

Using Geoinformation Science to Reveal the Impact of the Eritrea-Ethiopian Boundary Commission

Decision on Irobland and People

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Part III

Assessment of EEBC reports and Ethiopian government's stand on Irob condition

The Eritrea-Ethiopian Boundary Commission committed bias to the Irob people and land, failing to look carefully into disputed border matters, accepting and using inaccurate as well as controversial evidence in the Endeli projection, in the Central Sector, that includes entire Irobland. In accordance with a puzzled assumption of the Colonial treaty of 1900 between Italy and Emperor Menelik II, the EEBC and its lawyers irresponsibly accepted that the so-called "Muna river" would apparently flow eastwards from Zalambessa, dissecting Gulomakeda, Sabeya and Irobland subsequently joining the Endeli river at a point in time. If the Boundary Commission were truly interested in determining a fair arbitration, it could have interviewed some knowledgeable elders from Gulomakeda, Sebeya, and Irob areas who would have helped them in obtaining better evidences about the existence or non-existence of this fabricated (made-up) river named: "Muna". No one would deny the presence of several tributaries that flow eastwards from Zalambessa, but none of them is called "Muna". Therefore, it is fraudulent for the Boundary Commission to use the nonexistent "Muna" river theory as the rationale for their border-delimiting line - a line (from Point 20 to Point 21 on the EEBC's map of border delimitation) which will impose compulsory separation of families, relatives, friends and communities who have never been disturbed for centuries.

Besides the introduction of fabricated non-existent river known as "Muna" in to its report, in order to create such disintegration and division among families, the commission has put in its report another very shameful and irresponsible statement read as "the impact of Ethiopian administrative activity has been weaker, and the impact of Eritrean activity stronger, in Northern and Western fringes of the Endeli projection and that therefore Ethiopia has

not established its effective sovereignty to the required degree over those areas. The treaty line should therefore be varied so as to place only the more southerly and easterly parts of the Endeli projections in Ethiopia (Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission Decision, p. 54)". This and the "Muna river theory" is absolutely trumped-up (fabricated) story purposely done by Ethiopian government's effort to put Irob people's existence in to serious question as ethnic entity. The places being represented as "northern and western fringes of Endeli projection" are parts of Irob which had never been any other than Ethiopian territories in the geopolitical history of the region. And have never been administered by Eritrea at any time.

Moreover, after the issuance of the Boundary Commission's ruling in 2002, the EEBC, Ethiopian government and the United Nations purposely avoided mentioning in their documents or reports the name of "Irob" or the "Irobland", while "Badme" often has been the focal point and the core of concern. Why did the international community and Ethiopian government demonstrate such biases on Irob people and land? In addition, the United Nations and other international community members never condemned the Eritrean invasion and occupation of the Irobland (1998-2000) and their mistreatments and human rights abuses against the Irob inhabitants. And the current Ethiopian government held the international communities' side betraying its citizens for the sake of food aids that it get from them. The Ethiopian government accepted the EEBC's injustice and ill decision that inhumanely and cruelly disintegrate and/or uproot the same people from their sacred ancestral land. On top of that, in 2004 the Ethiopian government conducted several public meetings aimed to convince tigreans and Irob people to show up their agreement of ceding the above listed territories and the rest of disputed areas of Ethiopia to Eritrea based on the EEBC's decision. However, the Tigrai people in general and particularly the Irob people completely rejected the government's proposal of accepting the EEBC's decision of ceding the Irobland and the rest of Ethiopian land to Eritrea.

After 9 years of EEBC's decision, on March 2, 2011, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia appeared on the Eritrean opposition radio (ASENA) for interview about settling of the boundary condition between Ethiopia and Eritrea. During his interview, he clearly indicated to the public about his readiness to award the disputed Ethiopian territories to Eritrea. He clearly said that his only concern is about the division of single houses into two

countries and bringing normalization process between two countries but not about hundreds of villages that are awarded to Eritrea from Ethiopian side. This indicates that the Ethiopian government still didn't change its stand of ceding the Ethiopian territories to Eritrea. Its stand today and its stand before 9 years are all the same. On the contrary, Irobs are not ready to give even an inch of their land to Eritrea and are struggling to save all villages of their land awarded to Eritrea by EEBC, which accounts more than one third of the entire Irob territory. The interview of PM Meles Zenawi with the Eritrean opposition (ASSENA) radio can be watched through the following link. <http://aigaforum.com/Archive/ArchiveMar2011-2.htm> or open www.aigaforum.com, then Archives, and then choose Mar 2011 (2). The same interview can also be watched using the following link: http://www.irobmablo.org/IRAA_Statement_May26.pdf. This link will provide the readers very clear views and insights of his interview with Eritrean opposition radio, ASENSA. From the beginning the current Ethiopian government didn't provide necessary information to the Eritrea-Ethiopian Boundary Commission that proves about the Ethiopianess of the Irob people and land. This was done purposely to divide Irobland and people in to two countries. And still now, it has the same strong stand to award Irobland to Eritrea. It is because of this, that the commission has delimited the border carelessly and without paying due attention to the right of the Irob people. Due to this and other related dangerous signs, the Irob people are afraid of harmful disintegration and therefore are watching the situation very closely more than ever.

Regarding the historic integrity of Irobland, the author of this article wants to remind every reader about the Irob people's former struggle that they waged against the Italians and others' to assert their Ethiopianess. As it is clearly stated in Souba Hais Article, "during the territorial conventions held between Italy and Emperor Menelik, the two sides agreed that Irob had been and is part and parcel of Agame, therefore Ethiopia. The Irob leaders played important roles in this regards by presenting the historical background of Irobland and people to the authorities of both sides. A delegation lead by Belata Naizghi of Adgade-Are (now awarded to Eritrea) traveled to Adwa to meet Dej. Gebre-Selassie, the head of Ethiopian territorial commission, to brief him about Irob's case. Other Irob leaders like Ras Sebhat Aregawi and Shum-Agame Desta Sebhat did as much by personally contacting the commissioners

of both sides. Thus the Irob leaders succeed in keeping the entire Irob region intact in its traditional administrative province of Tigrai, Ethiopia and it remained so till current shocking Invasion". The author is privileged to cite the above paragraph from Souba Hais article without modifying it as it reflects the plain truth about Irob people and their land's status. If Irob were part of Eritrea, why wouldn't it be divided in to two countries during the border controversy between Italy and Menelik? Why now? The answer is simple. On those times, the political history of Irob region was carefully assessed and determined its fate to remain totally in Ethiopia by seeking clear evidences about the Ethiopianess of the Irobland and people. But now a couple of irresponsible lawyers sitting at warm chairs in Den-Hag, who never visited the Irobland and did not care to know anything about the geopolitical history of the region divided the Irob people and their sacred-native land in to two parts without any historical justification and evidences.

Conclusion

First of all, it is somewhat paradoxical that Ethiopia, the oldest African nation, should repeatedly be the turf for experimenting modalities for boundary formations in the continent where the overwhelming majority of the colonialist-generated boundaries, remain either un-delimited or un-demarcated. Furthermore, Ethiopia has consistently made positive contributions in the struggle against secession and for the preservation of territorial sovereignty of African states such as the Congo, Nigeria, Sudan and even Somalia-with its perennial irredentist agenda against its neighbors. Yet, Ethiopia has today become the first-and so far the only-state in the continent to sustain forced secession of part of its people and territory. What is even more astounding is that Ethiopia-the indomitable country that had successfully fought so many anti-colonial wars to acquit its independent existence, now stands to be victimized by defunct and invalid colonial "treaties" thanks to PM Meles Zenawi. The "treaties" were unilaterally flouted, violated, manipulated, reversed, rejected, superseded and/or overwritten by inter-colonialist cabal (e.g. 1906, 1925, 1936) at will. Why and how it is that such non-existent and non-applicable colonial "treaties" are about to hang as an albatross on Ethiopia's scarred and tired shoulders finally affecting the border people and putting the Irob minorities' existence in to question?

Hence, to act against the decision of the EEBC, Ethiopian government's stand and The Hague court, all Irobs, countless Ethiopians from all walks of life, and others have protested against the injustice of using null and void colonial "treaties" to divide the Irob minority and other boarder communities in to two nations with a basis for determining border between Eritrea and Ethiopia. The Irobs and Ethiopian public in general have pointed out incessantly to all concerned that the entire process of the Eritrean-Ethiopian boundary commission and The Hague court's verdict --in all of which the Ethiopian people have had no say whatsoever--were illegal, illegitimate and unacceptable by this or succeeding generations. Countless letters, resolutions, pleas and protests have been expressed via various venues since 1998, principally addressed to United Nations and other world powers. And I don't know why the United Nations, whose Charter's first Preamble line is "We the People of the United Nations...", have become deaf all this time to the messages of Irobs and all the boarder people.

To make matters worse, the Ethiopian government agreed not only to base boundary delimitation on the basis of defunct colonial treaties, but also to accept the determination of the UN managed Boundary Commission (arbitration body) as "final and binding." However, Ethiopians at home and abroad in all walks of life protested against the signing of the Algiers Agreement and called upon all concerned not to go through with it because it is patently inimical to the national interests of Ethiopians planting the seeds of interminable instability and conflicts in the region for generations to come. It was also stated that all concerned should know that Ethiopians will not accept its terms as legitimate and binding verdict even if it may be imposed.

The Ethiopian government has a responsibility and obligation to heed the voices of its citizens and protect and safeguard them regardless of any social or political harm that might come from any external or internal forces or agents (Article 33, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia). Based on paragraph 2 of article 33, every Ethiopian national has the right to the enjoyment of all rights, protection and benefits derived from Ethiopian nationality as prescribed by law. The government also has a sacred duty not to endanger the Irob people or other Ethiopians because of the continued influences

and pressure of the international community, which never demonstrated any good gesture or effort in condemning, defending or protecting the fundamental civic and human rights of the Irob minority during the Eritrean invasion and later during the EEBC unjust and unfair border delimitation.

Therefore, the government of Ethiopia is implored urgently not to betray the Irob people or other Ethiopians at the border zones, in exchange for continued aid that the international community is promising as precondition if only the demarcation is promptly implemented as scheduled by the Boundary Commission. The Commission's ruling is unjust and unfair and will surely lead only to more problems than solutions. This is violating the territorial rights and protection of the citizens of Ethiopia, like Irobs, subjecting them to disintegration and possible ethnic cleansing. For this reason, we the Irob people and all Ethiopians in general, strongly resent and reject the support given by the UN, the EU and the United States to the EEBC's unjust ruling criticizing the Ethiopian government for not acting responsibly towards its citizens.

The primary responsibility of the international community, particularly of the United Nations, should be protecting the most helpless and endangered groups around the world such as Irobs and safeguarding their civic and human rights but not creating separation among families and uprooting them from their native sacred land of their ancestries (see Universal Declaration of Human Rights). Although the Irob natives all over the world tirelessly voice their concern over the helpless and voiceless people of Irob in the Irobland, UN and other international communities continued to ignore their outcries for justice and human rights. Thus, why did the United Nations demonstrate bias against the Irob ethnic minority of Ethiopia instead of safeguarding their civil rights and preventing them from being divided in to two countries?

Last but not least, the author of this statement begs the Ethiopian government not to betray the Irob people and Irobland as well as other Ethiopians and Ethiopian land for the sake of continued aid that International communities are promising for it as the preconditions if and only if the demarcation process between Ethiopia and Eritrea is quickly implemented as scheduled by the Eritrean-Ethiopian Boundary Commission and supported by UN, EU, and

United States of America. It is by no means too late for the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union, and the United States – to re-examine and rectify the invalid decision which inevitably destructs population along the Eritrean and Ethiopian borders. Therefore, the author of this article would fervently call the United Nations and all justice and peace loving nations of the world, to once again look in to this matter carefully and take appropriate action. The author also calls on peace loving nations to pay attention to the Irob people's continuous cries for justice and respect of their civil, human rights and territorial integrity of their land. Irob people also seek the recognition of their absolute right to determine which country they will remain as citizens based on their interest. The Irob people must not be forced to accept a blind verdict aimed at dividing and separating them from their families and relatives to which they are tied through birth, ancestral heritage and culture. We, Irobs, strongly condemn the whole process beginning from the Algiers agreement made between the two countries leaders and completely reject the EEBC decision of ceding our land, calling its decision senseless and baseless, therefore Null and Void.

Recommendations to all Irobs

To defend ourselves from disappearance, we Irobs must stand together hand in glove. As Albert Einstein said "You were not born a winner, and you were not born a loser. You are what you make yourself be." If we, Irobs, don't act now to avert the ill decision of Eritrea - Ethiopian Boundary commission and the Ethiopian government's stand of ceding our land, soon the name Irob itself will just be history and we will not exist as a people after the planned Ethio-Eritrean border demarcation is implemented in Irobland. Therefore, let us pressurize the Ethiopian government in order to publicly guarantee us the integrity of our sovereign territories and not to give even an inch of our historical land to Eritrea.

Let us also make sure that our cries are heard by international powers and humanitarian organizations in order to influence Ethiopian government and reverse its stand of ceding Irobland which will enable us remain undivided in the same country, Ethiopia. Irobs and lovers of Irobs must unite and work

together at this critical moment and fight for the Irob minority rights that are given to Irobs by the international law and article 33 of Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. It is by itself international criminal act to break the international law that prevents a minority from being divided. After the recent Ethio-Eritrean war, it seems our social integrity is disrupted and we are at the state of near total collapse to continue as an intact minority and people. If we, Irobs, are forced to be divided into two countries as it is already done by The Hague court, then our fate will be losing our historical identity, bond, culture, and integrity finally leading to disappearance. We will never survive with our dignity, identity and respected culture if the danger of division worrying the Irob people is not reversed. Therefore, we must mobilize together internationally to save ourselves from being divided in to two countries as it is our constitutional right and citizenship responsibility to do so. We are one people, a distinct ethnic minority, who have been Ethiopian citizens in the geopolitical history of the region. We are the people who have a strong and passionate attachment to our land and country, Ethiopia but now divided into two nations in the name of political compromise. What an irony!

The author of this statement wants to conclude by urging every Irobs to stand up and hold hand to hand to fight when any one comes to divide such a tight community in to two and demarcate our land. The only option is to take matters into our own hands and defend our people's interest by any means necessary. We don't give any inch or piece of our land to Eritrea as it has never been land of Eritrea in the history of Irob nation. Let us proceed until federal state of the country, Ethiopia to talk personally to Meles and ask the status of our land before demarcation happens suddenly. Besides reaching and voicing to the international communities (supreme powers) will help us to make the law that they have put on paper the reality and prevent Irob minority from being divided in to two hostile nations. With this, we have to make sure that our Irob elders and youngsters are aware of that our land is already given to Eritrea. We have to make sure that we are telling them exactly which part of Irobland is ceded to Eritrea. We have to make sure that our Irob elders and youngsters are ready to defend our land when anybody comes there to demarcate our historic and beloved land.

Long live Irobs and Irobland, the land of the braves!

May, 2012.

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N.B. The above reference materials represent for the entire article (Part I, II and III).