

THE HOMELESS PRIME MINISTER

Sometimes we Ethiopians like to boast. The first in everything! The cradle of humankind. The first bare foot runner to win the Marathon. The first to claim an annual economic growth of 12% and ask for food aid for 12 million people or more. The first country since the 1970s to claim a 99.9% wins for the ruling party in the general election. And now to top it all we have come to stun the world by having the first homeless prime minister in History.

Not that the new powerless Prime Minister was evicted from his home or became homeless for reasons that have made more than a half million Ethiopians homeless in the capital and other urban areas. Oh no. He is “homeless” because the wife of the dead and departed (all believers can add here: praise is to God or Allah) prime minister has refused to evacuate the prime minister’s residence. She is no ordinary woman this Queen of Corruption called Azeb. She usurped the title of First Lady and then dipped her hand into the national wealth of Ethiopia (the couple stole more than 2 billion dollars say those in the know), lied better and more than her late husband (whom one American Ambassador admired saying he lies professionally). She has refused to evacuate and the puppet PM fronting for the Tigrean rulers has stated that she can stay. Which has made him homeless of the first kind, a prime minister without a home? Azeb has made it clear that she will leave the PM’s palace if she can go instead to the palace of the president (a nominal appointee) or a big palace is built for her in Addis Abeba. To make believe she has visited a property near the Sidist Kilo University but her claim of security worries means she would stay put for quite sometime. The new homeless PM will not object for sure.

The whole incident has made Ethiopia achieve another first. Claiming economic progress and boom while reeling under a big famine was getting boring anyway. Sadly some of the opposition tried to ridicule itself and achieve a pathetic first on its own but no one noticed. South African Zuma shot miners and tried to interest us on who among his four wives should get State subsidy but no one listened. The president of Benin claimed three of his close fellows were trying to poison him but

his could not be a first at all. Drunken soldiers trying a coup are not original either. Mwai Kibaki shouting he is not a polygamist was a failure—it has been done before and it was never a true statement. In fact, we are forced to remember Jomo Kenyatta publicly forcing his wife, Mama Nigina, to deny his alleged impotence. Those were not Viagra days, the blue pills that sent Nigeria's Abacha on his final journey during an orgy with European prostitutes. Lucky Britain is still keeping part of his five billion dollar theft. The Botswana king tried his part by marrying maidens every other year—no one was really very much impressed. Museveni of Uganda as a new old president bombed—his enemy Joseph Kony has, alas, more allure as a real bad man. Kagame arming the M23 rebels of the Congo was a “so what else is new?” event. So called A Qaeda rebels and Islamists in Northern Mali destroying shrines are a joke—the Taliban and Al Shabab had done more destruction on historical heritages and their nations. All this is what makes the Ethiopian experience so original. Having a homeless Prime Minister is creative and admirable. A real First!

We are obliged to say despite the competition for the rivals were and are many. Take the defeated Senegalese president (who wanted to anoint his son like in Korea and Syria) declaring: “I am the only president in a perpetual state of grace. It is a special phenomenon linked to my personality.—probably I am a man of action rather than just talk”. The man of action was defeated and ousted. Chad's Idris Deby, who has 13 children and many wives, got married to the 21 years old daughter of a Sudanese Janjaweed chief and paid a 27 million dollars dowry (plus one million dollars for her jewels, gold and diamonds) and tried to be a first but those who heard of this laughed at him. Huge dowries are not a first at all. All this is what makes the Ethiopian event very original and a striking first. Making a Prime Minister homeless has not been tried elsewhere at all. The usual practice in Africa is taking the corpse of the PM and his family out of the State House. If not, the family moves out militarily thanking their stars for being spared or alive. Azeb Mesfin hopes she will stay on in the palace come what may. Delusion, illusion,

desperation or an Ethiopian tragicomedy par excellence? A serious question. That the answer is not yet in the hands of the Ethiopian people adds to the sorrow.

Though the situation is bleak and the future uncertain we Ethiopians can snatch some comfort from the fact that we give the world surprises and we are unique. We still have the syndrome of the chosen people like the Israelis, the Chinese, etc. as we think we are special—after all the very first human beings were Ethiopian, no? We think we are neither black nor white but some special brand of brown or “red “. How many in the world are those who have more than 35,000 political prisoners and still be hailed as a democratic country? How many are those who can slaughter hundreds if not thousands and still be pampered as democrats? One is inclined to say none in this twenty first century are living in. But, alas, Ethiopia has reversed the whole equation—you can imprison, kill, starve, impoverish millions and ruin and shame a country but you can still be admired and supported. Even without having the original show of a homeless Prime Minister!