

Fomenting Divisions Among the Saho Tribes Should Stop

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I never thought, or wished, to speak in the past about this issue in public. It is about internal family concern, which has to be dealt and be resolved among ourselves by ourselves as the Saho community. But I have now been forced to speak up after I read exchanges of unwholesome voices of individuals_in the social media outlets such as the Facebook. Such stale debate reminded me of a folk saying of our tribes. They say “wanishenah ku wanshishan” [they talk and force you to talk too]. So, I decided to speak and it is suitable time to write on this issue.

As I recall, these recurring divisive voices or “fitnah” appeared since the ELF took some steps against groups of fighters dubbed “Yemin” (right wing) or rebels who landed on the shores of Dankalia. By incident or otherwise, these individuals were from the Saho tribes that did not include the Asawurta tribe. After that incident, many none Asawurta fighters had left the ranks of the ELF and joined PLF, which at that time was led by Martyr Osman Saleh Sabbe. By abandoning the ranks of the ELF they were trying to express anger and dissatisfaction with its leadership. Thus, they blamed the incident and the losses on Martyr Ahmed Mohammed Nasser just because he was the Chairman of the ELF. Moreover, the blaming also stretched to other veteran fighters from the Asawurta tribe, Ustaz Mohammed Omer Yahiya among them, which also included Ali Isaq who was from one of the Afar tribes.

Honestly, I never heard that those individuals were killed by Asawurta or an Afar. It was not correct to hold a whole tribe responsible. When this problem began to spread, I was living in Sudan, and I faced a lot of discomforts and annoyances just because I happened to be struggling in the ranks of the ELF. Some individuals from my own tribe were unhappy with my stay in the ELF led by persons whom they believe had killed the fighters from the tribe I belonged to. However, I stayed firm on my position and continued to defend Martyr Ahmed Mohammed Nasser and others. I rightly maintained that it was the ELF as an organization that took the steps, and it was not right to blame individuals just because they held leadership status.

Anyway, the incident was painful and remained as an open wound. I hope history will tell why those people were killed; how they were killed; was there a conspiracy against them; and was it a collective decision of the ELF leadership ! The victims were heroes who fought in the ranks of the ELF for years, and had done their share in making history. Time will come when history shall testify to their contributions and this wound will be healed. Thus, in my view, it is not right for some irresponsible individuals to use this sad incident for personal ends of whatever nature at the expense of the unity and harmony of the Saho tribes.

The Dankalia incident has been on and off to be exploited by individuals from both sides for the purpose of satisfying personal egos, and outrageous mongering for material and power related ends, although that sad incident had involved individuals on both side of the ELF and the PLF. On my part, I was not aware about the gravity of the case until the split of the ELF-RC. At that time, I noticed some individuals from among my Asawurta brothers hiding behind the good name of Martyr Ahmed Mohammed Nasser, and instigating divisive activities from behind the scene for the sake of personal petty power interests. I noticed them trying to alienate potential and resourceful individuals in the organization who belong to other Saho tribes. Since then, it has been my continuous pre-occupation, and where I happened to be, to fight such backward and divisive instigations. I have been calling on members of the Asawurta and other Saho tribes to be aware of the damages and divisions could cause to the interest of the larger community. Thus, I have been trying to call the brothers and sisters among the Asawurtas and the other tribes of the Saho to raise themselves above petty disputes, and look forward to their interest in their country.

And, to explain why I decided to write this short article, I saw someone wrote in a Facebook page to claim that he was out there to speak for the Asawurta, and alleged that some individuals from other tribes of the Saho had collaborated with the dictatorial regime in Eritrea to kill members of the Asawurta tribes. It is shameful and outrageous to blame the tribes for deeds and acts some individuals might have done.

It has to be clearly stated that everyone should take note of the fact that the Asawurta is the tribe of Martyr Ahmed Mohammed Nasser and Nasser Basha. Martyr Ahmed Mohammed Nasser was neither elected to lead the ELF in the name of the Asawurta tribe, nor had he claimed that he had been authorized by the respected tribe of Asawurta to represent them in the ELF or its leadership. He was above all tribes of the Saho as well as the socio-cultural compatriots who struggled under the banner of the ELF. He was a national figure who struggled for Eritrea as a nation. Before him also his grandfather, Nasser Basha, never claimed to have been spokesman for the Asawurta alone, as the great Sheikh Ibrahim al-Mukhtar and prominent leaders of other tribes did. All of them had represented the united voice of the entire tribes of the Saho. That was why they had put their signatures on the customary laws of the entire Saho community.

The great fathers I mentioned above did not only serve the cause of the Eritrean people, but also never believed that the Asawurta tribe was not an authentic part of the Saho. Ibrahim al-Mukhtar and Nasser Basha had worked hand in glove for Eritrea's cause and common good of their united community. And later, too, Martyr Ahmed Mohammed Nasser struggled for the interest of all Eritreans.

When we know that those great fathers and leaders had never claimed to had been speaking for their exclusive tribes, and never believed that Asawurta is not part of the Saho, who would be those who keep on popping up now and then to tell us, and other compatriots in larger Eritrea, that they are speaking for our brothers and sister

in the Asawurta tribe? I shall take the liberty to tell them that whatever they say and write cannot mean anything except attempts to satisfy personal egos and engaging in useless petty disputes. The Asawurta is an important and indivisible part of the Saho community; and it shall stay that way for eternity, simply because history, destiny, inter-tribal kinship and family blood relations bind it to the bigger Saho tree, irrespective of whatever petty “fitnas” and discords individuals might do for narrow and malignant egos.

Long live to the unity of the Saho community.