

Irob Day Festival Update

(June 2, 2013)

Irob News Service #1: Irob Day to be celebrated on June 2, 2013

While 'Irob day' was decided to be commemorated each year on 16th of May (Ethiopian calendar) the actual celebration this year is to take place on June 02. My informants from Dawhan town tell me that dignitaries and invited guests are flowing to the Woreda. According to the invitation paper, the aim of the day is to remember the martyrs, the wounded and the disappeared. Most of all it is to celebrate 'Irob unification' after 'shaibiya' occupation. Though your reporter is currently in Somalia (Ogadenia?) for few days, thanks to citizen journalism you will be updated minute by minute (if the technology allows) of the happenings of the festival direct from Dawhan.

Irob News Service # 2: Hagos Tsegay, woreda chief, replaced

According to reliable sources from Tigray, the chief Administrator of Irob Woreda, Ato Hagaos Tsegay, has been removed from his post. Though he was expecting to be replaced some time, he didn't expect it would be so soon, your reporter was told. No explanation was given about the removal but some say it is promotion into higher echelons of government power. Goron Group is grateful to Hagos for his hard work to Irob development.

Irob News Service #3: Partial list of Dignitaries, June 02, 2012; 10 Am

The Irob day celebration has just started at the compound of Dawhan High school. It seems like the whole population from region is in this town. Among the dignitaries, the president of Tigray region, Ato Abay Weldu,(the man had a long years of experience in Irob region) the Catholic Bishop of Adigrat, Abune Tesfasilasie, the Zonal administrator, Military chiefs, representatives from Afar region, Onna Mohamed (*Hadi Redanto*) and Abba Lemlem of Gonda Gonde and many others.

Irob News Service #4: Art and Music June 02, 2012; 10:15 Am

This is the day to promote Irob language and culture, most of all a day to celebrate Irob resilience through difficult times of Shabiya occupation and Economic hardships. The Irob band (Bahli Irob) is active on the stage, a lot of dance and and festive mood is in the air. Memhir Embaye has just finished his trade mark 'Didede' paying tribute to the land, its history and the people. The crowd reacted well, and I must say it can make one emotional.

Poems are being recited; one man is on stage having great time with "Masene", though I am afraid Meles praising (with some doses of adulation) is taking unwarranted time, a temptation our artist should resist, I would say, though there is nothing wrong to recognize an individual's contribution from time to time.

Irob News Service #5: What the Bishop Said ... partially June 02, 2012; 11 Am

Bishop Tesfasilasie just ended his speech followed by the president of Tigray region. The Bishop's speech stressed on the need to refocus on education, family, and promotion of ethical values. He said promoting science is noble cause to embrace but if scientific pursuit is not accompanied by respect for family and ethics it will take us nowhere. As expected, he emphasized that since character is shaped both in the family and schools and if those two institutions are not strengthened one can't expect to have a citizen with public purpose in mind. He called upon all stakeholders to work hard to promote spiritual and economic well being of the people.

Irob News Service #6: What the President said ... partially June 02, 2012; 11:30 Am

Thus spoke the president of Tigray region: After the customary introductory remark that he is happy to be in Dawhan and grateful for the invitation he praised the Irob struggle against Derg tyranny and recognized the blood price that was paid. He said, though the Irob people had a choice to make whether to support a different group, the wise people of Irob chose to be on right side of history (i.e., TPLF/EPRDF) and it is necessary that people reap the fruits of the struggle of Ginbot 20, the day the derg regime was collapsed.

He continued his speech with typical EPRDFite lingo of poverty personification. Now that the Irob people have chased the Derg and Shabiya away dead and wounded, there is a more vicious enemy, poverty, which require...s concerted effort from every one. He praised improvements in education, reduced child mortality etc... but recognized much more is needed while assuring the support from the regional government. He finally thanked the military (there are a lot of them by the way on the festival)

for preserving peace and protecting national sovereignty with the people of Irob no matter what they faced.

(Your reporter was expecting the president would share some of his fond (or otherwise,) memories of his time in Irob land as 'tegedaly' but everything he said was in line with party politics. May be for the revolutionaries personal experiences don't inform policy making choices)

Irob News Service # 7: Panel Discussion... Gebre's Memory

Panel discussion is being conducted in some of the halls and your reporter was told Gebre, one of the long time serving Irob Woreda administrators, is arguing why TPLF was welcomed in Irob land and why the people fought hard during Shabiya invasion. He is making a case how Church and State can work together during emergencies and attempting to demonstrate the case of Irob as a best practice lesson for others to learn in partnership building challenges. He also remembered the formation of 'Ituk senbet' as spontaneous response to unwarranted aggression. Gebre made some recommendation on how to engage the young into productive professions and minimize illegal migration.

Irob News Service # 8: Finally Q & A Session

After the panel discussion chaired by the ex-woreda administrator, Q & A sessions were organized where questions and suggestions were forwarded. The new administrator talked about the need for installing alternative water banks, expanding the quality of education, illegal migration, and tapping into the local tourism potential; The Military chief thanked Irob people for their hospitality and the military is prepared to respect local culture. The military man had some interesting stories about Irob hospitality on the mountains of Aiga.

During the discussion, the president, Abay Woldu, further acknowledge that Irob topography is challenging but it is not hopeless for development. With resilience the Irobs display, supported by a good leadership and technology the Irob fate can be altered. He further reminded the educated class to document (write) the colorful Irob history and confirmed that the administration in Mekelle is ready to help such initiatives.

Abune Tesfasilasie on his part, further touched upon the points that the facebook Goron Group are so familiar. Unlimited generosity and lack of training on business mindset, misplaced expectations within low income communities etc... and at around 3 Pm the program was finalized and guests were invited for

refreshment.

Your reporter's take on the festival:

By and large the Irob day was a success not only for what it accomplished but for the signal it sends to the people. It is not every day that all the stakeholder come together under one roof to discuss Irob development challenges and success stories. However, for those of us who play outsider/insider role, we were damn-founded the case of the disappeared citizens were totally ignored. Your reporter thinks such an act of willful amnesia is unforgivable and we remind the authorities that their case should not be pushed to the oblivion.

(This report was made available by our men in the ground, Huluf W/Silasie, and Seyoum Yohnnes (Bolta) - compiled by your reporter who happen to be in Somalia for some days. I will be ungrateful if I fail to thank them for their superb job of citizen journalism from the site)