

# **Ethiopia Has No Place for Terrorism, Religious Division**

Gutema Kebede \05-11-15\

Ethiopia has continued its effort to repatriate its citizens who are caught in the chaotic condition of Libya and exposed to the threat of ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria). So far over 100 willing citizens had been transported back to Ethiopia through concerted efforts exerted by the government and its embassies in Egypt and Khartoum.

The government is exerting strenuous effort to transport all Ethiopian nationals back to their home land and alleviate their security problems (solely based on their own consent and interest to go back home).

The video purportedly released by ISIS had showed the beheading and gunning down of close to 30 Ethiopians at point blank range. Following this horrible incident, international chroniclers disseminated heartbreaking news of murder committed on innocent Ethiopians in the Libyan desert. The gratuitous attack had been condemned by all Ethiopians at home and the international community abroad, including European Union and United States of America. As a bereaved family, Ethiopians all over the world took to the streets and severely condemned the gratuitous attack of ISIS. They unanimously called up on respective governments to step up effort and eradicate ISIS and all terrorist elements.

At home, millions of Ethiopians have expressed their spent anger on the deplorable acts of ISIS and called up on people and the

government to strengthen their solidarity and fight out terrorism.

Soon after an event intended to comfort bereaved families was also organized at National Theatre. Participants said the event has been organized very well as far to commemorate Ethiopian victims of ISIS and beef up rally anti-terrorism sentiment among the greater public in Libya. The event was organized by compassionate artists who said they have been immensely touched by the evil act of ISIS. Various artists, higher officials, and families of the victims were in attendance of the event, among others.

FDRE Foreign Affairs Minister Tewodros Adhanom had said that the murderous incident had deeply saddened him. The killers had intently committed diabolical crime to incite religion-based war in Ethiopia, though unsuccessful as Ethiopian Muslims and Christians are tightly inter-woven, inter-married and co-habiting peacefully since the emergence of Islam and the influx of the messengers of the Prophet from Mecca to Ethiopia.

The Minister said the savage killers do not represent any religion, let alone Islam that sings salaam(peace).Were the murderers sane and rational to understand Quran, he said, they could have understand how Ethiopia received Muslim brothers and sisters and spared their life from the attack of Quarrysh, the then killer in Mecca during the time of the prophet.

He said nation can prevent such kinds of embarrassments by eradicating poverty and striving to change the living condition of citizens in a concerted manner. Citizens should also opt to work and thrive here in their home land as job opportunities are widening with time, following the successful economic growth of

the country. The Minister had lauded artists for organizing successful event in a short time and called on them to intensify effort to fight human trafficking as they did earlier. He noted the government will exert relentless effort to support the families of victims and root out the act of human trafficking on all corners of Ethiopia.

Currently a wide wave of Ethiopians across the country are pouring in to the streets and protesting the embarrassing and horrendous act of ISIS committed on innocent Ethiopians, who went to Libya in search of jobs.

The terrorist group has committed its inestimable and back-clenching atrocity against Ethiopian Christians. The group is widening its atrocities as it is waging act of butchery in various countries, for instance in Iraq, while struggling to scale up its horizon of devastation, beyond its attempt to establish seemingly self-professed caliphate state in Syria and Iraq(though unlikely). Earlier, the group has repeated its nefarious act in France, Bangladesh, neighboring Kenya, Egypt, Nigeria, Uganda, Cameroon, Pakistan and Indonesia, among others, and killed thousands.

The group in its satanic video has mentioned its defeat in Somalia in a war spearheaded by Ethiopia, though it shrewdly ascribed its malicious act to Christians and Christianity. The terrorist group is known to be media savvy for killing its victims in front of camera and terrorizing its audience. It has killed Ethiopians in front of camera and posted it on a web. No surprise, the group has killed thousands of victims in a similar fashion, though the world turned blind eye to its real goal of turning Muslims against Christians and vice versa.

The video has showed the anger of terrorists for losing their battle in neighboring Somalia as an ally of Al-shabab. It said "the blood of Muslims that was shed in the hands of Christians is not cheap(even though it did not specifically mention any state participating in peace-keeping mission in Somalia, besides, anyone can witness the fact that there happened no bloodshed in the name of Christianity and Muslim ever on earth.

After killings of the Coptic Christians last February, Egypt's military responded with airstrikes targeting the militant stronghold of Darna. It has not launched further strikes, though its president is trying to form a pan-Arab military force to respond to extremist threats in the region.

The Islamic State group, which grew out of al-Qaida's former Iraqi affiliate, now holds about a third of Iraq and Syria in its self-declared caliphate. It's called on Muslims across the world to join it. Its online videos and propaganda, including scenes of its mass killings and beheadings, have caught the attention of many extremists

Its influence has grown since it seized large areas of Iraq last summer. Insurgents in Egypt's strategic Sinai Peninsula also have pledged to the group, while another purported affiliate in Yemen claimed a series of suicide bombings in March that killed at least 137 people. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani had also blamed an affiliate in his country for an attack on a bank branch in the country's east that killed 35 people and wounded 125. An affiliate also operates in Pakistan.

"The Islamic State in Libya is still focused on this consolidation phase of announcing its presence through these very high-profile executions," said Frederic Wehrey, a senior

associate for the Middle East Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "But they face some structural limits in terms of how much local support they can get because they haven't captured real revenue streams."

The attack has notoriously grown in a global scale. Similarly, it is to be remembered that not far from a month ago, the big brother of ISIS , Al-shabab, had committed murderous act in Garissa University of Kenya killing over 148 innocent students while they were busy studying their lessons. Kenyans remembered them as innocent victims of a terrorist attack that stunned a nation and left communities heartbroken.

### **How is ISIS enticing young people?**

Those who are believed to had traveled to Syria to join ISIS had refocused attention on the Islamic extremist group's appeal to young people.

Children and young people feature in the terrorist group's propaganda, including a recent video showing boys in camouflage and ISIS bandanas learning hand-to-hand combat. The militants call them their "Cubs of the Caliphate."

Experts say ISIS has especially ramped up its efforts to lure young women, seen as potential brides for its fighters and gate ways to the territory under its brutal control in Syria and Iraq.

### **It runs a powerful propaganda machine on social media**

"There's no question what we're combating with ISIL's propaganda machine is something we have not seen before," U.S. State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki told CNN. "It's something we

need to do a lot more work on. We are seeing 90,000, I think, tweets a day that we're combating."

The militants have repeatedly promoted videos using high-level production techniques to celebrate their brutality. A short mash-up clip [in September](#) played like a trailer for an action movie, with slow-motion explosions and flames engulfing American troops.

UK surveillance chief Robert Hannigan has said ISIS and other extremist groups use platforms like Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp to reach their target audience in a language it understands. Their methods include exploiting popular hash tags to disseminate their message, he said.

ISIS also use its Western recruits to promote the cause to other people like them back home. And the extremist group is putting a particular focus on girls, analysts say.

"We're seeing young women from across Western countries both expressing their support for and migrating to Syria now in totally unprecedented numbers," said Sasha Havlicek, chief executive of the Institute for Strategic Dialogue. "And I would say this is the result really of an extremely sophisticated propaganda recruitment machinery that's targeting young women very specifically."

### **It promises good life**

Analysts say that ISIS can appeal to young people's religious idealism and to a desire to escape the frustrations of life in the West.

"ISIS provides a utopian political project, the so-called caliphate, the centralized Islamic rule," Gerges said. "ISIS provides these deluded young men and women with an adventurous trip."

As a reward for allegiance, ISIS loyalists receive gifts from Allah including "a house with free electricity and water provided to you due to the Khilafah (the caliphate or state) and no rent included," according to [Aqsa Mahmood](#), a British teenager who left Scotland to join ISIS in 2013.

"Sounds great, right?" writes Mahmood, who now appears to blog about life under ISIS rule and is believed to have communicated with one of the three British girls who recently left for Syria. Mahmood offers assurances to women who might be worried about roughing it: "You can find shampoos, soaps and other female necessities here, so do not stress if you think you will be experiencing some cavewoman life here."

Western officials, though, say that ISIS is pushing a false narrative of what it's really like in its territory. People who heed its call "erroneously believe they are going out to help people," said Yasmin Qureshi, a British lawmaker. "And they don't think ISIS is doing anything wrong because they think ISIS is helping people in their sort of warped thinking."

### **It has a diffuse but efficient recruiting network**

"It took so little time for the three young, innocent, vulnerable girls to leave from the heart of London and speed to

the heart of Turkey -- and probably they entered in areas controlled either by ISIS or other militant groups," said Gerges, referring to the British teenagers.

He stressed "the important presence of a person who basically serves as a middleman or middle woman between young men and women in the West and ISIS militants in Iraq and Syria."

U.S. investigators studied [the case of three teenage Colorado girls](#) who tried to join ISIS last year to learn more about how the militant group recruits young people in the West.

The FBI found examples of Westerners already in the ISIS fold who were communicating directly with new recruits via social media.

Believed to be operating from Turkey, Syria and Iraq, the online recruiters helped provide how-to guide Westerners who are inclined to travel and join the ISIS fight, officials said.

But even after identifying them, officials couldn't see a clear path to arresting them. Most are thought to be out of reach of U.S. law enforcement.

### **It tries to seemingly outwit efforts of Western governments**

Social media services may have been largely invented in the West, but ISIS is trying to outflank governments in how it uses the platforms.

As case in point, currently, ISIS is luring, recruiting and blind-folding its young followers and potential victims using internet technology and social media like twitter and face book. The group is thought to be media savvy as it kills unfortunate



captives in front of camera and post its drama of butchery (terrifying footages) on the web.

"We are way behind. They are far superior and advanced than we are when it comes to new media technologies," Maajid Nawaz, a former jihadi and author of "Radical: My Journey out of Islamist Terrorism," told CNN last year.

Similarly, British Prime Minister David Cameron has said the case of the three British girls highlights the need to fight ISIS on multiple fronts.

"It needs every school, every university, every college, every community to recognize they have a role to play, we all have a role to play in stopping people from having their minds poisoned by this appalling death cult," he said.

The U.S. government is trying to step up its efforts to counter ISIS propaganda by beefing up a small State Department agency to make it the heart of the fight against the militants' messaging.

"We're seeing their approaches continue to evolve," Psaki told CNN. "We need to continue to make sure ours are evolving and we're combating it in the most strategic way and using every interagency resource."

But she acknowledged that the United States still has a lot to do. "We're really going to pick it up now," Psaki said. "We have new people in charge of the office. And we will see what happens over the coming months."

**How is history of Muslims and peaceful co-existence in Ethiopia like?**

In the case of Ethiopia, like many other countries in the world, Islam was introduced to Ethiopia peacefully. It has always been one of those religions which the Ethiopian faithful accept by his/her own consent. All say Islam advocates peace (salaam). The link between Islam and Ethiopia is older than 1400 years. Islam was introduced to and exercised in Ethiopia way before Mecca and Medina became popular Holy cities. Even some say Islamization happens in Ethiopia before the emergence of the Hegira (the occasion when Mohammed left Mecca to go to Medina in AD 622 and the start of Islamic era).

Historian, LaVerle Berry in his 1991 article entitled 'Ethiopia and the Early Islamic Period' wrote "the first Muslims in Ethiopia were refugees from Mecca, persecuted by the new leading tribe, the reactionary and revengeful Quraysh that could not accept other ideas and believers of that time."

The King in Ethiopia, known by the name Ashama ibn Abjar and King Nejash, paid homage to the new comers. He permitted them to live and worship their god in Nejash, which is located at northern Tigray province (currently, Nejash is among the historical centers of Islam in Ethiopia and parts of East Africa as well).

Not only did the King accept the refugees of Mecca with opened arms, he was also the first to allow them to creed and spread their faith in his Empire. King Nejash did not treat them as fugitives and extradite them to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from where they ran away in fear of persecutions.

Several Islamic historians have also asserted that the Last Prophet of Islam, Prophet Mohammed lost his mother during his childhood. Hence, he was breastfed and brought up by an

Ethiopian Step Mother, endearingly known as Um Aymen. In addition, the first Muezzin (man who calls to prayers) was Bilal who was an Ethiopian.

Furthermore, the 4<sup>th</sup> sacred town of Muslims that has 82 mosques is Harer town which is found in Ethiopia. These all remarkable ties have made Ethiopia to be inseparably related to Islam as part of its religion. Over all, this great history has witnessed Ethiopia as the safe haven and ideal refuge of Muslims since long ago. Some even say Muslims all over the globe are indebted to Ethiopia.

This deep rooted historical relation has persuaded millions of Muslims to revere Ethiopia and consider it as a second home land to their religion. As part of notable history of Ethiopia, friendliness and tolerance between Muslims and Christians have started since the arrival of followers of the Prophet. Some countries mention Ethiopia as a beacon of tolerance and friendliness, and even they advise countries plagued by religious conflict to learn valuable lessons of tolerance from Ethiopia.

However, though unsuccessful, ISIS has tried to mar the very fact of inseparable and tightly inter-woven culture of peaceful-co-existence of Muslims and Christians in Ethiopia. Irrationally and mindlessly, it has ascribed the massacre of 30 innocent Ethiopians to Christians shedding the blood of Muslims.

In the contrary, the country has become the epitome of tolerance and peaceful co-existence. For instance, UNESCO has recognized the town of Harer as a town of peace and tolerance as it embraces many mosques and churches that harmoniously serve the purposes of their believers (we could also take Saint Raguel

Church and the Grand Anwar Mosque in Mercato area where both believers are being served in a small area that adjoins both religious institutions, the faithful rushing and jostling on same narrow alleys).

Furthermore, the coming into power of EPRDF in 1991 has enabled Ethiopian Muslims to freely exercise their religion. This has resulted in positive relations between Muslims, Christians and the government. Hence, significant numbers of Ethiopian Muslims consider the current government as the keeper of their faith taking in to account the very fact that Muslims were denied of religious equality and freedom and could not freely worship their faith during the previous regimes.

It has been two decades since Ethiopia has endorsed a Constitution with the consent of its people. The various Articles enshrined in the Constitution have stipulated crucial elements of religious freedom and secularity. Article 27, for instance, states that "everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include the freedom to hold or adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and the freedom, either individually or in community with others, and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching."

This freedom of religion is one of those important pillars enshrined in the Constitution. It states that believers and religious institutions can worship their God without any restriction and interference from any other body. Currently, there is no state religion in Ethiopia and secularity has become the corner stone of the country since the endorsement of the Constitution. The Supreme Law has answered indispensable

questions of religious freedom that were suppressed by the defunct regimes of Derg and Imperial Haile-Silassie.

### **What is real intention of terrorism, ISIS?**

Though there is no inclusive definition and comprehensive agreement, terrorism is an ideology (particularly in politics or religion) considered to be inconsistent with existing norms and traditions. Terrorist position usually constitutes a threat to society, government, and mainstream morality, etc. Terrorists violate common moral standards of individuals or groups and advocate replacement of religion-based tyranny on the place of secular democracy and modern life (they assume such things as slippery slope to decadence, cursed by Allah and devilish in nature).

They have many ironic qualities such as need to define themselves by naming and shaming their "enemies" and desperate need of admiration from their clan for what they "do". They favor censorship of their "enemies". Besides, they use intimidation and manipulation to spread their own assertions and claims. They often claim that God is on their side of an issue and they use religion as an excuse for acts of violence.

Commonly, their terrible act is built on one "reality" which focuses on imposing unpalatable terror and extremist teaching on others. Most importantly, it is agreed that terrorism is unacceptable bulldozing committed by mentally-blinded individuals (ostrich mentalities) who enforce on or sometimes bluff their way through others intended to materialize their evil goals of carnage and obtain acceptance.

Terrorists want to advocate their own ''idea'' in the name of Islam(though the teachings of Islam are solely based on salaam) and they do not think twice to pull a trigger and exterminate human beings without any discrimination to race, color, age and religion. Terrorists are trying to disguise themselves in peaceful Muslim believers and misquote various articles the way it serves their purpose of summary executions of civilians (despite prohibition of murder and other criminal acts in Islamic doctrine).

As witnessed at an international level, terrorism and violence is unscrupulously imposing economic, social and political problems on people and countries. Accordingly, no matter how much countries are spending to boost their peace and stability, the threat emanating from terrorism and its ensuing devastation is proliferating at an international level.

The atrocity committed by terrorists is used to butchering innocent civilians including old men, women and children. A case in point, it could be mentioned that terrorists like ISIS, alQaeda, Al Shebab, Bokoharam and Taliban, among other branches of terrorist cells, are killing lives indiscriminately and destroying properties in various countries.

Nevertheless, the world is strengthening its solidarity more than ever in the face of gratuitous attacks. It has been strongly fighting against terrorism and terrorists, especially since the large scale attack laid on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. Since then, the international community is intensifying its struggle. The fight against the agents of destruction is getting very much tougher year after year. i.e terrorists are elusive as they regularly adapt themselves to time and technology.

Terrorists try to exploit and manipulate some naive believers and lure them in to precarious condition (of destruction). Some sheiks and erudite of Islam religion said that individuals fell prone to the snare of terrorists due to lack of thoroughly understanding of Koran and the teachings of Islam that focuses on peace and tolerance.

Presently, ISIS is trying to expand their base using inadvertent youth and adults, though surreptitiously. These sects, that have their own fundamental differences in their teachings of Islamic faith, have even called for an all out expansion of their teaching only and overwhelming other religions. Particularly, these sects are using their manipulative and exploitive skills to lure vulnerable boys and girls and employ them as agents of their hidden agenda.

Using their predatory skill to prey on the youth, these hardliner sects are attempting to erode invaluable Ethiopian assets and worthy past experiences. They are preaching hate and sowing seeds of hatred by inciting individuals to act against tolerance and peace of believers; their ultimate goal is erasing the culture of peaceful co-existence from Ethiopia. To this end, they are struggling to create enmity between Muslims themselves, Christians and others. Had they been successful, they were and are teaching the hegemony and existence of their teaching and their followers only.

Tangibly, these zero-sum game players are trying to instigate violence across the globe. They are also trying hard to weaken the moral fiber of people related to tolerance. In this regard, they are releasing ghastly(ghoulish) images of terror on the web and are spreading malicious rumors and gossips about religions, individuals and the government as well (were it not for the

awareness of people to discredit these kinds of negative propaganda).

Terrorists flagrantly deviate from the peaceful-co existence and tradition of tolerance in Ethiopia. Their illegal activity had showed that cruelty of assassins has reached its nadir. Some say, this malicious act is the manifestation of despair (some call the group, desperado terrorists and mindless vandals).

### **The way forward in the fight against ISIS, terrorism**

The government and people cannot sit by as these anti-people and subversive groups try to undermine national security using Islam as a disguise to advance their hidden agenda of terror and destabilization.

The government said the country will benefit only when there are peaceful relations with all religious institutions. This internal peace and equanimity enables to participate millions of believers in various development endeavors. This in turn could speed up development by intensifying the current poverty alleviation effort of the country.

It firmly states that ensuring rule of law is the final solution to all problems. Cognizant of this very fact, the government has expressed commitment to curb anti-people movements before they impose clear and present danger. It said the people of Ethiopia are tightly interlaced and Ethiopia has no room for ISIS's religion-based division, and cannot be a bolt hole to desperado terrorists.

Terrorism could by no means enhance peace and stability except churning out turmoil and indescribable ordeal. Taking this



crucial issue in to consideration, the government has called up on the greater public and religious institutions to step up effort and weed out acts of terrorism and strengthen prevalence of peace in Ethiopia.