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A Message to PM Abiy Ahmed By Mohamed Heebaan Oct 6, 2018

Dear Prime Minister Ahmed,

I salute you for the courageous, earth-shattering reforms, the likes of which hasn't been seen not just in Ethiopia, but to my knowledge, in the entire African continent. Our region, the Somali region, has been one of the biggest beneficiaries, because sacking Abdi Iley's criminal administration ushered a new day for our people. Some people claimed that you invaded Jigjiga. You didn't. You liberated it!

Abdi Iley wasn't an ordinary tyrant. He was savage in the extreme. Not only he had innocent people tortured, raped and murdered, but he also had the dead and the corpses desecrated and stomped on!

However, as gruesome as Abdi Iley's administration had been, like all the butchers and barbaric regimes in history,

there were people who benefited from his administration. So, if you see or hear about some people who protest on Abdi Iley's behalf, don't be surprised: they are the remnants who profited from our people's misery. If you hear some people talk about Abdi Iley's so-called accomplishments, they are doing that just to whitewash his crimes, in part, because they themselves were part of the rot!



There are people who say, "Abdi Iley's rule is finished. Therefore, we shouldn't waste any more time on it. Instead we need to move on and focus on dealing with the region's present and future difficulties." As Arabs say, *that is a true statement with dishonest intent!* We must ensure that Abdi Iley and his remnants are held accountable for their crimes, so that the punishment they receive will serve as a deterrence to the current leaders, and the future leaders would know abusing our people will cost them a heavy price.

A society with a short memory that doesn't learn from calamities and doesn't take precautions will end up falling into the same disasters over and over.

The Privatization Advisory Council:

Whoever put together the list of the Privatization Advisory Council is clearly stuck in the 19th century! [To put together a 21-member national privatization Advisory council](#), in Ethiopia, a country where Muslims constitute the majority of the population, and not include even a single Muslim member on the list was truly scandalous! You cannot reform the country with old hands full of innate biases that see the Ethiopian people as the *Privileged and the irrelevant*, and who are prisoners of the 19th century mentality. In that 21- member advisory council, at least 11 members should have been Muslim economists and financial experts, unless someone can prove the impossible, and demonstrate that there are no Ethiopian Muslim experts in the fields of economics and finances.

Some people would argue that it is wrong to judge issues on religious basis because the moment you start traveling down that road, you start dividing people, instead of bringing them together. This argument is valid in secular democratic countries such as Sweden, Canada or Switzerland. But in Ethiopia it isn't because in Ethiopia, things were always judged on biased religious basis. The bias to one religious group over the other was so overwhelming that it shaped the people's thinking to the point that, today, in 2018, a national advisory council was established where Muslims, who are the majority in the country were completely excluded, and your advisors saw nothing wrong with that! Unfortunately, that shows and underlines how biased the advisors who surround you are.

To understand how bizarre and inexcusable the list and the action by those who put it together are, consider if the tables were turned, and the entire list of the 21-members were all Muslims, and not a single Christian among its members. Should that happen, the Ethiopian people would have been outraged, because the bias against the Christians would have been so glaring, and the hauls and cries about the discrimination against Christians would have been so loud! And we are making the same point. Thus, to avoid these embarrassing biases, religious equality on issues of national significance must be adopted. Muslims could not make the argument that I am making today here before in Ethiopia, because before your ascendancy, Muslims never had a chance. Therefore, in order to establish religious equity in the country, we don't just need the revamping of the Privatization Advisory Council, but the revamping of your own advisors, and the replacement of those who came up with that ridiculous 21-member list with inclusive, forward looking advisors with modern attitudes and sensibilities.

The Resources of the Somali Region:

Somewhere you argued something along the line that “The gold in Oromia is for all of Ethiopia, and so is the oil and the gas in the Somali region.” I am sorry, but the Somali region hasn’t seen any gold, or silver or cobber from Oromia or from any other region. As Liban Farah detailed with facts and figures in an article he recently [published on Wardheernews](#), the Somali region was completely shut out of the resource allocation and project developments. If our region was given its share of projects and resources, no one could have argued against the rational that you presented. However, since our region is effectively excluded from resource allocation and development, sharing our natural resources with others is neither fair nor convincing. We lag behind other regions, and we need these resources to develop our region for the benefit of our people.

The ONLF:

When the new administration headed by Mr. Mustafa Omar was appointed to the Somali region, the ONLF was passed over. The organization and its leaders, I am sure, must have been disappointed with that. However, not being appointed to lead the region at this juncture was the greatest favour for the ONLF. This is the case because Jigjiga today is Cairo of 2011, when Hosni Mubark’s corrupt regime came to an abrupt end. At that time, the Muslim Brotherhood was very popular and best organized among Egypt’s political parties. However, because of the high expectations of the Egyptians and the insurmountable challenges, and few other factors, the *Ikhwan* suffered the worst of both worlds: They lost both the power and the support of the people in a short period of time. The same could have happened to the ONLF. However, the government has, unwittingly perhaps, saved the organization from a certain disaster.

However, the government’s action had perhaps another goal in mind. It was intended to send a message to the organization that its options are limited. The rational behind that decision is clear enough. Somalia is in shambles. Eritrea has reconciled with Ethiopia. So, what could the ONLF do? was the thinking in Addis Ababa. When Governments think they have the upper hand in negotiations, they tend to negotiate in bad faith. They do certain things to wear down the other party. For instance, they keep the other party wait for very long. They feign disinterest in the negotiations in order to lower the expectations of the other party, and force it to put its cards on the table; and pressure it to be satisfied with the *minimum*.

When governments start acting that way, there is a way to deal with them. And the most important thing is not to fall for their game. That is, instead of putting your cards on the table, the best thing is to fold your hand. Then get a piece of paper and write down your contact number and one single sentence, “Call me when you are serious about negotiations!” And then leave the area.

True, the ONLF does not have major foreign supporters. However, the organization's strength stems from its commitment to the liberation and the self-determination of the Somali people under Ethiopian occupation. So long the ONLF is committed to that goal, no one can wish it away. Foreign support comes and goes. But the territory and its people are permanent. Two factors that are working to the advantage of the Somali people of the region and to the ONLF are:

1—The discovery of the huge oil and gas reserves in the region.

2—Time and the monumental transformation that you introduced to the Ethiopian society, and the far reaching consequences they will create will benefit the Somali region, the ONLF, and all the oppressed peoples of the Ethiopia.

So, time is on the side of the ONLF. The organization does not need to rush. That is, instead of the ONLF pushing and trying to change things, both the push and the change in Ethiopia will come from a different direction: from the center of Ethiopia.

Having said all of that, still, I urge the ONLF and its leadership to negotiate with your government in open-minded and constructive manner, because there has never been an Ethiopian leader, in the entire history of Ethiopia, who showed the respect and the courtesy that you have shown our people. Thus, if there ever was a leader that deserves our cooperation, it is you. I hope also your government will negotiate in good faith, and avoid fruitless pressure tactics that will lead the negotiations to breakdown. Cooperation is so important for the ONLF, for the Somali region, and your government as well. Let us focus on the things that brings us together and benefits us all.

Secession? Not for us!

The one thing that I remind the ONLF and the new administration in Jigjiga, and all the intellectuals and the movers and the shakers of the Somali region is that we should not fall into the secession trap one more time. At this juncture in our history, this is a high risk project that we will be well advised not to indulge in. Thus, if the ONLF leadership is entertaining this idea, they must refrain from it. If they made such proclamation, they should never repeat it again. The risk of indulging in this agenda, at this juncture, is that it will only enable the other Ethiopians, who have bigger stake than we do in Ethiopia's affairs, and who are or soon will be at the throats of one another, settle their differences at our expense, and make us, again, the sacrificial lamb for Ethiopia's unity! We made this mistake before. We must never repeat that mistake under any circumstances.

This doesn't mean that we abandon our people's right to self-determination. It simply means that we keep our cards close to our chests, and methodically move to our goal when it is appropriate and doable. We will secede when there is no power in Ethiopia that could negate our decision. And that day, as I am going to show in upcoming piece, is getting closer every day.

The New Administration in the Somali Region:

Mustafa Omar, the head of the new administration in the Somali region is intelligent, articulate, and very knowledgeable. He knows about Ethiopian political dynamics as much as anybody. Contrary to the propaganda by Abdi Iley's remnants that portray him as a clannist, one of Mustafa Omar's real strengths is that clan sentiments do not cloud his thinking. A careful reading of his writings and ideas over the years makes it clear that he believes clannism to be a dead end as best illustrated by the late great Somali poet Abdullahi Suldan Timacadde, "Dugsi male qabyaaladi waxay dumiso mooyaane!" There is no shelter in clannism, it only destroys.

The one area that I used to differ from him, but I now appreciate the rationale behind his thinking is that he seems to have too much faith in the importance of cooperating and coexisting with other Ethiopian nationalities such as Oromos, Ahmaras and others. Thus, if there ever was a genuine Somali leader, representative of his people (Abdi Iley was neither genuine nor representative of the Somali people. He was a tool of the Tigrayans), who would do his best to work within Ethiopia's multi-ethnic framework, Mustafa Omar fits that bill.

Challenges:

The Challenges that are facing the new Somali administration are enormous. Politically, economically and morally, the region is in shambles. Abdi Iley's terror administration disdained knowledge and integrity. Not only he murdered and tortured innocent people, but fakes, flatterers and extortionists were the people he felt most comfortable with. Given the high expectations, and the broken system in the region, the chances of success appear very slim, and failure unavoidable. Still, changing things around, and beating enormous odds are what good leaders are expected of.

In addition to all other difficulties he faces, the most critical problems the new administration faces are:

- 1- The systematic slaughter of Somali communities by Oromo militias.
- 2- The conspiracy by Abdi Iley's remnants and by the hated Tigrayans that is working very hard to turn the Oromos and Somalis against one another, so that the Somali region and for that matter all Somalis will, by default, end up on the side of the Tigreans.

These two issues reinforce one another. That is, every time Oromo militias slaughter Somali communities in that long border, the propaganda by the Tigreans and by Abdi Iley's remnants starts resonating with the Somalis everywhere.



We know this conspiracy and we could foil it. We could also demolish any and all propaganda by Abdi Iley's remnants and by the much despised Tigrayans with powerful logic. However, unfortunately, we cannot hide the dead bodies of thousands of slaughtered Somalis with our bare hands. And frankly, we don't want to!

Mustafa Omar, the head of the new administration, is between rock and hard place. People started blasting him for being soft on the Oromos even before he assumed power. This is really unfair, but it comes with the territory. Besides, as Somalis say, "Kor waayeel waa wada indho!" Meaning, 'Grown ups see everything.' People know it, is you who appointed Mustafa Omar. And he is generally counted on the side of the Oromos. Thus, every time a single Somali is killed by the armed Oromo militias, the task of the Tigrean propaganda and Abdi Iley's remnants to turn the Somalis and Oromos against one another becomes that much easier.

The anguish and the anger among Somalis against the Oromos have reached a point where, in social media, some of the most prominent figures of Somali Republic's provincial or state leaders are now accused of being 'closet Oromos', or having Oromo ancestry and people are urged to revolt against them! This is ridiculous claim. But it shows the dangerous direction that the relationship between Somalis and Oromos is heading.



The one entity that can effectively support Mr. M. Omar and his administration is you and your government. However, such support from you to Mr. M. Omar's administration would not be a favour or charity from you. Rather it is a support for your own rule and your own leadership because, as the Prime Minister who appointed him, you have vested interest in the fate of Mr. Omar's administration: His success is your success. And his failure is your failure as well. When the leaders that you appointed are successful, their success solidifies your own leadership. Success breeds strength and confidence. When you are successful and victorious, your political adversaries will differ to you. Failure is the opposite, for it breeds self-doubt and hesitance. Failure is also a magnet for adversaries. The moment that you fail, you would suddenly see adversaries come out of the woodwork, and knives come out for you from every direction. The best way you can help Mr. Omar's administration and the Somali region as a whole is to put an end to the wanton slaughter of Somali communities by Oromos militias. Half-hearted statements that you or your officials make from Addis Ababa wouldn't do a thing. In some ways, it seems to encourage the perpetrators.

The issue is simply matter of priorities for you, but nothing else. This is the case because when you want to take a tough action, you have shown you have what it takes to do that. For instance,

you busted Abdi Iley's criminal enterprise in half a day. You forcibly retired the deeply entrenched Tigrean generals, who sucked the blood of the Ethiopian people for 27 long years, with stroke of a pen and with incredible ease. So, you have proven you have the guts and determination to make tough decisions. As I said, this is simply a matter of priority.

If the Oromo leaders think they can turn a blind eye to the slaughter of the Somalis by Oromo militias, and they would have peace and stability, they are making a grave mistake. If these slaughters continue, Somalis will not take them lying down. First, they will defend themselves and their territories with

whatever tools at their disposal. They will also join anyone and any group fighting against the Oromos including the devil himself, and make the Somali territories a living hell for the Oromos. And most critically, when the inevitable happens, and the historically privileged Ethiopians, and the newly



privileged Oromos fight over Ethiopia's destiny, as it is certain they will, and the millions of displaced Oromo refugees from that predictable conflict stream into Somali territories, instead of finding succor and support, all that they would find, I am sorry to say, would be the sharp end of the bayonets! This is a danger that Oromo elders, thinkers and intellectuals could easily see and could warn you about. But the agitators and sloganeers cannot, because it is beyond their horizons.

A worrying thing is that it appears a disproportional number of the Oromo people's eggs have been placed in the basket of agitators and sloganeers, instead of that of the thinkers, the intellectuals, and elders. This is bad for the people of Ethiopia, and would prove dangerous for the Oromos. The agitators and sloganeers are useful in galvanizing people, and uplifting their spirits. But they are notorious in sparking fires they do not know how to put out. This happens because sloganeers and agitators play with people's emotions, instead of engaging their minds. And those who play with people's emotions end up playing with fire, and wreaking a havoc they have no idea how to contain.

Another curious thing is that the defeated Tigrean regime had stooges and collaborators in every region including the Somali region, the Oromo region, and in all other parts of the country. These collaborators tormented and terrorized their own people in order to get in to the good books of the Tigrean regime. Therefore, any time there is a political change and a wind of

freedom is experienced, it is expected the differentiation between the victims and the victimizers would be very clear, so that those who terrorized the people would account for their crimes. In the Somali region, this is expected and it is going to happen. This is necessary because even though Abdi iley's remnants are trying, through desperate clannish tactics, to pass off as ONLF supporters, the tormentors, and rapists, and torturers must be held accountable for their crimes.

From a far, in the Oromia region, it seems the spirit of "We are all Oromos" and the feeling of excitement and jubilation prevail in the region, whereby the collaborators of the Tigrean regime, and the freedom fighters they used to hunt and murder are all dancing in unison! It is good to be forgiving. However, any society with a short memory that would not distinguish between the fake and the genuine, and the collaborator and the freedom fighter will have a tough time moving forward. This is of course for the Oromo people to sort out, but I just couldn't help pointing it out.

The war between Oromo and Somali communities was started by the Tigrean regime using its stooges in the Somali region, and its stooges in the Oromia region in order to undermine and derail the uprising in the Oromo people. However, the stooges of the Tigrean regime are no longer in power in the Somali region. Thank God for that. Yet, oddly, the stooges of the Tigrean regime in Oromia are still in power! And it is they who are fanning the flame of the communal violence, to primarily undermine your leadership, but with a new misleading mask of Oromo assertiveness! These attacks on Somali Communities are systematic, well calculated slaughter, and are apparently orchestrated by some of the highest officials in the Oromia region. I am not making this statement up as a form of hyperbole, but we have a clear-cut proof to support my claim, and here it is:

On Monday Aug. 13, 2018, [Negeri Lencho, the spokesman for the Oromia region announced to the Reuters](#) and to other world news networks that "the Liu Police of the Somali region had slaughtered 39 Oromo civilians in the Eastern Hararghe region."

In the statement he gave to the news media on Monday Aug. 13, Negeri Lencho specifically mentioned that the attacks took place on the weekend on Saturday and on Sunday.

This announcement is something that is on the record, it can be googled (see the above link), and it is reported world-wide by major news networks. But there is one problem with the information that Mr. Negeri Lencho gave to the international media: The information he gave was completely false! The attack he claimed took place Saturday Aug. 11, and Sunday Aug. 12, never happened! He said, and I quote, "heavily armed members of a paramilitary force from the Somali region had carried out cross-border attacks in Oromiya's East Hararghe district."

But here are the facts:

On Saturday Aug. 11, and on Sunday Aug. 12, the two days that Negeri Lencho claimed the Liu Police from the Somali region attacked and slaughtered 40 Oromo civilians, Abdi Iley, the president of the Somali region, and all of his most important officials were under semi-house-arrest in Addis Ababa. And more importantly, the Liu Police could not have launched any attack because the entire Somali region was under strict curfew, and the Liu Police in the entire Somali region were confined in their bases, and they could not and were not even allowed to leave. It was Ethiopia's defense forces that were in charge of the entire Somali region. Therefore, as we can see, Mr. Negeri Lencho's claim of the Liu Police from the Somali region slaughtering 40 Oromo persons on the dates he mentioned is demonstrably FALSE!

Now, Negeri Lencho is no ordinary person on the street. He is the spokesman for the Oromia region, and he is, according to the news reports, in charge of communications. So, the unavoidable question becomes, what was Negeri Lencho's motive in fabricating a non-existent slaughter of 40 Oromo persons? Could it be that he had an ink link of a plan in the works to slaughter the Somali communities, and the fake story he fabricated was being used as an alibi, so that the coming slaughter of the Somalis would appear as justifiable tit for tat?

That appears to be the case, because in the next two weeks after the Mr. Lencho's fake story was reported world-wide, the Oromo militias attacked and slaughtered Somali communities in Tulliguled and its surroundings.

Mr. Prime Minister, in the west, when they want to get to the bottom of a mysterious crime or wrong doing, they say, "Follow the money". Here if the stability of the country is a priority for your government, and you want to get to the bottom of communal violence that is tearing the country apart, I say to you, "Follow the false News" Mr. Negeri Lencho is caught red-handed fabricating stories, and he must be held accountable for deliberately stoking communal violence. Orchestrated communal violence like the one Negri Lencho is fanning its flame with fabricated stories is a threat to the stability of the country and to your leadership as well. If you do not deal with this threat firmly by making those who are fanning its flame accountable for their actions, it could become your Achilles heel.

If we are objective and open-minded, and it is necessary to be that if one wants to see things and issues accurately—the biggest danger to your leadership, to the cause of the Oromos, and to Ethiopia's interests *at this moment* is not coming from the Tigreans, or from any other nationality, but from the direction of the Oromos. This is really odd. At the very moment, when their dream and the opportunity they were yearning for so long has arrived at last, instead of embracing it and protecting their golden opportunity, it seems some Oromos are intent on annihilating it! If you do not put those Qeerro and agitators out of business, before long, you are going to see all those Qeerro's armed to their teeth, Do not ask me by whom, and just like Somalia's Al-Shabab, they will make the Oromo people's dream go up in flames!

In conclusion, you are one unique Ethiopian leader whom we consider his success as our success, because no leader in Ethiopian history has ever shown the fairness, the respect, and the friendship that you have shown the Somali people. I am not flattering you in any way. It is the decisive actions that you took that is doing the commendation. You released Abdi Karim Sheikh Muse (Qalbi-dhagax) a symbol of Somali dignity and patriotism from prison. You de-listed the ONLF from the terrorist-list, to the eternal shame of Farmaajo and Khayre, who exposed themselves as nothing but shameful stooges of the Tigrean regime. And you busted Abdi Iley's criminal administration and gave our people their freedom back. Between you and the Tigrean regime, the difference could not have been starker. For 27 long years, our people suffered the brutality of the stooges of the Tigrean regime, Abdi Iley's period being the most gruesome.

The more Abdi Iley's regime raped and tortured, and murdered, the higher his stock went with the Tigrean regime.

In just 5 months into your tenure, you put an end to our people's nightmare! If you die today, God forbid, our people will remember your historic actions and cherish their memory. It is natural that any leader's actions, good or bad, will be reflected not only on him, but on his people as well. So, whereas all that we remember and associate with the Tigreans are the rapes, the tortures, the pillaging and killing, your magnanimous actions will also be reflected on your people, the Oromo people, who despite the unfortunate upheavals, we consider them comrades in arms.

One last word that I cannot emphasize enough is this: stability, stability, stability and peace. You must firmly deal with those who are sowing mayhem and discord everywhere. Otherwise, they will ruin everything, and everyone will blame it on you.

Best wishes,

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