

“Those Who Call Themselves Fano”

Quote from Ambassador Ervin Massinga’s Speech”

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Born out of the indomitable spirit of resistance to oppression, aggression and attempts of colonialization; FANO is a force currently engaged in a fierce struggle to bring justice and freedom in Ethiopia. In a defiant and scornful speech, the US Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ervin Massinga referred to this force as “Those who call themselves Fano.” Those who call themselves Fano: are the very people who fought hard to make Ethiopia the only country that has never been colonized and a people that inspired the anti-slavery struggle of the ancestors of Ambassador Massigna. His foreign policy speech of May 15, if it was meant to bring the warring parties closer to dialogue, did exactly the opposite. The victims and targets of genocide and crimes against humanity, the Amharas, felt once again abandoned by its traditional ally the USA. If this statement was based on a personal bias by the Ambassador, I want to say this;

From the Caribbeans to the mainland America, the history of Black Freedom Movement is full of heroism inspired by a independent Ethiopia protected by FANO. No other country has inspired the freedom struggle of the African Slaves than what Ambassador calls the; “so called Fanos.” From the times of Marcus Garvey, to Martin Luther King and Bob Marley, Ethiopia stood as the beacon of hope and the Promised Land for all black people. It was the Judo- Christian values that spread across the Caribbean to form the largest number of churches and the most powerful black liberation movement in the Caribbean and in America. The spirit of FANO is the product of ancient valor and passion to protect the liberty and freedom of Ethiopians but also the freedom of all Africans wherever they were. Ethiopianism spread across America and the Caribbean like wildfire. A universal Ethiopian anthem was written and included in the Declaration of the Rights of the Negro People adopted in NY in 1920. The Lyrics begins:

Ethiopia, Thou Land of Our Fathers...

For us will the victory be Glorious
When led by Green Yellow and Red
Etc....

Chorus:

Advance, advance to Victory
Let Africa be free Advance to meet the fie
With the might
Of the Green, Yellow and Red. ETC.

I deeply cherish the values that this country has stood for. It is these values that have made America the center of gravity for millions of oppressed people on earth. From the day I became a citizen of this country, I have not hesitated to exercise my “**First Amendment**” right of freedom of expression by defending and protecting the fundamental rights of all people, knowing fully well that my voice alone will not have any effect unless it brings together the voice of millions of Americans who today are not even aware that there has been a genocide taking place in Ethiopia for the last five years, before the Ukraine war, before the Gaza war, two issues that have triggered the ICC and ICJ actions almost instantly, unlike the case of the Amhara genocide. It is apparent that successive ambassadors and envoys have not done a good job in informing the American public when a crime of such magnitude takes place in a country that has been a traditional ally of the USA for a century. I am disappointed that America has refused to acknowledge the persecution of Amharas in Ethiopia, people who have been the custodians of Judo-Christian and Koranic values and who have withstood the pressures of colonialists and Arab expansionists for hundreds of years.

Ethiopia is arguably the closest US ally in Africa but the ongoing crises has exposed Washington’s lack of a clear and coherent policy for Ethiopia and the Horn in general. The USA seems to be ill prepared to handle the complex strategic and security issues of the region. Ambassador Massinga’s statement only adds to this ambivalence. Seen together with current crisis in the Middle East, the crisis in the Horn and Ethiopia in particular needs a much more serious attention than just a bluff. The most strategic and security concern for America at this moment in history is not even Ukraine. It is the Greater Horn and the Middle East. This issue will be addressed by an international conference to be held in Nairobi in September. We hope to learn a lot from this conference.

This week the US ambassador’s statement has created anger and frustration amongst Amharas in Ethiopia. Furthermore, it clearly undermined the stated interest of the USA to create stability in Ethiopia and the region. Certainly, you don’t do that by scorning the people who are sacrificing their lives for the protection and safety of their people. By appealing to the fascist forces to unite, the ambassador emboldened the enemies that have vowed to exterminate the Amharas and declared to establish a Cushite Empire from the center of Ethiopia to Kenya to the coast of the Indian Ocean. The map of the Cushite Empire has been laid out for the public to see with no shame or fear. Its greatest obstacles are, as stated publicly, the Orthodox church and the Amharas, Muslims and Christians: hence the persecution which started in earnest five years ago.

I have been to every African country where Genocide and crimes against humanity have taken place over the last three decades. I can say, full heartedly that none compare with the kind of atrocities that have taken place in the Amhara region in pursuit of a declared ideology of hate and expansion. People have been crucified, roasted alive, cannibalized, fetus torn out of mother’s womb, old and young, women and children slaughtered like sheep in full view of the public, for only one reason: **because they are Amharas**. No systematic persecution has been recorded as has the Amhara persecution in recent memory, before the Gaza war. No sane

person in Ethiopia can believe that Ambassador Massinga has not seen these acts which have been widely circulated. He cannot even avoid watching and listening to the war drums of the Oromuma gangs because it is all over Ethiopia wherever Amharas reside. A United States Ambassador is the ears, the voice, and the face of Washington abroad, Robert H. Tuttle, U.S. Ambassador to the UK, said once. Nothing can explain this insolence except his personal relationship with this deranged leader with whom he spends several casual times, one time seen with a hand in hand public parade.

The Ambassador said people have the right to defend themselves and in the same breath stated that violence will not bring a solution. Americans believe in taking up arms to defend and protect themselves, their rights and their families. Amharas have a long tradition which resembles the second amendment: rights that have been exercised for hundreds of years. The FANO movement is the guardian of evil, invasion, oppression and colonialism. The Second Amendment guarantee that “the right of the people to ...bear arms, shall not be infringed”, protects the liberty to carry fire arms outside the home for self-defense or other lawful purposes. **The Second Amendment** is crucial in ensuring that the government remains accountable to the American people. **“A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.”** The Founders saw the dangers of power-hungry government leaders and enshrined the right to keep and bear arms to prevent the government from wielding too much power. The Amharas have entitled themselves to these same rights which Ambassador Massinga condemns.

The Genocide Convention was the first Human Rights treaty adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, on 9 December 1948 and signified the international community's commitment to 'never again' after the atrocities committed during the Second World War. The definition contained in Article II of the Convention describes genocide **as a crime committed with the intent to destroy a national ethnic racial or religious group, in whole or in part.** It does not include political groups or so called “cultural genocide”. The catch word for lawyers has always been **INTENT**. A prominent argument for the specific intent requirement is that ‘*dolus specialis*’ is what separates the crime of genocide from other international crimes, e.g., crimes against humanity. Intent has sufficiently been addressed in the case of Ethiopia. The case just refused to move because the fact that Ethiopian government is not a signatory to the Rome Statute required a different and more bureaucratic approach which needed the support of the big powers.

Diplomacy requires specialization to manage complexity. Recent decades show that American diplomats have become more generalists, called by one “a system of meritocratic mediocracy.” Diplomats are chosen for breadth not for depth. Those with no depth rarely understand local contexts well enough to make a solid argument for a proposed solution. Such unprofessionalism of American diplomats regularly happens in Africa. They never try to go deep and understand the complexity of a given situation and provide solution. They rather defend positions that make them more comfortable with the status quo and the leaders, though it is invariably not in tune with the ordinary narrative and popular perspectives and facts on the ground. They are

lured into corruptions, seductions and sins that a corrupt government in a given country can offer to a mediocre diplomat. Embracing a dictator in Ethiopia, though common to the US foreign policy, is at odds with American interest in the Horn of Africa in an extremely sensitive time. The Horn of Africa, rather the Greater Horn, has not been a priority concern to the USA for some time now. Those countries in Africa who do not have any leverage on US foreign policy are taken for granted. "Throughout its history, the United States lacked clear objectives on the continent and, as a result, its policies were largely reactionary, vacillating between exploitation, benign neglect, and half-hearted attempts at democracy and humanitarian assistance."

A successful ambassador is a powerful asset for U.S. diplomacy: the right person can improve a foreign public's perception of America and can bring warring parties to work together under a fair political system. The ambassadors can establish good relationship not only with governments but with the population on critical issues and turn a foe into an ally. Otherwise, they will end up turning an ally into a foe. An ambassador should work in close cooperation with embassy staff including local staffs, to carefully manage the messages conveyed through media interviews and other media tools. Traveling within Ethiopia and touring without government minders and talking to ordinary people, activists and Fanos as part of community outreach will go a long way to having a better understanding of the crisis the country faces.

There are discussions amongst the Amhara intellectuals as to whether or not the American foreign policy in Ethiopia is not based on inherent suspicion and dislike towards the Amharas? There are many instances that bolster this argument. One of course is the famous Kissinger policy: "exploiting ethnic, religious or other differences to keep the country weakened and embroiled in enduring conflicts." At different times this policy might have worked but in the modern age when there are competing powers, playing with this option is very primitive and counterproductive. If it is not this then it can only be **DENIAL or FOLLY**. The denial is not explainable. Folly is understandable because it has happened several times in American history. (Read The March of Folly by Margaret Tuchman)

Ambassador Massinga referred to the need of a national dialogue. He has to go back to his readings. National dialogues take place within a broader transition. One important aspect of national dialogue is to bring sustainable peace through reconciliation. I have personally attended the TRC processes in South Africa, Rwanda, and Liberia and attended the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda to "prosecute persons responsible for genocide and other serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in the territory of Rwanda, in Arusha. These were a series of events in Africa that were quite extensively discussed at the time. I did write about my experience and opinions on the conduct of this process on several occasions. The term TRC gives a wrong impression that reconciliation in a wounded nation such as Ethiopia, can easily be achieved by using the over abused words "**Dialogue "and "Reconciliation"**

The future of Ethiopia depends upon ***Truth, Justice, Reparations and Reconciliation in this order***. *Reconciliation is the last part of a successful national dialogue. And the precondition of such a dialogue is the removal and prosecution of the government that perpetrated these crimes. There cannot be any transition to peaceful co-existence unless such a regime is*

removed and justice rendered. Earnest dialogue begins on a new political platform which recognizes the full self-determination of the Amharas, the integrity of their land and their equal rights amongst the 80 ethnic groups in Ethiopia. The dialogue begins with the truth, the whole truth told, the injustices and the genocide exposed to the Ethiopian public and the world, all other crimes exposed, and the victims and the criminals made to confront each other. Then justice can be delivered, reparations made, and the process of reconciliation can begin in a reformed Ethiopia that has dealt with its past. Reconciliation without the complete truth, without justice, reparation is fake. It will only be a masquerade for the divisiveness that will persist and eventually manifest itself in another round of extreme violence. It will be a long healing process that can eventually bring people together if started in good faith, and on a firm structural foundation.

Transitional justice has been wrongly proposed to the situation in Ethiopia. Transitional justice is justice. What do we mean by justice in these circumstances? How can we pursue justice if the state itself perpetrated the genocide, the displacement, the torture and if the state itself is complicit in the commission of these crimes against its own people on an enormous scale? How does a society recover? How do we deliver justice while pursuing peace and stability? Above all, transitional justice is about victims. It focuses on their rights and dignity as citizens and human beings and it seeks accountability, acknowledgment, and redress for the harms they suffered. “By putting victims at the center and their dignity first, transitional justice signals the way forward for a renewed social contract in which all citizens are included and everyone’s rights are protected.”

The emphasis of transitional justice is on how abuses of human rights get treated during political transition. There cannot be transitional justice without political transition. Transitional justice which includes dialogue for sustainable peace requires first and foremost the removal of the regime and the establishment of a transitional government. It happens in a society which is making transition from conflict to sustainable peace, from dictatorship to democracy, from a legacy of genocide and human rights abuses to respect for human rights, and from a culture of impunity to one in where criminals and perpetrators are punished and made accountable and citizens are treated with dignity and equality. These processes are not easy to implement and can take years. Though the sequence is sometimes seen as problematic, in the Ethiopian case I have suggested the sequence as outlined above: **Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation**. Once this is set up, which requires considerable support from the population and from international organizations like the AU and UN, the political transition can take place simultaneously with elections and the beginning of a long healing process.

The New Scramble for the Horn is the rush to control or influence countries for economic exploitation and control the Horn and the strategic maritime routes. In this new rush, the players are increasing in numbers. As for now localized conflicts in the Horn are spreading and deepening and resolving them are becoming more complicated as the stakes are getting high and the players too may. We have yet to see serious effort to construct a peace and security architecture that bridges the Horn and the Red Sea’s Western, Northern and Eastern regions. Since the interests are diverse and sometimes conflicting and irreconcilable it poses a great

challenge for the Horn of Africa to stop the accelerating instability in the Red Sea security zone which Ethiopia is part of. Ethiopia will be the epi center if the political tsunami explodes. For these reasons the crisis in Ethiopia must be dealt fast and decisively before it involves others and possibly introduce proxy wars. Ambassador Massinga should be more worried on this rather than preaching the Ethiopian people on how to manage the conflicts.

The destiny of Amharas and Ethiopia is in the hands of: “Those Who Call Themselves Fano.” America and the world have been put on notice several times. FANO might have no time table. But nothing will stop it from reaching Addis and enforce change of government on its own terms. America should prepare its foreign policy and strategy of stabilization now than later because Fano will be in Addis without the need for dialogue. Dialogue will be done with the people of Ethiopia on the future of the country, only and only after Abiy and his entourage have been removed from power and see their day in court and a transitional government has been established. FANO is ready to do just that. FANO is a structured organized body and has taken its time preparing to take up this responsibility. It has policies, programs, rules of engagement and a strategy. The USA would do good to its own interest to peace and stability in the region and to the people of Ethiopia, if it recognizes this force and coordinate smooth transition.

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