

Why Have the Amaras Once Again Become Victims of Ethnic Cleansing by TPLF?

By

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“A pregnant woman who only gave birth to a child during the night was thrown out on the street the following morning along with her mattress and child who is just a few hours old (neonate). Pregnant Amara women have been forced to flee their homes. Many children as young as 8 months of age have been locked up in prison along with their lactating mothers and they have nothing to eat or drink thereby suffering from hunger. A farmer who individually was able to own as many as 3000 tree plants of coffee, avocado, mango, papaya and banana has been forced to leave behind everything and flee. Those farmers who had many bee hives and had engaged in poultry and dairy farm had to leave behind all their wealth. All these Amara farmers were told by the local authorities that as you came empty-handed, you cannot take along with you anything. Armed government officials threaten the Amara farmers with imprisonment on false charges of burning forest, terrorist activities and illegal possession of weapons. There are farmers who have been imprisoned on such false charges and some others have appeared before the court on such false charges. After confiscating and tearing into pieces identity cards of these Amara farmers, the local government authorities have subsequently accused these Amara farmers of travelling without an identity card and roughed them up and subjected them to suffering”.

Excerpt taken from appeal letter (dated 27 March 2012) written by the All Ethiopian Unity Party (AEUP) chairman Hailiu Shawel to prime minister Meles Zenawi regarding the forced eviction and deportation of 78000 Amharas from Bench-Maji in southern Ethiopia.

Hereafter I reproduce personal Testimony of an Amara who has been forcibly displaced in a draconian measure that amounts to ethnic cleansing from Gura Ferda district in southern Ethiopia. It is based on an interview a VOA reporter conducted with the victim by telephone.

“Amaras have been put or squeezed into a grain sack and subsequently beaten by the local officials. These Amaras were forced to feed on sand. They were yoked like draught animals and subsequently beaten. One person who was beaten in such manner has been incapacitated so much that he cannot stand any more and he is now under treatment in hospital”.

As I was writing this article, I heard how the houses of the displaced people, along with all belongings of the displaced Amhara peasants, were set on fire by the TPLF regime on the eve of the Ethiopian Easter so that these peasants may not have any reason to return to their houses by way of collecting or selling their properties. This is a cruel act of the TPLF regime which will go down in history as unforgettable act that we would immortalize so that posterity may not repeat such deeds that defy any rational explanation.

Do Ethiopians Have Constitutionally Guaranteed Citizenship Right Under TPLF?

Article 8 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia states that:

“All sovereign power resides in the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia”.

Ethnic federalism to which TPLF, including all the ethnic-based parties subscribe is premised on the ethno-nationalist principle which holds that ethno-linguistic or cultural boundaries must coincide with political boundaries. The logical sequel of this ethno-nationalist principle is that cultural/ethnic and

political boundaries are not allowed to cross cut each other. The Ethiopian constitution reflects this principle. According to article 8 which I quoted above, the individual citizen of Ethiopia as an embodiment of sovereignty does not exist. In a democratic system, sovereignty emanates from the unified consent of individuals who agree to give their support to the state that governs them on the basis of freedom and equality. In a democratic system, free individual citizens bestow their unified will on the democratic state. The unified will of the individual citizens becomes the popular sovereignty which invests the democratic state with the supreme authority that emanates from this popular consent of individual citizens. This is what we call popular sovereignty which places ultimate authority in the people. This sovereignty is expressed through the choice individuals make in electing their representatives who form a government and would be subject to election and recall at any time. (Donald S. Lutz, *Popular Consent and Popular Control: Whig Political Theory in the Early State Constitutions* (Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1980)

Ethnic federalism bestows rights on the so-called “nations, nationalities and peoples” that are in the case of Ethiopia represented by ethnic elites that are picked out by the TPLF bosses. As such Ethiopians become citizens of their respective ethnic region and not citizens of Ethiopia. The current constitution defines rights of an Ethiopian as being premised on the ethnically-based territory or Killil. Under such political construction, an Amara has no right to speak of outside the ethnically designated Killil called Amara Killil. The concomitant of article 8 of the current constitution is that it nullifies all the rights which are stated in the constitution such as the right of free movement of people to go from one region and settle in another ethnic region and earn a living. In what she dubs “**the idiosyncrasy of the Ethiopian federal system**”, Lovise Aalen a Norwegian anthropologist who conducted an extensive research for her PhD thesis on the politics of Ethnicity in Ethiopia observes that the “**assumption that every citizen is an ethnic citizen makes the Ethiopian system very different from other federal systems in the world**”. **Source:** Lovise Aalen, “**The Politics of Ethnicity in Ethiopia: Actors, Power & Mobilisation under Ethnic Federalism**” 2011.

What many Ethiopians fail to realize about the current political system based on ethnic federalism is that this system does not recognize citizenship right that entitles a native of Ethiopia his or her right that extends over every inch of the Ethiopian realm or territory. As such the present Ethiopian constitution cannot be counted on to uphold the right of an Ethiopian as the constitution recognize no Ethiopian citizenship, but ethnic Amaras, Oromos, Tigreans, Gurages, Somalis, etc. The constitution recognizes citizenship that is bound up with one’s ethnic identity and ethno linguistic region. The present constitution has created two groups of people in every ethnic Killil. The first group concerns those who are considered to be the indigenous people to the area i.e. “**sons of the soil**”. This group of people are given preferential treatment in terms of rights compared to the second group of people (often ethnic minorities) who are seen as second class citizens with no constitutional rights to speak of and whose existence is dependent on the good will of the local ethnic Killil leaders or their Tigrean bosses at the center. Any one who is outside his/her ethnically designated region is treated as an alien with no rights to claim or defend. Hence the propensity of Tigrean entrepreneurs of hate to use this legal loophole to ethnically cleanse southern Ethiopia of the Amharas the TPLF perceives as its historical nemesis. TPLF is undertaking the ethnic cleansing of Amharas through the agency of its proxy representatives Mr. Shifferaw Shigute. In present-day Ethiopia the only people who are not adversely affected by this rule are the Tigreans who as members of the ruling Tigrean regime have every right to settle in every part of

Ethiopia and prosper even at the expense of others with the full support and favour of the incumbent state which protects them. The sad thing about ethnic federalism which denies Ethiopians their right as citizens of that country is that this dangerous and inhumane system of government is not only embraced by the ethno-nationalist TPLF but also by ethnic-based opposition parties that subscribe to ethnic federalism.

The Social Construction of the “Amara Enemy” by TPLF

Some of you may have read about the recent forced displacement and deportation of Amaras from southern Ethiopia. This diabolic act is not an isolated one nor did it come out of the blue. It is part of a cumulative process of demonization of the Amara ethnic group which has been going on for decades now. And in the last 21 years, the Amara people have been made the main targets of vilification, demonization, discrimination, etc by the TPLF government that has mobilized the whole media and state machinery at its disposal towards this goal of criminalizing the identity of Amaras as a people.

The incessant propaganda the TPLF and its cohorts mounted has targeted the Amaras . This propaganda has succeeded in reducing the Amara people into a population that is fit for any act of dehumanization by groups such as TPLF who continue to perpetrate atrocities with impunity against the Amaras they identified as their mortal enemies. During 21 years of TPLF’s rule, the Amaras have served as convenient punch-bags of every anti-Amara group that project its hatred on Amaras. All these happened with the direct encouragement and incitement of the TPLF. As the following quotations show, for the last 38 years, the TPLF has been working tirelessly to create an enemy image of the Amara ethnic group it loathes and abhors most. And for this, the founders of TPLF and the Tigrean elites bear responsibility. In an anthropological research conducted for his PhD thesis among Tigrayans, the Tigrean Alemseged Abbay, one of the research questions which he posed to those Tigrayans he interviewed was the following. Whom do Tigrayans perceive as their foremost **historical enemies** and he came with the following result that overwhelmingly showed that Amaras represented their historical enemies.

“The historical enemies of Tigrayan informants (82,1%) start & end with Amhara (Shoa) & only 10.7% included Turkey & Italy in the list of their historical enemies”. See Alemseged Abbay’s book entitled: Identity Jilted or Re-imagining Identity?

“Moreover, since the people of Tigrai had the dominant Amara as their adversary, the media had mobilized the people and united the militant forces to deal an outward blow”.

Source: **“How the media of the TPLF Emerged & Countered the Dominant Media of the Ethiopian State: Could it be a Viable Alternative for Societal Transformation?** by Aregawi Berhe, Institute of Social Studies, Hague, the Netherlands, 1992”

Here comes another text which I quote from Aregawi’s paper written in 1993 as his master’s thesis at the Institute of Social Studies:

“The defeat of the Italians at Adwa gave Menelik immense power over his potential rivals, particularly the Tigrean nobility under Mengesha Yohannes and Alula Aba Nega. Menelik had the opportunity to divide and weaken Tigrai. His army was let loose to devastate as much as the colonial army did. The people remember this period as “Zemene Shoa” which means the “era under Shoa”i.

Aregawi Berhe, who wrote the above lines in 1992 accusing emperor Menelik of dividing, weakening and devastating Tigray by equating emperor Menelik's alleged record of destruction to the Italian colonial army, tried to present himself later as an innocent person who does not share these hateful thoughts which I quoted from his work. Instead Aregawi blamed the present TPLF leaders such as Sebhat Nega for accusing Menelik of pillaging the villages of Tigray by writing the following lines in his book which was published in 2009.

“Cultural events, theatrical performances as well as jokes and derogatory remarks were used to disseminate this poisonous attitude. Fuelling some historical grudges perpetrated by the ruling classes, the Sibhat faction tried to cast doubt on the possibility of living in unity with “the Amhara”. While they stressed how emperor Menelik’s army pillaged the property of Tigrayan people during its Adwa campaign, the damage the same forces had also incurred on the Amhara or Agew peasants was intentionally ignored. These lopsided historical presentations were noted and criticized by friendly organizations like the Ethiopian People’s Democratic Movement (EPDM).

Source: Aregawi Berhe, **A Political History of the TPLF (1975-1991): Revolt, Ideology and Mobilisation in Ethiopia**, 2009 by Tsehai publishers

From the two quotations which I presented to readers regarding Aregawi's attempt at covering up his own written statement which is informed by ethnic hate, show how this self-styled “**opposition leader**” is dishonest about what he did and believes in. Here Aregawi is caught red-handed while trying to cheat the Ethiopian public thinking that his records are not known to other Ethiopians. Aregawi and the other TPLF sharks who currently masquerade as opposition figures should realize

that there are Ethiopians like my self who watchfully follow their track and put their records out on the open so that Ethiopians may not be cheated by them once again. It is not a sin to hold any political opinion in the past or present however wicked the opinion may sound. But it is shameful to appear to be what one is not as Aregawi has been trying to do long after he claimed that he has distanced himself from the TPLF and joined the opposition rank. The Ethiopian proverb ድመት መንኲሳ አመሊን አትረሳ expresses best Aregawi's dishonest behaviour that I have shown above with incontrovertible evidence.

The Demonization of the Amaras: a prelude to Ethnic Cleansing

Before one group (in-group or one's own group) targets another group (an out-group or enemy group) for genocide, it subjects the other or out-group to a barrage of propaganda war aimed at dehumanizing the out-group whose identity it seeks to erase or destroy. This is what TPLF, its supporters and even its opponents (members of the Ethiopian opposition groups such as the OLF, ONLF, etc) have tried to do against the Amaras. TPLF and its associates have consistently tried to depict the Amaras as rapacious exploiters, invaders, blood-suckers, breast-amputators, national oppressors, parasites, etc. The catalogues of negatively charged epithets that have been hurled at the Amaras are too long to exhaust here and all these epithets have tried to place Amaras out of the realm of human community by equating Amaras to parasites. The Amaras have been invested with all kinds of enemy images that have tended to portray Amaras as less than human beings or monsters that should be dealt a crushing blow (for a discussion of the enemy images in which Amaras have been held, read the book by the Norwegian anthropologist Kjetil Tronvoll entitled “**War and the Politics of Identity in Ethiopia: the Making of Enemies and Allies in the Horn of Africa**” published in 2009). The Amaras have been excluded from the

scope of morality thereby reducing them to sub-human creatures that are fit for abuse, humiliation and degrading treatment including forced displacement, deportation, ethnic cleansing and massacre. When people such as the Amaras in present day Ethiopia are excluded from the scope of morality and made to be perceived as psychologically distant people, their lives become expendable and any kind of mistreatment meted out to these Amaras that as a group have been reduced to a status of a sub-human creature, becomes justified.

OLF's Depiction of the Amaras as Sub-human Creatures

Writing about subject of demonization of a particular ethnic group and the subsequent dehumanization that derives thereof, I would like to acquaint readers with the song which OLF cadres used to repeat before they went on their killing of Amaras. Here it is instructive to inform readers about OLF's song and refrain that was depicted Amaras as sub-human creatures at the height of the 1991-1992 ethnic cleansing of Amaras which OLF perpetrated in areas that have been carved out as "Oromia region". The ethnic cleansing of Amaras was carried out by OLF with the full knowledge, support and encouragement of the minority TPLF regime. Here follows the dehumanizing song of the OLF cadres which were repeated ad nauseam before they went on their killing spree that targeted innocent Amara peasants in the ethnic enclosure of so-called Oromia region.

"Ya jeru jererti, Ya jeru jererti, Amartitin Namma Mitti"

Leaving aside the refrain "Ya jeru jererti" which does not convey any message, the main message contained in the sentence "**Amartitin Nema Miti**" translates into "*the Amhara is not a human being or the Amhara is a sub-human creature*". This is a nauseatingly offensive expression, with a very strong negative valence. This expression conveys the same message as the Nazi term *unter-mensch* (a German word meaning sub-human) that resulted in the process that precipitated the rounding up of six million Jews who were gassed in a gruesome manner. The Germans depicted as *unter-mensch* not only the Jews but also the Slavs and Gypsies. By the way, OLF's description of the Amaras as sub-human not only echoes the Nazi depiction of Jews as sub-humans but also parallels the Hutu description of Tutsis as cockroaches.

Putting the Amharas Outside the Scope of Moral Community

When one group of people that is targeted for demonization is placed outside the scope of moral community, according to Opatow, such a targeted group is placed "outside the boundary in which moral values, rules and considerations of fairness apply". It is under such circumstances that the victimizing group of people (followers of TPLF, OLF, etc) fail to recognize or appreciate that the victimized or excluded group of people such as the Amaras in contemporary Ethiopia, who are considered as sub-human creatures, are also part of a shared human community that deserves humane treatment. When one group demonizes another group that it slates for ethnic cleansing or genocide, it resorts to delegitimizing beliefs that are used to discredit the group that is to become victim of dehumanization. Negatively loaded epithets such as Nefteгна, national oppressor, blood-sucker, parasite, chauvinist, etc have been interchangeably used by various political actors including the sons and daughters of Amaras in the hey days of revolution to portray Amaras as "**national oppressors**". During the Haile Selassie and

Dergue period, it was fashionable to thrash Amaras as “chauvinists, Neftegnas, national oppressors”, etc and repeating such words was even a mark of distinction that qualified one as a genuine radical revolutionary or progressive. One only needs to refer to the 1969 speech of Walleign Mekonnen Kassa – a 24 year old young Amara radical student, who by then had hardly any understanding of the social and cultural history of the district of Borana Sayinet, his birth place, much less diagnosing and disentangling the intricate problems of the larger Ethiopian society. The inchoate Walleign, who was not even drilled in the social history of his birth place, let alone understanding the dynamics of Ethiopian nationalism that eluded many before him, dubbed Ethiopia not a nation but nations. Although he never knew Prochazka, in reality Walleign was echoing the colonialist ideas of the pro-fascist admirer of Mussoloni - the Austrian native Roman Prochazka whose concept of Ethiopia as a fragile patchwork of disparate peoples with no overlapping identities expressed in his booklet in 1934, bore striking resemblance to what Walleign was blurting out 35 years later. And this says a lot about the miss-education of the Ethiopian youth and the inadequacy of the Ethiopian educational system in instilling the Ethiopian youth with a balanced knowledge of Ethiopia and its historical evolution thereby producing an ill-informed generation of youth as we will see by taking stock of Walleign’s revolutionary radical rhetoric.

Walleign Versus Prochazka & the Fake Ethiopian Nationalism they Preached About

Let us look at Walleign’s rhetorical sloganeering (which was typical of his ill-informed generation of flaming radicals) and compare it with that of Prochazka – the pro-fascist sympathizer of Mussoloni who used to live in Ethiopia till 1934. Let me mention, in passing, that Prochazka was expelled from Ethiopia in 1934 following the publication of his offensive booklet.

“And what else is a nation? It is not made of a people with a particular tongue, particular ways of dressing, particular history, and particular social and economic organization? Then may I conclude that in Ethiopia there is the Oromo Nation, the Tigray Nation, the Amara Nation, the Gurage Nation, the Sidama Nation, the Wellamo [Wolayta] Nation, the Adere [Harari] Nation, and however much you may not like it the Somali Nation. This is the true picture of Ethiopia. There is of course the fake Ethiopian Nationalism advanced by the ruling class and unwillingly accepted and even propagated by innocent fellow travelers. What is this fake Nationalism? Is it not simply Amara and to a certain extent Amara-Tigre supremacy?” Walleigne Mekonnen Kassa, Struggle magazine, Haile Selassie I university, Nov. 17, 1969

Here comes Prochazka who dismisses the existence of Ethiopian nationalism and calls for the break-up of Ethiopia along ethnic lines through the principle of the right of self-determination.

“There is no such thing as a united Abyssinian people. The greater part of the non-Christian tribes in Abyssinia has no more burning desire than to be freed from the tyranny of the Amara. The numerous peoples and tribes which inhabit the territory of the Ethiopian state, and which differ in race, language, culture and religion from the ruling minority of the Abyssinians proper, would long ago have thrown off the Abyssinian yoke if they had been given the right of self-determination. Instead, they were forcibly kept cut off from European influences and from the advantages that progressive colonization could confer upon the country”.

The reason why Prochazka clamors for the break-up of Ethiopia on ethnic lines is clearly stated by him in the contents of the following paragraphs which I hereafter reproduce for the benefit of readers who may not access this old booklet of him.

“I want to show that the government of this country (Ethiopia) is systematically thwarting the fulfillment of the obligations entered into under international contracts and agreements, and that its population, inspired by their officially approved hatred for foreigners and by excessive national consciousness, are forming themselves into the core of a new Ethiopian movement for the organization of a battle front of all colored peoples under the Abyssinian leadership for a general attack against the white race. The final aim of (Abyssinian) policy of antagonism to the white race in cooperation with Japan is nothing less than to act as the champions of all colored peoples of Africa. It is incumbent on the legations of the civilized nations in Abyssinia to warn their governments to take a definite stand before the Abyssinians attack and destroy Western culture and civilization in its entirety.”

Source of the above information is a booklet entitled: **“Abyssinia the Powder Barrel”** by Baron Roman Prochazka, published in 1934”. This author was a barrister who used to represent Europeans at the Mixed Special Tribunal & Consular Courts of the foreign powers in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa before 1934. Following the publication of this offensive book, the Ethiopian government of the time expelled him from Ethiopia.

Both Prochazka the pro-fascist writer and Walleign Mekonnen Kassa, the inchoate Ethiopian Marxist radical, share their deep belief that Ethiopian nationalism is a fake one. This is also a belief that underlies TPLF’s ideology of ethnic nationalism which duplicates the colonial concept that was first introduced in Ethiopia by Italian colonialists who always refused to recognize the saliency of Ethiopian nationalism that dealt Italians a humiliatingly crushing blow at Adwa in March 1896.

We can forgive Walleign Mekonnen Kassa and his generation and my own generation, including myself (I was yester-year’s foot-soldier of EPRP who does not take any pride in the deconstructive and nihilist role I played as a teenager), as miss-educated. With the benefit of hindsight and extensive reading of the history of my country here in Europe, I regret the fact that I once embraced this anti-Ethiopian paradigm out of ignorance when I was a barely high school student in the late seventies. Today I think that Walleign would have also regretted his ignorance (although some of his contemporaries such as remnants of EPRP, MEISON, etc are still so proud of the legacy of Walleign and his nihilist generation) had he lived to see what a mess the Ethiopia he imagined to be democratic has become today. I urge readers to read Prochazka’s booklet entitled **“Ethiopia, the Powder Barrel”** published in 1934 – just a year before fascist Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia. Ignorance of Ethiopian history among the Ethiopian youth has cost us a lot, including our generation and above all our country that has now become the testing ground of an apartheid system based on ethnic nationalism. Ethnic nationalism that for well over two decades now has become a guiding political principle in Ethiopia is informed by colonialist ideology which our uneducated ancestors were able to defeat at Adwa. Let me add though that Walleign never shared the racist views Prochazka harboured about Ethiopia with regards to the alleged threat Ethiopia posed to the white race. Ironically, some of the Amara peasants who are currently being ethnically

cleansed from Gura Ferda area said that they hail from Sayinet – the birth place of Walleign Mekonnen Kassa.

Fascist Italy, TPLF & EPLF - the Trio that Singled Out the “Amara Enemy”

TPLF’s success in depicting the Amaras as a group that are today denied full humanness and their animalization and the brutish treatment that is being meted out to them during the last 21 years, has not just come about ex nihilo or out of thin air. It is a result of a cumulative process of demonization of Amaras of which the very sons and daughters of Amaras were enthusiastic vehicles. The singling out and demonization of the Amaras was started by the Italian colonialists who falsely equated Ethiopian nationalism with the Amara people following the ignominious defeat they suffered at the hands of the united people of Ethiopia they hitherto dismissed as “disunited people” with no developed sense of pan-Ethiopian nationalism or patriotism. Thus began the Amara bashing by the Italian colonialists following the disastrous defeat they suffered at the hands of the Ethiopian people who were led by the perspicacious leader emperor Menelik II. Italian colonialist literature is littered or studded with depiction of the Amaras as devil incarnates. I urge readers to consult Italian colonial literature on the Amaras in books authored by individuals such as Pietro Badoglio, Alberto Sbacchi, Angelo del Boca, Anthony Mockler, etc. TPLF as an exponent of ethnic nationalism, something that Italian colonial policy makers tried to impose on Ethiopia during the 5 years of occupation, has targeted Ethiopian nationalism as its nemesis. And the Amaras happen to be the ethnic group that TPLF has mistakenly identified as being the sole bearer or exponent of Ethiopian nationalism. This misconception about the Amaras being the sole repositories of Ethiopian nationalism has eluded not only the Italian fascists but also ethno-nationalist groups such as TPLF who were shocked to see how the majority of Ethiopians came out in May 2005 to shake off not only TPLF’s minority ethnic rule but also the very idea of being thrust into mutually exclusive ethnic pigeonholes as has been the case during the last 21 years. And it is not without reason that Italians in their colonialist literature had refused to use the name Ethiopia and continued to use the term Abyssinia (Abyssinia being just a small i.e. northern part of present-day Ethiopia) by way of denying the fact that emperor Menelik forged the alliance of all Ethiopians from all nooks and crannies of Ethiopia to deal Italian fascist invaders and their Eritrean ascaris a crushing blow at Adwa thereby putting Ethiopia on the world map as a beacon of freedom for colonized people all over the world. TPLF, like the Italian colonialists whose ideology of ethnic divisiveness it upholds, has continued to identify the Amaras as staunch and die-hard repositories and exponents of Ethiopian nationalism thereby making them the target of annihilation, something about which I will say more in future write-ups.

The Italians succeeded in infecting their colonial subjects i.e. the Eritreans with the virus of Amara hatred that has characterized the Eritrean colonial identity. The Eritrean identity that has been bequeathed to Eritreans by their Italian masters as a new identity – an identity of slavery Eritreans have been so proud of to the point of shading blood for it during their 30 years **“war of liberation from colonial Ethiopia”**. Today we know what that liberation has amounted to with Eritreans flocking to their former **“colonizer Ethiopia”** by braving the danger on their way to the Ethio-Eritrean border where their once beloved leader Esayas Afewerki has imposed a shoot-to-kill policy that his loyal soldiers implement unreservedly. It was the educated children of the former Italian colony Eritrea who targeted the Amara ethnic identity as an object of hate soon after Eritrea was united with Ethiopia. These Eritrean

nationalists, who joined the Haile Selassie I University massively, as they were provided with the best schools by the very “Amara government” which denied such schools to other parts of Ethiopia, most strikingly the predominantly Amara-inhabited regions of central and northern Ethiopia that are falsely accused of being beneficiaries of Haile Selassie’s Amara government, were instrumental in pushing their anti-Amara hatred in the name of revolutionary radicalism within the Ethiopian Student Movement (ESM). The Tigrean elites who masqueraded as radicals were also able to do the same by hiding themselves behind the banner of radical Marxism – a mask that has been exposed fully during the last 21 years when Tigrean radicals of yester years (former EPRP, Meisone, Dergye’s Worker’s party members) chose to side with the fascistic TPLF unscrupulously. The unsuspecting, gullible, if unassuming Amara, radicals could not see where all these anti-Amara agitation and drumbeating of the ESM was heading for. For at least 55 years, the Amara youth has been fed on the myth that Amaras were evil-doers, national oppressors, blood-suckers, Neftegnas, etc by accepting essentializing notions of the identity of the Amara ethnic group as being evil and oppressor. Neftega is a code word for Amara although Nefteгна does not represent only one particular ethnic group of Ethiopia as it is not bound up with the identity of just one particular ethnic group as the following example shows, although Amaras may have represented a significant proportion of the Neftegnas. I hereafter quote the Ethiopian historian, professor Shifferaw Bekele’s observation on this subject regarding those who settled in Sidamo as Neftegnas. Shifferaw citing McLellan’s book entitled “**State Transformation & National Integration: Gedeo and the Ethiopian Empire**”, East Lansing, Michigan 1988) makes the following observation:

“McLellan has looked into this issue by giving us percentage of origin of sample of his settler informants broken down into officer and ordinary soldier as well as civilians. Let us look at the total percentages: Shewa 69 %; Gojam 12.05% Wello 5%; Tigre 4%; Begemeder 2.03%; and other 7,5%. The figure for Shewa gives a misleading ethnic picture Shewa having Amara, Oromo as well as Gurage. For instance, a good proportion of the settlers in Sidamo were the retainers and soldiers of Dejach Balcha which meant that the majority of them were Oromo and Gurage. Hence, the percentage for Shewa Amara would be less than what the estimate here suggests”. (For details, read Shifferaw’s book entitled: “An Economic History of Ethiopia” pp 104).

So gradually but surely, the Amara youth has been desensitized to the demonization to which Amaras were subjected as epithets loaded with a negative valence were attached to the identity of Amaras through the use of words such as Nefteгна. This insidious propaganda barrage to which the Amara youth has been subjected and of which it became a convenient vehicle, has reduced the Amara youth, particularly the educated elite to the point of accepting the negatively-charged epithets that have been hurled at the Amara people. The cumulative effect of this insidious process of Amara demonization has reached a point where the very Amara victims have come to accept the negative attributes that have been laced with their ethnic identity. Today, this very Amara elite and the youth of the current generation has accepted the fact that Amaras are to blame for all the ills that have befallen Ethiopia and is altogether resigned to the idea of defending itself against such waves of demonization and criminalization. This is the typical proverbial case of the psychological process that we call internalization. To drive my point home, I will belabour this concept as follows.

The Amara Elites Internalize a Negative Identity Imposed by the Enemy

A child who is always told by his/her parents or care givers that what ever he/she does is not good and beaten up all the time, eventually begins to believe that he or she is indeed bad. Likewise, human beings who are continuously bombarded with negative attributes that do not define them as such, begin to accept these attributes that are externally generated and attributed to them as being true. This is what we call internalization. Internalization in this case is a psychological process whereby the Amara elites and youth have accepted the demonized image of the Amara as being evil-doer, oppressor, blood-sucker, breast-amputator, invader, etc. With the advantage of hindsight, it seems to me that in the whole socialization process and intellectual formation of my generation of youth that participated in the Ethiopian student movement, my generation and the generation before me have tended to internalize the image of the Amaras as rapacious exploiters, blood-suckers, slaver traders, etc. So here we are today, after 21 years of TPLF rule, the Amaras have been reduced to the status of sub-human creatures that have to readily accept any verdict of those ethno-nationalist entrepreneurs of hate who call themselves representatives of the oppressed peoples and feel entitled to bully, trash, bash, uproot, deport and massacre at will innocent Amara peasants. This is so because, after all a demonized people such as the Amaras are not worthy of the protection of their human rights as citizens of Ethiopia as they have no rights to defend or no any citizen's right to speak of. And so it is not surprising that the plight of these Amaras have not received the response it deserves. How many websites cared to disseminate the story of 78000 Ethiopians who were forced to leave their belonging and sent away with their new-born (neonate) children? After all who cares about sub-human Amara creatures whose only credential is nothing but a negative history of being "*national oppressors, blood-suckers, invaders, avaricious expansionists, gluttonous hordes, breast-amputators, etc*". So it is not surprising that the Amaras, **who have long since been placed out of the boundary of a moral community by ethno-nationalists entrepreneurs of hate such as the TPLF, are seen today with a sense of indifference, contempt, hate and above all moral disengagement on the part of the TPLF, supporters of various ethno-nationalist political forces and even the Amara elites that have come to regard the mistreatment of Amaras as something that is not out of the ordinary.**

Anatomy of a People Whose Identity & Existence Is Threatened by TPLF's Onslaught

The TPLF mobilized Tigrean peasants whose existence on subsistence farming has proved precarious in the ecologically degraded parts of Tigray. Although poverty was not unique to Tigray, Tigran ethno-nationalists were however quick to give an ethnic slant to the deep resentment of the Tigrean poor by lacing it with issues of ethnic identity. From day one of TPLF's existence, the issue of economic security of the people of Tigray was an important issue. Expansionist goals were openly stated in the program of the TPLF from day one of this organisation's existence and the Tigrean ethno-nationalists mobilized their people to eventually annex the coveted rich and fertile parts of Gondar. The former province of Tigray used to cover an area of 66000 square kilometres until 1974. On page 1 of the Political Program of TPLF which it adopted at its 2nd Congress in May 1983, the first sentence contains the following text bearing on the size of the future greater Tigray, the home of the "**golden people**".

"Tigray is an oppressed nation in northern Ethiopia with a land mass of more than 100000 square kilometres".

From the outset, the TPLF has articulated its objective of capturing state power that guarantees the economic security of its ethnic followers and restore the allegedly despised identity/esteem of the Tigrayan people. To achieve this goal TPLF has to target the Amara ethnic group as an object of its hateful propaganda as the following words of Aregawi Berhe, the former boss of Meles Zenawi and Tigrean ethno-nationalist guru clearly spell out:

“The question of identity, esteem and values of the Tigrayan people that had been ignored, despised and forced to assimilate with the dominant Amara nationality where for the last hundred years, the ruling class of Ethiopia had come from. This perspective was the nationalist aspect of the struggle, with the aim to bring back and retain what had been lost in the years of Amara rule. The question of political power, economic security, distribution of the resources and status at all levels of the production process was the other dimension of the struggle”.

Source: “How the media of the TPLF Emerged & Countered the Dominant Media of the Ethiopian State: Could it be a Viable Alternative for Societal Transformation? Aregawi Berhe, Institute of Social Studies, Hague, the Netherlands, 1992”

Let us see how TPLF has gone ahead in realizing one of the goals i.e. economic security of Tigreans which Aregawi has clearly spelt out in the above text. Once in power, the first thing TPLF has been engaged in was the physical elimination of the elders of Welkayit, Tsegede, Humera, etc so as to erase or destroy the history of these original inhabitants of this region and render the annexation of the region to Tigray a smooth process. I hereafter reproduce an appeal letter written to Amnesty International by the Washington-based Gondar Development & Cooperation Organization (GDCO) dated June 15, 1992 regarding the annexation of land.

“Once in power, EPRPDF/EPLF launched a concerted military campaign against the people of these fertile districts to the extent of involving Sudanese war planes which bombarded the towns of Kabtiya and Dansha in Wokayit district. The devastation of property was immense. Innocent children, women and the elderly were killed indiscriminately. Those that managed to survive the wrath of these aggressors by taking shelter into the hinterland were rounded up and cruelly executed. Even the relatives of those executed who happened to live in the provincial capital Gonder, were hunted and brought back to Wolkayit and executed publicly. Several hundreds of elders and public figures were executed”.

Before one group destroys the identity of a particular people, it has to physically eliminate the traditional leaders of such a community of people who embody the culture and history of such a community. In this case, the killing of hundreds of elders from the annexed parts of Gondar by TPLF right on the heels of TPLF’s seizure of power, preceded the annexation of the Gondar region to Tigray in a manner that duplicates the horrors of destroying the history, culture and identity of one ethnic community, i.e. the Amaras. The uprooting of Amaras in Welkayit, Tsegede, Humera, Dansha, Tselemet and the resettlement of the area by no less than 500000 armed Tigreans in an act that amounts to ethnic cleansing following the annexation of the fertile lands of Gondar to Tigray, is something which has been muted and has not got any national or international media coverage. The same holds true for the annexation of northern Wello. Today TPLF has changed the demographic profile of these regions such

that its officials like the Tigrean supremacist Seye Abraha and their Amara puppet figure Addisu Legesse are toying with the idea of deciding the future of these annexed regions by a referendum. As any one sensible person can understand, the outcome of a referendum is readily known as the region has been ethnically cleansed of Amaras and resettled and supplanted by more than half a million armed Tigreans. These armed Tigreans have unscrupulously taken over the land that used to belong to Amaras. In these regions of Gondar that have been annexed to Tigray and settled by Tigreans, the original inhabitants, especially the male population has been subjected to massive imprisonment, disappearances and killings. So far no independent reporter has ventured into the region during the past 21 years. To illustrate the degree of ethnic cleansing in the areas that have been annexed to Tigray, the following figure is in order. According to the 1994 census of the Ethiopian Central Statistical Office, 2.63% of the population of the Tigray region comprised of Amaras. By 2007, this figure has dropped to 1.6%. And the question is what happened to the 1.03% of Amaras who used to inhabit this region? Those Amharic speakers, who have been allowed to remain in what has been annexed to Tigray, have been prevented from using Amharic as a medium of communication. They have been forced to speak in Tigrigna and their children are being forcibly made to identify with a Tigrean identity by renouncing their own identity as Amharic speakers. To give you an idea of the richness and economic potential of one of the regions of Gondar which has been annexed to Tigray, the following pertinent information is in order:

“The Humera, Abdarafi and Metema areas produced over 1,2 million quintals of sesame, 2,5 million quintals of sorghum and half a million quintals of corn annually. It was also, next to the Awash valley area, the second largest producer of cotton in Ethiopia. The area employed over 190,000 people both in agricultural and service sectors and another 300000 in the form of seasonal labour. In the early 1970s the area attracted a large number of workers to meet the shortage of labour during the harvest season. At one time more than 2500 tractors were believed to have been farming in the area and the total capital in the region was put at around 500 million Birr (an equivalent of 250 million US dollars then)”.

Source, **Lisane Gondar** – a publication of the **Gondar Development & Cooperation Organization GDCO**, April 1992.

In 2008 alone, the Tigrayan investors were able to export of more than 90000 tons of sesame thereby collecting 121,5 million US dollars (for details see **The Tigray Regional State Growth & Transformation plan 2011-2015**) from the sesame that grew on the Gondar regions that have been annexed to Tigray since 1991.

Amara women have been subjected to the most degrading and morally repugnant acts of sexual transgression and humiliation the details of which I have chosen to spare readers for now (but I will throw light on the shockingly harrowing account of these women in my future write-ups as no records of these fascist deeds should remain buried on any count). The original inhabitants of these annexed regions have been forcibly removed from the fertile parts of their region and moved to the less fertile parts. Some of these original inhabitants of these regions have been forced to rent their own land from absentee Tigrean landowners who by virtue of their Tigrean ethnic identity have now become landowners and rent out the land that they have no need to till as they live in the urban areas of Tigray as absentee landlords. This is adding insult to injury to the people of Gondar who have to bear all these indignities about which we will report in detail in the near future. The Amara men are not allowed to

carry a gun while the members of the “golden” ethnic group are heavily armed to their teeth with automatic weapons with which they enforce their ethnic superiority over the original Amara inhabitants of the region. The Tigrean Gelawdewos Araia, a self-styled “TPLF opponent” and supporter of the Tigrean supremacist Seye Abraha, who masquerades as human rights activist has unabashedly fabricated a new history to justify the annexation of these fertile parts of Gondar to Tigray (see Ghelawdewos Araia’s interview with Ethio-observer, a Tigrean-owned website, dated 17th of January 2012). Not surprisingly, his Tigrean compatriot Desta Assayehgn, another TPLF admirer with no sense of scruple like almost all of the Tigrean elites was quick to extol the virtues of Ghelawdewos’s interview (see the article in the notorious pro-TPLF website known as Tigray-online dated 27th of January 2012) which claimed that historically the fertile lands of Gondar which have been annexed to Tigray by the TPLF belonged to Tigray. By the way, Ghelawdewos Araia was one of the editors of the now defunct “**Ethiopian Commentator**” magazine in USA. This magazine was the most hateful pro-TPLF magazine which used to cast aspersion on Ethiopians of monumental stature such as the late professor Asrat Woldeyes by trying to portray him as a Derge collaborationist – although professor Asrat was known for his fiercely independent stance even under the Dergue by refusing to dance to Dergue’s tune.

How Are the Amharas Living in the so-called Amara Region Faring?

In the Amhara region, visible signs of their demographic decline have been in evidence as witness the result of the 2007 national census whereby some **2, 5 million Amaras have been unaccounted for**. The contemptuous response of the head of the Ethiopian Statistical Office, the Adare woman Mrs. Samia Zekaria (elite members of whose ethnic group have dangerously identified themselves closely with the minority TPLF regime in targeting Amaras they so much hate as the discriminatory policies of the Adares against Amaras in the city of Harar have shown) to this shockingly and conspicuously declining demographic trend was even more insulting to say the least. Let us see the following figures about the population of the major ethnic regions of Ethiopia and see by what percentage the population of these regions has grown in 13 years between the 1994 and 2007 national population censuses:

In the 13 years that span over the 1994-2007 period, the population of Tigray has grown by **37. 57%**; **Amara by 24.43%** ; **Oromia by 44. 98%**; **Southern region by 44. 96%** and **Somali region by 38.79%**. How do we account for the conspicuously spectacular decline of the population of the

Amhara region? I leave readers of this report to form their own judgement and refrain from burdening you with my own speculations. But the fact remains that this is a very serious case which Amaras have to take into account given the inimical predisposition of TPLF to the Amara people in particular – a people which this movement targeted since its inception.

According to the **2005 Demographic & Health Survey** report, the Amara region has the highest infant mortality rate (infant death rate of 94 per 1000 in the Amara region as against 67 per 1000 in Tigray) in Ethiopia. The Amara region has the highest rate of blindness and happens to be the region which, along with the Somali and Afar regions, tails behind all regions of Ethiopia in terms of educational progress through the deliberate policy of the Tigrean minority regime. The TPLF may blame the lagging of the Afar and Somali regions in education on the nomadic life style of the Afar and Somali populations, which by itself does not explain everything. But how do we explain this glaringly depressing state of education in the Amara region where all the people of this region have a settled existence? What makes the Amara

region any different from the Tigray region where settlement patterns, life styles are similar given the dominance of agrarian life among the populations of these two regions? Let me cite some figures to drive my point home. According to the 2007 national census, the population of the **Amara region 17,214,056** whereas the population of **Tigray is 4,314,456** (see **Summary & Statistical Report of the 2007 Population & Housing Census Results**). However despite such huge numerical difference in the size of the population of these two regions, in the Amhara region only **97 high schools** (see the article entitled: **“Accessibility In Equality to Basic Education in Amhara Region, Ethiopia”** in the **Ethiopian Journal of Education, 2008**) were available in **2005** for the population of this region whereas the Tigray region had **59 high schools** in **2005**. As **of 2009**, the number of high schools in Tigray has grown to **110 high schools**. Tigray region is by far the most favoured region today in terms of educational infrastructure than any other major region of Ethiopia. This is how the apartheid system created by the Tigrean elite in Ethiopia is working round the clock to empower Tigreans at the expense of non-Tigreans. The goal of TPLF is to keep the non-Tigrean people of Ethiopia in a state ignorance and darkness so this situation would facilitate the unchallenged eternal political tenure of the Tigrean regime & its visible ethnic beneficiaries i.e. Tigreans.

Due to visible absence of clean water, the Amara region bears the burden of being victimized by water-borne diseases that are rife. The region’s very poor health status is the reflection of the destitution and squalor into which the region has been plunged by the deliberate policy of impoverishment of the region by the TPLF government. The Amara region is the region which has been severely victimized by malaria infestation following the deliberate dismantling of the Ethiopian Malaria Prevention Service (EMPS) in 1993 by the TPLF regime (for details see my article in the 1995 edition of the now defunct Ethiopian Register magazine). Tens of thousands of people have been losing their lives every year after they were deliberately exposed to the vagaries of malaria consequent upon the dismantling of the EMPS – a move that was opposed by experts in the field and resulted in the dismantling of the EMPS head office and the transfer of equipment to the favoured region of Tigray – the home region from which TPLF leaders hail and where the **“golden people”** of Ethiopia are located to use Meles Zenawi’s nauseating characterization of his people – a characterization that typifies the Nazi-type psyche of a Tigrean ethno-nationalist with no conscience & with no sense of scruple to speak of.

Ethnic Federalism and the Disenfranchised Amaras

Ethnic federalism which seeks to reconfigure Ethiopia on ethnic and linguistic lines is not a novel idea. It was the Italian colonialists who first introduced it in Ethiopia in order to facilitate their divide and rule policy that was the only sure weapon of destroying pan-Ethiopian nationalism. Today, ethnic federalism is a concept which is embraced not only by TPLF but also ethnic-based opposition political groups in Ethiopia such as ARENA Tigray (which many euphemistically and correctly refer to the third Weyane movement), etc. Ethnic federalism is akin to the Italian colonialist project and proved disastrous as the following observations of the Italian historian Alberto Sbacchi corroborate:

“The Italian administration of Ethiopia was affected by impractical regional boundaries. The ethnic system proved unworkable. The state of affairs showed that basing internal regional boundaries on the ethnic principle did not work”.

Source: see **Alberto Sbacchi's** book entitled **"Ethiopia under Mussoloni: Fascism and the Colonial Experience"**, 1985

Another writer, **Czeslaw Jesman** has the following to say about this failed Italian colonialist project:

"Italian formula of laying foundations for an articulate modern Oromo nation has failed completely. The Italians had little time to implement it – from 1935-1941 only – but they had studied it very closely for several decades before Mussolini's attack, and they were more than doubtful whether an anti-Amhara, and therefore anti-Ethiopian, feeling could be spun out of Oromo peasantry and tribesmen".

Source: ***"The Ethiopian Paradox, Oxford University Press, 1963).***

Now let me return to the geographically dispersed Amaras who find themselves in all nooks and corners of Ethiopia and have now become the single most vulnerable targets of a Tigrean-state sponsored ethnic cleansing and genocide. The Amaras are people who find themselves dispersed in all parts of Ethiopia southern, eastern and western Ethiopia where many of them have lived for up to 5 generations. During the last 21 years Amaras, living in the regions outside the so-called Amhara region, have been practically disenfranchised as they have no rights to education, work, livelihood, etc as citizens of Ethiopia. All priorities in areas of education, work, investment, etc are given to those who are dubbed **"sons of the soil"** or **indigenous people** as though the Amaras are aliens who came from other planets and do not count as Ethiopian citizens. In TPLF's Ethiopia, Amaras have no rights to speak of and they have continued to lead a precarious life characterized by constant fear and anxiety. The Damoclean sword of evictions from the areas where they have been made to feel aliens, constantly hangs over their heads. They have been economically marginalized and their families have been targeted for displacement and destabilisation. Amharas living outside the so-called Amara region, such as Arsi, Hararghe, Bale, Wellega, Illubabor, etc have been subjected to the systematic ethnic cleansing as the unfolding tragedy of Amharas currently in the Bench Maji areas attest. In the year 2000 alone, more than 13000 Amaras were uprooted from Gidda Kiremu in eastern Wellega after the OPDO forces with full knowledge and encouragement of the TPLF regime targeted Amaras.

I will hereafter reproduce extensively what **EHRCO** published in its **34th Report** on the **18th of September 2000** regarding the ethnic cleansing that took place in **Eastern Wellega**.

"It is a known fact that Ethiopia is composed of different groups of people who have forged a strong historical, linguistic, ethnic, and cultural alliance. Through their long history of living together, these groups of people have been able to tame their linguistic, ethnic, religious, and cultural differences and develop a strong culture of unity and cooperation among themselves. Nevertheless, since the establishment of a government based on ethnicity in 1991, the people are being pushed from different directions into abandoning the above cultural heritages and focus instead on the differences among them. The harmfulness of this ethnic-based policy that the government is pursuing has been shown by the ethnic conflicts that occurred in Borena and Arsi zones, Harar, Benishangul, Minjar and Shenkora wereda, Semen Omo, Gedeo and Guji, and other places during the past nine years. These ethnic

conflicts have shown clearly that additional and more frightening problems than the many endemic social and economic ones await the Ethiopian people.

EHRCO has ascertained that the following violations have been committed against the peasants:

- a). Eight persons have been illegally killed.**
- b). An unknown number of others have been shot and wounded**
- c). Wives and daughters of the peasants have been raped**
- d). Thousands of peasants have been beaten, detained, their houses and properties burnt down and/or looted, and they themselves driven out.**

Details of the Violations Against the Peasants

In March 2000, local officials illegally detained an unknown number of peasants in Gida Kiramo and other weredas allegedly for destroying the forest. The peasants are still in detention.

On 21 June 2000, the same officials mobilized their Oromo supporters and ordered, "Amhara peasants should leave the area". Then assisted by the militia and police they went out on a public demonstration carrying placards with the slogan "Amhara go to your country", caused churches and peasants' houses to be set on fire, properties to be looted, flour mills to be destroyed, peasants' livestock to be either slaughtered or looted.

On 16 June 2000, they caused St. Gabriel's church to be set on fire and its property looted.

On 17 June 2000, the army was brought and encamped in the area. The victimized peasants hoped for the protection of this army. Unfortunately, the army - either because it neglected its responsibility or because its mission was such - collaborated with the victimizers and ignored the burning down and looting of three churches, houses of many peasants, and the confiscation of the peasants' livestock.

On 17 June 2000, council members and officials of Abidengero Wereda gathered armed persons and declared, "All Amhara should return to your country. They then ordered the peasants to get ready to return".

The next day, a large number of armed people came to the wereda and drove the women and children to a nearby forest. When the Amhara peasants protested saying, "While we (the men) are here, you should not take the women and children anywhere", the armed people opened fire. The houses of Amhara peasants in the wereda were set on fire, their household properties and livestock were looted, and the peasants ran away for their lives, families were separated; women and children were left without any shelter.

On 25 June 2000 at about 1 in the afternoon, an organized group of individuals in Gida Kiramo Wereda, Gudina Jiregna peasant association, at a place called Chabsu, looted the properties of Amhara peasants, set their houses on fire, and killed three people".

As the extensive text above, which I quoted from EHRCO's 34th report, shows the Amaras have been subjected to untold indignities on account of their ethnicity. Some sources put the number of Amaras killed could be in the hundreds while between as many as 16000 Amaras have been driven out of

Eastern Wellega and sent to Gojjam across the Abbay river for a forced resettlement in malaria and other vector-borne-diseases infested lowland region. In this inhospitable place, each day children and elders were dying unable to resist diseases. The cause of the displacement of these Amaras was politicized ethnicity that denied existence right to the Amara minorities settled there since the 1940's. Even international human rights groups such as Human Rights Watch were not willing to go there and report these gross human rights violations as the human rights violation concerned the Amara ethnic group that represented a once "politically dominant oppressor" group. The negative valence attached to the identity of Amaras as once "**oppressive rulers**", "**politically dominant group**" etc of Ethiopia has prevented international human rights organizations from highlighting the plight of the Amaras in a manner that is commensurate with the suffering of these people.

The Bankruptcy of the Tigrean Elite & Its Support for the Nazi-type TPLF Regime

37 years ago, many Tigreans were prominently active in multi-ethnic groups such as the EPRP. Some were also members of groups like Meisone, Wez, Malered, and Seded and also participated as officials of the military Dergue. When it comes to the Ethiopian left groups such as the EPRP, Tigreans played a preponderant role than their number and ethnic size would warrant. Hundreds of Tigreans have died opposing the TPLF ideology of hate and I salute them all for having sacrificed their lives to bring about a democratic Ethiopia that would not build walls of division and fission among its people. With the passage of time though, this conspicuous Tigrean opposition gave way to a closer identification with the hateful ideology of TPLF. Not only ordinary Tigreans but even the once flaming radicals of Tigray massively joined TPLF and became its advocates.

I will spare you the details of an intriguing development which I observed here in Holland with regard to such dubious characters who used to be leaders of the left movement such as the EPRP but later succumbed to the status of being supporters of Tigrean ethno-nationalism, albeit, sub rosa. But for now let me turn to one case to illustrate the bankruptcy of the Tigrean elites who have unabashedly identified themselves with the diabolical Tigrean regime by introducing you to some of their writings. Professor Gebru Tareke is a Tigrean from Axum who used to teach history at Haile Selassie University in the 1960's and early seventies before he was sent to USA for his PhD study. He completed his PhD study in USA in 1977 and remained there till his retired. Some of you may have read his book which is based on his PhD thesis entitled: "**Ethiopia: Power & Protest, Peasant Revolutions in the 20th Century**" (Red Sea Press, 1996). This person has been teaching history in American universities for no less than 30 years and is now an emeritus professor who in his old age has been rewarded with directorship of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies. For a long time, Gebru has tried to appear as some one who was genuinely opposed to TPLF. He has been successful in his effort of deceiving many gullible Ethiopians and even some very intelligent individuals who used to see him as an upright person genuinely opposed to TPLF. His latest book, which came off print at the end of 2009, has clearly exposed Gebru for what he really is i.e. a passionate supporter and advocate of the TPLF regime and its destructive policies despite some texts that incensed some TPLF stalwarts such as General Tsadkan G/Kidan. I will quote from his new book by way of acquainting many of you who may not have been able to read his book.

“The Ethiopian ethnic-based federalist system is a novel and fascinating political experience laden with potential problems, but that may prove to be the historical exception”. Taken from page 327 of Gebru’s book

Let me briefly ask Gebru what makes ethnic federalism which is by its very nature divisive and disintegrative in many countries of the world (former Yugoslavia, former Soviet Union, etc) constructive when it comes to the Ethiopia of TPLF? How come that Gebru has failed to see the various ethnic conflicts which have been fanned TPLF’s ethnic federalism policies.

“The make up of the officer corps of the new army has been diversified to reflect society, but whether the army will be as solid as its predecessor, which never showed sectional cracks during the civil wars, is hard to predict. Its unity and its loyalty to the state will continue to reflect the deep fissures in society. Paradoxically, the former army was less representative but it was a unified organization with unswerving loyalty to the national state. Although the new army is more democratically constituted, it may be more susceptible to sectarian and divisive politics and allegiances”. Taken from page 328 of Gebru Tareke’s book

What is more disgusting than for an intellectual of Gebru’s calibre to unabashedly claim that the make up of the officer corps of the army under TPLF “has been diversified to reflect society” whereas the truth is that 90% of the officers are members of the minority Tigrean ethnic group? Has such skewed trend characterized the Ethiopian army both under Haile Selassie and the Dergue governments? I leave the judgement to readers.

“The federal constitution of 1995 represented the most determined effort to create a democratic framework in which Ethiopia’s intractable national cleavages could find a permanent solution. It is to the credit of the EPRDF that it finally implemented an innovative structure that allows the country’s ethnic components sufficient power to manage their own affairs & to develop their languages, cultures & individual customs. Formerly oppressed & marginalised peoples have, for the first time in a100 years, become arbiters of their own destiny”. See page 329 of Gebru’s book

Is it not an insult to the intelligence of the Ethiopian people when Gebru claims that TPLF implemented an innovative structure ***“that allows the country’s ethnic components sufficient power to manage their own affairs”***? Far from allowing the devolution of power as Gebru avers or claims, what TPLF has succeeded is in creating a highly centralized state which pulls all political strings by putting in place an indirect rule that duplicates colonial rule. In this regard, I refer readers to read Paulos Chanie’s work entitled ***“What One Hand Giveth, the Other Hand Taketh Away – Ethiopia’s Post-1991 Decentralization Reform Under Neo-Patrimonialism”*** PhD thesis submitted at the Institute of Social Studies, Hague, the Netherlands, 2007 which is based on a field research conducted in three of Ethiopia’s 9 federal regions.

“Success stories abound of women in the army and in the business world. Nationally, they are represented by talented and influential persons, including most notably Azeb Mesfin, Meles Zenawi’s equally savvy wife. No politically prominent woman since Queen Taitu Bitul, emperor Menelik’s wife, has been so actively and visibly engaged in the public arena. A former liberation fighter, she is

emblematic of the liberated Ethiopian woman". (the above quotation is taken from Gebru Tareke's latest book, see page 332)

Gebru Tareke's panegyric or eulogizing statements about the wife of prime minister Meles Zenawi the tentacles of whose business empire runs the whole gamut of the Ethiopian economy from Khat and coffee trade to ownership of various industrial plants and comparison of such an avaricious woman with the Queen Taitu Bitul, the great patriotic wife of emperor Menelik is shockingly disgusting to the say the least. This opportunistic behavior of Gebru makes him look like an obsequious palace scribe who is bent on securing his fortune than an independent-minded historian worthy of the name of his profession. I could have dissected the content of the non sense Gebru scribbled down above. But I am afraid it would sound an insult to the readers of my paper to venture into a detailed analysis as any one sensible person who is even remotely acquainted with contemporary Ethiopia can see the fallacies contained in most of what Gebru wrote down in the texts that I quoted from his new book entitled: "**The Ethiopian Revolution: War in the Horn of Africa**", 2009 by Yale University Press. Rather, I will throw some illuminating light on the psychological mechanisms which underlie the transformation, of a once sane individual such as Gebru who is endowed with a good intellect, into an unreflecting, de-individuated admirer of Tigrean ethno-nationalism that is destroying Ethiopia piece by piece.

Psychological Mechanisms Underlying the Loss of Conscience Under the Spell of Ethno-nationalist Ideology

The psychological mechanism which makes a potentially intelligent human being to loose his/her ability of critically thinking and stop him from making sound judgment is initiated by a process which leads to the suspension of one's conscience or what Sigmund Freud, the 20th century famous Austrian psychiatrist, alternatively dubs the superego. According to Freud, **suspension of one's superego or conscience takes place when in the process of forming part of a group or a crowd, an individual's superego is degraded. The degradation of one's superego or conscience takes place when the function of the superego of the individual is transferred to the group leader/leaders.** Ethnic nationalism leads to the suspension of the function of the super ego or conscience among the followers of an ethnic nationalist movement such as the TPLF. The suspension of conscience in its turn leads to the sweeping away of moral judgements that prevent followers of a virulent ethno-nationalist organisation such as the TPLF from recognizing the pain they inflict on the ethnic others or non-Tigreans. Ethno-nationalist ideology has the capacity of effacing the individual as an autonomously functioning human being capable of making sound moral judgment with the help of his/her conscience. It insulates and restricts followers of such a movement in their own social world so much that followers of an ethno-nationalist movement become obsessed with themselves to the exclusion of the "ethnic others".

Examples of groups whose followers are characterized by loss of their conscience and super ego are fundamentalist religious organizations, movements such as the Nazi and fascist movements in Germany and Italy and ethno-nationalist political movements in Ethiopia such as the TPLF. Ethno-nationalism is an ideology which is emotionally-laden. As such it is not amenable or susceptible to rational thinking or reflection. Followers of ethno-nationalist ideology, no matter what their academic or intellectual

background may be (be them social scientists or emeritus history professors like Gebru Tareke), are apt to fall into the trap of ethnic demagogues as they have given up their individuality, their conscience and identified themselves with the defective thinking of demagogic ethnic leaders such as Meles Zenawi who do the work of thinking for all their blind ethnic followers. It is this kind of dehumanizing nationalist ideology based on the collective narcissism (self-love) of one group of people i.e. Germans during the Nazi era and Tigreans in contemporary Ethiopia which pushes them to the point of seeing every one outside them as hostile enemies who should be physically eliminated. And this is what poses the greatest of dangers as such an ethno-nationalist group which has sunk in siege mentality can impulsively act out aggressively whenever it feels threatened. The current behaviour of TPLF bears the hallmarks of such a paranoid group that has been increasingly isolated and feels threatened to the point of mobilizing its followers for the last-ditch struggle to stay in power. Sadly, under such circumstances, it is not possible to establish rapport or contact with such a hostile group given the fact that even the intellectuals from the ethnic group who must have been amenable to rational reflection have succumbed to the blinding ideology of hate which subscription to ethno-nationalism presupposes. The case of Gebru Tareke, one of the senior intellectuals of the Tigrean community and a man with a broad grasp of Ethiopian history than most Tigrean intellectuals, is a sad commentary on the pervasive influence of Tigrean ethno-nationalism and its poisonous influence on the psyche of the members of the Tigrean ethnic group today, The virulence of such a blinding and homogenizing ethno-nationalist ideology embraced by TPLF members is as deadly as the Nazi ideology of German nationalism that precipitated the extermination of 6 million Jews and 50 million Europeans. In the Ethiopia of TPLF, the defenceless Amara ethnic group may prove to be the one that will bear the brunt of the genocidal campaign that TPLF is preparing before its inevitable and forced exit. And the ethnic-cleansing that has been insidiously and progressively taking place in Ethiopia during the last 21 years and the current wave of ethnic cleansing that has openly targeted Amaras in southern Ethiopia is a harbinger of great disasters that are to unfold yet. I hope that I would be proven wrong and that the dark clouds hanging over the Ethiopian sky may turn into naught.

A Call for the Emergence of an Assertive Amhara Community

Now coming to the issue of the continued targeting of the Amara people by the TPLF, the following is in order. It is up to the Amaras, to rise up to the occasion and take stock of their current condition and review with a sense of calm and composure those factors that progressively and cumulatively added up to precipitate the present humiliation and degrading treatment to which Amaras they are exposed. Today, it is first and foremost up to the Amaras to take measures to be an **assertive community** who should not tolerate the demonization of their history, the degradation of their language (which has been dubbed Afan Ajawa or rotten language by the unruly OLF thugs and cadres). It is up to the Amaras to protect their collective identity as Amaras at a time when the government which is supposed to protect them as citizens of Ethiopia has continued to see them as its natural nemesis. It is the Amaras who should first and foremost stop the animalization of their identity, the misrepresentation of their history, a history that they share with their Ethiopian brethren of other ethnic groups. Amaras have kept silent when the monuments of Ethiopian war heroes such as Dejazmatch Afewerk Wolde Semayat who died at Korahie (Ogaden) defending his country against fascist Italy's encroachment on Ethiopia were

demolished in the town of Jijiga by the TPLF-installed local administration by way of humiliating an Ethiopian hero whom they took for an Amara. Similar things have happened elsewhere in Ethiopia when the Haile Mariam Mammo memorial hospital and the Atse Gelawdewos School located in Nazareth (now Adama) were renamed Adama hospital and Adama high school respectively. Amharas should not expect sympathy nor empathy from the TPLF, its followers and its yes-men proxy leaders such as Ato Shiferaw Shigute of southern region who is at the beck and call of his Tigrean bosses and enforces their orders by uprooting innocent Amaras – a population whose identity has been recast in negative light by official political fiat. The Amaras have to make a deep reflection on the recent history of Ethiopia in which they played a significant role along with Ethiopians of other ethnic groups in order to bring about the democratization of the Ethiopian society. They have to ask themselves why they continue to be labelled and branded as supporters of the Dergue and are identified with the heinous records of the Dergue regime despite the fact that they, along Ethiopians of other ethnic groups, paid enormous price in by becoming victims of Dergue’s repressive acts including the infamous Red Terror?. Amaras have to ponder over the following pronouncements of Tigrean elites who created TPLF and who falsely and maliciously equated the Dergue with the Amara people as the writing of the former TPLF leader Aregawi Berhe, who currently masquerades as an opposition figure, corroborates.

“The collective aspiration of the Tigrean people no doubt was not only to see the demise of the repressive Amhara regime but also to have a sound socio-economic transformation for the betterment of their life”. Aregawi Berhe, **Origins & Development of the National Movement in Tigray – A Socio-economic Analysis**, Institute of Social Studies, the Hague, the Netherlands, 1993

Reading the above statements of Aregawi Berhe, I think TPLF has come a long way in realizing both of the goals it set out to realize in February 1975 when Tigrean ethno-nationalist started their **“war of liberation from the repressive Amara regime of the Dergue”**. I say this because TPLF has successfully deposed the hated “Amara regime of the Dergue” and more over it has brought significant social and economic transformation that has changed the lives of hundreds of thousands of Tigreans, albeit, at the expense of non-Tigreans. The spectacular changes the Tigray region has witnessed in terms of infrastructural development (roads, schools, health facilities, communication networks, industrial plants, urban renewals, rural development, environmental care, etc) and the visible empowerment of Tigreans who now monopolistically control the scaling heights of the economy of Ethiopia as witness the elbowing out of members of other ethnic groups thanks to the political system that favours Tigreans more than any other ethnic group save for the members of the minority Adare ethnic group who have visibly and dangerously identified itself with the TPLF as visible beneficiaries of this apartheid-like regime. A brief foray into the Merkato area, where once the vibrant Gurage community members used to figure prominently as traders (the Gurage comprise an industrious ethnic group of Ethiopia that has traditionally been prominent in the trade and commerce sector), showcases the visible empowerment of Tigreans which has been achieved by political fiat i.e. ethnic entitlement of the victorious ethnic group that came out as a winner of the 17 years war waged by Tigreans to precipitate the downfall of the **“repressive Amara regime”** of the Dergue to use Aregawi’s description I just quoted above. The TPLF has during the last 21 years created and fanned many inter-ethnic conflicts that have left a trail of destruction in areas south of Tigray. The conflict it ignited between Oromos and Somalis in areas like Miesso (in Western Harrarghie), the gruesome massacre Benishangul area in 1992, the TPLF perpetrated in Gambella, the inter-ethnic conflict it fanned in the

Benishangul area in 1992, the massacre of Oromo peasants in Water, the killings at Areka in Wolayta, Awassa, Gedeo, etc are too numerous to count. The forced displacement which is taking place in Gambella and now Afar against defenceless civilians currently cannot be tolerated. One thing is sure though and that is this minority regime thrives on division. Its apartheid policies which it has implemented during the last 21 years duplicate the short-lived fascist Italy's policies. TPLF thrives on the politics of hatred which so far has helped it and its ethnic constituency, particularly the Tigrean elites that have stood to benefit from this system of apartheid. So far political correctness has prevented many from stating the obvious. TPLF's ethnic constituency cannot shrug off its responsibility and hide itself behind the by now familiar "independent newspapers do not reach Tigray" argument - something the self-styled Tigrean opposition repeats ad nauseam. Hundreds of thousands of Tigreans have established themselves in various parts of Ethiopia and daily witness what TPLF is doing to Ethiopians. Tigreans cannot feign lack of knowledge of what TPLF is doing in areas south of Tigray. They know how hundreds of Tigreans forcibly annexed the fertile lands of Gondar and this cannot be a basis for coexistence and peace between the people of Gondar and Tigray. Tigreans know how the emotions of other Ethiopians have been harmed by the policies of TPLF that has created two categories of Ethiopians i.e. those who are favoured by virtue of their ethnicity and those who are condemned to squalor because of their identity of being the ethnic other. This cannot go on for long. It is time to be counted by distancing one self from this heinous regime which is destroying the very social fibre that connects us as people of one country. Every one including those Tigreans on whose behalf TPLF is perpetrating untold atrocities has to assert moral agency and take matters into their hands and act responsibly by visibly distancing themselves from this regime. So far we have not seen this. The "**I am not responsible for what TPLF does**" attitude that underlies and justifies the wide spread **moral disengagement**, particularly among the Tigrean elites who should know better, cannot be tolerated any more. **Moral disengagement** and moral diffusion that we have widely witnessed among the Tigrean elites during the last 21 years would only lead to the hardening of feelings of mutual suspicion and resentment that would prove deadly to all of us. These are actually the elements that form the basis for massive violence that spiral out of control leading to conflicts of genocidal proportion. What is taking place in Bench Maji, Afar, Gambella against defenceless Amharas, Afars and natives of Gambella respectively cannot go on like this endlessly.

I am not calling on Amaras to organize themselves politically along ethnic lines as I do not believe in ethnic politics or its ramifications since they all run against the grain of pan-Ethiopian values those are inclusive as against the exclusive ethnic politics. But this is a call on Amaras to set up an association that protects their history, identity and culture so that Amaras can be counted as an **assertive community**, who are aware of their rights and duties as citizens of Ethiopia. They should understand that they happen to be members of an ethnic group that has been unjustifiably pilloried as the *bête noire* of Ethiopia. Such an assertive community can bring pressure to bear upon organized political forces operating in Ethiopia to take account of the interest of Amaras as citizens of Ethiopia so that no political group can ride roughshod over Amaras as we are witnessing now. Henceforth, Amaras should not allow any government, political group be it in power or in opposition to see them as an expendable part of the Ethiopian society and expediently negotiate over them by disregarding the interest of Amaras. Amaras urgently need an association that creates **awareness** among them about their collective interest, cultural and historical identity that has come under severe attack by TPLF which has particularly targeted Amaras as being staunch exponents of Ethiopian nationalism that threaten its political power. **Amaras have to reclaim**

their humanity by rejecting the sub-human depiction of their collective identity as being the problems of Ethiopia – something which the TPLF and the Tigrean elites, that have unabashedly thrown their political weight behind this fascistic ethno-nationalist cabal group, have been propagating through the state media they monopolistically control during the last 21 years. I hope this article would provoke a discussion that is long overdue and is commensurate with the pain and suffering the Amara people have suffered for the last 21 years. The sooner we get our acts together, the better it would be. Any one worth his salt can challenge me on any of the issues I have dealt with in this paper by presenting his or her alternative perspective. Finally I greatly appreciate the effort of AEUP in giving psychological succour to some of the victims & for following up and updating us about their plight under difficult circumstances. My thanks go also to the VOA Amharic service for reporting on the plight of these pitiful Amara men, women, vulnerable elders and children who have been condemned to unfathomable pain and distress that would leave a long lasting psychic scar even on those who may survive the agony of this tragically overtaxing negative life event precipitated by ethnic entrepreneurs of hate that ride roughshod over them.

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