

Response to the Recent Communique by the Ethiopian Academy of Science: You can't Duck to Hide with a Stolen Camel

Mulu Gettaw, Jan 8, 2021

On January 1, 2021 the Ethiopian Academy of Science (EAS) released a communique about the ongoing crisis in Ethiopia. It is very sad to see that the Academy fails to take its basic responsibility and oath to be truthful and impartial. It is unfathomable that the EAS didn't even consider the publicly available facts about the genesis of the war and its consequences in its discourse to come up with nine recommendations. The minimum we expect from a science academy is rigorous synthesis of published data when doing primary research is not feasible. The EAS instead chose to tow tail the Ethiopian government line of propaganda and misinformation.

EAS is led by an august group of elderly men and women like Prof Tsige Gebremariam, Prof Yalemtehay Mekonnen, Prof Habtamu Wondium, Prof Mesfin Araya, Prof Afework Kassu and others with PhD and MDs. Frankly, while I understand why some of these people have to tiptoe the Ethiopian government lines in their communique (they are top government appointees of Abiy Ahmed Ali), I don't really understand why others have signed to such poorly crafted and hypocritical press release against their own very persona and the values the EAS website espouses which is given below.

"The Ethiopian Academy of Sciences is an autonomous, non-profit, non-governmental organization established in March 2010 by a group of prominent scholars who wish to promote the Sciences and bring about development, prosperity and improved health services for the peoples of Ethiopia. The Academy aims to advance the development of all the sciences."

The most sacred value of any scientific academy or group to keep its integrity is to follow the scientific method in its activities especially on issues of great consequences to society. The EAS has failed miserably on all counts of the required steps and methods to arrive at valid conclusions. Frankly, I am befuddled by the preamble of the communique that clearly states misleading and false information based the very biased narrative of the Ethiopian government. Even for the novice researcher, some of the information that the academy presented as facts have been refuted by international media and organizations like the UN, HRW and international media such as the New York Times, The Guardian, CNN, etc. I sympathize with some of the signatories given that their reputation is going to be damaged and their integrity questioned on many issues. It is very telling and travesty to see that they released this communique now after keeping quiet for so long as if they didn't exist:

- i. while mayhem and displacement were happening all over the country except in Tigray,



- ii. while targeted killings of prominent personalities including Engineer Simegnew, General Saere and murder of the officials of Amhara state was happening,
 - iii. while federal roads to Tigray were blockaded for more than two years with the full knowledge of Abiy Ahmed and Amhara regional government officers,
 - iv. while ethnic profiling and harassment of people from Tigray was continuing and
 - v. while many academic institutions are destroyed and shutdown because of lack of peaceful environment
 - vi. while many journalists and prominent politicians are in prison without any due course of the law
- What is even more troubling is to see such a callous call for support of the ENDF when there is an ongoing genocide being committed by the ENDF, Amhara Militia and Eritrean forces in Tigray. The HRW and UN have clearly stated these facts but the EAS would like to close its eyes and ears. Hypocrisy and narcissism at its best!

I am not very shocked to see some of the contents of the communique given a few of the people leading the EAS have been lackeys of Abiy Ahmed seen on ETV advising Abiy Ahmed and even telling him that 'we got the leader we want but we need the people who can be led by you'. It is beyond egregious to see a science academy endorsing alternative facts from Abiy Ahmed and his media ignoring the plight of the millions of Tigrayans who are suffering at the hands of the brutal invading forces (Eritrea, Amhara and PP-ENDF). The communique fails even to mention Tigray and its people while the brunt of the war is affecting millions of people in and outside of Tigray. It is unfathomable to see these elderly men and women trying to equate the unfolding genocide in Tigray to the clashes and crisis that's happening around the country, which they also fail to attribute it to the inability of the government to fulfill its primary duties as stipulated in the Ethiopian constitution.

The Academy fails to observe the basic tenets of the scientific method in order to arrive at the conclusions and recommendations it states in the communique. Nothing in the communique indicates that they used properly collected data or scientific analysis to come up with the recommendations. The fact that they failed to even consider good synthesis of what has been published and reported about the war on Tigray by neutral international organizations is a clear abrogation of responsibility and academic integrity. Some of their recommendations are also unconscionable given the magnitude of the ongoing war and the unfolding Genocide in Tigray. I would like to call on the EAS to review and revise its statement if it's going to be trusted and stay relevant. Here are nine rebuttal points to consider:

1. While the full support to the ENDF seems benign, it actually is an indication of a serious abrogation of integrity since the ENDF is colluding with Eritrean forces to attack the Tigray people. So, unless EAS supports treason there is no way to support the ENDF. This reminds me of the proverbial expression, **you can't duck to hide with a stolen camel**.
2. While the genesis of the war which is dubbed as 'law enforcement' by Abiy Ahmed has been contradicted many including by Police Commissioner Abere Adamu of Amhara Region and others, the EAS shouldn't have arrived at a conclusion without weighing on all available evidence. How can you preach sciences and yet don't apply it in your own work?
3. While the presence of Eritrean troops has been confirmed by the international media (eg. NYT, Bloomberg, BBC), governments (US, European) and even by the Major General Belay of ENDF, Acting Mayor Atakilti of Mekelle and others, for the EAS to omit and ignore such blatant transgression of international law indicates its culpability and lack of integrity.
4. While the EAS advises media to stay above the fray, it fails to live up to its own words. The EAS even didn't get the moral or aptitude/courage to call upon the government of Ethiopia to respect freedom of the press. The EAS knows that there are so many journalists in prison, many media organizations are shutdown

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5. While the EAS sympathizes with the scientific community, it is unforgivable that they failed to address the elephant in the room, the dire conditions of students, teachers, scientists, schools, universities and other institutions in Tigray and those who have become refugees in the Sudan.
6. While the EAS blames external forces for the crisis, it didn't get the courage to name the culprits when it is obvious that Eritrea is invading Tigray even by the admission of the ENDF generals and PP cadres.
7. While the EAS talks about the carnage Ethiopia has been in since Abiy Ahmed came to power, it fails to tell us the dereliction of duty by the Ethiopian government whose primary constitutional duty is the safety of the people.
8. While many of the EAS leaders benefited (reached the heights of academic ranks: almost all got professorship during the 27 'dark' years, government positions, became wealthier too, etc.), from the 27 'dark' years of the EPRDF, which some call TPLF leadership, it shows how much ungrateful they are to ignore the events that led to the war which has resulted in the catastrophic humanitarian crisis in Tigray that has been ongoing for two years which now reached an epic stage of Tigray Genocide.



Finally, I would like to remind the EAS that they have to have the courage to ask for the official release of the peace agreement that was signed between Abiy Ahmed Ali and Issayas Afewerki. It has now become clear to many observers to be a pact between these two men to choke up Tigray and destroy the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF), an elected governing party in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. If you are going to remain relevant, you need to call for the opening of the blackout in Tigray and the investigation of all the war crimes in Tigray and those that happened over the last two years, by independent bodies not by lackeys like Daniel Bekele of EHRC and his brother in law Netsanet Belay of Amnesty International.