



Urgent Call for Intervention to Avert Genocide on the People of Tigray in Ethiopia

**Your Excellency Mr. Heiko Maas,
Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany**

As you may already know, international civil war has erupted in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. What started as a political and constitutional crisis in Ethiopian politics has now, sadly, escalated into full-fledged regional war. Tigray is being attacked by Ethiopia Federal Government defense forces, Amhara national region state special troops and militia, and Eritrean national defense forces. To make matters worse, we learned from an official in Tigray that United Arab Emirates drones from the Assab military base in Eritrea are also involved in the war.

While we are aware and very much appreciative of Germany's position in this devastating situation, we also think that Germany could put more pressure to halt the devastating civil war and genocide on the people of Tigray. As a longtime friend and development ally of Ethiopia, Germany's role in creating peace in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa is of paramount importance. Additionally, we believe that Germany could intensify actionable pressure by leveraging its economic and political influence to bring the parties to an all-inclusive national dialogue.

The Federal government has prevented independent reporting of the situation by keeping millions of people in the region in total communications (internet, phones etc.) blackout. Thus, to help you obtain an understanding of the grave situation from Tigrayans perspective, we would like to draw your attention to the following core points.

1. Genocide on the people of Tigray¹

Over the last two and half years, Ethiopian media outlets have been extremely polarized. State media have been airing hate speech, genocidal incitement, dehumanization and other similar sorts of reporting, mainly targeting the people of Tigray. This has been intensified since the war broke out. For example, on November 10, General Bacha Debele², a retired general who is now back in service in one of the war fronts, appeared on national Tv to make a very intense verbal and body language to dehumanize "*Tigrigna speakers*" describing us as "**evils that deserve to go to hell**" which is tantamount to calling genocide by enticing Ethiopians of other ethnic origin to see Tigrayans as traitors, killers, and people of crime character. It is to be remembered that the prime minister himself has in the past used "**የቀን ጅቦች** Amharic for **daylight hyenas**", "**ፀጉረ ልውጦች** Amharic for **strangers/others**", and other sensitive and dehumanizing terms to characterize Tigrayans. Furthermore, civil, military, police and other officers of Tigrayan origin in the federal government of Ethiopia have either been arrested or told to stay at home. This profiling and expulsion measures have expanded to Ethiopian diplomatic missions and international organizations including the African Union and United Nations³. We have multiple sources at hand that Tigrayans in Addis Ababa are being racially profiled, and their houses are being color marked. We have learned from reliable sources that there are concentration camps in Addis Ababa, Afar, Arbaminch, and Adama areas. There could be many others that we do not know yet, especially in the Amhara region.

Furthermore, there are multiple indicators that severe war crimes against humanity could be taking place. Armed civilians from Amhara are said to be occupying the western part of Tigray, wiping out residents. What happened in Mai-Kadra is a tragedy that must be strongly condemned, and investigated by neutral and independent international bodies. News stories from refugees in Sudan tell a totally different perspective contrary to what Ethiopian Human Rights organization has recently reported, that actually Tigrayans have been massacred by Amhara armed civilians. Additionally, as the war intensifies on the southern part of Mekelle, on Sunday November 22, 2020 Col. Dejene Tsegaye of the federal

¹ <https://rb.gy/1ddsug>

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7PUQrrgWlo>

³ <https://cutt.ly/ahdods6>

army told more than 500,000 residents of the city to “**save themselves**” or face tank and artillery attacks “**without mercy**” after giving the 72hr ultimatum⁴. The deadline is over now and the prime minister has publicly announced that he has ordered the military of the federal government to go ahead with the operation despite international calls for immediate de-escalation and humanitarian access⁵. Mekelle is a densely populated city, and the currently identified target locations announced on national Tv by the Federal government are in the heart of the city includes civilian infrastructure (e.g., Mesobo cement factory, Dimtsi Weyane Radio and Tv station, Noble Hotel etc.) and heritage sites (e.g., Emperor Yohannes palace, Abreha Atsibaha monastery, etc.)⁶. Thus, we urge the German government to put pressure to halt the ongoing tragedy. Additionally, the government of Ethiopia is heavily engaged in making the people believe that the TPLF is planning for mass massacre in Mekelle⁷. Having observed past trends, we take this as a very serious alarm of the government’s plan to massacre civilians and blame the TPLF for it.

We urge all international actors to apply Responsibility to Protect – R2P - the people of Tigray against genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. The federal government equipped with sophisticated artillery has not shown responsibility to protect the civilians. We appeal to the German government to go beyond verbal condemnation and leverage its capacity to save about 7 million civilians in the Tigray region.

2. Subjugation of the people of Tigray for holding a just and constitutional election

In early 2018, Ethiopia entered into a much-hoped transition that was welcomed by all Ethiopians, especially Tigrayans, since we hoped that it would end the racial targeting that started long ago but was intensified in 2016 showcased by displacement of thousands of Tigrayans from other regions in Ethiopia. PM Abiy Ahmed received a very warm welcome on his first visit to Mekelle – the capital city of Tigray. However, Tigrayans started to doubt his intentions after he made offensive language to describe Tigrayan freedom fighters in his speech to Ethiopian diaspora in the USA. This was followed by selective arrest of Tigrayan civilian, security and military officers. Furthermore, per the constitution, Ethiopia was supposed to conduct a national election in August 2020. However, PM Abiy Ahmed indefinitely delayed it on the pretext of Covid-19. Prior to this, Abiy Ahmed had dissolved the **constitutionally elected EPRDF coalition party** and formed a new **unelected Prosperity Party** in December 2019. Tigray continued to run its own election in September 2020 by respecting the constitution on which **more than 2.7 million people casted their votes**. Out of the five contesting parties, the TPLF won by a landslide. The demolition of the EPRDF and indefinite postponement of the national election eventually created a huge constitutional crisis that led to the current all-out war. PM Abiy Ahmed wanted to subjugate Tigray **for standing on its firm stance to undertake the election**, which is enshrined as a core pillar of the Ethiopian constitution. He wanted to replace the constitutionally elected government of Tigray by unelected authorities. Further, in the beginning of October 2020, PM Abiy Ahmed’s administration announced that it has **cut the annual budget to Tigray**, including subsistence funding from international donors to people in Tigray who rely on it for daily meals. All development projects in Tigray that are funded by the federal government of Ethiopia have been halted. Alarmed by the worsening situation, on October 26, 2020 president Debretsion Gebremichael of the regional state of Tigray wrote an appeal to about 70 leaders of the world to intervene and mediate to bring all involved parties into an all-inclusive peaceful dialogue to avert a possible clash. That clash has become a sad reality now.

3. Invasion of semi-sovereign Tigray state

Ethiopian constitution empowers regional national states to have territorial integrity under the federal framework. As such, regional states are semi-sovereign and they have the right to defend aggressions.

⁴ <https://cutt.ly/FhdolVu>

⁵ <https://twitter.com/AbiyAhmedAli/status/1331853743810285575>

⁶ https://twitter.com/meazaG_/status/1331968166768111618

⁷ <https://twitter.com/addisstandard/status/1331894441284612096>

What the Ethiopian federal defense forces, Amhara regional state special troops and militia, and Eritrean national defense forces are doing is a clear invasion of the territorial integrity of Tigray. **What Tigray is doing is self-defense.** The involvement of Eritrea in invading Tigray on its northern and eastern sides and the ironic collusion of the Ethiopian federal government with Eritrean forces to attack a regional state which is part of its federation is shameful and deeply worrying for Ethiopia's future. Contrary to its actions now, the Ethiopian national defense force is mandated by the constitution to safeguard the Ethiopian territorial integrity against any external aggression. After the invasion, we learned that Eritrean forces have looted civilian assets and machineries in factories, for example, the Almeda Textile factory.

4. Escalating regional/international conflict

The civil war and aggression on Tigray is a recipe for disaster to the Horn of Africa region and international security at large. The Horn of Africa region is an already volatile region with extremists such as Al Shebab in its close proximity. And what is happening now creates a fertile ground to terrorist organizations to take foot. Now, Eritrea and UAE are involved in the war and this escalation worsens the situation and complicates peaceful means of resolving the crisis. The disintegration of Ethiopia will definitely threaten the horn of Africa, and by extension all nearby regions and the world at large.

5. Mass displacement

The war has already resulted in a massive humanitarian crisis. Multiple reports show that more than 40,000 Tigrayans have fled to Sudan risking their lives. *"I saw women giving birth on the road, but then continuing to walk because they feared the Ethiopian soldiers would kill them."* Roni Gezergil said to media⁸. We are aware of war crimes committed on Tigrayans by the Amhara militia and Ethiopian defense forces in the western part of Tigray⁹. UNICEF¹⁰ reported that about 2.3 million children are in urgent need of assistance and thousands more are at risk in refugee camps. Intermittent reports from within Tigray say that more than 1.3 million people are internally displaced. UNFPA Sudan has identified that five Tigrayan women were raped by Ethiopian military forces¹¹. Furthermore, Ethiopian defense forces have recently started halting refugees from entering to Sudan. UNHCR report¹² showed the number of refugees arriving in Sudan has dropped from **6815 on November 5**, to **718 on November 25**. This dropping number while the crisis has escalated is alarming to breach of refugees' rights to flee to safe places. If Germany along with the international community does not step-up efforts to preserve refugees' rights, this will be an under-reported human tragedy in modern times.

6. Violation of fundamental human rights in Tigray by the federal government

Since the declaration of the war by the federal government of Ethiopia on November 4, public services such as electricity, telephone, internet, banking, federal roads, and others remain closed. This aggravates an already grave situation of food security, which was hit by the devastating desert locust, compounded by the projected drought in the Tigray national regional state in 2021. The multi-donor-funded Productive Safety Net Program on which more than 1 million people in Tigray depend for food aid; has been interrupted. The cut off international aids during this war has also already impacted large segments of the population, affected by Covid-19 pandemic, HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria, who are now deprived of access to life-saving treatments and medicines, donated by the global community. These decisions aim at suffocating the people of Tigray by depriving them of the fundamental right to existence (denying food supply), and communications.

⁸ <https://rb.gy/elpyop>

⁹ shorturl.at/oAYZ8

¹⁰ rb.gy/ttybp1

¹¹ https://twitter.com/max_f_diana/status/1329496946382434308

¹² <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/dataviz/144>

7. The war is on dismantling the Ethiopian multinational federation in favor of a monochrome system

Looking at it at a bigger scale, the war in Ethiopia is a complex political war. The main difference is as to how the Ethiopian state should be governed. It is political because at the core of this civil war, are two main contrasting political forces in Ethiopia; namely the unitarist and federalist forces. The unitarist camp wants to create a monochrome Ethiopia where close to 80 nations and nationalities are assimilated to speak one language, and perhaps one religion too. Whereas the federalist forces adhere to a multinational federalist system in which nations and nationalities are allowed to exercise their culture, language, and self-rule. PM Abiy Ahmed Ali belongs to the unitarist camp while the Tigray national regional state firmly believes in multinational federalism. The Tigrayans, Oromos, Afar, Southerners and the rest of nationalities support the multinational federal system. It is important to note that PM Abiy Ahmed who disguises as an Oromo, first started dismantling federalist forces in the Oromo national regional state. Almost all key political figures of Oromo are either put behind bars on unfounded allegations related to the assassination of an Oromo singer-activist Hachalu Hundesa who was gun shot in Addis Ababa (e.g., Jawar Mohammed, Bekele Gerba, etc.), or they are confined to house arrest. Many in Ethiopia consider these series of steps taken by the Federal government as a means to consolidate a hegemonic power. Still, PM Abiy Ahmed is wrongly portrayed in many media as if he represents the Oromo federalist cause, which he abandoned a long time ago.

To summarize, we would like to urge the German government to exert efforts to

1. do everything possible in your power to stop the catastrophic war crime and genocide in the Tigray region of Ethiopia
2. help stop subjugating, shelling and bombing of civilians in the Tigray Region
3. put maximum pressure on the federal government of Ethiopia to allow humanitarian corridor without any precondition.
4. reconnect Tigray urgently by restoring telephone and internet services
5. do everything possible in your capacity to reopen banking, fuel, food, and medical supplies – which are interrupted by the Ethiopian federal government.
6. establish a neutral and independent investigating mechanisms on the atrocities in the Tigray region

Finally, we strongly believe that an all-inclusive peaceful dialogue is the only viable solution to revert the crisis. In this regard, we strongly appeal to the German government to play its critical role to enforce immediate cease-fire of all forms of hostilities and urgently commence an all-inclusive national dialogue for a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

Thank you for doing your utmost in reverting an ongoing tragedy of genocide on the people of Tigray.

With hopeful and kindest regards,

- Global Society of Tigray Scholars (GSTS)
- Alliance of Tigray Associations in Diaspora (ATAD)
- Tigray-Äthiopischer Verein in Deutschland e.V.
- Entwicklungsinitiative für Tigray in Deutschland e.V.
- Äthiopische Gemeinder der Kriegsgeschädigte in Deutschland e.V.
- Tigray Frauen Verein in Deutschland e.V.
- Ethiopisches selbsthilfe Verein in Hessen
- Tigray Kultur Verein in Deutschland e.V.