

Secretary Rice's rebuff of HR2003 in Menelik's City lacks decorum

By Robele Ababya, January 9, 2008

Secretary of State Dr. Condoleezza Rice made her maiden visit to Addis Ababa late last year, although the tyrant Meles Zenawi has since 11 September 2001 been a coalition partner on the war against terrorism as a matter of political expediency over principle. Her denouncing of HR2003 in Addis Ababa - lacked statesmanship and decorum and exposed her insensitivity to the agony, grief and wailing of mothers of the martyrs of June and November 2005 in the aftermath of the historic election decisively won by the opposition and ruthlessly stolen by the ruling party of the despotic ruler.

The Secretary showed her insensitivity in the Capital City of Ethiopia founded by Emperor Menelik II and His Queen Empress Taitu, both renowned for their spectacular victory over the Italian aggressors at the famous Battle of Adwa. The victory ignited an inextinguishable beacon of hope for colonized people everywhere on our globe, specially Africans and their kin and kith in the Diaspora including forbears of Dr. Rice. It is weird that she stood on the hallowed ground of Menelik's City to renounce a Human Rights Bill unanimously approved by the exalted House of Representatives of the United States Congress. She contradicted African- Americans and the Black Caucus in the House who supported the Bill from its inception to its approval.

The smiling Secretary posed for a photograph with the insecure tyrant standing on her side looking like he was pleading for her protection as if he did not once brag that the fighters of the Islamic Courts were hiding behind the skirts of Somali women. He needs protection from his mentor because his invading army is now bogged in Somalia where it is being accused for gross violation of human rights including arbitrary killing, looting and raping. His army in Somalia is in desperate situation; some home-sick are appealing through foreign media to folks at home to put pressure on the Zenawi regime to effect withdrawal of its forces.

One wonders whether the Secretary has realized that her host is on record in her own Department of State as one the foremost violators of human rights. It is therefore a contradiction in terms that she has expressed, in our own Capital City, categorical objection of her administration to HR2003. Time will vindicate the suspicion of most Ethiopians why her administration opposes the Human Rights Bill of which Zenawi is so scared.

Zenawi's heinous crimes are well-known to the international community and recorded by human rights institutions. But his crimes continued unabated exacerbated by his unprovoked invasion of Somalia and crackdown on dissidents in the Ogaden of Ethiopia. In both cases his security forces are killing mercilessly, looting unabashedly and raping humiliatingly. He has destabilized

the region and his bad example of robbing ballots at the historic Ethiopian election of 15 May 2005 has now crossed over to neighboring Kenya – a country envied as an oasis of peace is now in the grips of fear and uncertain future. Incidentally, the Department of State was swift to recognize the ‘victory’ for Mwai Kibaki but is now playing the role of a mediator because the fraudulence was so evident and stupendous to cover up. The present calamity in Kenya could have been avoided if the Bush administration had not knowingly sided with Zenawi who had snatched victory by force from peaceful contestants in the historic election of 15 May 2005, subsequently condemning them to jail and pronouncing them guilty of crime punishable by death even before charges were laid against them in his Kangaroo court. Surely, the Bush administration did not show courage to apply sanctions and exert moral authority to stem excesses of human rights abuses Ethiopia. It is amazing that barely a few weeks after Secretary Rice’s visit to the region where she denounced HR2003 in Addis Ababa, Kenya is embroiled with political upheavals that were common in Ethiopia for the past 17 years. The question is for how long double standards would be applied before Africans truly unite to take charge of their own destiny.

Zenawi continues to rule over Ethiopia with an iron fist; he is a landlord in a country where millions of peasants live in slavery in his serfdom; he holds complete control of all pillars of democracy including the judiciary, parliament, electoral board, army, media, lucrative business enterprises (windfall for a former die-hard communist turned multi-millionaire). He is still in power because of stolen popular votes in full view of the Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Jendayi Frazer, Ambassadors Aurelia Brazeal, and Vicki Huddleston. This is a weird line up of senior officials in the Department of State impervious to the wailing, agony and grief of mothers of the Ethiopian martyrs of June and November 2005! It is totally unacceptable that Secretary Rice denounced HR2003 in our Capital City in contempt of its residents who had denied even a single vote to the EPRDF at the historic election and consequently suffered inhumanely at the hands of the despotic leader who proclaimed state of emergency on seeing power slipping away from his hold.

The sad saga of political upheavals in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia speak loud and clear of the fiasco of the foreign policy of the Bush administration in the Horn of Africa. Secretary Rice and her senior diplomats in the region have run out of time and initiative to undo the colossal damage. Their dismal performance as diplomats and lack of courage to defend human rights in the continent of their origin particularly for Dr Rice and Dr. Frazer will be recorded in the history books for future generations of Africans to read. The history books will include the broken promise of President Bush to stop the long history of association of US administration with despotic rulers.

The current despotic puppet regime has betrayed all vital national interests of Ethiopia including her territorial integrity. Article 39 of its Constitution stipulates

the right to secede and as such it carries time-bombs still waiting to explode. The situation in the Ogaden is a case in point.

It is needless to elaborate that the country faces numerous problems of gigantic proportion none of which is amenable to military solution. Experience to date under three consecutive regimes confirms that the Ethiopian peasant did not get value for the stupendous amount of resources spent on military establishments. Ethiopian peasants lived in misery under the yoke of oppression despite sacrificing their children to bear arms and paying taxes to finance military adventures of dictators Mengistu and Zenawi. This spending spree and colossal wastage of resources is sheer madness that has to stop. Progressive forces should as a matter of duty make paradigm shift in favor of unity in diversity and counting our blessings as Ethiopians having mosaic cultural heritage and shared values.

As Emperor Menelik said, "We must resist the powers to keep our independence". Independence is our cherished heritage for keeps to eternity. So, it is in that sense that this protest to Secretary Rice is made for her rebuff of HR2003 on our own turf. She should with all due respect be asked to change her mind and support it for it enjoys the support of the overwhelming majority of the Ethiopian people who cherish their independence. The majority support it because it contains universally accepted values. Progressive forces have sacred duty to oppose the kind of rebuff made by the Secretary while on a visit to our country. Her partisan support to a tyrant is unacceptable.

Ethiopia is an ancient civilization once prominent as four of the world's powerful countries during the dynasty of the Axumite Kingdom spanning the entire 1st millennium. Our country has enviable customs and cultures developed over several centuries. It is now known that Ethiopia is the origin of humankind and we Ethiopians take pride of the fact. So for Secretary Rice to renounce publicly a Human Rights Bill is tantamount to contempt of the overwhelming majority of its Ethiopian supporters at home and abroad. She is lucky she escaped spontaneous public protest in Addis Ababa because her tyrant host has prohibited all freedom of association in violation of his own Constitution. She did disservice to HR2003. Nevertheless HR2003 is already the bedrock of enduring friendship between the peoples of Ethiopia and the United States of America. Secretary Rice missed the golden opportunity of being counted among supporters of a Human Rights legislation containing timeless universal values.

The lesson for us Ethiopians is that we have ignored counting our blessings concentrating instead on divisive issues that are within our competence to solve through accelerated constructive dialogue. For this reason, outsiders consider us weak and take it for granted that they can say anything condescending in our Capital City and get away with it scot-free. Let us all unite to tell Secretary Rice that the vast majority of Ethiopians embrace the universal values of HR2003 of

which our martyrs were the cause of its birth and Congressmen Donald Payne and Chris Smith were instrumental in its delivery.

LONG LIVE ETHIOPIA!!!