EDUCATION FOR FREEDOM

Soweto (South Africa) Students Uprising For Freedom and Justice

Implications to the April 2014 Oromo Students Uprising For Freedom and Justice

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It is always desirable to get rid of suppression, but it is no not without pain and sacrifices to achieve it and attain freedom, because the battle is between those with provisional power to mobilise resources of the oppressed against the oppressed themselves and power less but authentic majority without power. There cannot be resistance without prevalence of suppression.

It goes without saying that human right is not decided by alien body, but it is a natural right one deserves and upholds. Despite this, sometimes it is compromised by laws enacted by governments in the interest of the public and against the interest of the public too. The former is legitimate as far as it is justified by the partaking of the stakeholder while the latter is a characteristic of suppression enacted by suppressors of different modes, the major ones being political, racial and colour discrimination.

Racial and colour discrimination and apartheid prevailed in Africa especially in south Africa since 18th century, but was supported by law enacted (1948)after world war II by white minority Dutch and British South African Authorities. In any way it was nothing, but colonising the indigenous majority people. This social and political suppression came to an end in 1993/4 by the subsequent uprising of South African Students, the public and diligence of black South African freedom fighters.

The Oromo are colonised by the Abyssinians since 19th century to date. Though the phenomenon is similar with the rest of African countries, the major difference is that the former is black-black colonisation expedited by some Western countries. This suppression persists in a very tantalizing way with analogous and fierce resistance, by the Oromo people, students and freedom seekers. As resistance is a response to dissatisfaction of needs it may continue until the needs are met.
It is a lived history that students and graduates are maneuverers of social change and struggle for freedom in the society. In other words education is an essential instrument for freedom without which ignorance and slavery persist. That is why Soweto and Oromo students took to the street their resistance against subjugation of their people. Persistent resistance of Soweto students uprising is tantamount important for emerging Oromo students movement for freedom and democracy in Ethiopia.

In this article I will describe and analyse experience of Soweto students uprising along with Oromo students uprising for freedom and justice. In doing so, I use qualitative descriptive analysis approach informed by Gene (2000) protest strategies\(^1\) and Soweto students experience. While acknowledging the significant role played by Oromo students’ movement before 2014, I will deal with Oromo students uprisings of April 2014 and its aftermaths.

**The Soweto Students Uprising**

The Soweto students uprising came after a decade of relative calm in the resistance movement in the wake of massive government repression in the 1960s. Yet during this "silent decade," a new sense of resistance had been brewing. In 1969, black students formed the South African Student’s Organization (SASO). Stressing black pride, self-reliance, psychological liberation, the Black Consciousness Movement in the 1970s became an influential force in the townships, including Soweto.\(^2\)

The political context of the 1976 uprisings also takes into account the effects of workers' strikes in Durban in 1973; the liberation of neighbouring Angola and Mozambique in 1975; and increases in student enrolment in black schools, which led to the emergence of a new collective youth identity forged by common experiences and grievances.

Consequently, on the morning of June 16, 1976, thousands of students from the African township of Soweto, outside Johannesburg, gathered at their schools to participate in a student-organized protest demonstration. Many of them carried signs that read, 'Down with Afrikaans'\(^3\) and 'Bantu Education – Hell with it;' others sang freedom songs as the unarmed crowd of schoolchildren marched towards Orlando soccer stadium where a peaceful rally had been planned.
The crowd swelled to more than 10,000 students. En route to the stadium, approximately fifty policemen stopped the students and tried to turn them back. At first, the security forces tried unsuccessfully to disperse the students with tear gas and warning shots. Then policemen fired directly into the crowd of demonstrators. Many students responded by running for shelter, while others retaliated by pelting the police with stones. That day, two students died from police gunfire; hundreds more sustained injuries during the subsequent chaos that engulfed Soweto. The shootings in Soweto sparked a massive uprising that soon spread to more than 100 urban and rural areas throughout South Africa.

The initial demand of South Africa students was about suppression of the education system on Black South Africans. Samuel (1990) observes that, 'the immediate cause for the June 16, 1976, march was student opposition to a decree issued by the Bantu Education Department that imposed Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in half the subjects in higher primary (middle school) and secondary school' (P.21).

Since members of the ruling National Party spoke Afrikaans, black students viewed it as the "language of the oppressor." Moreover, lacking fluency in Afrikaans, African teachers and pupils experienced first-hand the negative impact of the new policy in the classroom.

*The Bantu Education Act, 1953 (Act No. 47 of 1953; later renamed the Black Education Act, 1953) was a segregation law which legalised several aspects of the apartheid system. Its major provision was enforcing racially separated educational facilities. Even university were made "tribal", and all but three missionary schools chose to close down when the government no longer would help support their schools... It is often argued that the policy of Bantu (African) education was aimed to direct black or non-white youth to the unskilled labour market (www.wikipedia.org; visited 3 May, 2013).*

According to this Act, the schools reserved for the country's white children were of Western standards and the education was both mandatory and free. Considerable number of Black schools did not have facilities and running water. The education for Blacks, Indians and Coloureds was not free. In 1976, the Afrikaans Medium Decree of 1974, which forced all black schools to use both Afrikaans and English as languages of instruction beginning with the last year of primary school, led to the Soweto in which more than 575 people died, at least 134 of them under the age of
eighteen. Teachers were also protesting by way of refusing to implement the policy and were made redundant. Indlovu (1998) describes, ‘the firing of teachers in Soweto who refused to implement the Afrikaans language policy exacerbated the frustration of middle school students, who then organized small demonstrations and class boycotts as early as March, April and May.

As the mid-year exams approached, boycotts took place in many Soweto schools. It was around that time that the older students of the South African Students Movement (SASM) decided to organize a mass protest in Soweto. The delegates decided that there should be a mass demonstration from the Soweto students as a whole.

The government’s response to this peaceful demonstration was killing. The brutal killing of the school children on June 16, 1976, shocked the international community. Newspapers across the world published Sam Nzima’s photograph of a dying Hector Peterson on their front page. In the meantime, South African security forces, equipped with armoured tanks and live ammunition, poured into Soweto. Their instructions were to shoot to kill, for the sake of "law and order." By nightfall another eleven more people had been shot dead. Students in Soweto responded by pelting the police with stones and attacking what they regarded to be symbols of the apartheid government. Across much of Soweto government buildings and liquor stores were looted and burned.

On the second day of the uprising, the violence spread to African townships in the West Rand and Johannesburg. At the University of Witwatersrand, police broke up a group of 400 white students who had been marching to express their solidarity with the pupils of Soweto. On the third day, police began placing youth protestors in jail; students later testified to being tortured while imprisoned. What began as a local demonstration against the Afrikaans language decree quickly turned into a countrywide youth uprising against apartheid oppression.

The police shootings and the defiant response of African students in Soweto emboldened youth throughout the country to wage protests. Students in Port Elizabeth mobilized in their schools, leading to a conflict between the police and a crowd of 4,000 high school students and township residents en route to the local soccer stadium that left eight residents dead.
Hector P4. One of the victims

Protest Strategies

Protest was not limited to African students. In the Cape, Coloured and African high school students expressed solidarity with students in Soweto, while black students at the University of the Western Cape boycotted their classes for a week and clashed with police and university authorities. Demonstrations also took place in rural boarding schools and black University campuses all over the country. To sustain resistance, leaders of the Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC, founded in August 1976) decided to involve adults in the protests in order to build inter-generational unity and to strike an economic blow against apartheid. From August through December 1976, SSRC leaders organized a number of campaigns,

- including stay-at-homes (short strikes) for adult workers,
- marches to Johannesburg,
- anti-drinking campaigns,
- mass funerals (which became politically charged and often turned into protest rallies),
- meat boycotts
- and a Christmas consumer boycott.
- class attendance boycott
In preparation for the stay-at-homes, the SSRC printed flyers urging adults to participate. One read, "...the scrapping of BANTU EDUCATION, the RELEASE of Prisoners detained during the demos [demonstrations], and the overthrow of oppression, we the students call on our parents to stay at home and not go to work from Monday". (Karis and Carter 1982.p 591).

Sporadic clashes between students and police continued into 1977; by the end of the year, the government acknowledged that nearly 600 people had been killed, although recent research showed that at least 3,000 people died. Thousands more were imprisoned and many black South Africans fled into exile or joined the armed struggle.

Aftermath of the 1976 uprising

According to Samuel (1998), no significant steps were taken to demonstrate that the state was moving away from the policies that had provoked the initial revolts. While the years 1978-9 remained relatively quiet in the schools, the legacy of 1976 still lingered. On January 1, 1980, a new statute, the Education and Training Act replaced Bantu Education Act 1953. The Act sought to do away with some of the worst aspects of the precious legislation. It dropped the designation ‘Bantu’ and replaced it with ‘black’ and declared free and compulsory education would be central aim of policy, involvement of the parents and communities in the education system. Another important aspect of the Act was the provision that the home language would be used as a medium of instruction up to standard 2.

The 1980 also witnessed large scale student rejection of the state’s educational system. In April of that year, ‘coloured’ students in schools in Cape Town protested against the inferior quality of education and its generally inadequate provision, the rise of cost of schooling and education. Protests spread rapidly through many parts of South Africa. In its early stage over 2000000 secondary school students were involved. The movement also spread to the universities.

Samuel (1990) describes the events of 1980 that it exposed the depth and extent of the educational crisis in South Africa. Policies and legislations were imposed by the state without any consultation. It also underlined the failure of the educational system to realise
its political objectives. ‘Resolving the inadequacies of the education system was seen as short-term demand, while the national struggle for liberation-and therefore the linkages with broader community and political issues-became an important part of the educational struggle’ (Samuel p.25). The government was not able to fully address students’ questions and the revolt relapsed in 1983. In 1983 more than 10,000 students participated in school boycotts where security forces shot and killed some bus boycotters. The largest student organisation (Congress of South African Students) was banned from operating.

In 1984 the educational crisis was intensified and this was exposed by poor matric result that evoked anger. Pupil started boycotting when their demand for the right to democratically elect Student Representative Council was refused. The conflict was heightened considerably when a 15 year old pupil was killed by a police Land rover in the schoolground and spread through the South Africa.

By the end of 1984, it was estimated that 500 000 students had been involved in protest against the system. The events of 1984 were to be repeated in 1985 but on a much larger scale. The banning of COSAS by the state at the end of August ensured that a large number of pupils would not go back to school for the rest of the year (ibid, p.27). The state attempted to use the state of emergency to force pupil back into class. For example in the middle of August 764 pupil from a single Soweto high school were arrested for meeting outside the classroom. By the end of September the school boycott had become nationwide. According to the Department of Education and Training, 174 schools were deserted. In the Western Cape 454 coloured schools were closed by the Ministry of education and culture. The end of the year saw a massive stay away from examination throughout the country. The focus of the students’ protest in 1980 as in 1976 continued to be the state’s education system, but in a significant way students related their educational struggle to the broader political struggle of black communities. As Samuel asserts, the large part of the student population at this time was captured by the slogan, “Liberation Now – Education Later”. Pupils were prepared to scarify their schooling for broader political struggle.

The student uprising of 1976 was recognized as a watershed by the previous generation of activists. Ahmed Kathrada, convicted in the Rivonia Trial and imprisoned on Robben Island
since 1964 describes students’ uprising of 1976 as a watershed. He says “after our sentence in 1964, the rest of the ‘60s was fear among the people... End of ’69, the Black Consciousness movement came in, and the beginning of the ‘70s there was a revival of the trade union movement, so that gave us hope that things are changing. But in 1976, when massive students of Soweto came into the streets unarmed and they were killed in the hundreds – nobody knows how many of them were killed – that changed history. Fear was now driven out”. This headed to another chapter of struggle and system transformation. Corroborating this, Karis and Carter say, “the politicization and activism of young South Africans in Soweto and beyond galvanized the liberation movements and set in motion a series of transformations that ultimately led to the demise of apartheid” (p.180-84).

It is vivid from the above discussions that students protest was intensified and turned in to the wider political struggle against apartheid. This is due to the consequences of number of developments as identified by Samuel (1990). These are the political crisis of the state, the growth and strengthening of black political initiatives (through the organisation of the United Democratic Front and the National forum), the weakening economy, the increasing strength of the organised labour movement, the lack of confidence expressed by the private sector, and a growing internal resistance (p.27).

The state’s responses to the protests of 1980 were typical. Large numbers of schools were shut down, and many students were detained and shot down.

**The April 2014 Oromo Students Uprising**

Prior 1991, Oromo students’ public protest against Ethiopian regimes could be viewed as a complement to other nations and nationalities students’ movements in Ethiopia. There had been a clandestine movement that advanced national consciousness among Oromo and gave birth to Oromo national consciousness. Similar to Soweto students uprising, Oromo students uprising after 1991 emerged after a calm and clandestine resistance against suppression by successive Ethiopian regimes. There were sporadic movements especially in the universities and secondary schools since 1992. These disguised demand and sporadic movements came up with vivid and students mass uprising in April, 2014, which has never
ever have had equivalence neither at Oromia nor Ethiopian empire level in terms of students mass upheaval.

The popular April 2014 Oromo students uprising takes into consideration of preceding Oromo students’ movements and political backgrounds such as the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Article 1, which reads ‘All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development’. It also takes into account the recent liberation of Eritrea (1992) and South Sudan (2011) and Oromo struggle for freedom by the Oromo Liberation Front and other Oromo political organisations, Ogadene, Sidama and other national movements in Ethiopia. Also, the upsurge of Oromo pride and national consciousness after 1991 is an influential instrument for the uprising.

The uprising

On 22nd of April 2014, Jimma university students protested against government decision and action to incorporate nearby Oromia towns to Addis Abeba (Finfinne) under what the government calls Addis Abeba Master Plan and in protest of amalgamation of other Oromia cities in Federal administration. Their demand reads ‘EPRDF is doing trickery to the Oromo people, Oromo’s right to its land should be respected’ Addis Abeba is the central city of Oromia, Oromo is one!

On that day 10 students were arrested in allegation of organising demonstration and chanting slogans against government. Yet, the rest of students continued the protest by surrounding Jimma University police station and strongly demanding to free arrested students as they reflected students’ demand in unison. Eventually some students were released.

Subsequently on 24th of April, 2014-Haromaya University students demonstrated in front of the University and marched down town for the same purpose. They chanted slogans, ‘Finfinne is for Oromo, stop harassing Oromo; we do not let Burayyou, Legato, Lagadadhai, Sululta, Sabbata be sold, stop evicting poor Oromo farmers, We need freedom, Oromia shall be free, we do not give up struggle for Oromia, Afaan Oromo should be taught in schools in
Addis Abeba, Afaan Oromo should be federal language; we do not let down Oromo history, free Oromo political prisoners’.

These demands echoed across universities in Oromia. Consequently Ambo University students, in central Oromia, staged to the streets in several hundreds and protested the master plan on 25th April, 2014. The students marched chanting slogans such as “Oromia belongs to the Oromo people,” and "Finfinne is the central part of Oromia," highlighting a long-standing Oromo yearning for self-government and free from colonial oppression. Though the government believed 9 were killed, a witness told the BBC6 that 47 were killed by government forces during the two day protests, where some non-student individuals also joined the protest. During the subsequent attempts to crackdown the protest the government forces killed a 7 year girl in Guder town (12Km away from Ambo). The following extract of chronicle of Peace Corps, Jen and Josh 7 (May 24, 2014) corroborates the situation in Ambo.

Barricade on main road in Ambo
Disclaimer: Friday, April 25th, the protests began in Ambo.
We heard the sounds of a big crowd gathering at the university, walking east, yelling and chanting... In other parts of Ethiopia, journalists and bloggers were arrested and thrown in jail. Main road in Ambo, cars & buildings being burned Tuesday morning, the protests resumed.

... Apparently there were protests at the preparatory school and the federal police were in town. We stayed home all day, listening to the sounds of the protests, denying to ourselves that the ‘pop, pop, pop’ we heard in the afternoon was gunfire....Wednesday morning, the protests resumed.... This time, we heard sirens.... Again, we heard the ‘pop, pop, pop,’ every few minutes. We poked our heads out of the compound gate and talked to our neighbour... Neighbour’s said the federal police had already shot and killed demonstrators who were participating in the protest.... Ironically, as we sat at home, listening to gunshots all day long, John Kerry was visiting Ethiopia, a mere 2 hours away from Addis Ababa, to encourage democratic development.

Around 3pm...we heard gunshots so close to our house that we both lucked reflexively. An hour later, we talked to a young man who said, numbly, “I carried their bodies from their
compound to the clinic.” Our two young neighbour university students – had been hunted down by the federal police and killed in their home while the protest was on the opposite side of town.... Not being armed with weapons, protesters retaliated against the shooter by hanging him. Another friend told us about 2 students who were shot and killed by the federal police in front of a primary school, again far away from the protest ...

While waiting at the station, we saw at least 50 people brought into the station at gunpoint, some from the backs of military trucks and many from a bus. Inside the police compound, there were hundreds of demonstrators overflowing the capacity of the prison, many of them visibly beaten and injured. After the U.S. Embassy requested our release, we headed out of town. The entire east side of town, starting from the bus station, was damaged. A bank, hotel, café, and many cars were damaged or burned.... We couldn't help but shed tears at the sight of our beloved, damaged town. One of several vehicles burned during the protest our favourite restaurant/gym (Jen and Josh, May 24, 2014).

This chronicle depicts that the government forces’ response to the students’ peaceful demonstration was inappropriate, despite the latter is human and constitutional right in principle. The yelling over a bullhorn in Amharic by armed forces warning to stay at home indicates that they are external forces or invaders from other region like Agazi. As many local people cannot speak the language the forces speak and understand what they are yelling about, they may be tempted to do otherwise. The observation also tells that vehicles and buildings were burned. It goes without saying that the instrument students hold was their pen and may be stone to defend at distance if things go worst. On the other hand, armed force hold armament that dribble fire and kill people and burn things around. Therefore, at this point it could be concluded that the government forces are responsible for the lost life and properties. On the same day when gunshots were going on all day along, John Kerry, the State Secretary of US was in Addis Ababa. Even though he had first-hand evidence, he uttered no word about the incidents and reckless action of the Ethiopian forces. On top of this were pervasive demonstrations across the world including USA by the Oromo in Diaspora against government actions and support of students’ demand. John Kerry and his government did not regard these atrocities, even as a death of a single human being. They did no attempt to denounce or condemn Ethiopian government action either on the spot. By doing so they confirm that the democracy they chant is hypocrisy when it
challenges their ally. However, some US senators like that of Minneapolis expressed their concerns about the situation in Oromia and passed over to the higher authority for discussion.

In 7 days, the protest spread in all universities in Oromia, namely, Wollega, Metu, Bolu Hora, Adama, Madda Walabu and Addis Ababa universities participated in the city-wide demonstration demanding an immediate halt to the city’s deceitful plan. The protest on April 26 and 27 by Wollega University students was one of the gargantuan demonstrations. Thousands were involved. The federal police and Agazi forces turned guns to the students and killed three students on the first day. Others were wounded and the only public hospital was banned from treating them. The police denied first aid access to students resulting in conflict between police and medical professionals. Despite this, medical professionals’ put pressure and the students were offered medical treatment by these ethical professionals.

Other students fled to the bush, and their whereabouts was not yet known. The protest continued on 27 April. Students were hunted from their dormitory and put in prison, where the victims were hanged up-side down and beaten ruthlessly.

After 8 days some secondary and middle secondary school students joined the uprising. At some places like Ambo, Gimbi, Nedjo and Gulliso, parents, civil servants and adults supported and joined the revolt. In fact in some places of Western Oromia purposive
intruders attempted to alter the momentum by manoeuvring clashes among ethnic groups, and this was halted by local wise people.

As discussed earlier, the initial question of Soweto students was about Bantu Education system, which its major provision was enforcing racially separated educational facilities aimed to direct black or non-white youth to the unskilled labour market. By the same token though schools in Oromia and some universities provide Afaan Oromo, educational facilities and the quality of resources provided is poor when compared to Tigray region education institutions. At the same time the policy made a systematic blockade to the graduates who learned in Afaan Oromo by legalising Amharic as working language and outlawing Afaan Oromo as working language of the country. The implication of this conditions us low employment of Oromo and high employment of Abyssinian graduates at the federal level which is 12.79 % and 56.52 % respectively.

The main strategy of Oromo students uprising across venues was demonstration followed by chanting slogans and placards.

**Government Reactions**

As mentioned earlier, students demonstrated barehanded and chanting to let their voices heard. Conversely, government’s reaction was with ammunition and not proportional. Numerous reports from witnesses, local residents and other sources indicate that the security forces have responded with excessive force against peaceful protesters. For instance Amnesty International1 reported that, forces comprised of the federal police and military Special Forces known as ‘Agazi’ have fired live ammunition at unarmed protesters in a number of locations including in Wollega and Madda Walabu universities and Ambo and Guder towns, resulting in deaths in each location.al.

In Nekempte, Wollega Province in western Oromia, there have been cases of tortures of varying levels as well as detainees being taken away in the middle of the night to unknown destinations for unknown reasons. Fifty (50) detainees, including thirteen females, were taken away at one time alone; and their whereabouts were not known. (Human Rights League for Horn of Africa, 24May, 2014).
On top of this, 21 students from Adama, Haromaya, Wollega and Ambo universities and 40 civil and other students were arrested on May 16 only. Other 7 students from Wallaga University were kidnapped the next day. Reports indicate that some of the detainees are isolated from others and held in separate rooms handcuffed and legs tied together with their hands on their backs. There were ten students subjected to this particular situation. Among these were Tesfaye Tuffa (male) and Bontu Hailu (female).

One witness told Amnesty International that on the third day of protest in Guder town, near Ambo, the security forces were waiting for the protesters and opened fire when they arrived. She said five people were killed in front of her. A source in Robe town, the location of Madda Walabu University, told Amnesty International that 11 bodies had been seen in a hospital in the town. Another witness said they had seen five bodies in Ambo hospital.

The government on its part acknowledged that three students had died at Madda Walabu University, and five persons had died in Ambo town, but did not state the cause of death. Numbers of deaths reported by witnesses and residents within Oromia are significantly higher.

According to eye-witness reports received by Amnesty International, of those who were killed some people, including students and children, died instantly during protests, while some died subsequently in hospitals as a result of their injuries. Children as young as 11 years old were among the dead. Students and teachers constitute the majority of those killed and injured. Protesters were also reportedly beaten up during and after protests, resulting in scores of injuries in locations including Ambo, Jimma, Nekempte, Dembi Dollo, Robe town, Madda Walabu, and Haromaya.

The blackout on internal media, independent journalism and human rights monitoring organizations in Ethiopia as well as on exchange of information, the number of incidents that occurred in the first two weeks of uprising was not possible to establish the exact number of those who have been killed. (BBC TV news May 2, 2014).

Earlier Al Jazeera news revealed that “at least 20 protesters have been killed and many others wounded in Ambo and Robe towns” alone. As the protest escalates, the numbers of
killings of innocent civilians is likely to increase. The latest BBC report has increased the dead to 47 (BBC TV news May 2, 2014, http://youtu.be/ndJ1NE0qV_M)

Amnesty international on its public statement 13 May 2014 expressed its concern and actions to be taken by the Ethiopian government as follows.

*Amnesty International condemns the use of excessive force by security forces against peaceful protesters in a number of locations across the Oromia region during the last two weeks, which has resulted in the deaths and injuries of dozens of people including students and children. Many hundreds of protesters are reported to have been arbitrarily arrested, and are being detained incommunicado and without charge. Detainees are at risk of torture. The Ethiopian government must immediately instruct the security forces to cease using deadly force against peaceful protesters, and to release any person who has been arrested solely because of their involvement in peaceful protests. These incidents must be urgently and properly INVESTIGATED, and suspected perpetrators should be prosecuted in effective trial proceedings.*

Despite this international concern and advice, the government action was contrary. Reports indicated that kidnappings and/or extra-judicial arrests and detentions, have continued in different parts of the regional state of Oromia, particularly in Hararge/Haromaya, West Showa, and Wollega until the issuance of this article as accounted in the next section.

**Aftermath of the uprising**
On May 2, 2014 the office of government communication released a statement through government media- TV. The statement revealed that in some universities in Oromia, students violently protested against government Master Plan to expand Addis Ababa. It adds that students were misguided by anti-peace forces and staged the protest. It further states that the office has discovered the protest was backed and organised by anti-peaceful forces. The statement disclosed that 3 students of Madda Walabu and 7 from Ambo were killed on the first day of the protest.

Government officials, who were deemed to persuade the demonstrators and the people, were sent to the areas where the uprising was vigorous. Abba Dula Gammada, the Parliament spokesman, made number of discussions, by systematically organising people, who were preoccupied to speak in favour of the government. Though it was unblemished from the act of the participants of the discussion that their need was not yet met, government media TV broadcasted opinions of already prejudiced ones.

The government forces continued to undertake door to door hunting. This persecution went on to the extent of rural areas, and there were incidents where one student was killed in Gulliso-Western Oromia. As the protest was towards the closure of academic institutions there was no as such group protest. However, government forces did not stop persecuting and imprisonment of students and other civil servants. For example 150 civil servants and students were put in custody in Nedjo-western Oromia in July, 2014 after schools closure. Reports tell that Oromia state of unrest became intensified as in 1992/3 and even more.

Schools and universities resumed their academic task in September. The government came up with political training package and conducted this at every education institution, with special emphasis on the universities. The package includes hard warning to those protesters and the other one a propaganda agenda for the forthcoming quasi election of May 2015 and pin-pointing students with hard questions. However, students’ forehand question was about their existing demand and its outcome. They vented, we need answer to our question about Finfinne, Where are our friends? Why are they killed and put in prison? What action is taken to the perpetrators? We need our friends released. Those students who forwarded these questions were imprisoned and released after a while to intimidate others and suppress stiff questions. On 4th Nov, 2014, the Oromia court passed verdict on 21 Haramaya
university students 10 months in prison. In addition to those killed during the demonstration, on 6th Nov, 2014 the government lodged file against 64 protesters of Ambo residents in allegation of terrorism and waving up Oromo Liberation Front flag during the protest (OMN news 6th Nov, 2014). Whether this government action and ways of handling students and Oromo people question could be a remedy is inconceivable.

Protest against the so called Addis Abeba Master plan is not concern of students only, but all Oromo. In addition to the ultimate goal of cutting Oromia in to halves, this is because Oromo have no big city to develop their language and culture without having to learn a foreign language as others enjoy these privileges. For example, in Bahirdar City over 96.23 are Amharas and Mekelle over 96.2% are Tigre and speak their respective language. But Oromia does not have any big city with majority Oromo population and language. For example among Oromia cities, Finfinne is only 19.5% Oromo and 76.2% speak Amharic, Adama 39.02% Oromo and Amharic is spoken as a first language by 59.25%, , Bishoftu is 39.4% Oromo and Amharic is spoken as a first language by 71.95% (CSA 2007). Therefore, nowhere can the businessmen, well-off and educated Oromo advance their language and culture, and no option for rural Oromos who want to make the same and business in the big city, without having to learn a non-Oromo language as well. In fact the long-range intention of the so called Master plan is to cut-off Oromia in to two by evicting the natives as they learned from their predecessors and their former Western allies.

**Synthesis**

In this section I will comment on the two students’ uprisings for freedom and justice presented above. I use Synthetic analysis where I compose and examine the strategies applied and protest issues raised during the uprisings.

Soweto students and Oromo students’ non-violence movements were instigated by similar cause, and that cause is suppression. Their ultimate demand was to get rid of suppression and regain freedom. However their demand and the considerations they took is similar, the time and international politics they ensued vary. For instance, beginning from the early 20s until the beginning of 1990s the world had capitalist and socialist political ideology which divided the world in to two major categories. At the same time it was a time where
apartheid was condemned widely, though the colonisers and oppressors lingered to power to sustain colonisation in South Africa. These situations contributed to the South African students’ movement and the national movement for freedom, though were not decisive.

Unlike this international state of affairs, the Oromo students non-violence uprising occurred where the brink of capitalism reached to the new paradigm of globalisation, which I consider is a nomenclature replacement for imperialism. As this paradigm is a socio-political monopoly, there is little or no international competitive ideological threat that keeps the balance of interior or exterior political force. Despite this, the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which gives people the right of self-determination, determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development and the rhetoric of Ethiopian constitution support the April 2014 Oromo students non-violence uprising. Therefore the uprising was authentic and the demands were legitimate.

Historically students movements have had contributed and still making headway to get rid of dictatorship and bring about justice and freedom. The movement is a brawl between authorities with enough facilities and ammunition and the barehanded populous and therefore it is a violence and non-violence struggle respectively. Therefore the later circumstance requires solid organisational planning and critical consideration of strategies/methods that might work to attain the goals. Gene (2000) identifies 198 nonviolence protest methods and categorises them in to three; protest and persuasion, non-cooperation, and intervention. Let us scrutinize how these were applied during the above two students’ uprisings.

Methods of nonviolent protest and persuasion involve various strategies. One of the major tasks is planning. As explained earlier, SASO had number of meetings to plan and set protest strategies. Presumably it was possible for SASO to conduct this meeting as it was a legitimate body established before the protest to represent South African students. Despite this they were prosecuted by government authorities.

On the other hand, it is not clear whether Oromo students had a meeting for similar activity. They might have had camouflaged, virtual or cyber meetings of protest that helped them to take the demonstration to the street and different parts of Oromia, but showed sporadic and inconsistent protest strategies/questions. For example some university students
requested about disappeared, killed and academically dismissed students, justice and freedom; while others chanted language policy, Addis Ababa master plan, the quality of food in their respective campus. It is comprehensible that protest issues may be contextual and address specific circumstance. Common issues should be built on the specific issues students raise based on their university’s circumstance. In a situation where overarching issues prevail like in Oromia, the demand should be unprecedented, cross-cutting and intelligible. Otherwise it damages more particular protesters and the response also becomes piecemeal. This circumstance also elucidates incoherence and organisational deficiency and enhances the power of persecutors. Here it should be noted that this is not to deny the presence of a gist of coordination during the April 2014 Oromo students uprising. Though it is not yet known at this juncture about its role of coordinating, the work of National Youth Movement for Freedom and Democracy (NYMFD, aka Qerro) in reporting, updating and recording the protest and causalities is worth mentioning.

Another strategy of protest and persuasion is designing effective communication. This begins from within protesters themselves, supporters and goes on in a multiplier effect within a shorter time. The same is true for genuine organisations external to students such as teachers, workers, farmers, parents and unemployed citizens etc. This is possible by preparing and distributing leaflets, pamphlets and texts etc. For example, using Facebook and other internet social networking sites in 2011 Egyptian young people helped to carefully organise demonstrations and protest marches trying to keep them as peaceful as possible. In 1976 Soweto Students Representative Council prepared and distributed leaflets to adults and workers to join the protest by stay-in, farmers not to bring their products to market for five days and workers union to strike. Thus many teachers and head teachers as well as workers joined the protest. By the same token, few primary/secondary school teachers and civilians joined the April 2014 Oromo students. Considerable number of workers and higher education teachers, however did not take part may be due to lack of proper communication or meekness. In fact this is not without understanding how this would be difficult under EPRDF government, but there are many ways they could have cooperated. For example higher education teachers may influence maladministration decisions of their respective university.
Slogans, caricatures, and symbols are good tools communicating and conveying message to the public and dictators as well. It is esteemed that Oromo students continuously chanted slogans without fear on street. But these were not supported by pictures that show the cynical and reckless acts of the dictators, which are readily available.

Another strategy of protest is symbolic demonstration supported by persuasive symbols. This was effectively applied in Egypt in 2011 when protestors marched on Pearl Square to attempt to re-occupy it after security forces had violently cleared it, they wore white sheets symbolising their readiness for martyrdom; others carried the national flag of Bahrain; others carried flowers and signs that stated they were peaceful. Teenage girls bravely risked being shot by entering no go zones in front of armed security forces. They waved flowers above their heads before laying them gently down on the ground in front of the on-looking security forces as a symbolic peace offering. Because the protest was demonstrated at the Pearl Square where national gathering usually takes place, it attracted international attention and the media. With the eyes of the world watching a short time later the security forces were ordered to leave the area, allowing the protestors to retake Pearl Square without any blood being shed.

In fact we may not compare Egypt military structure and professional ethics with that of Ethiopia. The former is a military with professional ethics, safeguarding its own people and international war experience established in the early 19th century, while the later was formed in the early 1990s and mainly known by indoors war reflecting that it is not for the people but protect the governors. Therefore it might be difficult to influence TPLF armed force as Egyptians did for the sake of peace, justice and freedom. But it is likely to influence genuine armed democrats and Oromo nationals out there.

Though protests in South Africa and Oromia sustained they did not get enough international media attention as in the Arab world because of the venues where they were demonstrated.

Another strategy of protest is non-cooperation. Non-cooperation and defiance reduce and remove the sources of the regime’s power. These campaigns also provide important experience in how to refuse cooperation and how to offer political defiance. That
experience will be of great assistance when the time comes for non-cooperation and defiance on a mass scale.

Both Oromo and Soweto students uprising defied government policies enacted against the interest of their people, therefore are non-cooperation. Particularly Soweto students’ movement is of good lesson in that the defiance started from classroom instruction (language policy) and then to the question of national freedom. The lesson is not necessarily its range, but that it influenced others through struggle where they finally joined them. At some Oromo protesters demanded Afaan Oromo should be national working language, but was not well addressed across.

Probably selective social boycott, excommunication with government supports are not well addressed in the struggles which contributed to leakage of information and round-up students in their campus and restrict them to discuss and demonstrate at later stage of the demonstrations in Oromia. Stay-at-home was completely a missed strategy during Oromo students uprising while this was one of influential strategy Soweto students applied and tumbledown the government.

Non-consumption of boycotted goods and food stuff is one of the strategies to weaken the power of dictators. It is a lived memory that this strategy was applied in Oromia when Minilk II (Abyssinia coloniser) was acclaimed by an Abyssinian singer to incite Oromo in 2013. The Oromos boycotted Beddele Beer and Coca-Cola and the response was favourable. Oromo diaspora supported this simply through social media, but could have taken further actions like what South Africans exiles did in 1959.

On June 26th, 1959, a group of South African exiles and their British supporters met in London’s Holborn Hall to call for a boycott of fruit, cigarettes and other goods imported from South Africa. The boycott got off to a slow start, but by the following March shopkeepers were being asked to stop selling South African products, the Trade Union Centre(TUC), Labour, Liberal and Communist parties were backing the campaign, and twenty-two local authorities had banned South African fruit from their schools and canteens. On March 9th, 1960, Labour Party leader Hugh Gaitskell went on television to ask viewers not to buy South African goods. (Christabel Gurney 1999,).
Other indispensable strategies are boycotting government or government supporter’s transport services including city bus, national/cross country buses, airplane etc. These strategies were not applied or made any impact either during the protests. Especially Oromo in the diaspora who showed their sympathy to homeland protests by demonstrations and influencing their MPs could have contributed more to this by boycotting anything that contributes to the revenue the Ethiopian government, like Ethiopian airlines. Unlikely, this was underscored anywhere during their demonstration. Other missing strategy is traders and others to refrain from or curb using other government services that contribute to the power of government like withdrawal of bank deposits. It should be underscored that ‘any penny matters’ either to boost power of the oppressor or empower the oppressed.

Another strategy of non-cooperation is political. This is usually manifested by boycott of elections. For example on councillors election of 2006 in South Africa The majority of Black electorates followed the repeated call of anti-apartheid forces and largely boycotted the elections, with only an estimated 10 - 14 per cent of 'eligible' Black voters participating. Soweto, Alexandra and Lenasia high schools staged an almost total stay-away of pupils, although most workers on the Reef went to work. The UN General Assembly overwhelmingly rejected the municipal elections as a manoeuvre to further entrench White minority rule and apartheid, which would increase conflict in southern Africa. In intricate and highly centralised, but quasi decentralised government system like Ethiopia, it is unlikely to democratically contest and gain parliament representation in the government as history tells us. The past election trends under the EPRDF government has left thousands dead and enhanced TPLF veiled tactics of deception. On the other hand, boycotting election reverberated in South Africa with minimum scarification and gained international attention as shown above.

Strategies of intervention like hunger strike, Sit-in, Pray-in, alternative social institutions alternative communication system, stay-in strike, alternative markets, alternative transportation systems, alternative economic institutions, disclosing identities of secret agents etc. seem not have been widely applied, though are important.

**Implications**
At its early stage, Soweto students protest and demand was about the education system and sub system (medium of instruction and quality of education etc.). But later on, it turned political question (freedom), which was the ultimate goal of the students and oppressed black South Africans. The protesters continued with better and engaging strategies through time until the protest turned demanding freedom and eventually gained it. The Oromo people and Oromo students’ question is also unanswered business looking forward. In order to keep momentum of the Oromo students protest, the Soweto students up rings and similar practices elsewhere have some implications, to which I turn now.

Soweto/South African students’ protest was led by South African Students Organisation, departed from South African Students Association, which included white and colour Africans. The departure was because of white students’ imposition of their apartheid ideology and the snowballing of Black consciousness movement by Black Africans. The organisation planned and coordinated protests along other national movements. The strategies or actions during the protest were implemented in line with agreed upon organisational intentions and people’s support. The following are some implications Oromo students’ movement and Oromo nationalists may consider for such kind of national struggle for freedom.

- The Oromo students’ movement need to have a strong organisational capacity whose objectives, strategies and activities are implemented dutifully and in discipline by supporters. In order to achieve the objectives, it is wise to have strategic planning or how to do it. This increases the likelihood that all available resources will be mobilized and employed coherently and most effectively.
- The Oromo movement in general and Oromo students’ movement in particular should be aware that one-off and sporadic protests enable dictators to plan erudite methods to halt subsequent protests. Therefore the protest should get ready to plan series of protest strategies until the demands are addressed.
- Unequivocally, what is going on in the classroom greatly influences destiny of any country. Hence the demand for quality of education, Afaan Oromo as a medium of teaching at all levels in Oromia, Afaan Oromo as a working language of the country and free Oromia should be a vigorous and the centre of demand.
The fact that the Ethiopian government is supported by some countries shows that Oromo diaspora can play significant role to support the protest and weaken the power of the dictators in Ethiopia. To this end, showing sympathy by demonstration and sending letters to the MPs is good but inadequate. The Oromo diaspora could invite MPs to their respective community discussion forums, register as a party member and lobby them to publically condemn the atrocities and support the protests, as was done in the UK by the Trade Union Centre (TUC), Labour, Liberal and Communist parties Labour party in support of boycott of the then South African products organised by Black South Africans in 1960.

The Oromo diaspora should also arrange international legal service to urge international organisations investigate genocide committed by the Ethiopian government, and this should be ready at all time when such act takes place.

Another simple, but very important is boycotting any service that contributes to the governments power and buy ammunition against innocent people, the easiest being boycotting Ethiopian Airlines. Note that ‘every penny matters’.

Oromo students’ union and youth associations in diaspora should establish international links with their respective organisations and inform and influence international community about reckless actions by the Ethiopian government.

The current situation in Ethiopia depicts political crisis of the Ethiopian government, the growth and strengthening of Oromo political initiatives (through independent Oromo political organisations), the increasing number of poor people and starvation, student movement, the lack of confidence expressed by the private sector, diaspora and foreign investors, and a growing resistance within the ruling party itself. Therefore, with the understanding that amoebic style of reproduction cannot be a remedy to Oromo political and Oromo students’ demands, though relevant after sovereignty, it is timely and unprecedented for Oromo political organisations to stand in unison and make the concealed history upsurge without which their ambition remains, as my fellow Oromo says ‘taa’ani urjii lakkaa’udho’; that is to say ‘indolent and counting stars in the sky’.
• As the demonstration and protest should be against the system not individuals, groups or other nationalities, it is wise to seriously watch out purposeful intruders who try to avert the intention of the protest and defame it.

• Gaining cooperation of different social groups or civic society is paramount. No oppressive regime can function and maintain power without the co-operation of the people it rules over. Therefore rigorous, continuously and collective struggle for freedom is inevitable. However the struggle for freedom is sour, its fruit is so sweet that everybody can taste and enjoy it.

I would recap by what M. Luther said regarding the perseverance for freedom: ‘Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous struggle. And so we must straighten our backs and work for our freedom. A man can't ride you unless your back is bent.' - Martin Luther King Jr.

Notes

1 Gene Sharp 2000: Gene provides 198 peaceful protest methods and strategies and categorises them in to protest and persuasion, non-cooperation, and intervention.


3. Afrikaans is a West Germanic language, spoken natively in South Africa and Namibia, and to a lesser extent in Botswana and Zimbabwe. It is an offshoot of several Dutch dialects spoken by the mainly Dutch settlers of what is now South Africa, where it gradually began to develop independently in the course of the 18th century. Hence, historically, it is a daughter language of Dutch, and was previously referred to as "Cape Dutch" (a term also used to refer collectively to the early Cape) or "kitchen Dutch" (a derogatory term used to refer to Afrikaans in its earlier days).

4. Hector Pieterse (1964 – June 16, 1976) became the iconic image of the 1976 Soweto Uprising in apartheid South Africa when a news photograph by Sam Mzima of the dying Hector being carried by a fellow student, was published around the world. He was killed at the age of 12 when the police opened fire on protesting students.

By Sam Mzima: November 16, 1976, National Archive of South Africa. Permission granted in terms of Section 1(xiv) of the National Archives of South Africa Act, 1996 (Act No.43 of 1996).


7. Jen and Josh were American Peace Corps, Serving in Ethiopia from October 2012 - December 2014 and were working with schools and Ambo University.
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