

Meles discussing 'trash' and 'garbage'. By Yilma Bekele.

As you all know Ethiopia held what is referred to as 'elections' last May. The ruling TPLF party won 545 of the 547 seats in Parliament. One can tell from the results that either the TPLF party is the most popular association in the country or the election was rigged and the outcome was tainted.

Ethiopians were resigned to the fact that the Prime Minister's Party will be declared the winner. It was also assumed the regime will allow the so-called opposition to win some seats to save face and appease the Ferenji donors. Those aligned with Medrek actually were willing to look the other way when Ato Meles jailed their leader, murdered their candidates, denied them gathering places and threatened them with criminal charges if they criticized the regime's policies in the heat of the moment. It did not save them from extinction.

Ato Meles did not stop there. He picked and choose the international observers and trained his own cadres to be election observers. He tried but was unable to deny the European Union from sending independent observers. Welfare recipients sometimes have limited choices. He did manage to curtail their activities to show his people that he will not be pushed around.

Well the report by European Union election observers was made official last week. For us Ethiopians there was nothing new there. We live the nightmare thus there is no need to read about it. Our collective response was a loud duh!

On the other hand our 'fearless leader' for life has a different response to this carefully written report. According to Barry Malone of Reuters the PM chosen words were "'trash that deserves to be thrown in the garbage" He did not stop there, elucidating further he went on to say "The report is not about our election. It is just the view of some Western neo-liberals who are unhappy about the strength of the ruling party.... anybody who has paper and ink can scribble whatever they want."

Charming isn't he. You would not expect such 'trash talk' from a leader of a country do you? One would think when you ascend to be a leader there are certain diplomatic norms to be maintained and style of talk to abide. One can disagree without being crass. The office one holds dictates one's behavior and choice of words. Well, it is Ethiopia and international norms, rules and regulations are suggestions left to the individual's discretion.

It took the EU Election Observation Mission (EOM) six months to issue the official report. EU EOM was headed by Thijs Berman, a Dutch member of European Parliament and 10 Core Team members (analysts) 90 Long Term Observers and more than 60 Short Term Observers from 22 EU member states, as well as Norway, Switzerland, and Canada. The report is a carefully written document giving credit where credit is due and pointing out some discrepancies where improvement is needed to make the system work better. None of the observers hold any bias against our country and people that we know of. Their stated mission was to observe and report so what ever happened will be well documented and help future decision makers to see where to put their resources to help Democracy take root in our country.

When it comes to our country things just don't move in a reasonable and rational way. You can sense the crudeness of the TPLF regime when it denied the team access to Ethiopia to present their findings. According to Mr. Berman "This is the first time that a host country has denied the EU observation mission access to return to present its report,"

The regime choose to impeach the character of the EU mission instead of responding to the detailed findings by the observers. First to comment was our good friend Shimeles kemal (yes he is still around) the mentally unstable, paranoid Communication Affairs Minster who said 'the report is nothing but a biased political analysis of Ethiopia and was made under pressure from Human Rights Watch (HRW) which led the government to reject the report,' He was not satisfied with one enemy thus he threw in HRW for added effect.

The PM decided to lower bar further down. He was not about to be outdone by a junior miscommunication chief. He decided leave the insulting and name calling to me. Twenty years at the helm has given him the license to dispense insults, demeaning words and bully his people with immunity. That is what he did five years ago in response to EU COM's report regarding the 2005 elections. In fact he was so proud of his penmanship he published his response on his newspaper 'The Ethiopian Herald.' This is what he wrote:

The statement has come as a great surprise to me. I had expected that the statement would have very few if any nuggets of truth, and, if any, that these would be buried under so much garbage that it would be virtually impossible to excavate them. As it turned out, the statement has some big, really big, lumps of truth in it, and it is relatively easy to remove the garbage that has covered those lumps of truth. While I was expecting a huge garbage dump all I got was newly started garbage dump that was unable to bury the truth. The letter cannot but therefore start by identifying and highlighting the lumps of truth in the statement.

There you have it a head of state calling the Honorable Ana Gomez and her teams report 'garbage'. Looks like time has not mellowed the PM. Why do you think he is stuck in this funky mode? Do you think just may be we have something to do with it? Is it possible we encourage this dysfunctional behavior? Are we part of the problem?

These are good points to ponder while we look at the PM and his isolated existence in a bubble. You see the truth is verbal abuse, demeaning of fellow citizens is nothing but the first step leading towards higher forms of criminal behavior. Ato Meles has made it a habit of knocking down our flag, country and culture. We are so enamored by his crass behavior that we ascribe such adjectives as 'wend new' 'jegna new' etc. that only emboldens his crudeness. He of course thinking it is cute goes on to apply it in his relationship with foreign dignitaries. It is true children repeat what they hear. Thus one is always careful about language around two year olds. They blurt out that 'new' word they just heard in a public setting.

We are ashamed that the PM did not find a grown up method of disagreeing in a civilized manner. Language is very important in diplomatic circles. Words carry great weight. A diplomat's response is more nuanced and carry the solution or the behavior desired buried inside. Analysts are sent to decipher the utterances of a head of state. Trash and garbage are not in the dictionary.

