



# Harar Interest Advocacy Group International

Incorporated In Victoria A0050667C

7/April/2010

## **A Joint Statement by Community Organizations of Ethiopian Origin in Diaspora Regarding the Debate on *Ethiopian Federalism***

TO

The Concerned Ethiopian Government Institutions  
Ethiopian Political Parties  
Community Organisations of Ethiopian Origin in Diaspora

Dear Sir/Madam

First and foremost we would like to express our appreciation and support for the process of social, economic and democratic developments which are being undertaken in Ethiopia. Henceforth, we honour and acknowledge the commitment of the Ethiopian government for its continuous effort to facilitate and consolidate the processes and advance peace, stability and security in Ethiopia regardless of internal and external obstacles aimed to discredit and paralyse the progress.

The objective of this joint statement is to highlight our concern to the Ethiopian people and the Ethiopian government some of the provocative comments and statements made on the debate of "*Ethiopian Federalism*" on Ethiopian national TV on March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2010. On the debate, we noted that a number of representatives from opposition parties indicated that the promotion of "*Federalism in Ethiopia*" is inherently wrong and dysfunctional highlighting the existence of the "*Harari National State*" as one of the anomalies of the *Federalism in Ethiopia* and the *Ethiopian Constitution*. This joint statement provides a brief response to the restatements made on the debate and provides some of the evidences that the Harari National State is indeed a model demonstrating functional *Federalism in Ethiopia* and *Ethiopian Constitution*; and a symbol of peace, tolerance and prosperity in Ethiopia.

No one doubts the fact that the Harari National State and Hararis are one of the nations and nationalities of Ethiopia with an independent history, culture, language and values. The people of Ethiopia are well aware of the fact that the lack of recognition for the rights of ethnic minorities and the subsequent repression of nationalities by the previous Ethiopian governments led to various forms of internal strife and struggle which had nearly brought Ethiopia to the brink of disintegration. However, their struggle against oppression and violation of ethnic rights brought about the end of these repressive regimes and ushered a fresh breath into their hopes, aspirations and more importantly opened a new chapter in their history as one nation under a new Ethiopian Constitution which was approved by the participation of Ethiopian people for the first time in Ethiopian history.

One of the most important features of the Ethiopian Constitution is that it has breathed new life and hope on the future of ethnic minorities, nations and nationalities by restructuring the contemporary Ethiopia under Ethnic National States taking into consideration differences in their

1. values and aspirations;
2. socio-economic status;
3. historical background;
4. unique historical position and reality and
5. concerns as a minority.

Moreover, the Ethiopian constitution provides further provisions for the newly formed Ethnic National States that they are independent to formulate and implement socio-economic policies and programs with the objective in mind of preserving, protecting and promoting their values, hopes and aspirations without restrictions, reservations and interventions. Based on the above premises, the Harari National State has been justifiably given a unique status of National State considering its distinctive and unique historical position and its ultimate need for protection as one of the minority ethnic groups in Ethiopia. Accordingly, the Ethiopian people have justified beyond any reasonable doubt that the issues relevant to the establishment of the Harari National State are unique and distinctive and fulfilled the conditions of one of minority ethnic groups requiring the support and protection of the Ethiopian law. Some of the justifiable reasons for granting this unique status for the Harari National State include:

1. Harar was an independent and proud nation with history showing over 100 Kings before it was made to fall by Emperor Menelik II in 1887
2. The Harari population has been deliberately repressed and brought to the brink of extinction and dispersion by the brutal persecution and systematic oppression of the past Ethiopian governments;
3. Harar and Hararis have received international recognitions for their continuous independent struggle and sacrifices of innumerable lives while struggling against persecution and oppression of their nation and nationalities;
4. Harar and Hararis do exhibit solid history of thousands of years of continuous and independent governments extending to the horn of Africa;
5. Harar and Hararis have played a significant role in promoting peace, stability and ethnic tolerance in and around the Harari Region;
6. Harar and Hararis are wonderful examples of hospitality, and peaceful co-existence among nations and nationalities in Ethiopia;
7. Harar is an internationally recognised library and museum of history of East Africa and its surrounding region,
8. Harar has been considered as the fourth holiest city of Islam and
9. Harar and Hararis have been honoured with the UN prize for peace and listened under world heritage.

The people of Ethiopia believe that the items listed above put Harar and Hararis at the top of the list as unique and distinctive nation in the context of the contemporary Ethiopian history. The Ethiopian people have accepted the fact that these unique historical positions of Harar and Hararis tell part of their own historical past that can not be narrated without an exemplary formation of Harari National State. For that, the people of Ethiopia are the ultimate owners and guardians of the Ethiopian Constitution. Therefore, Ethiopians will defend the Constitution because it enshrines the core values of protecting, preserving, and promoting their hopes and aspirations they have struggled for and sacrificed their lives for over a century. The Ethiopian people are also the guardians of the Constitution because it recognises the rights of ethnic minorities, nations and nationalities of Ethiopia irrespective of the number of their nationals and the size of the area of habitation.

We Hararis in Diaspora and our stakeholders assert that it is the basic rule of logical reasoning and knowledge of Ethiopian history that was overlooked on the debate of “*Ethiopian Federalism*”. We argue that the answer to what kind of Federalism in Ethiopia is like solving a jigsaw puzzle. Unless one gets it perfectly right, it is never right. To get it right, one needs to understand the underlying fundamentals behind the formation of Ethiopian Constitution and, more specifically, the five basic criteria listed above. We believe that so far no opposition party appears to have addressed and tackled the problems and provided a solution in the light of the values, hopes and aspirations of the Ethiopian people. Instead, what we have seen is confusing, self contradicting and irresponsible comments aimed at creating distrust, tensions and conflicts among the Ethiopian people.

Our experience and observation of Democratic processes in developed countries teach us that contestant parties present their case to the electoral public and present themselves as better candidates to lead their country and people to prosperity and security. In the election process, they

1. try to consider their differences as temporary and good opportunities for dialogue and better understanding;
2. rely on the guiding principles of progress rather than regress regardless of the immediate and short run challenges they are facing;
3. focus on building the future on what has already been achieved so that citizens enjoy the fruits of a better future;
4. put forward specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound plans and policies that would bring positive changes in their country;
5. learn to respond to the challenging questions they are facing in the process of election;
6. fight their opponents with information instead of reactions and intimidations;
7. learn to focus on the issues rather than the people while demonstrating to the public that they are mature enough to guide and lead mature and civilised political party and
8. conduct sufficient consultations and research with their stakeholders to check whether the policies they promote are to the best interest of their party and nation.

Our close observation of the process of Ethiopian General Election shows that most of the above ingredients demonstrating mature opposition party are sadly missing. Therefore, our opinion is that regardless of whatever political party presents its policies and programs to the public, a mature party that will appeal to the public will be the one which :

1. clearly highlights the constitutional rights of minorities referring back to the history of the impacts minority suppression and subjugation in Ethiopia;
2. clearly shows the apparent danger of returning to the old systems of government and their impracticality in the context of contemporary Ethiopia;
3. responds to questions more responsibly, respectfully and without intimidating the electoral public.
4. emphasises respecting the rule of law and
5. Supports Ethiopian Federalism and upholds the full rights of nations and nationalities including minority groups in Ethiopia. .

In our opinion, these approaches, principles and policies are the measures and tests that would make one political party more mature and responsible to lead the country and the its people than an alternative party. It is on these bases that we assert the formation of the Harari National State is a test for a mature political party because Harari National State is a clear prove demonstrating a functional Federalism in Ethiopia and is a model of peace, stability and prosperity in the country.

As a result, the Harari National State demonstrated that it has not only protected but also promoted the rights of all nationalities in the state while fulfilling the constitutional rights of its nationals without restrictions and reservations. These core principles and values are the underlying causes for their struggles and scarifies they have paid for over a century. No one doubts that the Harar National State has proved itself as a nation producing innumerable citizens of highest personal and

group responsibilities from different ethnic backgrounds. Harari National State has always been guided by forward looking principles and policies aimed at achieving prosperity to all its citizens. These were the core values of the Harari National State in the past and that is going to be in the future.

In summary, it is important to note that the Ethiopian people do not have the time and desire to live in the past and throw away the future. The past is history and a lesson for shaping the future. The future is hope and a new beginning for better opportunities and positive changes. The desire to live in the past and deny the rights of others bring back memories of the past oppression which is the underlying causes for tensions, conflicts and crisis. That is going to be too risky and we expect that is not the political objective and intention of any mature political party.

Therefore, we urge all political parties commit themselves to put their utmost effort to bring about peace, stability and prosperity in the new Ethiopia. We also urge them to refrain from making confusing, inconsistent and provocative statements to the electoral public that they wish to lead to prosperity regardless of their ethnic background and areas of habitations. Our expectation and the expectation of the Ethiopian people and the international community is to see political parties exhibit maturity and promote policies that bring positive changes to Ethiopia in civilised and professional manners.

Last but not least, we would like to extend our appreciation to those political parties that have shown maturity in the election process and wish them all the best in the general election and that the coming term would bring peace, prosperity and stability to Ethiopia and Ethiopians.

We wish to acknowledge the contributions of individuals, groups and the many Harari Community Organizations in Diaspora and their stakeholders for providing all the necessary support and feedback prior to releasing this joint statement. We would also like to acknowledge parties and organizations who responded to the above matter on a timely manner.

Best Regards.

Signatories:

1. Atlanta individual interested Hararis (Atlanta USA)
2. Amana Kids (Amana Waldach) (Canada and USA)
3. Dallas Harari Women Association (USA)
4. Ethiopian Interest Advocacy Group Worldwide (Australia)
5. Gursum Community Association (Canada)
6. Harar Interest Advocacy Group International (Australia)
7. Harar Revival Movement (Worldwide, USA)
8. Harari Canadian Community of Ontario (Canada)
9. Harari Community Association (Australia)
10. Harari Community Association in Rome (Italy)
11. Harari Community in Edmonton (Canada)
12. Harari Community in Germany (Germany)
13. Harari Community of Dallas Texas (Afocha) (USA)
14. Harari Community of Ontario (Canada)
15. Harari Community of Ottawa (Canada)
16. Harari Congress in Diaspora (Canada)
17. Harari Heritage Centre (Canada)
18. Harari Saay Association (Australia)
19. Harari Society of Calgary (Canada)
20. Harari Sports and Cultural Federation (HSCF) (Canada & USA)
21. Harari Women Association in Toronto (Canada)
22. HNL Supporting Group in North America (Canada & USA)

23. Los Angeles Area Harari Community Association (USA)
24. Memphis Harari Community Association (USA)
25. North America United Harari Organization (USA & Canada)
26. Northern Californian Hararian Association (USA)
27. Society for Heritage and Advancement of Harari Nation (SHAHAN) (Canada)
28. Sweden Harari Association (Sweden)
29. Switzerland Harari Community Association (Switzerland)
30. Vancouver Harari Community (Canada)
31. Washington Harari Community Inc. (USA)
32. Yemag Harari Association (Australia)
33. 3 CR Harari Radio Board (Australia)
34. 3zzz Harari Radio Board (Australia)