The Vindication of Ethiopia's State of Emergency

In the wake of Ethiopia's State of Emergency declared on 9 October 2016, some quarters within and outside the country have been engaging in misinformation and disinformation about the very reasons and purposes of the declaration. Needless to say that the Government of Ethiopia introduced this temporary measure to deal with an alarming threat to the country's peace and stability as well as extensive damage on public and private properties by anti-peace elements in collaboration with militant and extremist groups residing overseas. The level of violence and destruction Ethiopia witnessed prior to the announcement of the State of Emergency were unprecedented and no one could imagine that the situation could be controlled without such timely and appropriate measure.

Essentially, the state of emergency is not meant to deal with protests, but rather a lawful action to restore peace and stability as well as set a stage for long term political solutions to peoples' grievances and demands that are long overdue. In other words, the declaration would give the Government the necessary breathing space to take all appropriate measures so that Ethiopia will continue on its developmental path that has changed the lives of millions of peoples and the image of the nation, not long ago, known for abject poverty and perennial conflict.

The Government of Ethiopia duly upholds the constitutionally guaranteed rights of all citizens to express their views and genuine concerns on issues those matter to them. However, this doesn't mean that protesters and criminal groups can take the law into their own hands to destroy private and public properties, including vital infrastructure, businesses, health and education centers as well as government offices and courts. Nor the protests would mean to be used by enemy of the state to bring about regime change in Ethiopia by dismantling its constitutional order.

As some cynical observers try to paint, the state of emergency is not also a blanket ban on all freedoms and activities across the country. In this regard, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn emphasized that the Government of Ethiopia remained committed to ensure all fundamental human rights that are stipulated in Ethiopia's constitution. Moreover, no diplomatic or consular rights are suspended under the
state of emergency decree, and diplomatic missions in Addis Ababa continue to enjoy all rights stipulated in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations except asking permission, for their own safety, should they want to travel more than 40km (25 miles) from the capital, Addis Ababa.

Since the state of emergency was declared in Ethiopia, almost all violence hot spots across the country have returned to normalcy and many suspects have been arrested. Furthermore, a large number of looted weapons also handed over to security forces. As part of long term solution, the government has proposed reforms to the electoral system so that opposition politicians have a better chance of being elected by opening political space and respecting the freedoms and democratic rights of all citizens based on country’s constitution.

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