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ALL FOR ETHIOPIAN UNITY, NOTHING
OUTSIDE OF ETHIOPIAN UNITY, NO
ONE AGAINST ETHIOPIAN UNITY!

A WHITE PAPER

Background:

Over the past many months, **EDF** (Ethiopian Dialogue Forum) and its policy arm **ERPI** (Ethiopian Research and Policy Institute), have conducted numerous meetings, and held public discussions with a large number of scholars, experts and people of experience both within the Diaspora as well as from within Ethiopia itself. These discussions and debates continue to inform the myriad of the problems that Ethiopia faces as well as inform the available policy options to help solve those problems. In this regard, we have had discussions and presentations regarding history, culture, national

identity, assimilation, bloodline politics, citizenship, extremism, constitutional issues, and very recently, the merger of 'Oromo' organizations dubbed the 'Oromo Revolution', Amhara revolts dubbed 'Amhara Resistance' in Gondar, Gojjam and Wollo, among others.

EDF/ERPI has stated goals and purpose, which include:

- **Support the promotion of Ethiopia's inclusive development and the development agenda of EDF**
- **Expand the wealth of knowledge on relevant Ethiopian issues by tapping into the country's rich and diverse indigenous cultures and by drawing from best practices across the globe**
- **Expand interdisciplinary research and inquiry, and promote regional and continental engagement of the Ethiopian Diaspora and Ethiopianists**
- **Help bridge the research-policy gap, both to better inform academic research on pressing policy issues and to bring academic research more to the attention of policy-makers at the EDF and its members**
- **Because we are a member-supported independent entity, our only resources are our volunteers. As a consequence, we aim to identify, seek, solicit and invite meaningful views and input from those that wish to collaborate with us and contribute to Ethiopia's sustainability and the well being of its 102 million citizens.**

More specifically,

ERPI aims to approach and analyze development as a process and as a condition in which inclusive economic growth, social equity, political freedom and democratic participation are all integrally linked and must reinforce one another and operate synergistically in order to advance sustainability and equity. Its program of research and policy analysis, therefore, aims to cover the following main areas of development: economic, historical, cultural, social, political, scientific and technological. Consequently, it draws on a wide range of social science disciplines and other fields, and brings a multi-disciplinary approach to its work. The Institute's outlook and conceptual framework will be non-partisan, ideologically open and national. This is expected to enable it to provide a forum in which groups with different ideological and political orientations could engage in a critical dialogue on controversial and not-so-controversial national issues impacting Ethiopia. The reason behind this narrative is relatively straightforward. Each and every Ethiopian citizen and nationality group has a stake in Ethiopia's future and the advancement of its citizens. We have determined through research and dialogue that exclusionary policies, programs and investments are hugely expensive and detrimental for sustainability.

Because we believe that many look to **EDF/ERPI** for leadership on many important issues, this white paper is intended to elaborate and amplify our position on three important issues:

- i) The unity and inviolability of Ethiopia;
- ii) Our position on extremism of any type; and,
- iii) The deleterious effects of Article 39 in general and the right to secession in particular of the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

The Unity and Inviolability of the Ethiopian State:

The bloodline politics prevalent in Ethiopia today have caused fissures in society, and have wreaked havoc on the livelihoods of the population. The divisions that have been created by the cynical and destructive TPLF have spawned various groups seeking not only recognition but autonomy and possible secession as well. It would not be so terrible if the aims of these groups, largely manipulated by some academics, political elites, social media, political and religious groups, were to simply seek recognition and self-rule, it is worse: they wish to create 'mini-states' that will inevitably lead to the Balkanization of Ethiopia in a similar way to that of the former Yugoslavia, the failed state of Somalia and the war torn country of Syria. There is a plethora of evidence that shows that, for some individuals and groups, the typical narrative today is 'Independence of their land' from Ethiopia. The air of ambiguity, and hence, suspicion in which the intentions and policies of some of the groups float has produced unease and bewilderment among many. Surely, this is not designed to help Ethiopians to unite, and indeed, the goal might even be to distance and to "other" what they call "Ethiopian groups". Certainly, we cannot be expected to ignore and disregard this state of affairs. Children of Ethiopia should and must repudiate as well as shun this as a terrible idea.

This questionable narrative diminishes the fundamental notion that, irrespective of ethnic and or religious affiliation, all Ethiopians sacrificed their lives and their material well being; and preserved Ethiopia's independence from colonial rule and constant external threat. The battle of Adwa and the defeat of a European imperial power by an African Black nation would not have been possible without the unified and heroic struggle of the Afar, Gurage, Tigre, Amhara, Oromo, Wolayta, Annuak, Sidama and other nationalities and religious groups. Ethiopia is, therefore, not a product of a single ethnic or religious group; but an achievement of a diverse population that is bound together through generations of marriages, religious and economic interactions. As a consequence, tens of millions of Ethiopians are of mixed blood and ancestry. They form the social glue that will make the country prosperous in generations to come.

Discordant Narrative Won't Help:

Yes, the politics of many of these groups may be seen as incoherent. But for those who are in it and dream of gaining big, they know just what they want, and the lack of a clear and compelling narrative only enhances their power. To understand what is in store for the country and its 102 million people with so many groups vying for attention and recognition, we need to understand who these groups are. To do that, we would have to name names, identify which groups are demagogues, which groups have dictatorial impulses, and which groups are internal and external enemies of Ethiopia. That is not the aim of this white paper. The aim is to outline a framework of policy, which can be used as a guiding principle and one, which Ethiopians of all walks of life would embrace and should embrace.

What we know is that Ethiopia's circumstances are neither an accident nor inevitable. What we also know is that when dictatorial and exclusionary governments and bad leaders come to power, they rarely advertise brute force and oppression. In fact, they come to power because others are hesitant to speak truth; followed by deference hoping that the brutes will reform once they get to power; then that followed by cooperation and collusion with the brutes in power. In Ethiopia, this could have been prevented because the previous regime was brutal. We cannot afford to repeat the same mistakes over and over again and expect a positive outcome.

EDF/ERPI recognizes, indeed, acknowledges the “right of people to be acknowledged publicly as what they really are”. This is a fundamental human right issue that the world embraces. We do too. EDF/ERPI further acknowledges that individuals hold more than one identity based on profession, religion, and history, social structure and based on the identity constructive capacity of the individuals. Furthermore, EDF/ERPI doesn't consider identity as “sameness” or as “equivalence”. Yet, it is our position that our common genealogical and geographic roots that have given us common ancestry with common destiny are being eroded by wily political elites whose aspirations for power are limitless. This phenomenon is dangerous to all Ethiopians.

What we Ethiopians have learned from the state of affairs in the country is that we have to react faster and much more vigorously and honestly than was the case when TPLF took power in 1991. The other thing we must countenance is that we should stop assuming that the government in Ethiopia would not fall into the wrong hands, that it is safe for the long term durability of the Ethiopian state to acquiesce to the plans, aspirations and machinations of the disparate groups to sell Ethiopia to the highest bidders; and stop believing that civilized debates are sufficient enough to convince everyone of the importance of maintaining a united and ONE Ethiopia with diversity. EDF/ERPI takes the position that we need responsible, moral, aggressive repudiation of the effort to split up the country and/or introduce extremist forms of rule.

To this effect, **EDF/ERPI** promotes, supports and advocates the following:

- 1) The unity and inviolability of the Ethiopian state is sacrosanct and non-negotiable.**

- 2) Ethiopians of all walks of life should repudiate, condemn and denounce all forms of extremism. A key part of this action is the recognition that sectarianism plays into the hands of people who wish to take advantage of the current situation, weaken and Balkanize the Ethiopian state.
- 3) Because Ethiopia is a long and historic product of inter-ethnic integration with common ancestry; and because its people are both natural and eternal, that the nation cannot be unmade, we call for the removal of Article 39 of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia.
- 4) We have called and continue to call for an All-Inclusive Stakeholders Conference at the earliest opportunity; and have contributed and will continue to contribute on a meaningful framework underpinning a compelling alternative for Ethiopia and its 102 million citizens.

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