

Criminals and Red Terror Perpetrators: Is There Any Guarantee They Will Not Do It Again?

By A/Prof G. Tadesse

I am writing this short note in a response to recent radio interview of Dr Hailu Araya in Voice of America Amharic Program. I am deeply disturbed by the fact that he is currently one of leaders in an opposition political party, where he portrays himself as a fighter for justice, democracy and rule of law. In a gross self-contradiction with what has been trying to tell the Ethiopian public, he is now defending mass murder, unashamedly attempting to justify red terror of his former regime. His re-emergence as a defender of the red-terror campaign is a frightening development, demanding every democratic Ethiopians to unite against the comeback attempt of murderers and dictators. We must make the current dictatorial and terrorist regime the last one in Ethiopia.

Dr Hailu is teamed up with former TPLF leaders, Ato Siye Abraha and others, who are maintaining secrecy of barbaric actions of their former organisation, TPLF. Obviously they are attracted to each other by similarity of their background. Dr Hailu did not see anything wrong in killing of hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians by his regime. He sat on blood of red terror victims until the fall of Derg. On the other hand, leaving aside the crime of TPLF in Tigray, Gondar and others parts the country during its push towards Addis Ababa, Siye Abraha facilitated the killings of unarmed civilians in various parts of the country. It is not surprising to see those joining ranks, given that they have shared agenda, defending crime of their respective parties and governments. What surprises many is their intension to rule again, without acknowledging their crime and facing justice or seeking forgiveness from the Ethiopian people. Recently Ato Siye was heard stating he would seek forgiveness for his past crime when he gets into a position of authority again. What a pathetic reasoning. One does not need to be in a position of authority to seek forgiveness or to face justice. In fact Siye's motive is clear, avoiding any chance of facing justice. This is the man who openly boasted of his ability "not just to fight a war, but also to create a war" when he was the TPLF defence minister.

Appearance of those monstrous individuals as political leaders and saviours of Ethiopia is worrying development and rises questions such as what kind of change can they bring without changing their criminal behaviour? What makes them different from the current criminal gangs ruling the country if they continue to defend mass killing or keeping secret crimes of their former political party? What guarantee do we have that those individuals would not kill again or legitimise killing of innocent citizens as a way of handling opposing views?

The memory of red terror is well and alive in the minds of Ethiopians who watched their beloved children butchered by Derg. Estimated 250,000 Ethiopians were slaughtered by Derg and its collaborators during the red terror campaign. For Dr Hailu it was a right thing to do in order to deal with opposition. For the rest of the Ethiopians, especially for those who lost their beloved family members, the grief has no end and the search has continued for those disappeared and their whereabouts remain not known. Sees the case of Firezer Gebeyehu in <http://www.debteraw.com/> Red terror was an official policy of Derg, declared and orchestrated through media, political cadres and was a slogan of the regime for the duration of the campaign. Contrary to this fact, while Addisu Abebe tried to imply that it was not declared, Dr Hailu asserted it was “a justifiable” measure.

Since May 2007 woyanne election drama, many of these criminals are making at most effort to rewrite history in a hope of covering up their crime or to bolster their defence dossier as they live in fear of facing justice. Some are writing books, while few are appearing in various media outlets to distort the truth. Others are linking mass killing and misery brought by Derg to the popular revolution of February 1974 and condemn the revolution and revolutionaries, in a deliberate attempt to cover up the crime of Derg.

Encouraged by these developments, Dr Hailu Araya went out into public using international media in defence of red terror. His attempt did nothing, but unmasked him and what he stands for. He argued that red-terror was a response to a “white terror”. He even attempted to implicate the people, cheaply arguing red terror was committed in “a popular demand”. In a desperate attempt, he pointed his finger at former Soviet Union, stating that “Derg copied the term red terror and action from the soviet revolution”. How can we believe this man will not justify mass killing again?

On the other hand, former members of TPLF Ato Siye Abraha and others these who fallen out with the current butcher of Addis Ababa, ato Meles Zenawi, on personal grounds than any tangible ideological and policy difference, are responsible for several mass murders across the country. Until they fallen out with Ato Meles they were happy to kill or authorise killings. Mothers, fathers, wives, sons, daughters of victims of the current regime’s undeclared terror campaign in various parts of the country are crying for justice. Blood stained streets are fresh reminders of terror committed by TPLF regime during its 19 years rule. Like former Derg officials, perpetrators and collaborators of the TPLF terror campaign are attempting to display different image about themselves as opposition leaders.

While Dr Hailu is defending red terror, the former TPLF leaders are maintaining absolute secrecy of those behind mass killings of innocent people – AAU students, unarmed civilians in Areka, Arusi, Bale, Harar, Gambella, Gondar, Welega etc - jailing and killing of Prof Asrat. As a person directly involved in disappearance of EPRP leadership and members including Tsegaye Gebre Medhin (aka Debteraw), Yishak Debretsion, Amha Bellette, Sitotaw Hussein, Teklai Gebre Sellasie, Hagos Bezabih, Desalegn Amsalu, Mot Baynor Nure, Eyob Ashenafi, Demissie Tesfaye, Ms Aberash

Berta, Lemma Hailu, Tesfaye Kebede, Wondusirak Desta, Tamrat Gizachew, and many others, Ato Siye holds key information and must tell the truth. These brave Ethiopians were disappeared when Ato Siye was the defence minister. It is a legitimate question to ask Siye, what happened to those people? Who are other involved in perpetrating these crimes? What was your role in these crimes as a defence minister? If you are opposed to TPLF rule, why do you keep its crime secrete? Where are those people? Were they killed? Were you keeping them somewhere in a secret location?

The truth is these people have criminal background and not fit for office in any standard. There is no difference between the current killers in power and those criminal gangs trying to replace them. They did not deliver democracy when they were in power and they cannot deliver now or in the future. Dr Hailu as a member of government that committed the worst crime in Ethiopian history, and as an advocate of injustice and crime against humanity cannot be trusted. Ato Siye as a committed believer of TPLF political program who still holds key information on whereabouts of many Ethiopians cannot be trusted. He is responsible for mass killing of civilians and disappearance of many people. There is no guarantee he would not do it again. The struggle is not to replace one dictator with another dictator. The struggle is not to replace one group of murders with another group of murders.

The Struggle for Democratic Change Continues!