

Mohamed Hassan: "There is no civil war in Ethiopia"



Interview conducted by:

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A conflict has ravaged the Tigray region in Ethiopia for several weeks. Some even speak of civil war. How did Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who won the Nobel Peace Prize, end up at war? Who are those who challenge his power? What are the repercussions for the Horn of Africa? Former Ethiopian diplomat, Mohamed Hassan (The strategy of chaos - Jihad made in USA) explains the stakes of this conflict.

Two years ago, popular movements and a peaceful revolution ended the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) dictatorship in Ethiopia. A dictatorship that had ruled with an iron fist by Meles Zenawi for many years. In 2018, Abiy Ahmed was brought to power. The new Prime Minister recognized opposition parties and signed a historic peace deal with neighboring Eritrea. Abiy Ahmed even

obtained the Nobel Peace Prize for these efforts. However, in recent weeks, fighting has pitted the FLPT forces against the national army. Some observers even speak of a civil war. How did Ethiopia, which seemed to have found peace after a turbulent history, once again sank into violence?

This is not a civil war. TPLF forces that were overthrown in 2018 attacked the Northern Command of the National Defense Forces stationed in Tigray region in an attempt to regain power. Nevertheless, the TPLF and its members do not represent the people of Tigray. It is a minority group that only defends its own interests. After dominating Ethiopian politics for 27 years, the TPLF clique was ousted from power. TPLF leaders refused the hand extended by the Prime Minister, who brought all political movements around the table to build a new future in Ethiopia, and they withdrew to Tigray. With the money they had stolen, instigated clashes along ethnic and religious lines, attempted to sabotage the authority of the central government. TPLF officials wanted to seize power. They attacked a national army base in Tigray to steal weapons and to launch an offensive towards Addis Ababa, with the aim of removing the Prime Minister. This is what caused the current war. The TPLF is defeated. Beset on all sides in Tigray's capital, Mekelle, has no choice but to surrender.

Ethiopia is a large, multi-ethnic country. How could a minority group like the TPLF hold the reins of power for so long?

The dominance of the TPLF rested on five pillars. They **first** created a bogus organization, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDRPE) which was supposed to involve the Amharas and Oromos, the majority groups, as well as the peoples of the South. In actual practice, the FDRPE was dominated by the TPLF, that dominance allowed the TPLF clique to advance under cover. The **second pillar** is federalism. TPLF leaders organized a bogus federalism that allowed them to apply the famous "divide and rule" strategy. The system was headed by the Minister of Federalism who was a member of the political bureau of the TPLF. Intelligence services are the **third pillar**. They were also headed by a TPLF official. 20% of intelligence operatives were from the Tigray minority, that does not represent the demographics in Ethiopia at all. These services also had the

largest budget in the country. Likewise, the TPLF relied on the military, the **fourth pillar**. Most of the officers were Tigrayans. Finally, the **fifth pillar** was based on the control of the economy. Ethiopia was a neo-colony whose wealth was plundered by multinationals. As a comprador bourgeoisie, the TPLF had its pockets full in the process. However, its leadership did not endeavor to meet the needs of the poverty-stricken population.

All this explains the uprisings that led to the overthrow of the TPLF. But how did the government manage to end this domination that seemed to be entrenched, especially in the intelligence services and the military?

The TPLF had established a full-fledged apartheid regime in Ethiopia, nevertheless their power melted like snow in the sun from 2017. Even though the TPLF belongs to a minority ethnic group, it dominated the leadership of the security apparatus. Majority of the members of these services were from other ethnic groups. When there were popular uprisings, these security agents refused to obey TPLF orders any longer. They refused to suppress their brothers or their children who rose up.

The TPLF then entrenched itself in the Tigray region, but it clearly did not relinquish power. If it cannot retake Addis Ababa, could it seek secession?

The TPLF has a dual strategy. First, to organize the "long march to Tigray" where it took power and from there to destabilize the country. TPLF bandits relied on their money, weapons, and ethnic tensions to destabilize the government and regain power. They are failing.

The TPLF also has a long-term strategy: to create Greater and independent Tigray. Their region is landlocked, they need access to the sea. That is why they always wanted to go to war with Eritrea; they wanted to regain access to the Red Sea coast. They would like to start a new conflict with their northern neighbor, but it is an impossible dream. Western countries that have supported the TPLF for so long in fighting terror and in their wars will not support the group this time around. The TPLF is doomed. Western media and think tanks that claim the existence of civil war in Ethiopia are in fact trying to save a criminal organization. This organization should be disbanded, and its leaders must surrender to justice for their actions.

Does the TPLF have a significant social base in the Tigray region?

Not at all. During the 27 years that they were in power, the leaders of the TPLF enriched themselves personally. They put their money in tax havens, invested virtually nothing in the Tigray region. They were not even able to supply the capital Mekele with drinking water! The TPLF has long lost its links with the masses; it does not represent the people of Tigray. It is a criminal gang run by a handful of individuals. Everyone in Ethiopia knows it! The entire Ethiopian population wants to bring the TPLF to justice. This conflict is not a vendetta or a war between Tigray and the rest of Ethiopia. It is a war against bandits who have robbed the country.

Is there in this conflict an intervention of imperialist powers who have supported the dictatorship of the TPLF for many years?

Not actually. The imperialists know that the peoples and governments of the Horn of Africa are united against the TPLF. In that region, the TPLF clique played the role of gendarme for the neocolonial powers who have sent "peacekeeping" troops to several countries. The TPLF notably killed 16,000 Somalis. The group is hated in the region, and the governments of the Horn of Africa are supporting Abiy to curb this cancer. Sudan, which has recently undergone a change of government, is co-operating with the Ethiopian Prime Minister. Just like Eritrea. A new future can begin, without the TPLF and the interference of imperialist powers.

The peace agreement with Eritrea is indeed historic. Eritrea had wrested its independence from Ethiopia after 30 years of struggle. That was in 1991. But since then, conflicts often broke out between the two enemy brothers.

The war with Eritrea was irrelevant. This conflict was artificially fueled by the TPLF when it was in power in Ethiopia. This fictitious conflict helped the group to divert attention from the real social, economic, and political problems facing the Ethiopian people. The war also served as a springboard for the TPLF to become the dominant power in the Horn of Africa region, with the support of the imperialists. For the neocolonial powers, the TPLF was an ideal client. This

marginal group, representing a minority of 6% of the population, needed the support of imperialists to stay in power. The imperialists could in turn rejoice in having in this strategic region a servant ready to destabilize the Horn of Africa region and to break up relations among the peoples.

It seems that the trend has turned. A few years ago, when the TPLF was still in power, you explained to us that the Horn of Africa region had everything to succeed, if it managed to free itself from the chains of imperialism: it is strategically located opposite to the Gulf and on the edge of the Indian Ocean. It has many resources and significant agricultural potential; it can also rely on a large working population ...

That is right. The Horn of Africa region with a population of nearly 130 million is endowed with many resources. Over the past 80 years, the region has not been able to develop properly, as it was dominated by imperialist powers and their agents, who carried out the colonial strategy of divide and rule by exploiting ethnic and religious differences. However, the peoples of the Horn of Africa have historical, cultural, and social ties with each other. By working together, the governments of the region can significantly improve the lives of these peoples. This is what is happening; a new start is possible for the Horn of Africa.

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NB: This interview has been translated from French to English by ECSS.