

# **The Spectre of Violence Haunting the Opposition Circle**

By Harego Bensa

A professor who just arrived from US told me his experience of co-habitation in America. The term refers to a special housing arrangement in which usually two peoples quite often with different background rent a common house to live in together. I had never thought that such “yedeбал nuro” exists in one of the richest nations of our world. What impressed me most rather was as to how two people with different interests could live cordially under the same roof.

The professor told me that leading a subtle life in such a condition is quite a common phenomenon there. Such people usually look for their matches (most often with similar tastes and habits) with information provided by newspapers and other sources. Once they opted for somebody, they call each other, sit together and discuss matters of common interest. Through their discussions, they reach on a consensus how to live together and vow to set aside their differences.

While living together, they are bound by their promises. That way, they take the co-habitation as a shared responsibility and an opportunity to exploit to their mutual benefits. As a primary advantage, they minimize their expenses for the house rent fee, which is one of the expensive costs there. Apart from that also share several things, saving a significant amount of money which each of them can spend for other necessities or luxuries. They often take taxi or watch DVDs together, exchange books, films, songs etc. things of their tastes. Their common interest even takes them to the world of attractions by saving their costs at least by half. In short, they try to exploit every advantage out of their life together.

The bottom line is that these people respect one another and refrain from harming the feelings of the other partner lest they would end up their co-habitation. That being the case, each of them is considerate to one another and show maximum restraint even at a time of conflicting ideas.

That is exactly the kind of life that should exist in the political spectrum of any country, so the professor told me. A good example, I thought. All political parties should assume a shared responsibility and take a role of partnership for the common good.

Unfortunately, what we are witnessing from the inner circle of the oppositions in Ethiopia is contrary to such a belief and actually strange in the world of politics. They are not acting as responsible citizens let alone politicians with the potential to lead a country. All their words and actions show that they are not ready for civilized politics. What a disappointment!

They are openly denouncing the draft anti-terrorism law. Why? Some of their cliques have in fact been caught red-handed while planning to kill senior government officials

and destroy vital infrastructure in the country. None of them have ever denounced any of the terrorist acts committed against the country. Rather they have been glorifying people engaged in subversive actions and imprisoned for similar crimes. They have also started expressing their conflicting ideas as to whether they would participate in the coming elections or not. They have also launched their infamous campaign of false accusations against the government just a year before the coming elections.

Look, what AEAO and Unity, two of the most notorious opposition parties have recently done. They told media that they commemorated the “martyrs” of Sene 1. Well, one may think that there is nothing wrong with such a memorial service. The lessons we have drawn in the past is not in favor of such a genuine belief. It is really easy to discern the ill-intentions of the old guards in those political parties.

Their actions remind me of the smart fox which tried to fool the sheep by saying that let me pray for you so that you will be protected from your enemies while the sheep and more importantly the fox itself knew it very well that the only enemy they have was the fox and the solution was not prayers but killing the fox itself.

To begin with, the leadership was the master mind of that violence, that led to human and property loss in the aftermath of Elections 2005 on Sene 1. Before that the oppositions which had then formed an alliance known as Kinijit right from the outset were engaged in a smear campaign to discredit the validity of the electoral process and the democratic institutions.

Moreover, they were openly discourse that their objective was to change not the state but the democratic system that made their political participation as opposition parties possible. And when they learned that the electoral results announced by the independent Electoral Board were not in favour of them to control the federal government, they intensified their subversive campaigns. That time, their electoral achievement was spectacular for it was 10 folds higher than that of what they achieved in the previous elections. After a long wrangling among themselves, they lodged their formal complaints which led to an independent enquiry established through their own consent.

Thus, re-run elections took place in some of the constituencies where there were some irregularities. When the outcomes of the enquiry and the subsequent re-runs were again not in their favour, they committed one of their grave errors: rejecting the electoral results altogether and boycotting the parliament. That was yet to be followed by the worst of all their errors; the call for street violence which led to a significant human loss and public property damage. Had it not been for the swift and cautious measures taken by the government, things could have gone out of control, threatening the very survival of the nationhood.

The situation culminated by the arrest and subsequent trial of the culprits, who were found guilty of treason and sentenced up to life imprisonment. Then came a time when a self-initiative of concerned Ethiopians intervened to secure pardons for them. Those people took the opportunity and requested formal pardons, announcing their regrets to

what they did in the past and pledges to not try again any unconstitutional means in their pursuit to take power. Yes! They were freed on such conditions they have made it clear in black and white. With the overall outcome, we Ethiopians were happy and felt that our political leaders reached a certain level of maturity.

To our disappointment, however, what these people are doing right now is contrary to our expectations. In fact, their actions and words at this time are the exact replica of what they were saying and doing prior to Elections 2005. Worst of all, their horrendous acts are coming at a time when the nation is about to start the count down to the upcoming elections. Is this not enough to reveal their ill-intention behind their hypocritical memorial service?

And we know why these people are doing this. Having been locked in internal feuds and personal disputes to control the leadership in the inner most circle, what they had cooked down for almost four years was nothing but dirty tricks. In stead of coming up with fresh ideas for the benefit of the whole nation, their obsession is only to take power through whatever means. Knowing that an open call for violence this time around is unlikely to be heeded by their supporters, mainly the youngsters, who had the brunt of the violence masterminded by them last time, they came up with a seemingly new strategy: Hey guys lets pay a tribute to those martyred on Sene 1 only to instigate another violence. What an evil idea! Why did not they give the memorial service all these years and made it now just a year before the fourth elections? The answer is crystal clear. Desperate of securing support from the public, who had been bogged down by their internal wrangling, what they have in mind is instigation of violence, as a short-cut to seize power through whatever expense that has to be paid by others.

But, we Ethiopians have a good lesson from our forefathers. A person with a seemingly smart idea might fool another person. The victim is not considered as a fool provided that the trick made on him by that specific person was made once in his life. The experience would rather give the victim a good lesson to become wise enough for the future. The problem is when that person tries to trick him again on another encounter. If that person is fooled for the second time by the same person, he is in deed foolish worth-deception several times. But it is also silly of the perpetrator to try to deceive the same person for the second time. And, when his tricks are exactly the same, it is a different story. It is the deceiver who is absolutely crazy.

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