



Qafar Ummattah Party

Afar People's Party

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The main concerns of the Afar people in Ethiopia

The ongoing political subtleties in Ethiopia has ignited a new optimism aspiring for democratic reform. Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed delivered unifying and inspiring speech during his installation. The promises made coupled with partial release of political prisoners were received as an encouraging indications towards the leverage on public demands throughout the country. Nonetheless, the immediate removal of the State of Emergency, release of all political prisoners, and initiating the national reconciliation dialogue are among the primary short-term expectations. Institutional reforms including security, justice, the election board and political openness could be among subsequent waves of the reforms for durable peace, stability and inclusive prosperity in Ethiopia.

The premiers undertaking in visiting different parts of Ethiopia was received positively by the Afar community. In this conjunction, the expectations of the Afar people are mounting to meet Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed in order to express their concerns and aspirations. The visit is expected not only to souse the public disobedience throughout the country but also will help the Prime Minster to make primary assessments related to social, economic and political predicaments locally. However, the excitement to be visited by the Prime Minster is engrained with growing discontent and the sense of continued exclusion and marginalisation both from power and economic development.

Afar Region is the most neglected area in Ethiopia. Despite its significant geopolitical position and untapped natural resources, the region is left in a political and economic disarray by successive central powers. The combination of sinister political maneuver, rampant corruption and inconsistent development projects has exacerbated the social, economic and environmental adversities of Afar people. A major part of pastoralist community that makes 85% of the region's population has been displaced due to federal agricultural projects and regime affiliated investors. This was done without sustainable resettlement and reorientation towards agro-pastoral way of life. Environmental degradation, recurrent drought, highly polluted Awash River, unmet health needs and border conflicts are among few challenges to mention. Consequently, the Afar region remains the poorest of all within Ethiopian federation.

Afar People's Party believes that the challenges expressed by Afar people are directly entwined with the political crisis quivering the country. While regional concerns might emanate from specific local contexts, most of these can be solved by democratising the Ethiopian State apparatus. Hence, the Afars shall be free when the rest of our Ethiopian compatriots are free. This conviction and core value are a testimony for our stringent engagement to coordinate our straggle with other Ethiopian oppositions to lay ground for justice, equality and freedom in Ethiopia. Therefore, Afar People's Party positively follows the leverage of Dr Abiy's administration and hopes to see tangible and comprehensive short and long-term reforms throughout Ethiopia.



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The Afar People's Party has identified major regional concerns that need immediate solutions:

1. A visionless and corrupted leadership loyal to a certain political faction within EPRDF; amplified tribalism, exclusion of educated youth from leadership; inability to create jobs, etc. are the brands of current regional leadership, which is unable to solve the basic needs of its people for past 27 years. This is happening with blessing of EPRDF not of the Afar People;
2. The Afar Regional State cannot continue as ancillary “Agar killil” within one country implying that EPRDF is systematically excluding five regions out nine from a discussion making. This, in turn, will widen the gap between center and periphery leading to intensified conflicts and instability in Ethiopia. Therefore, the monopoly of EPRDF and Afar National Democratic Party (ANDP) shall end without delay;
3. The official delimitation of Afar Region: the major source of inter-community conflicts — Afar/Tigraway; Afar/Issa; Afar/Oromo; Afar/Amharai—are subscribed to the non-delimitation of borders. We are witnessing the loss of life between brotherly communities without exception. The Afar People's Party has repeatedly alarmed about the impacts of these conflicts, but no measure has been taken until the moment we write this statement. We are convinced that the stability of the region and of the country is intimately linked to this problem, hitherto concealed. We hope that Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed will officially launch the boundary delimitation works between the Afar Region and the neighbouring Regions as soon as possible in order to establish a lasting peace between brotherly peoples;
4. The fight against the pollution of the Awash River: the Awash River is a lifeline for Afar people. They drink this water as well as their livestock. They irrigate their fields with this water. The pollution of Awash River is about existence for communities residing near the river, particularly for Afar and Oromo population. However, this source of life is polluted by spill of industrial waste. The polluted water have an adverse impacts on general public health outcomes. According to statistics from the Ministry of Health the Afar Region scores the highest rate of child- and maternal mortality and other source of preventable diseases. Yet, this important issue has been neglected both by regional and federal authorities while the Afar People's Party has alerted the concern to both the Regional and Federal states. We hope that Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed will not only prevent any dumping of waste in the river, but also start projects to clean up the river;
5. Supporting and relocating populations forcibly displaced: Large-scale projects – including the Kesem-Tendaho Sugar Projects – launched as part of “economic development” have had collateral impacts on the local population. The National Audit Office reported to the Federal Parliament indicating that the Sugar projects are severely failed due to mismanagement and corruption, yet causing a great disruption of livelihood to Afar Pastoralists. The Afar people have the customary laws that govern the right of property and that they are strongly attached to their ancestral land. Nevertheless, these people have been forced to leave their ancestral land without any support from the government. We ask Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed to relocate these children, women and men, and ensure that they have a means of subsistence;



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6. The establishment of social safety nets against drought: The Afar people are among the most vulnerable communities affected by climate change. The recurrent droughts have hit hard the backbone of Afar people who live from their livestock. The unprecedented loss of livestock has led to tragic consequences causing an absolute poverty unimaginable under Ethiopia's "double digit" economic growth. We call on the Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed to put in place preventive safety nets to mitigate drought related circumstances that are likely to be repeated;
7. The demilitarization of the Region: The Afar region is probably the most militarised region in Ethiopia. Due to its geopolitical position the Afar Region and its population found themselves in the middle of different wars. The massive and permanent presence of the army has led to harassment, arbitrary imprisonment and killings of the local population. This has locally perceived as a threat and the source of insecurity. Resolving the Ethio-Eritrean border issue will positively provoke the demilitarisation process of the Afar region. Thus, we ask Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed to demilitarize this region and resolve the border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea that will have a positive impact on the whole country.

The Afar People's Party will stay vigilant and continue its struggle until the new Prime Minister delivers his promises, but we remain positive for the steps taken so far.

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