

***Lebelo Hailesilassie***

***The State of Tigray Post-Election Opportunities and Challenges***

First and foremost, I would like to express my genuine delight that Tigray is poised to make its first ever regional election on time without the Federal Government the Republic of Ethiopia. I am even more cheerful this election is on chores in period of political instability and unrest across wide spread of Ethiopia, geopolitical challenges and worldwide health crises. This speaks volume Tigray stands firm and tall to make sure its hard-fought earned self-governance in which over 60, 000 lives scarified is not on table for negotiation with anyone other than the people of Tigray.

As much as I am delightful and looking forward with the upcoming historic election, I am challenging all concerned Tegar, specially the elites and scholars to bring all our heads together and brainstorm on the aftermath of the election consequences to better place Tigray in the highest of high politically, economically and socially.

*What are the opportunities and challenges during the aftermath of our Historic Election?*

**Opportunities**

**1. Big lesson will emerge on the framework of election and its newly created Independent Electoral Commission (IEC).**

As we all reckon, the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia had publicly announced several months ago that there will not be an election in Ethiopia in due time and denied its citizen the right to vote or to be voted mimicry due to the challenges from COVID19. Henceforth the NEB “pit-pat” the formal request from the regional government of Tigray to do its own election and denied resources at the very least. The newly created Independent Electoral Commission of Tigray will be measured on the basis of transparency, privacy, integrity, affordability, and accessibility. If the Tigray IEC is successful on those five nodal facets, it should shame the national electoral board of Ethiopia and be an opportunity for NEB for a real reform to do better decisions and elections in the future.

The Independent Electoral Commission of Tigray led by teacher Muluwerk seems to start heating the ground running so far and I congratulate them for the good work so far and wish them a successful Historic Election.

**2. Unity of Tegarū will Flourish into new “Heights”**

There is nothing makes me prouder being “Tigraway” than seeing Tegarū stand together in period of disharmony from outsider, but I envision this to scale up into period of harmonies within to come. It might sound a bit dramatic if I said I cried (tear of happiness) watching the first debate among Tigray parties on the topic of Self-Governance, Democracy and Tigray future. Although it is very normal and appropriate that there will be one major party winner and will lead Tigray in the next five years, there seems consensus among Tegarū and parties in Tigray the winner will be accepted by everyone with a good hand and will get a continued support during their term. This is probably the best feelings you could have at this point and the party in power during the post-election would have the highest responsibility by fulfilling its promises and make sure majority rule and minority right is not compromised. A flourished unity will be a huge capital in improving a lacking socioeconomic phenom in Tigray.

**3. Winner Party would gain new perspectives from opposition parties and include it into party policies when deemed necessary and legal**

It is so unfortunate, historically, in Ethiopia or in third world countries in general, there is this perception one’s idea is right and some one’s idea is wrong. It is true one’s idea could be better than the other depending the socioeconomic and political situation and that’s why there is election for citizens to vote on better ideas and policies. Hearing the first debate among Tigray parties and having the opportunity to read into some of their polices, almost 80% of their polices overlap with each other and made me think maybe it is unnecessary that we have six parties or more in Tigray. It cost a lot money and other resources to have redundant parties, but this is topic for another time. I think we are in a period of time where we need to fetch in some ideas from our counterparts with no shame and turn it into policy without violating the policies of the opposition parties.

**4. Improved People to people relationships with neighboring regions**

It is my sincere belief there have not been issues between the people of Tigray and other people of Ethiopia. In my opinion, the issues have been between elites and few money and power-hungry individuals. A successful election, a continued or a peaceful transitional government during the post-election would make the people of other regions to aspire such plateau and focus on challenging their leaders to follow the steps of the government of Tigray as supposed being enclaved by fabricated agenda on TPLF by the Federal Government.

**5. 100% Dominated Federation by one party will be in the past in the history of Tigray and focus will shift to State Building.**

Although it is very possible to see the usual faces in the federation again and the slight improvement in our election methodology might not brought a lot changes in voting and making policies since 152 seats would still be occupied by one party but it is still symbolic and improvement in the right direction.

**Challenges**

**1. Limiting the Political Space and Weakening Opposition Parties**

The political space in Tigray seems much improved in recent months and specially as we approach election time. It is delightful to see election runner parties are getting fair media coverage, monetary allocations and equal treatment during debate. However, this door could shut anytime soon and should not caught anybody in surprise if it happened. Our old habits are still in fresh memory and wouldn't require anything special to bring it into practice specially if TPLF happen to be to one we welcome during the post-election. TPLF is more experienced and capable party with full of network who could potentially exploit those opportunities in the name of መኝተ.

It is my sincere hope this is not going to happen, but it will be a test of character whether we are ready to leapfrog our old habits and embark for greatness and this will not be an easy test to pass.

**2. Political Intolerance**

We are now certain about two things. 1) Election will take place in Tigray and 2) there will be at least one chair in the federation from opposition party. I expect that chair to be the Golden chair because it will be challenging the majority alone in all policies they might have to discuss and pass. I am hopeful there will be more golden chairs in the federation. I am also certain opposition parties will gain more experiences from this election and be as vocal as possible in making sure the leading party is not bringing the old dangerous habits. However, this is going to test the leading party patience and might not patient enough to tolerate such normal and democratic behavior.

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**3. Lack of Party Internal Democracy**

History tells us parties fail when there is no harmony within. It is by principle, their internal practice of democratic principles of a party determines its public exhibition of democratic principles. The party cannot be democratic to its citizens and opposition parties if it lacks internal democracy. This was very common phenomenal in the history of TPLF.

**4. The Federal Government of Ethiopia and its media will mock the outcome of our election.**

This is probably the most expected post-election agenda, but this will never buzz a clutch time in the basketball court. Our unity shall still flourish and remain cool about it and focus on our bigger agendas.

**5. Independent Electoral Commission of Tigray Pre-Election Arrangement**

This is the least I want to see in my life as Tigraway and specially currently. The Commission has the primary mandate to conduct and announce the election. Delay in the release of the election outcome can be seen by the people of Tigray and election runner parties as grand plan to sabotage their effort at winning the election. I pray to God this does not come into play, but I trust commissioner Teacher Muluwerk to publicly address the media if such delay takes place due to unplanned events.

I hope the government of Tigray, parties and concerned individuals have those and other important agendas in their radar; capitalize on our post-election opportunities, devise a plan to overcome post-election challenges and making sure the coming Historic Election is successful and our post-election time is the one to be remembered as best in history and transform Tigray into real democracy and prosperous Nation-State.

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Thank you

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