

Scuffle in Seattle – Kinijit vs. Kinijit

By Mekonnen Kassa

The stage is set in Seattle for a fight between two splinter factions of an opposition political party Coalition for Unity and Democracy (aka Kinijit).

On the right corner, supporters of a former Derg Minister Hailu Shawel, and on the left corner, supporters of the former EPRP Berhanu Nega represented by a comedian turned politician and a former card carrying member of the Derg's Ethiopian Workers Party Debebe Eshetu.

I watched "Andenet" TV last night, a Seattle public TV station broadcasting in Amharic for an hour every Thursday. What an oxymoron! If it was up to me, an appropriate name for the station would be "Betnat."

During the aftermath of 2005 Ethiopian election, "Andenet" was one of the notorious TV stations that were a sewer spewing out hateful propaganda against known and suspected EPRDF supporters. At the same time, the station deceitfully preached the spirituality of Kinijit the Party and divinity of all its leaders who had the "mandate from heaven to rule Ethiopia."

This is the same TV station that called all opposition supporters to come out and "protest" the visit by Deputy Prime Minister Addisu Legesse back in Aug 2006. Two of the station hosts were the foremost leaders of the gathering cheering the protestors to wail funeral songs wishing death to the Deputy Prime Minister, the Ethiopian Consul in Seattle, and others they knew by name who happen to be in attendance at the meeting.

Kinijit the "spirit" is no more and the "divine father" and his disciples are keeping busy in an unprecedented political fight and power struggle. The irreconcilable difference between these two splinters is evident more so this weekend than ever as they each have called for a separate meeting for Saturday and Sunday here in Seattle. And by the way, there are many other splinter groups here in America and back in Ethiopia as well.

The TV station interviewed a certain Tamrat Mengesha (administrator of a Shawel Supporter paltalk discussion forum) regarding the two conflicting meetings under the same Kinijit party name.

I tell you, his gloves are off and he was throwing a knock-out punch at Berhanu Nega's group. He branded them the anti-unity mercenaries who are masquerading as Ethiopians. He mentioned, as an example, the flyer used to call for Debebe's meeting in Minnesota. He said the flyer advertised that, a professional comedian Debebe, the eyewitness story he tells about Kinijit is entertaining and will make audiences laugh. The interviewee was furious at the Minnesota organizer's deliberate attempt to make fun out of the political infighting and a mockery out of Ethiopians struggle for democracy.

Ato Tamrat also accused the Berhanu Nega group of engaging in a relentless concerted effort to undermine the elected chairman and "leader of 26 million people," Hailu Shawel. Among others, he noted that the Berhanu group called for a meeting in Minnesota one day prior to a

meeting called by Shawel group; they are doing the same in Seattle calling a meeting for Sat Jan 12 while they are well aware of the Sun Jan 13 meeting called by Shawel supporters.

Ato Tamrat called on all unity loving true Ethiopians to come, pay \$30.00, and hear Hailu Shawel expose naked the conspiratorial and destructive nature of Berhanu's group.

Tamrat also called on all True Ethiopians to boycott Debebe's meeting.

Throughout the interview, allegation made by Ato Tamrat against the Berhanu splinter group sound eerily similar to the allegation constantly made against EPRDF. To be true to their character, I expect the "Andenet" TV station hosts and their followers to be out in full force protesting against the meeting called by the Berhanu Nega group and the former Comedian.

I am sure both support groups will keep a list of who attended which meeting so that they can unleash their fury against each other later.

No sympathy from me, I am just glad someone else will be at the receiving end for change.