

Some Comments on the Annual Reports of the Bureau of Democracy and Human Rights Bureau

By Almiftah May 2013

This short text aims at commenting the country report released annually by the Bureau of Democracy and Human Rights of the Secretary of state of the USA specifically based on the Ethiopian situation.

But, it is not clear for me as to why the office for government communication affairs (other government body) lost interest to respond inline with the report

However, as a citizen of the country, I decided to comment on the general aspect of the report and some of the specific issues included in the report.

I know that the bureau of Democracy and Human Rights of the Department of the secretary of state of the USA is responsible for producing such reports with the intention to promote democracy and the respect of human rights. And I believe the effort should be given proper recognition provided that the intention of the report is for the genuine cause of the betterment of the lives of humanity throughout the world.

Hence, I would like to extend my appreciation to the Bureau for compiling such reports that show the concern of the US on issues of democracy and human rights.

Constructive criticisms on any report are welcomed and can be used as inputs for correcting erroneous deeds and help to make corrections on activities that exhibited weaknesses. Accordingly, I have forwarded my comments from three aspects. One is the exclusion from the report some of the basic characteristics a report should include. A standard report produced on any subject should fulfill the basic characteristics such as relevance, predefined goals and objectives, reasons for making the report, the methodology and prediction of trends.

Relevance concerns the applicability of the report at social level with respect to the points mentioned in the report. In this regard, applicability of the report is dependent on the participation of a concerned body and acceptability of the facts included in the report. I believe most countries and their citizens lack interest to accept and use as inputs, in their activities, the facts and directions pinpointed within the report. The methodologies for data collections rely on individuals and their opinions which are susceptible to bias. The raw data and facts may be distorted because of various other reasons by individuals or diplomats. Also, the report refrains from mentioning the trend on some areas. Therefore, in a situation where the relevance, the methodology and the trend has not been handled well, I believe the comprehensibility of the report is questionable. This situation in turn, hinders the report from achieving the intended outcome.

The other point to be considered is the prevailing objective situation in Ethiopia. Before the constitution of the FDRE has been proclaimed, Ethiopia had been ruled by dictatorial regimes during which the human and democratic rights were not given necessary attention and were restricted by laws. Hence, the backward norms and cultural practices were deep entrenched in the society and social services were under rudimentary stages. Besides, citizens were denied to have (gain) property and income in accordance with their effort and contribution.

As an out come of these policies and practices, the country was forced not to achieve progress in the political and socio economic arena. Similarly, citizens were obliged to remain in the quagmire of poverty, exposed to backward thinking and had less appetite for work and raising productivity.

So, it was necessary to devise a radical and nation wide reform, unreserved efforts of implementation and necessary resources including time to uproot such backward outlooks and practices. Developing countries have to work tirelessly to curb the practices of backward culture, political hostility, extreme

economic inequalities among the various section of the society and maladministration and replace it with progressive cultural practices, tolerance in political activities and good governance, However, the intended result can never be achieved within a short period of time. As the existing multi faced problem require huge resource.

However, Ethiopia has generally proclaimed a constitution that ensures the basic human and democratic rights, in accordance with which it has been working strenuously to translate the provisions enshrined in it.

The participation of the public has been increasing from time to time because of efforts that have been made to raise the awareness of citizens on the overall political, peace building and development affairs. Also, consecutive awareness raising lessons have been provided to officials at various levels on the respect of human and democratic rights, fighting corruption and avoidance of abuse of power.

To facilitate the human resource development sustainably, extensive works have been made in accessing education and health services for all.

In the implementation process of the polices and laws, focus was given to equitable development of nations, nationalities and peoples, ensuring of equality of women, creating job opportunities and strengthening the overall participation of the youth.

After extensive efforts, Ethiopia's capacity to utilize its resources has been strengthened significantly, the export commodities have been diversified and the national income has been increased sharply.

I believe, it will not take long to bring Ethiopia to the level of poverty free, strong and reliable economy and exemplary democracy status, through intensified efforts of its citizens.

Today, Ethiopia has become one of the fastest growing nations of the world. The multifaceted achievements the nation registered in only 20 years is manifestation of Ethiopia's stride towards progress.

One of the area which in Ethiopia has been accused in the report if the 2012 is the prevalence of harmful traditional practices, particularly the FGM. But if one evaluate the trends of the performance of the past few years, he/she finds that it is one of the areas where great achievements have been registered, when compared with the objective situation that had existed earlier.

Generally, the foundation for building a strong democratic society and poverty free economy has already been laid.

This shows that Ethiopia has been on the right track of progress as regards democratization, socio economic development, the respect of human rights, eradicating harmful practices, the respect of women's rights and the rights of rations, rationalities and peoples. The situation has been scimitar in many developing countries.

Now a days, a number of developing countries have already put in place the legal frameworks and policies that assist to bring about a comprehensive socio economic, political, and cultural changes. In some of these countries, a number of laws have been approved, democratic and service institutions have been created and a multiparty system for the formation of government has been implemented.

In order for the bureaus report to be fruitful, the need to work co-operatively with concerned countries should be given due attention. Together with this, the report should include all the basic characteristics a report should contain. Other wise, the noted deficiencies discourage countries' the tendency to use the report as an input.

The third point to be considered is the peculiar experience of a given country in matters pertaining to the report.

It is obvious that industrialization has contributed to all sided nation building efforts in various countries.

The level of education of a given country, political awareness and the status of economy is necessary to influence government performances

If we take for example the USA it has passed through several ups and downs before it has reached where it is today in terms of development and democracy. Even after many years of stride in the democratic system building, the US has been in trouble with regard to the rights of black citizens. The murder against the famous black politician, Dr Martin Lather King in 1950, the subjugation against indigenou languages and the similar mishaps sometimes happened in countries with long experience of democracy entails that even problems may arise in counties with developed democracy. There fore, when ever a report is compiled with regard to developing countries, the point of reference should not be the current practices and achievements of those of the developed ones.

To sum up, the noted report of the bureau should include the basic characteristics that a report should contain and consider the background of the countries in question and the efforts being made and achievements being registered currently in those countries. In addition, using the practice of democracy and human rights in the developed democratic states would not be reliable reference. The long experience of report compiling tradition should undergo change in an integrated manner with current global situation and in a way involving stakeholders so as to make it effective in terms of promoting democracy and protection of human rights.