

NO ONE CAN AFFORD TO PLAY GAME WITH PEACE

By

Yohannes Gebresellasié (Ph.d) Addis Ababa

The Ethiopian people will never take peace for granted because they know very well that peace is precious and it was because of the prevalence of peace that they have been enjoying stability in this nation. Further, they know very well that if they want to fight against poverty, under development, illiteracy, diseases and other disabilities, they need to live in peace. The Ethiopian people know by now the fruits of peace and they can't afford to let it slip and let it go. It simply is too precious to ignore and it is simply not to their advantage to play game with peace. So why are those few people inside and abroad working very hard to deny the Ethiopian people of their very precious gift-Peace? The answer should primary come from them-the anti-peace, anti-assistance to the country, anti-development and anti-Ethiopian.

We are living in the 21st century Ethiopia and Ethiopia has a constitution and the Ethiopian constitution is regarded as one of the best in the world. The important achievements of the Ethiopian people have been safeguarded by the constitution of the land that explicitly recognizes equality of Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of this nation. The constitution of the nation puts all Nations, Nationalities and Peoples 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. The current government from the very outset drafted and put into effect a constitution of the people, for the people and by the people of Ethiopia under Proclamation Number 1/1995: a Proclamation to Pronounce the

Coming into effect of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia on 8th day of December, 1994. 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”.

Human rights which is the major part of the constitution is entrenched in and guaranteed by the Ethiopian constitution; therefore, it is reinforced on a daily bases because democratic rights, human rights protection and respect for the dignity of the Ethiopian people is the number one priority of the government and the people of Ethiopia and will continue to be so in the future. Therefore, international governmental and non-governmental organizations alike must not be mislead and must not be confused by few mediocre self-serving religious fundamentalists and few disillusioned diasporas, hard core terrorists from within and abroad that make their daily duty to defame this beautiful nation called Ethiopia. Instead, they should rest assured that democracy and human rights are alive and well and are here to stay because they are matters of survival and not matters of choice and because they are hard fought for.

It is very important to underscore the significant role that can be played by the Diasporas in promoting and advancing dialogue, tolerance and other peaceful ways and means of resolving differences be it individual, group or political parties. Since Diasporas by and large reside in countries with rich experience in tolerance, dialogue and other similar peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms and since they live and experience those norms, they are best suited to contribute their experiences to their country of origin. As a result, they can play a significant role in promoting those values and norms to the society with less experience in that regard. In other words, they must help in transferring those peaceful values that they take for granted in places where they reside and the achievements gained as a result; as opposed to advocating violence and other illegal activities in order to achieve personal, group or institutional hidden agendas. Diaspora's gift for their country of origin should therefore primarily focus on promoting peace, stability and sustainable development and certainly not violence, anarchy and lawlessness.

The greatest lesson of this century is that peace is the highest ideal to the international community. Our country suffered because of conflicts and wars, each more ferocious than all previous wars. The price our people paid because of those conflicts and wars have been devastating. One of the other more serious problems which we have been confronted with today is intolerance. Some foreign based media outlets preach and write issues that propagate violence instead of peace and tolerance. Also some governmental as well as non-governmental donor institutions alike are misguided by few noisy opposition groups and some disillusioned self appointed human rights group in their country about the true picture of the country in question and the whole world media follows suit, I would like to ask: What sort of human rights do they preach? Do donor institutions have powers and all the rights to preach whatever they want and should the poor countries only limit themselves to those rights which do not disturb donor agencies? When we follow donor's interests, we get the full support, but when their own interests are interfered, these same agencies then side with few noisy opposition advocates to achieve their own interests.

The 21st century invites us to think of the past and to plan a future, a future which gives us security to live in peace and happiness. A future which provides clean air and clean water, guarantees education to all, a future which eliminates poverty and all weapons of destruction, a future which provides peace, tolerance and sustainable development and a future that allows unity in diversity. Ethiopians must learn to appreciate religious tolerance and respect the rule of law. Further, the people both from within and the Diaspora must focus on development issues to improve the economic condition of the country and the global community must continue with its

good initiative of extending its economic support and with its technical and technological cooperation to help this country in its effort to reduce and illuminate poverty and embark on democratization and good governance. Generally, peace and tolerance are cornerstones to achieving developmental endeavor and therefore, they should not be taken for granted

The Ethiopian people suffered enormously under the former brutal military regime for a very long time and do not have the intention to go back to that old system anymore because they have had enough. There is no turning back on those hard fought values and norms. No one should have any doubt on that and most importantly, no one must be misled by few opposition propagandists from within and the Diaspora. Therefore, it is important that governmental and non-governmental organizations alike build confidence on the democratic process flourishing in Ethiopia and continue their cooperation and collaboration in order to further reinforce peace, stability and good governance in the country.

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 have been issues of the past and people have been focusing 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 realize 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 want to maintain and safeguard their

achievements over the years gained through hard fought struggle and immense sacrifice. They definitely do not want to give up and loose to some mercenaries who would like to take them back to the old and archaic mentality. Democratization, good governance and sustainable development are matters of survival for the public at large; therefore they are here to stay