

## “Eye for an Eye, and Tooth for Tooth” - In Search for Lasting Peace in Southern Africa

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### Abstract

*The history of our motherland Africa has been characterised by numerous and complex ups and downs. the greater part of the journey, however, which africa has travelled, is marked with tears. this paper evaluates efforts which have been made to try and wipe these tears. noting some weaknesses in the peace initiatives that have been put in place to find lasting peace on the continent, the paper proposes to evoke the age-old biblical injunction: ‘eye for an eye, tooth for tooth (Lev. 24:20; Dt. 19:21) as the effective route to bring lasting peace to Africa, and Southern Africa in particular.*

**Key words:** Africa, Peace, Eye for eye, Poverty, War

### Introduction

The name ‘Africa’ is quite paradoxical—for , while to some it evokes a sense of pride, to others it evokes a sense of wanting to be detached from any form of association with the name. To those who feel bonded to their motherland and cherish fond memories of the African delicacies and bygone good times, the name ‘Africa’ indeed is a source of great pride and it doesn’t matter whether one is actually living on the continent itself or is staying in diaspora. Not everyone, however, feels the same as some have actually cut ties with the continent to stay in Europe or America, running away from what they perceive to be endless and solutionless African problems. Quite admittedly, the greater part of the journey which Africa has travelled is marked with tears. For so many years now Africa has not been able to free itself from abject poverty, hunger, ethnic tensions, corrupt leadership, and all sorts of unpleasant realities

(Mwandayi, 2012). What is quite disturbing, however, is that some of Africa's wounds are self-inflicted through corrupt leadership, rape and murder of Africans by fellow Africans, unjust distribution of natural resources and so many other evils that one would find hard coming to terms with. Faced with the inadequacies of the peace initiatives that have been going on the African soil, this paper proposes to evoke the age-old biblical injunction: 'eye for an eye, tooth for tooth' (Lev.24:20; Dt.19:21) as an alternative and quite effective route to bring lasting peace to Africa, and Southern Africa in particular.

### **Tears of the African sons and daughters**

The film 'Tears of the Sun,' a 2003 American war film depicting a U.S. Navy SEAL team rescue mission amidst a civil war in some remote part of Nigeria, among others, goes a long way to capture in image the sad realities of the African continent. Though the film may look a deliberate attempt to show off the superiority of American forces it still has a lot to tell on what is transpiring in most parts of the African land, namely: murder, rape, torture, emotional harassment of innocent victims, to mention a few. Making a transect walk on the African continent, right from the top, that is North Africa and down to Southern

Africa we encounter countless incidences where the few and mightier have always been driven by a laager mentality in their dealings with the perceived weaker groups whose tears have endlessly been wetting the African soil. Before even the white colonial rule came, there were tribal wars on the African continent which in most cases resulted either in the total crushing or subjugation of weaker groups. While the life stories of Shaka the Zulu in South Africa, for example, and many other rulers of the time may glorify the mighty achievements of such rulers, they are at the same time a living testimony to the tears of the defenseless peoples who were under them. The appetite to spill blood even in needless circumstances but simply as a fulfillment of one's ego was simply in the blood of such rulers. Acknowledging such sad realities, however, is not a way of trying to justify the foreign occupation of Africa under the pretext of protecting the weaker groups from blood-thirsty rulers.

The tears of the weaker sons and daughters of the African soil got even worse with the entry of the colonial regime on the African continent. Many were mercilessly butchered, raped and tortured by the colonial masters. Those who tried to offer resistance were either hanged to death or buried by

dynamites in the mountain caves where they sought refuge. Many African societies as a result were either completely annihilated or were reduced to female headed families as most men had been killed or taken to work for the colonial masters. Subjugating them to keep working on the white farms were the various kinds of *chibaro* 'forced labour' including *mutero wembwa* 'dog tax' that they had to pay.

With the attaining of independence of many states, many thought that Africans were free at last and that they could govern themselves freely as sovereign states, treating each other equally as they were sons and daughters of the soil. One would have thought that the colour of the skin 'black' should naturally have acted as a booster to social cohesion among the Africans but certain conspicuous aspects of African realities point the other way. The Arab uprisings in the north in places such as Libya and Egypt are a strong testimony that all is not well on the African continent. Parallel uprisings have been witnessed in the west as well as in such places like Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone and others (Marianne Ducasse - Rogier (2004). In the east of Africa, the long dragging war in Somalia defies any claims to talks on peaceful resolutions to African problems. In Central Africa, one can point to Kenya as another hot

spot which has seen more tears wetting the African soil. The southern region too of the African continent has not been spared from these fires of violence, murder, rape and torture that continue to engulf the continent. During the years 1975 - 1992, Mozambique, for example, witnessed a civil uprising which claimed over a million lives. Similar cases of loss of life were witnessed during the 1980s Gukurahundi atrocities in the Matebeleland and Midlands regions of Zimbabwe. Sporadic incidences in which there has been also sacrifice of innocent and defenseless lives have been witnessed in Zimbabwe and the greatest casualties were election related, with 2008 witnessing almost a nationwide bloodbath. Crossing the Limpopo into South Africa, memories of persons burning with tyres hanged like necklaces round their necks due to the xenophobic violence which escalated in 2008 come to mind. The target of such attacks were none other than the defenseless Zimbabwean, Mozambican, Malawian, Somalian and other foreign nationals who had sought refuge and work there following the destabilized situations in their own home countries. Amidst all these disturbing facts of reality, it would be instructive to note that not all parts of the African continent are beset by conflicts. However, where conflicts exist as argued by Sam K. Kutesa (2009) this has led to devastating effects, including: deaths

of innocent civilians, refugees across borders, internal displacements, loss and destruction of property, disruption of socio – economic activities as well as costs relating to their management and resolution.

### **Conflict Resolutions in Africa**

Following the rise of conflicts on the African continent there have been serious efforts by the Africans themselves and in some cases with the aid from the international community to resolve such conflicts. A look at a few examples will help demonstrate that Africans have not been just folding their hands as the continent got engulfed by the flames of violence. A regional effort in 1999, for example, saw the signing of the Lusaka Peace Agreement as a way to resolve the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) which pitted the government of Congo and armed rebel groups and had ended by sucking in neighbouring countries of Rwanda, Uganda and Angola as well as Zimbabwe and Namibia. In affirmation to the growing spirit of regional cooperation and commitment there was an agreement in 2009 between DRC and Rwanda to partake in joint operations against the Ex-FAR/Interahamwe (Kutesa 2009). During the same year DRC also went on to carry out joint operations with Uganda and Sudan against the Lords Resistance Army (LRA). In an effort

to bring lasting peace to the Great Lakes Region, the Tripartite Plus Joint Commission which was formed and which involved Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and DRC, as noted by Kutesa (2009), played a key role in building confidence and trust among these countries.

Considering the case of Burundi, there has been a lot of regional effort also by African leaders to bring peace to that country. With President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda acting as the chairperson of such a regional effort and assisted by the late President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and later former President Nelson Mandela of South Africa, and then South African Vice President Jacob Zuma, there was an ushering of the Arusha Peace Agreement of 2000 which finally saw the bringing on board of the two remaining armed groups; namely the National Council for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD) and the FNL/Palipehutu (Kutesa, 2009). As a sign of enjoying the fruits of peace that had been brought to their country, the Burundi government saw it worthy to return a gesture of gratitude by sending some of its forces on a peacekeeping mission to Somalia under the African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

A further indication of the serious regional efforts to bring peace to

Africa can be observed when we take a look at the long drawn conflict in Sudan. While the armed conflict in Darfur can be said to have started in February, 2003, Joseph C. Ebegbulem (2012) argues that a closer examination of the crisis shows that it is not a recent development but is rooted in ages of resources and racial conflict between Durfurians of Arab and African descent.

When the crisis eventually took the form of armed conflict in 2003, it looked initially just like an internal conflict centered on the marginalization of Southern Sudan but it was not after long that it roped in neighbouring countries such as Uganda. To curb the spreading of this conflict, the Inter - Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Government of Sudan (GOS) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) came together for negotiations under the auspices of the regional organisation. The fruit of this regional effort saw the birth of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 which resolved the internal differences in Sudan (UNMIS, 2013).

A cursory look at Somalia, would reveal as if nothing has been done to change the fortunes of that country as insurgent groups appear to be still fighting with government forces. A closer look, however, would show that there have been regional efforts

to bring about peace also in that country. Under the auspices of Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the warring Somali parties negotiated and signed a Charter in Nairobi in 2006, for power sharing. Such an effort saw the birth of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and other Transitional Federal Institutions (TFIs) including the Transitional Federal Parliament (TFP). In August 2008, there was another agreement signed called the Djibouti Agreement which brought in a new opposition armed group (The Alliance for the Re - Liberation of Somalia). With this agreement saw the establishment of a new democratic government (Kutesa, 2009). Other insurgent groups, however, remain outside of the peace process and hence continue to fight the government.

A move to the southern region of Africa shows that there have been some regional efforts to resolve conflicts within this region as well. When South Africa attained its independence in 1994 there was a special need to bring the parties that had been at loggerheads together and chat a way for peaceful co-existence. This saw the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which was tasked with searching and revealing past wrongdoing in the hope of resolving conflict left over from the past. It acted as a court-like restorative justice

where victims and witnesses of gross human rights violations were invited to give statements about their experiences, and some were selected for public hearings. Those who had perpetrated violence were given room to give testimony and request amnesty from both civil and criminal prosecution. While the board appeared basically to be a South Africa product in that it was established by the then President Nelson Mandela with the help of Bishop Desmond Tutu, the regional body was behind all these efforts in as much as they had helped the African National Congress party (ANC) to dislodge the apartheid government.

Similar efforts towards resolving conflicts were done in Mozambique too after the long protracted war (1976 - 1992) between the ruling Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) government and the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) rebels. The regional members with the assistance of the country's religious groups, particularly the Catholic Church led by D. Jaime Pedro Gonçalves, urged the belligerents to reconcile and bring the war to an end. With the help of the international community and particularly the Catholic lay group in Rome, the Sant Egidio, Gonçalves succeeded in bringing the FRELIMO and RENAMO to a negotiating table in Rome. After months of talks,

FRELIMO and RENAMO signed a peace agreement on October 4, 1992 (Serapiao, 2013). The General Peace Agreement, as confirmed by Victor Igreja and Beatrice Dias-Lambranca (2008) brought an end to almost two decades of a bloody civil war.

Following the 2008 disputed elections, Zimbabwe too has seen the involvement of regional leaders to break a truce between the warring political parties, the Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Taking the first step to resolve the political impasse in Zimbabwe was the regional body, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) under the facilitation of Thabo Mbeki. Mbeki's mediation efforts were later buttressed by the work of Jean Ping, the then Chairperson of the African Union Commission (Ikejiaku, 2011). The mediation efforts by these two African bodies finally saw the signing of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) in 2009 by warring parties. SADC and the African Union became the guarantors to this agreement.

### **Critical Review of the Negotiated Peace Solutions**

Though generally it can be argued that there has been a significant decrease in the number of intra-state armed conflicts which were on the rise between 1990 and 2009 due to some

peaceful negotiations that have been ongoing, there are still some challenges that threaten the achievement of full peace in Africa. Such a worrying situation tends to support the results of a study on conflicts around the globe carried out by the University of Maryland's Center for International Development and Conflict Management. The Centre found that 33 countries were at high risk for instability and of these, 20 were in Africa (Dare, cited in Ikejiaku, 2011).

Taking a look at the Lusaka Peace Agreement, while surely one can emulate the cease fire that ensued after the agreement as well as the withdrawal of foreign forces and the holding of elections, real peace appears to be eluding DRC. Sporadic armed conflicts have become almost a common phenomenon in that country. Discontented rebel groups continue to pose a threat to peace in DRC such that it may not be surprising one day to see the country rescinding again into another full-scale war. The same almost applies with the Arusha Peace Agreement in Burundi. While Burundi has been hailed as a classic example of the success of regional efforts, and also an example that incremental progress can build into a concrete solution (Kutesa, 2009); it still faces the challenges of post-conflict reconstructions. Surely not all would like to pull the belt of progress in the same direction and there is

bound to be diversity in terms of the future vision of the country. Such differences in opinion remain a haunting threat to the peace agreement. The fact also that it is within the Great Lakes Region which is generally quite turbulent may mean that it may easily be torched also by the flames of conflict that characterize that region. The 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Sudan remains hanging by the thread. While CPA helped resolve internal conflicts in Sudan there has been a lot of dragging of feet when it comes to the full implementation of the provisions of that agreement, especially those related to border demarcation, sharing of oil revenue, the status of Abyei, and the operationalization of the Joint Integrated Unit (Kutesa 2009). This latent potential of a relapse into another conflict is exacerbated by the fact that there has not been yet a breakthrough in trying to resolve the conflict in Darfur. Further throwing spanners in the attempts to bring peace to Sudan is the call for the arrest of President Bashir to answer charges of alleged human rights violations at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Hague. As for Somalia also, the Djibouti Agreement (2008) has too failed to bring lasting peace to that country. A number of insurgent groups, as we saw, have not been forthcoming to be engaged in talks which could result in the fulfillment

of the spirit of the Djibouti Agreement, hence have been continuously fighting with the government forces.

The not-fully resolved conflicts which characterize the Great Lakes Region are also obtaining in the southern region of Africa. In South Africa, for example, while there is need to give credit to the great role played by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and is popularly taken as a model of truth commissions, many would feel the Commission glossed over so many things, some of which even demanded prosecution. This finds echo, for example, in the words of Allen and Macdonald who argue:

We only need to look at the legacy of the South African TRC to understand that a single prescription of how to deal with South Africa's past was oppressive, and dissenting voices, although present at the time, were largely drowned out (Allen and Macdonald, 2013, 11).

While the TRC promoted relative peace and co-existence in the country it failed to bridge the gap between black South Africans and their white counterparts. Some Boer communities continue to cling to their old mentality that blacks are the cursed sons of Ham and hence should continue under the subjugation of the whites. The whites

in South Africa have indeed remained in control of the economy as they continue to own vast tracts of land and other key economic structures such as the mining industry. This surely remains a time bomb as some revolutionary minded people like Julius Malema continue to call for the indigenization of the economy. While the ruling ANC party continues to take a kid-glove approach to the matter, the pent-up disgruntlement of the general public over such an imbalance of the economy has often been projected on the foreigners who are accused of taking over jobs and hence, the xenophobic attacks as the resultant. Apart from the xenophobic attacks, South Africa has witnessed also a growing number of protestors protesting against the unconscionable contempt with which the poor are treated in that country. One writer argues that one would be forgiven for thinking that the shack settlements of South Africa were in occupied Palestine (Pithouse, 2011). Indeed, it is quite unfortunate that many of the protests by the poor have often been met by brutal force from the police. The murder of Andries Tatane (2011) in Ficksburg, who with thousands of others had gone to the streets to protest against the ill-treatment of the poor, Michael Makhabane (ca.2000) - a student from the same town Ficksburg who was protesting against the exclusion of poor students from the University of Durban-Westville,



among many other killings by the South African police (Pithouse, 2011) show that the reconciliation process has really not worked well in South Africa.

As for Mozambique, the piece-meal solution proffered by the Rome Agreement is beginning to show its deficiencies. With Afonso Dhlakama, the RENAMO leader returning to Gorongosa to revive his army base there and threatening to resume the war if a new peace agreement is not reached, we see the fragility of the brokered Rome Agreement. The Rome negotiations indeed played an important role in helping put an end to the war but they failed to address the root cause of the conflict. While the ruling FRELIMO party would want to argue that it has done all it could to create a democratic environment, Dhlakama himself would want to argue that the FRELIMO party failed to reintroduce participatory democracy certified by the Rome agreement. One major weakness also with the General Peace Agreement is that it was founded upon the culture of denial: the political authorities 'encourage turning a collective blind eye, leaving horrors unexamined or normalized as being part of the rhythms of everyday life' (Cohen cited in Igreja and Dias-Lambranca, 2008). Such a type of post-war settlement in which victims

and former perpetrators live in the same villages where the most appalling abuses and egregious crimes took place leaves room not only to feelings of revenge but also to actual physical violence as a form of reckoning with war-related abuses and crimes. The continual bickering between the two parties is potentially explosive and once again may result in the destabilization of the region. The potentially explosive situation in Mozambique is an equally test to the effectiveness of the *magamba* spirit ceremonies which were conducted by war victims and survivors in Gorongosa district in central Mozambique as a way of trying to create a socio-cultural environment conducive to engagement with the past and communal repair (Igreja and Dias-Lambranca, 2008).

Zimbabwe is another hot spot. While the GPA, to some extent, managed to bring together Zanu PF and the MDC factions, there was a continual exchange of words between the parties which simply demonstrated that all was not well. The tension between the parties was not resolved even with the 2013 harmonized elections as both the MDC formations; MDC - T and MDC Ncube accused Zanu PF of massively rigging the elections.

What the fore-going analysis shows is that negotiated solutions tend to

always have some weaknesses which at the end of the day result in the recurring of conflicts. Such a trend, as we saw, has been observed in recent years in a number of African countries including Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique and even Zimbabwe. The major challenge, it would appear, facing most African nations is the failure to manage the post-conflict reconstructions. Thus, though there is generally an encouraging recession in the number of armed conflicts in Africa, the positioning of African states at a transitional crossroads, as noted by Sadiki Koko (2009) renders them more likely to experience periods of instability as they move towards establishing new socio-economic and political frameworks.

### **The Search for a Lasting Solution**

Faced with the inadequacies of the negotiated solutions and the growing trend of recurring conflicts it becomes indispensably necessary to find ways of achieving lasting solutions. Since negotiated solutions have in some respects managed to bring relative peace in some lands but are not guarantees to continued peace it shows possibly that there is need to beef up such efforts with some more realistic mechanisms that would result in the satisfaction of all concerned members so as to curb any further recurrences of conflict. It is against this background that this

paper proposes the age-old 'eye for an eye, tooth for tooth' principle. The very usage of this injunction, for example, during the whole Old Testament period up to the time when Christ began to legislate against its application in personal relationships shows by itself that it must have been a very powerful weapon to resolve conflicts among people.

### **'Eye for an Eye, Tooth for Tooth'**

The concept of retribution as basis of penalty is very antiquated. Long before the biblical concept of punishment 'eye for an eye,' there existed in the ancient world the principle of exact retaliation. Bearing witness to this is the ancient Babylonian Law Code called the Hammurabi Code. The Code provides:

If a man put out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out. [An eye for an eye]

If he breaks another man's bone, his bone shall be broken.

If he put out the eye of a freed man, or break the bone of a freed man, he shall pay one gold mina.

If he put out the eye of a man's slave, or break the bone of a man's slave, he shall pay one-half of its value.

If a man knock out the teeth of his equal, his teeth shall be knocked out. [A tooth for a tooth] (Traditional justification for the imposition of penalty philosophy, 2013).

As can be seen from the above set of laws, an offender would receive, as penalty, the same wrong act which he committed against another person. Drawing possibly from the Hammurabi Code, one can find in the biblical text almost the same system of retributive justice. We read:

Anyone who strikes down any other human being will be put to death. Anyone who strikes down an animal will make restitution for it: a life for a life. Anyone who injures a neighbour shall receive the same in return, broken limb for broken limb, eye for eye, and tooth for tooth. As the injury inflicted, so will be the injury suffered. Whoever strikes down an animal will make restitution for it, and whoever strikes down a human being will be put to death (Lev.24:17-22).

Just as in the Hammurabi Code, the text shows that a person was justified in returning the same offending action to the source of such offending action. The principle in other words, allowed a person to do to another who caused him wrong, the same wrong imputed against him. One can

further point to the text as underlining the basic principle: the same action, as punishment, shall be imposed on the person who caused the wrong, he who injures shall be injured, and he who takes a life will forfeit his life in payment of that which was lost. As a result then, serious cases such as murder did not receive light punishment and comparatively trivial offences were not to be punished exorbitantly.

Given the strict nature of the 'eye for an eye' principle, some have been quick to dismiss Old Testament ethics as primitive and blood-thirsty and overly rigid. Some would further argue that it has limited applicability and another criticism leveled against it is that the assumption of proportionality of punishments (punishment should be commensurate or proportional to the moral gravity of the offense) is untenable in most pluralistic societies because there is often widespread public disagreement on the severity of particular offenses (Traditional justification for the imposition of penalty philosophy, 2013).

While the critic of the Old Testament ethics as primitive and overly rigid has won popular support, such a position appears to stem from the failure to understand the development of this ethical system. Prior to the formulation of the principle of exact retaliation, the law

of the jungle dominated. The offended part, in other words, had every room to carry out unlimited private vengeance on the offender. Aware of the original status of such an ethical law and the positive changes that it underwent, C. J. Wright took a swipe against criticism of Old Testament ethics. Referring to the label that it was primitive and blood-thirsty, he argued:

It is the most unfortunate caricature, since this was a very considerable advance in legal history, namely; the removal of unlimited private vengeance and feuding in favour of a law limiting the penalty for any offense to strict and equivalent retribution (Wright, 1984, 152).

This law which prescribed careful attention to equivalent punishment for offences applied strictly to the world of public legal action, governing court proceedings. Its usage, however, in the public legal sphere did not imply that individuals were free to apply it anyhow. The priestly writers actually encouraged people not to wantonly seek revenge for every wrong done. By abnegating one's natural desire for vengeance and retaliation even when it would be legally right to do so, people, as perceived by the priestly writers, would be able to maintain holiness in the community (Lev.19:17-18, Prov.25:21-22).

A move to the New Testament shows that the call to maintain holiness in the community made by the Priestly writers is quite consistent with part of Jesus' sermon that 'eye for an eye, tooth for tooth' or simply the law which governed court proceedings should not be the measure of conduct among his followers (Mt. 5:38-42). It is quite unfortunate indeed that many come to interpret Jesus' words in the cited passage as a sign of his criticism and rejection of the Old Testament moral standards as a whole. The passage needs rather to be understood as Jesus' criticism of making minimum legal rights the criterion for relationships, even with those classed as enemies (Wright, 1984, 152). The danger which the moralist par-excellence Jesus saw in the attempt to extend the principle of exact retaliation to personal ethics was that it made it a charter for self-interest. While indeed one could have been justified to retaliate for a wrong done, the will of God in ordinary human relationships, as shown by Jesus and the Priestly writers, was rather to be sought in subordinating one's right to the benefit of others. The call for an unselfish attitude in personal ethics, an attitude which not only refuses to retaliate but also does not resist did not, however, imply that the principle of exact retaliation ceased to be of value in the world of public legal action.

A sign that the principle of exact retaliation is not draconian and a sign of retrogression but is still of great relevance in the world of public legal action is the fact that it remains to be the primary justification in the imposition of offenses in most cultures today. The simplistic approach in handling crimes, "let the punishment fit the crime," remain, in other words, to be the most popular basis for imposing penalty, it has not lost its appeal to modern day societies even.

Now given that most African conflicts fall not so much within personal ethics or relationships but are of the public domain and demanding public legal action at times it would follow that revoking the 'eye for an eye' principle as part of the mechanism to resolve conflicts is justified. Troublemakers behind most of African conflicts often want to resort to the use of power, especially military one to bulldoze their subjects in any direction they may deem fit. Perceiving their targets as weak, they can maim and kill without fear of any reprimand or worry of the possibility of suffering the same fate in return. It is only when such people realize that their targets have the potential to inflict the same harm on them that they tend to restrain their arrogance. The perception, in other words, that one's dear ones would also be killed or

maimed if he/she does that to the other would often result in the revision of that person's evil plans before they are executed. A few examples from world history and nature would possibly help illustrate the kind of argument I am making here. Lessons from nature teach us that if there is an outbreak of fire, for example, and that fire looks unstoppable then the best way forward would be to start another fire from an opposite direction coming in the direction of the already burning fire. Once the two fires meet then the original fire would cease. The capacity to cause the same harm or burn the same way as in the foregoing given example acts as a neutralizer to possible greater and devastating harm.

A look at world history tends to reflect the same kind of teaching also. The trial of World War 2 genocide culprits at Nuremburg and their subsequent sentencing indubitably left a deep imprint in world history. Goring who was Hitler's henchman committed suicide rather than face execution. Of course, since then, German has never been that violent. On another note, however, the devastating effects of World War I (1918) and World War II (1945-48), have taught nations that *mhandu yemunhu munhu* 'a person's greatest enemy is another person.' This has resulted in the untiring effort

by every nation to produce or buy the most sophisticated weapons that would help conquer an enemy. Following the use of the atomic bomb against Japan some nations have come to produce their own nuclear weapons also (though it is not publicly claimed) just in case they are attacked by the same weapon by another nation. Just this awareness alone has seen the restraining in the use of such weapons after the Japan incident.

More has been done and continues to be done also in the world of intelligence, all in an effort to outwit perceived and potential enemies. While there are countless varieties of weapons in each nation's armory and some nations even claiming to be superpowers, they cannot just strike any other nation anyhow because of the very realization itself that the targeted nation may equally be prepared, having or is capable of being supplied, for example, with the same kind of long range missiles. Such a realization has restrained, for example, North Korea from attacking South Korea and vice versa, it has restrained Israel from attacking Iran despite the exchange of threats at times, it has also restrained the United States of America from imposing its will on nations like Russia or China and so many other examples. This acceptance of realities has helped

maintain relative peace in the world and one would assume that if all African states were capacitated to the full in terms of military strength then we would hopefully see less and less of conflicts on the African soil. Even those powerful nations which usually sponsor violence in Africa would restrain from doing that on the knowledge that they would be attacked in the same way.

Even internal conflicts would eventually become a thing of the past also. An indicator that even internal conflicts would likely cease when people uphold 'eye for an eye' is the case of what took place in some parts of Zimbabwe during the election campaigns of 2000. In the Matsika area of Makoni District, for example, Zanu PF youths were alleged to target MDC activists in the area and burning down their huts but when the MDC youths began also to target and burn those Zanu PF activists' huts there was relative peace in the area. Similar lessons can also be drawn from the case of the avenging spirit of Chokuda in Gokwe. As the story is told, it was only after two years and seven months that the remains of the murdered MDC - T activist Moses Chokuda were buried following years of his spirit lingering around seeking justice and vengeance. Commenting on the

battle fought by Chokuda, the headman, Kally Mashizha said that 'the battle waged by Chokuda, although long and painful, was necessary and would teach people in Gokwe the sanctity of human life' (Mashizha cited in NewsDay, 2011). Such a stand-off of equal forces helps to calm the political tempers as both sides realize that each side is equally capable of causing harm.

An unfortunate scenario would be when one side is disarmed and incapacitated while the other is armed to the teeth through the help of the state machinery. What such situations would only manage to accomplish would be the suppression of conflict but not the resolution of it and surely one day its ugly teeth would come out regardless of the years spent trying to suppress it. Unless people feel fully compensated for the loss of their dear ones, it would be difficult to imagine them forgetting and just forgiving the perpetrators of harm who brought loss and excruciating pain to their families. As argued before, the main aim of evoking the 'eye for an eye' principle as part of the peace building process would not be to pursue selfish interests which would result in the spilling of more blood but rather to compensate in a more satisfactory manner for every harm that would have been caused so that there can be lasting peace.

## Conclusion

Africa has for long been associated with much suffering and the greater percentage of this suffering is conflict related. Something which needs to be appreciated, however, is that there is a general reduction in the number of armed conflicts in Africa, thanks to the mediation efforts by regional leaders with the help at times of the international community. While there has been a general decline one major challenge in Africa is the recurrence of such conflicts. It would appear the mediation efforts which have resulted in the signing of various peace treaties are failing to strike the last blow that would result in the complete resolution to such conflicts. It is against this background that this paper has advocated the revoking of the 'eye for an eye' principle as a mechanism that would enhance the peace building process. The aim would not be a self-interest purging of the society of all those who committed various crimes but rather to compensate in full those who suffered the effects of violence. The realization that the other is equally capable of causing the same harm to the one who is causing harm usually acts as a neutralizer or a deterrent measure to any possible violence. While it might be good to acknowledge that some of those who commit acts of violence may simply be instruments and having nothing to pay back with, the principle of 'eye for

an eye' should also be seen as lesson to them that they need to learn to say 'NO' at times and not to be used to commit acts of violence just because someone bought them a crate of beer.

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