

The Kenyan Syndrome

The following is a chapter from a book titled “Somaliland: The legacy of Non-Recognition” that I am currently writing. The daily indignities which Somalis suffer almost uniquely in Kenya have impelled me to preempt the book’s publication by offering this chapter for early release. It chronicles the untold misery the Kenyans inflict on the Somalis in their country on ordinary basis.

—Ahmed I. Hassan

The Kenyan perspective on Somalia and Somaliland is this: it is economics, stupid! A saying goes, “A disaster for some could be a benefit for others”. Most Somalilanders believe that what has been the bane for Somalisⁱ has been a boon for Kenyans.

With Somalia a thoroughly failed state and Somaliland as yet unrecognized nation, everyone who has anything to do Somaliland and Somalia has made Nairobi one’s base of operations. Almost all embassies in Nairobi are additionally their countries’ nonresident embassies in Somalia and Somaliland. Diplomats, who should have been stationed in Mogadishu or in Hargeisa, live in and work from Nairobi. The operational, sustentative and recreational upkeep of all these diplomats, needless to say, contribute handsomely to Kenyan local economy.

All humanitarian assistance to Somalis (there are no or preciously little other forms of assistance) is channeled through organizations based in Kenya. Though no shortage of air, land and sea accesses exist in Somalia or Somaliland, (even the famously dangerous Mogadishu sea- and air ports are presently accessible) food, medicine and other humanitarian shipments destined for Somalis are unshipped at Mombasa, prior to logistically maddening, onward, cross-border, overland, impractical, ineffective, and expensive onward transportation to their intended. As a result, the needy get only a fraction of these shipments. The bulk of them are pillaged along the way. Mombasa port authorities, Kenyan individuals and Kenyan-controlled transportation companies, on the other hand, laugh all the way to the bank.

The UN and its offspring organizations (too many to list them all accurately) effectively control Somalia. The UN is the only government worthy of any mention in Somalia. The numerous Somali ‘governments’, including the current one, are habitually installed in Mogadishu under the sponsorships and patronages of the UN in collusion with its kindred other organizations and countriesⁱⁱ, Kenya being among the most prominent of the last group. If you ever wondered why the

Somali ‘government’s’ top and not so top officials spend most of their official and not so official times in Nairobi, you would better stop wondering now.

The UN is the real government in Somalia because the UN controls all the purse strings in Somalia. This purse is bursting at the seams. The UN is the recipient and depository of all the humanitarian and developmental aid funds that are so generously rendered by many countries, the US and the EU states being the most notable among them. Moreover, the UN itself has some of its own budget earmarked for its Somalia and Somaliland activities.

This UN Somali government is based in Nairobi. Nairobi, in all intents and purposes, is the Capital city of Somalia. Understandably, though, Somalia has no jurisdiction in Nairobi. Furthermore, Nairobi is not only the seat of the UN Somali government, but additionally countless NGOs that, if their assertions were taken at face value, collectively spend billions of Dollars annually helping the unfortunate in Somalia and Somaliland, i.e. the entire populations in both countries, since economically at least, nearly everyone in these countries is unfortunate. Together with the non-resident Embassies, let us refer to this UN Somali government and these NGOs as *The Establishment* hereafter.

The Establishment employs huge staff and support hands to carry out their ostensibly indispensable work for Somalis. Its infrastructures in Nairobi – whether they are staff installations or support apparatus or task specific organizations and departments – are vast. Its activities span those of conventional governments, political, security, humanitarian, social, developmental. Its head is not a Somali. He is Ahmadou Ould Abdulla, President *Extraordinaire* of the Somali Republic. In most matters that affect the destiny, lives and livelihoods of the Somalis, especially the Somalians, the buck stops with him. And his Palace – the nerve center or epicenter of Somalia’s statehood – is in Nairobi.

Lest allegations of alien governance of Somalia are made, appearances of legitimacy and Somalis’ ownership of their ‘governments’ are meticulously kept. Thus *The Establishment*, additionally, replicates proxy ethnic-Somali-staffed ‘governments’ as and when needed and, with fanfare, lodges them in Mogadishu. They are equally top heavy but, of course, not as rich as their papa, *The Establishment*. There are the ‘presidents’. There are four-scores-strong cabinets lacking even offices for their ministries. Presently there is the 575 member parliament (for a nation of 7 million people!) though there is no building in Mogadishu that can house them all for a session. There is the well-staffed judiciary

where no courts exist. There are the hundreds of military generals and police chiefs who command neither armies nor law enforcement forces.

Most of members of these proxy Somali ‘governments’ make Nairobi their preferred place of residence. No place of work – in fact no work in the sense of the word – is required. The few in the top echelon – the ‘presidents, the prime ministers, the speakers of the parliament, one or two cabinet ministers and some generals’, are holed up in Villa Somalia in Mogadishu, lest they are given embarrassing designations like ‘governments-in- exile’. They certainly cannot rub off the label of ‘governments-in-hostage’, though. Their protection is the sole, and for the unfortunate citizens of Mogadishu the deadly, mission of the 5000-strong troops of AMISOM peacekeepers.

When these prominent ‘government’ officials are not holed up in Villa Somalia in Mogadishu, *The Establishment* requires them to travel to Nairobi for briefings, debriefings, order dictations and some well deserved recreation. Typically, the time ratio of the holing up in Villa Somalia in Mogadishu and of attending to their more important assignments in Nairobi is 1:3 in Nairobi’s favor.

Nobody accurately knows the total number of personnel *The Establishment* and the current proxy Somali ‘government’ employ, but the conventional wisdom is that it is bigger than those comparable governments, who are engaged in real work for their peoples, normally keep. If they run into tens of thousands of people, that would not surprise many knowledgeable insiders.

Nairobi in particular and Kenya in general mightily benefit in financial terms in hosting this gigantic *Establishment*. Economically, it is a multidimensional industry by itself, which would favorably match other income generating economic sectors in Kenya.

To start with, there is the huge expenditure that supports the operational, sustentative and recreational upkeep of *The Establishment*. Given the legendary lifestyles of the UN and NGO personnel, catering to them must be handsomely lucrative for the Kenyans. And since smart lifestyles are pleasurable only when they are enjoyed in total safety, *The Establishment* spares no expense to provide watertight security for their installations and personnel. The Kenyan police and private security companies must be a gainfully happy and busy lot.

Personal security is also paramount and immensely costly when the physical presence of some of *The Establishment’s* staff in Somalia is necessitated for the

sake of projecting good appearances to the world as well as to confer good-read element in *The Establishment's* reports that are periodically fed to headquarters in New York, London, Paris or Berlin. True to their thoroughness, *The Establishment* employs a uniquely ingenious three-tier or rather three-color risk code *modus vivendi* for this security-oriented task.

The first color is red denoting 'No risk taken under any circumstances'. Certain nationalities of *The Establishment's* personnel are deemed too indispensable to be exposed to risk of any magnitude. Irrespective of their capabilities, qualifications, and job descriptions, they are assigned to desk jobs in their well guarded Nairobi offices. When one has to venture into Somalia, it has to be into the reasonably safe regions such as Somalia's Puntland region or into *Somaliland* (in UN's view, Somaliland is still part of Somalia). Mogadishu and the Southern regions are out of bounds. Even then it should be only as a day's trip of not more than several hours duration. If a plane from the UN's own fleet is not available, one would be chartered from one of the many aviation companies in Nairobi for this especial purpose. A legion of bodyguards would be ready at the other end to provide extra and probably unnecessary security. Nobody would give a sigh of relief until the traveler has safely returned to Nairobi at the appointed hour.

It is a mere coincidence that the nationalities so diligently protected are those normally known as Westerners. Additionally, if one is from a non-Western nation, but happens to have white skin, one is eligible. No bigotry of any sort needs to be implied in qualifying for this grade of protection. Only that *The Establishment* seems to believe that mischief makers in Somalia are the real bigots in their *modus operandi* when choosing potential their victims. Wherever the prejudice lies, the Kenyans must be extremely pleased with this arrangement, which is a vital source of income for their aviation and service industries.

The second security color code, yellow, is applied to another category of personnel. They are deemed highly important to *The Establishment's Business*. They provide the appearances of diversity in *The Establishment's* human resources composition. (All this talk of equal opportunity in *The Establishment's* recruitment policy is not for nothing.) The annual reports for the headquarters in New York and other First World cities would look exceptionally good if they contain a great number of days of on-field toil by *The Establishment's* personnel, a purpose served so well by this category. Yet, unlike the first category, if anything untoward, God forbid, happened to a member of this category, it would not be the end of the world.

So it is permissible to let these personnel undertake assignments that would take days, weeks and to a maximum of three months in Somalia or in Somaliland. Still security stays paramount. Due diligence dictates that they are sent to locations where it is more likely of one coming into harm from a lightning strike than from Somali mischief makers. (Since thunderstorms are rare in Somalia and rarer in Somaliland, the chances of lightning strikes are almost nonexistent.) Somaliland, in its entirety, and Puntland, to lesser extent, amply meet this prerequisite. (In statistical terms, it is riskier for one in this category to live and work in his own country or in most other countries of the world than in Somaliland or in some places of Puntland, Somalia.)

It is not so easy to rebuff allegations of racial discrimination in the eligibility for this category. It this category is a non-white and non-western domain. Somalis, too, are not welcome to join as they are categorized separately. The whites can be forgiven if they moan that they are at the receiving end of *reverse* discrimination. There are great many gallant whites; men and women who can make fear itself fear of them. In pursuit of humanitarian work for fellow humans, they are willing to risk life and limb. When misfortune, whether natural or self-inflicted, strikes non-whites, they happen, invariably and puzzlingly, to be nearly the only source of relief (non-whites rarely help other non-whites). Though a great many such men and women exist and are willing to serve, the color of their skin disqualifies them to join this category.

The Establishment offers only implausible denials when they are requested to respond to these irritable allegations.

Thus, Nairobi being the seat of *The Establishment*, Kenyans are almost the exclusive beneficiaries of the plush and undemanding jobs of this category. So many of them – young, inexperienced, not so qualified, brash, showy and arrogant – are found cruising around in flashy *Establishment*-owned SUVs, with trademark sky-high aerial antennas (presumably for direct and instant contact with Nairobi), in Hargeisa, Borama, Burao. Berbera and other urban areas of Somaliland as well as in some peaceful towns of Somalia's Puntland.

The third and last security color code is red. It signifies areas of high danger for *The Establishment's* personnel. For the first and second categories the red areas are **NO GO** locations. So this third category serves in those areas. Its members are exclusively Somalis (here, we will not discuss appearances of discrimination, reverse or otherwise, racial or otherwise). The ICs allocates billions in humanitarian aid for Somalis. A tiny fraction of this fund actually reaches them. It

is *The Establishment's* Somali employees (this third category) who accomplish this herculean and dangerous feat.

They are the ones who really earn their wages (though their wages are *The Establishment's* lowest; 1st and 2nd categories are paid much higher salaries). They are the ones who sweat and toil. In line of duty, they are regularly killed, maimed or kidnapped. They as well as the American and European tax payers and NGO contributors – the fraction of whose billions reaches the needy Somalis – are the real and only angels in *The Establishment's Business*.

These Somali angels are recruited in Nairobi, Somalia's Capital City *Extraordinaire*. Some of them, the angels that is, are from the Somali Diaspora. Others had travelled to Nairobi, at great expense and risks, before they landed in their jobs. Like some members of the proxy Somali 'government', all are required to come to Nairobi for briefings, debriefings, order dictations, training sessions or seminars (or occasionally for some well-earned recreation). All of which are great for Nairobi's aviation, hospitality and retail industries among *others* (*we will come to what others are later*).

In awarding *The Establishment's* contracts for works, products and services, Kenyans, as individuals or as companies, are the primary beneficiaries whether such works, products and services have to be provided in Nairobi (arguably normal) or in Somalia (arguably not so normal). In the latter case, the Kenyans simply engage Somali sub-contractors to implement the contracts at fractions of their original values, allowing them to pocket huge profits without leaving their desks.

Among other related matters that reap financial windfalls for Kenyans are *The Establishment*-sponsored and funded Somali Reconciliation Conferences, Somali groups' conventions (Intellectuals, Civil Society, Women, Minorities etc), and Somali Issue-focused meetings by interested nations and organizations that are held in Nairobi with amazing regularity and frequency.

Kenyans are not even beneath financially milking Somalis and their sorry predicaments when misfortune has thrown them to seek refuge in Kenya. (This is where *other industries* referred to above come in). True, hundreds of thousands of Somali refugees live in camps on Kenyan soil. True, that those refugees were allowed to camp on Kenyan land is by itself a commendable deed. But that is where any Kenyan compassion ends and Kenyan inflicted nightmares on Somalis begin.

Excepting the land for the camps, no other assistance is given to the unfortunate refugees by Kenya. On the contrary, Kenyan bureaucrats and security forces customarily hinder the humanitarian aid destined for the refugees by other governments and organizations until they are given bribes and other unnecessary and underserved favors. Kenyan companies and individuals who are contractually retained to distribute aid and services do not entirely and honestly fulfill their contractual obligations for which they are handsomely paid. Kenyans, officials and non-officials alike, routinely abuse the hapless Somalis emotionally, physically and sexually, especially the vulnerable women and children.

A good many Somalis, especially those with some means, bypass the refugee camps and head for Kenyan major urban and presumably safer areas like Nairobi and Mombasa. Not all of them are refugees and penniless. Many of them are well to do on their own or are regularly maintained by relatives in Diaspora. In fact, some in the Diaspora with preferences for African environment – climatically as may socially – and fearful of the chaos in their country of origin, settle their families in Kenya. Other bid their times there until their relatives elsewhere sort out the legalities, such as visas, for emigration to further afield. (This is not their choice, but what else can they do when all the non-resident embassies are in Nairobi?) Still others with their adaptive countries' passports visit Kenya to look for lost relatives or on transit on their way to Somalia or to prospect for *Establishment* jobs. Then, and without suggesting that the reasons end there, there are members of the proxy Somali 'governments' – some of whom included in those 'governments' at Kenya's behest – who are regularly summoned to Nairobi for reasons mentioned earlier.

Obviously, all these Somalis contribute enormously to Kenyan economy. Many are the businessmen who have been so pivotal to the radically progressive and visible commercial, industrial, and real estate transformations of many sections of Nairobi, such as East Sleigh, and other cities in Kenya. Children of settled families patronize Kenyan burgeoning private schools and universities. Retail, hospitality and residential leasing businesses all stand to benefit from the Somalis in one way or another.

If there is one thing these Somalis go to any length they have on hand, it is the legal status for their stays in Kenya. Most of them manage to get it, either by fair or foul means (the foul means involve a lot of money changing hands between Somalis and the Kenyan authorities). However, there is a unique predicament which is unique to Kenya that is uniquely applicable to Somalis.

If you happen to be an ethnic Somali, legal visit or residence or even citizenship does not provide you with legal protection against unlawful apprehension, detention, imprisonment, harassment, extortion, profiling, stereotyping and other uncalled for and uncommon maltreatments by the very authorities that were supposed to enforce and uphold the protection of life, limb, freedom and property for *all* under the law of the land.

Corruption in Kenya – in all its walks of life; by those in its highest places as well those in its lowest stations – is world famous or rather infamous. Kenyan authorities, especially its security forces, regard extortion and unlawful gain as a birthright. For all citizens of the nations of the world, bar the Somalis, this illegitimate solicitation is applied through gentle implication, insinuation, persuasion, imploration, or even by rendering extra service conspicuously or in queue-busting expedition. If that does not work, delaying tactics are employed, in ascending degrees of severity, in giving desired service. Whether or not the desired purpose for employing these theatrics is eventually served, the approach used rarely turns ugly or malevolent.

Uniquely for Somalis, however, it is entirely a different ball game. It is a game which *ugly* or *malevolent* would do no justice to describe it. Hellish is more like it.

Somalis are exceptionally and specifically targeted for extortion as a matter of course. They are beleaguered as individuals, as families as well as a community. The extortion is perpetuated in equally individualistic and institutional forms. It could be committed on the spur of the moment or it could be scrupulously premeditated and meticulously executed. It can be practiced at anytime of the day or night or at any place and location. Neither reason nor excuse is required to trigger it. No compassionate allowances for mercy or exceptions are made in consideration of age, gender, state of health, social status or simple human fellowship. The means employed, however brutal, sadistic and insane justify the end. For the hapless Somalis in Kenya, it is an evil beast bedeviling them like no other on earth; for their greed-maddened Kenyan tormentors, it is a heavenly bountiful hunting ground enriching them like no other on earth.

Most scholars of law, including many Kenyan professionals and the few, though strangely mute, human rights activists, who are privy to this horror on Somalis, earnestly believe that it goes well beyond extortion. They say it is an unmitigated, institutionalized socially accepted and officially sanctioned or abetted or at best tolerated highway robbery and communal abuse. At any rate, it is hard to point to

comparable precedents of this strange phenomenon in the annals of history save the disenfranchisement that the Jews underwent in Germany and other European countries that was a precursor to the horrors of the Holocaust.

Enter this all too frequent occurrence:

On a beautiful day in beautiful Nairobi, an honest, tireless and selfless policeman, uniformed or in plain clothes, stops a Somali on the street. The cop demands the Somali's identification papers. In point of fact, it does not matter in the least whether the Somali is in possession of his/her ID; whether the ID shows legal status; whether the Somali is a citizen of Somalia or a naturalized citizen of, say, Britain or even at times a (hear this!) Kenyan. The Somali hands his/her ID over if available (seasoned Somalis usually carry photocopies, not originals, of their papers, when they venture out. They say it is less problematic to be arrested and get a *licensed lawyer* bring over the original papers to your place of detention). The takeover of the ID is all well and good as far as the cop is concerned. If no ID is available, that, too, is all well and good as far as the cop is concerned.

The Somali is grabbed by the collar or arm or is handcuffed and ordered to proceed with the cop to a police station. He is declared an *illegal alien* on the spot. Lately another instant judicial conviction is a *terrorist*. Seasoned Somalis know all too well the meaning of these judgments. The meaning is "Pay and pay it now". Seasoned Somalis do "Pay and pay it now". Seasoned Somalis counsel unseasoned Somalis to "Pay and pay it now" if, nay, when they encounter a similar situation. There is a going rate which fluctuates for no known reasons (it also advisable to keep abreast with this vital information and keep the going rate – in cash, mind you – in your breast pocket at all times). Whatever the going rate, it is known to be usually more than an average cop's legitimate weekly wages.

In the event that the breast pocket is uncooperative, seasoned Somalis do – and advise unseasoned Somalis to do – the next best thing. They do their best to persuade the cop to change his stated destination, i.e. the police station, to somewhere else the seasoned Somalis can "Pay and pay it now" the going rate. One of the more effective persuasive tactics is to offer the cop more than the going rate.

Now, it is when the seasoned Somalis cannot "Pay and pay it now" under any circumstances; or unseasoned Somalis are unaware of, or are unable to heed, or ignore the seasoned Somalis' advice to "Pay and pay it now", that the real

nightmares for the hapless Somalis – and the fun for their Kenyan tormentors – start in earnest.

Non-payment would mean certain detention in overcrowded, filthy, pest- and hardcore criminals-infested police holding cells. The slightest indication or, as more likely, mere imagination of demurral, verbal or otherwise; either on the way to, or in the cell is met with instant and disproportionate beatings so brutal that the unfortunate victims are left all too frequently with permanent scars and too many times with disabilities. Girls, women short of too advanced age, boys and young men are liable to – and do get – sexually abused either by the cops in the station or by the criminals in the cells.

Once in the police station, the institutional facet of the robbery takes over. It is for nothing that seasoned Somalis dread and leave no stone unturned not reach this stage. The institution is the individual multiplied by X. Until one reaches the station, one had to deal with an individual. Now, one has to deal with X and the criminals thrown in for keeps.

Like all institutions, some paperwork needs to be taken care of. A charge sheet for the Somali is promptly filled out. Suspected offense: *Illegal stay in the country* – something to that effect, though rarely varied. What about the Somali's perfectly in order ID? What ID?! The tormentors have been known to have torn up passports – national travel documents of not only Somalia, but also of European countries and the US – in front of their ethnic-Somali holders. Anyway, at this stage, not only the ID, but also any other personal effects of value simply disappear and who can, God Forbid, ever accuse honest, tireless and selfless policemen – upholders and enforcers of the law of the land – as the culprits of such untimely disappearances of the Somali's personal effects.

The point is, if you are an ethnic Somali and you are detained in Kenya, you are guilty as charged. In court, the Judge would of course have to agree with the police if the Somali cannot produce documents proving the police wrong. There are rare occasions that a Somali is acquitted. Instances of the acquitted Somalis being rearrested a few blocks away from courts by the same constables, who had produced them in front of Judges earlier, are common knowledge. The honest, tireless and selfless constables are adamant to make it abundantly clear that “Pay and pay it now” is the only acceptable outcome for all their troubles.

One particularly abhorrent demonstration of the foregoing took place in mid January this year. For nearly two weeks, the Kenyan police, with assistance of a

myriad of other forces, with funny and inexplicable names and even funnier and more inexplicable missions, descended on every corner and neighborhood of Nairobi, where they had thought they would find a Somali – any Somali, mind you!

What they did would make the preceding tale read like a child's story. It is best to spare the average reader the too disturbing recountal of Kenyan antics during these so-called security sweeps. Those who have stomach for them can check out the media reports on these incidents – some provided herewithⁱⁱⁱ or from Google search.

Exit this all too frequent occurrence.

This could happen any day to any ethnic Somali in Kenya. Not even Somali-Kenyans are entirely immune to this grotesque scourge. Versions of it befall boys, girls, old men, old women, pregnant women, disabled persons, the noted, the undistinguished, the affluent, the destitute, families with toddlers...and all as long the common denominator of being ethnic Somalis is attributable to them. No sanctuary from it exists anywhere: Streets, highways, back ways, residences, cafes, restaurants, business premises, hotel rooms (in five-star as in budget ones), mosques, entertainment outlets – you name it. No hour of the day is off limits from its strike (the odder the hour the more agonizing for the victims and thus the more rewarding the results for the perpetrators). The agony could last mercifully only minutes (if one “pay[s] and pay[s] it now”) or it could take days, weeks, or months of excruciating misery.

Somali owned businesses pay regular protection money in the hope that the tormentors would look elsewhere or that if, as happens anyway they are targeted, they would be enabled to sort out things through well-placed connections. More often than not, it is an exercise in futility.

The scourge is truly an equal opportunity dispenser of riches to its beneficiaries as it is, as recounted above, an indiscriminate distributor of ordeal to its victims. High ranked officers and lowly constables alike, males and female officers equally, solo as well as in unison, engage in it.

The depressing aspect about this phenomenon is that it has reached a stage where, for Kenyans, it is so widespread, so endemic, so embedded, so accepted, and its practitioners so oblivious of guilt, remorse, fault or shame that it has become so natural for them to engage in it as long as the victims are Somalis. It cannot now be

stopped, reversed, diminished, slowed down, rationalized, moderated or humanized. It generates its own momentum. It grew to be a self-sustaining hydra. The system is its ally. Those from whom protection, remedy or relief against it supposedly could be sought are its most ardent promoters and defenders. It developed into a substantial, almost a major and irreplaceable source of income for the law enforcement forces.

There are few courageous Somalis, Kenyans and other nationals who have confronted the authorities with those facts and demanded explanations and justice in at least not singling out the Somalis for special mistreatment—to no avail:

Explanations, Sir? No explanations exist where the facts themselves are not factual in the first place. And, my friend, with all due respect, your facts are not factual. Justice? For the Somalis? Well, that is a bit tricky, isn't it? Listen, where do you think we are? We are in this world; not in the afterworld where there are heaven, hell and justice in both. We are in Africa and Kenya in particular, my friend. You know, we do our best here; as best as is possible in this world and in Africa and in Kenya at that. Just compare us with countries like Somalia, Zimbabwe, Dem, Demo Demorac... whatever Republic of Congo, etc... We do our best here.

Anyway, my friend, what are all these Somalis doing here? We had a bothersome crowd of them who call themselves Kenyans -- in virtue of being born here and knowing no other land – before waves of the new breed flooded us. I'm telling you, these people are bad news. Just look what they have done to their own country! Do you think they'll behave better here? I have my doubts, my friend. Most of them are terrorists or pirates and what not. We have to be on guard. We have to be alert. We have to be vigilant. I'm sure you understand, don't you, my friend?

And where, in heavens' name, did they get all this money, you tell me, please. Believe me, they are all loaded. Look, they are taking over so many businesses here. They are almost replacing the Asians in trade. And good, honest Kenyans including good, honest officers like me are so penniless! What, with all this inflation, rising cost of living and government fatties only looking after themselves and not us, good, honest Kenyans, including good, honest officers like me – what do you suggest we do, you tell me, my friend?

Anyway, I was saying all the Somalis are loaded. They come here not only from their hellish place, but also from North, South, East and West--from every direction. Many of them also proceed to North, South, East and West from here, But still, so many of them are loaded and some are carrying American and

European passports. Amazing! Isn't it, my friend? Can you tell me how they got American and European passports? Amazing!

Anyway, my friend, they are loaded. And unlike others, shuuush...– please come nearer; I want to tell you privately, between you and me like – unlike other nationalities, they are so easily charitable when you apply a little pressure on them. I mean an officer can be forgiven to apply a little pressure when the officer is tempted to make a loaded person a little lighter. It is a necessary tool of the task – the pressure I mean. Pressure or no pressure, other nationalities are tough nuts. They raise all kinds of hues and cries. They demand to see your boss; they complain to their embassies; they write to the newspapers. They are bad news, I'll tell you. They rarely are worth the effort.

Not so the Somalis, my friend. They are so charitable when you apply a little pressure on them. They submit to pressure so easily and comply with what you tell them without any hues and cries. They don't have an embassy, to speak of. They no one to complain to; no one to turn to for help; come to think of it, they don't even have a government in the conventional sense. The UN Somali government is our ally, because we share interests. What interests, you asking me? My friend, that is neither here nor there. Suffices to say that we scratch its back and it scratches ours.

Please let me continue without interruptions. Ok? Thank you. I was saying, their 'government' holed up in that Villa – what do they call it again? Yeah, Villa Somalia they call it; funny they still think there is a Somalia! – Well their 'government' holed up in that Villa is ours and our allies' creation as well. Whoever bites the hand that feeds him? No one, my friend, as far as I know. These guys holed up in the Villa are beholden to us. They'll never raise a finger for their fellow Somalis, wherever they are and least of all in Kenya. They simply can't, I assure you about that, my friend.

So, do you see why Somalis are so easy to succumb to a little pressure? Another thing, they don't write to the newspapers, because, I guess most of them don't even know how to write and even if they do, no newspaper would believe them terrorists and pirates. And they know that asking to talk to an officer's boss would only increase the pressure and would entail more submissions to pressures. But only the more foolish of them do that. We don't encourage such behavior. I know what I'm talking about, because I'm a boss to many officers myself.

Anyway, the Somalis are just easy preys. Being Kenyans, we know one or two things about predators and preys; the hunters and the hunted. We, Kenyans, and the animals live in an Animal Kingdom here – in more ways than one. Remember, we have the biggest Wild Life sanctuaries in the world, It is not all for nothing that we, Kenyans, have the biggest Wild Life sanctuaries in the world, I assure you. You see, the lioness or the cheetah first surveys the whole folk of gazelles or zebras from afar. The predator identifies the feeblest; the limping; the too young or too old to run fast; the one too stray from the folk to share its common danger warning mechanisms; the escape routes; everything. The predator doesn't just chase after the prey, my friend. The predator first calculates its chances of success so diligently before the actual attack.

We share this land with these animals, both the hunters and the hunted. Of course, some of the animals' hunting and counter hunting instincts have naturally rubbed off on us, Kenyans, as well. We all live in the Animal Kingdom. As a matter of fact, we are all animals, aren't we all, my friend? I speak for myself, you say? OK, my friend, that is exactly what I was doing—speaking for myself. But I thought that all humans, and not only the Kenyans, are animals. If you don't agree with that, my friend, that is entirely your prerogative. But, for myself, I believe that all humans are animals. I remember learning something to that effect in my biology classes in my school days. But shall we continue or shall we not? You say we do? OK, then please don't constantly interrupt me. I can't stand the aggravation. Thank you.

So, mark my words, the Somalis are easy preys. They are so docile. But you know, my friend, I can't understand why they are so meek. Why are they so susceptible to a little pressure when others are so resistant to it? I always thought that Somalis are brave and strong-willed people. They certainly are so brave and strong-willed against each other, or they wouldn't have been fighting and slaughtering each other for so long.

It is obvious that a Somali will never be docile when his opponent is another Somali. It is clear that a Somali will never submit to a little pressure from another Somali – not even a big pressure, if I may have the liberty of saying so.

Like what big pressure, I mean? Well, like the big pressure Siad Barre used to apply on them, or at least on some of them, like those who call now themselves Somalilanders. I hear Siad Barre tried to make them disappear from the face of the earth. What could be a bigger pressure to apply on people than trying to make them disappear from the face of the earth? I hear that, though the Somalilanders sustained untold suffering, including nearly disappearing from the face of the earth

and wonton and complete destruction of their cities, the matter eventually ended up the other way round. Siad Barre's regime disappeared from the face of the earth. Anyway, for the umpteenth time, didn't I tell you not to interrupt me? You sorry? Sorry won't wash, I warn you, man!

Let me tell you something, hopefully without your interruptions. There were times, if my dad is to be believed, when only a fool would mess with a Somali. He also said that when there was a Somalia, it was a much feared country. Now, that they have thoroughly destroyed it by fighting each other, it is the world's laughing stock – nay, I correct myself before anybody else does; there is no Somalia to all intents and purposes, Thank Heavens. Why I say 'Thank Heavens'? Didn't I tell you not to interrupt me? You have so short a memory, my friend! I think you are not my friend after all! Still, I'll answer this question because it is an important question—at least to us. Thank Heavens because if there is the Somalia that was, there may not be the Kenya that is. There may not also be other countries that are.

No more questions, mind you or this conversation would come to an instant end. I think we are near the end of this conversation anyway.

Let me just add this. I myself remember that my Somali schoolmates were tough nuts, though they were usually skinny. Many an elephantine Kenyan boy was deceived by the lissome build of a Somali boy. The school bullies invariably used to be Somalis. We used to get some peace only when they were fighting each other.

Lo and behold, there it is! My Lord, there it is! It was always in the back of my head, but I couldn't place it before this very moment, however, hard I tried. Now, suddenly, I have it. All because of this conversation with you. Thank you, my friend. You are my friend, after all. You can ask me all the questions you desire. Sorry, if I have been a bit tough on you, my friend. Your conversation with me and the questions you asked me did it. I was foolish. I have been foolishly thinking that your questions were such a nuisance. Oh, my Lord, I almost missed it. I would never have forgiven myself if I did. You say 'cool down'? I'm cool, my friend. I'm only excited to finally get the idea that was circulating in my thick brains for so long but couldn't place it until this conversation with you, my good man. Until this moment. This blessed moment.

What idea I'm talking about, you asking me? I'll tell you, my friend. I'll definitely tell you. The idea, the trick, the knack, if I may, is to keep the Somalis fighting each other, so that we, Kenyans, are in peace and our country intact as is.

The beauty of the idea is, if they start fighting each other, they will continue fighting each other forever and we will keep living in peace forever and our country will be intact as is forever.

As a bonus of this beauty, the Somalis will stay being docile and will keep submitting to little pressures. In other words, they'll continue to be easy preys.

But never mind I said that, my good friend. It is off the record, you understand, my good friend? Thank you. It is only my personal opinion and my personal opinions are of no consequences.

Now this for the record, since, in fairness, not to mention in the spirit of friendship, I have to provide you with something for the record to take away with you. Or this conversation would have been useless to you. I wouldn't allow that to be the case, especially, after this conversation with you crystallized the idea that had been roaming around in head. No, my good friend, listen to this, use it and say that it came from me—with my compliments.

With all their terrorism, piracy, and however-they-get-loaded, we do our best to treat Somalis the same way that we treat others. Correction, we don't do our best, we do treat them exactly the same way as others without qualification or reservation. In point of fact, my friend, we treat them better than we treat others. Did you forget that we host all their Reconciliation Conferences? Isn't their UN Somali government based here? And all those NGOs feeding the hungry back in their country? And all those non-resident Embassies? And all those meetings by world governments aimed to rebuild their country? Remember, when the US Secretary of State, Ms Hillary Clinton, wanted to meet their 'president' Sharif, we extended the welcoming mat, didn't we?

See, we are their best friends. We treat them as friends, though they are terrorists or pirates or loaded. We treat them better than others. Where would they be without us, you tell me, my good friend? And they have the impudence to complain about us?! That once in a while one of our good and honest officers is tempted to unload them a bit, even though that by itself is not factual. For the life of me, if this is ingratitude itself, I don't know what is! Give me a break, please!!!

Though the beast pesters Somalilanders much less than Somalis, on account of the fact that Somalilanders form a tiny fraction of Somalis who felt the need to sojourn in Kenya, they are naturally as mad as anybody by the Kenyan gross inhumanity that is so crudely meted out to Somalis. Whatever grievances

Somalilanders may harbor against Somalians, who are bearing the brunt Kenyan heartlessness, Somalilanders are deeply offended by any condescension, any vilification, any belittling, any scorn, any humiliation, any abuse, any indignity, any oppression, any mistreatment, any brutality, any injustice or any extrajudicial punishment that any Somali from anywhere falls victim at the hands of anybody from anywhere in the world.

In the annals of history, goodwill and coexistence – indeed peace – or lack of thereof between two peoples are known to be steeped in earlier experiences and incidents, either pleasant or abhorrent, between these two peoples. If pleasant, though neither the benefactors nor the beneficiaries may be around any longer, one people is likely to bask forever in pride and humility; the other is likely to remain forever in gratitude and itch for a chance to return their once-upon-a-time benefactor's favor. If abhorrent, though both the victimizers and the victims are no more, one people may be haunted forever by their historical stains; the other may, at best, forgive and will never forget and, at worse, itch for an opportunity to settle scores with their once-upon-a-time tormentors.

While most Kenyans seem to be presently oblivious to this historical axiom, it is evident a similar legacy is in the making between the Somali (meaning Somalians and Somalilanders alike) and Kenyan peoples. Sadly, it is a legacy that has already found its roots in abhorrent experiences and incidents.

One might ask if there is a possibility to abort this legacy. The hope is there is. The expectation sees none on the horizon. This is because the initiative, the desire and the endeavors for such an abortion should come entirely from the Kenyans. And that is not even in their national psyche.

Even if it were in their psyche, it would be a daunting task. Short of either sacking the entire law enforcement forces and replacing it with entirely new and righteous forces or granting the entire ethnic Somalis blanket impunity against any consequence of breaking the laws of the land – in effect placing them above the law – there is no practical way the Kenyans can possibly eliminate this scourge. Needless to say, no one in possession of an iota of one's mental faculties can suggest that the Kenyans do either.

There is a third and feasible option. All Somalis in Kenya should leave that country in masse; in any anyway they can; as soon as they humanely can. Not only that; No Somali should go to Kenya ever or at least until the Kenyans forget that Somalis are not all loaded and if loaded, not wishing to be unloaded without their express

will, as well as somehow remember that Somalis are, lo and behold, fellow members of the human species.

Granted, that is easier said than done. It would require the UN Somali government, the NGOs, the non-resident embassies – in short all *The Establishment* to move elsewhere as well. It would necessitate holding the Somali Reconciliation Conferences and multinational meeting on Somalia elsewhere too. All these would present colossal logistical and financial challenges. And then, though it could be argued that that is entirely a Kenyan internal problem, there are the unfortunate ethnic Somali-Kenyans who would be left to hold the bag.

Indeed, easier said than done. But who can suggest any other way to tame this runaway beast? He who can, shoot.

This preoccupation and prioritization of economic interests and gains – not all of which are pursued legitimately or conscientiously as shown above – is what pales out Kenya's other policy considerations on Somalia and Somaliland. However, in the rare occasions that Kenya is rational enough to stop long enough to contemplate other course of actions, they seem, at worst, suspiciously detrimental or, at best, unbeneficial to both Somalia and Somaliland.

Kenya can be counted on to abet every Ethiopian and American counterproductive or ill-thought initiative in Somalia and Somaliland, though none of their constructive and helpful ones. It sees neither irony nor contradiction to be instrumental in creating 'governments' for – and installing them in – Somalia from Nairobi while, at the same time, hosting those who are determined to undermine the same 'governments'. The very public and recurrent humiliations that are subjected to even the more prominent members of these 'governments' in Nairobi, point to baffling inconsistencies or ambiguities in the genuineness of Kenya's pronouncements of unreserved support, if not downright malice, towards these 'governments'.

As for Somaliland in particular, one thing is certain: Nothing on public record that Kenya did or said ever sympathized with, acknowledged, favored, supported, advanced, or promoted Somaliland's independence reclamation and recognition causes. Besides, whether intentional or otherwise, all of Kenya's professed policies towards Somalia, should they ever be achieved, would simply and painfully mean the ignominious demise of Somaliland.

Take as an example those puppet ‘governments’ habitually formulated in foreign capitals, including in Nairobi, and installed in Mogadishu. Kenya is consistently vital not only in their formations, but is also indispensable in sustaining and in bestowing them the international legitimacy that is invariably the sole reason of their, nonetheless inevitably and deservedly short, tenures. They are not only bizarre insults heaped on injuries to Somalians on whom they are unceremoniously imposed without their wish, consent or consultation, they are also as esoterically a grotesque affront to Somalilanders and thus to all Somalis.

As if it were God’s Word, the first thing every such ‘government’ solemnly and adamantly proclaims is that “The unity of the Somali Republic is sacred”. Every one of them claims that its jurisdiction extends from Ras Kanbooni in Somalia to Zeila in present day Somaliland. The so-called National Charter they all swear to preserve and protect totally, unequivocally, unqualifiedly and unreservedly reject Somaliland as a separate entity. In short, there is no Somaliland in any form, shape or whatever!

Their understandable, though understandably futile, preoccupation to survive till the next day is matched only by their obsession to ostracize and undermine Somaliland in every way and at every turn. They huff and bluster whenever Somaliland seemingly or actually scores a mention, an acknowledgement, an acceptance, a compliment, or a consideration, however minor and inconsequential, from any quarter. To them, Somaliland is enemy No. 1. At every opportunity that presents itself, they loudly and vigorously reiterate their sacred avowal to extend their unitary authority to every corner of Somaliland – even (or perhaps preferably) by force if necessary – as soon as they have the wherewithal to do so^{iv}.

While claiming to be in the service of Somalilanders, as part of their supposed subjects, they have no scruples to endanger Somalilanders’ livelihoods by lobbying other countries and international organizations to deny Somaliland not only direct trade, but lineal aid as well. They hinder Somalilanders’ freedom of movement, pursuit of higher education, and generally interaction with other peoples of the world by urging other countries not to accept Somaliland’s passports^v, educational and other official documents. Only documents issued by ‘the legitimate TFG’ should be acceptable, they assert – unreasonably ironic as they cannot reliably and securely provide this service, and frustratingly maddening when other nations blindly oblige.

Now, how are Somalilanders supposed to look upon countries and organizations, foremost among them Kenya, which give birth, nourish and empower those

Somaliland-phobic, Somali – rather, imposed-on-Somalia – ‘governments’? Not certainly as friends, but what else if not as foes? What difference is there between he who intends to kill you and he who sirs your prospective killer; raises him; and provides him the weapon he would use for your demise?

Whether Kenya’s and others’ professed state-building efforts for Somalia are genuinely serious, sincere and benevolently well-meaning or they are used as façade, distraction-inducing, generous-looking ruse for malicious motives (as seems more likely), the consequences for Somaliland are, all the same, unspeakable.

In the former possibility, if a Somaliland-phobic ‘government’ succeed in attaining roots and might and then make good of its avowals to wipe out Somaliland, it would inevitably mean war and destruction between Somaliland and Somalia. Neither country could likely survive such a tragedy. The human catastrophe it would cause would adversely affect not only the Somalis, but also others in the region and well beyond – not least those whose shortsighted current policies, inadvertently or purposely, promote such unthinkable eventuality.

In the latter case, the cumulative time taken during their advents and tenures is tantamount to national incarceration for Somaliland as it licks its wounds on the sidelines in its continued unrecognized status. The more prolonged this status becomes; the less would be Somaliland’s survival stamina. Besides, the combined ill-effects of those Somaliland-phobic “governments” anti-Somaliland diatribes and campaigns during their usually short life spans cost Somaliland dearly in lost livelihoods and inconveniences in all and sundry – costs that Somaliland could hardly afford.

As things stand presently, Kenya is good neither for the Somalis (i.e. Somalilanders and Somalians), nor for the Somali countries (i.e. Somaliland and Somalia).

—Ahmed I. Hassan
ahmedihass@hotmail.com

Comments are welcome

Notes

ⁱ For classification, clarification as well as reverence to reality, this book refers to citizens of the Republic of Somaliland (formerly British Somaliland) as Somalilanders; Somalians are the citizens of the present day Somali Republic or Somalia (formerly Italian Somaliland). There are also Djiboutians, Somali-Ethiopians and Somali-Kenyans, who are citizens of their respective countries. A Somali is an ethnic denotation, not a citizenship.

ⁱⁱ These organizations and countries include AU, IGAD, AL, EU, Kenya, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Egypt, USA and others.

ⁱⁱⁱ Kenya Releases Somali Parliamentarians

http://www1.voanews.com/somali/news/news-makers-in-english/Kenya-Releases-Somali-Parliamentarians-2010_01_18-81976157.html

January 2010 Mass Arrests of Somalis in Nairobi

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=87891>

January 2010 Mass Arrests of Somalis in Nairobi

<http://www.newstimeafrica.com/archives/10432>

Kenyan Police Attacks Somalis

http://intersol.dk/intersol/english_articles/1693/kenyan-police-attacks-demonstrating-somalis

^{iv} As recent as late 2009, the current 'TFG government of Somalia' under 'president' Sharif assembled the remnants of Siad Barre regime's top military officers in Washington DC under the auspices of UN Secretary General's Special Representative for Somalia and, as some say, the US government. Most of the assembled former officers have known and credible war and human rights abuse records and were instrumental in the genocide against Somalilanders and others in the 1980's. One of the participants was Gen. Mohamed Ali Samatar, the longtime Barre Regime's Ministry of Defense and Chief of Staff, who by his own admission had ordered the destruction of Hargeisa and other major cities in Somaliland.

In unsurprising character with their ugly and criminal past, their end of session communiqué they made recommendations of forceful reunifications of Somalia and laid out the military strategy of achieving such a goal. Visit that following pages for further information.

<http://www0.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=31653&Cr=Somali&Cr1=>

<http://www.somalilandtimes.net/sl/2009/394/3.shtml>

^v It is near to impossible to receive the Somaliland Passport illegally. One has first to prove one's Somalilandian citizenship. This requires affidavits and testimonials from one's trial chief and sometimes other prominent persons. One must have a known and verifiable residential address which brings the neighborhood municipal authorities into play. After one passes these hurdles, the application goes to the Presidential Palace for exhaustive criminal and intelligence background checks on the applicant. No less than the Vice-president of the Republic grants the final approval before the document is issued to the applicant.

Compare this with the unrestricted ease that anyone could attain Somalia's travel documents as long as one is willing to part with one or two hundred dollars.

Ironically most nations grudgingly accept Somali Passports and reject that of Somaliland. Somalilanders pay a heavy price for this tragicomedy.