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The Net Result of Abiy's 'National Dialogue' Prolongs the Ethiopian Civil War than End It!

(OLF-OLA Press Release)

Three years into Abiy Ahmed's war on Oromia and 15 months into the war on Tigray, talks of national dialogue, reconciliation, and peaceful resolution of the Ethiopian civil war occupy a good part of the bandwidth across media houses: whether one looks at the social media or the conventional outlets, both in Ethiopia and overseas. Following a relative lull in the north since late December 2020, the 'government' of the Prosperity Party (PP) is prosecuting an operation to eliminate the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) in the West, South, and Central parts of the country using desperate human wave tactics on the ground assisted by drones/air force fleets, on the one hand, and fill the air with 'peaceful national dialogue,' on the other.

Why is the regime busy staging 'peaceful national dialogue' while it is also hellbent on intensifying conflicts in all parts of the country? Is there a process of peaceful national dialogue in Ethiopia?

To successfully conduct a national dialogue that can contribute to sustainably easing the political malaise rocking the country at its core, the Oromo Liberation Front- Oromo Liberation Army (OLF-OLA) believes, that the following confidence-building measures and conditions are a non-negotiable prerequisite:

1. Reaching a negotiated cessation of hostilities across the country;
2. Dealing with Eritrean influence and withdrawing its forces from Ethiopia;
3. Releasing all political prisoners across the country;
4. Opening unimpeded humanitarian corridors wherever it's needed;
5. Repealing the proclamation that designates OLA and TPLF as terrorist organizations;
6. An all-inclusive process that leads to the establishment of an independent commission acceptable to all stakeholders.

Regrettably, none of these confidence-building measures have been met.

1. Negotiated cessation of hostilities across the country

Short of a relative lull in the Amhara region, the country is still in the depth of active conflicts and aerial attacks in the West (Gidami areas), South (Guji area), Central (north and west Shewa), and North (Wollo areas), including along the borders of and inside Tigray: Abala, May Tsemri, Tsegede, and Shiraro.

Unable to dislodge the Oromo Liberation Army from Oromia and the hearts and minds of the Oromo people, the regime has been using different tactics that they believe would do the trick. It is relentlessly using drones from, inter alia, a new base in Assosa, and human waves from the ground to attack our positions in the west.

At some point, the regime was deploying Abiy's troops with artificial wigs to impersonate members of the OLA, and committing atrocities in a frantic attempt to distance OLA from the Oromo people.

Now, it is trying to give some credence to its 'national dialogue' by parading dismissed ex-members of the OLF and OLA in front of its media outlets. It is also trying to deceive the international community into believing that Ethiopian stakeholders of all persuasion are participating in the process.

The reality on the ground is that the federal government and all regional Special Forces are fervently recruiting and training new soldiers. The regime—through its deputy Chief of Staff of the Army is also threatening the second chapter of heightened offensive to the conflict that took place in Nov and Dec 2021.

2. Withdrawing Eritrean forces from Ethiopia

With the benefit of hindsight, it's now clearer than ever that the world erred Abiy's war pact of 2018 with the Eritrean regime for a peace agreement for which it bestowed the Nobel Peace Prize.

The world believed that it found a reformer in one of the most troubled regions of the world in the person of Abiy Ahmed, while Abiy took the bestowal as a stamp of approval to do whatever he desired in the region. Abiy, then, invited Isaiass's forces to assist in genocide, mainly, in Tigray and Oromia. Amhara expansionists took advantage of the opportunity to invade parts of north-west Oromia, and south and western Tigray. Abiy is now beholden to both forces. Peace will remain transient until Eritrea's influence in the region is dealt with and its forces removed from Ethiopia.

Today, however, far from removing Eritrean troops from the country, Eritrean forces are deep inside the country's security apparatus in Finfinne (Addis Ababa) and fighting with our forces in Western Oromia, not to mention their continued role, chiefly, in western Tigray.

3. Releasing all political prisoners

Only a few months into office, and as soon as he made sure that he was in control of the country's main security and intelligence architecture, Abiy had begun a heavy crackdown on members of the Qerroo movement, Oromo Liberation Front, Oromo Liberation Army, and on members of his own party that dare to sympathize with any of the major questions of the Oromo people.

Over the past three years, tens of thousands of political prisoners are being kept in various prisons, concentration camps, and makeshift prisons in Oromia alone.

Together with the OLF leadership these tens of thousands of political prisoners remain in jail.

4. Opening unimpeded humanitarian corridors wherever it's needed

Impeding humanitarian access and obstructing aid from reaching the public in need of assistance directly stems from the policy that the regime follows regarding populations/regions where opposition forces enjoy greater support. It's a regime policy to punish the people where it believes political forces such as the Oromo Liberation Front-Oromo Liberation Army (OLF-OLA) or TPLF enjoy bigger public support. Until recently, the regime was never enigmatic about its intentions to punish the people based on where their political allegiance lies. A member of the senior leadership of the Prosperity Party (PP) is on record for publicly stating that "when catching the fish remains elusive, you drain the ocean" referring to his party's strategy of punishing the Oromo people in pursuit of the Oromo Liberation Army.

It is, therefore, not surprising that the regime is still blocking close to 90% of the aid that should have been delivered to needed areas.

5. *Repealing the proclamation that designates OLA and TPLF as terrorist organizations*

We should all recall that, in May 2021, PM Abiy hastily moved a bill through parliament to designate TPLF and OLA as terrorist organizations precisely to avoid the international pressure to bring about an end to the Ethiopian civil war through national dialogue.

Today, eight months into the enactment of the bill and despite the talk of national dialogue to mislead the international community, demonizing rhetoric still reigns supreme across the regime's media platforms when it comes to the Oromo Liberation Army and Tigray forces.

6. *An all-inclusive process that leads to the establishment of an independent Commission*

Recently, the regime concocted a process in which it solely controls the establishment of an 'independent' national commission that would oversee the processes of the national dialogue. It used a parliament that came to be through a fraudulent election by expunging all formidable opponents and constituted by the ruling PP and its allies, to pass a bill that creates a commission that answers to the same body. None of the warring parties, not even opposition parties that were pushed out of the electoral process, had a say on this bill that established a commission to supervise the 'national dialogue.'

It is, therefore, a foregone conclusion that all major confidence-building measures and preconditions that are necessary for a genuine national dialogue that could sustainably ease the political problems of the country, and ensure peace and security in the region are far from being met. Neither was there an intention to meet these necessary confidence-building measures in the first place.

What is PM Abiy's national dialogue actually about then?

PM Abiy's national dialogue is all about accomplishing the following main objectives:

At home:

1. *Unify of his own political camp:* the internal differences among those nostalgic of centralized Imperial Ethiopia. There are conspicuous cleavages within the coalition that the PM cobbled together to prosecute the civil war. The premier appears to have lost firm control over the Amhara expansionists whose forces are being independently trained by the Eritrean regime. There are also antagonisms between the Oromia and Amhara wings of the PP. The 'national dialogue' is meant to ease this infighting.
2. *Coopt some Oromo actors for the purpose of the national dialogue, if possible, and create fresh discord among Oromo forces.* The regime has long been in the business of sowing discord among Oromo nationalists and people with any relatable sympathy for the questions of the broader Oromo public, simple questions like the right to internal self-autonomy and self-administration and devolution of power to regional states. By releasing only political prisoners that it considers as moderate, and decorating the national dialogue with their participation, the regime hopes to create fresh discord between Oromo forces who are part of the dialogue and those who would remain outside.
3. *Perhaps also, make a bogus public call to the United Front to take part in the dialogue.* The regime might make a public call for members of the United Front of the Ethiopian Federalist and Confederalist Forces (UFEFCF) to partake in the 'national dialogue.' By making a public call to the United Front (UFEFCF), which includes the OLA and TPLF, on terms which the regime knows we'll refuse because none of the confidence-building measures have been properly

addressed, the regime hopes to get us castigated and branded as parties who refused to give peace a chance.

Internationally:

4. *Securing access to funds from the Bretton Woods: International financial institutions, the US, and the other Western States.*

The penultimate purpose of the ‘national dialogue is to get access to foreign currency, after an ostensible ‘attempt’ at peace. China, Turkey, and UAE might have helped the regime in providing cheaper arms deals and temporary handouts. The regime, however, recognizes that the structural problems that currently bedevil the Ethiopian economy cannot be addressed without western intervention.

5. *Use Western money to rehabilitate the economy to finance the war, and to buy more weapons, and technology to fuel the war.*

The ultimate purpose of the ‘national dialogue is to recover the economy to be able to finance the civil war, and at this point, the recovery of the economy is needed, primarily to finance the civil war. Western money will also be used to buy more gadgets to ease Abiy’s genocidal adventures throughout the country, in particular, in Oromia, Tigray, Benishangul Gumuz, and parts of Amhara against, inter alia, the Agew and Kemant peoples.

We, therefore, remind the international community that, when all is said and done, the net effect of the current national dialogue will be prolonging the Ethiopian civil war, not ending it. We further advise all stakeholders, national and international, not to cooperate with a ‘national dialogue’ that we can tell from the outset is meant to prolong the Ethiopian civil war than end it.

Victory to the Oromo and all oppressed people!

OLF-OLA High Command

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