



ሕብር: ኢትዮ ሕብረ-ብሔራዊ ፌዴራሊስቶች የድጋፍ ኃይል  
Ethio Multinational Federalists Support Force (EMFSF)

November 30, 2020.

To:

Dear Madam/Sir,

We, the members of HIBR, Ethiopian Multinational Federalist Support Force, coming from over 16 nations in Ethiopia, write this letter to apprise you of the ongoing war in Ethiopia and to urge you to use your good offices and influence to stop the war and the attendant atrocities.

### **The Genesis**

On November 4, 2020, Abiy Ahmed Ali formally declared war on the Tigray National Regional State (TNRS) describing his action as a “law enforcement operation.” This war the latest of the wars he has been conducting in various parts of Ethiopia for nearly three years. The ongoing war on Oromia, the violence against the Sidama nation ahead of the referendum for statehood in November 2019, and the vicious crackdown against the Wolaita and Konso were the forerunners of the current all-out conflict in Tigray involving fighter planes, missile and rocket attacks, artillery shelling, drone attacks, and bloody waves of foot-soldiers.

Immediately following the declaration of war, Abiy issued a State of Emergency (SOE) that allowed his security forces to take “all” measures against the Tigray and restricted the activities of anyone from Tigray in Ethiopia. This was followed by a massive deployment of entire divisions of the Ethiopian

National Defense Forces (ENDF) in the areas bordering Tigray, specifically in the Raya (south) and Walqayit (southwest) regions of Tigray. In addition to deploying the ENDF, Abiy mobilized the Special Forces, the State Police, the militia, and civilian volunteers of the Amhara National Regional State (ANRS).

At the same time, the Ethiopian Air Force (EAF) started by bombing Mekelle, the capital of Tigray, partially destroying a hotel in the inner city (apparently, because Abiy's intelligence suspected of hosting a meeting of the TPLF leadership).

In the subsequent days, Ethiopian troops were airlifted from Addis Ababa to Asmara (Eritrea) to utilize Eritrean soil for the invasion of Tigray from the north. In addition, in an apparent collusion with the Eritrean leader, Isayas Afeworki, Abiy Ahmed allowed the foreign army to attack his own people and country across an international border. The two governments unleashed a coordinated attack on Tigray from the north, west and south.

At the beginning phase of the conflict, TNRS forces dealt an initial blow to Abiy-Isayas campaign. Abiy started to enlist the military assistance of other countries to smash Tigray and, by extension, the federalist dissent in the country. Besides Eritrea forces, attack drones provided by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have been used to bomb Mekelle and several other towns of Tigray. Despite Abiy's repeated insistence that the military action in Ethiopia is a "law enforcement operation," the war has now become a regional conflict.

## **Effects of the War**

The actual damage of the war is hard to estimate, given the dearth of information coming out of Tigray. Judging by the number of refugees fleeing to the Sudan and the number of internally displaced persons trapped within Tigray, it is evident that the casualties of the war is staggering. So far, over 40, 000 Ethiopians have reportedly fled to the Sudan and a similar number are internally displaced within Tigray. The tragedy is compounded by the Ethiopian government's refusal to allow any humanitarian corridor. Reports of indiscriminate shelling of towns, the drone bombing on civilian sites in towns, and the brutal treatment of civilians in the areas where Abiy's forces encountered innocent civilians bespeak of indescribable atrocities already.

Elsewhere in the country, ethnic profiling of Tigrayans has reached a crescendo. They are illegally dismissed from jobs, their properties destroyed, their assets frozen and travels restricted. Mass arrest, arbitrary detention, and enforced disappearance of Tigrayans in Addis Ababa and in other towns have intensified, aggravating the precariousness of their life in Ethiopia. Tegarus rightly view this as acts of ethnic cleansing and a dress rehearsal for—or the beginning of—genocide.

Abiy's war on Tigray is a war without a cause. It is driven by hatred, hubris, and insistence on staying in power without an electoral mandate. Abiy's term of office expired on October 5, 2020. The TNRS and the TPLF saw Abiy's move to postpone the election beyond the five-year term in office as unconstitutional. The TPLF and TNRS conducted their regional elections as scheduled on September 9, 2020 and duly established their state government. Abiy rejected the election, cut off any relations with the new state government. On

November 4, 2020, Abiy denounced the TPLF as a terrorist organization, categorized the leadership as criminals and declared war on the region.

In Abiy's sight, their "crime" is their quiet resistance to his autocratic rule. He saw their insistence on election and self-rule in a multinational federal framework. Indeed this seems to be the true cause of the war, not "the pursuit of corrupt criminals" as Abiy wants the world to believe.

### **Cause of the War**

The war essentially resulted from diverging visions about the current and future direction of the country. Accordingly, it emanates from a clash of contradictory visions about the polity. Abiy's vision is a unitary state, with power concentrated in the hands of a president at the centre presiding over a polity with a single overarching linguistic, cultural, political, and economic character. In contrast, TPLF's vision is one of a multinational federal polity with self-governing constituent units with cultural, linguistic, and economic autonomy and regional/local sovereignty expressed, exercised, and secured through the right of self-determination as provided for in the Constitution.

In rejecting Tigray's insistence on election, Abiy rejected the centrality and primacy of democracy in political life. The rejection of the democratic imperative and the consequent intolerance, by Abiy, of the TPLF's position caused Abiy to deploy war against Tigray. He sought to resolve the difference by physically eliminating the persons who stood in support of the democratic imperative as the only way forward. Practically, Abiy's war is a war against democracy.

To the supporters of multinational federalism, Abiy's war is a war on the self-determination right of the diverse groups in Ethiopia. It is a war waged to derail the federalist democratic project. It is a war on hope, a war on the longing of the generation for the constitution's undelivered promises. It is a war driven, waged, and fuelled by Ethiopian's supremacist elite's imperial nostalgia, a retrograde desire to return to the imagined glorious past.

In reality, this war is a war against all nations in the country, not just Tigray. As such, it is in the strategic interest of all nations and nationalities to stand in solidarity with Tigray. Given the constitutional system we have, we feel duty-bound to support Tigray in its war to preserve democracy, constitutionalism, self-rule, and the right of nations to self-determination.

### **An Illegal War**

As such, the war is illegal. As someone who has overstayed his tenure, Abiy is a usurper with no legal authority to serve as a commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The Ethiopian military on its part is not under any legal obligation to take and execute his orders. According to the Ethiopian Constitution, war power is invoked—and the army is mobilized—when there is an external aggression that threatens the sovereignty of the country. The only other time the army is deployed for domestic operations is when a state of emergency is declared as per the provisions of Art 93 (4) to deal with a natural disaster, an epidemic, or a massive breakdown of law and order.

When Abiy declared war on Tigray on November 4, 2020, the war was declared on the most stable and legally governed state,

the only one in the country with a brand-new government that was installed through a democratic election conducted in September 2020. No emergency existed at the time that necessitated a military response of any type. The war had no legal basis and no just cause. While constitutionally declaration of a state of emergency ought to precede military action, in Tigray's case, the war preceded the declaration of SOE. There is therefore several illegalities to the declaration of this war, which is also a violation of the right to peace of Ethiopians and the peoples of the Horn of Africa neighbourhood.

Dear Madam/Sir,

Pursuant to the above, we now want to call on you to stand in solidarity with the peace loving forces of Ethiopia to urge Abiy Ahmed to submit to the call by various international bodies for a negotiated and amicable end to this conflict. In particular, we call on you to put diplomatic and political pressure on Abiy Ahmed's regime to:

1. Agree to an immediate cessation of hostilities through a declaration of ceasefire and submission to the call for peaceful resolution of differences with the TNRS;
2. End the siege of Tigray towns, especially Mekelle, and release all the civilians detained or sequestered in them;
3. Restore public utilities and social services;
4. Account for all the persons killed, injured, taken prisoner of war, lost (disappeared), or have sustained harms otherwise;
5. Remove all foreign military and intelligence personnel and weapons deployed in the war against Tigray;
6. Lift the unconstitutional and illegal State of Emergency declared on Tigray;

7. Restore communications, telephone and internet services as well as free access to domestic and international media;
8. Lift the ban on the flow of goods, people, and funds of Tigray people;
9. Allow the flow of humanitarian aid to those who need aid, the displaced, injured, and are left needy otherwise;
10. Facilitate the return, rehabilitation, and reintegration of refugees that fled their homes due to the hostilities;
11. Stop the widespread ethnic profiling of all sorts, and pronounce official denunciation of the practice as an intolerable evil;
12. Release all Tegaruu detainees arrested arbitrarily and held in various detention centers, reinstate them to their jobs and restore to them all properties illegally expropriated from them without due process of law;
13. Allow a neutral body (preferably a multilateral international body such as the United Nations, European Union, or Africa Union) to investigate the cause of the war, the crimes of war, and properties destroyed, and bring the perpetrators to justice;
14. Release all political prisoners across the country, especially high profile political leaders such as Jawar Mohammed, Bekele Gerba, Hamza Borana, Abdi Regassa, Michael Borana, Kennasaa Ayyanaa, Abdulgafar Umer, Colonel Gemechu Ayyaanaa, Lemmi Begna, Dawit Abdeta, and several other personalities such as Dr Husein Kedir.
15. Convene a broad-based, inclusive dialog with all political forces in order to facilitate an orderly transition to a genuine multinational federal democracy that secures

human rights, justice, and peace for all within the framework of the FDRE Constitution.

Dear Madam/Sir,

We, supporters of the constitutional project of multinational federalism in Ethiopia, believe that your voice is important at this critical time. We count on your support to help stop this war and to prevent a genocide in the making from becoming a reality. We count on your diplomatic and humanitarian efforts to prevent the imminent disaster that is looming over us in Ethiopia and in the neighbourhood.

It is our conviction that you will take this plea seriously and exert all the efforts you can in order to stop Abiy Ahmed's war on his own people, prevent the impending humanitarian crisis, and prevent the consequent region-wide instability in the geopolitically strategic Horn of Africa sub-region.

We hope that you will add your voice to call on Abiy Ahmed to end his hitherto violent approach to resolving political differences in Ethiopia. The only way out of the present conundrum is a comprehensive plan to achieve an agreement for cessation of hostilities, normalization of relations, and a quick return to the constitutional signposts of the multinational federal democracy that, we believe, is a guarantee for human rights, justice, and a lasting peace in Ethiopia and beyond.

Sincerely,



Ezekiel Gebissa  
President of HIBR