

**There is no visible sentiment of narrow nationalism among the people of Tigrai; rather our “Culture of Excessive *Sikifta*” has hampered our developments**

I didn't get the exact English word to the Tigrigna term *Sikifta*. Though not the exact definition; *Sikifta* could mean “**forgo your feelings and/or advantages to keep or not to damage somebody else's feelings and/or advantages**”. Thus, I will be using the Tigrigna term with this basic meaning.

During the last 25 years, it was frequent to hear from some individuals as if there is visible sentiment of narrow nationalism among the people of Tigrai. However, this labeling lacks factual explanation on how the problem was being manifested and how widespread among the general public is. It seems that such accusation has been portrayed purposely to further exploit the people of Tigray's Culture of Excessive *Sikifta*.

If there is someone who could answer to most of the questions below to the contrary with objective facts and supportive evidences; then I will tend to pause and re-consider my stand in this regard. Thus, the questions which I am forwarding to all Ethiopians will be the following:

1. Could there be any rationale for the people of Tigrai who had practically exhibited unselfishness during its' seventeen years of intense and arduous armed struggle that resulted in the removal of the *Dergue* Fascist Regime at the cost of the scarification and injury of hundreds of thousands of it's' sons and daughters to be labeled as narrow nationalistic?
2. Did the people of Tigrai requested compensation for all the scarifications and destructions due to the 17 years of the arduous armed struggle?
3. Are the people of Tigrai favored by the federal government and did it take federal resources in excess of its share?
4. Did the people of Tigrai showed any resentment on the development of the other Ethiopian nations and nationalists?
5. Is it not the people of Tigrai who had primarily shouldered the impact of the Ethio-Eritrea war; and who still continue to be the victim of the “No War, No Peace” policy? Can someone imagine the psychological, social, economic, cultural and environmental implications of the policy in place for 15 years to the people of Tigrai?
6. Is it not the Tigrai region lagging behind most regions in terms of social and economic development as a result of the recurrent drought, civil war, the Ethio-Eritrea war compounded by mal-administration, corruption and because of its “Culture of Excessive *Sikifta*”?

7. Is it not the people of Tigray who has and who is tolerating all the targeting and discriminations by some of the opposition groups both locally and abroad?
8. Could majority of the university students from all over Ethiopia and studying/who have studied in the Universities of Mekelle, Adigrat and Axum witness that the people of Tigray has shown them any sort of intolerance to their language and culture?
9. Could majority of the Ethiopian Army Members stationing all over Tigray witness that the people of Tigray has shown them any sort of intolerance to their language and culture?
10. Is there any race and language based discrimination in the EFFORT companies which are having employees from all Ethiopian nations and nationalities.
11. Are they not the Tigray Development Association, the Relief Society of Tigray and Dedit Micro Finance who were training and sharing their experiences for the establishment and strengthening of similar institutions in the other Ethiopian regions?
12. Is there any famous Tigrayan vocalist or artist who didn't advocate Ethiopia and Ethiopian unity. The list could continue.

If every Ethiopian try to carefully and rationally answer such and other related questions without any bias; then I am sure the majority will come to the consensus that there was no visible sentiment of narrow nationalism among Tigrayans. This however does not mean that there are no individual Tigrayans who might show narrow mindedness when they feel that their culture, language and nationality is compromised excessively. Moreover, this doesn't mean that there are no individual Tigrayans like other individuals from the other nations and nationalities who are corrupted and who abuse the system.

But, if any Tigrayan is exercising his/her right of using and enriching his/her language, culture and history and if this is creating some discomfort to others; it should be clear to them that this was one of the objectives of the People of Tigray's struggles; and they have to accept the objective reality and show tolerance than labeling that individual as narrow nationalists. Similarly, any Tigrayan should also respect the other Ethiopians right to exercise their identity.

Some individuals also show a sort of resentment when the Tigrayan's brevity of recent history in overthrowing the militaristic junta is shown and narrated through different medias; and they consider as if Tigrayans are narrow nationalists. But, there is nothing wrong for Tigrayans to enlighten their history and trace the roots of their forefathers; as there could not be Ethiopian patriotism without Tigrayan Patriotism, without Oromo patriotism, without Amhara patriotism and without the patriotism of the other nations and nationalities.

The other accusation by some opposition groups and individuals is that excessive resources are allocated and the Ethiopians property is being dispatched to Tigrai. This is being expressed by these elements as “*Tigrai Eskitilema Hulum Yidma*”. This destructive propaganda which is portrayed repeatedly is not effectively countered neither by TPLF nor by the Tigrayan officials at federal level. This in itself could be attributed to our Culture of Excessive *Sikifta*.

However, as the Ethiopian Constitution clearly stipulates and endorses nationalism, we Tigrayans shouldn't be trapped in our Culture of Excessive *Sikifta* in fear of not to be labeled as narrow nationalists, and we should stand together and defend the interests of our people. I do hope by now all of us and our leaders might have learned the hardest way from the recent unexpected uprisings in some towns of the Amhara Region and the killings of Tigrayans and the lootings and destructions of their properties and the portrayal of messages of hatred targeting the people of Tigrai.

Finally, to mitigate the multi-faceted problems emanating from our Culture of Excessive *Sikifta*, I suggest the following:

1. When it comes to our survival and our equitable and rational social and economic benefits; we Tigrayans should not wait a blessing from somebody else to exercise our constitutional rights; and we should avoid our excessive *Sikifta* mentality and be able to “call a spade a spade”.
2. The need to teach our children to be proud of their identity; cultivate them to be open minded and guide them on how they could express their thoughts and feelings diligently and without being trapped in the culture of excessive *Sikifta*.
3. We need to have a strong, independent and global media outlet with the aim to serve as a discussion forum with the aim to contribute in fostering the Tigrai people short, medium and long-term strategic interests.

Thank you

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