



Global Society of Tigrean Scholars (GSTS)

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PUBLIC STATEMENT

Alarming ethnic based attacks and targeted killings of civilians in Ethiopia

We, the members of the Global Society of Tigrean Scholars (GSTS),¹ are saddened to learn the targeted killings of university students and civilians in various parts of the country. We immediately and unequivocally condemn these killings, and any physical assaults, and we urge all government bodies to swiftly ensure the safety and security of all students and civilians in all parts of the country and conduct fair and impartial investigations on the perpetrators of such heinous attacks to face justice.

GSTS further urges the international community, in particular the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the African Union (AU), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Federal Government of Ethiopia, and the Regional States of Ethiopia to stop, investigate, and address the resurgence of killings and serious human rights violations and abuses perpetrated on Ethiopians from various ethnic groups, and the targeted killings of Ethiopians of Tigray origin in various parts of the country. It is to be recalled that there have been mob killings and massive displacement of people across several regional states, primarily in the Amhara, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples, Oromia, Benishangul Gumuz, and Gambella Regional States.

On the 26th of May 2019, a mob of students in Debre Markos University barbarically stoned to death, Seare Abraha, a student at the same university. This happened not only within the campus but also in proximity to the office of the University President. All media reports indicate that he was targeted and cruelly killed because of his ethnicity as a Tigrean. In Gambella, on the 29th of May 2019 two Tigreans were shot and killed while at work. As of now, none of the assailants are apprehended. On 5th of June 2019, Yohannes Masresha, a student at Aksum University of non-Tigrean

¹GSTS is a Global Knowledge Network of Tigrean Scholars and Professionals with a central mission to enhance excellence in research, innovation and teaching in Tigray and beyond. Its main aim is to fight against destitution through education, research and innovation. It aspires to contribute to excellence in higher education, problem-solving research and related issues within the setting of a more democratic academic culture.

origin was killed by another student at the same university in an ethnic-based attack. GSTS mourns the deaths and share the grief with the victims' family.

The circumstances that surround these killings are all alarming and peculiar. In the both cases, the victims were killed by a mob of university students in a federally run university campus with the presence of 24-hour security services. The tragic events illuminate that ease to which a campus could be turned into barbaric mob killing place. In the case of the other victims, the two men were shot by gunmen as they were transporting students to school. A commonly shared element among these victims is their ethnic origin. Furthermore, students are not safe at their workplace and educational facilities, nor can they expect security forces to protect them.

These cruel killings are not the first, but rather an addition to the hundreds of attacks on Ethiopians based on their ethnicity. It is also to be recalled that similar mobs have attacked students in several universities, and other places like Tana Beles in the Amhara Regional State. However, it is not surprising given the intensity and viciousness of anti-Tigrean attacks that are on the rise. For the past few years, the extremist views of political leaders and media outlets have emboldened ethnic hate attacks and growing anti-Tigrean rhetoric that demonizes the entire Tigray community. These, and previous vicious attacks on Tigreans, are the direct culmination of the campaigns carried out against Tigreans for a long time. Media outlets like ESAT have broadcasted vile 'Nazi-like' propaganda against the entire Tigray community, which have crossed the line into public calls for attack with genocidal intentions.² As a consequence, killings, physical attacks, verbal abuses, and the intimidation based on ethnicity are unfortunate daily occurrences in Ethiopia. In many university campuses, students are denied the safety and security to carry out their daily life and have their rights for association and speech curtailed.

The Amhara Regional State did not only fail to investigate and stop such attacks, but its security bodies have also actually endorsed and supported them. The Regional State of Amhara and other regional states are demonstrably guilty of unspeakable atrocities and grave human rights violations against Tigreans, both recently and in the past. All Regional States and Universities have not come clean and clear on what actual measures they are taking to stop this brutality against Tigreans and other ethnic communities in the region. The same is true of the Oromia and Gambella Regional States. Given the inability or unwillingness of these Regional States to investigate and hold the perpetrators accountable, there is no credible or effective alternative except for the Federal Government to launch a comprehensive investigation into these killings. The Tigray Regional State need to immediately

² The link to a video clip of the news from ESAT that was broadcasted calling its followers to attack on Tigrean community and Tigray. The news connotes a message of genocidal intent on behalf of ESAT. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iKEgAQhXqAs&has_verified=1

investigate, prosecute and announce publicly the outcomes of the fair and impartial investigation and prosecution the recent killing in Aksum University.

Some officials of the Federal Government and other regional states have denied the existence of ethnically targeted attacks. However, blanket denials or cover-ups of such wrongdoings are not going to be helpful for the nation's peace and security, nor do they assist in furthering the dialogue for stabilization.

GSTS expects that such episodes of ethnic attacks are quickly dealt with and publicly condemned by the Federal Government, Regional States, and the International Community, particularly the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and embassies residing in Addis Ababa, the AU, and IGAD, which still remain in self-imposed censorship.

Therefore, GSTS urgently calls the Federal Government and the International Community, particularly the UN Human Rights Council, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the AU, and the IGAD to take the following measures:

1. To officially and publicly denounce such demonization and mob killing immediately. We expect that the International Community to lift its self-imposed- censorship and urge the Federal Government to take the necessary steps to prevent violence, killings, threats of violence, harassment, and intimidation;
2. To urge the Federal Government to focus on the protection of all citizens and students from physical and psychological attacks, and to urgently work with the Regional State of Tigray to guarantee the safety and security of Tigrean university students and inhabitants in various parts of the country;
3. To call upon the Regional State of Tigray to take all measures necessary to ensure the safety and security of university students in the region, and facilitate the protection of Tigrean university students in other parts of the country.

GSTS calls for the establishment of UN-mandated international (hybrid) commission of inquiry for all human rights violations in all parts of the country to help ensure justice and accountability.

We would also like to emphasize that at such critical and difficult juncture in Ethiopia's history, a UN-mandated commission may significantly contribute to pacification of the country and preventing further atrocities.

Global Leadership, GSTS

5 June 2019