

The Problem of Tribalism in Ethiopia and Roles of Ordinary Citizens

By Agere Denqesh

Tribalism/'racism' is a major problem in Ethiopia right now. Some politician and extremists use it to satisfy their own interests at the expense of other citizens, while others take it to be the only means for solving the country's political problems (real or perceived), which otherwise can be solved by alternative approaches. Whatever the reason, tribalism/'racism' has created unprecedented problems in the history of Ethiopia. Briefly, the experiences of mistrust, hatred, division, violence, genocide have become rampant among the population. If this problem continues unchallenged, it may lead to the demise of communities and ultimately the entire country. I hope nobody wants this to happen.

What can be done to tackle this evil beast? There is no easy answer, especially for an average person like me with no expertise in the area, whatsoever. But I believe ordinary citizens can still make their share of contribution towards a solution, however small it may be. Let us see what can possibly be done by the ordinary citizen at least for now.

- When you encounter tribalism/racism in any form and shape, don't be indifferent and stay quiet, but condemn and reject it as openly as possible. Expose the perpetrator to shame and, if appropriate, report to institutions or communities for further actions.
- Do not support politicians and community leaders who imply, promote or practice tribal/'racial' favoritism or antagonism. This applies to all forms of support, including campaigning, sending donations, and voting,
- Demand from authorities the crafting of legislations or laws that criminalize any act of tribalism/'racism.' Act as citizen watchdogs if the formulated laws are respected and followed through by everyone, including political and community leaders, parties, etc.
- Demand that the current constitution of the country which upholds tribalism/'racism' be discarded.

This beautiful and still proud country belongs to all of us, and we all have shared responsibilities in its fate. As citizens, we can do something about the problem of tribalism/'racism' threatening the country, either individually and/or in groups. It is up to us to make the decision, and act. Our fate is in our own hands.

God bless Ethiopia.