**ETHIOPIA THE EPICENTER OF ERITREAN MIGRATION / DESTABILIZATION**

 **EXPLOITING THE NO WAR NO PEACE SITUATION.**

 **BY TESFAHANNES BEYENE**

**araele13@yahoo.com**

**Border dispute & the Algiers Agreement:** The reason why Eritrean youth are living Eritrea is that, when the border dispute between Eritrea and Ethiopia erupted in 1998 it was suppose to have been settled after the two countries signed the Algiers Agreement in December 2000. The agreement established that the two countries, with the full support of the Security Council, set up Internationally recognized body called the Eritrea Ethiopia Border Commission (EEBC) to settle the border dispute once and for all. It was for the commission to delineate and demarcate the borders between the two countries and their findings-- were to be *“final and binding”.*  The two countries signed in black and white to say that they will abide by the ruling, while the International Community was suppose to have been the guarantors of the agreement. *The agreement included a clause that says if any one of the two countries in dispute, refuse to accept the ruling of the Border commission- then sanctions were to be activated*. Thus the Hague based Boundary Commission completed its final and binding delimination /demarcation of the two countries borders in 2002 and also decided that the Eritrean town of Badme, which was at the heart of the border dispute, was awarded to Eritrea.

Ethiopia categorically refused to accepted the ruling but after a lot of pressure from the EEBC, Ethiopia said she accepted the ruling in principle but she placed a precondition on it, saying that she wants to have dialogue with Eritrea first and settle the demarcation pillars later. Where as Eritrea said and is saying now is--- lets first implement the border commissions ruling in full- then to have dialogue with Ethiopia later. Ethiopia is still justifying it's refusal to utilize the border by saying the line of demarcation would split communities, churches and schools and is bringing unnecessary excuses not to demarcate the border in contravention of International law. Frankly it's all red hearing, if the border is demarcated with pillars, people who are affected on both sides of the border can decide in line with UN ruling, to be on the Eritrean side or the Ethiopian side. After all these communities have lived together in peace and harmony for years and can live again in peace. Legally speaking however Eritrea is on the right side of the law but Ethiopia has no leg to stand upon.

What need to be understood here is that, if Ethiopia complies with the Border Commissions ruling, then Eritrea has said repeatedly that she will open diplomatic relations with Ethiopia in 24 hours. The United States and European Union have so far refuse to put pressure or to impose sanctions against Ethiopia for non compliance in line with Algiers agreement. This is simply because the USA and its followers did not want to press Ethiopia to accept the Eritrea Ethiopia Border Commission Ruling for the following reasons: Ethiopia is a partner on war on Terror for the United States against Al-Shabab, it is seen as friendly country or as or police man of the region on behalf of the United states, where as Eritrea is considered a pariah state simply because she has repeatedly said she is happy with its policy of self reliance and wants to run her country's affairs by herself with out any interference from outside powers. Ethiopia also provides a drone base for the US in its territory so that its predators can spy over any sky in the Horn of Africa and kill any one hostile to the US Policy. For the above mentioned reasons Ethiopia has refused to comply with the Algiers Agreement and that is why Eritrea and Ethiopia are in political limbo--- a situation of no war, no peace for the last 14 years since the border dispute was settled in in 2000.

**Border dispute & Sanctions against Eritrea**: In 1988 Ethiopia used the pretext of a border dispute and crossed Mereb River that separates the two countries. There was no reason for Ethiopia to cross the border once they took back the flash point town of Badme. But their ultimate objective has been to defeat the Eritrean army, slash and destroy the country in order to bring regime change. In any case their military objectives failed to materialize. It is at this stage that Ethiopia realized that war was not the solution and employed different tactics to make ends meet. They made every efforts to isolate/ weaken Eritrea economically and politically and thought *“If we cannot regime change them, then lets bleed them on all other fronts”*. This time they used diplomatic means, backed by the United States, to push sanctions against Eritrea at the UN. The case against Eritrea was brought obviously by Ethiopia and satellite states like Djibouti, Somalia, supported by the United States at the UN Security Council. As a result 2 resolutions were passed one in December 2009--- Resolution 1907 that imposed sanctions on Eritrea for allegedly supporting terrorist organizations, the fabrication was so bizarre and we were told that Eritrean planes have landed in Baidoa, Somalia to deliver arms to Al-Shabab. What was difficult to comprehend about the allegation was that it was believed by international institutions like the UN, when they know full well that Eritrea does not have stealth fighter planes that can cross two or three country's borders to land arms Somalia. *The allegation was an insult to human intelligence, but no one can say anything since the powerful and the rich are beyond the reach of the law.*

Again in December 2011--- Resolution 2023 was adopted, reinforcing the previous resolution without any evidences and in March 2016 the UN security council again renewed the sanctions against Eritrea and Somalia. Wiki leaks has shown the two sanctions against Eritrea were engineered by Ethiopia with the tacit agreement of the United States and we knew the allegation was hyped by the defunct Somalia Eritrea Monitoring Group who brought the accusation against Eritrea. The claim is unfounded and purely fictional and Eritrea has never supported terrorist organizations like Al-Shabab and will not do so in future. After hearing this bizarre story about Eritrea and Al-Shabab, a Senior Israeli diplomat on Africa affairs (Ambassador Granot) responded to the defunct Eritrea Somalia Monitoring Group on the outrageous allegation that Eritrea is in the business of trafficking weapons and people to Sinai via Sudan. He has said that *“I served 17 years as an Ambassador to Ethiopia and one thing that I learned in the region is that, lying is a justified means to achieve greater opportunity”*. It is not surprising that the minority government in Ethiopia is doing everything at its disposal to create scenarios/ innuendos to blackmail or frame Eritrea for any ills that is now happening in Ethiopia.

So the border dispute failed miserably to dislodge the Eritrean government militarily, the sanction regime failed to weaken Eritrea economically, while the Al-Shabab allegation against Eritrea evaporated into thin air---- then Ethiopian regime had to resort, yet again to another plan of action, by opening refugee camps purely for Eritreans in Northern Ethiopia near the Eritrean border in order to lure Eritrean youth to flee the country. The end game is simple, to deplete Eritrea of its youth. This time, Ethiopia had to open these refugee camps purely to cater for Eritreans when it had more hungry people of her own to feed. *It is quite strange, when asked why they are opening these camps instead of feeding their hungry people, the answer Ethiopian officials give you at the camp is that they are doing it in “solidarity with the oppressed people of Eritrea”*. We know that they are not doing it for humanitarian reasons, they are not doing it for the love affair of the people of Eritrea, they are doing it for political reasons in order to use Eritrean refugees as a political football against the Government Eritrea.

This is not new, Ethiopian rulers past and present have tried and failed to subdue Eritrea in the past and still are trying, but they have failed in the past and will failed again. In the last few years, the current Ethiopian Prime Minister (Hailemariam Desalegne) has repeatedly said in his press conferences that that he wants to bring regime change in Eritrea and on many occasions he made it clear that he wants to see the Eritrean Nation collapse. So these are some of the sinister motives Ethiopia, is using to destabilize Eritrea and at the same time encourage Eritrean youth to flee the country to Northern Ethiopia where the minority government has so far opened 4 refugee camps.

**Eritrean Refugee Camps in Northern Ethiopia** The camps we are told have about 70 000 Eritrean refugees and they are called (1) Aba Guna Camp, (2) Adi Harish Camp (3) Mai Aini Camp and the fourth is called Hintzaz. These four refugee camps have now become the epicenter of Eritrean migration for smuggling Eritrean refugees around the World. A lot of money is now exchanged in these camps, it is a flourishing business for Ethiopian officials as money is flowing from around the world for those Eritrean refugees who want to leave the camps to move to Sudan and continue their Journey to Europe. Eritreans in these camps live in fear for their lives as they are under military guard every day. Last year about 4 Eritreans were shot dead and about 10 Eritreans were wounded for complaining about the harsh treatment they face by the minority government of Ethiopia. It is from these epicenters that the traffickers operate and for those who can afford to pay in dollars, the road is clear for them to carry on to go to Sudan and then across the Sahara to Libya and the final destination Europe or America. From these camps many have disappeared, these camps are the perfect place for smugglers and traffickers to operate. The refugee camps are a big industry where many Ethiopians are now employed. Money can change hands easily and it is from these camps that Eritreans cross to countries of their choice paying thousands of dollars. It is a lucrative business to trade humans from the refugee camps. The UNHCR knows very well that there is a lot of refugee business activity in the area but may opt to not say anything as they do not want to offend Ethiopia and at the same time to protect their jobs. In these refugee camps Eritrean refugees receive remittance from relatives abroad. The so called resettlement program for Eritreans is also processed from the refugee camps. The idea is to settle Eritreans in the United States and other countries, but, the majority of those who are given the opportunity for resettlement are in fact Ethiopians pretending to be Eritreans. So Ethiopia benefits financially from the Eritrean refugee camps, smugglers get money from scared relatives and that money first passes through Ethiopian banks who take a small amount or through the black market; either way, money enters Ethiopia due to this trade. *As a result of Eritrean Refugees going to the border, either by accident or design, Ethiopian vans are constantly hovering around the Eritrea-Ethiopia border looking for Eritreans refugees because they are considered as a cash crops.*

Ethiopian officials also know that Eritreans have relatives abroad so once they are in Ethiopia their relatives will send money to Ethiopia. Once the money is received, the traffickers are there, ready to help them get to other countries. For those who do not have relatives abroad and unable to go quickly, there is also a way for them to leave the camps. A 25 year old man told me that those who are not in a position to pay, they can learn the trade from the big smugglers by becoming mini traffickers until they amass sufficient money to allow them to leave. It is a multi-million business and Ethiopia is benefiting out of Eritrean misery. In other words, Ethiopia is the main beneficiary of these camps financially and politically.

One may ask as to how much does each person leaving the camps in Ethiopia pay? It varies from one trafficker to another but many fellow Eritreans told me that one needs to pay at least up to $2 500 to be taken by a lorry from Ethiopia to the Sudanese border. They are then given mobile phones to call their relatives abroad. Once the transaction is completed, the migrants are taken away deep inside Sudan perhaps in a hideout in Khartoum. From Khartoum if they want to go through the Sahara to Libya then the price is doubled or tripled. In Libya, the traffickers from that country would again put any migrant in detention camps or safe house until they pay the full amount of dollars. The dollars can vary but if the transaction is done they are safely taken to the coast of Libya so that they could be put on a boat or dingy to Europe. By the way those who leave their country are those who have the money. All in all, most Eritrean refugees have paid between $10.000 to $40.000,to reach Europe or America even if you pay this amount of money there is no guarantee you will be put to a boat, or you may be told to pay again and if you are lucky the dream becomes true and reach Europe. In Sudan there is also another refugee camp for Eritreans and I am sure similar activities goes there as well.

Finally for the last 14 years, the two countries are in a limbo situation because Ethiopia is deliberately waging permanent state of conflict called no war no peace designed to weaken Eritrea into submission which has a negative effect on Eritrean youth. At the same time Ethiopia has refused to accept the final and binding d elimination and demarcation ruling that has become main cause of instability in the region. Ethiopia is still actively campaigning to build up a case against Eritrea for additional sanctions. she is still in occupation of Eritrean territory by refusing to accept the Algiers agreement in full. she is making money from the refugee camps at the expense of Eritrean refugees. she is using the Eritrean refugee camps to lobby African Union and European union against the people and government of Eritrea. She is deliberately using the port of Djibouti paying 1.5 billion a year instead of using the Eritrean ports of (Massawa & Assab) almost for free and feed the 15 million Ethiopians who are suffering from starvation. Therefore the Government of Ethiopia is the epicenter or the main engine of destabilization of Eritrea nation and the Horn region on the whole and are exploiting the present situation to harm the people of Eritrea and nothing else.

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