

## **A case of historical revisionism:**

### **that night in Hargeisa.**

**October 11,2010.**

*This article uses facts and figures collected from the SNM and SSDF veterans, and eye-witness accounts from the time of these events.*

This is a brief response to a series of articles printed by Wardheernews and signed by Abdulkadir Mohamoud. These two articles were printed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of October 2010. The second article ends with the following pessimistic sentence appealing to the American public and government to be kind to Mohamed Ali Samatar, who is believed to have been responsible for the bombardment of the main towns in northern Somalia. Abdulkadir wrote this in his conclusion of a farce intended to mislead the world public opinion:

*“...Out of respect of the Somali people, the people and government of the United States should protect Mohamed Ali Samatar from undeserved harassment.”*

What an appeal! Abdulkadir makes a shameless plea to the American people and government to protect and safeguard Mohamed Ali Samatar, who is accused of having committed atrocities against his people. Mohamed Ali Samatar, who resides in the United States, has been accused by two Somali citizens whose relatives were tortured and killed by the regime of Siad Barre. Mohamed Ali Samatar has the right to defend himself against any accusation made against him, but no one, including Abdulkadir, has the right to appeal to the American people and government for Mohamed Ali Samatar to be given immunity. This is a weakness on the part of Abdulkadir. His appeal only serves to show that he is overwhelmed by fear and suspicion that Mohamed Ali Samatar will be imprisoned. Surely this demonstrates that Abdulkadir doubts the defendant's innocence. Isn't the General in the safest place on earth: In the hands of the judicial system of the most democratic country in the world!

Abdulkadir is very pitiful of Mohamed Ali Samatar's harassment, forgetting the towns he had destroyed and the painful atrocities he has committed against innocent civilians.

In his defence of Mohamed Ali Samatar, Abdulkadir continues:

*“Mohamed Ali Samatar is a man who has always been loyal to his nation and country. It contravenes the law of any decent society to persecute any man of doing what every general is trained to do: to defend his country from its enemies.”*

It is very peculiar to hear that generals are trained to kill their people and not the enemy. That is how our colleague Abdulkadir comprehends what the military academies are for; to kill the innocent citizens of their country as Mohamed Ali Samatar did in the northern regions of former Somalia. What an insult to the respectful and brave generals of the world, of whom the majority fought for noble and patriotic principles. It is very unfortunate that Abdulkadir is defending a man who gave orders to Somali pilots to bombard and demolish the city from whose airport they were flying and landing. It was “a government in war against its own people” as Africa Watch documented in one of its accounts of the atrocities committed against the people in the north.

Mohamed Ali Samatar went all the way to the Apartheid regime of South Africa in the eighties to hire mercenaries to fly the Hawker planes given to the regime of Siad Barre by the late Sheikh Zaid of the Emirates. Thousands of fleeing refugees were shot by the trigger happy South African mercenaries. Africa Watch has estimated that tens of thousands of innocent citizens were killed in these attacks. A mere glimpse at the back cover of this book gives an insight into the horrific reality of these attacks:

*The Africa Watch report “...documents the violations that preceded the outbreak of war on May 27, 1988, including widespread killings, torture, mass arrests and detention, the use of landmines, the destruction of reservoirs and the killing of livestock. It also details the army’s conduct of the war, the targeted killings, artillery shelling and aerial bombardment of civilians. Tens of thousands have been killed, cities destroyed. Nearly half a million have sought refuge in the inhospitable desert in Ethiopia while hundreds of thousands more have been displaced within the region.” (Africa Watch, 1990)*

The end of this summary addresses Abdulkadir’s prevailing argument that Mohamed Ali Samatar should be protected.

*“Africa Watch also analyzes the role of the US administration and questions international support for the government of Siad Barre.” (Africa Watch, 1990)*

In other words, Siad Barre’s brutal regime should not have enjoyed international support, thus, why should the criminal perpetrators of this regime be given protection by the international community? Given Mohamed Ali Samatar’s central role in the atrocities committed by Siad Barre’s government, and most likely he will be proven guilty on all counts as he confessed that through the international media like the BBC. This is not a secret and it is almost known almost to every Somali. However, Abdulkadir is trying extremely hard to portray humane and commendable traits out of a monster.

Abdulkadir concludes by writing:

*“We shall visit in detail about the role and heroism of Mohamed Ali Samatar in another installment in the near future.”*

In fact, this is the gist of it. Abdulkadir's protracted defamation of the SNM and its principles is nothing more than a prelude to his ultimate aim; to proclaim the innocence of Mohamed Ali Samatar, who is bound to remain accused unless a court holds a trial and declares whether he is guilty or not.

In English we use the saying 'beating around the bush,' while in Somali we call this 'arar' or 'gogol-dhig.' This appears to be Abdulkadir's main aim in this article, thus, we will wait and see in due course his case in defense of Mohamed Ali Samatar.

I have a couple of other issues I wish to highlight on the farce and falsehood of Abdulkadir's two articles.

### **The SNM has never served the Derg:**

It is true that the SNM found refuge in Ethiopia while waging its incursions against the forces of Siad Barre. Unlike the SSDF who opted for a conventional war, the SNM chose to adopt guerilla war-fare, as it is:

1. More effective and less costly;
2. More engaging, popular and inclusive;
3. More democratic and justly;
4. More practical, disciplinary and manageable;
5. Less destructive with minimal losses.

Furthermore, what Abdulkadir doesn't mention is that the people of northern Somalia, both internally and externally, were fighting against an unpopular dictatorial and clannish regime. Yes, the SNM was receiving some assistance in the advancement of its war of liberation according to the objectives enshrined in its political program and constitution. I would like to inform Abdulkadir that Mengistu Haile Mariam was totally and principally against any secession and dismemberment of Somalia. This was witnessed by the two leaderships of the SSDF and SNM which he tried to unite but to no avail. He may not have been against the secession of Somalia because of a sheer love of the Somalis as Abdulkadir may behold, however, he may have been driven by a fear of the fact that Ethiopia may follow suit or that he may pave the way for the already troubled Ethiopia to fall apart. This is understood by farsighted analysts covering what was happening at the time in the Horn of Africa. Mengistu Haile Mariam was not alone in his intervention of the situation in the Horn, but he was bound to respect and abide by both the regional and international alliances of which he was part of. One should not be shortsighted and view issues alone from a very narrow and purely Somali perspective.

To shed more light on this I would like to update Abdulkadir on a summit which was held on 11/12/1986 in Reykjavik, Iceland between Reagan and Gorbachev. Reliable sources at the time of the summit have informed us that the issue of the Horn was high on the agenda, thus one should not so easily believe that both Mengistu and Siad Barre acted purely on their own will. There were both internal and external pressures to bring the two men to the table.

Siad Barre supported the so-called liberation fronts which were fighting against the regime of Mengistu. Equally, Mengistu supported the SSDF and SNM who were fighting against the dictatorial regime of Siad Barre. Nothing less and nothing more. From 1984 up to late 1989, it was the SNM alone that was confronting the shattered regime of Siad Barre both politically and militarily.

The northern part of Somalia was burning as was the northern part of Ethiopia. The two dictators came together and signed a peace agreement in Djibouti in order to extinguish the two northern fires, but they did not succeed. This in turn was followed by the full liberation of both countries. Siad Barre was toppled in January 1991 and Mengistu in May 1991. The same fate for two friends.

Siad Barre came to Ethiopia after a long time in 25/5/1988 and the SNM left Ethiopia for the total liberation of the country on 27/5/1988. While Mengistu and Siad Barre were in the hot springs of Sodere, near Nazareth, the SNM forces attacked the main northern towns. The SNM tactically, and with care and shrewdness, used Ethiopia for the realization of its strategies, but the real friend of Mengistu Haile Mariam was Siad Barre, who signed the agreement with him. The SNM has never signed an agreement with Mengistu Haile Mariam. How can one then accuse the SNM of going to Ethiopia for assistance while simultaneously defending Siad Barre's involvement in the signature of treaties and agreements with Mengistu Haile Mariam?

It is strange how preoccupied and obsessed Abdulkadir Mohamoud is with the Derg. Just like the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) of Somalia went out of the order of the day and Siad Barre remained the sole actor, the Derg has been the same, and Mengistu Haile Mariam was the sole manager and actor of the state of affairs of Ethiopia. That is something every fool should understand. Just like Ibrahim Babangida of Nigeria, Mengistu was the Maradona of Ethiopia.

Unlike what Abdulkadir has written, the SSDF was a broad Somali movement in the initial stages. Its first secretary general was Mustafe Haji Nuur from Hargeisa. In those days, the SSDF military bases extended from the border between Ethiopia and Djibouti to the Southern corners of Somalia. Almost all Somali clans were represented. However, due to the harsh and poor leadership of Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, such a broad

Somali front was reduced to a narrow clan cluster, limited to the sub-sub-clan of Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed.

Likewise, the SNM was a broad Somali movement fighting all over Somalia. It is not hidden from the Somali public at large that the SNM had been operating successfully on three fronts: The northern front, the central front in Mustahiil and the southern front in Barray. SNM was successfully operative on all fronts sometimes going as far as Baidhoa town.

It was not the SNM who destroyed the cities, but the dictatorial regime of Siad Barre. When Mengistu Haile Mariam realized the threat of the EPRDF, he admitted defeat and safely escaped to Zimbabwe, returning back the plane and the pistol as the rumors say. But look what the obstinacy and selfishness of Siad Barre and his clique have done to the country. Siad Barre, unlike Mengistu, did not retreat or escape, but preferred to fight back and destroy the country. Even before the incursions of the SNM, the cities and the country were demolished.

### **Disagreement between Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed and the Derg:**

It is true that the close friendship of Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed and the Ethiopian regime began to deteriorate at last. The Ethiopians had once been staunch supporters of the one-man performance of Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed. His leadership was extremely ruthless and highly dictatorial, and this led to the eviction of great numbers of the rank and file of the SSDF. In his account, Abdulkadir is trying to depict Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed as a nationalist who confronted the Ethiopians and was imprisoned for this alone. This is far from the truth.

In May 1984 Mengistu, with a delegation of generals and ministers, was in Dire-dawa to tackle issues related to the leadership of the SSDF. He had not even had the chance to attend the 25<sup>th</sup> May OAU festivities in Addis Ababa. Eye-witnesses have reported that Mengistu was heard exclaiming that leading the millions of different Ethiopian nationalities is easier than dealing with a handful of Somalis from the SSDF.

There were skirmishes between the Ethiopian and SSDF forces which took place in Galdogob and Balanbal area. This resulted in deaths on both sides. Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed put his troops in a standby position and many long range messages and orders were intercepted by the Ethiopians. The Ethiopians saw these messages as a threat to the security of Ethiopia. The SSDF had a potential arsenal which could affect the balance of forces within Ethiopia specially the eastern part. Apart from that, there were controversial statements by some Ethiopian authorities on Gal-dogob area. The complications within the SSDF leadership were further deteriorating day after day. On

17<sup>th</sup> October 1984 three of its leaders were shot in Dire-dawa, resulting in the death of two of them. Again, in the same year a group of Abdullahi Yusuf's opponents were attacked in Dire-dawa, including Mohamed Farah Jimale who is living now in Mogadishu. This ended up in a retaliatory attack in which Dr. Abdulqadir Irrid Yanbo, Abdillahi Yusuf's brother-in-law, was shot in Addis Ababa in broad day light. Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed was imprisoned along with his executives because of issues related to these complications.

How would Abdulkadir evaluate Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed in his capacity as the President of the TFG? What degree of nationalism and innocence would he attribute to Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed's bloody performance in Somalia?

In another statement, Abdulkadir Mohamoud writes about a shipment of guns intended for the SNM. He wrote:

*"There was a 'special' shipment of arms on the SNM convoy which the Derg in Ethiopia and its generals thought was crucial to capture Hargeisa. However, the shipment was intended to have had far reaching consequences not only for the battle of Hargeisa but for Somalia. The shipment was found and demolished by the Mig."*

But what did the 'special' shipment consist of? Abdulkadir writes again:

*"The shipment which was of special significance to Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam and his generals was 10,000 North Korean made AK-47 machine guns and an endless supply of ammunition laden on a number of trucks in the convoy. The shipment was intended to be distributed to the civilian population in Hargeisa with the aim to ignite a civil war."*

What a farce of baseless information! Poor, Abdulkadir! Let us pinpoint some facts and figures to make a longer account shorter:

1. The country had already been embroiled in civil war for almost a decade; hence there was no need to ignite a war in May 1988.
2. The attacking SNM forces were not in need of 10,000 Aks. Hargeisa was attacked by 1,800 Mujahidins and Burao by 1,200 Mujahidins,
3. Apart from the surprise factor, the SNM planned to capture the stores of Siad Barre for guns and ammunition and it did so successfully.
4. The Mig which demolished the 'special' shipment should also have demolished the 65 attacking SNM convoys and prevented them from entering Hargeisa.

These few points alone demonstrate the falsehood of the information given by Abdulkadir Mohamoud. Earlier, our writer and colleague displayed his obsession with

the Derg, and now he has turned to outrage at these 'special' shipments. He is undoubtedly haunted by the specters that he has created to frighten the Somali public.

In early April 1988, the SSDF and SNM met with the Ethiopian authorities in Addis Ababa after the signing of the Ethio-Somali agreement. The SNM requested fuel, ammunition and other logistical support but was denied this request. Hassan Ali Mire, the then Chairman of the SSDF requested the release of Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed and his colleagues and supported the SNM stand emphasizing that the SSDF was not in a position to wage war. Both the SSDF and SNM were subsequently supplied with food and fuel. The Ethiopians had shown more respect for this agreement than Siad Barre, who attacked the SNM bases and penetrated into Ethiopian territory more than 30 kms, just on the eve of the ratification of the agreement.

To conclude, I think it would be very difficult for Abdulkadir to prove the innocence of Mohamed Ali Samatar. The case is in the hands of the American justice system and articles printed on websites in defence of an accused person cannot influence the judges ruling Mohamed Ali Samatar's case, thus, his pleas are futile. Furthermore, I think such articles are an abuse to the integrity of the American people and its system of justice. On a separate note, Abdulkadir's articles are a painful insult to the victims and their relatives, showing a complete disregard for the lives lost and destroyed through Samatar's actions. This is totally against Islamic and traditional Somali ethics.

Aw Farax Mohamed

xaqa\_u\_gargaar@hotmail.com