



Ethiopia

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Bulldozers for the poor - palaces and gardens for Colonel Abiy

An integral part of Abiy's cruel plans of ethnic cleansing against the Amharas

Summary

Addis Ababa - the new flower looks wilted these days. Abiy is having large parts of the city center demolished. The official reason: “beautification” of the city. It is clear that Abiy is having a gigantic palace including a private zoo built, while at the same time he is “resettling” the population in favor of the Oromo. The ethnicization of urban planning is on the agenda of his regime.

Addis Ababa - the New Flower becomes history-less

Modernization and development are key terms that Colonel Abiy and his “Prosperity Party” repeatedly use to camouflage their destructive ethnic policies. The Prime Minister (PM) and his party use the terms growth and development indiscriminately. He too has a completely misguided idea of development. Blindly copying Dubai - that's how you can summarize it. He also gets “loans” from the Emirates, drones and they are welcome investors in Ethiopia. Ethiopia will therefore be in debt to them for a long time to come. The country's silverware is being sold off piece by piece to investors in order to remain creditworthy.

Preparations for his palace on an area the size of 500 soccer pitches (<https://bit.ly/3vXa6eh>) are in full swing. Many houses (five-digit number), settlements and streets were demolished to make way for Colonel Abiy's “palace project”. In the process, poor neighborhoods, commercial areas of the informal sector, including people and materials, are literally being evicted.

Without or with little warning, but with bulldozers and eviction squads, accompanied by militarized police units, the devastation of homes and workplaces takes place. Not infrequently, although there are court rulings prohibiting this.

The residents' belongings are exposed to this destruction, robbery and looting.

This “beautification” of Addis Ababa (AA) is intended to attract tourists and investors. It is an absurd notion that tourists come to AA to marvel at glittering new buildings and that investors might be impressed. The government also has no funds to invest itself. Instead, it allocates building land to Oromo investors and their international partners. The other ethnic groups have been impoverished by the PM's policies and are out of the question as investors. In reality, the “beautification” of AA is about a redistribution of the population in favor of the Oromo. At least 60% (2007 census) of the population of AA are Amhara and the majority use Amharic as a business language. This is to be changed in order to make room for Oromo and to make Oromiffa the official language in AA. In this way, the Amharas are marginalized through structural and administrative measures, flanked by police violence. The whole thing is then embedded in the newly created “Sheger” district around AA, which is administered by the Oromo state government as it sees fit. Thus, this bacon belt around AA acts like a security cordon to keep the population of AA in check and at the same time channel the economic fruits to Sheger.

The poor inhabitants of Addis Ababa pay the price for Colonel Abiy's escapades

A media-effective, quickly constructed “social housing” is intended to convince the people in AA that this is a sustainable “slum clearance” with a social component. Colonel Abiy's appearances are the regime's latest tool to justify its brutal actions at home and abroad. Hardly anyone doubts that AA is in need of rehabilitation.

The journalist (J.L. Anderson) describes his meeting with Colonel Abiy as follows: Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed drove me around Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. With a politician's pride, he pointed out some of his recent civic projects: a vast park and a national library; a handicrafts market; a planetarium, still under construction. (<https://bit.ly/3WbUe26>)

So these are his projects!

In Ethiopia, buildings and cultural assets are officially listed as historical monuments. Two of the most important laws are: No. 209/2000; No. 839/2014 (<https://bit.ly/4aQIYg3>) which clearly state that the protection of cultural properties must be determined by objective procedures and protected without compromise. With tricks and the negation of existing regulations, AA is being reshaped at the expense of the vulnerable. This is done to the glory of the Oromo Prime Minister and to the detriment of the many Amharas and other ethnic groups in AA. Affordable housing is not being created here! Examples of demolished buildings:

- Gebrewold building, popularly known as “Semay Tekes”, “high in the sky”, built in the mid-1950s by a local dignitary and equipped with Ethiopia's first elevator,
- Private and official residence of Dr. Workneh, Ethiopia's first physician, who studied modern medicine, served as a civil servant in various capacities and represented Ethiopia as a diplomat at crucial historical moments,
- “Piazza” area, the “modern old town” with numerous monuments and buildings from the city history of AA, founded by Emperor Menelik II, the builder of modern Ethiopia,
- “Anbessa Pharmacy” - built by the Italians during the five-year occupation of Ethiopia (1935 - 41) and owned by the German chemist and pharmacist K. Hildebrandt,
- As part of its research into the “urban renewal” of AA, the British Guardian tried to speak to experts. The result: “Like everyone in Addis Ababa the Guardian spoke to, they spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals. Several ... Heritage experts declined to be interviewed at all”. (<https://bit.ly/3JvRhBR>)
- The demolition squads almost always proceed like this: “A tailor in a neighboring district of Piassa said he was given an hour to vacate his store without receiving an explanation. They later learned that it was to be replaced by a cycle path. (<https://bit.ly/3JvRhBR>)

Calibrating the context

The transformation of the city serves the colonel's pet projects (palace project, multi-lane roads from his palace to the parliament and the airport) and other prestige projects, which are decorated with lots of flowers and pomp. It is important for him to present these measures as his personal achievements.

- Fear and terror, insecurity and arbitrariness as instruments of his policy stem from his banal secret service mentality. Hence his unscrupulous approach.
- To put his tenure as PM in the right light, he absolutely has to imitate Dubai in East Africa to please himself. This is evident in the Anderson report. (<https://bit.ly/3WbUe26>)
- Urban planning as an instrument of power is an effective tool. In Ethiopia, the land has de facto belonged to the state since the 1970s. Abiy is using this to pursue ethnicized population policies through urban planning. Amhara are denied access to AA in phases, while Oromo from the Sheger zone are to be settled here in the longer term. This is not possible without violent expulsion.
- There is hardly a speech/statement by the PM in which the village of Beshesha is not mentioned. He complains and emphasizes that he was born in this small town, without electricity, without paved roads. The PM obviously has an inferiority complex towards those he calls “the Addis Ababians”. It is precisely this psychological circumstance that drives his destructive policies against the Amharas and the center of the country, Addis Ababa.

Urban planning as a design tool to make urban spaces livable is misused to uproot the Amharas and make room for Oromo.