

Interview with
Mohamed Hassan
"The spring of Ethiopia"



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In August, Mohamed Hassan returned from a trip to Ethiopia. He has traveled throughout the country and has been visiting several regions such as Oromia, Amhara and Somali Region (Ogaden). Mohamed gave lectures and participated in seminars. He met several former opposition leaders and had a meeting with the new Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed. The trip was also a personal boost for him. At the beginning of his journey, some have recognized him because for years he has presented his analyses on the Web TV of the opposition: Oromo TV, SBS - Amharic and ESAT TV. During his stay, he even became a celebrity because of his

regular appearances on national and local television. People came to shake his hand, young Ethiopians of different nationalities thanked him for his analyses and efforts. He received gifts from ordinary people. Mohamed is one of the lucky anti-imperialists who see their wildest dreams come true. Here is a summary of our conversation with Mohamed Hassan.

How is the situation in Ethiopia today?

The economic and social situation in Ethiopia is disastrous today. In the West, there have been much talk of the "Ethiopian economic miracle". Nothing is true. In the "modern" capital, Addis Ababa, large new buildings are empty. The gap between the rich and the poor is wide, and poverty is harrowing. Our European media have spoken and written about the "digital economy" which is fast growing in the country. Today, there is none of this. Fairy tales are gone. The bare reality is dreadful to watch.

The TPLF regime has been stealing, looting and murdering for almost 30 years. The Ethiopian government was even more awful than that of Mobutu in the Congo! The country is ruined. The government received 40 billion euros financial aid from the World Bank and the IMF. This aid disappeared in the pockets of the leaders who transferred the money en masse to foreign accounts. Who will pay these debts? The new government has received just 1 billion euros from international organizations to ease past dues. What a difference with the old "generosity! »

In the past, China has also invested 17 billion dollars, Turkey 3, India 1 and Brazil 2 billion. Most of the money is gone in the pockets of the TPLF and its supporters. Due to the crisis and the disorder in the country, businesses (including textile factories) have virtually ceased operations. Fortunately, the infrastructure works remained virtually intact.

The society is completely disrupted. It has become "a jungle". The Eritreans who visit the country are shocked. Human values, solidarity and cordiality have disappeared among a significant proportion of the population, who nevertheless has the same historical roots, despite the major differences between the peoples of the Horn of Africa. The 27-year dictatorship has left deep wounds.

What has changed in Ethiopia after the fall of the TPLF regime?

The current Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed is very popular among the different peoples of Ethiopia. He took power this spring, prompting the fall of the TPLF regime that collapsed like a house of cards. He understood that the situation - due to the crisis, the numerous uprisings- had become unbearable for the government. His endeavor has prevented further bloodshed and possible civil war between peoples.

The TPLF is disappearing. Security services have been dismantled. Now purging in the army is in progress. One general after another is put aside. A military coup is no longer possible.

The president is very tolerant. But Ethiopians shout "never again"! They want justice. Murderers, thieves, crooks must be arrested, sentenced and punished. The Prime Minister and the new government have to work on it, otherwise they will disappear. Real sustainable change must come from the people themselves, who are united on the basis of their hatred of the TPLF, and who demand justice. People are mobilized and organized. There are demonstrations, meetings and referendums everywhere.

Decisions must be made. Three million farmers lost their land, millions of people had to flee their land. Land must be returned to farmers.

The situation in Tigray itself needs to be clarified. The Tigrayans, who had supported the TPLF regime, fled. They were driven out of the Amhara region, which suffered so much. Tigrayans have fled abroad,

others returned to Tigray region hoping to have support, but in vain. Even the Tigray Regional State which has benefited little from the TPLF regime, no one of the residents of that Region want to be associated with the TPLF. There is now an agreement between the Tigray People's Democratic Movement and the new central government leaders in Addis Ababa to resolve the situation. In 2 or 3 months, there will be no more TPLF in Tigray.

The biggest challenge for the new Prime Minister was to end the terror in the Somali Regional State. The population has lived in great poverty since the dawn of time. There is almost a permanent threat of famine. Yet the Somali Regional State is the richest part of Ethiopia. Trade with the rest of Ethiopia is about \$ 1 billion a year; however, the black market is estimated to be at least 5 times more.

The Prime Minister of Ethiopia has been far too tolerant with the former Somali Regional State leader, Abdi Iley. This local potentate has practiced inhuman terror since 2010. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has long held a hand above Abdi Iley's head.

After the fall of the TPLF in the spring, little has changed in the Somali Regional State. Political prisoners were not released; killings and intimidation are very common. In early summer 2017, Abdi Iley organized a real pogrom against all non-Somalis and non-Muslims in the region. Oromo families have been murdered, churches burned. There were tens of thousands of victims. One million people have fled the area.

After the intervention of the Ethiopian army, following a big meeting and with the support of the opposition, Mustafa Omer came to power. He is an intelligent young man who has the confidence of the people. Former leaders were expelled, some of them arrested. Finally, the Somali Region State can look to the future with confidence.

What do these upheavals mean for neighboring Eritrea?

The Ethiopian people know the positive role that Eritrea has played in "regime change". Isaias Afwerki, the president of Eritrea, is very popular in Ethiopia. Just look at the fantastic welcome he received during his first visit to the new Ethiopia. The population is already looking forward to President Afwerki's second announced visit. The conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea has been resolved. TPLF's old dream of making a "GreaterTigray" at the expense of Eritrea has disappeared forever.

Relations between Eritrea, neighboring Somalia and Sudan have improved. General Salva Kiir Mayardit, President of South Sudan, met President Afwerki. The two countries will support each other.

Hostilities between Djibouti and neighboring Eritrea have stopped. Djibouti will have to learn to live with the expansion of several Eritrean ports that will be directly linked to Ethiopia, the Horn of Africa and Central Africa. Djibouti will understand it.

These ports will also play a major role in the transport of phosphate, which is currently extracted from the ground to a depth of less than eight meters. The mines are within 60 km of the nearest port.

Today, negotiations are underway between Lavrov, the Russian minister and Osman Saleh, the Eritrean foreign minister. China will certainly not want to be left behind, but now it has to re-evaluate its relations with Ethiopia. A high German delegation recently visited Eritrea. After the United States, Germany wants to improve its diplomatic, political and economic relations with Eritrea.

The West is beginning to understand Eritrea's role in stabilizing the region. They had to abandon the dream of a "regime change" in Eritrea. The embargo and the hate campaign against Eritrea have to cease. In Belgium, there is still nothing to notice, but, as now Germany reverse its position, Belgium will follow. The media in Belgium are late. They repeat the old mantra: "violation of human rights", "slavery" It will not be long

before the sounds of those who have had the courage to defend Eritrea
in Belgium will be heard.

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