

THE GLOBAL SOCIETY OF TIGREAN SCHOLARS (GSTS)

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PRESS STATEMENT ON THE CONDITION OF MOB VIOLENCE AGAINST TIGREAN AND OTHER ETHIOPIAN CITIZENS

The Global Society of Tigrean Scholars (GSTS) vehemently condemns the ongoing mob violence targeting innocent Tigrean and other Ethiopian citizens living in different parts of the Ethiopian regional state of Oromia, particularly in Metu, Nekemte, and several other places. The violence has resulted in numerous deaths, loss of assets, and forced displacement of several innocent victims. However, government authorities across both regional and federal sectors are, ostensibly, unable to halt the carnage and are taking inadequate measures to hold the responsible parties accountable. While the violence has been driven by incessant and unfounded hate campaigns via state owned mainstream news, cable, and social media outlets, (as also stated in a letter sent to EBC authorities by the Tigrean regional government communication bureau on 20/02/2010, No. 1948/12/10), the current situation has escalated to a state of lawlessness in several parts of the country, thereby furthering the outstanding atrocities against Tigreans. Although exact details on the casualties remain unknown, and have been under/unreported by official media networks, social media reports have shown that the number of deaths and casualties are increasing while efforts to restore peace and order remain very weak. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that the atrocities against innocent civilians are either underestimated or deliberately ignored by the Oromia regional government. The Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), the party in charge of the Oromia regional state administration, has continued to fault non-Oromo ethnic groups for the region's internal problems. Using media outlets in its jurisdiction, the party is producing and spreading hate speech and rhetoric against non-Oromo ethnic groups, escalating the current situation.

We use this opportunity to categorically state and highlight that the root cause of the hate mongering atrocities towards Tigreans lies on the silence of the government when deafening unfounded claims such as “Let Tigray develop at the expense of others”, “Tigray is Paris”, and “Tigray is the sole beneficiary”, which were incessantly propagated in all directions without the slightest shred of evidence. With all the media outlets in its control, we feel, the federal government has failed not only in exposing these lies that thrived during the course of two decades of defamation but also its indifference to holding responsible bodies accountable.

As members of GSTS, we are appalled by the lack of interest that the federal government has shown to intervene and protect innocent civilians whose lives are being endangered by the grim situation in the aforementioned localities. The Federal government has both the responsibility and an obligation to protect every civilian throughout the country, regardless of his/her ethnic identity, socio-economic status, or religious affiliation. Despite its constitutional obligation, the Federal government has not illustrated a clear position with regard to what is happening to Ethiopian citizens as a collective, and more specifically to our fellow Tigrean brothers and sisters living and studying in Oromia region. We consider this lack of regard as a complete disregard to the people's human and democratic rights stipulated in the constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the international conventions to which Ethiopia is a part of it. Furthermore, we consider this degree of negligence as no less than an outright approval of the anti-Tigrean mob violence, which by implication poses a clear and

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present threat to the peace and security of the nation at large. Therefore, we kindly demand the federal government to listen to the grievances of the people affected by the consequences of the mob violence and the aggressors so as to set a long-lasting solution to sustainably eliminate the onset of similar conflicts in the future.

In the same token of disappointment, we are also baffled by the silence of the Tigray regional government. While it is clear that the victims of the brutal mob violence are suffering because of their identity, it is disheartening that the party and government that represents them is slow in acting towards the protection of the innocent civilians. Over the course of several months, arguably years when examined deeply, campaigns triggering hate against ethnic Tigreans have developed and incited violence. However, we are amazed that the regional government of Tigray has not, at the very least, been able to proactively update its people about the situation and undertake efforts to protect the victims. We would like to stress that the victims are innocent, and have been unjustly targeted because they are considered to be representatives of the ruling political party, against which the Oromo protestors have expressed grievances towards. Hence, we call on the Tigray regional government and Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) party to take meaningful actions and thereby advocate and enforce their constitutional mandate to rescue our fellow brothers and sisters living under conditions of insurmountable brutality.

Being that time is of the essence, we call on the Oromia regional government to stop mass arrests, defamation, and labeling, while at the same time intensifying their efforts to swiftly restore peace in the destabilized parts of the country. GSTS urgently calls federal government authorities to conduct independent and impartial investigations into any complaints of alleged human rights violations committed in the context of the ongoing mob violence, bring the perpetrators to justice, and provide support for the victims. In an effort to address the dire problems and sustainably restore, peace and security on the ground, GSTS expresses its willingness and readiness to stand with the federal and regional governments of Ethiopia in whatever way possible.

In the meantime, we are also calling on our fellow Tigrean and other Ethiopian scholars, both at home and abroad, to join hands with GSTS in our endeavor to advocate and plead on behalf of our people, who at this time, are leading a miserable, hopeless, and dreadful life under the ethnically inspired mob violence in the Oromia region of Ethiopia. We call upon you and count on you to express your solidarity with our people using your connections and networks in the international arena and within your local socio-economic and political sphere, so that the carnage will be stopped, and peace and order will prevail in our country.

Last, but not least, we send our prayers to those who lost their lives during this turmoil time and our condolences to the bereaved families.

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