

# PM ABIY, I OWE YOU ONE: YOU ARE THE COMPANY I WOULD KEEP

Tecola W Hagos (July 9, 2018)

## I. Introduction

There are several variations of the proverbial that express similar sentiment as in the title of this article. One that comes readily to mind is the expression “Tell me your friends and I will tell you who you are.” If we take that adage seriously, we would completely accept the surrealistic event that just happened in both Addis Ababa (earlier) and in Asmara in these past couple of days. I can see that I was wrong in undermining the two Leaders (PM Abiy Ahmed and Pres Issaias Afeworki) for I was totally wrong in writing my highly skeptical view about peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea due to the Border dispute. I am very glad that I was proven wrong in that peace and friendship is possible between Ethiopia and Eritrea. You both have proven to me that you both are far complex personalities and far more perceptive and truly courageous than I am. I am obviously making tautological statement here, for you are leaders of countries, and I am a sideshow scribbler who should know better to use his time productively. I owe you both an apology. Sorry for my hasty and harsh defeatist remarks.



What happened in this week is miraculous, immense, far profound than mere international relations. PM Abiy Ahmed is creating a world uniquely his own vision. Abiy Ahmed’s visit to Eritrea during a time of his very heavy workload is the best example of peace and courage at work. Although of minor importance, in light of such monumental events taking place in the future of a people, I admit that it has life-changing profound effect on me as an individual. For once it left me dumbfounded, and for once I run out of anything to say. That is a monumental admission by a chatter-box who is resourceful and imaginative in expressing his views in writing.

Yes, I have written some very harsh statements against PM Abiy mainly, because I do not want a hero being stained by any close contact with the likes of Kassa Kebede. Another point of contention is due to my strong disagreements in allowing terrorist organizations, such as Ginbot-7, OLF et cetera into Ethiopia. I was and still am vehemently against forgiving Mengistu Hailemariam, the Red Terrorist butcher. However, I do regret using harsh and rude statements focused on your person and close associate Demeke Mekonnen in my disagreement with you. It is the love I have for Ethiopia that I use at times crude expressions to vent my anger. My apology to you, especially so witnessing the tremendous positive change you brought about in Issaias Afeworki and the people of Eritrea. Now that you have signed a Peace Treaty with Issaias Afeworki, the first step is to publicly present it to the Representatives in Parliament and have an open debate. Ethiopians should be informed about the content of any international agreement before it is accepted as part of the law of the land

## **II. Looking at the People of Asmara/Eritrea**

I watched again and again lengthy videos and several news clips of PM Abiy in Asmara and the incredible welcome he received by President Issaias Afeworki and the People of Asmara/Eritrea. I am still in the process of digesting what I watched in the internet of such historic event. No one can generate such enthusiasm and expression of love without true feeling and true passion deep under. I could say that I have never seen anywhere such love by a host leader and hosting people for a visitor (from supposedly an enemy country) anywhere in the world.

I ask myself, is this not far better to witness than to see tanks rolling downhill, soldiers in trenches, planes bombing, fields of dead and dying young soldiers et cetera? Certainly, infinitely better. I peered carefully at the people who were celebrating and welcoming PM Abiy, and in all honesty, they would have been from anywhere from Gondar, Mekelle, or Addis et cetera, for they are so much similar in their physical features, dressing, mannerism and enthusiasm as their Ethiopian counterparts. As always, it is very difficult for me to rejoice in the new paradigm that fractures Ethiopia, even though I am painfully aware of the fallacy of composition in my reasoning for unity.

All these uplifting historic events taking place one after the other, and yet I felt deep in my soul regret and sorrow, for I realized for the first time after all the past years of self-denial that Eritrea is indeed another new independent country and not a part of ancient historic Ethiopia. To some extent all that celebration in hosting Abiy is in part a celebration of independence and national recognition of Eritrea itself. I cannot avoid feeling this way, after all my childhood friends that lasted a life time were children of Eritrean neighbors. I even had two very good friends in my middle-school years (not girlfriends but buddies) that were girls. And much later in my life as a professor in a local college, I had few students who were from Eritrea. They were very polite and attentive students the same way my other Ethiopian students were. I had one elderly Eritrean student, almost my age, who was a doctor and a polyglot who spoke and wrote in seven languages, attending my class of English Composition. I still remember him because of his concern for me about my overwork for my class was overflowing and all the writing I had to correct. There were others in that class from both Ethiopia and Eritrea whose appreciation of my effort I still remember to this day. Most of all what was most endearing to me was watching them how they related to each other, helping each other, doing assignments together, et cetera.

There are also family relations like my Eritrean Aunts who were married to my Ethiopian Uncles, and my nieces and cousins. How could I let go such loving family members? You tell me. For example, there was my Auntie Hiwet originally from Asmara living in Addis, whom I adored who would not accept that I had eaten enough when I visited with them, who would insist that I eat more and then pack some food for me to take to my dorm. I was then a college student very slight of built and look very vulnerable.

## **III. No Manchurian Candidates**

The other day I read a very interesting well written but rather short article by Solomon Medhanie, in Aiga Forum. [<http://aigaforum.com/article2018/is-pm-abiy-manchurian-candidate.htm>] I do not think neither leader is a Manchurian Candidate. In order to make such huge claim as Solomon did, one must first establish the existence of an almost God-like master manipulator like Mrs. Eleanor Iselin that would fit the game setup as in the book by Richard Thomas Condon (1915-1996). I do not see anyone anywhere in the World who could manipulate such two leaders and the future of that part of the World with such profound effect.

This obvious change of heart not just tone of Issaias Afeworki and his associates, I think it has to do with the personality of PM Abiy, and Issaias Afeworki seems to acknowledge that in his speech at the state diner he gave in honor of the PM. The political divide between the two leaders was a huge chasm until it was bridged in a spectacular manner when PM Abiy continued the peace offer without preconditions, and later followed through his pronouncements with deeds when he traveled (breaking protocol) to the Bole Airport and personally received the Delegation sent by Issaias Afeworki.

Of course, the neighboring countries are affected by the new friendship matrix of Ethiopia and Eritrea for the area is undergoing no less a political Tsunami. Ethiopia is a stabilizing force. I urge you all to hear the words of not just PM Abiy but also the words of wisdom and democratic vision of Lemma Megersa. The consistent message of Lemma Megersa is that Ethiopia has a historic role to play not only for our own continued survival but also in keeping the Horn countries from falling apart. Just like Abiy Ahmed I believe Lemma has solid grounding in Ethiopian history.

#### **IV. Your Visit to America - Conclusion**

PM Abiy Ahmed, this visit to America that you are planning to make is a dangerous one. It is booby-trapped, full of danger, and full of Mengistu Hailemariam supporters and Red Terror supporters and participants. There are also the intellectuals and opposition leaders that you have invited to get involved in opposition peaceful politics. These groups here in the United States are not the types you had confronted before. For one they are seasoned old/mature by contrast to the useful protesters you are used to back in Ethiopia are transitional on the move. However, the ones in the US are static, weighed down, old and **lethargic**. The most dangerous are those that openly court you and flatter you with honeyed words. But do remember that you are coming into the den of vipers, and I do not think you have prepared yourself for such a situation. You do not have time to prepare the necessary antidote for snake-bites. Thus, to avoid unnecessary entanglements, you may be better off postponing your trip for much later.

There is also the state of the United States of America under President Donald Trump. The timing is not a good one for there is extreme form of struggle between a divided population, political leaders et cetera. I am pretty sure Donald Trump would receive you with great respect and possible admiration. However, you might end up alienating large swap of Democrats who

otherwise would have strongly supported you. It is also awkward to visit a country when you are not officially invited by the US Government. This is not to discourage you from your peace building mission, rather I want to suggest that timing is important, and one should pay attention to such minor details in some situations.

I had written in the years past very many papers and lengthy commentaries stern and severe criticism of the independence of Eritrea. My dissenting legal brief/article I submitted to the 2011 Ethiopia Eritrea Conference was very critical of the decision of the Boundary Commission. Paper submitted for The Third Annual Ethiopian and Eritrean Friendship Conference, March 26, 2011 in San Jose, California] “Ethiopia & Eritrea: Healing Past Wounds and Building Strong People-To-People Relationships” [[http://irobmablo.org/Tecola\\_Hagos.pdf](http://irobmablo.org/Tecola_Hagos.pdf)] I still think that both leaders ought to invalidate and void that decision and totally reject the process and enter a new agreement. To allow or accept the decision of the Commission would set bad precedent and introduce wrong concepts and legitimize corrupted arbitration. The Commission had exceeded its authority and has entered a decision that is beyond its authority. As Parties to an arbitration you are the Parties that decide whether to proceed with the arbitration underway then. Period. The new agreement could closely follow traditionally acknowledged lines of demarcations and use also the map provided by the Mapping agency of the United Nations that prepared the delimitation map. More importantly the new agreement would embody the new friendship and spirit of cooperation. There are many capable professionals that would help in that process.

God Bless All.

**Tecola W Hagos**

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