

Egypt's Empty Bluff!

On June 3rd 2013, Egypt's leader, President Mohamed Morsi, held a meeting with some other Egyptian plotters to discuss measures his country could take to thwart the Blue Nile dam project that Ethiopia is constructing. According to the information made available by mainstream media, most of the attendants around Morsi's discussion table were representatives of Islamist groups like himself. The most astonishing part of the round table talk is not the bulling rhetoric that Egypt's government has been pushing for centuries, acting as if they were the sole owners of the Nile, but the way they want to disseminate their pompous propaganda. It was for this purpose that the TV station was invited to air the discussion live. The president was chairing the meeting held to spread the disinformation they thought would scare Ethiopia. There and then, the Egyptian conspirators were talking about leaking wrong information projected to intimidate Ethiopia. The deceptive disinformation ploys included plans to directly attack and destroy the Ethiopian dam, and employ the assistance of some Ethiopian opposition groups to do the dirty work on Egypt's behalf.

However, Egyptians know deep inside that they are not going to try to go to war against Ethiopia. They have neither the capacity nor the guts to do so. They simply are bluffing thinking that they would intimidate Ethiopians. Egyptians should know more than anyone else that the scare tactic against the Ethiopians will not have any effect. They tried several times in the past and they failed miserably. They must remember lessons learned in Gura'e and Gundet.

IRAA believes that the preposterous discussion on Cairo's TV is only a scare tactic with a futile calculation aimed to pressurize Ethiopia into halting the construction of the dam. In fact, some of their wicked politicians were heard suggesting leaking wrong information as part of their scare tactic. Politicians of that caliber do not discuss such sensitive issue live on national television when they are serious about measure they would take. Moreover, their president hinted that his country may attack Ethiopia to stop the construction of the dam. All this is nothing more than trying to negotiate about the construction of the dam from a "position of strength." Otherwise, Egyptians are not capable of attacking Ethiopia and so they will not venture with that.

As they already suggested during their round table discussion, what the Egyptians will try to do is to destabilize Ethiopia by helping some narrow nationalist elements within the country. This is not new to us. This is something they have been doing for ages relentlessly. Hence, according to IRAA, the Egyptian rhetoric should not be taken lightly. Nevertheless, no negotiation should take place on Egypt's terms. Regardless, negotiating with them on our own resource will never deter Egypt from doing what it habitually does to destabilize us.

IRAA would assert no conditions when it comes to defending Ethiopian interest, and is ready to cooperate with anyone for that purpose. The issue here is greater than the actual Renaissance Dam. It is about Ethiopian sovereignty and her right to her fair share of the Blue Nile waters. This is a right of Ethiopians that should be recognized by all friends and foes. Therefore, IRAA demands the EPRDF government to take the following points seriously.

1. IRAA will never forget what the EPRDF government did at the aftermath of the Ethio-Eritrean conflict. Our defense forces did what is expected of them and won the war soundly within days. The EPRDF government, however, was quick to undo the victory by going to Algiers to sign off the territories secured with a heavy price. Hence, IRAA alerts the government not to repeat similar blunders and not to enter into any agreement with Egypt behind closed doors. No negotiation under any kind of precondition coming from Egypt should be acceptable and no agreement should be entered into that might compromise Ethiopian interest and sovereignty. The tactic Egyptians are trying to employ to negotiate from the “position of strength” must be rejected. Most, if not all, negotiations entered into must be transparent to the Ethiopian people and the Ethiopian opposition political parties. In addition, the possible input of the Ethiopian people and patriotic parties must be given deserved attention.
2. In order to meet the challenges such as this one, internal peace and stability of a nation is a prerequisite. As the saying goes “united we stand, divided we fall.” Let alone a war, to win a peace we need a nation in harmony within itself. We do not believe that this is the case in present-day Ethiopia. Hence, we call upon the EPRDF government to open its doors for national dialogue and release all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience.

We also call upon all Ethiopian opposition political parties to unequivocally denounce the Egyptian provocations without any preconditions. Ethiopia is not EPRDF’s property. Hence, Ethiopians will not and should not compromise their sovereignty for any reason and under any condition. This message must be clearly heralded to the Egyptians.

Irob Rights Advocacy Association (IRAA), June 2013