

Flashback November 2013: A Chilling Remembrance of Ethiopian Migrant Workers.

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November 2014 marks the one year anniversary of Ethiopian Migrant workers' gross human rights violation in the Middle Eastern countries by autocratic regimes particularly in Saudi Arabia. It attracted worldwide attention. Unexpectedly with short time it brought together the Diaspora Community members, Religious Leaders, members of Civil Rights for Women group, Students, professionals and responded in extraordinary ways by protesting in front of Saudi's mission in major cities like New York, DC etc. It is wonderful to see when everyone gets involved very quickly for this just cause. One year later that extreme time is flash back to many of us. It is a tragic event whose consequences are still being felt. The mistreatment of migrant workers has been received with shocking and dismay.

In history of Ethiopia, we witnessed mass exodus of ordinary Ethiopian citizens to foreign countries under the current ethno-centric TPLF's dictatorial rule.

The cause of migration is obvious. Some of them left due to the ongoing political repression and some of them left in search of employment with legal means and illegally via horrific ways. They hope to make money, and then to send back some of the money to support their family members at home. As always, the fate of the migrants is unknown at the final destinations. While they are in travelling they face countless life and death situation. The lucky ones will reach their destination without knowing what is waiting them next. Last year on November 2013, the Saudi Arabia authorities cracked down "illegal migrant workers" particularly directed to Ethiopians. As shown on various media outlets, the crackdown was so brutal. Several migrant workers women, men, and children were forced from their homes by police and beaten up by mobs of civilians, gang raped by vigilantes, and some were killed. At the same time, some of them were imprisoned and the violent actions by police continued until so called repatriation took place. To make a bad situation even worst, some returnees' belongings were confiscated by Saudi Araba Authorities.



Nov. 2013 Outside Saudi Arabia's mission in New York City, NY (Photo: Tadias Magazine)

When this horror news surfaced on Internet and other news media outlets, it triggered spontaneous worldwide protests in front of the Saudi Arabia's Embassies by Ethiopian Diasporas and other concerned groups., However, in Ethiopia such protest were banned and the government violently dispersed peaceful demonstration. Although the residents of Addis Ababa attempted to stage a peaceful protest in front of Saudi Arabia Embassy, sadly the regime police responded by beating and jailing the protestors. The Embassy of ethno-centric TPLF's dictatorial regime located in Saudi Arabia refused to provide services to its own citizen even after all public outcry.

The ethno-centric TPLF's regime seems to have no intention to resolve these issues. In countries where democratic rule prevails, the state is a key player to defend its own citizen rights. In case of Ethiopia it was the contrary. To date the ethno-centric TPLF's regime never asked the Saudi authorities to investigate on the reported abuses and hold the perpetrators accountable. Today, the vigilante gangs

walk the streets free. Why this unwillingness by the regime in defending its own citizen is completely ignored? The answer is no brainer, its own widespread human rights violations, large scale corruption with regime structure's, and not to disrupt monetary benefit receiving from Saudi's.

It is interesting to briefly indicate the story of corruption on the migrant's case. The workers recruitment agencies enrich in Ethiopia are run by well-connected corrupt officials and cronies with the regime. First and foremost, the agencies are targeting in recruiting people living in dire condition who are poor, illiterate, and unskilled. Once they are recruited by the agencies they were shipped to agents in Middle Eastern countries. There is little or no consulting to the migrant workers what lay ahead of them. Once these unskilled and destitute people reached their destination, the agent pass them to the employer. The worker will be immersed to the hard working condition right away. The migrant workers face the long hour work, no time off, physical and verbal abuse, unyielding isolation, sexual abuse etc. The language barrier compounds their sufferings. Workers are traumatized, some have attempted suicide, and some indeed committed suicide.

To make the problem worst, there are virtually no organization independent of the regime control that speak on behalf of migrant workers. The restricted press freedom by dictatorial TPLF regime makes it very difficult to provide any awareness to general public or to offer assistance for victims.

The recently deceased Prime Minister Meles replaced by the walking, breathing, living dead Prime Minister Hailemariam. Hailemariam is known for his inability to control the government command structure. The migrant workers recruitment agencies remain untouched allowing them to continue their criminal activities. Their action is equivalent to illegal human trafficking. This should come as no surprise where rampant corruptions exist in all level of the regime structure.

Ethiopians are touched by what happened in November 2013. This month should be seen as Remembrance Month to pay tribute to those killed, and for those who survived the vigilante groups and autocratic regime horror acts. At the same time, to thank and salute for those who came out in unity to expose the human rights violation with peaceful protest in front of Saudi's mission in NYC and other major cities. As debilitating crime continues drag on past November, the ethno-centric TPLF's dictatorial regime has opted, unfortunately, to do nothing. But, we the diaspora Ethiopian community will not be quite and give blind eyes when this type of human rights violation takes place against our fellow citizens. We will continue to build support networks and coalitions to have most effective way in achieving positive and sustainable change on Human Rights violation to our citizens. We shall overcome!!