

# WHO CARES IF OBAMA GOES TO ETHIOPIA!

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By Hama Tuma

The American president, Barack Obama, is expected to visit Ethiopia in late July and to meet with the dictators who have made life there a virtual hell for more than 92 million people. They are his allies if we want to be polite or his puppet if we are sticklers for the truth. They have summarily executed many, disappeared dozens, kept more than 40,000 political prisoners in dungeons but they recently released five bloggers and journalists to please Obama and that is all that matters to give him the chance to declare things are getting better in the hapless land. They have invaded Somalia to do his bidding, sent soldiers left and right to fulfill his orders, and sold more land than the size of Belgium for foreigners but who cares if they have uprooted thousands, committed massacres, sold children to foreigners, young girls to modern slavery and kept most of the population in abject poverty. Consider all this and tell me why Obama should not visit Ethiopia and meet with such monsters from his stable?

I do not like devils and I have no intention of being an advocate for one but I must say I do not understand all this hue and cry on Obama's trip to Ethiopia. He is going to Kenya which, after all, is the birthplace of his father. Ethiopia is Kenya's neighbor and like Kenya one of the invaders of Somalia a country that Obama considers on the same level as Afghanistan and Iraq. His declared intention to visit Ethiopia has irritated many quarters including Diaspora Ethiopians who have staged demonstrations calling on him to stay put in the White House. (Ethiopians in Ethiopia have no right to demonstrate peacefully and no one knows what they feel and think though they will be forced out en masse to welcome Obama with adulations). Washington Post

also joined the criticism with an editorial against the visit. Why all the hue and cry? It starts from a wrong assumption. The assumption that America stands on the side of democracy and good governance and is opposed to tyrants in Africa and elsewhere. A fantasy of great proportions. An un historic conclusion. Obama may be half black but he is the president of the predominantly white America--in other words he is not African but American. And where does America stand in Africa? With whom does America sympathize in Africa?

History teaches but most people, including many Ethiopians, are not good and attentive students. American policy towards Africa has more often than not been against the interest of Africans. America backed apartheid for long and labeled Mandela a terrorist. Nationalist Lumumba was murdered by the CIA. This same outfit organized a coup to oust Nkrumah and to foil the coup against Haile Sellasie. The murders of Machel, Cabral, Mondlane, Ouandie, Nyobe and more can all be traced to the works of the West with Washington as the center. Let us fast forward to Clinton who labeled tyrants in Uganda, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Rwanda as democrats. The whole world can now observe where these bad guys have led their countries to. The allies of Bush, who have become the darlings of Obama, are dictators of the worst kind in all levels--worst predators of the free press, brutal torturers, corrupts beyond imagination, thugs and murderers. On top of the list we find the regime in Ethiopia, a one party regime which just recently won 100 per cent of the seats in a rigged election. But this regime that Obama had previously hailed and praised has one joker in its hands--it is pro American. As Kirkpatrick said it's sure is an SOB of a regime but it is America's SOB and as we say in Ethiopia when you love a child it is with its diapers and all. The ugly regime is pampered and eulogized by Obama and his top lieutenants like Rice, Sherman and Gayle Smith, a cabal of tyrant lovers.

The victims in the coming visit of Obama to Ethiopia are not the Ethiopian people and not even Obama for that matter. The victim is the false and common assumption that people, including Ethiopians, have as regards America and Obama and the commitment of America to democracy in Africa. That America hobnobs with despots is anything but normal. That America stands against tyrants that love it and respects the wishes of the people and calls for good governance is a man bite dog news. Rare and actually unheard of in the past we all remember and know. Which means that Obama's visit to pat the backs of the Ethiopian oppressors is to be expected and, if we can say this, natural. In Other words, why did Obama take this long to go to Ethiopia where one his most loyal regimes scoffs at him with a 100 per cent election win. We expect Obama to utter the worn out clichés and platitude that American leaders reserve for Africa. Irrelevant chatter. We are certain we will hear Obama talking of economic progress in a country that has millions depending on food aid, sky rocketing inflation and unemployment, with hundreds of thousands homeless, and millions of internally displaced people. Obama will not see the real Ethiopia because he imagines its features and does not want to be confronted by it.

The brutal regime in Ethiopia came to power with an all round backing and support from the USA. It is America's baby with Herman Cohen as the midwife. You may not like the baby but you rarely throw it out along with the dirty bath water. Actually, the regime is liked by the Pentagon (America has been given an air force base in Arba Minch) whose objectives in Somalia are being pursued by soldiers of the regime (which gets money for the operation). The regime in Addis Abeba is Washington's man in IGAD, Southern Sudan, the whole Horn region, Darfur and even as far as Liberia. It cannot turn its back on such an ally, such a puppet. The problem with those who oppose Obama's trip to Ethiopia is their expectation that Obama gives a damn about the wishes and interests of the Ethiopian people. They feel

betrayed while they were never considered worthy of concern and respect in the first place. I do not really care where Obama goes come the end of July as I have long ago buried any illusion on America and its demagoguery on democracy. In my books a master of a loyal dog would go to the kennel and caress his dog and whisper thanking nonsense in its ears. It is to be expected. I am confident I can write the words of Obama's declarations in Ethiopia come end of July. No surprises. And I really do not care if Obama goes to Ethiopia, his devastating politics and policies are already there, bad to the core,