



HARARI ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE & EQUALITY (H.A.J.E)

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From Harari Alliance for Justice and Equality (H.A.J.E)

H.A.J. E's Press Release

May 3rd, 2021

Decision of the Ethiopian Supreme Court on the Recent Dangerous and Unconstitutional Act by the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE)

The revised constitution of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia includes special provisions to recognize and benefit minority and indigenous peoples and nationalities. This was an essential component of the constitution of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to recognize the scores of minorities and indigenous groups within the Ethiopian Federal State.

The Harari Regional State (H.R.S), the smallest of the 9 regional states, included provisions in its state constitution allowing members of the Harari nationality to be able to run for office and to cast their ballots for Harari elections irrespective of their place of domicile. For example, the significant Harari communities of Dire Dawa, Addis Ababa and many other towns throughout Ethiopia were able to cast their votes for Harari candidates seeking office in Harari Regional State from their places of domicile, be it in Dire Dawa, in Addis Ababa or wherever they reside in Ethiopia without needing to travel to the city of Harar during elections.

This provision was instituted in recognition of and to redress over a century of systematic and deliberate dispossession of the Harari people by former regimes, beginning with the imperial Ethiopian government. These previous governments had instituted policies which suppressed the social and economic vitality of Harar and deliberately sought to depopulate, disperse and politically castrate the political rights of Hararis in Harar for the simple reason that Harar did not fit into the Orthodox Christian vision for Ethiopia. Historically, Hararis have a long and well documented presence in and around modern-day Harar, having founded and self-governed Harar for over a millennium.

Due to the historical closing of political space for Hararis in Harar, Hararis, in general, moved en masse into business, and are highly active in trade and commerce. Over the years, they have established their businesses outside of Harar in major cities and small towns throughout Ethiopia, from where they continue to maintain connections to their kin and relatives in Harar. They follow the affairs of their region closely and hold their ability to be able to participate in elections in Harar as an obligation that none of them could ever forsake. During the last 5 election cycles, this constitutional and internationally recognized act of affirmative action for a minority and indigenous people was respected. Hararis all over Ethiopia were able to cast their votes where they lived.

For the current planned elections of 2021, the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia, (NEBE) had, out of the blue, unilaterally and without any prior deliberation taken the unconstitutional action to retract the right of Hararis outside of Harari Regional State (H.R.S) to vote for the Harari Regional Council during Harari



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Hararis working together towards a common goal!



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elections. It appears that NEBE head acted intentionally and with malicious intent in this regard, knowing full-well that their actions had no defensible basis. Such cavalier and reckless acts by the NEBE deals a grave blow to the nascent federal democracy that Ethiopia needs to nurture to remain a multi-ethnic federation and a nation of laws. It presents a grave danger to the basic constitution of Ethiopia and runs counter to internationally recognized norms and practices extended to indigenous and minority groups.

This illegal act was forcefully resisted by Hararis, including the elders of Harari society in Harar, and all Hararis in Ethiopia and Harari diasporas all over the world. They saw this act for what it was, an act of subterfuge that was slipped into the chaotic Ethiopian electoral process designed to strip Harari Regional State and Hararis of their constitutionally granted affirmative action rights. A case was brought before the Supreme Court of Ethiopia to seek redress of this overreach by NEBE. A verdict was handed out by the Supreme Court on 27-April, 2021 invalidating the actions of the NEBE, and affirming the rights of Hararis outside of Harar to their right to vote for Harari National Congress in Harari Regional State elections regardless of their place of domicile.

In a period of extreme unrest and civil strife in Ethiopia, the rights of minorities and indigenous communities should be respected and safe-guarded even more than ever before. We, the Harari Alliance for Justice and Equality (H.A.J.E) urge the National Election Board of Ethiopia to safeguard the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples of Ethiopia. The rights and protections needed to ensure the survival and prosperity of the scores of indigenous and minority groups within Ethiopia is a critical issue that has too long been ignored and requires special and greater attention by any incoming legally elected government.

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