

Africa: Libya, Côte d'Ivoire burn as Africa runs in circles

AllAfrica.com Mukhisa Kituyi 26 March 2011 *Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi is a former minister for Trade and Industry and a director of the Kenya Institute of Governance.*

(...) The crises in Libya and Ivory Coast (Cote d'Ivoire) have brought to the fore the dire inadequacy of Africa's current crop of leaders in dealing with urgent regional challenges.

Seventeen years since the genocide in Rwanda, we seem still lost to the responsibility of forestalling disaster. That, in itself, can be bad enough.

What is hurtful is our leaders' desire that the rest of the world should reify this inaction as some African enhancement to the meaning of dialogue.

When Gbagbo attempted an electoral heist in Abidjan, the world blew the whistle. Africa concurred, and acted like it wanted to take the lead in driving the fellow out of town.

First came contradictory messages as to whether a mission had been sent in or we were dealing with self-appointed journeymen. Then a series of confusing signals from Addis before an announcement that Ecowas would deal on behalf of the continent.

The last word from the AU connection is that President Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria, the current head of Ecowas, has asked the UN to enhance its role in Ivory Coast with the possibility of militarily ejecting Gbagbo.

Understandable this; what do we expect Jonathan to do when he is a month away from an election back home?

Meanwhile, the fears we had of violence consuming that beautiful country with ugly politics are being fulfilled by the marauding goons unleashed by the election cheater.

Individual presidents have made passing remarks about respecting the rights of the voters, wringed their hands and gone on to more interesting concerns.

The circus of African inadequacy plays out even more glaringly in the case of Libya. With the exception of Rwanda and The Gambia, African states have been very slow in their responses to the criminal violence Col Muammar Gaddafi has visited upon his own people.

As the Butcher of Sirte bombed his country's oil refineries and hospitals, and sent snipers to shoot unarmed civilians in the streets, Africa needed a collective voice of outrage and movement towards stopping or getting help to stop the genocide in the making. What we have seen is the theatre of the absurd. (...)

(...) The most pitiable of all has been the AU. As the extent of destruction became clear, as Gaddafi blasted heavy gunfire into a hospital in Misriya and cheated the world by declaring a ceasefire while sending a convoy of military vehicles towards Benghazi, AU was rounding up some tired gentlemen to plan a trip to initiate reconciliation in Libya.

The best thing to have happened from an African perspective is that African members of the UN Security Council voted with their heads and hearts to endorse quick military intervention. For once they did not read the lips of our leaders.

The chair of AU, Mr. Ping, has protested loudly that they were not consulted, although the UN Secretary General recollects otherwise. Mr. Ping wants us to believe that teams of African politicians who in most likelihood have enjoyed a Gaddafi cola nut would stand up to him and make him silence the guns he is railing on his citizens. (...)

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