

## **Why I continue to be an ardent fan of peaceful struggle.**

*By Kuchiye*

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I want to get some facts straight. The EPRDF of today is the EPRDF of yesteryear - repressive, divisive and corrupt. The entire Kinijit leadership including Hailu, Bertukan, Mesfin, Berhanu, Berhane, Andargachew championed peaceful democratic struggle as the most appropriate for Ethiopian conditions. They earned the support of millions only because the party's vision and the chosen mode of struggle stroke a chord across the length and breadth of the Ethiopian public.

Strip peaceful struggle off Kinijit and you will end up with an entirely different animal with awfully different set of values and strategies. If the leadership decides to revisit the party's ways, as it should from time to time, then the place to do it is its own board room and, I might add, in Ethiopia. When individuals who are in the top echelon of the party trigger public discourse over some core values without first having discussed them internally, it becomes a case of recklessness. When it is done from the safety of thousands of miles it even becomes a case of outrage.

Whilst ordinary citizens and the general public have every right to start discourse on any particular topic, the standard, unfortunately, is quite different for party and government officials. With the acceptance of public office, one actually surrenders a little bit of that "personal right" to brag and say what ever one wants. No matter how well crafted a statement an official makes claiming it is a personal view, it will always be construed as the position of the organization. That is why we see responsible politicians walk unenviable fine lines in the public arena. That is also why we should demand people we put in leadership position conform to generally accepted standards of leadership behavior and organizational codes of conduct. It matters very little whether the organization is a blue chip corporation, a democratic party or a communist party of bye gone years; ethical, moral and operational standards are what differentiate our way of life from that of animal kingdoms.

Personally, I am not in a position to declare that peaceful struggle is a failure since we have not even tried a quarter of its potent tools. On the other hand, our entire history, more so the recent one, is replete with examples of armed struggle that resulted in hundreds of thousands of lives being lost with nothing to show at the end. EPRP, OLF, TPLF, EPLF, ELF, ONLF and several others can be cited as examples. When armed struggle reached the finishing line, like it did in Eritrea and Ethiopia, the population ended up with the short end of the stick and worse of from where it started. I hate to speculate there are people among us who are still enamored by the guerilla fighting years of Mao Tse-tung and Che Guevara. Pardon me, but we live in the era of helicopter-gun-ships and satellite communication that could make the life of a guerilla force down right miserable if not devastating. Besides, how does a society that is war-weary factor into the call for armed struggle? Judging from the obscenely unpopular nature of EPRDF,

couldn't one make the case that the inherently subtle, colorless and silent ways of peaceful struggle are working?

As much as I resent armed struggle, I also resent the continued loitering in the arena of individuals who lack the patience and the skill to see a strategy succeed. It is disheartening that the very same people who advocated peaceful struggle and pleaded with millions to follow them are now hoodwinking the party and the movement at their leisure. The fabric that holds Ethiopian society is much weaker today than it was yesterday, all the more reason to exercise caution when we make choices. Choices shall never be made from the dictates of frustration and despair. Let's be firm, let's be resolute.

*'.....but screw your courage to the sticking-place, and we'll not fail.' Shakespeare in Macbeth*