

## Ethiopia: the indomitable force of peace in the horn of Africa

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After the declaration of the state of emergency in Ethiopia, the instability and unrest in some parts of the country fell under control through the cooperation of the public and the government. Those who considered the fatal circumstances under the unrest as a tool to promote their political goals were left disappointed when instantaneous calm swept all across the country.

Ethiopians are peace loving people as they have shouldered the brunt of numerous internal and external wars. The frequent battles between various local groups have made it difficult for the country to realize development. The conflict resolution and peace building traditional techniques of different ethnic groups also demonstrate the high regard that the people of Ethiopia have for peace.

Accordingly, the attempt by some groups to incite violence in the country has been shunned by the active participation of the people. Especially with a little test of the perks of development, the society has chosen the set of activities that would ensure the sustainability of the successes of recent years over the war-mongering calls of the diaspora cocooned in the comfort of Europe and the U.S.

Internal peace is a prerequisite for rapid growth and development. Ethiopians have enjoyed internal peace for a considerable time within the past quarter of a century and have reaped the benefits of sustaining that peace through the world-class economic growth they achieved. Therefore, an effort to sway people towards conflict and internal strife would be one made in vain.

Ethiopia has also been an ambassador of peace in East Africa. Known for not kicking off any invasions of the territories of neighboring countries, Ethiopia has played considerable diplomatic and peacekeeping roles to ensure peace in the region. The Addis Ababa talks between Somali factions are an instance of Ethiopia's role as a diplomatic force of unity in the region. Its current role as a mediator between the two sides in the current South Sudanese conflict, on the other hand, show the sustained nature of that role.

The Ethiopian defense force has also carried out peacekeeping responsibilities in various countries with utmost bravery and competence. Its motto "ensuring national security through competent participation in regional, continental and international peacekeeping work" is a reflection of the significance accorded to regional security in promoting national security.

Some of the major peacekeeping missions include the Rwandan mission during the time of the genocide. The Ethiopian army saw through an impartial peacekeeping work in the zones it was deployed in. The place is called "Changugu." It was feared for hosting a large concentration of notorious people and terrorists. The impartial activities of the Ethiopian army in that place won it the adoration of both the contending ethnic groups – Hutu and Tutsi. The fact that it managed to ensure peace with social affinity instead of force shocked various peace loving forces including the UN.

Another peacekeeping mission under the current government was in Burundi. Ethiopia was the deputy commander of the African Union mission in Burundi. The mission of the Ethiopian army in Burundi was to control the implementation of the cease fire agreement reached between warring sides, disarming, creating a suitable environment for reconstruction and restoring the political, social and economic status quo to pre-conflict conditions.

The peacekeeping mission that followed that of Burundi was in Liberia. The time spelt a difficult moment in the country that transpired because of the conflict between the government of Liberia and opposition forces. The Ethiopian army was assigned for peacekeeping in the vast area called sector 4 that incorporates over six states. Despite the area being one feared by other peacekeeping forces for harboring a large amount of rebels, the UN made the decision with the army's track record of quality and strength in peacekeeping along with close affinity to the people on the ground in mind.

In addition, Ethiopia was also selected in the peacekeeping mission in Western Sudan. The conflict between the Sudanese government and rebels in Darfur has reportedly claimed the lives of about 70 thousand people while upwards of 2.3 million people have been displaced. The first round of the Ethiopian peacekeeping force was deployed to Darfur in 2008 with it still carrying out its mission in a brotherly manner. Two factors make the Darfur Ethiopian peacekeeping mission different from previous missions. The first factor is that the deployment is in neighboring country Sudan with which Ethiopia shares a long border, natural resources and similar ethnic groups and religions. The second factor is that the army has taken up transport, all rounded logistics, reconnaissance, air force and deep water drilling in addition to its previous roles in deploying ground forces and staff and military observers. These additional responsibilities are clear indicators of the acceptance and trust the army has won in conducting its peacekeeping mission under UNAMID.

The other noteworthy peacekeeping operation is that of Abiye where the Ethiopian peacekeeping force is unilaterally carrying out the task. Following the self-determination of South Sudan, the governments of the North and the South have not managed to agree over the oil rich region of Abiye.

After carefully analyzing the situation, the UN proposed for the deployment of a peacekeeping mission in Abiye. The 15 members of the UN Security Council then unanimously decided to deploy 4,200 Ethiopian peacekeeping forces to unilaterally take on the challenge. The astonishing thing about the decision was not just the unusual unanimous decision by the members of the Security Council but the fact that both sides of the conflict, the North and South Sudan, expressed their desire to have the Ethiopian peacekeeping force as the unilateral force in Abiye.

Yet another peacekeeping mission the Ethiopian army is participating in is the one in Somalia under the umbrella of AMISOM. Ethiopia received an invitation to join the African peacekeeping force in Somalia and strengthen the AMISOM mission in 2014.

The army is working on sustaining peace in the sectors it has been assigned to, destroying and annihilating terrorists based in Somalia in collaboration with other parts of the peacekeeping force and creating stable administrative structures along with the people.

As has been illustrated above, Ethiopia is a significant force for peace in the horn of Africa. Its internal condition, diplomatic efforts and peacekeeping missions in the past quarter of a century are proof of the leading role it plays in ensuring peace in the region.