

## LESSON FROM MAY 15, 2005 ELECTION

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For the opposition political parties in the field one of its lethal weapons for replacing the regime to eradicate poverty is the use of ballots. Ballots symbolize guns and bullets in the hands of the army, the society. It is a given fact that the responsibility to eradicate poverty, completely, resting on the shoulders of the political parties particularly those in the field. They are in commanding and credible position to give flesh, blood, and soul, that is, to concretize the social, political, and economic misery hopelessly hovering over Ethiopian people. There are three alternatives, that can be used individually and in combinations, in their hands to get rid of these problems once for all. With the absence of Meles Zenawi for good, there is an optimum opportunity to do it this time around and change the course of history. Inevitably there are sacrifices to be paid.

One of the alternatives, the very handy one, is the use of election; the second one is the use of uprising. And the third one is, assuming that whoever is doing it is part and parcel of the society, the use of coup d'état. All of them require meticulous and intensive preparation, specifically on the part of the opposition forces in the field. The society, as always, as they have shown in election 2005 and 2010, are ready to actively participate if and when provided leadership. The society never failed to discharge its share of responsibility. Given these ripe political and social environment, it is totally wrong particularly on the part of the political parties in the field to agitate for not to participate in the coming 2015 election. To agitate for not participating in the coming general election is, particularly where, **a)** the TPLF leadership and the regime in general is in political crisis, and **b)** where there is an opportunity for politically perceptive political leadership, to indirectly campaigning in favor of the survival of the regime. It is, directly or indirectly facilitating the regime's survival conspiracy while damaging the society's interests, which are, to begin with, food, shelter and clothing. Therefore, the right thing to do, and the timely thing to do, is to vigorously campaign for the election to take place. At the same time, however, this is an important component of the campaign, to vigorously rouse the society to come out in mass as they did before and elect the opposition political parties, for which I will offer specific suggestions. As I was strongly in favor of 2005 and 2010 elections, here too, I am strongly suggesting to participate in the general election of 2015. Hence the topic, "Lessons from May 15, 2005 Election."

The campaign has to start seriously with the exposure of what is vividly stated in TPLF's political program, the revolutionary democracy. It must be uncompromisingly exposed to the people of Ethiopia, and to the governmental and non governmental international organization. Let them know the games TPLF leadership is preparing to play in the coming general election. They have to be told to actively involve themselves that the coming general election of 2015 is properly and fairly conducted. They are the ones who built this regime to reach to the level it has reached today, both politically and economically. Here is what, the TPLF program states: .... **only by winning the elections successively and holding power without let up can we securely establish the hegemony of Revolutionary Democracy. If we lose in the elections even once, we will encounter a great danger. So, in order to permanently establish this hegemony, we should win in the initial elections .... In the subsequent elections, too, we should be able to win without interruption.** The stealing of the election results of both 2005 and 2010 are embedded in it. This kind of built in mind-set must be attacked vehemently from the start. To let it take its destructive course unchallenged is wrong and unforgivable. It is tantamount to encouraging the TPLF leadership to implement it again.

One can boldly say that the divisive Meles Zenwi, who was the brain and the mouth of TPLF and the regime, composed this particular content of the program. Whether the current TPLF leadership, which is in political crisis, in the absence of Meles Zenawi, would follow this to the letter or not remains to be seen during the process of the campaign, and, how the opposition political parties would be dealing with it. The bottom line is, irrespective of what the TPLF leadership would do or not do, this dictatorial position indicated above ought to be exposed fast and now, and dismantled by the opposition political parties who are preparing to participate in the election of 2015. In my opinion it is the key to winning or losing the election. It is not a simple issue to let it go unnoticed.

Therefore, the political parties in the field have to challenge it vehemently and meet the need of the current demand of the society by systematically planning with an equally ruthless and decisive activities where the society at every level would be fully involved. The society is ready. The effect of the intensive campaign done during the elections of 2005 and 2010 is still intact. Teachers and students, elements widely distributed from corner to corner of the country, could be decisively effective instruments to retool the society with the current political situations. It is just retooling. The potential is there. To suggest useful methods to be applied, and to boost the preparation of the opposition parties

in the field for the 2015 election I will point out three lessons, here after called activities, to be implemented from the election of May 15, 2005, namely: a) formation of a coalition (Kinijit), b) disciplined organizational activities, and c) disciplined participation of the society.

### **What are the Lessons to be Replicated?**

By systematically implementing the three activities that would be discussed below, the then opposition political organization were able to bring out over 26 million people to use their ballots that completely destroyed Meles Zenawi and his regime. Mass participation is very critical. I will offer the edited version of the three activities from my article of September 17, 2008, **WHY THE STRUGGLE FAILED**. The three activities were successful up to the date of May 15, 2005, the election day. My humble suggestion to the opposition political organizations in the field is to replicate the three activities in the coming general election of 2015. In addition to prepare itself to challenge the regime if and when it stole the election results again. This part of the process, the challenging part, if and when needed, is going beyond the finishing line. It is stepping across the marked line.

#### **1. Forming a coalition (Kinijit)**

In 2005, the formation of the coalition undoubtedly stream lined and put in motion the process of the struggle for the victory of May 15, 2005. The four political parties formed a coalition strictly based on the strategy to beat Meles Zenawi and guarantee the coalition to win at every level of the contest. Here is part of the strategy, that can be replicated by the current opposition political parties in the field, that was established before going into the election. The four parties, namely AEUP, EDP-Medhin, Kestedemena and EDL, formed a coalition called Kinijit. They decided to field only one representative against Melese's one representative at each election Kebele. Instead of two or more representatives of the opposition parties competing against one of Meles's, they decided to choose from among themselves the strongest one that is capable to beat Meles's representative, to represent Kinijit. Hence the distinguishing names, AEUP/Kinijit, EDP-Medhin/Kinijit, Kestedemena/ Kinijit and EDL/Kinijit. Note that Kinijit is the common denominator. This was the strategy that effectively dealt a blow on Meles Zenawi. Without this strategic setup, the election of May 15, 2005 might have not been successful. In my opinion, this is an experimentally proven model to be replicated in the coming general election of 2015 by the political parties in the field.

#### **2. Well disciplined organizational activities of each member organization.**

These disciplined organizational activities, that were already in the process of becoming visible, is the sum of: a) a strong, dedicated and disciplined leadership; b) strong, dedicated and well disciplined cadres or member-

activists; c) well and effective in organizing their time, their energy, and their resources; d) an extensive reach out that effectively produced numerous offices and supportive Kebele community in the network. This aspect of the preparation is an extremely important component for the election of May 15, 2005 to succeed. And, e) well established organizational structure, that showed the command and solid hierarchical structure. For the current opposition political parties in the field to succeed in the coming general election of 2015, they are encouraged as much as possible, in fact it is a must, to adopt what was done before and during the election of May 15, 2005 by the then opposition political parties.

That was exactly what the opposition political parties did in the election of May 23, 2010 too. Except in here, in my opinion, it was a process that showed political maturity on the part of the opposition political parties. They went through negotiations and compromises that gave the chance to open up a crack. A window of opportunity to field their armies, the society. The opposition political parties effectively utilized this window of opportunity, the crack. Once the people got the chance to use their ballots, it was a forgone conclusion for Meles and his regime to be beaten. That was exactly what took place. The people did their job. But Meles stole the election again. It implemented what it stated in its political program. Now too, in the coming general election of 2015, it is guaranteed, that, with an intensive agitation and campaign, the people will come out in mass and beat the regime again. The people will do its share. But unfortunately, every time the election was held the leadership of the opposition political parties do not persist to pass the finishing line and grab the victory. Passing the finishing line is the point where the transference of power from the regime to the people takes place. Unfortunately, they turned their back and left the field, before crossing the finishing line, while the people were openly demanding for their right to be protected and defended. They cried, for no avail, for not letting their votes to be stolen. Here is a very sad consequence of their actions. The turning back by the leadership without completing the race exposed those progressive and aggressive activists and cadres who did their best to motivate the society to come out and vote, to be harassed, to be denied the social services they were entitled to, to be banished, and to be tortured by the regime's cadres. It was a very shameful act on the part of the opposition political leaderships. They did have an input for such horrible treatments the cadres and the activists received in the hands of Meles's cadres. They should have apologized for what they did to the activists. I sincerely hope the current opposition political parties in the field will stand on its two feet to resist and challenge the regime and defend and protect the democratic rights of the society. The people, as always, are there to line up behind them.

### **3. Well disciplined participation of the society.**

To have a turn out of about 26 million of absolutely determined voters by resisting adverse natural elements, by heroically and effectively resisting banishment, torture, even after witnessing the killing of compatriots by Meles Zenawi's ruthless security forces is simply phenomenal. The Ethiopian people have clearly demonstrated how inherently disciplined and determined they are, inherent characteristics that can be harnessed, if and when, determined and disciplined leadership showed up. There are two points to be observed here. One of them is the dedication, and, the effectively hands-on involvement of the then opposition political parties particularly at the grass roots level. These superior efforts on the part of the leadership and the activists in the field of the opposition political organizations cannot be denied, which was the first phase of the election. The second phase is what they did when the election was stolen. The second point to be observed is the built in resiliency and the perceptiveness of the people of Ethiopia. But, unfortunately, they were repeatedly abandoned by the leaders of the opposition political leaders, after investing so much time and energy, right after the day of the election of May 15, 2005 which is the second phase of the election. It is a very important lesson that the existing opposition political leaders in the field should take note of. It appears that a culture of non persistence and not finishing the race type of attitude, laziness, if you will, are being cultivated in the Ethiopian political system of struggle. It is dangerous. It should be exposed, condemned, pulled out and removed from its root for good. I think it is not a simple issue to be ignored.

I strongly argue that, it is absolutely a must to apply the above three activities to win the coming general election of 2015. If those in the field participate in the coming general election 2015 by implementing the above three activities indicated, they will win. There is no question about it. The question is, will the current political leaders leave the harvest in the field as it was done by previous political leaders or complete the process by empowering the people at any cost? Note that this is the second phase of the election which is very critical. Therefore, the follow up question to be answered is, that, what if the leadership of TPLF refuses to accept the result of the election as it did in the election of May 15, 2005, as well as in election 2010? It can steal the votes and boldly declare that it is the winner as it exactly did with the election results of May 15, 2005. Here is an internationally recognized confirmation of its stealing, to show its propensity to steal, if needed:

**“No pragmatic strategy can justify the United States backing a regime that STOLE the last election and has**

**brutalized their own people and will, at some point, disintegrate from its own corruption and incompetent ways.” Honorable Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) March 14, 2006.** (It appears the prophesy of Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) is in the process of being fulfilled.)

I will adopt here the analysis I used in my article of May 29, 2010, **What if Meles Rejects the Results of the Election?** Here is the adoption: The defining question for the current political parties in the field is then, **a)** given the inevitability of winning this coming general election of 2015 by the people of Ethiopia, and, **b)** assuming the determination of the regime to reject the result of the coming general election of 2015, are the competing opposition parties prepared and determined to challenge it by applying democratic means, say uprising, until the regime accepts its lose and submit to the democratic reality? Given the existence of ripe environment for winning the election, to postpone or boycott the general election of 2015, instead of determining to win and prepare oneself for it, at any cost, is tantamount to committing a crime of historic proportion against the people of Ethiopia. The beginning and the end of the election should not be measured on the basis of the lack of the gut and the lack of determination on the part of the opposition political parties in the field. Nor should it be measured on ones organizational internal weakness. It should be measured on the basis of whether the people are ready, all the way, to defend its right provided it gets gutsy and determined leaders to lead it. For a cut throat type of struggle the people of Ethiopian are engaged in, any available crack, small or big, should be latched on to it and taken advantage of. Therefore it is a must for the leadership of the opposition political leadership to organize and prepare itself to fit into the mold of the people. Amazingly the reverse is taking place in Ethiopia. It is not the political leaders who are providing the mold it is the people who is providing it. When people come out in mass and vote; when people demand for its democratic right, its vote, to be protected, then it is providing the mold to be fitted by the political parties.

Here comes a thought provoking opinion of mine which I believe will help the system of political struggle in Ethiopia. I want to link this general election of 2015 in particular, in fact, any future comprehensive political activities in general to simple, and humble, human to human relationship based activities, in addition to emotional and organic attachment. I want to weave this strictly

based on human to human, with no hierarchical relationship attached to it, into the political system of struggle. That is, activities are organized and implemented humanely. Not from a position of authority, a kind of an already established top-down process. Not from a position of here I am to teach you kind of thing. That is, humans talking to humans on equal basis. Not political

leaders or activists or cadres talking to human beings as political leaders or activists or cadres. Considering that both are on the same level where one would not think about ones political leadership; where one would not think about ones political status; where one would not think, primarily, about ones organizational interests or powers. Almost always, at least subliminally, this last one is the driving force of political organizations, or political leaders, or, cadres. They completely forget or ignore the interests of the people so routinely talked about in meetings, in press releases, and in political commentaries. When the primary concern is the interests and aspirations of the people, when one succeeds on this laid down fundamental principle, the interests of the political organizations, which is political power, will be fulfilled by the people whose interests are also fulfilled in the process. It is automatic. So, I want to link these basic human being tendencies to the coming general election of 2015. Based on this premise then, I would like to put forward a challenging question, **Do People Matter Any More** and weave it into the present and the future political activities to be applied by the opposition political parties and the civic organizations?

### **So Do People Matter any More?**

The challenge is, are we emotionally and organically attached and linked to the people that we talk about routinely? How is this organic and emotional linkage manifested in our daily political activities? Are we thinkers of people first, no matter what? Are the press releases made, the political commentaries made, the public meetings organized, made in complete commitment to, and, the people in mind? Or, are these political activities simply and routinely made, because they have to be done to manifest our existence? That is to say, we are alive and kicking. The question is to those structurally organized groups, be they civic organizations or political parties, be they in Diaspora or inside Ethiopia. If people matter, that is, if the concern is what happened to them, what is happening to them right now, and what will happen to them in the near future, then, given the current political opportunity, negotiation and compromise should be the key to open up the window of opportunity, a crack, to be used. In such favorable political environment any size of a crack should be taken advantage of. That is disarming and humbling oneself for the sake of eradicating poverty, for the good of the society, and for the sake of economic security for the current generations and the generations to come.

## **Do people matter to the leadership of TPLF?**

The answer is no. Let alone the people, it hates the name Ethiopia itself. The hatred would be intense when Ethiopia is attached to anything. For example the **Ethiopian people. The Ethiopian flag.** The leadership of TPLF have tried to diminish the honored symbolic representation of the flag including defacing it. For how long did the leadership of TPLF refused to say the word **Ethiopia?** These are the people who robbed churches, killed priests, sold human bodies for profit, capitalized on famine to make money, all these done on the people of Tigry. They considered the Tigry people something else not human beings. Even though they are trying their level best to make up for it, history will not, cannot forget it. It is the legacy of Meles Zenawi and his group. Let them be aware of it.

So it is not surprising for the TPLF leadership not to consider the people of Ethiopia as human beings. It so vehemently detested the people it is supposed to provide full services, it considers them animals, particularly as donkeys that cannot think or rationalize. Donkeys are extremely submissive animals bred to carry loads whenever one wished and wherever one wanted the load to be moved to. It does what its owner wants it to do. The leadership of TPLF believes that it owns the people of Ethiopia as dedicated servants. In fact with full confidence. The people are there to satisfy its voracious political and economic hunger. It was to that effect that Meles Zenawi, from the outset, with his gang, formulated a policy to enslave the Ethiopian people.

Implemented it to the letter until his death. It is an undeniable truth. This openly manifested motives of the leadership of TPLF has to be removed surgically. Here the bottom line argument is that people did not matter then before the death of Meles, and, it does not matter now after the death of Meles Zenawi. The mystified word (slogan), development (**LIMAT**) that one reads and hears all over the government information dissemination means, that one reads on T-shirts and caps are covers systematically used to hypnotize the people, without even scratching the existing abject poverty that the people are suffering from. The people are occupied with this empty hypnotic slogan being regurgitated everywhere.

## **Some Indicators of People do not Matter Anymore**

People do not matter any more means they are no more considered as leaving breathing human beings. They are considered animals. I argue that had the leadership of TPLF considered the people of Ethiopia as human beings, hence due concern for its peace and unity--for these two are essential for economic development--at least for its basic shelter, food, clothing and health, it would have not, even thought about it, let alone dividing it along its ethnic and language lines and solidify it by introducing article 39. Which indicates a very hateful and vengeful attitude towards the Ethiopian people.

By so doing it created a charged up environment. Instead, it would have totally focused on the poverty issue and how to eradicate it.

**The second indicators are,** the judicial system, the educational system, the health services, the intelligence (security), the military, the media and the economic policies would have been, from the outset, structured and geared toward fulfilling the interests and aspirations of the society at large. No, the people of Ethiopia are taken by the leadership of TPLF as animals, not human beings capable of thinking and rationalization, it is simply there to serve it. To satisfy its political and economic needs. To effectively and efficiently handle its business empire established, and, embedded in the so called economic system of the country, hence a state within a state, it has to capitalize on this nonhuman being categorization, devoid of feelings and compassion.

**The third indicator is the eviction.** The eviction of thousands of people with deliberately calculated move shows the non existence of human to human relationship hence the nonexistence of feelings and compassion. Because, the other side is not considered as human beings. Once the premise is established on “not human but animals categorization,” it follows then, what happens to the sick, the elderly, the pregnant, the babies being carried by their mothers, the children, to those who are being uprooted would not be of any concern to the TPLF leadership. The bottom line that one can learn from this eviction process being manifested in Ethiopia, is, that, these human sufferings did not affect an iota the TPLF leadership because the people are considered as animals. Those ethnic parties who are branches of the regime are simply followers who, perhaps still are, with short leashes on their necks. Certainly they were with short leashes before the death of Meles. They were under hypnotic control of Meles Zenawi. His death might have liberated them to a certain extent. Perhaps it is simply a wish on my part.

**The fourth indicator is the selling of fertile lands.** The rampant selling of the fertile lands to foreign governments under the cover of leasing, a very lucrative money making business, also reflects the lack of human based relationship that should have existed between the people of Ethiopia and the leadership of TPLF, and, by extension, here I want to introduce another factor into the picture, between the civic organizations and the political parties. Because of this relationship the leadership of TPLF could not see the future harmful impact of selling the land on the generations to come. As long as the deal satisfies its immediate political and economic needs it does not care about what would happen to the coming generations and what it would do. The youths of Ethiopia must note this divisive prescription.

**Do the Opposition Political and Civic Organizations have Input for the Development of this Characteristics of the TPLF Leadership?**

Yes they do. I think it is an important point to note. I strongly argue that, by extension, these destructive deeds and beliefs that took place in Ethiopia by TPLF leadership cover the opposition forces both inside Ethiopia and outside of Ethiopia. I argue that, simply put, the opposition political parties and the civic organizations were and are considered animals hence donkeys. Why? For one thing they are part and parcel of the society considered animals. Secondly, because they did not show any type of hands on aggressive resistance by standing on the side of the people treated as animals. They were and still are as submissive as the donkeys. The TPLF leadership, knows and feels about it and right now it can do anything it wishes to do and get away with it under the nose of the opposition political and civic organizations. Isn't this a fact?

Even though this characterization applies to both who are inside as well as outside of Ethiopia, it more characterizes those inside of Ethiopia for they are there where the action was, and , is still taking place. For example, to cite the most recent one, they did not have the gut to stand on the side of the evicted Ethiopians, a concrete and undeniable issue, by using hands on aggressive and continuous resistance. For example repeated demonstrations at any cost until the issue is settled in favor of the evicted. International organizations, both governmental and not governmental, see this inaction, call it laziness, if you will, on the part of the opposition parties in the field, as a deliberate approval of what the TPLF leadership is doing. The opposition forces, in fact, both inside and outside of Ethiopia would not be free from the condemnation by history.

So, believe it or not, accept it or not, this is the exact relationship between the people of Ethiopia and the leadership of TPLF, on one hand, and between the leadership of TPLF and the leadership of the opposition forces, be they civic organizations or political parties.

If people mattered, that is, the attachment and the link is organic, hence the concern will always be there day and night, then, given the poverty situation of the society, given the degradation of the education system, given the degradation of the health services in the country, the civic organizations and the political parties, both inside and outside of Ethiopia are responsible to do things at its disposal to come to the rescue of the society by crafting effective means and situations. Right now, the opportunity is there to change the course of history. It is undeniable. Please note that, poverty, the degradation of the education system, and, the degradation of the health services will have untold impact on the generations to come. They will, directly or indirectly, stunt and arrest the proper functioning and development, particularly of the children in schools. Imagine a hungry, and unhealthy child in a classroom and the impact of these situations on the mental and psychological development of the

child. What picture do you see? If people matter it is also the responsibility of the current young generations, the current youths, for these dysfunctional conditions hovering over the society of Ethiopia to be removed completely.

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