**Ethiopia’s malicious act and the numbness of the Western Democracy**
**By: Berhane Woldu**

The TPLF regime in Ethiopia had violated Eritrean sovereign territory and claimed to have destroyed Afar Independence Movement (ARDUF) base inside Eritrea in retaliation to the abduction of European tourists. Ethiopia had no evidence to embark on this reckless military aggression. However, Ethiopia’s egressions on the people of Eritrea are not new. Previous Ethiopian regimes, Haile Selassie and The Marxist Derge have committed crimes against the people of Eritrea for decades and now, these atrocities will continue.

The world powers and the UN have for long ignored calls from the people of Eritrea for justice and, freedom. After independence, these powers are still ignoring calls from the people of Eritrea for the rule of law. It is that indifference and deliberate disregard that is emboldening rogue regimes to undermine humanity and the rule of law. It is the reason the peace loving people of Eritrea are subjected to unwarranted suffering. And as a result, Eritreans are forced to stand against all evil deeds on their own, and will have to do so for some time to come.

The story of my life is a case in point. Due to the brutal and malicious treatments, discrimination and ethnic cleansing of the Ethiopian regimes, I became a refuge. As a young man, I traveled to distant lands and experienced moments, hardship and poverty. I was the only boy of three children, born into a middle class family in Addis Abeba, Ethiopia. My father came from Eritrea and my mother was born in Addis Abeba. My Grandparents came from centuries of Eritrean ancestries. They were the first in their families to leave farming and migrate to the cities. My father followed his uncle to Ethiopia, who was assigned as a missionary. My grandfather joined the Ethiopian army to fight the Italian army and received “Fitwerary” rank by King Haile Selassie Emperor of Ethiopia. My father worked for the post office and later joined an Italian Company, FIAT. After some years, he left FIAT and started his own business as a general agent. He married my mother and had three children. Unfortunately, my mother died and my father remarried and had nine more children. I attended a private Catholic school that was run by the American La Sal Brothers. After completing high school, I left for America.

As young man, I remember my father being taken from our home by the Ethiopian security personnel early mornings and not return for a few days. As I grew older, I started to understand that the reason that my father was arrested and questioned was due to his Eritrean ethnicity. My father’s uncle was also harassed and imprisoned several times accused of supporting the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF). I was about twelve years old when I started to notice that many of my relatives were being arrested. My friend’s dad and uncles were arrested as well.

While walking to school, we talked about their imprisonment with sadness and fear. What we did not understand then as children was the hardship and uncertainty of life the families went through.  My brother Tesfu was in Haile Selassie University in 1970 and was arrested during the University student’s demonstrations and sentenced for ten years. He was later pardoned. I witnessed these misfortunes as a young adult.

After I left for the USA, Haile Selassie’s government was overthrown by a communist military dictatorship, Derge. The Military junta was quick to nationalize private properties and in short time rendered my family poor. These are people that worked hard to save and invest. These are law abiding, taxpaying people forced to hand over hard-earned wealth and properties without consideration. These families were the backbone of the country’s economy. They were entrepreneurs that owned most of the small businesses, built houses, schools and civic organizations. These are families that lost everything they had worked for.

My family owned a transport company, farming and rental properties that the Marxist regime nationalized. As a result, my family became poor and destitute never to recover the lost wealth. The Derge was one of the most brutal governments in history. It’s red terror killed over 200,000 young men and women. The streets of Ethiopia were plagued with dead bodies. Many young Ethiopians left the country and become refugees in neighboring counties.

The Derg regime was Soviet Union’s principal ally in the Horn and, recipient of major Soviet support. The Soviet Union delivered loads of weapons to the Derge.  East Europeans, Cuban and Soviet army with high military experience and knowledge were brought to Ethiopia to assist the Ethiopian army to subdue the Eritrean struggle for independence. Like the Soviets the USA poured millions of dollars to assist the Haileslassie government to subjugate the Ethiopian and Eritrea people. Haile Selassie’s regime was US’s top ally in the region. Haile Sellasie managed to annex Eritrea with the help of the US at the UN. Both the Derge and Halie Selassie failed in their quest to suppress Eritrea’s destiny towards independence. In the process, Derge destroyed Ethiopia economically, socially and politically, what little the Haile Selassie regime had built in Ethiopia was gone and the country had become destitute.

My two brothers joined the EPLF, one was martyred during the struggle for liberation, and the second one was martyred after independence. My other brothers all became refuges in Sudan, Kenya and Somalia. Two of my sisters remained in Ethiopia as they were widowed with young children and could not leave Ethiopia. However, and unfortunately, both were ethnically cleansed by the current regime from Ethiopia during the war in 1998. They are now refugees in Norway and Australia.

The terror started when Haile Selassie’s government imprisoned and harassed my family. Then the communist government turned my family to become poor and destitute by nationalizing hard earned wealth and, the current regime destroyed my family by ethnically cleansing them from their livelihoods. These atrocities took place, then as now, with full supported of major powers.

After 30 years of war, Eritrea became independent in 1991. The current regime EPRDF (WEYANE), replaced the military junta of the Derge. At that time, what was left of my family in Ethiopia got temporary relief from harassment and oppression. Sadly, it did not last long.

Shortly after independence, Meles Zenawi made a speech in Asmara and said,**“We will not scratch your wounds. Let us see the future with confidence and hard work.”** However, these were words designed to deceive the people of Eritrea. Because in 1998, shortly after he made those remarks, Meles Zenawi declared a costly war on Eritrea that took the lives of over one hundred thousand Ethiopians and, twenty thousand dear Eritrean lives was lost. Again, my nieces and nephews were in the front line, forced to defend the hard won independence; freedom that was earned with dear blood of their fathers and mothers.

Moreover, in June 12, 1998, at mid-night, Ethiopians-of-Eritrean origins and, Eritreans that lived in Ethiopia were rounded up and taken to a concentration camp of “Shegoline Meda.” These innocent people were evicted from their homes, beaten, interrogated, and forced to pay excessive taxes. The criminal regime extorted money, took away their properties, confiscated financial documents, titles and deeds. In short they were robbed of everything they owned. The regime, in order to humiliate Eritreans, deliberately separated families, by taking away husbands from wives, fathers from children; wives were taken from husbands and children were taken from mothers never to hear from them. Old women and nuns’ were humiliated. Nursing mothers were forced to leave infants to cry hungry in desperation. Young men were massacred en mass. Over
80,000 Eritreans were ethnically cleansed from Ethiopia. These are Eritreans that have never been to Eritrea who lived in Ethiopia for decades.

This evokes strong feeling because, even if my parents had Eritrean heritage, my nieces and nephews were third generation Ethiopian-Eritreans that did not know Eritrea nor spoke the language. They were Eritreans only through their ancestral lineage. Yet, they were deported, some at the age of 12, 14, and 16 with no family to accompany them. Five years old child was arrested for three days and deported to his deported father living his mother and sibling behind.

When asked why Eritreans were ethnically cleansed, Meles Zenawi replied, **“If we do not like the colors of your eyes we will deport you.”**   But what surprises me the most is the numbness of the International community that ignored the atrocities as if nothing happened. These so called leaders and diplomats, instead of seeking justice on behalf of the suffering Eritreans, regurgitated the lies of the criminal regime and allowed crimes against humanity to take place in front of them.

Today, ten years after a final and binding boundary commission decision, with the help of Western powers, the Ethiopian minority regime is occupying sovereign Eritrean territories in defiance of international law. The UN and the Security Council has totally ignored their responsibility of seeing through the implementation of the physical demarcation of the border. Meanwhile, Eritreans are carrying the burden with no peace, no war. My family and many others are scattered all over the world as refugees living a life of uncertainty. It has been over 50 long years of suffering, separation of families and, living as second class citizens all over the world. Don’t Eritreans have the same rights as other nationalities to leave in peace, without separation of families and living a decent life in their own country?

I will leave the reader and the powers to be with this thought: I left Ethiopia at age 18, my father died three years later due to injuries sustained during interrogations, two of my brothers were martyred during war for liberation, and my younger brothers become refuges. For the first time I saw three of my brothers and one of my sisters after 20 years of separation. Twenty three years later, I saw one of my sisters and, for the first time I met my nieces and nephews. I have yet to meet up with two of my brothers for the first time in my life. I am not thinking about the material losses that we sustained as a family but, the mere fact that as human beings, we have been deprived the love and caring families cherish and enjoy every day in the West. The life Western families have grown to take for granted.