The Debate on Social Cohesion and Transitional Justice in Ethiopia: An Interview

Fana Gebresenbet

For the past decade, Ethiopia has witnessed an increasing amount of violent conflict across the country, most prominently the war between the government of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which started in November 2020. Two years later, on 2 November 2022, the federal government and the TPLF signed the *Pretoria Agreement for Lasting Peace through a Permanent Cessation of Hostilities* (CoHA). However, various other conflicts are ongoing in Oromia, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz regions, etc. The reasons for conflict are all very place-specific and follow complex historic trajectories. What all these conflicts do seem to have in common is that they are increasingly interwoven vertically, that is to say from the local to the regional to the national levels. And in addition, transnational conflicts in the Horn of Africa are increasingly interconnected.

Against this backdrop, various debates have started in Ethiopia on the need for national dialogue, reconciliation, and healing. The CoHA calls upon the federal government to "implement a comprehensive transitional justice policy aimed at accountability, ascertaining the truth, redress for victims, reconciliation, and healing".[1] Some political actors also have evoked notions of "social cohesion" and referred to the need to renew the "social contract" in the country.

What are the different meanings of these terms in the current debate? Where do they come from? And what connotations do these terms have among the various stakeholders

1 Pretoria Agreement 2022. "Agreement for Lasting Peace through a Permanent Cessation of Hostilities Agreement between the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)." [Pretoria, 2 November], §10(3).

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in Ethiopia? These questions are taken up by the director of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) at Addis Ababa University, Fana Gebresenbet (PhD).

Q: Dr Fana, to start with: Who are the current stakeholders in Ethiopia involved in the debate on national dialogue, reconciliation, and healing?

A: The key stakeholder leading the official national dialogue is the federal government, through the establishment of the National Dialogue Commission (NDC) and the appointment of 11 commissioners in the first quarter of 2022. The process was more inclusive and participatory than the experience with the establishment of the Ethiopian Reconciliation Commission and the Administrative Boundary and Identity Issues Commission in early 2019. However, the process of establishing the NDC emerged in the context of key opposition actors who were either in armed rebellion (the TPLF or the Oromo Liberation Army [OLA]) or actively disabled through the imprisonment of key politicians (such as Jawar Mohammed and Bekele Gerba of the Oromo Federalist Congress [OFC]). In such processes, more care should have been taken to bring what one might consider as "extreme voices" to the dialogue platform than include hundreds of others on a closer bandwidth. In Ethiopia, lack of inclusion of such ethno-nationally organized opposition parties on the extreme side of the continuum are yet to be officially part of the dialogue process, which is a major concern.
Since its establishment, the NDC was engaged in what it termed as pre-preparation and preparation stages, effectively not doing much on the ground. Active work on the ground only started in mid-2023 after the commission had allowed half of its three-year mandate to pass. Even then, the focus was on a bottom-up approach, eclipsing the key role – constructive as well as disruptive – potentially to be played by political, academic, and business elites. The commission also appears to be working with selected public universities, more for logistical and operational issues of hosting regional coordination offices and perhaps using their staff for facilitation than to inform and shape the whole dialogue process. The NDC also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with a consortium of civil society organizations (CSOs), which, if genuinely implemented, will be good. However, women's advocacy groups are not properly included in the process, and there seems to be a push to have a proper voice in the dialogue process.
Perhaps another important point to consider is the birth of the NDC in the midst of a more inclusive dialogue process under the Multi-stakeholder Initiative for National Dialogue (MIND). MIND was established with eight institutions drawn from civil society, government, and political parties in August 2020, some months before the war between the federal government and the TPLF broke out. This process was undercut with the establishment of the NDC, although attempts to build on the work and studies of the MIND were there.
When it comes to reconciliation and healing, there is no officially recognized process. The federal government as well as the regional governments do not appear to put significant attention on reconciliation and healing. The war in northern Ethiopia brought

a lot of suffering and trauma to all affected communities – especially in Tigray – while "life" appears to be "rebooted" and start without any targeted or collective trauma healing efforts. For example, although a significant proportion of students is yet to benefit from it, schooling started in Tigray without any healing support or trauma-healing skills training for the teachers.

In this context, the healing-related works are left to CSOs and local actors. The problem with this is that it is likely to be less coordinated and targeted to benefit those in most need. While religious actors might have the acceptance and legitimacy to help with healing one must remember that these institutions are primarily staffed by men, thus not necessarily the best when it comes to the particular experiences of women survivors. Moreover, the religious actors also suffered under the same challenging situation, and possibly the scale and comprehensiveness of the violence requires specialized training.

The situation with reconciliation is even worse. The reconciliation work is necessarily between the conflicting parties and needs careful design and facilitation to address the structural causes and effects of the war. After the signing of the CoHA, one would expect that the coalition created to fight the war on both sides would be transformed into a coalition for peace, possibly through a reconciliation process. A political dialogue is yet to seriously start, and the difficult questions remain unaddressed. The warring parties are yet to start "normal politics", to promote people-to-people engagements. Relations between Amhara and Tigray elites is still tense, and the contentious issues are yet to be put on the table. In other parts of the country, the violence is yet to subside before considering any form of effort towards reconciliation. This key process seems to have been ignored or simply considered to have been addressed in the CoHA and other ad hoc discussions that happened afterwards.

Perhaps the government is planning to properly sequence reconciliation efforts to come after a truth-seeking work. A taskforce of experts working under the Ministry of Justice had prepared a policy paper on transitional justice in Ethiopia.[2] Hopefully, a proper politically negotiated end to the war and violence will be followed with a transitional justice process that also includes reconciliation efforts.

Q: The Ethiopian Reconciliation Commission (ERC) was established by the federal government on 19 February 2019. It had a three-year mandate to look at gross human rights violations. How do you assess the achievements of the ERC?

A: Ethiopia needs a truth and reconciliation commission. There is no doubt about that. However, the establishment of the now-defunct Ethiopian Reconciliation Commission in February 2019 seems to have been more an expression of the hype and excessively optimistic view of the time. If one looks at the establishment proclamation and how the commissioners acted afterwards, it is more likely that either the government did not

2 Ministry of Justice 2023. Ethiopia. Policy Options for Transitional Justice. Draft, January. Addis Ababa: Ministry of Justice.

have the proper technical inputs to establish a commission that operates and brings the desired results, or the establishment of the commission was a performative act that goes in tandem with the mood of the time.
First, the establishment of the ERC was not participatory. The public was simply told about the establishment of the commission and the appointment of the commissioners. Second, there was no political process to end the escalating political tension at the time and to establish an "end date" for the operations of the ERC. Neither was there a significant buy-in from the political elite, particularly those in the opposition. Third, the government/parliament decided to appoint 41 commissioners, and after a year or so added another 5. Actually, the relevant proclamation does not limit the number of commissioners, and the job is part-time and unpaid. The problem here is that (1) there were too many commissioners that made the task of reaching a consensus difficult; (2) some of the commissioners were active politicians; and (3) it was easy to form/create factions within the commissioners. All these factors hindered creating a common position on any of the key themes that needed strategic decision-taking.
As far as I know, the commission's life ended without making any significant contribution to the mandate it was given. It did not manage to make the strategic decisions on the "start date" and "end date" of its work, neither it did take the decision (or communicate such a decision publicly) on which gross atrocities/crimes the commission would be considering. Moreover, the public image of the commission and some of the commissioners did not improve public trust in it.

Q: On 22 February 2022, the parliament launched the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission (ENDC). What is the scope of their work?

A: As indicated in the establishment proclamation of the NDC (no. 1265/21), the primary mandate of the NDC is to unpack the fundamental causes of instability, violence, and disagreement between different sections of society and the elite and to help address them through an impartial and inclusive process. The dialogue process is expected to take place under capable commissioners or facilitators and experts approved by them. The scope of work is also delimited to meeting the national interest, among others by creating a new political dispensation with trust between/among different sections of society and vertically between government and society. Over the longer term, the commission is expected to promote the culture of peace and make dialogue a culture in the country to transform society and sustainably build peace in Ethiopia.

Q: And how does the ENDC plan to achieve these aims?

A: The NDC is currently working from the bottom, woreda (district level) upwards to regions in some regional states, apparently those selected as being more stable and peaceful. The strategy they are working with is to let the public identify 50 representatives of the local community from 9 different categories (such as women, youth, elders, etc.).

That is where most of the energy is being invested, with the plan to identify and discuss on agenda items from the lowest level and bring it all the way to the national level. The dialogue sessions will then be facilitated to enable some resolution of tensions and sense/perceptions of enmity. This would be done at different levels.
There are also plans to engage Ethiopians from different professional associations (teachers, artists, lawyers, etc.), politicians (opposition as well as the ruling party), business people, etc. If all goes well, this will complement the bottom-up approach with some degree of elite bargain/dialogue. Otherwise, the bottom-up approach to dialogue will be easily short-circuited if the elite are not brought into the loop. The current refusals to recognize the NDC and its work by some opposition parties is already an indication of what is to come if the elite political actors are not seriously engaged. There are also plans to engage the diaspora. By the end of the dialogue process, close to a million might be involved in the process. However, the quality of involvement and whether it will be genuine is yet to be seen.
In accordance with the establishment proclamation, there is the plan of commissioning research to better understand some of the issues it has a mandate to investigate. This might allow experts and academics, among others, to make a contribution to the process by researching various agenda items, as well as root causes of instability and conflict in the country, and compiling international best practice to identify useful experience from other countries in the continent and beyond. It would have been ideal if this research was conducted well before actual work at the grassroots level started. But late will be better than never.

Q: Where do you see the biggest challenges for the ENDC's work?

A: In my assessment, there are several challenges the commission is facing. First is the lack of trust in the commission and commissioners in some quarters. As I've mentioned earlier, some political groups decided to exclude themselves from the process. The timing of the establishment of the NDC and the appointment of the commissioners in early 2021, prior to the resolution of the armed conflicts in the country, has meant that the commission has started with a low level of confidence. One could have expected further that the commission could have earned public trust over the past year and half. That didn't happen. It rather seems that some of the tasks the commission was supposed to address were handled by the government, often through coercive means. On top of that, the idea of dialogue and such political processes is no longer a priority for many Ethiopians, primarily due to the continued violence in different parts of the country, news of lawlessness/abductions for ransom, as well as the high inflationary pressures on basic consumer goods.
Second, I feel that the commission could have benefitted from a more targeted strategic communication to sustain and build on the momentum built towards its establishment as well as the appointment of the commissioners. This momentum was lost. Moreover, a clear and articulated communication strategy would have helped at least to build a clear

understanding of what is meant by dialogue, what challenges it would be resolving, and what strategies it would be employing. Currently, we have unrealistic expectations of the commission – with some expecting nothing short of a miracle to occur upon completion of its work. If such views are not managed, this would lead to a further lowering of satisfaction with the NDC's work.

Third, the commission needs to have undivided support of some professional groups and CSOs. In its current practice, in the interest of maintaining its autonomy, the NDC is not seriously engaging requests for cooperation and collaboration from CSOs and other sectors. While the principle is admirable, the right balance with engagement with other civil groups and associations should have been struck. If that does not happen, the critique levelled against the NDC will grow – and reduce further the legitimacy and effectiveness of its work.

Fourth, if the dialogue proceeds as well as it could, the expected political dividend could be garnered when the recommendations are implemented genuinely. This would open the floodgates for major political questions that were left frozen for decades. These issues get us back to issues that were considered solved with the 1995 constitution, including division of power between the federal and regional governments, the equilibrium between individual and communal/ethnic rights, matters of land ownership, socioeconomic marginalization, as well as the coming to terms with the country's past. Following recommendations regarding these deeply contested issues needs a careful navigation of the politics, not necessarily by the NDC but by other entities to be established per the recommendation. This is where the deep-seated political challenges come to the fore.

Q: How does the ENDC relate to the transitional justice referred to in the CoHA?

A: The ENDC was established without any direct mandate related to transitional justice in 2021, while the CoHA was signed in Pretoria on 2 November 2022 with provisions on transitional justice. Thus far, there is no clear indication that the ENDC works on truth-seeking and transitional justice. And this is also not to be expected on the basis of the proclamation. The best one could expect could have been the identification of agenda items related to past atrocities and the need for transitional justice during the dialogue process and then for the ENDC to recommend the establishment of a transitional justice process at the national level. In the context of the CoHA, this would have been limited to the war in northern Ethiopia (3 November 2020–2 November 2022) and, in terms of geographic scope, limited to the areas affected by the war.

The current policy-making process related to transitional justice, and the public documents we have thus far, is limited not to the context of the CoHA nor to the war in northern Ethiopia. Therefore, there is the likelihood that the two major processes will proceed parallel to each other without major direct linkages. In terms of sequencing, in my view, it would have been ideal if the national dialogue process preceded the transitional justice process. Otherwise, there will likely be fatigue and waste of resources if the two happen side by side (owing to the absence of learning from the other process and no

clear complementarity/synergy). Moreover, the dialogue process could have created the political foundations for a genuine truth-seeking and reconciliation process to take place, on top of identifying the key agenda items and time scope for the work of a transitional justice process. We are yet to see if there would be a meaningful relationship/linkage between the two processes.

Q: How does the prime minister's concept of Medemer – based on the three pillars of national unity, the honour of citizens, and prosperity – relate to the debate on social cohesion?

A: At the level of concept or ideology, *Medemer* ticks the right boxes to build social cohesion. In the past few decades, the dominant mode of politics has led to the investment of so many narratives, discourses, and resources and so much time in building cohesion within the ethnic community, at the cost of what holds Ethiopia as a polity and society together. *Medemer* emerges with the potential to address this by paying commensurate attention to national unity, building trust, as well as reducing extreme forms of ethnonationalism in the country.
But in politics, any concept/ideology is as good as its implementation. Compared to the first few months after April 2018, the utilization of *Medemer* has been dialled down. Now the term is rarely used. Moreover, the scale, extremity, and pervasiveness of violence and atrocities we saw in the past few years, including by government forces, has led to the further eroding of trust and the social fabric. Even in the areas farther away from the violence – be it northern Ethiopia, west or south Oromia, or the Benishangul-Gumuz regional state – the extent and type of violence has increasingly been made visible. Thanks to social media, any government (let alone those in developing parts of the world) cannot control what circulates and what doesn't. Videos and images with much powerful message reach millions in a matter of minutes on their phones. The graphic and ugly violence, and framings around them, find an easy way into the minds of many Ethiopians. Moreover, we also have a lack of trust due to the misalignment between what the government says in terms of cohesion and unity and what actually happens in pushing some ideas and policy choices by force. As a result, there is limited discussion, building of trust, and working towards a cooperative arrangement. On top of this, the violent displacements and continued suffering of hundreds of thousands from Oromia has further exacerbated the situation of the political discourse around *Medemer*. As such, in practice the utilization of *Medemer* at this point in Ethiopia's politics would have little traction among the public.

Q: Are there any other indigenous concepts talking to notions of social cohesion?

A: There are indeed many concepts related to social cohesion. There are various social norms that promote social harmony, trust, empathy, and peace. For example, in mid-

2021 Semeneh Ayalew, in an emotionally charged, provocative piece[3], strongly argued that the medicine for Ethiopia's collective suffering would come from the social field by bringing norms/concepts such as *tur* (ጡር) and *neg bene* (ነግ በኔ), which discourage committing immoral acts for fear of karma, and *reherahe* (ርህራሄ, radical empathy/radical humanity). A similar concept among the Oromo is *Saafu*. All these concepts require actors to be considerate of the pain of the one at the receiving end of a certain form/type of violence, to be proportional in the pain we inflict on others, and to be aware the circularity of time (i.e., that today's victor will be tomorrow's victim). There are also various social norms and institutions that promote harmony, social co-existence, and co-operation both within groups as well as across groups. I cannot list them all here but the social is full of such norms of forgiveness and empathy, while the political is increasingly affecting and eroding these social values. What is worse is that these social values are the very first victims of extreme violence.

Since the 1974 revolution, Ethiopia has survived through many rounds of violence. The terror campaigns of the late 1970s had siblings spying on each other and contributing to the killing of the other. The dogmatic views and interpretations of politics led to neighbours snitching on good neighbours. The bloodbath in urban parts of Ethiopia thus resulted in the erosion of trust. Famine and struggles for basic survival would not enable trust at least between people and government. The extreme forms of autochthony and nativism we see in recent years does not help cohesion. The federal arrangement does not promote co-existence along the boundaries between regional states. A community along the border would have to choose which way it will be, erasing the possibility of being a little bit of both. Gray identities are not wanted, one has to be either here or there. More concerning is the violence of recent years in western Oromia, Amhara, Tigray and Afar… In many respects, if we travel in time to the pre-1970s, the Amhara and Tigre would have been the closest in terms of social values, economic linkages, identity, language, and religion. Now politicization of identity and religion for decades and more importantly the war of the recent past, together with the mobilization before and during the war, has pushed these two groups to enmity. One is viewed – at least as the activists tell us – as the archenemy of the other.

Q: If you look at other societies both on the African continent and beyond, which have come out of violent conflict, and what experiences and lessons learnt can you draw on? Which of these experiences are relevant for the Ethiopian context?

A: The main lesson I would say is "if there is the will, there is the way". Some depict the challenges haunting Ethiopia as unique and the violence in the country's history and contemporary escalations as unique to the country and insurmountable. The experiences

3 Semeneh Ayalew Asfaw, Ethiopia: The Grim Search for Political Light in a Crisis, 6 August 2021, https://www.theelephant.info/features/2021/08/06/ethiopia-the-grim-search-for-political-light-in-a-crisis/ (accessed 31 July 2023).

of other countries tell us that if the political elite agree to forge a common democratic and prosperous future, there will be the way to make it happen. If Rwanda can survive as a state and build a "stronger state", why can't Ethiopia? If South Africa could make peace after decades of apartheid regime and its atrocious segregationist policies, why can't Ethiopia do the same? If Colombia is moving towards peace after decades of civil war with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), why can't Ethiopia? What happened and is happening in Ethiopia is not qualitatively unique and is not significantly worse than these cases.

Most of the political debate in Ethiopia is about the past, on atrocities committed some decades back, fuelling new atrocities in the present day. Compared to how much energy we spend on contestation over the past, we did not spend the commensurate attention to know/study it. So, it would be important to genuinely let historians do their work and thereby produce a shared/official history. Even if we all might not agree with that narrative, the deniability of some historical events and the details around them and the exaggerations/reductions of atrocities (and glories) could be reduced.

This could then be followed by active and deliberate projects of memorialization, not fuelling further politicization of the past for emotional electoral/political gains, but because the generations coming should know and learn from it. Here we have great experience from Germany on how it remembers and memorializes the Holocaust and the Second World War. Japan also takes the emotional aspects of the sexual violence against Korean, Chinese, and other women during the world war as seriously as it deserves. The emotional also requires us to focus on narratives, continued apologies, and agreements not to poke each other's wounds.

When it comes to truth-seeking and reconciliation on the more recent and politically more relevant atrocities and violence, we have the successful experience of South Africa. Kenya demonstrated the importance of considering socioeconomic issues, including issues of marginalization, grand corruption, and land (access, ownership). Liberia offers a good example of engaging conflict-generated diaspora in such peace processes too.

In terms of charting a new route and chapter in Ethiopia's history, the currently unfolding national dialogue could be more consequential. Here again we have good experiences to distil and take from the immediate neighbourhoods. We have the experience of South Sudan, where a bottom-up approach by itself could only lead to the shelving of the final documents. We have the more successful experience of Kenya, where some positive policy changes came out of the process. Tunisia could also offer lessons on engagement of civil society as key actors in such a process.

My understanding is that, if there is the will to look into the future and to collectively shape it, the past could be addressed and somehow dealt with. Then lessons to be taken from other countries will be a secondary question.

Q: Do you see a role for Ethiopia's international partners in these processes, if any?

A: International partners could do a lot in this challenging process. At the end of the day, the process should be owned internally, as such international partners should limit their role to supporting (not driving the process).[4] Support could range from expertise-sharing (high-level experts on process design, experience-sharing, etc.) to creating (dis)incentive structures as well availing economic/financial resources. We don't have to forget or ignore the very powerful economic incentives and cultural explanations that keep current political dynamics going on. Breaking this pattern needs intentional investment as well. Moreover, given the global condition related to Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine, the impact of the war on the Ethiopian economy, and the mismanagement of the economy, the socioeconomic pressures are huge. Inflation in the basic consumable goods is pushing prices above the means the majority have. Without a significant easing of the economic situation, the other processes – be it dialogue, transitional justice, or elite bargain – will not have significant bearing on the everyday life of the average Ethiopian. International partners need to be cognizant of this.

Q: And what could be the role of the African Union (AU) or the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)?

A: After significant delay, the African Union did well in the process leading towards the signing of the Pretoria Agreement. IGAD had some role as well. However, in the past few months we do not see major engagement from the AU and IGAD when it comes to building political dialogue and consolidating the peace. We do not see significant involvement of the continental organization in building momentum for and enabling the CoHA to implement its word and spirit or that other sources support the initiative. There is very little we can expect from the AU in terms of further consolidating peace and stability in Ethiopia. I don't think that the body has gone the full distance in terms of building sustainable peace or post-conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD) in other African countries either. Even if there is the will and ability, I wouldn't imagine that the Ethiopian government will go with it. As is the case with other international partners, the role of the AU/IGAD will be supportive as the process will inevitably be inherently political. Regarding IGAD, the institution is at its weakest point, and even in the past, it was more Ethiopia utilizing the IGAD platform than IGAD being an actor. Thus, it is unlikely that it will meaningfully contribute to persuading or coercing actors in Ethiopia towards peace.

4 See D. Yohannes and F. Gebresenbet, Discursive Norm Contestation in APSA Research: Exploring 'African Solutions to African Problems' as an Emergent APSA Norm, in: K. Döring et al. (eds.), Researching the Inner Life of the African Peace and Security Architecture. APSA Inside-Out, Leiden/Boston 2021, pp. 57–77.

The AU and IGAD, however, could lend some support in terms of assisting with developing policy initiatives and facilitating processes.[5] Some sort of regional or continental solidarity with the process could also be expected, which might as well come in the form of nominal amounts to be contributed. More importantly, the two bodies could ensure that member states of the Horn region do not have any destabilizing role on the process. As much as conflict processes are regionalized in the region, we can expect that the peace process should have allies from the whole region. Here again, I doubt that the AU or IGAD can achieve this over the shorter term.

Q: Finally, where do you see the debate in Ethiopia, say, in 12 months?

A: Despite my desire to remain very hopeful of the country's near future, there is very little evidence to support any significant degree of optimism. I would have hoped that the Pretoria Agreement would have encouraged the government to peacefully resolve violent conflicts in other parts of the country. Understandably, these things take time, and automatic agreements with other actors such as OLA or groups in Benishangul-Gumuz could not be expected. The talks with OLA in Tanzania did not bear fruit, and we see escalation afterwards. There are also numerous cases of conflicts, attacks, and abductions in different parts of the country. On top of this, the economic situation is deteriorating, contributing to, among others, petty crimes, including on the streets of Addis Ababa. Under these conditions, we cannot expect the slowing investment to pick up speed. Obviously, this has implications for the creation of decent paying jobs.

Moreover, we at best have cessation of only battle-related deaths in Tigray. The war economy more or less continued, with continued starvation of people (especially after the suspension of humanitarian aid by the World Food Programme and the US Agency for International Development (USAID); internally displaced persons (IDPs) are yet to be returned/resettled; the dispute over territories between Tigray and Amhara regions still have to be solved; and many observers say that many combatants from Tigray's side are yet to join the rehabilitation camps and that the TPLF did not fully disarm. Thus, the risk of a relapse to violence at least over these contested territories is plausible. Given the current war in Sudan and the continued uncertain relations with Eritrea, one cannot be sure how things will go in the near future.

Other peace processes, including the dialogue process and transitional justice process, did not take root. In the coming months, the dialogue process might take place across the country, especially in areas where there is stability; however, it will not have immediate political outcomes. I also don't see the transitional justice process taking any serious steps in the coming months, especially in Tigray as there are preconditions related to political processes that need to happen before any truth-seeking starts. Thus, we can at

5 African Union, Transitional Justice Policy, Addis Ababa: African Union, 2019.

best expect for a body to be established by the parliament, but no serious truth-seeking to happen any time soon.
The Ethiopian political condition is very precarious, turbulent, and worsening. The turbulent nature discourages us from making predictions. However, I do not see processes that will yield positive outcomes in the immediate months to come, while the negative forces might remain as strong or could grow stronger. As such, I want to be pleasantly surprised with improvement in the general peace and stability of the country in the coming year or so.

UE: Dr Fana, thank you for the interview.

The interview was conducted by Ulf Engel. He is the professor for "Politics in Africa" at the Institute of African Studies, Leipzig University, and a visiting professor at the Institute for Peace and Security Studies at Addis Ababa University since 2010.