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The Call of Time for the Oromo Political forces and the People of Oromiyaa

A popular revolutionary political movement is epochal. From time to time, it erupts like volcanoes leaving indelible mark in the political history of mankind. In many instances, such a movement up-roots a decadent political system and supplant it with relatively progressive one. The American revolution that rejected the autocratic rule of Great Britain and championed republic in the 1786, the French revolution that overthrew centuries of absolute monarch and brought about liberal political thoughts for France and beyond France and all across Europe in the late 1790s, the wave of decolonization movements across Asia and Africa that culminated in the creation of many sovereign states in the 1950s and 1960s, the upheaval of the peoples of Eastern Block communist states that led to the disintegration of the Soviet Union and subsequent liberation of their countries from the Soviet indirect rule in the early 1990s are just a few prominent movements one could cite. Evolved at different eras, these movements shaped progressive political and socio-economic pathways for human development not only in the respective epicenter of the revolutions but also had a considerable bearing on the evolution of similar revolutionary struggle in far distant parts of the world.

Close to home, it is to be recalled that the anachronistic monarchy of Haile Sillase that ruled Ethiopia for over 40 years was deposed in 1974 through a popular revolution that involved a broad range of socio-economic classes throughout the empire. The Military junta, Dergue, hijacked the revolution, usurped the political power following the collapse of the feudal regime, and ruled with iron fist for 17 years. However, with internal growing dissents and armed struggle and with its external communist allies free fall the Dergue too crumbled in 1991.

Hence, revolutionary movements are not any foreign for the entire nations and nationalities in Ethiopia, especially for the people of Oromiyaa. If we take a stock of Oromo movements during and after the reign of Haile Sillase, we could enlist the Raayyaa revolt of the 1940s, the Bale armed uprising, the Macha and Tulama pan-Oromo struggle, and the Afran Qalloo politico-cultural movement of the 1960s, and the national liberation struggle that has ensued in the early 1970s with the establishment of Oromo liberation forces. Albeit limited, it is undisputable that each hitherto carried out movements of the people of Oromiyaa served as a springboard for subsequent ones and helped secure incremental gains toward the ultimate aspiration of the people of Oromiyaa for freedom and independence.

Today, with the sacrifices that the Oromo heroes and heroines have paid over the years of unrelenting struggle, (1) the Oromo language that once relegated to only household use is a working language of offices, courts, various media outlets, and education in schools and higher learning institutions, (2) the political-geography of Oromiyaa is in place though in crude form, and (3) the Ethiopian identity that

eclipsed the Oromo identity is fading away. These inroads into affirmation of the rights of the people of Oromiyaa as a nation could and should be viewed as milestone achievements and celebrated.

Under no circumstance, however, any achievement short of liberation should be taken with complacency as an end by itself. The Oromo liberation struggle should continue with vigor to secure more gains that would eventually lead to emancipation of Oromiyaa from the Abyssinians rule. Cementing gains scored at every historic juncture and guarding against possible attrition of any gains, the struggle for liberation must pursue assuming timely and multi-pronged strategic approaches that expeditiously shorten the days of the present totalitarian rule of Meles Zenawi and free Oromiyaa.

Time is of the essence! It appears this is the epoch when subjects of tyranny free themselves through coordinated popular upheaval. The case in point is the current raging revolutionary movement in North Africa and the Middle East. Extraordinarily mesmerizing historical events have taken place within a very a short span of time in the two regions. Subduing an oppressed mass that stands united for a cause and exudes people's powerhouse has proved futile. Despite a barrage of crackdown, the revolutionary fire set in Tunisia has engulfed Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, and Libya and several countries in the Middle East. This fire has so far consumed the notorious dictatorial regimes of Tunisia and Egypt. It has engrossed the Muammar el Qaddafi regime of Libya, and it is a matter of time before the world witnesses another ruthless dictator thrown into the dust bin of history. This raging fire is destined to likely take on other brutal regimes in Africa: the like of that of Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia. In this eventuality, the question at the heart of the current Oromo political discourse is: "Could the people of Oromiyaa harness this epochal external wind of change to rise up in unison and end the putrid rule of Meles Zenawi and prevent any potential return of retrograde Abyssinian political hopefuls craving for reinstatement of the like of Ethiopia of the Minilik era?" Soon the discourse must beget sound and seasoned actions that ring the bell of freedom for colonized peoples in Ethiopia.

At this critical time of change that hovers around our continent, less rhetoric and more critical, timely, and concrete actions that match the call of the time are required on the part of the Oromo and other oppressed nations and nationalities in Ethiopia to free themselves from the grip of naked dictator – Meles Zenawi. By any standard, the regime of Meles Zenawi is not any less brutal than the recently ousted regimes of Tunisia and/or Egypt or the regime of Qaddafi of Libya that is now on the verge of tattering. Many similarities than differences abound between Zenawi and any of the dictators of the three countries.

Just like anyone of them, Mr. Zenawi has usurped political power illegitimately and secured it for so long by running bogus parliamentary elections intended to legitimize him as a democratic leader and through ruthlessly suppressing dissents with sheer force of terror. To remain in power, he has both overtly and covertly massacred thousands of people with dissenting political views, launched what amounts to genocidal campaign on some ethnic groups, imprisoned tens of thousands of people in hidden concentration camps, and perpetrated state of fear through constant torture, coercion and intimidation all across Ethiopia.

In the economic front, despite the much talked about double digit growth of the economy, the policy of Meles Zenawi has left the vast majority of the population under abject poverty. Millions are being exposed

to recurrent famine. Many more millions depend on food aids doled out from western countries. The draconian policy of land lease to foreign investors has evicted millions of farming communities from their land and forced them to turn to daily laborers or flock to cities only to live in beggary. The working class finds it utterly difficult to survive on meager pay in an economy embroiled with staggering inflation. For entrepreneurs, there is no level plain field for competition. It is not the market force but political connection that determines entrepreneurial success. While millions struggle to make ends meet, Meles and the company – his immediate family and political elites of his party (TPLF) – has been amassing the wealth of the empire state of Ethiopia. Hence, his regime is riddled with embezzlement and corruption - the hallmark of illegitimate and tyrant regimes.

Therefore, just like the citizens of those countries currently rocked with upheaval in North Africa and the Middle East, political disenfranchisement and economic marginalization accompanied by all sort of social woes have afflicted right, left, and centre the peoples in Ethiopia. Actually, in some cases, it may be difficult to draw a close parallel between the dire situation in Ethiopia and any one of those countries. We could grossly state that the political, economic, and social situation in Ethiopia is in a much more ominous state.

Given this dire situation in Ethiopia, it is not unlikely for the type of Tunisians or Egyptians revolutionary serge to take effect in Ethiopia and uproot the entrenched regime of Meles Zenawi. The fundamentals of revolutionary conditions are similar. All what is required in Ethiopia is effective mobilization of the mass that could ignite the revolution.

Three factors are critically important to mobilize the mass: First and foremost, establishing an unambiguous goal for the revolution; second, defeating the fear that the regime is invincible; and third, unifying and rallying the mass steadfastly behind a clear and shared goal.

The immediate and obvious goal is deposing the all-out hated regime of Meles Zenawi. With the exception of the regime and its beneficiaries and lackeys, everyone will buy-in to get rid of the regime. What needs to be clear without any shred of overcast is the ultimate goal of the revolution for which we aspire to mobilize the mass. That is, the type of political order that all stakeholders are committed to bring about in the post Zenawi's era. The clarity of this ultimate goal is decisive to bring all on board for a potential revolution and help it succeed in Ethiopia.

A crystal clear goal, beyond its appeal for broader participation of all in Ethiopia, would warrant success in ultimately garnering a lasting peace, stability and prosperity not only just in the Ethiopian empire proper but also in the entire region of the Horn Africa. The clear and noble goal of the revolution we aspire that all stakeholders in Ethiopian empire and beyond should subscribe to and work toward must be ending the tyrannical rule of Meles Zenawi , pre-empting the potential emergence of a similar dictatorship, and creating conducive political climate and ground work for free and unfettered self-determination of nations in Ethiopia.

For this worthy goal, ULFO calls upon:

1. The Oromo liberation forces to rise to the occasion and collectively chart a road map of the political pathways that help effectively weather through any political upheaval of the likes of the North

African countries that could ensue in Ethiopia. We urge them to collectively articulate the wish and aspiration of the people of Oromiyaa, formulate timely and appropriate forms of struggle, and actively mobilize our people to fully engage in revolutionary struggle destined to end tyranny and usher the era of freedom and liberty. We remind all that the political destiny of our nation heavily hinges on well synchronized collective efforts of all organized Oromo political forces. In the past, we failed to put our political powerhouse in order and that consequently prolonged the misery of our people. We cannot afford to repeatedly flounder. It is a matter of urgency to reflect on and draw lesson from political opportunities we have squandered in the past and hastily prepare to act in unison on matters pertaining to the national interest of the people of Oromiyaa. We, therefore urge

2. all Oromo liberation forces to labor, as a matter of priority, on unification/coalition of these forces before all else.
3. The people of Oromiyaa to remain vigilant and guard against Trojan horse embedded in some political organs and work to misuse our people for their narrow political end. We urge you to make conscious effort in protecting and further promoting the collective interest of the nation at anytime.
4. All Oromo civic, community, religious organizations at home and in the Diaspora to exert due pressure on all Oromo liberation forces to collectively and responsibly take charge of the business of the nation.
5. All Oromo activists who for one reason or another chose to stay aloof from organized Oromo political forces to join one of your choice and make a difference in transforming it to one suited or equipped for our national liberation struggle. Sitting on the sideline and finger pointing is counterproductive and de-service to our nation. It doesn't contribute meaningfully to the advancement of the struggle. We appeal to you to join and revamp organizational capacity of our liberation forces with your talents and resources.
6. Oromo nationals working for or with the regime of Meles Zenawi to sever their relation with the dying regime and make a critical move of allying with their own people. We urge them not to err again and pick a wrong side but wisely prepare to stand by their people in the eventuality of the demise of the regime. In this critical juncture when interested parties are jostling to secure a political space in the Ethiopian empire, we remind Oromo nationals not to remain idle but actively watch and act on every political move that potentially puts the people of Oromiyaa at a political disadvantage.
7. All nations and nationalities with whom the Oromo share the Abyssinian colonial legacy to work hand in hand and forge common understanding and develop a political framework that could help achieve our common destiny. We urge all to guard against the divide and rule policy of the regime, the policy that the regime has thrived on since it came to power.

8. The western governments of the United States and European countries to draw a lesson from the current popular revolution of the North African countries and to cease from promoting dictatorial regimes. It is a established fact that, despite documented substantial evidences for crime he has been committing over the years, the western governments (especially that of the US and the UK) have been promoting Meles Zenawi as the darling of west. We appeal to your governments to desist from engaging in such a morally reprehensible act; We appeal to your governments to instead help in promoting freedom, democracy, and development that guarantee the stability of the region and in turn meet the geopolitical interests of your respective governments.

In passing, ULFO would like to remind all Abyssinian political forces to take a hard look at the evolving political dynamics within the Ethiopian empire and resist a temptation of addressing political issues of today just like yesteryear. Today, dismissing the collective aspirations of nations and nationalities in the empire as ethnic politics is simplistic and futile. This political approach benefits only the regime of Meles Zenawi and prolongs the suffering of all peoples in Ethiopia. Progressive forces should retract themselves from nostalgia benighted politics and come up with the 21st century political framework that brings about freedom and liberty and shared economic and security interest for all peoples in the empire state of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa region at large.

United Liberation Forces of Oromiyaa,

Unity is Strength!!!

Oromiyaa shall be free!!!