

Reigning in Anti-Peace Forces

The Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) forces and Ethiopian troops have cleared Mogadishu of Eritrean backed terrorists and international insurgents linked to the country's ousted Union of Islamic Courts. As Somali's Ambassador to Ethiopia, Abdikarin Farah said: "Mogadishu is currently peaceful for the first time in 16 years after the government responded to the attacks in Mogadishu with considerable success." Mogadishu is now calm because every clan in Mogadishu cleared its neighborhood, working in tandem with forces of the TFG and Ethiopia. It is because of its resolve and commitment for the principles of IGAD that the 26th Session of IGAD Council of Ministers that was convened on April 13, 2007 in Nairobi, Kenya, commended Ethiopia's endeavour. Says the Communiqué: "IGAD expresses its appreciation to the Government of Ethiopia for all the sacrifices it has paid to promote the common position of IGAD member states, which is fully consistent with the commitment of the Organization of the success of the TFG and the interest of the people of IGAD region to achieve peace and stability and to protect the region from terrorists and extremists."

It is regrettable that Eritrea is the only country in the sub-region that plays destabilizing role in Somalia despite its rhetoric for regional peace and stability in Somalia.

The Kenyan-based ambassador of Eritrea to South Africa, Mr. Salih Omar, while presenting his credentials to the South African President on April 26, 2007 said, "the foreign policy guidance of Eritrea includes fostering cooperation for the consolidation of universal peace and respect of international law and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states and combating terrorism."

In a live satellite interview with Al Jazeera television on April 16, 2006 president Isayas also claimed that Eritrea intervened in Somalia to bring peace and stability. All these statements are mere hypocrisy since Eritrea has never refrained from meddling in the internal affairs of its neighbors and supporting terrorist and extremist elements bent on destabilizing peace and stability in the Horn of Africa region.

Eritrea is officially backing the remnants of the Union of Islamic Courts /UIC/ which was ousted from power last December. This is mainly because they share the same hostility towards Ethiopia and the sub-region. Both are attempting to put the region in jeopardy.

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This has become obvious to the international community as Eritrea has turned out to be the leader of non-governmental actors in the region. The US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jenday E. Frazer said "... the Asmara government was training, funding even advising several insurgent groups including the Al-Shabbab."

While the African Union, the United Nations and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development are assisting the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia to become viable, Eritrea is working to undermine its authority. First, it trained and armed the international terrorists and its troops fought along the UIC extremist leadership. And now, after the UIC's ouster, Eritrea is harboring members of the extremist leaders in Asmara.

Besides, it is commissioning self-styled mercenaries like the Ogaden National Liberation Front /ONLF/ and others to massacre innocent civilians in Ethiopia. The recent heinous acts of abduction in Afar and massacres of Ethiopians and foreigners in the Somali Regional State of Ethiopia are cases in point.

Eritrea has turned out to be an isolated state. And recently, it has suspended its membership of IGAD accusing it of bias to the situation in Somalia.

Eritrea's withdrawal from IGAD can't be a surprise given the country's contempt for international law and institutions. President Isayas denied even the existence of the regional institution when he said in his interview with Al-Jazeera, "there is no organization named IGAD on the ground."

No pretext is, therefore, necessary for Eritrea, to justify its withdrawal from IGAD. As Prime Minister Meles Zenawi clearly put it in a recent press conference with foreign correspondents, "Eritrea suspended its membership for it has originally placed itself wrongly with peace loving nations."

Despite the malicious attempt by Eritrea to derail the peace process, the best chance for Somalia to bring an end to the mayhem is at the end of the tunnel. The international community is duty-bound to help the TFG to make headway towards achieving it.