

## BEFORE THE NEXT MASSACRE BURIED THE NATION ITSELF

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At the darkest time of Hitler's Germany, a prominent German Pastor who found himself in a situation where he didn't expect, wrote the following:

First, they came for the socialist, and I did not speak out- because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out- because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out- because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me- and there was no one left to speak for me.

Martin Niemoller

About four years ago, the Oromo extremists hanged a dead body in front of a cheering crowd, not in a hidden place, but at a public square. Shocked by an expected event, the public outcry lasted about a week. At that time, the citizens not only expected, but also were confident that the government will enforce law and order and things will get normal soon. Since then, in the city of Burayu, they raped women, killed children, and old people, and the public outcry lasted about a week. In Shashemene they killed innocent people, burned properties, and the public outcry lasted about a week; in Ataye, they destroyed properties and killed innocent people, and the public outcry lasted about a week; in Welega, for the last few years, Ethiopians who happened to be mostly Amhara were continuously killed and chased out of their homes periodically, and the public outcry lasted about a week, every time it happened. During this sad and depressing time, the government sometimes gives lip service or tries to divert attention to something else, and opposition parties call press conferences and release statements, and they go back to their normal routine till it happens again. As difficult as it is to comprehend, in this country of ours, and in this century, what shouldn't be tolerated is tolerated, not by the government only, but also by the citizens at large; what shouldn't be normal by any stretch of imagination, becomes a normal routine. In the Twenty First Century of Ethiopia, every now and then, innocent people get executed by the Oromo extremist group and this has become a "normal" way of life, with no end in sight.

Why did this become normal? Some people say the government is incapable and others say the government is not willing to enforce law and order in the Oromia region. The fact that the government arrested the president in the Somali region at the early stage and suppressed the resistance, and recently arrested more than twelve thousand people in Amhara region to suppress the Fano movement, it is hard to say that the government is not capable of acting the same way in Oromia region. Maybe, the right question is that, does the will exist with the government to do it? If not, why not? Regardless, if the government failed to enforce law and order for whatever reason, and life remains "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" as Thomas Hobbes once said, then we should ask ourselves a simple question: what is the state for? What makes it a legitimate government for the citizens to recognize it as such? When and under what circumstances is an uprising or a resistance against the government justified, if not to demand for the right to live? Under this dire condition, it is imperative for Ethiopians at home and abroad regardless of our ethnic background to stand together and demand this government to enforce law and order. I

understand that some of us, including myself, are constrained from speaking up, worried that we may add gasoline to the fire if we do so. Unfortunately, our collective numbness or silence played a negative role in making what is not “normal” a normal way of life in our country. If we don’t stand together and demand the government to enforce law and order, sooner or later, what Martin Niemoller said will come to hunt us. My fellow Ethiopians, the issue is not between the Oromo extremists and the Amhara people. It is not even between the Oromo extremist groups and the Amhara extremist groups as some people are trying to paint it as such. Let us be honest and recognize the fact that the Oromo extremist groups supported by the Oromo prosperity party members are carrying out this atrocity. Mind you! The Prime Minister is the leader of this party and it is under his watch all this is happening. It does not matter whether he is part of it or not. One thing is clear: he failed those people who supported him when he came to power. At this critical time in our history, this issue requires our collective attention and participation to avoid a widespread atrocity. Especially, the non-Amhara Ethiopians must be at the front line demanding the government to protect the safety of citizens so that bloodshed can be avoided between these two ethnicity groups. Before our country experiences something similar to what happened in Rwanda, we all should ask ourselves, what can the citizens do collectively to prevent it? How do they transform individual outcry to a meaningful citizens voice in order to force the government to act?

In my opinion, the citizens of this nation should give the last warning to this government to protect innocent citizens regardless of their ethnic background. No government will survive for a long time without the support of its citizens. How many innocent citizens should perish before the citizens of this nation collectively say, enough is enough? Before it is too late, collective action is urgently needed and here is my concrete proposal to be considered by political organizations and activities at home and abroad:

1. Political activists, civic organizations, and political parties at home and abroad need to create a committee to take a coordinated action.
2. Political activists, civic organizations, and political parties at home and abroad should coordinate to call a three-days strike throughout the nation and demand the government to take decisive action against the Oromo extremists.
3. Send a joint letter to leaders of other countries and organizations asking for their support.
4. Make it clear that the objective is not to overthrow the government per se, but to force it to correct its mistake, and protect the people as expected or resign.
5. The first strike should last three days and see how the government reacts and prepare for a longer strike if necessary.

6. Don't sacrifice some individuals and go home. Instead keep the fire burning till the government feels it and act or resign.

My fellow Ethiopians, I know it is not easy and I understand the possible danger this bold action comes with. However, without this collective voice and action, **THE NEXT MASSACRE OR THE ONE AFTER THAT WILL BURY THE NATION ITSELF**. This situation is not sustainable in any society and we cannot afford to continue ignoring it. It is my hope that non-Amhara individuals and organizations will join this effort so that ethnic cleansing can be stopped and widespread atrocity can be avoided. Let it be clear that without this collective action to avoid it, it will expand and no one will be immune. If we want to avoid what happened in Rwanda, this is time to act decisively and collectively.

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