

Address to the Oromo Intellectuals' Misrepresentation, Fabrication of, and Attack on, Ethiopian History. (Professor Haile M. Larebo)

On July 28, 2019, a group of 54 people, claiming to represent “individuals and national/ethnic based nonprofit and community organizations representing our members”, published “An Open Letter to Ethiopians and to the International Community” on social media [See <https://www.satenaw.com/open-letter-to-ethiopians-and-to-the-international-community-re-communique-of-concerned-ethiopians/>], sharply refuting a prior Communique made by “Concerned Ethiopians Across the Globe Urging Prevention of Genocide and Balkanization of Ethiopia” with 154 signatories, in a letter written on 19 July 2019, and addressed to the current Ethiopian Prime Minister, Dr. Abiy Ahmed, copied to various prominent leaders, political bodies, civic organizations, and media outlets, which published it on July 20, 2019 [see [[“Communique Urging Prevention of Genocide and Balkanization of Ethiopia.”](#)]],

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The 54 individuals dismiss the Concerned Ethiopians' Communique and their interpretation of Ethiopian history as “*extremely disingenuous, doom-laden and reflecting a one-sided political narrative that does not represent the view of the vast majority of the peoples of Ethiopia*”. For them, Ethiopia, though masquerading as a nation-state, is a de facto colonial empire, created towards the end of the 19th century in cohort, and competition, with the European colonial powers, by Emperor Menilek II, a northern Ethiopian monarch who, aided by his northern army, not only conquered many southern nations and nationalities, but also destroyed their governments, expropriated their lands and gave them to his men, mainly the Amhara and their agents, forcefully imposing, on hitherto independent and self-governing people with their own identities, cultures, and languages, those of the Amhara, under the pretense of homogenizing and assimilating all ethnic groups.

In this letter, I do not intend to deal with every aspect that Open Letter writers (*which I call thereafter “The Group”*) deal with. I leave those areas beyond my interest in the hands of the Concerned Ethiopians to address if they deem fit, limiting myself to only the historical points, which I consider are crucial, and need an immediate attention.

To start with, as a historian, I was dumbfounded at reading the pretentious historical narrative of The Group. I find the narrative as the most stupid, despicable, and embarrassing. I am sure nobody expects such gibberish could be written by any intelligent people let alone by those some of whom seem to have an impressive educational qualification, with PhD degrees to their credit. It is with immense and profound sadness that among these, I notice the names of one or two

individuals, who apparently appear to have a terminal degree in some sort of Ethiopian or African history and one of them, I would wish he is not the same person I have in mind, has written at least two monographs on Ethiopian history. Impressions and wishes aside, The Group do NOT seem to understand one iota of Ethiopian history and reality.

They do not have a clue beyond being arm-chair intellectuals or militant crypto-ethnicists. It is amazing these so-called learned individuals or professionals dare to accuse the Concerned Ethiopians of being disingenuous and one-sided in their interpretation of Ethiopian history, when the very narrative or interpretation they offer as representative of the correct perspective is nothing but their own exuberant, yet delusional, concoction of lies, fairy tales, makeups and distortions.

The problem starts with their very claim that they speak on behalf of “*the vast majority of the peoples of Ethiopia*”, and yet they provide no evidence or support to such a claim beyond, of course, their fanciful imagination. It is paradoxical to see that, while the Concerned Ethiopians, whom these intellectuals and professionals accuse of representing only the view of the tiny minority of the country’s population, have 145 signatures to their credit, while the accusers themselves are actually able to muster in support of such an important letter a pittance, only 53 signatures. Yet they are blind to see the frivolousness, not to say the stupidity, of their claim that they represent the position of the “vast majority of the Ethiopians.”

I am not here to teach The Group Ethiopian history. Genuine students are life-time learners. But the mindset of The Group seems already programmed with a predisposition to see and understand Ethiopian history only in their own distorted historical lens. Thus, any attempt to offer them a different perspective would be of no use beyond wasting one’s time and energy. However, I would stress a few things especially for those innocent readers who may be willing to learn and educate themselves to spare themselves from being an easy prey for these groups’ sinister propaganda and agenda.

- It is indeed a fact that Ethiopia is the only country in the world to crush the indomitable arrogance of the White Man who, until then, roamed around the world, pontificating about his unquestionably inherent superiority and invincibility, and describing the Black people, including the present 53 signatories and the “*very vast majority of the peoples of Ethiopia*,” whom they claim to represent, as “monkeys,” and “baboons”. Not only Ethiopians are proud of this extraordinary military feat, which astounded the world, especially the Black people for whom Ethiopia became synonymous with black pride, power, and glory. Since then, Ethiopia has served as the rallying ground for the anti-colonialist and anti-racist movements everywhere in the world, most significantly in Africa and the African Diaspora. That is why Africans decided to

make Ethiopia's capital the seat of the continent, and the colors of its flag "pan-African colors."

- Ethiopia was not an invention by Emperor Menelik II. It is the most ancient nation-state, whose civilization predates almost every modern nation-state in Africa, Europe and Asia. Emperor Menilek simply completed the process of re-unification that began long before him, with Emperors Tewodros II, TekleHaimanot, and Yohannes the IV. These rulers were well-aware that they failed to restore the entire Ethiopia's historical domains, having lost considerable portion to the European colonial conquerors. However, they did neither conquer nor acquire new lands beyond bringing together the two families, the north and the south, separated from each other for a short while due to the weakening of the central authority.

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- Each of these emperors was supported by admirably able and talented generals, such as Ras Alula from Tegray, Ras Dareso from Gojam, Ras Gobena from Shawa, and Ras Makonnen of Harar, known as the four cornerstones of the Resurgent Ethiopia.

- Each of these rulers were of multi-ethnic background, so too were their leading generals as well as their armies.

- Unlike most of the nations of the world, where the core group in the central government forcefully imposed its creed and culture by destroying that of the periphery, Ethiopia, throughout its history, has always been a multi-ethnic, and a multi-religious nation-state, with a variety of life-styles, ranging from the Oromo pastoralists to sedentary population, specializing in diverse professions.

- Contrary to other civilizations, the central government in Ethiopia never attempted to impose its worldview, or one specific ethnic identity, or culture. That is the only reason why in one of the oldest nation-states in the world (Ethiopia), there are still even today so many languages, ethnic groups, religions, and professions, and the people are the most hybrid, and the most tolerant in the world until, unfortunately, these crypto-ethnicists showed up, surprisingly quite unexpectedly.

- That Emperor Menilek II expropriated lands during the re-unification process and gave them to the Amharas is a gigantic myth, perpetuated by those who are ignorant of Ethiopian social milieu. These 'educated' signatories are parroting and regurgitating this same myth for their own political agenda and for the delight of their western protectors and masters, the same people who call them "monkeys" and "baboons", once they are away from their prying eyes, or, feel they are in a good company. To start with, Menilek's army was multi-ethnic, the Oromo ethnic groups being its largest component, and its greatest beneficiary too, because they filled most of the administrative and military's highest ranks. Both of Menilek's policies, i. e. reunification and administration, have won deep admiration of the world's renown writers, academics, statesmen, and the Europeans in his court, or those who accompanied him in his reunification campaign, and even his deadly enemies were no exception in admiring his leadership qualities. Contrary to the malicious portray by these crypto-ethnicists, these world renown personalities describe Menilek II as personifying the epitome of wisdom, and foresightedness, and as an exemplary to any civilized world.

- Ethiopians spoke and learnt Amharic, not because they were of Amhara ethnic groups (a thing that exists only in the minds of these writers). Amharic has been Ethiopia's national language since time immemorial and every European traveler, or visitor (since the Middle Ages), attests this basic fact, that Amharic was spoken throughout the Ethiopian nation-state. Though only an elementary knowledge is needed to establish this fact, these writers however, the highest level of their education notwithstanding, seem incapable to tell the difference between ethnicity and the lingua franca of a country. It had become the dominant language not because imposed by the Amhara ruling class (which in reality hardly existed except in the imagination of these confused and ill-bred, and ill-educated narrow ethno-nationalists), but because the Ethiopian people found it to be the best and the ideal. It may have some remote connection with the region anciently known as Amhara, an area known as a melting pot of many cultures and religions, a true embodiment of actual Ethiopia itself. Reliable studies suggest that no single ethnic group may own it, as it is a language developed largely as a result of pidginization and creolization out of several Ethiopian languages, and ethnic groups, in the style of Hausa, Swahili and the creole languages. It is indisputably rich, fluid, elastic, and sophisticated with no parallel in any Ethiopian languages and, in fact, most of the world's languages. It is a language of Wax and Gold that one expects only from the Ethiopians, people endowed with pregnant wit and creative genius.

- The idea that people were forced to abandon their language and culture exists only in the fancy world of these writers' imagination. If the Ethiopian government did not promote or encourage the study and learning of each ethnic group's language, history or culture, it does not require great imagination to find out that the problem lies elsewhere: the country's infant and struggling modern economy (with no potential to fund even the most basics), is responsible, and not politics. As someone born in the south, I would advise these writers to stop from patronizing the Southerners, by trying to be their spokespersons, or meddling in the affairs of, other Ethiopians. I am sure none of them want you to be their Moses. Just speak to your wretched self.

Instead of engaging themselves in worthy pursuits, as their education demands, The Group is engaged in committing rather an abhorrence that is clearly indicative of its utter intellectual bankruptcy. Most of them live in the comfort of western capitals, promoting and glorifying savagery and primordial atavism, such as the Gada system, presenting to the naïve and unsuspecting westerners as an indigenous egalitarian democratic system, which in truth is a socio-political institution that is inherently criminal and terroristic with in-built genocidal features. We know from the history books, written by both locals and foreigners alike, that the Gada system is responsible for wiping out the whole gamut of civilizations from the face of Ethiopia by levelling to the ground cities, villages, and destroying cultures with its wanton and wholesale massacre of their innocent inhabitants, including children and pregnant women, cutting genitals, breasts and heads as trophies to feed and satisfy the exalted heroism of each successive Luba generation, which is naturally bent in outdoing its predecessor in savagery and barbaric cruelty.

Ethiopia and Menilek respected the time-honored cultures and languages of every ethnic group, whereas the Gada system obliterated them completely from the face of the earth, imposing, through mechanisms known as *Gabar*, *Garba*, *Gudifacha* or *Mogasa*, an Oromo identity, and reducing the entire population to a status that was not better, actually worse, than slavery.

Idealizing this cruel and genocidal system as democratic is tantamount to glorifying Hitlerian Nazism or Southern USA Jim Crows as the highest manifestation of humankind's political advancement. These intellectuals, instead of being ashamed of, or condemning it in the strongest term possible, or campaigning for a total banishment of what actually is a naked barbarism and **anti-civilization**, are actually and unashamedly trying to describe it in grandiose terms as being the sublime manifestation of Oromo society's premature advancement in the art of governance.

The case of the less than 10 years old Keflo, a poor boy with divorced parents from Gurage area would be a picturesque illustration of the true nature of the inherent inhumanity of the Gada system in contrast to the ultimate compassionat nature of Mother Ethiopia. Keflo died in 1617, at the height of the so called "Galla Invasion". While Keflo was tending his relatives' cows in the field, ***"the Galla came from his back unexpectedly and pierced him with his sharp spear, and after cutting his penis for trophy while he was struggling with his life lying on the ground, the Galla left him believing that he was dead"***. The little Keflo, however, survived after a long battle with his life-threatening injury and, having eventually entered into the government service, he moved up through the rank until he held many important State offices, and reached one of the highest positions in the land, earning the title of *Gojam Negash*. I encourage The Group to place themselves in the position of the little innocent Keflo who, while looking, in his tender years, after his relatives' cattle, was stabbed by an unexpected blood thirsty stranger's spear from behind, and then castrated, and left for dead. I am sure none of them like to be in this boy's predicament, nor do they ever wish that to happen, if not to any human being, at least to any of their innocent children or their beloved ones. Keflo is a tip of an iceberg in the myriads of small children who lost their lives, dreams, and innocence in the hands of the bloody-thirsty Gada warriors, who are, in the minds of The Group, the paragons of the Oromo democracy, and who, according to *Gojam Negash* Keflo's contemporary writer, ***"if they fail to kill someone do not grow guttu (hairdo), which is the mark of their killing; they rather live weeping in despair as someone who have been sentenced to death row."***[Dejach Tinno, early 16th century Oromo intellectual and courtier in the court of King Susenyos].

What This Group overlook is the fact that Menilek actually saved the South from two evils: the savagery of the civilized Europeans in the form of colonialism, and that of the primitive Oromo brutality in the form of Gada system. Both the South and the various Oromo clans owe Menilek and his timely intervention an immense gratitude: the former, for being saved from the wholesale onslaught of their culture and devastation of their lands, massacre of their people by the marauding bloody-thirsty Gada warriors; the latter, for rescuing them from possible extinction due to the intense internecine wars among the various mutually hostile and cruel Oromo clans; and both, for keeping them away from falling into the brutal European hands, with their cultural identity, pride, and human dignity intact.

At the moment, Ethiopians seem to be facing the revival of the Gada order again, and the ethnic cleansing that has been going on in the Oromia zone for the last twenty-seven years, but most significantly in the last two, appears an indicative of the new Reign of Terror, which is the defining mark of the Gada system. This western educated Group has been quite deviously silent when thousands are, and still continue to be, uprooted from their ancestral homelands, and are

massacred, and still millions have been denied their basic human rights in that region. Yet they still claim that they are educated. This is my take for them:

*Human beings are member of a whole,
In creation of one essence and soul.
If one member is afflicted with pain,
Other members uneasy will remain.
If you have no sympathy for human pain,
The name of human you cannot retain.
(Poet Sa'adi, 1259)*

Ethiopians are known the world over for respecting other people's culture, and "*they are naturally given to justice and equity... of excellent good nature, ... endowed with pregnant wit and goodness of disposition, ... not cruel, not bloody, they hardly quarrel.*"

This is the character of the true Ethiopians, as described by the leading early European Ethiopianist, Ludolph Hiob. This is what The Group should aim for if they believe in their privileged education.

Menilek, unlike The Group, some of whom have attained the highest rank in their educational field, did not have any chance or luxury to attend even a modern elementary school, let alone a college. Yet he excels them by far in whatever aspects that makes one a true human being: understanding, compassion, magnanimity, intellect and foresightedness, not to say his most admirable and exemplary administrative qualities, leadership skills, diplomatic acumen, and national vision as a ruler of a proud and historical country. His lack of modern education notwithstanding, he has laid one of the strongest national foundation that kept the country from the prying eyes of colonialism. Indeed, it is upon all of us to build a better life for ourselves and our country, grateful that we had a land that is the envy of the world for its unique history, salubrious climate, fertile soil, immense economic potential, and an exceptional people.

Instead of blaming Menilek, and preaching hatred, dividing people in fictitious primitive tribal identities, The Group should take its educational responsibility seriously and do something useful to the country and people, who educated all of us without taking sides, or asking whether you are from this or that ethnic group or religion. Life is too short, let us do something before we depart to the world of no return.

My final advice to these 'educated' individuals is that, instead of fabricating lies, distorting facts, and deluding the innocent public for your own pure political agenda, you should work for the full empowerment of every Ethiopian, immaterial of his/her ethnic origin, religion, or language, birth or background. That is what education is about. The enemies of Ethiopia are poverty, illiteracy, disease and ignorance, and NOT Menilek or your imagined or illusionary Amhara. Instead of wasting your time in fruitless and useless politicking, dividing people, you should instead invest

your time in hard work with aim to alleviating our people's misery and mortality rate. Whether you appreciate or not, the fact is that Menilek has laid down a strong foundation: he has given pride that has allowed each one of us, including yourself, to walk in every corner of the world with heads held high, with unsurmountable pride, irresistible glamour, and assertive self-confidence.

Fighting for, and based on, foreign ideology is good for one thing, and one thing alone: ***an assured mutual destruction and extermination***. Let me leave you with an observation, which I consider to be quite educative, an observation left to us by a woman with no education but based on her gut-feeling. She told Emperor Susenyos, whose attempt to forcefully impose Catholicism by the royal fiat, has left the entire country asunder, a predicament similar to our own time: ***“Look not one of these men whose bones cover the earth is a foreigner; there is not one of us but has lost a brother or a son or someone bound to us by ties of blood. Whether we are vanquished or whether we vanquish, it is the same, we are the losers. “***