

Codka Israaca

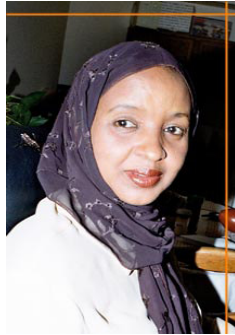
Official organ of the Pan-Somali Council for Peace and Democracy

The Need to Launch *Codka ISRAACA*

By Zainab Hassan

The Pan-Somali council for Peace and Democracy (Israaca) is a non-profit organization that is committed to advocate for the promotion of Somali unity based on justice, equality, and peace. Since its inception in 1998, Israaca attracted a large pool of global membership from diverse backgrounds including professionals and intellectuals.

One of our primary goals is to search for fair, peaceful, and negotiated ending to the protracted Somali civil war as well as



safeguarding the Somali unity in order to rebuild and strengthen social, economic and political well-being for all Somalis. Israaca's long-term vision for Somalia envisages a stable society characterized by good governance, coterminous with the pluralistic Somali social structure, and an equitable national sustainable

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It seems that the Somali National Reconciliation Conference that has been going on in Kenya since 15 October 2002 under the auspices of the Inter-Governmental Agency for Development of the Horn of Africa (IGAD) and that has been on the doldrums on much of this time is at long last inching towards conclusion. The hope that was fast dimming has been rekindled. The sudden shift of the expectations of the conference has been engendered by the encouraging signals coming out of the last meeting of the foreign ministers of IGAD in Nairobi on 21 May 2004 . By that declaration the conference has moved to the long awaited third and lasting phase of the power-sharing to be

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concluded by the end of July at the latest.

More importantly, the odds of the conference succeeding have been significantly increased by the fact that Ethiopia and Djibouti have vowed a united stance in the search for a lasting solution to the Somali problem. The differences between Djibouti and Ethiopia, it should be recalled, have been some of the major hurdles impeding the progress of the conference. Whatever prompted this complete turn around and change of heart on the part of Djibouti and Ethiopia regarding their long standing policies and practices towards Somalia, their latest statements are indeed very welcome news to many Somalis inside and outside the conference who have been frustrated by the future of their country being captive for disagreements between these two neighbour countries.

The genesis of the conference

After the formation of the Transitional National Government (TNG) of Somalia in July 2000 in Arta, Djibouti, the euphoria that accompanied the birth of the TNG had turned into bitter disappointments; and the hopes that had been vested in her had soon dissipated into a fleeting mirage. Granted that the TNG had been faced with insurmountable obstacles such as the legacy of ten years of devastating civil war; the internal challenges posed by armed opposition groups that were generally unwilling to negotiate; and an outside world that was largely hostile under various pretexts. Still the TNG was mandated at Arta to provide visionary leadership that formulates and implements wise policies that would help cure the wounds of the civil war and would gather together the fragmented population under the banner of reconciliation, forgiveness, tolerance and good governance that would lead the country away from past political practices to a new political

culture based on freedom of expression, rule of law, respect and advancement of individual rights, creation of genuine and robust civil societies, and ushering in a real democracy where popular participation in the political decision-making is the norm rather than the whimsical rule by a capricious single individual. Unfortunately, the TNG has failed in this mandate.

By the creation of the Somali Reconciliation and Restoration Council (SRRC) in March 2001 in Awasa, Ethiopia, to counter-balance the newly formed TNG, the conflict in Somalia had entered into another phase. The support that Djibouti and Ethiopia had each given to her chosen proxy had not only caused fissure to their relationship but had also further complicated the Somali problem which had remained hereto in the confines of fraternal annihilation by introducing additional burden of outside direct interference to an already complex and intractable situation.

From conception to commencement

In spite of the well intentioned efforts and the good will of many in the international community, Somalia has remained a troubled place deemed dangerous to herself as well as to the rest of the world. Therefore, it had become necessary to do something about this simmering volcano, so to speak, before it erupts and engulfs anything and everything in its reach. And so the 9th Summit of IGAD in Khartoum, Sudan, had mandated the three frontline states of Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti to organize an all-inclusive national reconciliation conference for Somali in Kenya.

The frontline states, with financial and technical support from the European Commission and the IGAD Partners Forum (IPF), had embarked on bold and ambitious project of organizing the Somali National Reconciliation Conference in Eldoret, Kenya to find a lasting solution to the Somali problem and to establish a broad based and all inclusive government of national unity. Thus the best

conceived reconciliation process yet for Somalia had been set in motion.

The conference had to bring together all the political, military, traditional, and civil forces in the country to deliberate together and to forge a way out of the misery that the Somali people have lived in the last decade. More importantly, it was announced that the reconciliation would be a process rather than a one time event and would address all the important sticking issues over several phases taking place inside and outside Somalia . Several missions comprising of representatives from the front-line states and IPF had visited all the regions of Somalia and the neighbouring countries to canvass the support and the views of the key actors and potential participants of the reconciliation process.

An impressive list of 300 participants representing all the significant actors and stakeholders in the political, social and economic interests of the country had been drawn by the technical committee comprising of the three frontline states with the assistance of the IPF and the European Commission who has been funding the conference. The list had taken into account the political reality as well as the normative imperative that obtain in Somalia and had apparently sought to strike a balance between the clans, regions and factions and other forces existing in the country.

Arriving in Eldoret with high hopes

After several delays and postponements from the date first set for the conference to begin on February 2002, the Somali National Reconciliation Conference had been opened on 15 October 2002 by the former president of Kenya Daniel T. arap Moi in his home town of Eldoret, Kenya in the presence of the presidents of Sudan and Uganda, Omar Hassan Al-Bashir and Yoweri Museveni and the prime minister of Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi, and other high level representations from Djibouti, Eritrea, Egypt, Italy, Sweden, Arab League, and the AU. To

the sceptics the seriousness of the international community would have been evident from this unprecedented large gathering of high level dignitaries in the opening ceremony of the conference. This was an emphatic indication of the importance that the international community attached to the outcome of the conference and their commitment to peace and stability in Somalia .

All the invited Somali parties except the administration of Somaliland which had insisted on its unrecognised separation from Somalia had come to the conference. When pressed upon the need for Somaliland to participate in the conference for it to be all inclusive, the organisers had made the valid point that they had appealed to the administration in Somaliland to take part in the reconciliation process but that there was no way they could have forced them to come. From the start of the conference and several times since, Somali leaders were given ample opportunities to take over the running of the conference which they had failed to accept over and over again due to lack of trust among themselves: a mistaken choice which haunted them later on and which they had very much regretted of making.

The atmosphere at Eldoret was conducive to reconciliation; and the optimism of the conference ending the conflict in Somalia was contagious. The majority of the delegates had been accommodated in close premises. Former foes and friends long separated by the civil war had found each other again in friendly setting and had intermingled in the lush lawns of the Sirikwa hotel. Indeed, there had been a number of successful attempts at reconciling personalities and neighbouring communities. The chance for a lasting peace and reconciliation in Somalia had never looked better and brighter. The first major breakthrough came in the Eldoret Agreement for the Declaration of Cessation of Hostilities and Principles and Procedures of the Conference signed by 24 leaders on 27 October 2002 only 12 days after the opening date of the conference. The signing of the Eldoret Declara-

tion (as the agreement was called) had concluded the first phase of the conference. The second phase started with formation of six reconciliation committees: 1) federalism and provisional federal charter; 2) demobilization, disarmament and reintegration; 3) land and property rights; 4) economic institution building and resource mobilization; 5) conflict resolution and reconciliation; 6) regional and international relations.

First signs of trouble

It had soon become apparent that all is not well at the conference and that the declared intentions of the organizers contravened with their operative actions! And the actual implementation of the plan of the conference had fallen much shorter than its conceptual presentation on paper. Mismanagement, inefficiency, corruption and competition among the organizers had sneaked into the conference from the get go and exposed it to the behind scene lurking danger of failure.

A great deal of manipulation and tampering had been subjected to the list of participants which had disfigured it and rendered the initial plan unrecognisable. For instance, well known and highly respected personalities like Abdirazak H. Hussein, Abdullahi Hirad, Nuruddin Farah, Said S. Samatar, Zainab H. Aden, Ali Jimale Ahmed, Mohamed H. Mukhtar, Abdulkadir Aden Abdulle, Istarlin Arush, Abdi I. Samatar, and many others of the same stature who were originally invited as members of an advisory council or civil society had either been deceptively and furtively replaced or unabashedly and blatantly vetoed by one or the other of the frontline states. Their positions have been taken by former factional leaders, members of the TNG parliament, members of the regional administrations, former ministers and generals of the military dictatorship who had been all well known for their factional politics but who had been deemed loyal to whatever agendas that the countries managing the conference namely

Ethiopia and Djibouti had been pursuing; thus giving the name "civil society" in Somalia a new meaning by bending its definition to the straining limit.

As they arrived in Eldoret some of the invited factional leaders had found out that their status had changed with the change of their political fortunes on the ground and some of them had actually been treated as persona non grata by the organizers of the conference.

The corruption and mismanagement in the conference had become so endemic and rampant that the number of participants had swollen from 300 to over 800 by the own admission of the technical committee themselves. Every member of the organizers had his own people included in the list. In the end participation in the conference had become for sale.

At this point the conference had reached its lowest point. It had become obvious that the only way to salvage the conference was to change the chairman of the technical committee, Mr. Elijah Mwangale, who was blamed for much of the problems in the conference. This had been made easy by the change of government in Kenya in December 2002. The new government had appointed a new chairman, Mr. Bethuel Kiplagat, with impeccable character.

The move to Mbagathi

One of the first things that Mr. Kiplagat had done after his appointment as chairman of the IGAD technical committee was to move the site of the conference from Eldoret to Mbagathi in Nairobi and to reduce the number of the delegates to 366. The delegates had moved to Nairobi (Mbagathi) on 16 February 2003. However, the change of the site did not solve the problems of the conference. The financial difficulties on which the move to Mbagathi was predicated had continued to plague the conference. The differences and wrangling between the representatives of Djibouti and Ethiopia had also reached a crisis

point that had exacerbated the differences of the already divided Somali political leaders encouraging some of them to leave which had brought the conference to the brink of collapse.

The row over the charter

By June 2003, the six reports of the reconciliation committees had been ready with their reports. All the committees but one had reached consensus on their works. However, the committee that had been working on the charter had split into two camps along factional lines and had produced two versions of the charter.

To bridge the gap between the two camps, the chairman of the technical committee had appointed harmonisation committee. The committee had included respectable and prominent Somalis such as Abdulkadir Aden Abdulle and Mohamed Abshir Waldo with intimate knowledge of the history of constitutional making processes in Somalia and also with appreciable understanding of the current factional politics in the country. The committee had produced reasonably good work. However, the chairman of the harmonisation committee was a controversial figure who had been disapproved by a large number of the delegates; and so the work of the committee in spite of its merit had become a victim for the reputation of the chairman of its drafting committee.

Unfortunately, a culture of suspicion and mistrust had taken root in the collective psyche of the Somali people which had spoiled too many good proposals for the Somali nation which the elite including the good professor himself had much to blame by preparing the ground for this malaise with their condescending and uncompromising ideology laden statements and actions. Many Somalis including the elite forget that any charter or constitution is primarily a political document before it is a legal one. And politics by definition deals with negotiating conflicting interests and working out acceptable compromises rather than throw-

ing a judgement as in court of law. Therefore, a charter is as good as it succeeds in achieving consensus and compromise among parties with contradicting claims. The best written charter or constitution is not worth the paper it is written on if it fails to get the approval of the people for whom it is written. On the other hand, the worst written charter could turn out to be the best constitutional document if it manages to gain the acceptance and the trust of the people it had been intended for: which is the only guarantee of its success and workability.

A good illustration for this could be found in the constitution of the military regime led by Siad Barre and the charters of Puntland and the TNG which had been pretty on paper but that had all failed to spare destruction from any of these entities. Our national pain and misery did not result from bad constitutions. Rather our problems come from political ambitions that had gone mad and the resultant political culture of impunity that had been imbued to our thinking.

It is important to remember in this regard that those leaders who have made the biggest noise about the charter are those who had shown the least respect for the same charters from which they had drawn their authorities! The excuses they had given were only red-herring for their personal political ambitions presented as the defence of national, religious or regional interest and which many of us had fallen.

Conclusion: rekindling the hopes for the rebirth of the Somali state

The conference had started with high hopes. The planning had been well conceived. It was obvious that the international community mainly the European Commission and IGAD member states wanted peace and broad-based government for Somalia. This was very encouraging for the civil war fatigued Somali population. The political and faction leaders

had also detected a warning to them in the serious intentions of the world community. They went by their usual motto of “if it is balloon I will punch the air out of it; but if it turns out to be an iron I shall oblige by it”.

However, structural problems within the IGAD system and lack of serious commitment on the part of the international community had immediately betrayed whatever good intentions that had been there in the first places. Besides the political differences and the diplomatic squabbling of its members had made IGAD, as an organization, incapable to undertake a mammoth task such as the one required to resolve the conflict in Somalia . It lacked both the financial and technical capacity to deal with these kinds of problems. These weaknesses were exposed early on when at the beginning the process had been postponed several times from the initial date of February to 15 October 2002 when it had been finally launched. But the deficiencies became starkly clear as soon as the conference started in Eldoret and as things began to fall apart.

Likewise, the international community's less than full commitment to the process was evident from the level of representation that was available to the conference. With the exception of Italy, Egypt, the UN, AU and the Arab League that have sent special envoys to the Somali peace process, all the countries of IGAD, the European union and the USA had, in contrast with all the other peace processes currently going on in the world, sent to the Somali National Reconciliation Conference very low ranking officers mostly second or third secretaries at the political office of their embassies in Nairobi.

These drawbacks had dampened the high hopes and the enthusiastic expectations that the Somali people have had of this conference. These had also emboldened the political and faction leaders who were dragged in the first place to the conference fearing unfavourable repercussions and punitive sanctions by the international community.

Many Somalis were convinced that the success of the conference had always hinged upon the international community's firm and united stand in pressuring the political factions to an agreement. It should be obvious by now that after 14 years of debilitating civil war, the Somali political leaders are unwilling or unable to compromise for the sake of their people and their nation while the Somali people are too weak and too fragmented to pose any real challenge to their hegemony and grip over them.

By the last two meetings of 6 and 21 May 2004 of the foreign ministers of IGAD, the determination and the commitment of the international community to a successful completion of the Somali National Reconciliation Conference in Kenya have been apparent more than ever before; and with it the hopes and the expectations of the Somali people to see the rebirth of their statehood by the end of July 2004 have been elevated. The angst, the agony and the sacrifices of the last 19 months may have been worth the long wait, after all. Let us all pray to God that this time around our aspirations of good, democratic, broad based and all inclusive government that services the Somali people rather than being a predator upon them and that cements their unity and cohesion rather than divides them will be realized in this conference.

Ahmed Isse Awad is a former board member of Israaca and is currently in Nairobi participating in the Somali National Reconciliation Conference. He wrote this article for the Codka Israaca. He could be reached at ai_awad@yahoo.com

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The Need to Launch ...

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development.

It is Israaca's conviction that the state of every society is a reflection of the quality and caliber of its intellectuals. The collapse of the Somali state and the continuing disintegration of the Somali societal system has as much to do with the myopia of its intelligentsia as it does with militarism and autocracy. Consequently, the establishment of Israaca arose out of recognition of that fact and it is an attempt to rectify the anomaly thereto.

Israaca focuses vigorously on the reform movement in Somali peace building and reconciliation process to establish a permanent peace in Somalia . It is also working on long term strategies for civil-society-based post-conflict peace building in the areas of human rights, pluralism, progressive education, democratization and governance as well as well sustainable development. A healthy civil society is an essential foundation that provides citizens with multiple channels through which to exercise effectively both their rights and duties of citizenship. Furthermore, cognizant of the fact that we the Somali nation is not operating in a vacuum but rather is part of the community of nations, Israaca is dedicated to raising the profile of the Somali issues in the international community especially in the United States, Canada, the European Union, the African Union, the United Nations, and all the other stakeholders to actively participate in the Somali peace building process.

As our name suggests, Israaca, we hope, is where Somalinimo finds a refuge. We enjoy support and membership from across the Somali society.

In our efforts to put a firm foundation for a clanless Somali community basedn meritocracy and technocratic professionalism, we seek to address the issues that are important to the Somali diaspora and to link them to the predicaments of the problems back home.

Towards that end, we plan to establish offices and bases in many localities inside Somalia to spearhead this movement from the ground up. We also strive to inculcate young Somalis born or brought up in the Diaspora with the Islamic values and Somali traditions in which our national culture is rooted

To make a progress in our struggle, I, as the chairperson of this organization, invite you to join us in this struggle which is a historic struggle to reclaim our dignity and respect both of which has been besmirched during the last 14 years.

What is this newsletter? You might ask. It is a legitimate question. As a start, the following quote by a great self-taught German born American sociologist would help.

“We know that words cannot move mountains, but they can move the multitude; and men are more ready to fight and die for a word than for anything else. Words shape thought,

stir feeling, and beget action; they kill and revive, corrupt and cure. The “men-of-words”-priests, prophets, intellectuals- have played a more decisive role in history than military leaders, statesmen, and businessmen.”

Eric Hoffer

A movement, be it a civil society one like Israaca or a conventional political party organization can not function without a communication organ that can disseminate information among members and also potential members. When destructive forces in our country have communication outlets that disseminate hate and division, we believe that it is only fair that we have countervailing media outlet that informs the public about the possibility of peace and the will to effect transformative change. This newsletter, therefore, is the communication organ of this nascent organization and we hope that it becomes a sounding board for Somali activists that want to participate in a new movement for change towards peace and stability

Daljiraha Maqan (*The Exiled Sentinel Soldier*): Nuruddin Farah and His Book, *Links*

By Ahmed Ismail Yusuf

Nuruddin Farah, the only world renowned Somali, who writes in English, and a serious candidate for the Nobel Prize in literature, has delivered yet another riveting novel, "Links." The book is set in Mogadishu, where Jeebleh, a professor in New York, is back in his motherland to find his mother's grave, settle residue of grievances from the seeds of the civil war with his childhood friend, Bile (after twenty some years) and find Bile's niece who has been kidnapped. Jeebleh is literally taken aback by the ruins that have become his beloved childhood city, which was/is the capital city of a nation melted into blood muddied gullies. "He needed a quiet moment, to contemplate all this madness," laments the narrator.

The callousness of the warlords in competition, the wanton waves of violence 'they' waged befuddled him and the word "sense," along with "conscience" that had been lost long before the civil war only becomes apparent after, he realizes. "I don't want any more deaths, not on my account," Jeebleh said. "I forbid you to let your mad dogs loose on the family of the dead boy. There have been enough mindless killings already. I forbid you to kill on my account, my conscience won't allow it," he droned on.

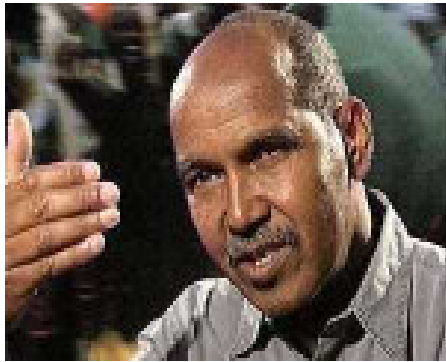
Jeebleh, straddling between his Somali culture and newly adopted American culture, is increasingly irrigating enemy soil for himself as he tries to walk on a shadowed moral line; Shadowed by the tar of tribalism that coughs crimes of rape, theft, robbery, murder and lays minefields before anyone thinking to take a

tentative courageous step of sanity.

The raging fire of anger between Jeebleh and his half-brother Caloosha—who has not a shred of scruples in his bones—is fueled by the nets of Caloosha's immorality weaved web. As his name alludes to it, Caloosha lets anything go down his gullet, bulging his stomach with vile and venom. Caloosha whose loot includes his too-young-for-a-wife wife, whom he had procured by killing her entire family, are all obtained revoltingly. This character's brutal personality rejects all rationale known to mankind and dwarfs great proportion of historically recorded, pestilent past. It's very tempting to tear him off the page, to beat some sense into him!

By creating such a repulsive character, Nuruddin is telling Somalis to examine themselves. Anyone affiliated with a Caloosha type, cousin, son-in-law, brother-in-law, brother and uncle is him/herself fueling the flames of collective, Somali moral failure.

Nuruddin, who survived three assassination attempts, yet loves his motherland and people just the same, Nuruddin, the man who refuses indefatigably to let go of his Soomaalinimo, who pleads for the blue flag, is also a Somali whom the rest of the world would love to have as a naturalized citizen. Yet he has been humiliated for simply being Somali, by many countries which have invited him to collect their most prestigious literary awards, apparently after he had won them. Nevertheless, Nuruddin who could have sloughed off his nettlesome Somali skin, refuses to let go of his Soomaalinimo.



The question is, Why has Nuruddin been sacrificing himself for Soomaalinimo when so many others have been running away from it by taking up other nationalities, including myself? Because Nuruddin is most confident in his Somali skin, persona and is most comfortable with his identity which he proudly wears in his heart and mind. Thus he loathes the destruction of his motherland, he abhors the horror the warlords cause and exposes the wanton waves of immorality.

In the seventies, Nuruddin was exiled from his motherland while he was in his twenties by a brutal political regime because of his politicized writing style. Thirty some years later, Nuruddin, now self-exiled, has not yet let

up. That is why the theme of all his novels is an indictment of soft advocacy of sort. And this one, Links, is as well an audacious incrimination of warlords' politics and the collective failure of the will of Somali people.

We have heard the term "Daljiraha Dahsoon (Unknown Soldier)" endearingly used around the world, including Somalis! Today we have to learn yet another endearment, though new but most appropriate for Nuruddin: Daljiraha Maqan (The Exiled Sentinel Soldier).

The Book, Links, is a poetic, artfully descriptive and purposely provocative piece of first class writing.

GACAL TAKOOR

By Ahmed Mohamoud (UMN)

Gobanimadu Soomaliyeey, garasho weeyaane
Waxaan gocanayaa ee hurdada, gama'a ii diiday
Ama goon socodka iga dhigay, gaabis la'imoodye
Guul-guulka iyo waxaan arkaa, gacal-takoore baase
Gaajada waxay noogu wacan, way is gumaysiga'e
Geerida-horteed toobad-keen, gaabis-baad-tahaye!

Gar illaahay waa loo islaam, godobi waa ceebe
Kuwaad gaabinaysiyo kuwaad, gawrac marinayso
Gun kuwaad ku sheegtiyo kuwaad, gudub u riixayso
Gabooyada walaalkaa aheed, ganaf ku taagayso
gabayooxa waxay noogu wacan, godobta weeyaane
Geerida-horteed, toobad-keen, gaabis-baad-tahaye!

Gabigood jareerta iyo boon, waad garbinaysaane
Gayaan maaha baad oran markay, gole yimaadaane
Garta uma naqaan odayadii, guurtidi ahaaye
Guhaada iyo erayada guracan, waad ku gubaysaane
Guryo beelka waxay noogu wacan, waa gar eexada'e
Geerida-horteed, toobad-keen, gaabis-baad-tahaye!



Gumaysiga illaah wuu xarimay, gabi ahaantiise
Gacalkaad takoorteena waa, layku gubayaaye
Godka naarta baa lagu galaa, guule caasiga
Gidigiinba Soomaliyeey, garasho dheer yeesha
Gal-dalooladiinana astura, goor iyo ayaanba
Guulaystayaalooow samaha, gaagax ka illaasha
Oo gumaysi dhaqan yaanu-noqon, wayna-gubayaaye!

Hadaan gebi-dhac jirin uumiyuhu, nagama gawdheene
Guushuba waxay saaran tahay, geesiyaal kaca'e
Gudcurkaan ka bixilayn hadaad, godobta daysaane
Inagoo gar-waaqsi ay ayuu, goolku dhalan laaye
Gacmaha is qabsada oo wanaag geliya maankiina
Oo gumaysi dhaqan, yaanu-noqon, wayna-gubayaaye!

Oo gumaysi dhaqan, yaanu-noqon, wayna-gubayaaye!
Oo gumaysi dhaqan, yaanu-noqon, wayna-gubayaaye!
Oo gumaysi dhaqan, yaanu-noqon, wayna-gubayaaye!

Crisis With No Resolve

By Ali Bahar

I: Cause and Effect

Somali people have always, in large part, seen themselves as set of separate communities of clans juxtaposed against their will, but yet residing next to each other and purposefully trying not to stretch far enough to reach other tribes near them or to move away from their individual tribal base, lest one crosses the imaginary pastoral lines that separates one from the “THE OTHERS”, consciously or physically. And especially in the last two decades as things went wrong in our nation, these tribes recoiled back to their comfort zone of small separate enclaves of tribal affiliation, and acted as if they never wanted to be part of the wholesome republic. Now, these tribal communities found solace in existing as clan units and not as a nation.

This means that tribalism in our society has a much deeper root than all other human relationships and interconnections, and will continue to be the only thing by which, at the end of the day, clans measure trust and security. The successful struggle for independence and the tribe-based traditional governing systems that followed has failed to explore pragmatic approaches to the problems of tribalism, government corruption, nepotism and the inequality that existed in the system. To the contrary, they encouraged widespread social disarray that emboldened their inherent leitmotif social thought of concentrating public resources in the hands of a few individuals or families, even when these individuals were criminal warlords. Tribe-based governing systems strive on the mindset of controlled social dynamics by bidding groups against each other and causing them lose sight of what is important—the big picture—for the success of their nation. It is a copycat strategy of the divide and rule tactics of the colonial masters in disguise — but we are fighting for the same tribe-based governments again and again, even today. Unfortunately, unless we understand how this destructive tribe-based formula is destroying our ability to govern our nation, we are doomed to surrender to such a dividing culture, which diminishes our ability to formulate good governing system that is based on one-man one vote in order to elect the right people with integrity and ability to run the nation. Only when we can convince ourselves that electing the

right person to the appropriate position in the government is as crucial as having a prosperous nation, we can then talk about accountability and leadership.

However, corruption reflects more than the character of those who commit it. It reflects the character of the entire society. It is inherent in our traditional tribal allegiance and is a systemic problem transmitted as a deep social malaise. No one refutes the diagnosis of the absence of ideological extant to replace the terrible tribal system that took a deep root in our society. Conflicting explanations of the role of power and the need for tribal segregation in our society are involved in a wide spectrum of issues. But power in the sense of direct force and violence against our people is involved not only in issues of war and peace but also in issues of crime and punishment. Political power and its efficacy are also seen by the warlords to be the storm centers in conflict reconciliation and peace process. None of these war criminal warlords are willing to pay any price for their action, and that is why they are fighting hard to stay on top. Unhappy social circumstances are more readily condemned morally by allowing someone’s exertion of power to divide us into breakable tribal lines to his advantage and his plan of keeping the our country in the hands of few powerful men, thus offering fewer opportunities for moral judgment and fewer prospects for sweeping reforms that could help us become successful in achieving our goals. We, as an intelligent and able people, could fundamentally change this by creating a force of unity to combat the force of tribalism and warlordism that are working against our unity in order for us to change things to our advantage of a society that lives with harmony and guided by democratic principles.

But instead of creating forces of unity, we have welcomed a man with guns (many of them) to establish himself, organize his followers among his tribe, and even to force others to carry on his orders in order for him to attain his personal goals. He rewards himself with land, money and with stolen public resources and property — he becomes stronger, richer and powerful— he becomes a warlord with influence that mainly stems from his power, intimidation and wealth. And in a society

where social status is increasingly associated with wealth and the barrel of the gun, the warlord is the hero, thus he is the next president of the nation. He creates a government that looks like him and protects the interests of the privileged few— the warlords and their close circle of cabinet members. It is the interest of this gang of warlords, those who are fighting for power in Kenya, to secure their seats in the would-be government before they even agreed on real peace. And they intend to become richer and remain on the top for whatever it takes. They are taking government positions not because they are democratically elected officers by the people and for the people, nor are they with special intellect and integrity, or with education and experience in government, but because of the sheer power and the influence they command. They opposed to all peaceful negotiation and reconciliation processes unless they are offered the exact number of seats that each wants, without which they wouldn't endorse the birth of peace in the regions they control. Seats and high government positions or else, they threatened!!

How on earth one could possibly get away with such atrocity and crime against humanity and yet succeeds to run for the highest office in the state, you may wonder. Such government system exists only because of the tribal system and its opportunistic of Me- -Against-My-Brother-scare tactics, which created an atmosphere where trust among tribes and individuals is a thing of the past. Rewarding these warlords because of the power and influence they command regretfully reflects a very disturbing fact. Values and goals in terms of which success is defined by how strong one is, even when one is clearly a criminal element in the society, and to the extent the rest of the society legitimizes atrocity of such magnitude or, at the minimum ignores it, is very troubling.

These misplaced values and blind tribal allegiance are contractions in our culture that create aspirations, which, by their very nature, can only be realized by the few; thus denies or destroys the aspirations of the rest of the society. The weak and the poor find the door shut on their faces when they seek help or attempt to realize their potential, and the gulf between the “haves” and “have nots” widens as the “haves” develop a distinct circle or class that controls and dominates the weak. The tribal system creates such contradictions. The ambiguity of status recognition according to wealth

and power that legitimizes the disparities have given rise to and promoted the corruptive lineage of clan system. This is perhaps not surprising since tribal or a clan lineage system is an ideology- void system with no intellectually defined social welfare agendas, unlike all other defined and debated optimistic social systems like Marxism, Leninism, Neo-Marxism or Capitalism, which are built around academic phenomenon of social philosophy and ideologies of dynamic changes within the society. The impetus or the fueling force of tribal systems is never about promoting an idea of development and social welfare as a whole, but rather one of individualism under the disguise of clan allegiances—a system with no moral judgment that commits the ultimate sin of destroying the human character, grossly undermines the opportunities and further advancement of its people, and consequently diminishes the sacrifices of building a nation. Look everywhere in Africa, and Somalia is no different, where tribal wars dominated all other social and national interest. More than half of its population has already experienced mass starvation, diseases and displacement of millions of people, as well as shattered economic systems and other crucial social structures. It is one of indignation and humiliation of its own people, who are practically forced to have become beggars on the streets, feeding on the handouts from the rest of the world or condemned to refugee systems. It is a demoralizing system with evil intension written all over it, like force and violence, war and crime, corruption and nepotism, all in the name of clanism, to which the Somalis can attest to it. We are the only nation without a recognized state and government—even writing about our state of government at this present time is overwhelmingly a gut crunching emotional feeling that begs for the question of how did we let this happen to us, and I am ashamed of what we have become in the eyes of the civilized world.

Tribal systems have become the leprosy, the curse of our nation. The palpable government corruption, the extortion and the sustained violent repressions all have their roots to our traditional tribal systems. Tribalism, as an unarticulated social structure that functions as a system with its own mechanics of exercising the power of corruption and nepotism, explores rifts between tribes and carefully mobilizes and finds the weaknesses of human capacity where men, individually or collectively, ignore or lack the understanding of both the

intellectual and the moral prerequisites for leadership in nation building. Our nation inherited men who spent public resources for personal gain and amassed a wasteful consumption, which exemplified how unprepared these men are for governing a nation. The outbreak of violence and anger and with such high virulence in our Somali society today is understandably the outcome of the practices of that corrupted leadership, who deprived our society a good share of its potential of becoming a prosperous nation.

II: The lost generations

For more than a decade our history has been marred by bloodshed, led by strong men and warlords. This left deep scars on our societies, and nowhere is more apparent, more visibly pronounced than on the faces of our children of today.

How do we even begin to educate our children about the history of Somali unity, the Somali nation and Somali nationalism? How much do we expect the next generations in our society to carry on responsibilities based on systems of equality, justice, integrity or duty bound deeds that could serve the nation better? To expect them to even understand this mess we created will be unfair to them and irresponsible of us. Because of the situations and the happenstance that are growing up, they will have hard time relating themselves to the past in order to understand what it feels like to be part of whole picture of a nation and people that you identify with, that takes care of you when you are young and needy or sick and homeless, and raises you and lefts you up to become a successful and productive citizen in the society, who loves his country and its people, sacrifices his/her life to defend it from enemy when need be. What happened to our young generation, the future of our nation, is totally incomprehensible. Thousands either die, are suffering from a lifetime and irreversible psychological scars and physical disability, or grew up and are still growing up in villages, cities and in rural areas where no help comes to save their lives, or educate them in order to become the leaders of tomorrow. Many, at a very early stage in their lives, experienced unimaginably tough life of mass killings and crimes on the streets and in their own homes, displacements and misplaced values in refugee camps, which included criminal activities, like rape and extortion in the hands of their own kind as well as foreigners who see them as something less than human. We are failing them by

destroying their hope and the nation that was supposed to nurture them and help them understand the significance of being Somali, to be proud of their heritage and to be ready to take the lead when that time came for them to lead. No one set the stage for them to step in, and no one gives them shoulders to stand on. That is the future of our country, something all of us lost sight of while supporting the warlords of the day, and we put our future in the hands of warlords and their Ethiopian agents of crime.

Even more disappointing is the fact that today many of those who were the product of the creation of the Somali nation in the sixties, who were educated on the expenses of the rest of the people to become the today's of leaders, are turning their backs to the nation that once supported their education, health and some of the successes they made latter in life. They are the warlords, the doctors, the judges and educators, social engineers and civil leaders, who are, with a dismay of many of us, advocating for the dismemberment of our nation and against Somali unity. It is unfathomable and beyond human reasoning that the first born child to whom this country gave birth to, after independence of 1960, to whom every chance was given to be educated and trained for today's leadership, would advise its death—the death of our nation. Like many others, I grew up in an era where everything we were told about our nation and its people would make us feel proud of who we were, and the conscious determination that one day you would defend that nation. That positive upbringing and the feeling of belonging to a nation had a direct impact on me as an individual and very much directs my conscience and my deep attachment to that nation I loved and felt proud of it. Those who are actively and vocally against Somali unity are weighing on the faith they have on clanism, a destructive social system, and they are seemingly afraid of having faith in our collective ability to bring about new paradigms with goals and with a sense of community; a wholesome nation that takes risks with tolerance, and promotes equality and justice for all. This is important to our own existence and to the well being of our society. It is imperative that today's leaders have a strong sense of nationhood and justice.

Our contemporary generation is the one that is leading their respective countries in the world with dignity and with a sense of purpose. It is our

obligation today to pull together this fractured nation, safeguard its sovereignty and save it from further disintegration and dismemberment in the hands of warlords and foreign agents who are relentlessly working behind every warlord to create a puppet government of their own. The death of our young generation is the success of their long dream of limiting our aspirations.

All Somalis, without objection, use the name “Somali” to their interests and conveniences whether that is traveling around the world, asking for help inside and outside the country or whether that be a simple identification and association with each other. But when it comes to defending the very existence of that name “Somali”, we are not willing to dignify that good name by sacrificing our lives in order to defend its sovereignty. Today’s Somalis are carrying unrecognizable tribal banners for x-y land groups that don’t stand for the great nation of Somalia, which people in the past died for to secure its independence and its borders. Who is defending that nation today? No one. Somalia became something used for conveniences only, or the imaginary tribal pasture boundaries, as some mistakenly seem to suggest. It must mean something much more deeper than that.

A nation that left its future behind would never move far enough. One only wonders what our children are learning today, what is certain, however, is that today’s young generation was left behind and was never given the opportunity to feel wanted by the collective Somali community nor instilled with a feeling of pride and responsibility that they are the future of something big and beautiful, the Somali Nation.

Haunted by the war’s horror, terrorized by the preventable deaths of many of their love ones, hindered and hammered by the lost years in their schooling, or the years some of them spent in refugee camps, the surviving children in Somalia today are having hard time adjusting to life. They have some critical questions about the war, their lives and their future. It was [and still is] a war, which our children cannot even tell who won and who lost; except the horror they will remember and the psychological lifetime scars left behind. Our children in Somalia today live the legacy of the war, but know nothing what it’s all about. This war is bitter and complicated experience for the entire nation, especially for young children. Somali children were drawn into a war that they never

understood, much less demanded to know the full truth about it. Before they were able to make a personal decision on whether to risk their lives and the lives of others, someone else (a warlord) made that decision for them. Do they know whether this war was noble or immoral? What are their personal values and how are they prepared to keep these values when faced with difficult decisions tomorrow?

Most children in Somalia today consider that taking a gun and attacking other tribes, to safeguard his “tribe”, as a good and moral cause— a moral judgment. This is their experience in which they invested heavily, both psychologically and physically—their reference point. They are inheriting mistakes made by their forefathers and their fathers. This is the past and present. This is the great march their nation took on its way to self- destructive suicidal act—and they are the future.

Is this the future that those so-called independent states in Somalia are excited about?

But does anyone care? No, we rather worry about seats in the government and how many representatives of our individual tribes are sitting on it. A government that has no plan or intension of addressing the critical questions our children are asking us. That is far more important from the standpoint of Somali politicians than worrying about the future of this country.

Children succeed when their communities and their country support them, but fail when their country abandons them. We abandoned our responsibilities and failed to articulate enough the importance of patriotism and nationalism through examples and deeds that our children of today could relate to. Instead of having the opportunity to be in school and learn and dream about their the future, about leadership and responsibilities, they are blinded by the consequences of this war of choice in which they are victims, a war that benefits only the warlords of today. Rewarding the same warlords who denied our young generations their opportunities is another insult to injury, and will not bring a democratic system of justice and equality in our society. This gives our children a sense of misinterpretation of what is right or wrong in life, and the sense of lack of history of fair governments and democratic systems. Those who grew up with guns in their hands or at early ages, witnessed crimes against them or sometimes by them, look at the world with a different perspective, with a dismay

and with guarded optimism than those of us who grew up in the sixties and seventies with unlimited expectations for our future, even though many of us never realized that dream because of the power of government that worked against our full potential to realize our dreams and to reinvest in our communities. Nevertheless, unlike the young generations of today, we didn't suffer in hands of warlords over the watch of our communities and the nation as whole.

Our children are the tomorrow leaders. They will be called on to use creative problem solving skills, good decision-making approaches, and critical thinking of new paradigms. Steady, consistent, and credible rationale for their actions that is based on sound moral judgments will serve us best. These good decisions and commitments that are true to their own insights and understandings of their responsibilities may help them lead this country out of the mud. It is never too late for all Somalis to start teaching their children that there is no glory in a war against your own. That war is not just a simple affair of shooting, but involves an understanding of who the enemy is. That fighting is never the most effective way to achieve goals. That people shouldn't go to war for the mere reason of killing their own despite the predictable outcome—death and destruction. Death or injury is an awfully terrible thing to deal with, but death or injury in needless event is even worse.

The best gift that any Somali family can give to their children is NOT to teach tribalism. Save them from the questions of “Qolamaad tahay or Cidee tahay”. Save them from the horror of tribalism.

III: Need For Effective National Debates

To those who advocate for tribal enclaves, persons of narrow views and observation, who readily believed and accepted whatever happened to prevail in our society, it is my view that nothing must be sustained because it is ancient, because we have been accustomed to regard it as sacred, or because it has been unusual to bring its validity into question. The practice of tribalism and regional chauvinism cannot be the method by which to decide issues, especially something as serious as the proposal of dismembering Somalia or slicing the cord of national unity and let it bleed to death.

To borrow a phrase from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, “The test of man's character is not where he stands during peace, but where he stands during

struggle and crisis”.

One would have thought that ideological discussions and analysis of vision for our nation would be on the front page of our debates today, considering what this nation has been through, but to the contrary, Somalis still trust and put their future in hands of warlords and foreign agents like Ethiopia and Kenya, neither of which has a vested interest in creating a strong state of Somalia. All the three elements, the warlords, the Ethiopians, and the Kenyans would rather have a disarrayed and dismembered Somali state. And to the disappointment of the peace loving people of the world, most educated Somalis, like the rest of us, including social scientists and psychiatrists and many of today's social engineers took the easy way of singing the gospel with the warlords and the likes, who have masterminded this seemingly inescapable anarchy state. Our resolve and determination to have debates on the issues, propose new paradigms, new thinking with the focus of closing the vulnerability of our social systems in constructive way, not withstanding all that separates us, is a must obligation that our future generations are expecting from all of us; but it will take a heroic effort of those who care about their nation and the future of their children to come together.

The semantics, which have dominated the coffee shop debates nowadays, especially between those who support the position of X-Y lands (Somaliland, Puntland, Rahanweynland, to mention a few) and their opponents, are more or less based on emotional outcry and blatant anger surprisingly directed towards the unity of our nation. Creating a sure sympathy for one's cause through dialogues and by means of discussions intellectually analyzed is one thing, but to pull the plug on the core of what once made us great and who we all claim to be, Somalis, in my view, is an unacceptable argument if not disingenuous and dishonest of those who are proposing the disengagement of our society into tribal enclaves. Some advocates for the breakaway x-y lands maybe misinformed about what it may mean to dislodge from the rest of Somalia . The violence and mistreatments that Somalis directed to one another, a neighbor against his/her neighbor, and the dynamic social change that took place might have left them disappointed and in disbelief without exactly knowing what happened, nor even perhaps why, except that things no longer seem the same way they once were. But

who is to blame? We should blame us, individuals, but not the nation. This ill-feelings towards one another, the suffering of our young generations and the unresolved crisis in our country can only end when we approach our problems with constructive thinking, with instinctive feeling that we are, as people, capable of creating a bright future for our children and their children; and with clear understanding that it is a daunting task, which will require a strategic plan with a center of gravity towards healing the nation and its people first.

One of our greatest weaknesses of today is our unwillingness to accept responsibilities of what happened to our beloved country and its people, our strong attachment to the sub-consciously reserved respect for clan systems, and our inability to come up with a solution to address this paralysis in our society openly and sincerely. Leadership is quite about principles, loyalty, and commitments that one makes to stick to the law of the land. But given our long history of tribalism and corruptive governments, we could have predicted all that happened would happen; The Murphy Law applies here. It is the domino effect phenomenon that shouldn't have taken us by surprise.

The polemics of those who are against our unity and existence as a Somali nation, all failed to include a concrete and a reasonable discussion that could bring us to the table. Social science scholars of the day failed to explore if there exists a sympathetic revolutionary temperament that could resuscitate nationalism among the Somali nationals. None have been able to organize some intellectual discussion among the Diaspora and to delineate a pragmatic approach to interpret the collapse of the government, while others have exercised some misplaced individual interests or perhaps misinterpreted the dynamic changes that our society has experienced, in part, from a lack of a sense of history and lack of understanding some fundamental concepts and principles that we yet have to grasp.

The virulence of some angry groups who are advocating for secession, mostly, to some exceptions, stems from acclaim that their regions have been deprived a good share of utopian potential to prosper after the creation of the Somali republic. Some even argue that they are better off today- an argument that lacks evidence.

These polemics, in my view, have missed the fundamental elements that became the demise of

our social collapse. It is never, in my opinion, the nation or the historical significance of the unification of the republic that is to blame. It was rather individuals who manipulated us to turn against each other, and at the end everyone suffered. The struggle for independence and the carefully studied strategies and debates preceded the unification of the northern and southern Somalia in July 1st 1960, were based on ideology of nationalism, which dealt with the very foundations for the future of every Somali national from the standpoint of moral responsibility and the obligations that the founders of our nation have undertaken. Any attack against the significance of this historical event is, unfortunately, a clear intent to damage our history and an outright dismissal of the significance of the ideals of those who sacrificed their lives to defend the Somali nation and its people. It is nothing more than dogmatic assertion aimed at the very foundation of what we once had, a nation and its proud people.

An intellectual debate examining the validity of the advocacy for secession was never put forward or played in public arena for all of us to have a voice on its implementation or dismissal. A debate on this radical proposal to departure from Somali nationalism and unity should come to the forefront in the intellectual arena where Somalis should debate the merits of such proposal. Their radical critics and their anti-unity movement in its fullness ignore the critical fallacy in their argument. The attack on unity, in large part, evolve around narrow mindedness of today's myopic thinkers who tend to avoid the real hard questions of how to establish an ownership in dealing with our own future collectively. It is an argument that lacks a serious analysis, both qualitatively and quantitatively, and presents no valid basis to justify the proposal that endorses regional and tribal cleavages that could practically dissemble the nation.

To create a nation with resolve and with commitment to democracy, we should embrace our differences but yet seek for a common goal. And as much as I disagree with those who are advocating and working against our unity, I understand their rights to disagree with me. All of us have the right to disagree on policies related to tribal lineages and its importance or disadvantages to our common goals, but the center of gravity of our ideas and efforts should be the focus of building a viable nation and people that is respectful of the law of the land and that of human kind, but not a society that

is defined by the deliberate of power of destruction of its own people. And for all practical purpose, no matter how small we try to fracture our nation and how far one tries to move away from the rest of Somalia and form a government of one's own clan with his kinship, the reality is that we are not going to wipe away the ugly reality of tribal sentiments and its inherent hate, because it exists everywhere, even within individuals of the same family. The role of power in social decision-making tends to be much more in the tribal-based tradition of government, and has no boundaries nor protects anyone from the ugly practice of clan tactics. Force and violence take many forms, from crime to war, and that could be found within a clan or subclan. The notion that dismembering our country into small circles of tribes and regions would somehow make some of us stronger and prosperous is totally unrealistic and surely unacceptable to many of us.

Secession of some regions from the union, though not the factual argument of the majority, is nonetheless, a debate that has been on the screens for a while. Given the horror of war, and the frequent outcome in which there are no real winners, those arguments tend to explain the existence and the recurrence of this man-made catastrophe in terms of either misunderstanding, in an intellectual sense, or with hostile or paranoid emotions raised to such a pitch as to override rationality. War, at least in our case, resulted from a failed government that lacked oversight, criminal activities against decent law abiding citizens, corruption and misappropriation of our meager funds, long existed tribal interest that were waiting a straw that could break the camel's back, and finally because of lack of communication of our social engineers and civil leaders, some of whom reacted with overriding emotions that undermined our collective power, which ultimately gave rise to today's warlords.

To their credit, however, the amalgam of multi clans in northern Somalia (known as Somaliland now), fortunately understood the initial step for peace early enough to save whatever little that has left from the self inflicted wars, and done so immediately to create an atmosphere of peace among its people; which has had definitely eased the tension across tribal lines. They did this without much help from the outside world and resolved it peacefully, at least so far, without an arm-twisting by a third party. Though not exclusively one big tribe, they yet succeeded to see the need for peace

and agreed on that single but important premise alone. They should be commended for their approach to their local problem and should be encouraged to maintain peace in the region, lest things get out of hand again. The lesson in here is that the new leaders of our civil society of today, in every region of the union, should take an overview of the experiences of the horrible wars that torn our society apart and the corrosive hatred that the Somalis developed for each other. Finding an antidote to this poisonous atmosphere or at least addressing this primary problem should be in the minds and hearts of all Somali individuals, especially those who took the leadership posts. It is the first step towards a long road of healing process and to a peaceful coexistence and trust building among the Somalis. Stress should be placed on societal formation, conflict and problem resolution and achievements. I am an optimist and a believer of Somali unity, and I am confident that Somalis will find a way to resolve their differences if they have the will. Given our present situation, I believe we should at least entertain the idea of federalism and try to reach our common goals as a nation than proposing the dismemberment of our nation.

The next step is to create the foundation for a democratic society, and it is the responsibility of the governing body to lead the way in order to facilitate the birth of new thinking and the promotion of democratic principles that could better serve the society. Analyzing the current situation seriously and honestly will help them understand what is good for the future of the people and how to infuse these new paradigms into the society. It won't be easy for everyone to see these new social changes and embrace it, but it is, nonetheless, imperative that the new leaders of today push for social changes and help the introduction of new and refreshing social conscience built on democratic ideologies and justice for all. It is the first important step for re-establishing trust and the revival of dignity in this badly bruised society. And quite frankly, those in the north have already tested a process of elections and are committed to improving on it. But they could do and should do more by becoming the role model for peace in Somalia, or at least show the world that they tried to help before they throw the towel and walk away. They should engage dialogues and appeal to all civil society in the region to consider peace as the first option. The fact that the support for greater Somalia has seemingly

lost impetus and interest is because of lack of trust and interest in government systems, and our failure to articulate the dreams of yesterday that the pioneers of this nation once embraced. The efforts and the work of foreign agents like Ethiopia and Kenya, who made no secret of their desire to sabotage any endorsement of the creation of greater Somalia, have also played a key role and succeeded because of our directionless and self-destructive behavior. Nonetheless, the outright rejection and sabotage by some to dissemble and weaken the idea of unity, and the blame of the Somali nation for the mistakes and the greed of the few who squandered and have stolen our future, will only encourage and strengthen the enemy of our nation and definitely help the opportunistic few who support clan dominance.

We are witnessing a social phenomenon where the unchallenged views of the few decision-making warlords effectively and spontaneously pervaded the wisdoms and virtue of the many. Through coercive power, the freedom of the individuals as well as that of the masses are deemed to be under the influence of moral corrupt few warlords who are so far succeeded to sabotage the process of reconciliation and peace processes. We are waiting for decisions to be made for us and handed to us without even attempting to bring about progressive social changes based on free elections and democratic ideas that are free from clan. Where is the leadership of the moral-intellect in our society? Where are the prerequisites for leadership like knowledge, virtue, experience and wisdom that matter most when running a nation.

The role of the likeminded intellectuals and the peace loving civil society, including Israaca,

even when in variances in approaches, must be emphasized as a potential center for the revival of discussions and debates. Moving the national debates from the emotional stage of anger to a higher level of philosophical enquiry on how to analyze our crisis and resolve our disagreements, if any, but most importantly to find a way to gracefully and collectively approach our problem and turn this thing around, should have been the focus and the spirit of our debates. For the most part, Somalis are for unity and reconciliation and nothing has been long decided to stop us from achieving our goals with conviction as a nation, as a united people.

Organizing grassroots of concerned and misinformed civil society to participate public discourse and intellectual discussions on how to save the nation and its people has yet to take root in this tribally segregated society. Popular participation in organized protests or marches, demonstration against tyranny; disruptions of unwanted domination, and even civil disobedience are all the very foundation for the definition of democratic civil society. Marches, like the one led by Abwaan Mohamed Ibrahim "Hadraawi" during last year is an example of peacefully assembled petition to redress grievances with our current state. We owe to our children and to the generations after them to voice our support for the creation of a strong Somali nation. Our independent thinking and individual freedom in our society can only be assured by democratic systems that encourage dissent and protect our individual rights. Time to reexamine who we really are.

It is time for new leadership, new direction, and a renewed hope.



Israaca Toronto AGM July 2004

From left: Nur Bahal, Saida Awad, Abdi Hosh, Shamis, Awale Kulane, Abdullahi Abukar, Zainab Hassan, Gaildon, Khadar Bashir, Afyare and Ahmed Yusuf.

Options For Somalia : Which Way Forward?

By Abdirashid K. Hashi

Why is it that we Somalis seem indifferent to our nation's plight and senseless self-mutilation which made us the laughing stock of the whole world? Also, why have we failed to rise to the challenge and halt our nation's bleeding and political disintegration? Is our civil war unique and the only one which erupted in the whole world in the recent past? What makes our conflict unsolvable? The answer to these questions and many more could be summed up in one phrase: *lack of leadership*.

The only reason that our nation's troubles seem intractable to us and mind-boggling to outsiders is simply that Somalis in general and our elite in particular failed quite miserably to rise to the moment and rescue the nation – when the nation needed us the most.

Throughout world history, true leaders assumed illustrious roles during their nations' hour of need. As a consequence, some leaders become known as great revolutionaries who cleansed their countries of corrupted systems; others are referred to as vanguards who led armed revolts and liberation wars; while some leaders are viewed as visionaries who had the foresight to devise suitable ideologies and organizational mechanisms needed for their national struggles; whereas other leaders are revered as national heroes and nation builders who paid the ultimate price for the liberty and sovereignty of their people.

All the leaders of the world – both the past and present – have one exceptional attribute in common: when true leaders identify a national predicament they tackle it with maximum force and stay focused till they successfully complete their undertaking. The skill and talent of transforming ideas, aspiration and vision into a full-fledged realities and the ability to execute visionary strategies with precision is what distinguishes leaders from ordinary folks.

It seems apparent that Somalia is having a considerable difficulty in conceiving a semblance of leadership let alone giving birth to worthy national heroes. What we must do in the meantime – as citizens of this sterile motherland – is to consult with one another and see if we could come up with an interim national consensus -a sort of a way forward.

Therefore to set the stage for a genuine dialogue and a national consensus building deliberation – for at least those who consider themselves as good Somalis - I would like to present in the following paragraphs four possible strategic policy options that we must evaluate. Each option is applicable to the ongoing (or stalled) Somali national reconciliation conference in Nairobi , Kenya or future national dialogues. Both the participants of the Nairobi conference and those monitoring their moves via the cyberspace need to consider which option they and other Somalis should take.

- **Option One:**

We need to consider if we would like to accept the fact that Somalia has literally been hostage for the warlords / faction leaders / political leaders / signatories or whatever you want to call them. These are the men who have the guns and control (or at least claim they have power over) different parts of Somalia . The reality on the ground and the fact that these mischievous men proved time and again that they will not settle for anything less than a total pre-eminence in Somali politics should convince the rest of us to accept their dominance and lordship over us and our country. We should make it clear to them, to ourselves and to the entire world that we voluntarily subordinate our rights to the unstoppable ambitions of our “leaders” and as such we should work with these leaders and hope the best. Simply put: shall we appease our “leaders” and declare a total capitulation.

- **Option Two:**

If option one is a bitter pill to swallow and our ego is a bit too inflated to accept this appalling scenario, then we can opt to negotiate with the men who hold our country captive. To make the best out of this quagmire, what we could try is to find a compromise between the “leaders” and the rest of us. Under this bargain - which in fact will be a lopsided one – we shall be ready to be junior partners in this unholy matrimony dominated and designed by the warlords / faction leaders / political forces or shall I say our LEADERS because they will instruct us to address them with that title when we join forces with them.

- **Option Three:**

Another option, which we can consider, is to accept that the warlords are destructive by nature and they cannot rebuild the Somalia that they themselves presided over its demise. As a consequence our duty and that of every sane Somali should be to end the illegal manipulation of our destiny by the thugs known as warlords. Such a world-view and appraisal of our current circumstance would require a new thinking or a paradigm shift, for an undertaking of this nature is nothing short of a declaration of war of liberation. And the fact of the matter is, the “leaders” whose defeat we might deliberate on would not wither away; they will rather strive to swiftly eliminate any challenger to their leadership and domination. Option three is a very dangerous proposition and it could cause its advocates both life and limb. Anti-warlord revolt will also require the formation of a national liberation front whose adversaries will include multi-headed home-grown monsters as well as external opponents who will declare from the get go that they will not allow a new mysterious phenomenon to sweep unchecked in their sphere of influence or backyard.

- **Option Four:**

The last option, which we must consider, is to accept that Somalia – the good old Somalia that is – is gone for good and is not coming back, therefore we must accept this sad reality and

move on. Some might convincingly contend that the Somali nation – which we are pointlessly hunkering after – has long been dismembered and destroyed. To indulge in a lofty idea such as the notion of a Somali *nation* is more like an illusion than reality. The proponents of this brutal realism stress that we have already gave up NFD, we also have relinquished Djibouti , and we - in all practical purposes - surrendered the Ogaden region. They further point out that Ethiopia has a strong grip on Puntland, Somaliland as well as Bay, Bakool and Jawhar regions – and they contend it will take decades if not generations to reverse this grip. The realists who subscribe to this view further argue giving up the dreams of Somalia should be as *painless* as abandoning the defunct fantasy of Greater Somalia has been. The brutal and blunt message of the proponents of this notion is: accepting the defeat already written in bold letters on our foreheads would enable us to focus on our primary responsibilities – our families and they further suggest that we - like the *gypsies* - should only worry about putting bread on our tables.

Without mincing words, I think we need to decide which of these paths we want to take. We sometimes waste our time when we waver with regards to where we want to go from here. The question everyone needs to ask is: what is the colour of his or her brochette. Each of these alternative points of reference has both prerequisites and consequences and the road ahead is filled with piercing bricks and penetrating thorns. I will be satisfied, if this opinion piece contributes towards terminating the futile and excessive arguments known as *fadhi ku dirir* or sitting warfare – and lead us towards action-oriented solutions and objective analyses to our national ailment.

I would like to hear from the readers.

Please send your responses to:
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