

A Roadmap to a Post Prosperity Party Political Dispensation

AN OROMO PERSPECTIVE



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1. CONTEXT

In the early months of 2018, the dictatorship of the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) decided to yield to the demands of the Oromo people presented by the historic Oromo protest. A self-described reformist group took power and promised a transition to democracy and an era of peace in the Horn of Africa. Once ensconced in power, however, the "reformist" leadership reverted to the rule of violence, resuming the extrajudicial killings, imprisonment without due process, stifling of freedom of the press and criminalizing the political opposition. Using sham elections, the Prosperity Party asserted it has an unquestionable legitimacy and mandate singlehandedly to shape the country's future unopposed. As a result, the hoped-for transition to democracy has given way to a dictatorship with fascistic tendencies.

The Prosperity Party 'government' declared war against the people of Oromia, Tigray and other regions claiming to ferret out terrorists. Despite battlefield losses, it kept escalating the conflicts, plunging the country into a protracted civil war without a clear national security objective. Afflicted by a brutal civil war, a collapsing national economy characterized by runaway inflation, foreign currency crunch, mounting debt, credit difficulties and rising unemployment and a thorough diplomatic isolation, Ethiopia has come to exhibit signs of a failed state. The Ethiopian government has exhausted its capacity to govern and the competence to arrest continued deterioration.

In the last three years, acts of an unalloyed evil have been perpetrated. The regime has invited Eritrea, Ethiopia's sworn enemy, to invade Ethiopia and avenge for the ignominious defeat it suffered two decades ago by murdering innocents, destroying property, and violating the dignity of Ethiopia's citizens with impunity. The country's political and military leadership now stands accused of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing in the wars it has waged against its own peoples. Even more ominously, the language of politics currently employed by Ethiopia's leaders has revived the echoes of Rwanda before the 1994 genocide.

In its current posture, therefore, the Prosperity Party is a criminal enterprise that has taken over state institutions and repurposed them for advancing its leader's lust for power. Under pressure from military losses, economic collapse, and political implosion, clouds of fin de regime are gathering over Finfinne's (Addis Ababa) skies. The repercussions of more bloodshed and ultimate state collapse would be devastating for the entire Horn of Africa and Red Sea region.

To forestall a calamitous outcome, it has become necessary for the Oromo to imagine a post-Prosperity Party political dispensation. It is clear that there is no military solution to Ethiopia's multifaceted political problems. Ethiopia's escalation of the war only increases the certainty of an implosion of authority in Finfinne and the regional state capitals. Ethiopian politicians and international stakeholders seem to have put their faith in an inclusive national dialogue that will establish an all-inclusive transitional government to be the only political solution. Indeed, that eventuality is inescapable whether the war ends with the triumph of one side or through a negotiated settlement.

Having determined that a roadmap out of the present morass is an unavoidable imperative, the Executive Committee of the World Oromo Congress, by powers vested in it by the organization's Constitution, under Article 11 (g) i & ii, has issued a roadmap. In issuing this roadmap, we also elicit alternative roadmaps from within the Oromo political community and from the various nations and nationalities.

2. OBJECTIVES

1. Bring about de-escalation, suspension of hostilities, permanent ceasefire, and stabilization to pave the way for a negotiated political settlement and a transitional arrangement to set the country/region on course for a transition to peace, security, and democratic order.
2. Ensure the nations and nationalities in Ethiopia exercise their constitutional and inherent right to self-determination in order to obviate the return of the imperial-like centralized power and domination the Prosperity Party has introduced in Ethiopia.
3. Reform the state and create basic conditions for its reconstruction, including birthing a new voluntary association of Ethiopia's nations and nationalities in which they are sovereign in their homelands and co-sovereign in governing Ethiopia.
4. Implement a system of transitional justice and accountability measures to bring justice to the officials and other actors who have participated in organizing, launching, and leading the conflicts in which war crimes, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and genocidal acts have been perpetrated. All those who committed acts of political violence, including gendered violence, extrajudicial killings, political assassinations, unlawful confiscation of private property, and severe abuses of children must be brought to justice.
5. End the Prosperity Party's *modus operandi* of militarization and commercialization of politics and ensure the supremacy of the people and rule of law.
6. Protect the people's fundamental rights to peace, physical security, and human rights.

3. THE PROCESS – FROM WAR TO POLITICAL SETTLEMENT

In putting together the roadmap, we considered a scenario by which the war ends through a negotiated settlement. In this respect, we propose a three-phase process in which negotiations for the cessation of conflict, to a negotiated end of the war, to an agreement to convene a national dialogue forum to discuss the country's future, to put in place a transitional charter, transitional governments, national reconciliation, and an agreement to ensure the right of self-determination for all nations and nationalities.

3.1. Phase One – Preconditions for Negotiations

1. Suspension of hostilities to avert the looming humanitarian catastrophe engendered by war and its attendant disruptions (simultaneous unilateral ceasefire).

2. Open access for delivery of humanitarian assistance to victims of war, famine, and displacement.
3. Release of all political prisoners without preconditions.
4. Lift restrictions on political parties to operate freely and with guaranteed security.
5. Expel all foreign armed groups from all areas of the country.
6. Encamp regional state and regime-backed paramilitary forces intimidating citizens in various parts of the country.
7. Repeal the proclamation that designated the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) as terrorists.

3.2. Phase Two – Negotiating Peace

1. Agree on negotiators and develop a framework or principles to guide negotiations for a permanent ceasefire.
2. Conduct negotiations to reach an agreement on actions to be taken by negotiating parties and a program of implementation.
3. Determine a timeline for completion and return to peace.

3.3. Phase Three – Political Settlement

1. Prepare for an all-inclusive dialogue, determining framework, agenda, participants, and administrators of the process.
2. Conduct an all-inclusive dialogue to end the war.
3. Reach a political settlement and prepare a transitional period governance charter.
4. Establish a transitional government and begin the transition process.

4. LEGAL BASIS FOR THE TRANSITION

1. The Constitution of 1995 in general and particularly all rights and freedoms specified in Chapter 3 of the Constitution shall be the guiding document during the transition period.
2. A Charter for the Transitional Period shall be adopted and be in effect to guide governance.

5. OROMO PERSPECTIVE

From our perspective, Oromia must be liberated from the totalitarian rule that exists now. Attaining control over Oromia's physical space is a precondition to defending our people, our rights and our land and achieving the demands of the Oromo nation.

Making the Oromia government serve the Oromo national interest and empower it to shape an Oromia that can stand on its own and able to negotiate, bargain and enter a new political arrangement with other regional governments with a view to authoring a new national political and economic community.

In this vein, the objective of the Oromo struggle is to (1) secure Oromia and simultaneously (2) ensure the shape and functions of the federal government. In practice, securing Oromia involves the following steps.

5.1. Securing Oromia and its Future

The primary task of securing Oromia is establishing an interim caretaker government that would fill the political vacuum that a collapse of authority creates. This caretaker government's mandate is to carry out the routine state functions of providing services, maintaining law and order, sustaining the safety, security, and wellbeing of all residents. This happens in two stages, an interim government and a transitional government.

5.1.1. The Interim Government

To avoid a political vacuum during the interregnum before a transitional government is established, a provisional caretaker government shall govern Oromia.

1. The Oromia administrative zones (*godina*) shall nominate new representatives with a view to creating a National Council, which shall serve as an interim government.
2. The National Council shall assign the President of the interim government of the national state of Oromia.
3. The presidency of the provisional government of the national state of Oromia shall also consist of two deputy presidents with equal status and authority without portfolio to complement the president and the presidency.
4. The president and deputy presidents of the provisional government of the Oromia national state shall coordinate the creation of two executive councils of the government.
5. The National Security Council of the provisional government of the Oromia national state shall be responsible for security matters, political negotiations, legal and constitutional issues, economic policies, and deals with all matters of strategic importance to Oromia and its neighboring national states.
6. The Oromia Executive Council of the provisional government of the national state of Oromia, consisting of technocrats and professionals, is in charge of maintaining and sustaining the government functions, delivering routine public services and ensuring the continuation of regular life.
7. The provisional government of the Oromia national state shall designate heads of the various branches to carry out departmental functions and at all levels to take responsibility for governance at the local level with the full participation of residents.

5.1.2. The Transitional National Government of Oromia

The Transitional National Government shall be all-inclusive and consist of checks and balances. It has two main tasks.

The Transitional National Government will carry out the major functions of the state.

1. Establish and maintain firm control over the regional security systems to ensure effective intelligence production, policing action, protection of public and private assets and defense of Oromia against expansionist aggression.
2. Focus primarily on recovery, rehabilitation, and revitalization of the Oromia national government to improve its capacity to provide necessary public services.
3. Organize political education and public relations capacities for developing awareness, preparing people for exercising democratic rights for self-determination.
4. Develop capacities for conducting external relations, bargaining, negotiating, and cooperating strategic partnerships within and outside Ethiopia.
5. Planning and deploying strategies for economic recovery focusing on improving capacities at all levels of the Oromia state government for preparing economic policies and designing projects that can bring about rapid growth to provide employment for the youth and safety net for the most poverty-stricken sections of the society.
6. Conduct social, cultural, and educational revitalization in lieu of securing and developing Oromia, to be able to use the best opportunity Oromo nationalism can bring in securing, developing, and prospering Oromo and Oromia.
7. Develop legal and constitutional reform with a view to incorporating local and indigenous values, constitutions, customs, and political traditions.
8. Reconstructing the economy ruined by the Prosperity Party, focusing on building Oromia-wide infrastructure network, energy grid, air and rail systems integrating Oromia and connecting with neighboring economies.
9. Draw up economic development strategies, mobilize, and empower the youth for economic self-reliance.
10. Define the relationship between Oromia and other regional states and Oromia's relationship with Finfinne.

The Transitional National Government of Oromia will also work to create an Oromo public space that is open and accessible to the Oromo people, regardless of gender, age or socioeconomic status. The public space will be a foundation and a launching pad for the Oromo people to exercise their right to self-determination.

1. Increase democratic participation in the governance of Oromia.
2. Establish public pressure groups to serve as checks on the transitional government
3. Tap Oromo indigenous assets to generate ideas for shaping an Oromia government committed to Oromo nationalism and good governance.
4. Ensure that an Oromia national government is autonomous and accountable to the popular will.
5. Diversifying the center of power by empowering indigenous institutions' capacity for oversight, guidance and ultimately impeaching and delegitimizing wayward politicians, political parties, or formal institutions.

5.2. Constructing a New State

In the wake of a failed transition to democracy, an economy in crisis, and a devastating civil war in which genocide may have been committed, Ethiopia today meets the criteria for categorizing it as a “deeply divided society.” As such, an agreement on a common process for decision-making for political consensus, peace and reconciliation is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. It is time for the international community’s involvement to end the civil war using any means, including invoking the “responsibility to protect” doctrine to protect citizens from atrocities committed against them by their governments.

We propose a roadmap that is appropriate for a “deeply divided society” like Ethiopia. The process begins with the emergency phase of confidence-building and stabilization after the end of the civil war and convenes a national dialogue to write a transitional charter that guides the transition.

Our proposal describes activities that must be undertaken during the transition categorized in three main responsibility areas: (1) deliver routine government services to the public, (2) restructure and transform the state in accordance with the transitional charter, and (3) prepare the country and citizens for the exercise of their democratic rights. Conceptually, the transition rests on five pillars: security, justice, socioeconomic development, political transition, and human rights, justice, and reconciliation. The activities in each area aim at restructuring the state and laying the foundation for a new state.

5.2.1. Phase One: Emergency Response

1. End the rampant extrajudicial killing of innocent citizens simply by labeling them terrorists or associates of a phantom terrorist organization called “shane,” “junta,” and other designations. The government must end the practice of guilt by association, collective punishment and scorched earth punitive measures under the guise of fighting a non-existent threat of terrorism.
2. Terminate military operations and encamp the military and security forces in barracks. The placement of a significant portion of the country under an undeclared state of emergency must end immediately.
3. Remove all foreign forces out of Ethiopia and regional Special Forces that are deployed outside their national states.
4. Release all political prisoners, specifically the thousands of innocent farmers, businesspersons, students, and community leaders who are languishing in prisons across Oromia, accused of being OLA supporters.
5. Restore public services such as telecommunications, banking, air travel, education, healthcare, transportation in parts of the country where they are deliberately interrupted.
6. Allow the United Nations and human rights organizations and news establishments to investigate human rights violations whether they are conducted in the war contexts or otherwise.

5.2.2. Phase Two: Transition and Transformation

The period of transition requires taking measures that contribute collectively to building peace. In its effects, the period shall be transformative and an opportunity to shape the future. Conceptually, the transition rests on five pillars: security arrangements, transitional justice, socioeconomic development, political transition, and human rights, justice and reconciliation.

5.2.2.1. Security arrangements

It is vital to move immediately to establish a safe and secure environment, and develop legitimate and stable security institutions. The Ethiopian security system was always organized, trained, and funded to provide security for the regime rather than for the public. The task of this period is to restructure the system and build its capacity to act as a national security system that will protect the public, the constitution, and the country.

1. The Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) can no longer be considered a national army that respects its oath to defend the constitution, the public and the sovereignty of the country. The ENDF as a primary national security institution has fallen short of the constitutional responsibility bestowed on it. Its soldiers and commanders are suspected of committing atrocity crimes. It must be restructured, purged of its criminal elements who must be held accountable, and placed under full civilian command.
2. The ENDF must henceforth not be allowed to be deployed for law enforcement purposes inside the country. The force's mission must be strictly to protect the country against external aggression.
3. The regional Special Forces have been deployed in the civil war. Those forces that were organized to provide security in their respective states must be reorganized under the new civilian command of the new political authority in each state. This means putting in place new mechanisms to recruit, vet and reconfigure existing police forces.
4. All private militias that now roam some regions must be disarmed and their weapons seized.

5.2.2.2. Political transition, governance, and participation

The success of political transition in the “deeply divided Ethiopian society” rests on finding sustainable solutions to Ethiopia's multifaceted and complex political problems. This can result only from a comprehensive political settlement that emanates only from an all-inclusive national political dialogue involving all stakeholders.

1. Because Ethiopia is now a “deeply divided society,” this process must be an internationally sponsored one whose aim is producing a comprehensive political settlement and peaceful resolution of political differences.

2. The international community can only serve as a facilitator in political negotiations. Political parties and all other legitimate stakeholders must negotiate all issues that require resolution. The constitution is the basis of all negotiations to produce a roadmap for the transition. Issues that require constitutional changes must be off-limits.
3. The right to self-determination is the bedrock of all other fundamental human rights and the organizing principle behind the Ethiopian constitution of 1995. As such, the Oromo nation and other nations' right to exercise their right to self-determination and the right to exercise are inviolable, unbridgeable and non-derogable.
4. If Ethiopia were to continue as a viable polity, it must be a federation of the willing, not the patrimony of imperialist conquistadors. A "Coming Together" multinational federation, created by the co-sovereign national states, is the only viable institutional framework that can adequately accommodate the self-rule demands of Ethiopia's nations and nationalities.
5. The Ethiopian constitution designates the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia as co-equal sovereign federal units who are entitled to full and free exercise of the right to self-determination. The boundaries of the national state must be respected, and contested boundaries must be settled through a referendum, except in regions where facts were created on the ground by force. Failure to respect, protect, and implement constitutional rights and mechanisms will ensure continued conflict.
6. The national dialogue will issue a roadmap for the transition period. The purpose is to guide political processes to culminate in referenda for the nations, nationalities, and peoples in Ethiopia to exercise their rights to self-determination and elections to form governments at all levels.
7. A new Ethiopia can only be a state created by free and autonomous national states who create an Ethiopia as a new political and economic community voluntarily and volitionally. Prepare a roadmap for a popular decision on the fate of the country.

5.2.2.3. Transitional justice

In the last three years, the Ethiopian justice system has been a political instrument that the Prosperity Party uses to enforce its rule by violence. Stable peace, a functioning democracy, and prosperous society can only be constructed on the rule of law, durable legal institutions, and a fair, open, and humane judicial system.

1. The Oromo person is presently considered a security threat. Basic human rights and constitutional rights are violated with impunity. The state must respect the dignity of Oromo individuals and their inviolable right to life.
2. The existing judiciary structure shall continue to operate. However, the courts, police, and prison system must be reformed to end rampant dehumanizing practices, namely arbitrary arrests, detentions without charge, illegal searches and denial of court-ordered bail and ordered the release of all political prisoners in federal custody and in detention facilities.

3. Prepare the groundwork to bring to justice criminals who organized, led, and perpetrated war crimes, crimes against humanity and property, ethnic cleansing, and acts of genocide.
4. Dispense justice in a Special Tribunal to adjudicate cases of crimes against humanity, war crimes and other atrocity crimes. Other cases shall be referred to the International Criminal Court.
5. The Anti-terror Proclamation used to accuse, round up and terrorize opponents shall be repealed.
6. A truth and reconciliation commission shall be established and mandated with the objective of ending the entrenched culture of impunity and horrific war crimes, crimes against humanity and acts of genocide.
7. The Transitional Federal Government shall sign and ratify the Treaty of Rome that established the International Criminal Court.

5.2.2.4. Socio-economic development

In post-conflict, deeply divided societies, it is necessary to provide emergency relief, and then lay the foundations for a viable economy in order to meet people's basic needs.

1. The immediate task is to focus on providing relief to the internally displaced and all those who have lost their livelihoods. Simultaneously, there needs to be a program of job creation for Ethiopia's youths, who for the past seven years were engaged in mass mobilization for a senseless war. Other measures of economic stabilization must be instituted to stimulate growth.
2. Land is the foundation of economic wellbeing and economic justice. In Ethiopia's law, the land and natural resources are the collective property of the people. This foundational constitutional principle must not be trifled with in any way.
3. Under the Prosperity Party, land invasion and displacement of holders from their lands by vigilantes organized, equipped, and sponsored by federal security forces or other national governments must end immediately. We demand the laws that allow for the looting of Oromo land resources must be abrogated, and the land and natural resources that have been seized illegally must be restored to the legal owner.
4. The intensification of land theft by Prosperity Party officials, religious institutions, robber barons parading as businesspersons and social misfits who call themselves custodians of Finfinne has become standard practice. Those who are guilty of these corrupt practices must be brought to justice.
5. Finfinne is the heartbeat of Ethiopia's economy. Oromo individuals who lost their land and livelihood have been systematically barred from full participation and share in the capital city's economic growth shall be supported. While respecting the full political, economic and property rights of residents and the city's status as

international capital, the government must commit to acknowledging the Oromo peoples' proprietary right to the city.

5.2.2.5. *Respect for human rights*

The constitution envisions an Ethiopian polity as a political community founded on the rule of law, human rights, social justice, democratic participation, and economic development.

1. *Afaan Oromoo* is spoken by a sizeable plurality of the Ethiopian population. Despite promises, it is not a working language of the federal government. *Afaan Oromoo* must be a federal working language, beginning during the time of the transitional government.
2. Non-Oromo residents of Oromia to linguistic justice. Their right to enjoy their culture and use of one's language is fully protected. At the same time, the Oromo peoples' right to use *Afaan Oromoo* in all transactions must not be infringed upon. The Prosperity Party's policies promulgated by the Federal Ministry of Education or the Oromia national government's education bureau that erode *Afaan Oromoo*'s status as the national language in Oromia infringe on Oromo human rights.

6. THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD

1. The interim period of the transition shall be six months followed by up to three years of a transitional period that cannot be extended.
2. During the six months interim period, national states will form their transitional government and send their delegates to the national assembly to form the transitional government at the federal and state levels.
3. The administration during the interim period shall be based on an agreement reached by the political forces representing nations and nationalities.
4. At the end of the transitional period – each nation and nationality in Ethiopia will exercise their right to self-determination voluntarily and democratically decide on their future.
5. At the end of the transitional period, the nations, nationalities, and peoples in the current state of Ethiopia shall have an option voluntarily and democratically to agree to form a new political-economic and security union of the nation-states.
6. No nation shall be forced to involuntarily join any association of states.