

Zambia politicians don't get it—response to a blogger

by Sitwala Imenda

I am responding to one of the blogs published in the Barotse Post, which reacted to my article on “Zambian politicians don't get it” that was published in the <http://bnfa.info> website on June 17, 2014. Under normal circumstances I don't respond to blogs and comments that are written anonymously, by faceless individuals. As I have said elsewhere before, replying to faceless individuals is like engaging in shadow-boxing, or boxing with a ghost (sipukupuku). However, I am doing this to honour my right to reply, which everyone has, whenever something has been said about them, particularly using the same forum. For readers who may not have seen the blog, I reproduce it below:

“Professor, Are u not ashamed that you and your organization are some of the people who are still frustrating the efforts and advances already achieved in Barotseland? You are still refusing to accept the government in place that has achieved so much. Just keep quite if you don't have anything to say. Don't mislead people. I can't say much but I just want to let you know that I am a Lozi who is not attached to any of these parties but is following developments as an independent thinker following evidence as it occurs. For the sake of hastening the Barotseland goal, just swallow your pride with your Sinyinda group and join others in quickening the independence of Barotseland.”

In short, the main assertion in this blog is that, I and my Sinyinda group should be ashamed of ourselves for being “*some of the people who are still frustrating the efforts and advances already achieved in Barotseland*”. The sad thing is that this comment has come from a Lozi “*who is not attached to any of these parties but is following developments as an independent thinker following evidence as it occurs*”. In other words, this person is so concerned about the affairs of Barotseland that s/he has chosen to be a **spectator** and an **arm-chair critic/commentator**, in the midst of all the suffering and turmoil occasioned upon the people of Barotseland by the foreign, Zambian occupying military force—what an irony of circumstances. On that account alone, I just wonder how we should seriously take this individual, especially that s/he is operating anonymously—afraid to be identified and be held responsible to account for her/his beliefs and actions. As quoted above, the person states that s/he is “*an independent thinker following evidence as it occurs*”. I wonder what evidence this person has collected, which has led her/him to the conclusion that we are “*frustrating the efforts and advances already achieved in Barotseland!*”

The evidence in front of me shows a complete different story. It shows that it is Sinyinda and his group as the Ngambela of Barotseland then and now as leader of the Barotse National Freedom Alliance who:

- (a) wrote to the Zambian government in May 2012 notifying it of the resolutions of the Barotse National Council (BNC) of March 27, 2012, and formerly declared a dispute between Barotseland and Zambia, on account of the latter's termination of the Barotseland Agreement 1964, and subsequent illegal occupation of Barotseland;
- (b) applied to the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation (UNPO) for membership and paid the \$2,200 application fee—of which membership was finally granted in November 2013;
- (c) have recently paid the UNPO annual membership fee of \$2,200;

- (d) petitioned the African Commission for Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR) for a ruling that Zambia's occupation of Barotseland is illegal and to, therefore, vacate the territory immediately. We are anxiously waiting for an imminent outcome of this petition;
- (e) have procured the services of international legal representatives who recently sent a letter of demand to the Zambian government to voluntarily append their signature to the invitation to have the Barotseland impasse resolved permanently and peacefully through the services of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in the Hague; and
- (f) have caused world-wide attention to the matter of Barotseland through media coverage on platforms such as Channel Africa, ETV, Al Jazeera, Jeune Afrique, and Muvi TV.

It is not good to appear to be bragging about one's achievements, but when ignorance appears to have overwhelmed some people, as in this case now, one is justified to do so. These are some of the notable achievements of the Sinyinda group, while we await further developments in other areas that cannot be mentioned at this stage for obvious reasons. The Sinyinda group has a name. It is called the Barotse National Freedom Alliance. Self-deception and self-laceration are deadly games to engage in. However, if you were simply genuinely ignorant of the achievements of the Barotse National Freedom Alliance at least you're now in the know and, hopefully, you'll behave like a proper *independent thinker following evidence as it occurs*.

The assertion that we "are still refusing to accept the government in place that has achieved so much" needs to be addressed because it is not coming for the first time. In a nutshell, this is an empty statement. The only government that is **in place** in Barotseland is the illegitimate Zambian government in view of the termination of the Barotseland Agreement 1964. It is common knowledge that successive illegal Zambian governments have brought unprecedented poverty and highest unemployment levels, turning one of the most flourish region into the most impoverished. Or, have I missed something which "other" government **is in place** in Barotseland outside the Barotse Royal Establish that is reluctant to take its position? Which is this "other" government? Where are the offices of this "other" government, and which civil servants work for this "other" government? Where can Barotse nationals find them to access service delivery or employment opportunities? Why do we have the illegal Zambia Army and Zambia Police littered all over Barotseland, instead of the armed forces and police working for this "other" government? What are the major achievements attributable to this, ostensibly admirable "other" government that we should all accept? Is this the government that has recently installed two traffic lights atop dilapidated road infrastructure and undertaking substandard road works on two roads that does not come to an end in Mungu? The whole spectacle is deceitful, a big inconvenience to the residents and visitors, and looks like desperate act of a mad man? Which "other" government are we talking about?

Certainly, had there been a properly constituted government in Barotseland, its presence would have been self-evident and there would have been no need to ask all these questions. The fact of the matter is that we're not there yet. Let's not fool ourselves, once we have arrived there will be many indicators to show us that we have, indeed, arrived: there will be a popularly enacted national Constitution; the Litunga will be our Head of State with a government run by a popularly elected Head of Government, assisted by Ministers drawn from a pool of popularly elected public representatives; there will be a Barotse Army and a

friendly Barotse Police; our own Currency; foreign embassies and High Commissions; physical premises from which the government would be operating; Barotse civil servants, etc.

So please Ms./Mr. Blogger, stop deluding yourself that, as we speak today, there is a legitimate government in Barotseland, unless of course you are overwhelmed by an acute case of some form of overmastering delusion. The kind we see in the story of "The Emperor's New Clothes", who was tricked by some magicians that they could make him a special suit which could only be seen by the wise (Probably to help him identify the wise from among his people and counsellors). As these magicians set about to do their task after securing the tender, the Emperor and his counsellors could not see the material they were working with but would not ask so for fear of being classed as unwise. The delusion held sway until the day the Emperor paraded himself supposedly clad in that magic suit for all to see when one youth exclaimed that he could not see the Emperor's new clothes and as far as he was concerned the Emperor was strutting around and about stuck naked, that's when the veil of deception fell from everyone's eyes. Once again there is no legitimate Barotse government to talk about in Barotseland at the moment. So don't be fooled, deceived or deluded. When the real Barotse government that the people yearn for is put in place, IT WILL BE SEEN BY ALL. No one will need to be told about it. *Kuikapula kapai fa meto*. Instead of looking from a distance, as a spectator and arm-chair critic, we need you to work with us if at all, you're really a concerned and patriotic daughter/son of the Barotse soil.