

THE WAY FORWARD FOR POLITICAL OPPOSITION FORCES IN THE CURRENT ETHIOPIAN POLITICS (speech delivered by Shigut Geleta (Dr.) on the Workshop organized by Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE) 28-29th October 2010 RISC, Reading, UK)

GREETINGS & GRATITUDE

Dear Mr. Chairman, distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like, first of all, to express my deepest gratitude to the organizing committee for having organized such a timely conference that aims at concerting and coordinating various voices against the ever worsening political landscape in Ethiopia. As we all recognize, nowadays it is not as simple as it appears at the end of the day to convene such a diversified gathering. I am sure that the organizing individuals must have been through many ups and downs to finally achieve such an event to take place. To say the least, the very thought and initiation to organize such a meeting requires to stand against the established mind set-ups and traditional working system of politics in Ethiopia towards a broader and holistic perception of the much interwoven major socio-political problems in the country. In view of this, therefore, I congratulate the individual organizers for their efforts to make, I should say, such a breakthrough move in bringing together different political organizations and civil societies to deliberate on what is common to all of us, namely, the prime importance of justice, democracy and peace in Ethiopia. Given the optimally diverse nature of participants at this Workshop, I have every reason to look forward achieving tangible cooperative framework on the most practical and actual socio-political issues of the country.

THE NATURE OF ETHIOPIAN STATE AND ITS BASIC PROBLEMS

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we all know, Ethiopia is a multi-nations state, comprising more than 80 nations and nationalities¹. It was formerly designated as the Empire of Ethiopia² until the deposition of its last emperor, Haile Selassie in 1974. As it has been the case with all empires, the making of the Ethiopian Empire has been characterized by the attempt to establish a single nation-state through violently subduing all other nations and nationalities. This making of an Ethiopian empire became a reality for the first time under the Emperor Menilik II³ by having relinquished the independent existence of various northern and southern Kingdoms as well as Confederacies under the *Gada* traditional ruling system. The making of Ethiopia has left us, however, not only the Ethiopian State we know today but also all the intricate and complex political problems of the country with which we all have been struggling to solve for generations thereafter.

¹ Central Statistical Authority 1998. „The 1994 population and Housing census of Ethiopia results at country level Addis Ababa: Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Office of population and Housing census commission.

² Leenco Lata, 1999, the Ethiopian State at the Crossroads, Decolonization & Democratization or Disintegration. The Red Sea Press Inc.

³ Vaughan, S and Tronvoll, K, 2003. The culture of Power in Contemporary Ethiopian political life. Edita Sevrige. P 151



In other words, the way the Ethiopian empire state was made has become the breeding ground for the chronic fundamental political problems of the country, as building an empire was necessarily related to domination and suppression, exclusion and exploitation of the conquered peoples by the conquering nation. That is precisely the reason that explains why the inner dynamics of politics in Ethiopia always lie in the question of nations and nationalities. Take any socio-political issue, be it economic, cultural, legal or social, it would be difficult to address any of these aspects without having recourse to the issue of nations and nationalities, since the latter makes in my view the political context.

It was not accidental therefore that almost all major political forces, including the Ethiopian Student Movements (ESM) in the 1960s, and later multi-national political parties such as Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) and All Ethiopian Socialist Movement (MEISON) couldn't do away with the issue of nations and

nationalities as the cornerstone of every socio-political issues they used to raise, such as for example, the question of land to the tiller, equitable distribution of education, health, development and etc.

Accordingly, the emergence of national liberation fronts such as the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) etc. have their root in the ever sharpening nature of that foundational problem of nationality in Ethiopian politics. They came to play crucial role in the dynamics of Ethiopian politics. The demise of the last two governments (His Emperor Haile Silassie and Mengistu Hailemaria's military rule), for example, cannot be fully explained without giving due value to the role played by those liberation movements and forces.

With the demise of the later, Eritrea became independent while the remaining liberation fronts managed to create a coalition of transitional government with the hope of resolving the fundamental and persistent political issue of the country by instituting a fair and just political system. As you all know, this was in May 1991. The Transitional Government of Ethiopia ratified the Transitional Charter⁴ with core principles: the right of self-determination of nations and nationalities, Decentralization of State (devolving of power with Federal setting based on nation and nationalities), liberalization of the economy and multiparty democratic system that would embrace international Human Rights Bill as part of the Transitional Charter for the respect of human rights.

However, these core principles were in practice reversed and nullified soon as the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) came to assume monopolistic or hegemonic posture within the coalition. This tendency of the TPLF-led Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) has eventually revealed itself not only in marginalizing but also in its open and violent elimination of its coalition partners. As

⁴ Transitional period charter, Negarit Gazeta No. 1, 1991.

we all remember, this has prevailed as soon as the first popular election process started in the attempt to lend the transitional government a democratic legitimacy.

After the Transitional Government was set up, the first snap- elections in the transitional period were conducted in April 1992, to fulfill the aims of empowering ethnic and national groups by decentralizing authority, federalizing governmental structures and providing local governments (woreda and kebele) with popular mandate. Almost 450 of the 600 Woredas (sub-districts) held this snap election. In Oromia Regional zones, the OLF won with landslide as well as a majority vote in Finfinnee (Addis Ababa). This state of facts sent a negative signal to the TPLF. The overall situation was not only surprising but chilling to the TPLF leadership. It came to realize that it has no chance to rule Ethiopia in free and fair democratic election. Cognizant of this fact the regime opted therefore to a naked rule of the gun by having started violating all the principles embodied in the Charter. Consequently, the EPRDF that is composed of surrogates organized from various national groups under the full control of TPLF started to carefully plan a change in political strategy. It mainly started to focus on politics of power protection and consolidation at the expense of the broad based principles of the Charter. This dictatorial attitude created confrontations over election rules, registration of voters, regulations of registration of candidates and many related matters. Intimidation and planned manipulation of democratic processes eventually resulted in the departure of the second strong political force, namely, the OLF, and other forces such as All Amhara People Organization (AAPO), Ethiopian Democratic Action Group (EDAG), Gedeo People's Democratic Organization (GPDO), Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and Sidama Liberation Movement (SLM) from the election. Other political parties and liberation movements were banned afterwards because of their participation in the Paris Peace Conference in 1993. Even after 1993 some political organizations have shown their commitment to participate in the political process, if it is free and fair. However, the TPLF/EPRDF considered these forces to be the biggest threats to its monopoly of power as they enjoy massive popular support. Thus, TPLF not only prevents them from operating freely among Ethiopian people but also subjects their

members, supporters and constituents to intimidation, detention, and killings (Candidates and elected members of Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Coalition (SEPDC), Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement (OFDM), Oromo National Congress (ONC) and Coalition for Unity and Democracy Party (CUDP) and etc. This simply indicates TPLF is always at war with any democratic force that wants to compete unless its victory is assured at the end of the day. This was what happened in 1992, 1995, 2005 and finally in 2010 where it claimed a 99.6% victory⁵ – a mockery of democracy.

Since 1991, the TPLF has been systematically building its hegemony both in Ethiopia and in the region of the Horn of Africa.

HOW DID TPLF MANAGE TO ESTABLISH ITS HEGEMONY

1) The green light by the powerful western governments at the very outset: the first blessing in disguise event for the TPLF was occurred as the mediators of the National Conference on Peace and reconciliation, namely the USA, gave it a green light to the TPLF army to march in to Finfinne (Addis Ababa) to fill the power vacuum created by the departure of the Dergue in 1991. At the time, the OLF has forwarded a proposal of the need to install a Provisional United Nation Administration (PUNA)⁶, which will transfer power in due course to democratically elected peoples representatives. This was far-reaching in its approach by opening a playing field for all political forces without exclusion to tackle fundamental political issues that form the essence of the conflict, and constructive enough to ease progress towards an honorable justice and lasting peace. However, as early as the summer of 1991 when Peaceful and Democratic Transitional Conference was held it became clear that TPLF and its EPRDF coalition's intention in deciding who will participate on the Conference which heralded for Transitional Government.

⁵ Reuters May 25,2010: Ethiopia's ruling party wipes out opposition

⁶ OLF peace proposal issued on April 18,1990

2) In its carefully designed preparation of the main binding documents such as the Constitution on a western standard, TPLF worked hard to impress the international community in giving itself the semblance of democratic character.

3) Portraying itself as a determinant stability factor both in the country and the region. The regime presented itself as the primary guardian of stability of the region. It further gives the impression that Ethiopia without it and its army would become just another African war zone.

4) Superficial reforms and cooperation on international affairs: the regime figured out exactly how to allow just enough superficial reforms to attract the Western Embassies while at the same time reminding them that Ethiopia for all its faults was still an anchor of stability in a turbulent neighborhood. By having done so, it sold its politics and met several goals simultaneously. Primarily, it secured uncritical support from the United States. The identification of Somalia by the US since 9/11, as an area of state collapse conducive to support for al-Qaeda, the presence of US force in Djibouti and the Islamist agendas of some of the local factions have enabled Ethiopia to link its own security interests in the region to the “Global war on terror”. Since Meles asserts that he is cooperating with the U.S in the war against “Global terrorism”, the overwhelming focus on terrorism is overshadowing US initiatives to resolve conflicts and promote justice in Ethiopia like elsewhere in conflict zones. As a result, today, US financed TPLF government is in the phase of building a totalitarian hegemony

5) Utilization of Money and power: Having full access to the country’s resource, Meles affords to literally buy many politicians including those who oppose him. He even affords to buy lobbyists to promote his agenda in Washington, Brussels (EU) and London (UK). Record showed that Meles’ government is the best client of some lobbyist firms such as Burson-Mastellers, DLA piper, Dewey and Leboeuf and Mark Saylor co. with estimated annual coast of five million dollars per year⁷.

⁷ <http://www.Corpwatch.org/article.php?id=98>

6) Empty promise accompanied with fear of politics. Meles's regime is perceived as unique in Africa in that the constitution guards the right of each of its constituents, nations and nationalities and peoples to secede and form separate states of their own. It is true that regional and group interests could be openly expressed in the way it has never been before.

7) Divide and rule policy. The regime pursues a malicious divide and rule policy by instigating a chain of conflicts between historically peaceful coexisted nations (For example Sidama and Oromos, Somalis and Oromos, Gedeos and Oromos, Anyuwak and Nuers, Oromo and Afar, Oromo and Konsos, Oromo and Amharas, Gumuzis and Oromos and etc.). After instigating the conflict the regime posture itself as a neutral peacemaker. In actual fact, however, it works for aggravating the situation by intervening or disrupting, for example, the traditional methods of resolving conflict among neighboring communities. Eventually tries to get support either from one or both after bloodbath.

8) Misuse of Humanitarian aid and social services. For its Sham election TPLF government is using distribution of land, fertilizer and humanitarian aid as main instruments to get vote from the peasants.

9) Use of its Military and security force as extension of its party, since there is no distinction left between legislative, judiciary and executive bodies of the state. All these institutions are rather parts and parcels of the TPLF itself. Its military and security forces are continuously intimidating the opponents on various orchestrated charges. The EPRDF/TPLF regime not only abused the judiciary, the media and economic sector but it possessed them as a part of its own party structure. Today what is called the private sector is actually mainly made up of two core groups, the Midroc business empire, owned by Sheik Mohammed Alamoudin and the TPLF owned enterprises.

These above mentioned factors are only to mention few among so many other factors that led the TPLF to its current ethnic oligarchy.

Today Ethiopia is under an iron fist rule of an individual. We have counted a decade since the Tigrean ethnic oligarchy has given its way to an individual autocracy of the Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi. Today the Prime Minister is the most uncontested figure both within the ruling party and the country. He has virtually monopolized all the most important positions in the party and the government. As the recent reshuffling of the cabinet clearly showed, even the notable senior members of the TPLF are no longer immune of the power of the Prime Minister. The reshuffle has showed that all government personalities, both at the federal and regional levels, are nothing but chess figures at the mercy of Meles Zenawi. The situation is strikingly reminiscent of the military rule of Mengistu Hailemariam. Meles is a Commander-in chief of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces, a head of the government as a Prime Minister, a chairman of the TPLF/EPRDF etc in exactly the way Mengistu was two decades ago.

This does not mean however that the Prime Minister has relinquished his reliance on his ethnic party as this seems to have been implied. On the contrary, the TPLF remains intact in being the home base for its power. TPLF functions still not only as the nucleus of the ruling party, the EPRDF, but also as a nucleus to the entire government/state machinery as a whole. This pertains particularly to the military and the police force, the security and the media institutions, and finally the judiciary system. The dominance of the TPLF within the state apparatus remains still boundless in that it even controls the entire fabric of civil society including the economy itself.

Despite all of these, can one still speak of a democratic Ethiopia?

In 1992 TPLF claimed to have won 96.6 percent of the vote that aimed for establishing elected local and regional Administrations. Eighteen years later, in the 2010 National Election, TPLF led EPRDF claimed another landslide victory with 99.6 %. Is that to say democracy is a process?

THE ECONOMIC SITUATION

Today, almost half of Ethiopia's population lives in absolute poverty. Each year millions face serious food insecurity. Scarcity, inflation and ever widening inequality are the glaring economic facts. Exacerbated chronic food insecurity caused by policy related failures that include dependence on subsistence farming, land tenure, weak markets, poor infrastructure and reliance on external food aid. Ethiopia relies on development assistance for 40% of its public sector spending and is likely to remain heavily dependent for many years to come. Ethiopia's long-term Debt sustainability is extremely fragile. The country's ratio of exports to GDP is very low⁸, and exports are concentrated in coffee, a commodity whose price was near its 20-year low in 2003. Per-capita spending on health is about one sixth the sub-Saharan averages. Safe drinking water is available to just 15 percent of the rural population; HIV/AIDS is a growing threat.

Most nation and nationalities including Oromos are not only deprived of their right and resources but also threatened for their very existence as this has become a reality with the recent land grabbing policy of the regime, which is going to jeopardize and endanger millions of lives in the coming few years. The adversary nature of this policy is not only the fact that it dispossesses and uproots settled farmers from their land but also that it poisons and destructs the ecological balance of the traditional farming communities in various ways.

Human rights Situation

Ethiopia is the signatory and state party of most conventions and covenants regarding the respect of human rights. However it remained an open secret that Ethiopia bid itself to its ratified covenants and to the constitution of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE).

⁸ http://www.ethiopianreporter.com/english/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=657:ethiopias-external-debt-stock-mounts-up-to-usd-52-billion&catid=98:news&Itemid=511

The regime masked its real nature behind these rhetoric democratic white papers, which are solely designed to attract the good will of and necessary support from Western Powers. In deed the true picture of the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) led Ethiopian government is different. Since it came to power its conducts regarding human rights violations is characterized by mass massacre, extra-judicial killings, arbitrary arrests, torture, displacement and forced conscription of the productive forces to non-ending wars on political opponents. Mass massacre of Ogadeni and Oromos at various occasions, Sidama at loqee, Shaka-Menzengir, Anuwak and Nuer, killings of Oromo students at various occasions, the death of 192 peaceful civilians in the rally of 2005 national election are a few out of many to be mentioned.

This notching record has been/is reported by various human rights organizations. Reports from individuals, witnesses from victims and defectors, including that of a former perpetrator Siye Abreha and some individuals from the government authorities, testify the atrocities. The former Defense Minister Siye Abraha witnessed to the world community that “the Ethiopian prisons speak Oromo”.

Among many others, the right of speech, the right of press and the right of free association count to the principal human rights universally documented as a yardstick for a democratic system. None of these rights is practical in Ethiopia. On top of imprisoning and banning sovereign journalists, the incumbent minority government in Ethiopia jams radios and blocks global Internet access. The self declared jamming of the VOA by the Prime Minister Meles Zenawi himself is a case in point.

It has become common practice for TPLF’s kangaroo court to hand down death and life imprisonment to Oromo’s. Will this stop the Oromo struggle?

The situation of Human right abuse is not limited to the territory of Ethiopia. It even extends over trans-national borders to almost all neighboring countries. Since there is no peace in Ethiopia, the Oromos and other nationals who flee from their country to escape atrocity of the Ethiopian government also face unparalleled atrocities either

by hosting governments or by the cross-border raids undertaken by the Ethiopian government

As far as Oromo (may be all southern nation and nationalities) is concerned, Meles and his predecessors have similar standing strategy in that all want to use them as a footstep to ascend to power. Once they realized the consolidation of their Power, they set on depriving them the minimum human rights and perpetuate the exploitation of their resources for themselves and finally enhance the profit of their exploitation by the involvement of foreign investors (as Government or private Companies). Typical examples are Chilaaloo Agricultural Development Unit (CADU), Walayitaa Agricultural development Unit (WADU) of Hailesilasse era, BP, AMOCO, IPC, Ethio-Libiya projects of Dergues and Today's Indian, Saudi, Egypt and china firms.

When it comes to the benefits of the ruling apparatus, all successive histories of the ruling regimes share one common character, namely, concede the sovereignty of the people they claim to administer to keep themselves on power.

THE WAY FORWARD

Ladies and Gentlemen,

All these griming political, economic and social situations suggest that Ethiopia is indeed at a crossroad as some prominent social scientists and politicians asserted long time ago. It is a crossroad between hope and hopelessness, change and disintegration. I am sure we all opt for hope and change rather than for their negative counter part, since it is to all human nature to seek for the positive. The question that immediately comes to mind is what will be the way achieving change and kindling hope then? To speak even more practical and political language I rather put it this way: what will be the way forward for opposition political forces to genuinely contribute for a lasting peace?

In what follows I shall try to address this question on behalf of the OLF. It has always been OLF's conviction that liberation from all sorts of national oppression paves a way for the peoples in Ethiopia and beyond to join hands to form a political union on

the basis of equality and voluntary association. This ushers a process of negotiation of a constitutional order that determines a form of state acceptable to free peoples seeking to establish a political union among themselves. The OLF has always shown a good political will to cooperate and create mutual and all inclusive solutions.

Since being forced out of the Transitional Government, the OLF had to continue with its primary task defending the Oromo people and itself, laterally co-operating with other political forces (such Paris Conference on peace, joint co-operation work and forming an alliance too) and even then the OLF never ceased calling TPLF for a negotiated settlement. However like all its predecessors, Meles Zenawi's government showed no real courage to take a remedial step towards solving the basic problem that kept the country in tragic economic, political and social mire.

As far as alliance with other political forces concerned after the Paris Conference failed, as a primary step along the derive for collective solution the OLF met, on April 20th 2000, with some political forces (Benishangul People's Liberation Movements (BPLM), Ethiopian Democratic Forces United Front (EDFUF), Ethiopian Patriotic Democratic Movement (EPDM), Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), Sidama Liberation Front (SLF) and Some individuals and other organizations as observer) across the North-South, East-West without any sense of exclusion and arrived at a joint agreement to work towards eradicating the root causes of the endemic tyranny, national oppression famine and arrested development that bedevils the Oromo and other peoples in Ethiopia. As an extension of the April 2000 agreement, it formed an alliance in May 2006 named an Alliance for Freedom and Democracy (AFD) despite so much unfavorable political and organizational conditions. Despite all these, the opposition forces are long way away from the co-operative united act that positively changes the course of politics in Ethiopia. Experience told us the stumbling block lies on the question of rights of nations and nationalities.

The policy that TPLF pursues in this regard is unfortunately the policy that was based closely on Stalin's theory of nationalities, applied in the Soviet Union under which each nationality would have only a nominal right to internal self-government,

with secession as an ultimate resort. In fact the policy has a dangerous mismatch between the development of social and political forces on the one hand, and the opportunities for these to be incorporated into the political structure on the other.

The other opposition political forces that see themselves as Pan-Ethiopians still remained in their traditional juxtaposition of individual versus collective rights in which case they uphold the first while reject the latter. This means they fail to appreciate what has been achieved even on paper as far as the right of nations and nationalities is concerned. For this position of theirs they often refer to the authority of liberal conception of democracy in which the individual is considered to be the only real agent of society and hence bearer of rights. Be the liberal theory as it may be, in reality there is no an individual without certain basic social traits such as language, social habit, custom and ways of life, to say the least. This means by virtue of the fact that a human individual is brought up by a certain family under a given social structure in a certain way; he is already a social animal. His individuality is inseparable from that social environment in which he/she is brought up. Therefore, an individual can never be considered to be an atom whose identity is immaterial irrespective of time and space. Had it not been the case, there would not also be Ethiopianness “Ethiopiawinet” for this Ethiopiawinet is anchored in a certain collective identity. So for liberal Ethiopians it would be self contradictory in terms to uphold Ethiopiawinet and deny the social character of an individual at the same time. As much as Ethiopiawinet is the social source of nourishment for the individual, the individuals are the perpetrators or the agents of Ethiopiawinet. So there is no way to mutually separate the individual from the social and vice versa.

It is precisely because of this conceptual impasse, why modern liberals came to recognize the dialectical dimension of democracy as to be anchored both in the agency of the individual and the contextual significance of the collective identity. According to some contemporary liberals such as Kymlicka (2002)⁹ collective rights are consistent with liberal pluralism if they meet two conditions: they protect freedom

⁹ Kymlicka,W. 2002, Can liberal pluralism be exported, Oxford university press

of individuals within the group and they promote relations of equality (non-dominance) between groups. This comprehensive political view could be the stumbling block to forge a very meaningful alliance between the Pan-Ethiopian and various nationalist forces.

When we look at the current developments in our region, there is a hovering danger of general conflict involving many governments and other forces. Naturally the victims would be the peoples who are not involved in the machinations of the governments. The continental and regional organizations, instead of helping to diffuse the situation, are playing into the hands of those who have their own design. TPLF-led regime rather tries to capture every single conflict in the region for its short lived greedy benefit than for a lasting solution.

Our recommendation to change the extreme asymmetry of power between the ruling party and opposition forces in order to attain the long lasting peace can only be achieved by genuine collaboration of opposition political forces in forging common understanding on the right of nations and nationalities. In the course of the process collaboration not only alignment of political forces but also the similar democratic traditions such as “Xeer”¹⁰ of the Somali, “Gadaa”¹¹ of Oromo, Sidama and Gediwoo, Burjii, “Seera”¹² of Kambata and Gurage, idir, equub¹³ and others have to be explored and geared in the way they have served for centuries for peaceful coexistence of these nations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

¹⁰ Lewis, H.S. 1961. *A Pastoral Democracy: a study of pastoralism and politics among the Northern Somali of the Horn of Africa*, London

¹¹ Asmarom Legesse 2001. *Oromo Democracy; an Indigenous African political system*, Lawrenceville: Red Sea press

¹² Poluha, Eva 1995b. *Cultural Models as Models of Decision Making in Melin*, M (Ed), *Democracy in Africa-on whose Terms?* Falun; Forum Syd/Scan books

¹³ Poluha, Eva. 2003. “Learning Political Behavior. Peasant-State relations in Ethiopia” in Poluha E and M Rosendhal *Contesting Good Governance. Cross-cultural Perspectives on representation, accountability and Public Space*. London

As Ethiopia is the geographic, political and economic center of the Horn of Africa, so is Oromia for Ethiopia. To attain stability and peace in Ethiopia, the Oromo demand for freedom, equality and democracy must be met. Without sustainable peace in Ethiopia, regional peace is inconceivable. Therefore, to bring genuine peace and stability to the Horn region, the starting point is to deal with the dynamic situation in Ethiopia by resolving peoples' demand for the right of self-determination. First and foremost, Ethiopia must be at peace with itself addressing Oromo demands and meeting their national aspirations. As long as this is ignored, sustainable peace in Ethiopia and the region will continue to be very elusive.

Ethiopia, which is geographically at the centre of the security complex of the Horn hottest conflict, is sitting on time-awaiting deep-rooted conflict. The tensions inherent in the composition of Ethiopia itself could easily spill over into relations with its neighbors with their own intractable problems. The only source of temporary stability of the current Ethiopia rests on the regime's total control over the military and security forces and its readiness to use it without hesitation.

Oromos are not only the largest group in Ethiopia but they are also the most centrally placed with whom the unity of the country would be under question. This simple fact lends the Oromo issue a peculiar sensitivity. Meles and his predecessors precisely capitalize on this sensitivity for their divide and rule policy in respect to people's relation between the Oromo and the other oppressed nations and nationalities in the country. The struggle of the Oromo people, then, is nothing more than an attempt to affirm their own place in history. It seeks equality, human dignity, democracy, freedom and peace. It is not directed against the masses of a particular nation or nationality, nor against individuals, but rather against oppressive institutions of Ethiopian regimes. OLF's quest is the quest for freedom, democracy, justice and peace as the case with most opposition forces. Therefore, I don't see any obstacle in our own way not to stand united against the TPLF/EPRDF regime.

Justice, Democracy and Peace shall prevail

Thank you for your attention!