

The Success of SPO of Ethiopia vs. the Bet and Switch Politics of the Opposition Camp

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Truth be told, Special Prosecutor's Office of Ethiopia, which was established on August 8, 1992 by law (Proclamation No. 22/1992), has done a terrific job by bringing 5,119 suspects to court and having 3,583 people convicted and sentenced. According to SPO, not only the office had these 3,583 people got convicted and sentenced but also most of the convicted Dergue officials, except the ones who were sentenced to death and life in prison, had completed their prison sentences and were freed from prisons.

Politics of Bet and Switch

Last week, the opposition camp hastily criticized SPO for not doing sufficient job in addressing the past heinous crimes and preventing the ongoing "heinous crimes" against humanity. A writer by the name Luelseged Degu asserted that full-fledged Transitional Justice in Ethiopia has not been conducted by SPO as its effort failed short in including all stakeholders in the process and did not do anything to stop new crimes¹. According to him SPO's effort has been a total failure.

The writer on the one hand told us that the processes of transitional justice would take decades, and on the other hand, he blamed the Ethiopian Government for not doing enough in less than two decades. The writer, clearly barking from the camps of the chauvinists who dreamed for the return the doomed days of our past, seemed jumping from one spectrum of transitional justice to another with clear disregard to the obvious truth. He knows the current reality of Ethiopia doesn't yield a place for his thought or the likes of him so that he had to do everything to tarnish the image of Ethiopia and the Ethiopian government. If the processes followed by SPO failed to include anyone, it would have to be people like him whose good days were our bitter past; other than that, the process was inclusive, fair and has been hailed by different groups and the people of Ethiopia.

¹ Luelseged Degu, SPO Report: Half way transitional justice, <http://www.ethiomedias.com/course/5217.html> (Ethiomedias, February 11, 2010)

Facts versus Fictions

The writer in his fictional allegations stated that “the heinous crimes” are still in the making. As a country which emerged out of millennium-old single-ethnic based rule and repressions, it is true that there have been collateral damages in our fight to be on board on the kind of good governance and democracy our people and country deserve. In any kind of good fight, it must be a fool who wouldn't expect collateral damages. For example, more than 200 people died as a result of the now defunct- Kinjit's insurrection during the May 2005 Ethiopian parliamentary elections. The police had responsibility of quelling the insurrection so that there would be respect for rule of law. The government was basically guarding Ethiopia's young democracy, and the deaths of those 198 civilians and seven police officers (however painful it was) were collateral damages. EPRDF salvaged the country from anti-peace elements by preempting the potential crisis of the entire democratization process.

The writer was simply trying to tell us that the collateral damages caused in protecting the Ethiopian democracy and sovereignty has been an equivalent of the Dergue regime's red terror, the terror which caused the massacre of hundreds of thousands and the genocide of Hawzen and other parts of Ethiopia. The truth of the matter is that even the collateral damages of our recent times have been caused by the desperados and anti-peace elements like him; however, I do not have anything to say regarding his fictional crimes against humanity which he tried to paint on EPRDF. Tampering evidence and accusing those who are engaged in good deeds are not new for chauvinists like him.

Conclusion

SPO has done a terrific job. To our pride, after defying all odds, it has surpassed expectations and accomplished commendable job within its mandate by “establish[ing] for public knowledge and for posterity a historical record of the abuses of the Mengistu's regime and [bringing] those criminally responsible for human rights violations and/or corruption to justice.” Because of its effort, justice was served and the victims' family and the people of Ethiopia finally have been afforded closure of our bitter past.

Thank you SPO, TPLF and our brave martyrs! Thank you EPRDF!