



Afar People's Party (APP) denounces illegal land grabbing and Woyane monopolized investments in Afar region of Ethiopia.

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Press Release

The evacuation of the fertile Awash Valley from its pastoralist inhabitants for state owned agriculture started in 1960s, continued through the dergue regime and is getting worst during the current tribal junta of Woyane. These huge agricultural projects have persistently been opposed by the Afars for several reasons. Firstly, the land grab meant that the pastoralist communities were pushed to arid areas without sufficient water and pasture. Secondly, the local communities were excluded from decision making and participation, thereby their rights to enjoy education, health and other socioeconomic advantages were restricted. Thirdly, the Afar people have exercised the communal ownership of the land since time immemorial. Therefore, the state ownership of land was associated with occupation and subjugation.

The Woyane regime systematically has collapsed the previous state farms in the Awash Valley and at present nearly 95% of the agricultural investments in the area are owned by Woyane firms. Banks in Ethiopia are prohibited from providing investment loans to any Afar in the field of agriculture that maximized the economic domination of the Woyane in the region. Moreover, Woyane leased more than 80 thousand hectares of the most fertile land of Awash Valley for huge sugarcane plantation to multinational companies, displacing thousands of the pastoralist communities. In this joint venture project, the Indian *Uttam Sucrotech International Pvt. Ltd.* signed a contract to build a new sugar factory at Tendaho with initial investment capital of US \$640 million. Two huge dams have been built to support these projects on already the most polluted rivers on earth causing ecological and human life disaster. Watch the shocking documentary (part I & part II) on the following link related to pollution of Awash River: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eUqgUR4qI98>, and the construction site of the Logiya dam at the link below: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lolkCgQAUeU&feature=related>

Health experts have reported that the dams and the severely polluted Awash River to contribute independently to the current cholera epidemic and other adverse health outcomes, but their combined effect in Afar region was described as disastrous.

Furthermore, the Woyane investors grabbed the Afdera Salt Valley. The Afars who were historically acknowledged in producing and marketing the famous Amole salt were conquered by Woyane investors equipped with high-tech machineries. The salt business was the lifeline of the Afars in the Afdera region. Currently the socioeconomic structure of these communities has collapsed and they are left to their destinies. Similarly, Woyane driven projects are taking place in Dallol area to produce Potash. Another Indian company *Sainik Coal Mining Pvt. Ltd* has signed a twenty years contract to exploit potash and other saline minerals, such as magnesium and calcium deposit in the Afar region of Dallol with initial investment capital of US\$450 million.

The Woyane investments in Afar region are benefiting few millionaires, while driving hundreds of thousands of poor people to extreme poverty in most drought prone environment.

- APP strongly denounces investment projects operating without any social and environmental impact assessment and lacks policies to support displaced pastoralist communities.
- APP encourages the foreign investors to consider social and environmental aspects prior to implementation of their future projects.
- APP demand the foreign investors to discharge their moral and ethical obligations to minimize social and environmental harms related to their investments.

Afar People's Party

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