



November 23, 2020

On November 3, 2020, the Ethiopian Federal Government waged war on the State of Tigray. Under the guise of a “law and order” operation, the unelected Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has dropped more than 20 bombs on his own countrymen killing hundreds, if not thousands, of innocent civilians. He has caused more than 36,000 refugees to flee to Sudan and has closed off all humanitarian access to the region, ringing alarm bells of human rights organizations and genocide watch groups.

Today, Human Rights Watch condemned the Ethiopian military spokesman who threatened residents in the northern capital of Mekelle with “heavy artillery” and “no mercy” if they don’t “save themselves.” To this, former Ambassador Susan Rice responded: “In other words, war crimes.”

The people of Tigray were already facing food insecurity due to a massive locust invasion, and the region hosts more than 100,000 Eritrean refugees further exacerbating its resources. The region is short on food, fuel and has been on telecom and electricity blackout since the war began. The Ethiopian National Defense Forces have hit universities, hospitals, churches, a sugar processing plant, the Tekeze Hydro Power Plant and many more infrastructure projects.

Ethnic profiling in Addis Ababa has resulted in at least 51,000 ethnic Tigrayans being forced into concentrations camps. Ethnic Tigrayans have been demonized, recalled from embassy positions worldwide and from prominent posts throughout the country, including private sector positions where the government is collecting lists of Tigrayan employees. The bank accounts of Tigrayans are also frozen.

Abiy Ahmed started this genocidal war on an expired mandate hoping to carry out a power grab. He postponed the countrywide elections scheduled to occur in May 2020. The Tigrayan government refused the postponement and held a successful regional election anyway, with the necessary measures of protection against COVID-19. Currently, the only elected entity, in accordance with Ethiopia’s constitution, in this civil war represents the State of Tigray.

The fact is that this genocidal war is an ideological war based on centralized versus decentralized (or federated) governance. The debate is fair but the price of this debate should not be human lives and trauma. Abiy Ahmed’s attempt to consolidate power has not only cost Tigrayan lives. The #OromoProtests have condemned the widespread killings, arbitrary arrests and torture of people in the Oromo region, and the arrest of Oromo political leaders. Areas of Oromia also remain in the dark as telecommunications services are severed there as well.

Abiy Ahmed was given a Nobel Peace Prize due to his efforts in making peace with Eritrea. It is now clear that he was actually planning a war with Isaias Afewerki against the State of Tigray. The international community was duped. We now ask that the international community respond and course correct their mistake in propping up a murderous dictator.

We ask specifically for an immediate ceasefire and withdraw of Federal troops. We ask for a national dialogue in Ethiopia to determine what the various states and its citizens need to heal and move forward in peace. We ask for Abiy Ahmed to step down and allow for the people to determine their future. We ask that safe access be granted to humanitarian organizations through Sudan to reach Tigray and the refugees in Sudan. Given the possible destabilizing of the entire Horn of Africa and the countries across the Red Sea, we ask that instead of accepting the accounts of Abiy Ahmed at face value, that the US Congress send a fact-finding delegation to Ethiopia with visits to at least Tigray and Oromia.

Tigray-Ethiopian Elders Council of Colorado