

Let`s together speak out more loudly:

“Woyane must refrain from tampering with our children`s future”



By Hamid Drar

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The bold decision adopted by Ethiopian new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, in which he announced the full acceptance of its government to the Eri-Ethiopia border dispute international ruling and its readiness to apply it on the ground. The announcement has emboldened Eritreans and Ethiopians with a wave of rejoicing. As a result, many hoped that the two countries would be free of tension and that everyone would be relieved.

As optimism mounted, the TPLF leadership “Woyane” broke its silence, three days ago, 13th of June, 2018 to upset the atmosphere by openly rejecting the decision of the central Ethiopian government. I would like in this article to lift the lid on the negative role played by “Woyane” ,during the last quarter of century in fragmenting the Eritrean opposition by distracting them from doing their national obligations. That exactly what happened on the day of announcing Meles Zenawi`s Plan of the Five Points in 2004.

It is true that there are strong cultural, historical and economic bonds that tie Eritrea with all its neighbors, especially Ethiopia, for known reasons. It is also true that the two countries have remained in a state of no-war-no- peace for nearly two decades. No matter who caused the two-and-a-half-year-old bloody border war, the two

countries signed a peace agreement in Algiers in 2000, when the malevolent war ended.

I am not here to delve into the details of what Eritrea or Ethiopia has done to solve the conflict to prevail the peace into our region. What I would like to do here is to point out to the negative effects of the decisions regarding the border dispute taken, in different times, by the Woyane Government on the Eritrean Opposition.

I think that, under the pretext of finding solution to the border conflict, the Ethiopian authorities sought to create a state of confusion among the Eritreans in general, and the opposition groups in particular. That means, Ethiopia does not aim by any resolution it proposes on the subject of the border dispute to find a solution, but its main objective is to weaken and paralyze the Eritreans in diaspora, who find always themselves divided between supporters and opponents of Woyane proposals. At the end of the day, we notice that the incongruity of Eritreans on assessing the Ethiopian plans and decisions ends up into diverting them from their main mission of creating an appropriate ground to build a constitutional and democratic state.

To see how the Eritrean opposition is being victim to the wicked policies of TPLF, and in order to elucidate what I am saying, I will try to go 14 years back, to 2004, when Ethiopia adopted the five-point project, and told the world its acceptance to the International Border Court ruling.

After a long hesitation and rejection of the International Border Verdict, in April 13, 2002, Meles Zenawi said on November 25, 2004 that "although the findings of the court's decision are not legitimate and unfair, nevertheless we in Ethiopia have decided to peace, but accepting the arbitration does not mean that we will give up any land."

Before moving forward, I think we need to pay careful attention to two very offensive words mentioned by Meles Zenawi: "Illegal and Unjust findings of the Commission". Imagine, on the one hand, he's pretending to accept the verdict "in principle" and calling it an "illegitimate and unjust" ruling, on the other. What a contradictory and evasive statement was!

"His government will begin an immediate dialogue with Eritrea to implement the ruling in a way that promotes sustainable peace and brotherly relations between the two peoples," Meles Zenawi said.

In addition, the Prime Minister told the Ethiopian Parliament that the talks with Eritrea would be in the light of the five-point plan that Ethiopia wanted to implement so that it could focus on its priorities in "development and good governance".

In that morning, Meles Zenawi mentioned in front of the Parliament two points out of the five points when he said: "First, Ethiopia, which previously refused to pay the demarcation costs of the Boundary Commission, would do so under this initiative and would allow the Commission staff to carry out work on the border to pave the way for the demarcating process."

As we well remember, Eritrea, from its side, arguing the commission's decision should be implemented before it can begin talks with Ethiopia, it refused to meet Kofi Annan's then-UN Secretary-General envoy, former Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy, when he tried to start facilitating talks between the Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and the Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki.

The controversial statements and counter statements that triggered these days, in reaction to the Ethiopian government declaration to fully accept and apply the Hague boundary ruling remind us of what happened in the past.

Exactly, as if history repeats itself, the same thing happened 14 years ago, when the Ethiopian Government announced the aforementioned "Five Point Plan". As it's said that under that plan, Ethiopia informed the world that "in principle" it has accepted the implementation of the border dispute's verdict between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

The Eritreans, especially in the opposition camp, were divided on that "initiative" between those who were enthusiastic about it and those who considered it to bring nothing new but to tamper with the words. The initiative has, along with other causes, led to divisions within the opposition; including the political party that I was hold its membership.

The party became a victim of its leadership discord over Meles Zenawi's five-point plan and split into two. While the first group judged the initiative as a step forward and demanded the party to open office in Ethiopia, warning that the rejection of the proposal may put the party in the ranks of Asmara regime to the extent that causes the party loses sympathy and diplomatic support.

On the contrary of that, the second group rejected the ideas proposed by their comrades in the first group and labelled them as naïve. Over time and after five years after Meles Zenawi's initiative, the party split into two clashing parties.

While the group that has accepted the initiative didn't content with claiming that the plan was a positive step, but it went far to depicting anyone who opposes it as a hireling PFDJ regime.

The group that rejected Meles Zenawi "Initiative", from its side, submitted detailed reasons to justify its rejection. They were as follows:

a. "The Ethiopian government didn't adopt a new or different position in its initiative. In fact, it rejected the original decision of the International Commission," when it clearly mentioned: We accept it "in principle". What does it mean there is something missing in the court's original ruling prevents its implementation on the ground."

Accordingly, we believe that even though the Government of Ethiopia has not added, overtly, the term "in principle" in its refusal to the ruling prior the current initiative of the five points, but its permanent callings to the Eritrean Government for dialogue means that it has accepted the initiative in principle and not definitively."

b. Rationally, if Eritrea or Ethiopia has something to say regarding the Court's decision itself or about the mechanisms of its application, it does not call upon the other state to question it; because it is its adversary in the dispute that required recourse to international justice. But it is the Boundary Demarcation Committee that should be questioned, so the pretext of asking for dialogue is null and void, which is to waste time and mislead public opinion."

The same group had moved and said: "We believe that Ethiopia's call for Eritrea to involve into a dialogue aimed at achieving a number of evil-minded objectives, including:

1. In the case of a bilateral dialogue, Ethiopia would exert pressure on Eritrea and threaten it to achieve the gains it had been dreaming and failed to reach them through war or arbitration;

2. If Eritrea agrees to engage in dialogue according to the Ethiopian call, and rejects the unrealistic demands, Ethiopia will distort Eritrea to say: "Are we did not tell you that Eritrea is not interested in achieving peace!" The Ethiopian Government will take that refusal as a pretext to begin its plans to undermine Eritrea.

In order to strengthen its position and to make it clearer, the Group of the party that disagreed with Meles Zenawi plan, it raised the following arguments:

a: "If our position in rejecting the five points and in defending our sovereignty appeared to be a similar to that of Isaias Afewerki or the Eritrean government. What's wrong with that? Are our differences with the government in Asmara based on fundamental political differences, or on a personal hatred? If we are motivated by personal ill will, this is harmful and unhelpful to our struggle for democratic change."

B: "The allegation that our rejection of the initiative, we will backfire on us to lose sympathizers, this is not true. Contrary to that, our defense of the sovereignty of our homeland and our refusal to comply with the control of the Woyane government in addition to our struggle for a democratic change in the country does not isolate us from our people and our supporters, but rather earns us the pride and respect of our people and friends.

Anyhow one chapter of our history that lasted for the last 14 years, ended up into producing a scattered and conflicting opposition. An opposition which didn't only be unsuccessful to rise to the level of our people aspirations, but it also failed to protect itself to remain united and defy Woyane intervention into the Eritrean national matters.

It is widely believed that, Eritrea, Ethiopia and the whole region are approaching a new chapter of peaceful relations that has commenced from the 5th of June, 2018 when the new Prime Minister of Ethiopia Dr Abiy Ahmed and the Executive Committee of the ruling party fully accepted the Eri-Ethiopia border dispute's ruling.

Unquestionably, no naive person would rule out that the declared desire of the new Ethiopian Prime Minister to fully implement the demarcation process in light of the international resolution of 13 April 2002 will not be aborted and emptied of its content. The forces deployed here and there, who have lived and benefited from the creation of contradictions and the perpetuation of wars and conflicts will not remain idle.

The June 13, 2018 statement issued by the Central Committee of Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), in which the hard-handed wing of the organisation leadership expressed its disguised rejection of the central government's decision and its demand for an emergency meeting for EPRDF, is an example of the challenges facing the Eritreans and Ethiopians who are seeking to solve the current border dispute and other potential areas of conflict between the two brotherly peoples to achieve a sustainable peace .

In conclusion, taking into account the abovementioned efforts the TPLF government aimed at undermining the Eritrean state's independence by insisting that the borders to remain without demarcation and that the two countries stayed in a state of no war and no peace. It will be politically wise for Eritreans adopt a strategy that enables them to save their country from what is planning against it by many enemies, amongst them stands the Weyane's adventurous wing.

It is important to enable the new Prime Minister of Ethiopia's initiative to demarcate the border to see the light and to abort any opportunistic mentalities that attempting to ignite wars between the two countries. The following strategy is needed to be adopted both by Eritreans and all Ethiopians and Tigrayans in particular to live together in security and peace as neighbours and brothers. with Eritreans in general and the Tigray people in particular:

1. Support the initiative of the Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed and urge him to continue what he began to demarcating the mutual borders;
2. We need to work and coordinate the truehearted Tigrayans to confront the hardline group of Woyane who is still dreaming of building the Great Tigray at the expense of Eritrea and the other Ethiopian territories;
3. As the first and final target of all the hidden agenda of our enemies is Eritrea and its sovereignty, so, regardless of if that the borders are demarcated or not, **all**

Eritreans are anticipated to work together without delay to build a broad and strong national umbrella to abort any plots aimed in ruining our land and people unity.

4. The main mission of us as Eritrean nationals, in this critical junction is needed to work in different directions, internally to save our independence and our unity. Internationally, we are expected to defy any conspiracy against us and to expose procrastination of the wicked wing of Woyane leadership.