

ADDA BILISUMMAA OROMOO

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FINFINE IS THE CENTRAL AND INTEGRAL PART OF OROMIA

The authoritarian regime of TPLF-EPRDF in Ethiopia has continued reversing some rights achieved by the Oromo people's struggle. Even the regime is continuing violating the rights enshrined in its own constitution of the country that has been worked out by its own experts. The wicked Master Plan of Addis Ababa that was declared recently by the incumbent regime is unfolding the continuation of dismembering Oromia state that has been underway since the last two decades. Beginning from 1991, TPLF's strategic policy of eviction and displacement of Oromo from their ancestral land is unabated. Despite deafening propoganda and denials of the *Integrated Master Plan's* infringing of the borders of Special Zones around Finfinne (Addis Abeba), the said Zones are already under Finfinne Administration practically.

The current so called "**Integrated Regional Development Plan (IRDP)**" by the TPLF government is aimed at the incorporation of rural lands and towns such as Aqaqi, Dukam, Galan, Sabata, Burayyu, Sululta, Laga Xafo-Laga Dadi, Sandafa, and others that are found in Oromia state at a radius of 50 km and so from Finfine (Addis Ababa). The decision has been made by the TPLF dominated Federal government secretly without the consent of the Oromo people and even without a knowledge of the surrogate organization, the OPDO. Regarding Finfine the long term plan of the TPLF is to build a Mega City of Addis Ababa which extends to Adama and beyond in south east, Waliso and beyond in Southwest, to Amhara boundary in Northeast and as far as Ambo town in the West. The TPLF plan of expanding Finfine through acquisition of land by force from Oromo inhabitants remains open ended. It is being carried out in TPLF's economic and political interest. This act of land expropriation from the Oromo people is not only immoral, but also a crime against humanity that undermines the very existence of Oromia as a state and the Oromo as a people.

The present expropriation of the Oromo land under the TPLF tyrannical rule is the continuation of the policy of its predecessors. It is to be reckoned in history that following the conquest of Mnilik all conquered lands in Oromia belonged to the Menz Amhara ruling class. One of the essential features of the conquest of Minilk was the parceling of Oromo land among his military leaders, the *Nafxanayas*, and the quartering of them on the conquered districts. The largest portion or vast tracts of land was set aside as government or state land which was subject to sale and heavy taxation. The emperor claimed sovereign right over the Oromo land. Considerable tracts of Oromo land were also granted to Orthodox Church (priests and deacons) under the name called "Samon". The priests and deacons of Orthodox Church had played a great role in realizing colonization of Oromia and Amharization process at the time. In general the Oromo land became the most important source of revenue for settler colonialists of the Amhara ruling class. The Amahra ruling families had destroyed the agro pastoral and communal life of the Oromo by introducing different categories of land holding system. Accordingly the territorial and traditional kinship structure of the Oromo people was destroyed and fragmented into pieces by Amhara conquerors. The Oromo political, economic and social institutions were systematically destroyed.

The categories of land holding under the Amhara colonial rule includes State land (the largest portion of the conquered land), Shalaqa land (allotted to military service and palace guards), Madaria- land set aside for civilian administrators who might show loyal and meritorious service, Church land (Samon) to support priests and deacons of Orthodox church, Hudad land to meet the extravagant consumption of the Amhara ruling class and others.

In pre colonial Oromia, the administration and distribution of land had been handled by democratically

elected Gada office. The Gada Assembly had maintained legislative power to modify or decree laws in the society. With the conquest of Minilk and the influx of the Amhara colonial settlers the Oromo lost the political power and their only means of production to a few colonizers. The Oromo conception of property which says “**Horin kan abba hore ti**”, literally meaning a property should belong to the producers, **Qabiyyen kan abbaa duraa ti**, meaning land holding belongs to the pioneer or founding fathers, “horri kan warra dura argee ti”, springs belong to those who discovered it first etc. was effectively erased.

As property right over the land of Finfine and its surroundings is concerned, the area historically and legally belongs to the Oromo people. Before the conquest of emperor Minilk, the present land on which the city of Finfine is erected had been the ritual, political and economic center of the Tulama branch of the Oromo society. A cousin of Minilk, *Dajazmach Mashasha Seifu*, led the invading army and occupied Finfinne and its vicinity. The traditional owners of the land were mainly the Oromo clans of Gulalle, Eka and Galan. These clans were forcefully evicted from their ancestral land. Their villages and crops burnt down, and their farm land and pasture lands were confiscated. The occupied lands of Finfine were distributed among the Menz ruling families of emperor Minilk, Dajazmach Mashasha Siefu, Ras Birru and others. The former name of the area **Finfinne** was replaced by Amharic name that came to be known as **Addis Ababa**. Subsequently names of different places in and around Finfine took Amhara names. Among others *Burqa Finfine was changed to Filwaha, Birbirsu Ya’ii Goro took the name Arada Georges, Chaffe Arara was designated Arat Kilo, Dalati was labeled Arat Kilo, Tullu Hexo was named Tallaquu Beta Mengist (Grand Palace), Beda Ejersa Ras Kasa Sefer, Luqo Kormaa was changed to Ras Birru Sefer, Barro Korma named as Ras Tesema Sefer, Arbu Irrecha to Ras Hayilu Sefer, Hurufa Bombi to Jan Meda, Karra Qirixi changed to Semen Ber, Kerra Qore given the name Jimma Ber, Adami named as Semen Mezageja, Babo was changed to Addisu Qera, Burqa Qoricha changed to Yeka Micha’el*. The above Oromo place names in Finfine are the least to mention. Some of these places were shrines, protected forests with wild lives and sacred mountains and river basins.

As the Amhara ruling class accomplished the occupation of Oromia they made Finfine their main military garrison (Ketama). First Taitu, the wife of the emperor, visited the hot spring of Finfine and chose the place for imperial residence. Then the invaders built residences near Burqa Finfine later named as Filwaha where the Menz Royaal Court enjoyed taking mineral baths. Other Menz nobility and their staffs also settled on the adjacent lands of the hot spring. Menilk expanded his military garrison in Finfine later to become the seat of his government. He eventually made **Finfine** with the name **Addis Ababa** the seat of his government and the capital city of his empire. He built his Imperial Palace called the **Grand Palace** at a place called **Tulu Hexo Dimtu** alternately called **Dhaga Arara**.

With the influx of the Amhara settlers into Finfine the demography was systematically changed rapidly. The Oromo people have been deprived their historical and traditional ownership rights over Finfinne and marginalized by the successive governments of Ethiopia. Although the Oromo are indigenous people they became minority in Finfine. The 2007 Census conducted by Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia indicates that the Oromo ethnic group represents only 19.51 % in Finfine (Addis Ababa) where as the alien Amhara represents 47.04% of the total population of the city then estimated to 2, 739,551. During the same census as regards to language spoken in the city Amharic represents 71.0% where as Oromo speaking people in Finfine was reduced to 10.7%. This data still shows that there are members of Oromo ethnic group in Finfine who forcefully lost their identity and language as the result of Amharization process through cultural and language domination imposed by the ruling classes. In Menelik's

time, many Oromos were physically removed from the city and its environs. During the reign of Emperor Haile Sellassie the government education and language policies, aimed at Amharizing the Oromo and its culture, effectively washed out the city of its Oromo components and made it impossible for Oromo generations to succeed as a community in and around the city.

It is obvious that cities play a significant role in social, economic, political, and cultural transformations of the people throughout history. However, whatever development was achieved in Finfine (Addis Ababa) it was planned to benefit the occupiers not the original inhabitants of the Oromo. The Oromo have been denied the right to participate in the administration of Finfine, and in urban economic, social and cultural developments. They were denied political power to make decision and a plan for their economic development. The alien rulers introduced urban policies and structures from time to time that prevent Oromos from becoming dwellers of the city. They imposed policies which have adverse effect on the national interest of the Oromo to benefit themselves. To put it in another way, the Oromos' lack of control over Finfine (Addis Ababa) hampers the development of their own institutional frameworks in the city. The deprivation of Oromos their historical right over the administration of Finfine (Addis Ababa) and the policy of exclusion of Oromos from participating in economic activities and cultural developments in the city had and will have incalculable negative effect on Oromo people.

As we have mentioned above, the current TPLF-EPRDF government has adopted the same policy of its predecessors, but replacing Amhara hegemony by a Tigrian one. The TPLF-EPRDF government is continuing the policies of land alienation, dispossession, evictions and displacement of Oromos from their ancestral land inherited from the past regimes of Ethiopia but in different forms. ***The TPLF leaders have already announced shamelessly their evil scheme of reducing the population of Oromia to minority in order to have easy control over their resources.*** During the last 23 years the Tigrian ruling clique has evicted hundreds of thousands of Oromos from their ancestral land. The TPLF looters who came to power in 1991 with force of arms has controlled political power and monopolized the economy and natural resources of Oromia from urban to the rural areas. They have controlled the natural resources of Oromia including farm lands, pasture lands, forests, mineral waters, rivers, lakes, mines, and etc. They have commercialized every Oromo national resources to convert them to money economy. Now days we can say the people and land of Oromia are practically private properties of TPLF leaders. They are not only using the lands in Oromia, they also evict the Oromo and sell their ancestral land to foreign investors at a huge amount of hard currency. These days land grabbing in Oromia by the TPLF regime is boundless. They have snatched millions of hectares of urban and rural lands of Oromia to sell in lease to Indians, Chinese, Arabs, Malaysians, Pakistanis, and other local and International companies and joint ventures. Besides, the TPLF trade monopolies and manufacturing industries are flourishing in urban centers of Oromia, of which Finfine (Addis Ababa) share the highest portion. All this is done at the cost of 40 million Oromo People's national interest. To fulfill their evil strategy they are sweeping the Oromo from the city and its environs. What happened around Aqaqi, Laga Tafo, Ekka, Bolee etc is current evidence in every one's face.

The 1995 Constitution of the so called Federal Republic of Ethiopia promulgated by TPLF-EPRDF government grants nations and nationalities the rights to decide on their affairs including the right to self-determination, administer their natural resources and development schemes, and to promote the language, culture and history of their people. As regards to Finfine Article 49 number 5 of the constitution states: ***“The special interest of the State of Oromia in AddisAbaba, regarding the provision of social services or the utilization of natural***

resources and other similar matters, as well as joint administrative matters arising from the location of Addis Ababa within the State of Oromia, shall be respected. Particulars shall be determined by law". However, a law which was supposed to determine the particulars has not yet passed by the House of Representatives after almost a quarter of a century. Therefore Oromia has not benefited anything from Finfine. On the contrary Finfine and the Federal Government did benefit a lot from Oromia.

According to the constitution, Finfine assumed the status of a state and the Capital City of the Federal government while at the same time nominally remain the seat of Oromia regional state. However, as part of the Federal Government, the Federal Parliament enacts laws that are binding in Finfine. Also, the Federal Government, when need arise, dissolve the elected city council and the entire administration and replace it by appointed administrators. Here we want to emphasize that Finfine was deliberately given the status of a state to detach it from its mother state of Oromia. No question Finfine is geographically integral part of Oromia. It is historically and legally the land of Oromians. However, the TPLF regime separated Finfine from Oromia economically and politically. They also uprooted thousands of Oromo peasants and workers from Finfine and suppressed different Oromo institutions including Oromo Relief Association and Macha-Tulama Welfare Association. It is a recent history that the TPLF dominated federal government ordered Oromo institutions and offices of Oromia Regional Seat to withdraw from Finfine in 2002. In fact Oromia is now a state without stable capital city. It is to be remembered the regime has also systematically annexed vast territories of Oromia to Tigray and other neighboring regional states over the last 23 years.

The TPLF strategy of alienation of Finfinne from Oromia as a different state and its plan of incorporating of the towns surrounding the city in the name of *Integrated Urban Development Plan* is nothing but the continuation of the policy of reducing Oromia into small size and if possible deny its viability as Oromo State. It is the strategy of dismembering Oromia by cutting it up and creating a buffer zone between east and west as well as north and southern parts of the regional state. The political objective of the strategy is obviously to complicate the Oromo question for self-determination and to make it difficult to achieve its goal. Finfine (Addis Ababa) as a seat of government, capital city of the empire and seat of regional and international organizations also remained the economic, diplomatic and political center for all practical purpose. The African Union, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and other regional and international organizations are headquartered in Finfine. The African Union is now housed in a new headquarter built on a vast tract of Oromo land but donated by TPLF regime. The attraction of international community and foreign investors to Finfine in particular and Oromia in general is part of the obstructions to self-determination of the Oromo people. As far as Finfine remains the economic and political center the one that controls the city also controls Oromia by default.

Furthermore the TPLF regime is working hard to bring to an end the status of Oromia as a regional state in the name of regional economic integration and urbanization. They are working systematically to reverse those rights the Oromo people achieved by a lot of sacrifice. Indeed, this is a dangerous move which leads to more bloodshed.

The so called Master Plan of Addis Ababa triggered by TPLF regime has already faced serious protests and denunciation by the mass of the Oromo people throughout Oromia. The Oromo students in the higher education and high schools as well the Oromo population in the whole of Oromia went out into the streets to protest the so called Master Plan of Addis Ababa declared by TPLF leaders. The protesters saying enough is enough listed other fundamental demands for

Oromo right for self determination to be realized. The regime's answer to the peaceful protests of the Oromo students and the people is use of excessive military forces to quell down the protests. TPLF's loyal special force called Aga'azii has already massacred again in cold blood tens of Oromo students and other members of Oromo society who protested against the so called Master plan of Addis Ababa. The regime's forces opened fire on Oromo students' demonstration in Ambo, Guder, Baale-Robe, Ghimbi, Tokke, Dire Dhawa, Haramaya, Qellem, Horro, and other colleges and schools of Oromia. They have murdered more than 40 Oromos in Ambo alone. The regime has continued to implement its plans and policies by use of force.

Besides, the TPLF regime has waged its deafening propaganda campaign and gathering of people by force to tell them lies in order to confuse the reality on the ground. There is an attempt to misinform the public about the so called Master Plan of Addis Ababa and other related issues. The different statements of the regime on the said Master Plan are ambiguous and contradictory. They are trying to inform the public through their Trojan horse that the Master Plan is not about expanding the territory of Addis Ababa while the reality on the map and on the ground tells us the city of Finfine (Addis Ababa) will extend from 54, 000 square km to 1.2 million square km. One may ask if it is not about the expansion of Addis Ababa why it is necessary to redraw the map of Finfinne (Addis Ababa) under the name of Master Plan of Addisa Ababa. Therefore it is a deception and trickery to divert the attention of the people from their legitimate demands so as to appease the mass protests. Such trickery is not something new but it is the experience of the regime during the last 23 years. In fact the demand of the Oromo people is not only about their rights on Finfinne, but also their fundamental questions include the right of national self determination.

Now, the situation is such a difficult time for the Oromo people that they are being pushed to a hard rock. Thus the Oromo people are left with no option except step up their struggle against the enemy that determined to destroy Oromia and the identity of the Oromo people. This requires the Oromos rise in unison against the endless eviction, displacements, dispossession and the atrocities being committed by the Tigrian predators against them.

The Oromo Liberation Front believes that Finfine is the heartland and integral part of Oromia. Accordingly, the fate of Finfine is not different from that of Oromia. Therefore, the struggle to liberate Finfine from TPLF occupation and exploitation is part of the liberation struggle already waged for the liberation of Oromia. Oromos of all walks of life should rise in unison to defend their survival as a nation. The Oromo youth, students, workers, peasants, and all other sections of the society should stand shoulder to shoulder to fight for the liberation of Oromia and the emancipation of the Oromo people.

Victory to the Oromo People

Oromo Liberation Front

May, 2014

