, the people lived in peace and harmony. Violence and anarchy has been an issue of the past and people focused on development, investment, education and training in order to put their nation forward. All this, they realized can only be achieved if there is peace. They also realized that all the achievements they achieved can only be sustainable in the absence of violence and in the presence of peace, democracy and good governance. The Ethiopian people do very much want to maintain and safeguard their achievements over the years gained through hard fought struggle and immense sacrifice. Democratization, good governance and sustainable

development are matters of survival and not of choice to the public at large; therefore, they are here to stay and never to be hijacked by some extremist leaderships from within and the Diaspora. The important achievements of the Ethiopian people have been safeguarded by the constitution of the land that explicitly recognizes equality of the Ethiopian Nations, Nationalities and Peoples. The constitution of the nation puts all Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia on equal footings and safeguards their rights and responsibilities. Further, the constitution creates unity in diversity and recognizes and respects the over eighty-five ethnic groups in Ethiopia with the same status. It is to be recalled that Nations, Nationalities and Peoples were not treated equally prior to the current government. The current government realized this unfortunate fact from the very outset and drafted and put into effect a constitution for the people and by the people of Ethiopia. The following is the preamble of the Ethiopian constitution:

“We, the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia: Strongly committed, in full and free exercise of our right to self-determination, to building a political community founded on the rule of law and capable of ensuring a lasting peace, guaranteeing a democratic order, and advancing our economic and social development; Firmly convinced that the fulfillment of this objective requires full respect of individual and people's fundamental freedoms and rights, to live together on the basis of equality and without any sexual, religious or cultural discrimination; Further convinced that by continuing to live with our rich and proud cultural legacies in territories we have long inhabited, have, through continuous interaction on various levels and forms of life, built up common interest and have also contributed to the emergence of a common outlook; Fully cognizant that our common destiny can best be served by rectifying historically unjust relationship and by further promoting our shared interest; Convinced that to live as one economic community is necessary in order to create sustainable and mutually supportive conditions for ensuring respect for our rights and freedoms and for the collective promotion of our interests; Determined to consolidate, as a lasting legacy, the peace and the prospect of a democratic order which our

struggles and sacrifices have brought about; Have therefore adopted, on 8 December 1994 this constitution through representatives we have duly elected for this purpose as an instrument that binds us in a mutual commitment to fulfill the objectives and the principles set forth above". Also article 39 of the Ethiopian constitution stipulates the following rights to Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia;

1. Every nation, nationality and people in Ethiopia has on 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;
    - When the Federal Government will have transferred its powers to the council of the Nation, Nationality or people who has voted to secede; and
  - d) When the division of assets is effected in a manner prescribed by law.

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 common or related identities, a common psychological make-up, and who inhabit and identifiable, predominantly contiguous territory.

The preamble and article 39 of the Ethiopian constitution clearly puts into perspective the rights of nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia. It also guarantees that all Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia have equal status irrespective of their ethnic, linguistic, religious or any other differences. In a way it recognizes unity in diversity. This is recognizing the absolute reality of differences that exist and giving equal respect and recognition to all citizens of this nation. This is what article 39 is all about and nothing else. As a result, the constitution that is based on equal rights and responsibilities became a formula of unity in diversity and not a dividing factor of the people of Ethiopia as some opposition wants us to believe. So why do the opposition parties want to scrap and destroy this binding formula that brought peace, stability and mutual respect among the people of Ethiopia? More importantly, with what formula do they want to replace it? Do they have any other constructive alternative to it? The answer to these questions is simple and clear.

First and foremost, the opposition has never opted for any workable alternative agenda because they have none whatsoever. Therefore, the opposition has been guided by the formula of destruction from the very outset. Second, and of more importance, the opposition particularly the extremists have never stood for equality of and mutual respect among Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia; instead, they want to keep the status quo used during the former regimes. Third, they were guided by few infamous masters of destruction in the Diaspora that they know that they cannot possibly win election in Ethiopia where the majority of the population is rural and agricultural in a fair and democratic ways and means because simply they have no base what so ever in the area where majority of Ethiopians reside. Therefore, they were guided by their masters of destruction to take every option including

violence to grasp power. if they can't do it now they were told, they will never do it at all. That is why they opted for illegal, undemocratic means and ways including using violence and anarchy. Those destructive and damaging tactics resulted in an unprecedented human losses as well as material damages, caused economic conspiracy and sabotage and negatively affected the nation's international image and reputation. Their illegal activities ignored and violated the nation's constitution and the law of the land, provoked and initiated violence and anarchy and racism in the country, cooperated and collaborated with enemies from within and abroad like OLF, ONLF, Genbot 7 and Shabia against the national interest of Ethiopia. This caused economic sabotage and human loss as well as damaged and destroyed public property of the country. If this is not a crime then what is? Therefore, they are accused of committing crime and as nobody is above the law, those extremists who are accused of committing the above and other criminal activities are facing justice.

The government has been so patient for so long for the sake of democracy and good governance but it can no longer be silent when innocent citizens are killed, public property is destroyed and the national interest is damaged. As government, it has to take every legal action to protect its citizen's livelihoods and rights as well as protect public property. In fact, that is the government's number one priority. Now that these extremists are facing the law of the land that they so constantly and publicly violated, what is expected from the justice system is a fair and speedy trial not only to the people in question but also to any citizen or non-citizen accused of any crime because justice is equal for all.