

Muslim Religious Leaders on Ethiopian TV by Tecola W. Hagos

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I watched ETV's last week presentation of the incident that took place In Addis Ababa of demonstrations by some Muslims protesting the "interference" of the Government in their religious affairs (July 16, 2012, July 22-4, 2012). I was moved by the great wisdom and eloquent statements made by several Muslim leaders and religious teachers being interviewed on the recent destructive demonstrations by Muslim fanatics. I was absolutely overwhelmed by the profundity of their thoughts and grateful for their genuine love of our common Motherland. All along over the years, I have stated that Ethiopia is our common Motherland that each one of us no matter our diverse background have equal stake in its welfare and no less responsibility fighting to preserve our national integrity and sovereignty for our Motherland. I have said that our call of duty and commitment cannot be carried out by a surrogate when it comes to protecting and fighting for Ethiopia, it is everyone's privilege and duty. And in no uncertain terms these great Muslim leaders and great philosophers laid out their inclusive and patriotic vision for all of us. I wish our Diaspora politicians would have the humility to learn from such great Ethiopians. In order to incorporate in our lexicon in our discourses, here under I have encapsulated the views of those Muslim scholars and leaders I remember by name:

1. **Sheik Ahmed Ibrahim**, a great sage of over 85 years from Addis Ababa, talked of tolerance and the depth and wisdom of the Holy Koran and the Hadith that counters fanaticism and promotes peaceful coexistence. He literally cried recalling how the fanatics had defiled the graves of many great Ethiopian Muslim scholars and venerable teachers, one of whom was his own teacher. This was one truly moving moment for me.
2. **Shiek Ahmed Zeyin** - From Amhara/Wollo area - spoke of the verification and ontology of truth. He stressed how fanatics distort the truth through partial-truth and fallacious statements, and cover their hidden agenda with claims of Koranic mandate.
3. **Sheik Abdi Ibrahim** - From Oromo region expressed the concern of Muslim Ethiopians in the role played out by foreign influence of fanaticism from Libya, Syria and other Arab countries and foreign organization such as Al-Ahbash aimed to create conflict within the Ethiopian community. He laid out the long history of communal life in Ethiopia.

5. **Sheik Mufti** – From Bale/Oromo area, an elderly leader who stressed the importance of law and order. He expounded the relationship between constitutional freedoms of religion and the limit set by the interest of the Government to keep peace and security among all Ethiopians not just for one religious or political group.

6. **Sheik Abubeker** from Addis Ababa was the youngest among those patriotic Muslim leaders and teachers/scholars, but his youthful appearance did not diminish the depth and profundity of his thoughts on the role that ought to have been played by the Government in curbing the destructiveness of the fanatic fundamentalist group much earlier. He pointed out that every one must be vigilant to stand against those who are aiming to turn Ethiopia into a failed State like Somalia.

I was reflecting on that TV discussion far into the night after watching the interview program with wide open eyes. No interview in my life had ever profoundly affected my thinking about the future of Ethiopia as did the interview of those truly great leaders. I am more than ever convinced that the Diaspora as a community is more of a burden and more of a destructive force for Ethiopians at home. For example, a group that calls itself Ethiopian Christian and Muslim Council had issued a statement condemning the arrest of members of the group that organized and carried out an insurgent movement in the guise of Muslim revival/sediqua in Addis Ababa a couple of weeks ago.

I do believe that the problem of Muslim fanaticism was brought about by the Ethiopian Government's ill advised and divisive policy to allow Wahabist involvement in the Ethiopian Muslim community through Mohammad Al'Amoudi who seems to have worked for years in collaboration with the Saudi Security officials' setup in undermining the long term interest of Ethiopia. Al'Amoudi is a disruptive variable whether his involvement has to do with Ethiopia's economy and/or its national security. It is truly tragic that some members of the Diaspora joined hands in supporting fanatics without knowing the destructive agenda of such foreign sponsored group (Al-Ahbash, Wahabists) that was clearly using religion to disrupt and create chaos in our Ethiopian society. One must be careful not to be blinded by ones hate for Meles or for Tygreans from acting out in a way that will hurt Ethiopia and its security interest. I hear and read the writings also of infantile aspirations of some members of the Diaspora to have unlimited individual freedom to say anything they want, do anything they want, create and join any type of organization, and ultimately become every single one of them Prime Ministers and high officials of the Ethiopian Government. The Ethiopian Diaspora community must really look at itself very carefully not in a self indulgent mirror but in the mirror provided by Ethiopians back home.

I wish also the great religious Fathers and leaders of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church take the initiative to form a truly patriotic and nationalist connective organization that will have as its members such patriotic and wise Muslim leaders as partners and work

for better understanding and close cooperation as one people living in a single Motherland that is equally dear to all its children. At my age, I cannot be swayed easily by high sounding words and phrases. I know that the vision of a truly one Ethiopian people is not a figment of my imagination, but the reality that is deep within each of us. I ask all here, what person would truly want to see such a wonderful country with the richness of diversity, the cradle of mankind and civilization perish? God Bless Ethiopia.

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