

EPRDF Land Policy and the "Cessation Clause"

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The feudal land policy of Ethiopia under the late Emperor was disastrous. Under the feudal system the nefteгна were the sole beneficiaries; whereas the legitimate land owners (farmers) were enslaved. The DERG under Col. Mengistu Hailemariam exploited the feudal policy regarding land ownership under the slogan "መሬት ለኦረሽ"; and used the same to enslave **all Ethiopians** except those who colluded with them, including *their* ex-Minister of Agriculture Eng. Hailu Shawel.

The EPRDF land policy is tailored to benefit farmers, by proactively engaging in maximizing agricultural productivity, through the implementation of irrigation; improved seeds through research; enhancement of infrastructure that helps farmers to bring their products to the local and international markets, and the like. Furthermore, under the EPRDF government, local and Diaspora investment is encouraged to lease land with preinstalled infrastructure such as water and electric power, for engaging in the production of other agricultural products including horticulture. Those private enterprises create employment opportunities, not to mention much needed foreign currency for Ethiopia. At the same time, the private enterprises are accorded very favorable incentives by the government to make deserved profits in return for their investments.

I have to respectfully defer with Washera2 with regard to the omission of "cessation" from the Ethiopian Constitution; and regarding "unoccupied land" acquisition. In my opinion, the "cessation" clause in our Constitution is the ultimate guarantee that all Nations and Nationalities shall remain on equal footing for generations to come. The Nations and Nationalities of Ethiopia have been empowered and they have embraced the Ethiopian Constitution in its **totality**. The "cessation" clause is not by itself a threat to Ethiopia's unity. **The cessation clause** is a guarantee against the exploitation by "future" governments who might impose their will upon the Nations and Nationalities of Ethiopia. Such a "future" government is the only threat to the unity of Ethiopia. For example, a political party which aspires to the Nefteгна doctrine, as is the case with Diaspora CUD, would be a serious threat to the unity of Ethiopia. I am a firm believer in the validity of the saying: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it".

On the question of "unoccupied" land, in my opinion, the current EPRDF policy is a fair one. It has removed the unnecessary burden of potential inequity in land distribution that would ensue, if only a handful of people blessed with extra cash were to become major "land owners". If "unoccupied" land were to be bought and sold at will in the open market, local investors with modest means, but never the less with good ideas, will predictably be left behind, and it will be "de ja vous" all over again. A level playing field in land distribution policy is crucial for the success of the Ethiopian dream.