

Kenya's' Political Conflict is Synonymous with the Failure of Democracy in Africa and the World at Large

By Shabani Mwalimu*

Kenya is East Africa's largest economy and is now plunging into another political conflict after the opposition's pulling out of the 26th October, 2017 fresh elections. Raila Odinga (72yrs) said that his withdrawal would give the Independent Elections and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) enough time to introduce reforms that will help deliver more credible elections. Odinga's withdrawal from the repeat presidential elections has put the turbulent country into both political and constitutional crisis.

Raising fears of renewed unrest after police killed more than 30 opposition protesters in the aftermath of the August vote declarations, Mr. Odinga's NASA coalition has led its supporters back onto the streets with demonstrations under the slogan "no reforms, no elections". The ruling Jubilee Administration has banned anti IEBC demos citing security threats.

The dispute over Kenya's repeat presidential elections intensified on Wednesday 11th October 2017 after the parliament had passed an amendment to the electoral laws saying that if one candidate withdraws from repeat elections, which involves two candidates, then the other automatically wins. The legal experts across the political divides have strongly differed in the interpretation of the constitution especially the election-related laws. The ruling Jubilee coalition has strongly termed these demos as Odinga's scheme to force a coalition government. While the opposition NASA coalition terms the move by Odinga as an opportunity for IEBC to cancel the repeat elections and conducted on another date within 90days in which fresh nominations will take place also.

Since the nullification of the August poll, Kenya has experienced a heated political wrangling widely witnessed with analysts warning that the country may be staring at political crisis. In the support of a free election, the United States has expressed concern over the Kenya's political situation ahead of the repeat presidential poll.

In a statement to newsroom issued on 5th October 2017, the US also criticized the spirited campaign by political players seeking to undermine the efforts of the electoral commission to conduct a free, fair and credible poll. **"Unfortunately, in recent weeks actors on all sides have undermined the electoral commission and stoked tensions. We are closely monitoring Kenya's electoral process and what politicians are saying and doing,"** read part of the statement by US State Department Spokesperson Heather Nauert. (Daily Nation)

In its concern, UK also commented on the current political situation in the country. In a press release issued by the UK minister for Africa Rory Stewart MP, he said: **'The UK is concerned by the increasingly unstable political situation in Kenya in advance of the new presidential election on 26 October. An open, peaceful and credible poll**

is the only constitutional way Kenyans can choose their next President. He added; 'We welcome steps the IEBC is taking to rectify flaws in the August election, as well as recent efforts by the IEBC and political parties to engage in dialogue.

Internally, the current political conflict has exposed the ethnic fault lines which had always existed but political leaders pretended that they do not exist. Inflammatory statements and songs at party rallies, text messages, emails, posters and leaflets have all contributed to the political crisis. Hate speech has been the order of the political divides. The conflict is relatively restrained and characterized by competition among elites for political power, and therefore, it is a self-serving and within the status quo.

Politics in Kenya have been characterized by ethnic tensions since 'independence' in 1963. This was designed by the British colonialists who adopted and used the divide and rule method of governing. For years, they played one community against another; in particular, the Kikuyus and Luo whom they considered a threat owing to their big numbers.

With regard to the statements from both UK and US, it can be seen how these two major powers have a direct influence on Kenya's political landscape. Both are working to put Kenya under their grip. The United Kingdom, the Kenya's colonial master, has been working to keep Kenya under his influence through Uhurus' administration. At the same time, the UK is isolating Raila Odinga who appeared to have harbored American loyalty since the re-introduction of multi-party in the country. Notably, the power struggle between the US and UK is normally translated into power struggle between Mr. Kenyatta and Mr. Raila Odinga along with their respective tribes and those other tribes allied with them. It is, however, important to note that these statements indicate there is no intentional policy from those two powers to let Kenya slide into chaos. This is because both of them have their economic interests in the country.

Viewing Kenya's situation, particularly the poll related- violence, the failure of the corrupt political system of Democracy is crystal clear. It is a system for the handful capitalists who yearn for individualistic satisfaction; thus, its politicians use any dirty means, such as dividing masses along tribal grounds, to capture or maintain power. Democratic elections are rather tools meant to enslave laymen not to work for a radical and genuine change, i.e., bringing Islam as the only alternative for resolving not only Kenya's but the whole humanity problems.

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*** Written for Ar-Rayah Newspaper – Issue 152**