

Muse Ganjab: Al-Shabaab facilitator or SEMG target?

I read with great interest today Muse Ganjab's article in his attempt to regain his dignity as a decent law-abiding Somali (<http://www.geeskaafrika.com/eritrea-in-response-to-un-monitoring-group-on-somalia/6023/>). A refreshing article that departs from the usual incoherent Somali rant against the United Nations and in particular, SEMG. It's both thoughtful and carefully crafted but still has the obvious whiff of a ghostwriter penning a rebuttal against SEMG or should one cheekily say against Jarat Chopra Somalia's latest bête noire. Personally, I see no shame in what Ganjab has done in hiring a ghostwriter (or legal firm). His rationale was to get his message across about his alleged relations with Al-Shabaab. He should be applauded for the effort. My only concern is Ganjab may not be thinking this through his defense or using the appropriate avenues to clear his "good" name. Here are some questions Ganjab should ponder over:

First, why has HSM publicly disavowed Ganjab? According to media reports, HSM has denied that Ganjab was ever a presidential adviser in his government. If true, it's quite troubling and warrants further investigation not only by SEMG but we Somalis. Many Somalis, especially the "Mogadishu and Nairobi crowd" are fully aware that Ganjab was a presidential adviser and had enjoyed very close to HSM. Ganjab himself made no secret of his role under HSM during the early days, especially to the Somali business community as part of the one-upmanship that exists in the business fraternity.

More important, and one that makes matters rather bizarre was that Ganjab had frequently traveled as part of HSM's presidential entourage on foreign trips. All one has to do is look at Facebook accounts to see Ganjab lined up with others on the presidential entourage. Yes, all this is very peculiar but the key question is, why would HSM suddenly disavow and distance himself from Ganjab? What does HSM know about his former adviser that many Somali are not sure of yet? One can only speculate but some have claimed HSM has recently uncovered unpalatable secrets about Ganjab's past and his associates. Mindful this is all part of the Somali rumour mill but whatever one believes there must be a damning reason for HSM to public disavow Ganjab. After all, as one commentator recently put it, HSM is loyal to his friends (but apparently not Ganjab).

Second, most law-abiding Somalis tend to steer away from Al-Shabaab or Al-Shabaab-linked associates and entities. Ganjab seems to differ. Within our community it's an open secret about Ganjab's relations with the remittance company Bakaal in Dubai. Bakaal has long been linked to Al-Shabaab, especially the Dubai office. In Ganjab's defense it could be his relations with Bakaal in Dubai are purely business-related and he has no idea of Bakaal's reported links to Al-Shabaab. If so, one needs to give Ganjab a pass. The question is, was the SEMG ready to overlook this, and this form part of SEMG's opinion about Ganjab?

Third, it stands to reason if ones name has been defamed the best course of action (provided one is innocent), is to seek legal redress. For Ganjab it's easy and would be the most effective pushback against SEMG. Ganjab reported to hold a Canadian passport. If so, he should be amenable to exploiting the excellent legal system in Canada to seek a lawsuit against the United Nations (okay SEMG and Jarat Chopra).

In deliberately avoiding to use the appropriate avenues for redress Ganjab presents his critics and those that peddle rumours to actually believe the allegations made by SEMG, that he has links to Al-Shabaab and had engaged in corrupt transactions with senior Somali officials. A telling example is the current rumour among the Somali business community in Johannesburg in relation to Ganjab:

The rumour is that SEMG and Jarat Chopra have misunderstood Ganjab's relations with Al-Shabaab. Apparently, Ganjab was asked by a Southern African intelligence service whose government has close relations with Eritrea to act as an intermediary in its approach to Al-Shabaab. Some claim Ganjab has and continues to have access to some senior Al-Shabaab members who are from his sub-clan. The rumor (and I stress rumour) further goes that it was in this role (as an intermediary) that Ganjab may have got tangled up in an operation that probably saw him facilitating certain items for Al-Shabaab with the approval of this intelligence service.

All this is reminiscence of a beguiling plot out of the TV series Homeland. Did SEMG and Jarat Chopra know about Ganjab's reported work on Al-Shabaab for this African intelligence service? The truth is we don't know and may never know. For obvious reasons one can hardly expect Ganjab to disclose this as part of his defense nor would it be right for SEMG to expose this if true. However, this still leaves us with the corruption allegations, which in my view are much stronger.

In the end, Ganjab should hold on to the comfort that SEMG has no prosecutorial or enforcement powers but is merely a technical body that reports to the United Nations Security Council. Where Ganjab should be worried if the allegations made by SEMG are true is that, one can only imagine him being arrested unexpectedly like Afweyne another Somali who professed to be innocent and a nation-builder but now seems clear he was beyond guilty. In any case, I would urge

Ganjab to reflect on what he has done wrong or not and take the legal route to clear his name. Having ones day in court is a good thing.

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