

Eritrea's Context, Motivation, Sustainability & Intergenerational Equity

Any intelligent, meaningful engagement in the C21st with a sovereign state can only occur first by understanding its context and hence a nation's motivation.

Engagement otherwise, especially when utilising just the lens of human rights cannot provide generative, sustainable and / or context specific solutions and importantly peace.

Academics have long criticised the failure of international law, especially post-cold war, to recognise "collective rights". That is the continued subordination of collective rights in favour of individual and political rights. Today, NGOs are deliberately funded and with mandates to engage prescriptively, without context, and through a myopic lens of individual and political rights only – a convenient western lens for a convenient western agenda - .

Such engagement does more harm than good as it fails to address the context and protect the collective rights of the nation's people and thus creates further violations of human rights.

Eritrea's context

Eritrea is one of nine youngest sovereign nations in the international community in the last 25 years. Also, one of the poorest, - as it emerged from thirty years of struggle for independence, and yearning for its human rights and human dignity.

The struggle was a collective one, and engaged all ethnicities, Christians and Muslims alike. The Eritrean diaspora supported the war efforts through charitable donations, organisations and institutions set up abroad to support the Eritrean struggle and war effort.

After independence in 1993, there was rapid economic development. However, this was not to last. This rapid economic development was debilitated by *deliberate and subversive campaigns* to stall the Eritrean people's right to development.

The first of these campaigns was Ethiopia's laying of facts on Eritrean sovereign territory and the ensuing border war in 1998-2000. And then the international community's failure to enforce Ethiopia's implementation of the Ethiopia Eritrea Boundary Commission (EEBC) decision pursuant to the Algiers Peace Treaty, 2000.

The second campaign, the unjustified sanctions - albeit an arms embargo, were designed to prevent investment into the country. And today as if this was not enough, and in an attempt to bring this young country to its knees - the third campaign.

This third campaign - is the most vicious of them all – the disingenuous media, and activism premised on secondary information and with the sole agenda of destabilising Eritrea through regime change. And thus, violating the collective human rights of the Eritrean people and

their vision for an ***ethical, non-corrupt, sustainable, inter-generational, equitable development of the nation, by its people and for its people.***

Of course, the genuine protection of human rights of the Eritrean people is not in accord with subversive activists who have deliberately created a campaign against Eritrea, thus muddying the water using individual human rights as a ploy to destroy genuine dialogue, lock out any other perspectives, hijack politicians with lazy, rehashed, unsubstantiated accounts and access a media filled with fake news to create further hyperbole.

Furthermore, such activism has no interest in respecting the context as the activism is promoted on short termism.

This short termism is like its activism, to ensure that the destabilisation will create rehashed economic models leading to unsustainable development and superficial consumption and consumerism, planetary degradation - the creation of a few super wealthy individuals who have as much interest in the collective rights of the Eritrean people as their activism did.

My conclusions on such activism is evident from the behaviour of other similar activists – who have left countries at the stranglehold of corruption, crippling foreign debt, unsustainable development, pretence of elections and democracy, lack of genuine press freedom, greed, disgruntled youth and a destroyed national identity.

Eritrea's future trajectory at the behest of such activists, activism which is unwholesome and lacks integrity is a deeply shoddy and grim one.

Genuine activists / activism would have engaged -and through the appropriate mechanisms instead of politicised ones which always have a subversive agenda. Further there are no alternatives or solutions offered. These disingenuous activists have never set foot in Eritrea or at least in the last couple of decades, repeat rehashed accounts without any ground reality and worse still have used false testimonies to bolster their accounts. It is high time that such unethical activism is held accountable for its actions.



Thousands of Eritrean Diaspora rally against COI Report in Geneva in 2016

Eritrea's motivation

Eritrea's context needs to be respected to ensure the genuine protection of the human rights of the Eritrean people. On the global stage Eritrea is an outlier. It is a country that was born from a collective consciousness, a struggle where human rights were core to its liberation and development and her future.



EPLF fighters going to battle

This is evident in the Government's vision – ***where there is zero tolerance for corruption*** – where funding from institutions is carefully and strategically considered.

It is common knowledge that the integrity with which the Government operates with respect to funds whether through grant, aid, investment is with extreme caution. Caution to ensure that such funds are not utilised for unnecessary and / or unsustainable projects.

Along with caution there is due diligence which includes coordinated strategy meetings from all Ministries of the Government to ensure that the impact of the project and indicators of its success are relevant.

This can be frustrating and perceived as tedious by funders, investors and grantors but it is the Eritrean way. ***Haste makes waste.***

Furthermore, It is evident from such discussions that a nation-wide policy for honest, just and fair economic development - "leaving no-one behind" is the underlying impetus.

And of course, It is premised first and foremost as a responsibility to the memory of the Eritrean martyrs who laid down their lives for Eritrean independence – to free themselves from the yoke of brutal colonisation and tyranny and provide for the collective respect of human rights and human dignity.



Eritrean diaspora protesting in the USA

This was a collective struggle and the development of Eritrea today is once again from a collective vision motivated from that history which permeates the subliminal memory of every Eritrean and thus a responsibility and importantly for future generations of Eritreans - and to protect all human rights - through the just, fair, sustainable development and ensure inter- generational equity.



The 17 Sustainable Development Goals

The Government's focus on the C21st solution to the western lens of "individual rights" is the MDGs and the SDGs. These goals are pertinent and relevant and address the chronic concern with our western systems that do not address the genuine concern for the human rights of the people in the developing world.

When activists superficially talk of elections and constitution – they fail to hear the Ministers, their concerns on the west's lack of access to justice for all, or the lack of media freedom, unsustainable consumption, planetary degradation, the incredible wealth divide, excessive corruption through tax havens and now the awareness of endemic modern slavery and in western supply chains – I am afraid that our systems are not the best of examples for the developing world.

And for activists to advocate from this human rights lens is farcical especially when they advocate without awareness of the truth, context and the ground reality. In fact, a frustrating approach of rehashing textbook prescriptions to issues on human rights when we would do best instead - to engage - to support a young country at the behest of subversive policies and address poverty and infrastructural development issues to safeguard human rights.

Eritrea, Sustainability and Intergenerational Equity

Eritrea's vision for economic development is careful and considered, that is, it is intended not only for the present generation but also provides for inter-generational equity – ***that is the sustainable exploitation of natural resources to protect development for future generations.***

Eritrea is acutely aware of environmental externalities created by human induced climate change from industrialisation, polluted air, ozone depletion, soil and water depletion, deforestation and erosion of animal habitats and ensuing species extinction and of course impact on human systems. And for this reason, the Government's strategy to development is careful, strategic, environmentally friendly and for long term sustainable growth.

Unfortunately, I do not hear this from the disingenuous human rights activists – their idea of development is premised on rehashed models that have created disparity and further collectively violated human rights and have done little to protect the rights of future generations. Eritrea is a country with genuine concerns for the protection of human rights and is at the forefront of its development. Further evidenced in the way mining rights have been carefully exploited and the protection of its natural resources through equitable ownership and considered development which no Eritrean would dare entrust to any opposition.



Collective rights for just development with protection of all human rights of the Eritrean People

So, in summary, any engagement with Eritrea, requires genuine concern - to ensure the protection of human rights through capacity building and best practices, that are fit for purpose – and for a nation that was built on the very premise and foundation of protecting human rights.

The map is not the territory.

And much of what is being rehashed about Eritrea is but a map – you would be best served as the Eritreans say to “come and see for yourself”.

Ruby Sandhu. August 2018