

[HararianForum] Harar Review/a moment with Ezer Ali Khairo

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By Salah Khairo

I pushed through the crowds of people who were selling and buying vegetables and fruits on the ground; and reached out to the store owned and operated by Ezer Ali Khairo. When I arrived he was sitting on an old chair next to an old desk, on which piles of files lying against the wall, while monitoring the street. Behind him were stocks of Dates collected through private donations ready for distribution to the poorest of the poor Hararis in the Holy month of Ramadan. To his left were a couple of old chairs made available for instant visitors like myself.

I greeted him with "Assalamu alaikum", shook his hand and stood by the door to examine the changes that have occurred in the area since 2007. There were, in fact, some substantial changes in the content of the environment, I concluded. The area was littered with rubbish crowded with people and noisy. The convenience stores around the marketing precinct are still operating but with minimum capacity. Ezer Abubaker, the barber, and my childhood friend, Melaaku, the cobbler, passed away.

"Salah what have you been up to?" interjected Ezer Ali, while inviting me to sit on one of the empty old chairs next to him. He is fit, energetic and attentive, I thought, before answering "Well I have been visiting people, offices, and places. So far, I met President Murad Abdulhadi, Awe Basha Birign, Abdurahman Gutu, Ahmed Abdosh, Abdulaziz Adem, Abdullahi Idris, etc; visited the grave yards of Ezer Hadji Rashi Khairo and Anna Fatuma Shero; I have been to the shrine shaikh Abadir and Aw Berkhadle, Ahbashi Centre and few peasant associations"

"Did you know Aw Basha?" he asked.

"Not really," I replied. "I introduced myself to him".

"What is your opinion of him?" he enquired while smiling.

"I think that Aw Basha is a very smart person and is a treasure to us all; I am completely fascinated by his intelligence and his performance at this old age beyond my expectations. He made me wonder how smarter could he be if he were much younger," I replied.

"Yes, he is very smart and knowledgeable," he acknowledged.

"a lot of people say so in Harar" I added. "in fact, I believe that HarariState would have been much better off if he were the Harari President or Vice President. I guess that he would have brought the much needed prosperity, stability and peace to this region. I have seen the degree of respect that people, from the Oromo and Amhara ethnic background, cherish on him at his office compound."

"How was your meeting with Raais?" he asked again, following discussions on my statements and his accounts with him.

"He is welcoming. I had a bit of a chant with him at his office and I asked him as to why he is not acting against the consumption of qat in Harar" I replied.

"Why do you have to raise the issue of qat with him?" interjected Ezer Ali. I guessed he meant the struggle against the use of qat in our community is the game that we have already lost; and Raais is a practical advocate and promoter of qat use in our community.

"I thought qat should be the most important matter that should be presented as an agenda of discussions and debates in the HarariState. I did not want to miss the opportunity because I might not see him again although he promised me he will see me sometimes in Ramadan" I replied.

"Yes, it is true. Qat consumption is one the major problems in Harar," he said "it is killing the nation, our nationalisms and we are in a catastrophe"

Yes, qat is sapping out our spirit, courage and energy.

Yes, it is draining our nationalism, the ultimate goal what independent nations and nationalities ought to be as an independent entity, identity and existence distinguishing them from one another.

Yes, we are losing the struggle to keep the legacy of our fathers in the same way that the son of Ato Demese Asfaw lost the legacy his father and submitted his assets to the very enemies whom his father wanted to evict one after another. The true sons and daughters of Harar must raise their heads and open their eyes wide not only to restore but also protect their invaluable Islamic history, culture and identity that have been passed to them through generations whom they are always proud of.

Oh, the true sons and daughters of Harar take this as the sole purpose of your life: Shun away from the things which

humiliate you down and reduce your dignity; be prepared well in all specialities of life; shape your independent destiny and goals and strive to achieve them. If you are heedless, your enemies will control your destiny by controlling your liberty; and the most precious gifts and graces that the Almighty Allah blessed on you.

"You said you have visited Ahbashi Centre" (aka Merkez), interjected Ezer Ali Khairo, "I have been informed and heard several complaints that you have been very critical of their Jemma in Australia. If that is the case, why did you go there?"

"You see, what they are doing in this particular case is to put 'peer pressure', that is to say, 'forcing a person to change his or her attitudes, values, or behaviors in order to conform to their norms' through family, relatives, friends, employers, etc. The problem with this approach is that they don't face the key players directly, examine concerns and needs; and providing workable solutions but rather put peer pressures on others to get control over the lives"

"Do you know what had been done in the name of Islam in our community in Australia?" I asked. "I will tell you some other time"

You see, I am not new to Islam nor does Islam is stranger to me. I love Islam; and it has been part and parcel of my life. I have studied many Islamic groups and their interpretations of the world around them. But I found, surprisingly, Ahbashis and their interpretation of Islam are very typical.

To be continued