

## Mengistu Hailemariam and our moral compass. By Yilma Bekele.

Today I felt like crawling under the blanket and just hide. I know that is what children do. They think hiding under the blanket makes them invisible. It give them a feeling of security and that what I was looking for. Some place to hide and feel secure from my clueless people. Clueless is what we are and I guess I just have to live with it. Predictable like the season is how we function and I have to accept it.

What has gotten me down is the talk of the dead not yet dead news regarding the former dictator of my country. It looks like the despicable individual is not going to disappear from our radar no matter how far removed and how long ago we have parted company. Like a nightmare he keeps showing up in the most awkward and inopportune moments. His appearance this time around was not his doing but nevertheless he was used as weapon to clobber us with.

I am not really concerned about the hapless dictator it is us I worry about. You would think that after over twenty years of contemplating the total ramifications of what his involvement in our country's history has meant to us that we have come to a few conclusions. We have looked at the situation and drawn a few lessons so we can keep it in the back of our brain for future reference good and bad. That is all experience is all about isn't it?

Life is a learning experience. We succeed some fail a few but we draw conclusion so we know what works and what to avoid. That is how we move forward. Those that learn from past experience, analyze then adapt what works avoid that did not produce the intended result get to reap the benefits. Those that ignore the lessons of history end up digging their own grave.

That is what we are doing today, digging our own grave. The fact that we have not put the criminal dictator in perspective is very alarming and not so good news regarding our future. How could we be trusted with the future when we do not have a clear picture of our past? How do we know what we want tomorrow when we have not really sat down and looked at yesterday to see what went right and what exactly went wrong and why?

Two things happened simultaneously this last week. The ethnic based regime's blunder aroused the ire of our people and exposed them to charges of criminal activity. To divert attention and blunt the impact they were able to concoct a ruse pointing away from their evil deeds. It was a simple ploy one plays on children and it worked. It worked because we did not take the last twenty years to learn, analyze and grow. It looks like we did not take the idea of raising a conscious, smart and morally upright citizen to heart in order to be able to lay a solid foundation to build the future Ethiopia. We did not invest time and energy to produce an intelligent, motivated and smart generation that is able to avoid the mistakes done by the past generation.

The last two weeks the major news coming out of our country was the plight of our Amara citizens being uprooted from their homes. It was not a pleasant sight. Simple farmers that make their living by

sheer determination and constant struggle against nature using primitive tools were deemed to be unworthy of basic human respect and dignity and were ordered to move from their villages at a moment's notice. It was very distressing to see fellow humans being treated like that in their own country. It became the focus of attention and revealed the nature of the illegal and corrupt regime in Ethiopia. It was not a welcome attention and the government rightly felt the heat.

There was attempt made by the opposition to investigate and gather evidence to bring the matter to the attention of all that are empowered to look at situations like this. It was not easy but they tried under the difficult circumstances presented by the regional Bantustans and the Federal government. Their representatives were jailed, abused and given a few hours to leave the region. Thanks to technology the whole world in general and the Diaspora Ethiopians were able to follow the news and keep in touch with their people.

The government first tried to deny that 'ethnic cleansing' is being carried out. They also attempted to blame the regional administration for the problem and finally were compelled to admit there was some truth to the allegations and were forced to ask the deportees to return. In a matter of a week the news was bringing clarity regarding the illegal and criminal nature of the regime in power. It was opening the eyes of many individuals to see the regime in a different light. The news was gathering momentum and the regime was entering a state of panic. The opposition and the Diaspora activists were even talking about appealing to the International Court of Justice and the United Nations.

Someone somewhere figured the weakness and clueless nature of the Ethiopian. They figured give them another bone to chew and they will drop everything and jump at the opportunity. They did not have to look far. They found an old discarded bone and tossed it in the middle of the unruly pack. Thus they put out a press release announcing the death of the tyrant that has been holed in Zimbabwe for the last twenty years. That is all it took for the frenzy to start, the earth to move and the heavens to open.

Are we that transparent? Are we that easy to fool? Fifty four percent of the Ethiopian population is under twenty five years of age. They have not witnessed the madness of the Derge era. To them Mengistu is a distant history. The history of Ethiopia including the Derg period is a self-serving tale as told by Woyane and their apologists. Neftegna, Monarchist, Dergist is an interchangeable term Woyane uses to ruin people's lives. The fifty four percent cannot be relied upon regarding their knowledge of our past. Meles and his disciples' main agenda was to discredit our past so they could build their distorted vision on a shaky ground. According to Woyane and their followers there is nothing good or redeemable about Ethiopia before their appearance.

It is a very difficult story to take to heart. Especially when life under Woyane is nothing but hell on hearth for the vast majority of our people. That is why the fifty four percent are all waiting their turn to leave by foot, boat, plane and any which way out. What got me a little concerned and a lot

despondent is the failure of those aged 25-54 years and compromise twenty nine percent of the population. The ones that are politically involved and run our independent media outlets. They picked this disinformation campaign and run with it. I am not saying we should have ignored the story on the other hand it is our responsibility to tell the story with a certain amount of perspective thrown in to give the listener and reader some point of reference. Every time we mention the criminal dictator we should remind our people the role he played in the destruction of our country and people. That is the legacy he left behind and that is how he should be remembered. This idiotic idea of misplaced '*Ethiopian chewanet*' is what works against us and blinds us from standing up against abusers and ill-mannered individuals. The kind of ways the news was reported was both embarrassing and self-defeating to say the least.

Dear editors of our independent media what are we supposed to make of your screaming headline announcing the 'good health' of a tyrant in exile that has not even acknowledged his criminal role and responsibility when he was the de facto head of state? Some of you even went the extra mile and called his house and talked to his wife while others relied on their reporters to find out the latest 'breaking news'. Did you really think the sympathetic, feel good close to the heart story was appropriate regarding a criminal in exile? One of the headlines screamed "Former Ethiopian President Colonel Mengistu is alive and well..." I dove for cover.

Mengistu Hailemariam was a ruthless dictator, a cruel and horrible individual that will be remembered as a black mark in our country's history. The fact that the one who came after him was a ruthless psychopath does not make the former any less of a criminal. Our independent medias' reporting was journalism at its worst and an affront to truth and insensitive to the victims.

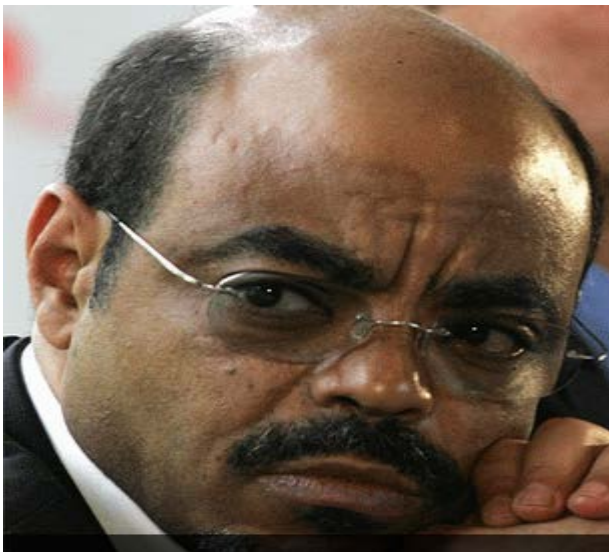
Where exactly did we go wrong? What exactly happened to our moral compass? It looks like we got a long way to go to differentiate bad from evil, truth from fiction and show some empathy towards those that were victimized by Mengistu and his accomplices. Mengistu which even writing his name brings pain and agony to my soul was the cause of much anguish to our country and people. This is not even past history but it happened yesterday in our life time. Many of those fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters that lost their beloved ones are still among us. The memory has not even faded from our collective mind.

To refresh your memory the ongoing exodus out of mother Ethiopia started under Mengistu. The first time in our countries history her children started running away from home. Ethiopia began losing its youngest and brightest and has not recovered ever since. The whole country became a killing field. The lawlessness nature of the regime brought about the degeneration of societal norms and the gradual destruction of culture. His regime rode rough on all that we hold dear and that has taken us long to build. His lack of basic leadership skills and ruthless evil nature decimated all that were educated, able and showed potential. He exposed our country to dangerous minds that used the opportunity to wrestle power cunningly. He is a military leader that left his troops in battle to save his

dirty ass. He is wanted by the Ethiopian military to be court marshaled and is definitely a candidate for a firing squad. This is the individual you so zealously displayed and published letters written by Woyane and their sympathizers lauding his good side. Shame on you all!!!

Every one of us got something good and commendable within us. Something positive could even be said about evil individuals. I am sure Hitler was a German Nationalist that loved his country, Meles Zenawi was probably a good family man, Mussolini was probably a devout Catholic but that does not define the totality of the person. All three of them have their dark side that outweighs their positive nature. The evil one lurking behind the smiling face is what affects us.

Dear country people please remember choosing one abuser over another is not a virtue. Demanding no abuse is the way to go. Why in the world do we compare and contrast the crimes of our leaders instead of resolving for such never to happen to us again? Isn't that the lesson to draw from the experience of the last forty years? How could I trust you with my future when some of you think of life as a pissing match and are busy picking the lessor of two evils instead on no evil? Is that where we find ourselves today that we are willing to accept a little less criminal than Meles instead of someone that respects the rule of law, the sanctity of life especially human life and love for mother Ethiopia?



Faces of evil.