

20th August 2020

Ethiopian Tigrayans in the UK,
Mekete Tigray Steering Committee,
London,
United Kingdom

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP,
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom,
10 Downing Street,
London,
SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister,

Subject: Gross Human Rights Violations in Ethiopia by Abiy Ahmed Government

We, concerned British citizens and residents of the UK of Ethiopian Tigrayan origin and who are organised under a broad democratic platform of “*Mekete Tigray*” (*i.e. Defense of Tigray*), are writing to bring to our Government’s attention to the Abiy Ahmed (PhD) Government’s gross human and democratic rights violations in Ethiopia. These include the systemic and widespread repression of citizens, minority groups and nationalities; and the establishment of a dictatorial rule that transgresses the fundamental pillars of the Ethiopian Federal Democratic Republic (EFDR) Constitution, including the suppression of the constitutional rights of nationalities to establish autonomous self-rule in their Regions through democratic regional elections.

Over two years ago the Abiy Ahmed Government came to power on the back of a popular uprising tasked to advance democracy, good governance, justice, peace and development in the Country. In complete betrayal and contradiction to the promising starts - the release of political prisoners; the widening of the democratic landscape; and the welcome initiative to resolve the Ethio-Eritrean state of “*No-War, No-Peace*” diplomatic stand-off - the actions and deeds of the Abiy Government have completely reversed those promises and initial gains, and have instead imposed an out-and-out authoritarian and dictatorial regime. Over the last two years the Abiy Ahmed Government has:-

- 1) violated the fundamental tenets of the EFDR Constitution and the rule-of-law, including the illegal and unconstitutional extension of the mandate of the current Government beyond the

constitutionally prescribed term Parliament. Furthermore, in addition to the illegal, indefinite postponement of the Ethiopian General Election the Government has threatened to wage war on Ethiopian Regional Governments, including the Regional State of Tigray, that seek to conduct regional democratic elections that are required by the EFDR Constitution (*Reuters, March 31, 2020; Foreign Brief, May 1, 2020; International Crisis Group, August 14, 2020*);

- 2) imposed illegal **“Military Command Posts”** that are akin to a military dictatorship in the majority of the Regions of the Country (*Human Rights Watch, July 1, 2020; Amnesty International, January 29, 2020*);
- 3) perpetrated gross human rights violations against the civilian population, including the mass imprisonments, torture and killings (*BBC News Amharic, January 28, 2020, May 29, 2020 and July 1, 2020*). According to Amnesty International Report on Ethiopia on 27th January 2020: **“Ethiopian security forces have carried out horrendous human rights violations in the regions including burning homes to the ground, extrajudicial killings and raping civilians suspected of supporting the rebels”**. In a [statement it released](#) on 3 July 2020 the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights stressed the fact that targeted attacks and excessive use of force by the country’s security has become rampant. Over the last 30 days alone over 10,000 people have been imprisoned on political ground and over 1000 killed extra-judicially. These are consistent with the Government’s own accounts (*Aljazeera English, August 14, 2020*);
- 4) instituted an outright dictatorship by imprisoning the entire political leadership of the *Opposition Parties* including the Oromo Liberation Front, Oromo Federalist Congress, Ethiopian Democratic Party, Wolaytta National Democratic Party and federal representatives of the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front based in Addis Ababa; the banning of non-governmental mass media outlets (*e.g. Oromo Media Network, Tigray TV and Dimsi Weyane TV, Wolaytta FM*) and the Internet shutdown during the Covid-19 Pandemic (*Human Rights Watch, July 1, 2020; Committee for Protecting Journalist, June 30, 2020*);
- 5) allowed the break-down of law and order, and has deliberately instigated civil, social and ethnic strife and discord for the purpose of the politics of divide-and rule, where Ethiopia, with over two millions internally displaced refugees, surpasses the tragedies recorded in Syria (*Norwegian Refugee Council, June 19, 2019*);
- 6) has targeted the 10 million Tigrayan people, the Regional Government of Tigray and its governing party, the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF), by propagating ethnic targeting and cleansing of Tigrayans; conducting economic warfare; and has recently been colluding with the dictatorial regime of the President of Eritrea, Isaias Afewerki, to wage war against the Tigrayan people and Regional Government; and currently against the Oromia Region and people (*The Guardian, July 2, 2020; The Telegraph, August 1, 2020; France 24, July 12, 2020*);

- 7) has dashed the hope of the promised peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea (*ironically and for which the PM Abiy received the Noble Peace Prize*) by deliberately curtailing and then derailing the peace process, including the closure of the border between the two countries and the discontinuing of people-to-people contacts. There is a real danger of a start of a new round of conflict between the two countries due to the political secrecy and scheming by the regimes of PM Abiy and President Isaias Afewerki that threatens war against their perceived common enemy, the TPLF and the Ethiopian Region of Tigray (*France 24, July 12, 2020; International Crisis Group, June 12, 2020*);
- 8) set the country's on a very dangerous trajectory of regime failure with the devastating implications for the Country's and the Horn of Africa Region's peace and stability, including the danger of creating an environment for the growth and spread of violent extremism in the Region and the exacerbation of the mass exodus of refugees and asylum seekers to Europe, North Africa and the Middle East (*France 24, July 12, 2020; International Crisis Group, July 3, 2020*);
- 9) damaged the country's economic development achievements, peace and stability. These include undermining foreign trade and the flow of foreign direct investment to the Country (*The Guardian, July 2, 2020; The Telegraph, August 1, 2020; UNCTAD W. I. Report 2020*); and
- 10) suppressed free speech and the mass media. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ): ***“Ethiopian authorities’ persistence of old patterns of censorship in response to crises, when the public most needs access to timely news and information, is deeply disappointing,”*** (*CPJ Sub-Saharan Africa Representative, Muthoki Mumo, June 30, 2020*).

Prime Minister,

With historic links and long standing people-to-people relationships between the peoples of the two countries, the UK Government has been an outstanding development partner of the Ethiopian people and Governments over the last 30 years, contributing significantly to the Country's economic development achievements, in particular in tackling poverty, regional instability and irregular migration. The UK's development aid for Ethiopia was budgeted at £302m in 2018/19 and £292m for 2019/20 (*DFID 2020*). In addition, the UK supports Ethiopia through its influence and positions at the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the EU and the UN. With growing British direct investment (*e.g. Diageo and Unilever*) and trade between the two countries, the UK exports to Ethiopia increased from £55 million in 2007 to £185 million in 2015 (*DFID 2020*). This is in addition to the UK and Ethiopia strategic and security partnership in combating terrorism, illegal migration and insecurity in the geo-politically and strategically important region of the *Horn of Africa*.

Prime Minister,

We, the concerned UK citizens and residents of Ethiopian origin humbly request that the UK Government use its diplomatic, political, economic and financial influence and leverage as well as its moral and international legal duties to urge the Ethiopian Government of Abiy Ahmed to:

1. stop committing human rights violations, including the extrajudicial killings and mass imprisonments of political opponents of the regime and that it frees all political prisoners and journalists; and bring to justice those who have committed mass atrocities. These include the freeing of the mass media, journalists, and the Internet as well as allowing a free political landscape that is conducive for democratic discourse;
2. stop from committing flagrant violations of the EFDR constitution, in particular the democratic rights of nations, nationalities and peoples that guarantee the unity of the country on the basis of respecting ethnic diversity. These include respecting the rights of Regional States, including Tigray, to conduct Regional Elections that are required by the EFDR Constitution;
3. cease and desist from hostile acts, threats and war of aggression, in collusion with the dictatorial Eritrean Regime, against the Tigrayan people and the Government of Tigray. These include ceasing to propagate the politics of ethnic targeting, cleansing and genocidal acts against nationalities and peoples (e.g. Oromia and Wolaytta); and the politics of the deliberate engineering of civil, social and ethnic strife in order to divide-and-rule the country;
4. enter into all-inclusive democratic political dialogue (*as the only viable option short of a civil war*) with all Opposition Parties and Nationalities in the Country in order to resolve pertinent political, security, economic and health (*i.e. the Covid-19 Pandemic*) challenges faced by the Country. Political dialogue and solutions are imperative when the current term of Parliament and the mandate of the Abiy Government expire in September 2020; without which a power vacuum will be created with the potential to disintegrate the fabric of the state and society.

Finally, we thank you for your time and attention, and trust that our Government will do what is morally, politically and legally right to address our concerns as British citizens and residents of Ethiopian origin. We look forward to getting an audience with your ministers and civil servants, and to hearing your response to our concerns. The Petitioners of this Letter - Ethiopian Tigrayans in the UK - can be contacted at the above-referred Email and Address. Thank you very much.

Most respectfully,

Ethiopian Tigrayans in the UK
Mekete Tigray Members and Steering Committee

Copied To: -

The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP; Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

The Rt Hon James Duddridge MP; Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Africa)

Sir Simon McDonald KCMG KCVO; Permanent Under-Secretary and Head of Diplomatic Service

Dr Alastair McPhail CMG OBE; British Ambassador to Ethiopia

The Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP; Secretary of State for International Development

The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP; Chancellor of the Exchequer

The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP; Home Secretary

The Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP; Defense Secretary

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park; Leader of the House of Lord and Lord Privy Seal

The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer MP; Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition

The Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP; Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition

The Rt Hon Lisa Nandy MP; Shadow Foreign Secretary

Baroness Smith of Basildon; Shadow Leader of the House of Lords

The Rt Hon Edward Davey MP; Acting Leader of the Liberal Democrats

The Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP; First Minister of Scotland

The Rt Hon Mark Drakeford MS; First Minister of Wales

The Rt Hon Arlene Isabel Foster MP; First Minister of Northern Ireland

The Rt Hon Ian Blackford MP; Leader of the Scottish Nationalists Party in the House of Commons

The Rt Hon Caroline Lucas MP; The Green Party

The Rt Hon Tom Tugendhat MP; Chair of Foreign Affairs Select Committee

The Rt Hon Claudia Webbe MP; Member of Foreign Affairs Select Committee

The Rt Hon Chris Bryant MP; Member of Foreign Affairs Select Committee

The Rt Hon Stewart Malcolm McDonald MP; Member of Foreign Affairs Select Committee

The Rt Hon Chi Onwurah MP; Chair of All Party Parliamentary Group for Africa

Lord Chidgey; Co-Chair of All Party Parliamentary Group for Africa

The Rt Hon Kim Johnson MP; Vice-Chair of All Party Parliamentary Group for Africa

The Rt Hon Pauline Latham MP; Vice-Chair of All Party Parliamentary Group for Africa

The Rt Hon Patrick Grady MP; Secretary of All Party Parliamentary Group for Africa