

TRAITOR ISIAS VOWS TO DIE FOR ETHIOIPA REDEFYINING HIS ALLEGIANCE TO ERITREA: WHAT WOULD OUR SILENCE MEAN EXCPET TACIT CONSENT?

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The treacherous path of Atse Isias in Ethio-Eritrean relations entered a new phase with his visit to Gondar this month. It is not the visit itself that is an enormous development but the statements that negate his allegiance to the Eritrean state. No Eritrean would act surprised when it comes to the recent statements, though as shocking as they may be, after observing the significant events following the resumption of relations with Ethiopia. We know the nature of the beast and what he is up to or what is in horizon for Eritrea, in case he is able to achieve his evil agenda (God forbid). However, for the advantage of the readers who did not monitor his visit to Gondar closely, it is important to go quickly through the statements before we show our take on them.

According to www.assenna.com (watch the news for Wednesday, November 14, 2018), during his visit to Gondar, the Atse is said to have visited the grave of his grandfather. Assenna Radio quotes an Ethiopian Amharic source reporting the Atse's interview with CGTN. The salient features of the statements that concern us most could be summarized as follows, with some questions or remarks added where necessary:

- That the best thing that has happened in his life is the day of the rapprochement of relations with the Ethiopians, describing that event as more important than the fall of the Dergue and the independence of Eritrea. ***Isn't this repenting that the dream of the Eritrean people for independence has taken shape or has become a reality?***
- That he is ready to sacrifice his life for the well-being of Ethiopia (in fact he vows and emphasizes that it is not a talk for courtesy).

- That he felt totally ashamed when he saw how respectably he was treated by the Amhara, as compared to what he and others used to believe about them (the connotation being, “misled by others”.)
- That he is an old man for whom no much time left, and that he does not have worries about the future of Eritrea as long as Abiy’s administration exists. This needs to be properly decoded and soberly read, but among few things, he seems to be proposing the line of succession after his death. However, the Eritrean people are praying that the heart attack hits soon.

Before we go to further discussion, a quick remark to make would be: to call these statements controversial is an understatement because they raise the cost for Eritrea as a sovereign state. In other words, they are devastating political bombshells that show he did not get his foot off the gas to accelerate the implementation of his treacherous agenda. To that end, these statements should not be taken lightly but reacted to proportionally and in action too. But to digest the statements more, the first couple of questions we need to raise are: ***Is this an announcement that he is abandoning his allegiance to Eritrea? Could a leader of a country have devotion to two different countries of different national interests that are mutually exclusive or even antagonistic towards each other?***

When we talk about our allegiance to one country, which means patriotism in substance, we are talking about the following interwoven elements:

- That we are talking about the acknowledgement of our bonds to others, with whom we share our homeland and customs in a worthy commitment (Watch the underlined phrase).
- That this means we are vowing that the rights we cherish are linked, inextricably, to equally important responsibility (the emphasis here is on the rights and obligations of a citizen).
- That those obligations extend not only to those living at present but to the past generations who brought us freedom and to the future generations who will carry forward those commitments.

Simply put, when the Atse says that he is ready to die for Ethiopia, it means he is shifting allegiance from Eritrea to Ethiopia and that means shifting all of the above commitments to the country he vows to have devotion for. Said differently, he is telling the Ethiopian people (the Eritrean people are too inferior for him to talk to):

- He is no more an Eritrean and is acknowledging that his homeland of choice is Ethiopia.
- His people are Ethiopians with whom he shares bonds, customs, and cherishes rights and responsibilities.
- His commitment is towards Ethiopians living at present, lived in the past (including Ethiopian soldiers who fell fighting the thirty-year war in Eritrea and later the Badume war), and the new Ethiopian generations to come.

In few words, what he put in the Ethiopian public sphere is that he has nothing to do with Eritrea. Accordingly, I regret to say that the spineless and the gutless Eritrean Defence Forces should have closed the borders and prevented his plane from landing at the airport in Asmara because he had denounced his Eritrean allegiance and was coming with a new citizenship status: as an Ethiopian Representative or Ethiopian Governor. If we cannot see that, there is an issue with us.

After his first visit to Ethiopia in which he made different shocking statements at different occasions, to clean up his mess for him, some supporters of the regime, I call "adversaries of truth", argued that what he had said about the relations of the two countries should be taken within the context of courtesy common in diplomatic language. Though I wonder which planet's diplomatic language they are talking about, one would take their suggestion as correct only, if the relations between the two countries are of normal character and not of special background (say like the relations between Eritrea and France, Eritrea and Nicaragua or Eritrea and Australia). But Eritrea had been a part of Ethiopia and it became independent after the longest and the harshest African war of liberation,

preceded by fierce political strive to achieve national independence. Within that context, what the Atse had said cannot be given a different interpretation other than what the fears our people have been expressing reflect, given the harsh past of the relations, the unhealed wounds of our people, and the sensitivity of the issues reflected in the statements. But as the statements he currently made in Gondar have raised the bar of his treason to a new level, due to their more serious implications and the fact that they were more precisely and clearly expressed, I do not know what arguments the foot soldiers of the barbaric regime would present.

As to the question whether the Atse could have allegiance to two different countries at the same time, we need to remind again that we are not talking about dual citizenship of an ordinary person. We are talking about a person who is the top leader of a country. Let alone a man of statesmanship status (at least the unfair and the imperfect world sees him that way, contrary to the image our people have about him), an ambassador or a government official who has access to classified information, should have the citizenship of only one country because there are legal and political implications to be considered. For the sake of clarity, let us raise the theoretical or the hypothetical question: ***Which side would he take if a war erupts between the two countries or a diplomatic row occurs?***

I have never heard or read about any leader who has dual citizenship, except one case that could have some unique background. Here we are referring to the case of Saad Al Hariri, the Prime Minister of Lebanon, who we hear has Saudi citizenship. If he really had Saudi citizenship before he was elected Prime Minister, the expectation and the standard universal practice dictate that the Saudi Government should strip off his Saudi citizenship, once he was elected. In case the Saudis did not do what they were supposed to do, then it could be said that the Lebanese Prime Minister is not a completely independent leader with no foreign springs attached to him. That would make it doubtful which country's interest he would represent. As this situation entails considerable risks that need to be studied and learn from, it is appropriate to look into what this dual citizenship has led to.

We are old enough to remember when Prime Minister Saad Al Hariri was allegedly put under house arrest in Riyadh by the Saudi authorities in November 2017 (according to the Lebanese President, Michel Aoun) and forced to resign his post in a televised speech, plunging Lebanon into a new constitutional crisis, finally to be released due to the mediating role played by France, and the pressure from the international community. Nonetheless, though we leave that to the Lebanese people to worry about, if it is true, there is a serious lesson to be learned that double allegiance of leaders could undoubtedly be a serious burden and cause complications for the country he leads.

The next issue we need to raise would be formulated in the form of the question: ***What are the implications of the visit of the Atse to the Amhara State?*** We are justified to believe that the Atse thinks his visit was a very big achievement for him and for the people of the state. On the one hand, it is apparent that he made a name for himself by telling the people of Ethiopia, in general, what they found to be music and fired them up, getting in response the outpouring of love from the people, who only know him superficially or saw things from the prospective of quick political gain in terms of the current inter-Ethiopian conflict.

On the other hand, his own people, who know that it is not his brand and style to love any people, whoever they are, or to bring the peoples of the region closer, found an additional proof that he is after cheap popularity and wants to stay in the graces of Ethiopians, to save his collapsing regime, and as compensation for the disrespect and despise he has earned from his own people back home. That is why he said he was ashamed to maintain an eye contact with the Amhara people who treated him respectably, though, he added, he used to be biased against them. He should either be a plain stupid or a complete moron to apologize to the Amhara people for his bias against them, ignoring the brutality of the colonial oppression of their consecutive governments towards the Eritrean people for about half of a century that the Eritrean people could forgive but cannot forget. Though we do not hold the Ethiopian people responsible for what had happened in Eritrea for over half of a century, we cannot deny that their governments had their strong support. He should have known, better than anybody, who should

apologize to whom. But the unfortunate thing is that his visit came to influence the climate for the achievement of his agenda: reinforcing the forces that want to end the sovereignty of Eritrea and ensure the re-birth of imperial Ethiopia with its access to the sea. He has chosen this path as the only option to escape the collapse of his regime which would risk his neck. Anybody would wonder: ***Is this an honourable exit from the crisis?***

Further, raising that his grandfather had died and had been buried in Gondar is by no means an issue we criticize as something negative. But we ask:

- ***Did it ever cross his mind that hundreds of Eritreans were the victims of the Red Terror in Gondar conducted by Malaku Tafara (a Gondare himself), one of the most blood thirsty, if not the most, among the Dergue members in 1978-1979?***
- ***Did he know that the square in downtown Gondar where he was received by thousands of people repeating the slogan, "Isu Is Ours", while he was in a particularly high mood and utmost joy (as if he was high on drugs), was the most soaked spot with the blood of Eritrean victims of Red Terror?***
- ***Did he learn that the number of Eritreans who were the victims of Red Terror in Bahr Dhar cannot be underestimated?***

It would have been a point for his credit had he also raised that the bones of hundreds of Eritreans were also buried in Gondar and Bahr Dhar, demanding justice for the victims and teaching that human tragedies of that kind and severity should be avoided in our region in future. He would have earned the same respect had he tried to find out where those victims of Red Terror were buried, when he visited the grave of his grandfather. To sum up this part we ask: ***If we focus on the words and actions of Atse Isias, when did we see him doing anything not outside the norm? When did we see his language not going beyond the bounds of what is appropriate and decent?***

To review what we have seen by way of behaviours and attitudes of the Atse in Gondar and to expose the level of the national treason he had committed, one

would be tempted to ask the question: ***What do we mean when we say we love our country?*** The answer could be different for different people because there are different kinds and levels of affection. For the normal person, the list includes: the people, the land, the society' history and culture, the style of government, and so on. However, the people stand as the first in the list because they embody and carry forward the society's commitments, and there is always one part of the society that deserves our respect more than others. Here it would be common to identify those who have given their lives for the national cause. The victims of the Red Terror were a part of that section of our society who gave their lives for the independence of the country. This is to say that his visit to Gondar also exposed his negative attitude towards those who gave their lives for the national cause. This is shocking but not surprising because the independence of Eritrea was less important for him than the resumption of relations with Ethiopians, as he had put it in his statements. Here he practically answered the question above by showing that he loves Ethiopia as land, people, history and culture; not Eritrea. This is to say that he proved to be an Ethiopian patriot; not an Eritrean one.

All of our discussions up to this point will lead us to the concluding questions: ***Would we continue being silent? Where do we go from here? Do we have the backbone to stop Traitor Isias?*** These questions would force us to see what the current alignment of forces in our Diaspora community looks like at the time the Atse constitutes a real threat to the national sovereignty of our country.

We see and hear about Eritrean justice seekers staging protests or conducting public meetings or organizing some activities in many European and North American cities to express their concern about the human rights violations of the Eritrean regime. Many of us also participate in these protests and activities to make our voices heard by the international community and in solidarity with our people inside the country. On the flip side, loyalists of the regime insist the actions of the protesters are unpatriotic because to them, criticizing the Atse whom they take as the embodiment of everything Eritrean is against the country. We are not worried about this group of loyalists, but about those who say they

are neither with the government nor with the forces known as the justice seekers, claiming to be the independent self.

The ideal of the independent self, which has been denied the proportional attention it deserves in our writings, should be given the right space here because of the terrible damage it is causing. To that end, among the few things we need to raise briefly is the begging question: ***Does the ideal independent self stand to reason or scrutiny given the disastrously bad current Eritrean reality in which every citizen and family are devastatingly affected?*** To begin with, we need to assert that the ideal of the controversial independent self is a negative phenomenon, if it at all exists in a functional society.

As human beings, we need to reach out to others. In fact, these connections are our only channels that enable us to develop fully our responsibilities as persons. If we deny ourselves these involvements because we do not care or due to anger or defensive reasons, we would finally find ourselves diminished. That is why we doubt if being “independent” (as they claim) or inactive observer helps the society to survive and develop.

In the Eritrean reality, members of this group, who claim to represent the independent self, support the regime and have connections with it, though those connections run in darkness or in secret. They are too shameful and too despicable cowards to openly say they support the regime or to come to the forefront as supporters. We would refer to them here as, the “disguised supporters of the regime.” We need to tell them that they are taking side by distancing themselves from any association with the justice seekers, but keeping secret connections with the regime. Simply put, they are not neutral or non-political, as they claim to be.

Their non-partisan claim is false and they should be considered more dangerous than those who have a declared position of support to the regime, with whom we differ, but we respect and try to win to bring to the real nationalist position the situation demands at this critical time. As a matter of fact, many of the declared supporters of the regime are shifting their allegiance from the “inspirational

leader” to the cause of the oppressed people, making a big difference in the struggle against the regime. These defectors from the regime are the ones who will decide its final fate for a couple of reasons:

- Apparently, as new arrivals in the opposition camp, they are coming with the conviction that they had been in the wrong camp for years and so they would be excited to make up for that by being more devoted than their new compatriots.
- They know, for fact, which nerve hurts the regime most when touched, and on which part of the body a blow would be fatal.

My remarks above may not sit well with some, who are the dogmatic political fanatics to whom a negative political position is a life-long stance that could never change (they issue life sentence to political stances). These remnants of the medieval age are the last to advocate for change, since it is too much for them to understand the tasks the current phase of the struggle demands, and are not ready to change themselves and their rotten views about others who had different political stand than theirs. They should be advised to distance themselves from the national debate and retire from politics all together because they are too hopeless and too obsolete to convince and be convinced, and have failed to attract enough force to the struggle (that is why the bulk of our society is an observer yet). Add to that, the Eritrean mothers have given birth to enough and greater citizens, who could do better to bring about the desired change to which these old hands have become the real roadblocks until the present.

We all say we love our country. This love or devotion is the patriotism we have discussed in detail. But as a large part of patriotism means confronting the problems that the society faces, the core of all problems of our people is the Atse, who has turned the entire country into his very own bailiwick with which he can do as he liked. The Atse is at present taking a particularly dangerous direction: taking us backward. That means the loss of our sovereignty for which tens of thousands of our sons and daughters had fallen. Of course, that is what the Ethiopians wanted since the day Eritrea emerged as an independent nation but

failed to achieve that because the conditions were not in their favour. Now with the coming of the new Prime Minister to power, the anti-Eritrean forces consolidated themselves and are using the peace agreements with the Atse as a cover to achieve their goal. The unfortunate part is that it is the Atse, whose allegiance is not to Eritrea, is the one pulling the plug on their plan and he is more excited than them to achieve that.

Before wrapping up this piece, the following points should be highly stressed:

- As we cannot be civil with Ethiopians who want to destroy the Eritrean sovereignty, they should be reminded that invaders are always defeated. At the same time, the Ethiopian people should remove their masks so that they could see why Atse Isias is hitting the reset button at this particular time, and realize that their partner is not Atse Isias but the Eritrean people, whose love, goodwill and cooperation they should not lose due to the adventurous policies and the short-sighted approach of their political leaders that will inevitably backfire.
- The supporters of the regime should know that there is nothing left to rationalize supporting the treacherous regime. It is high time for them to join forces with the justice seekers to stop Traitor Isias from achieving his evil agenda that will be disastrous to all without any exception.
- Our National Defence Forces should know that defending the sovereignty of the country rests on their shoulders and that they need to grow the backbone to foil the conspiracy of the traitor and defend the sovereignty of the country, which had cost the Eritrean people high.
- The justice seekers should know how to change anger and rage into energy and well-coordinated action plan, and realize that the tasks of the current phase of the struggle demands the unity of all forces, which is the only guarantee that leads to victory in the struggle. They have to pull all their scattered ideas, skills, human, material and media resources together, before our homeland becomes an easy prey. =====