

## **Do No Harm - Oath we can't justify ignoring during a civil war**

Mulu Gettaw, Dec 25, 2020

Do No Harm is the oath many of us in the health workforce took though it applies broadly to any profession. Individuals as well as the organizations they collectively belong to have the obligation not only to respect the oath but to defend it too. I believe that civic organizations have a higher responsibility to prevent their platforms from becoming ground for promoting anti this oath. Unfortunately, many of the posts in '**Ethiopian civic organization**' platforms are promoting war, the number one cause of morbidity and mortality, through weird justification of '**just war**' and **law enforcement**. I have observed what seems to be full endorsement by leadership of some of these Ethiopian non-profit organizations for such '**give war a chance**' voices. The permission given by the admins of the mailing lists and social platforms to provide an open medium to many hateful messages and propoganda which includes targeting of members of their own organizations who have Tigray roots is disheartening at best and dereliction of duty at worst. The unhinged callousness seems to have run deep among some and is now in the open creating equivalence between the war on Tigray by Ethiopia/Eritrea with the wars by the US somewhere else.

I believe that many of these organizations are registered as a 501(c3) and their platform should not be used as a medium for those who are advocating for war. There is no war that benefits any community and in fact its first victims are those health and social workers who are at the front lines helping less fortunate people. It is obvious that the current civil war in Ethiopia has already caused deaths and casualties which burdens families and health institutions all over the country which are weak in the first place, despite the huge progress made in the last two decades. I can't understand why some are considering their past grievances bigger than the horror millions of Ethiopians are facing. Obviously, the war is not selectively hurting one group of people as those who proclaim to choose '**just war**' over '**unjust peace**' try to persuade us. It is killing thousands of Ethiopians from every corner of the country plus Eritrean refugees and soldiers who are involved in the war. If the war has any end, when this ends, households in every corner of the country and even many of the members of these civic organizations will feel the consequences of this unnecessary war- death, sorrow, pain in our families and long term poverty in the country.

It's also disingenuous and dangerous to falsely label and point fingers at people for making a call for peace and dialogue. For example, I have recently observed that a couple of colleagues who requested their health professional's group, which I also belonged to, to advocate for peace were attacked as sympathizers of the TPLF. Why? Just because they are of Tigrayan origin? Is it hard to understand the parents, friends and colleagues of these colleagues from Tigray are in the middle of this war and hence have valid reason to personally ask for support to an end to the hostilities? It's not hard to imagine the loss of lives and the displacement of thousands of families though we don't know the exact extent of casualties because of the blockade put on

communication and journalists. Why are some of these organizations failing to be behind the calls for the ending of hostilities by the international community including the UN? These groups, of all people, should be proactively calling to ending of the war instead of trying to justify it. War is antithesis to the oath we all took, do no harm. I would like to quote a word of wisdom from a young Ethiopian who is dismayed by the war monger that exists on the Ethiopian social media.

*"If my recent engagement on twitter has thought me anything, it's that #Ethiopia desperately needs an apolitical antiwar movement that stays active and engaged even during peaceful times. This level of support for a war is not - and should not be - normal."*

Another concerning point is the attack we see, on some of these platforms, on prominent people like Dr Tedros Adhanom of the World Health Organization who has been supportive of the mission of civic organizations over the years especially as health minister in Ethiopia. To see some leaders of these civic organizations openly endorse fringe statements and accusations by some people like the Ethiopian General Birhanu Julla, who has an axe to grind, is a moral travesty and dereliction of duty. Dr Tedros has spoken for himself and these groups should know better to at least post his statement to balance the unfounded accusation in the posts circulating in their platforms instead of smearing him. Some of the blatant claims made in these forums reminds me of **Voltaire's beautiful words of wisdom:**

*"Those Who Can Make You Believe Absurdities, Can Make You Commit Atrocities".*

Finally, I would like to ask these organizations and their rank file to refrain from making hurtful comments in those platforms as it adds to the fear and anxiety some of us are already experiencing from the misinformation in the Ethiopian media landscape. It's hurtful to bring innuendo and one-sided propaganda to such public and professional forums. We should treat our colleagues and friends in the same way we would like to be treated. I am widely involved with civic organizations and I have never seen anyone condoning any form of violence by the previous EPRDF government on their social media forums/platforms.

One more point, everyone should have the liberty to define his identity in the way it fits his views. Many of us live in Western countries who guarantee individual's right to choose. I don't think anyone has the monopoly to decide on how one wants to define his/her identity. None in these civic organization forums can speak for an entire nation or nationality in Ethiopia. None in these forums can decide what the Tigray people want, especially those who are cheering the civil war in Tigray. Frankly, the crocodile tears shed from some who mention the people of Tigray, while endorsing the war on them, to look impartial and caring is narcissistic and hurtful. In such circumstances, unless reasonable voices dominate and call for respect of each other, I fear that the fabric that tied us as humans, forget for now the phrase as Ethiopians, is going to be gone before long. It is up to us to make a choice. Thank you!

Mulu Gettaw

Note- I apologize if I hurt anyone with the views reflected in this article. It's not intentional.  
This is my personal opinion.