



**To Your**

- Excellency, Mr. Antonio Guterres  
Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN)
- Excellency, Mr. António Vitorino  
Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- Excellency, Mr. Filippo Grandi  
High Commissioner for United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- Excellency, Dr. Tedros Adhanom  
Director-General World Health Organization (WHO)
- Excellency, Mr. Moussa Faki  
Chairperson of African Union Commission
- Excellency, Dr Workneh Gebeyehu  
Executive Secretary of Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)
- Excellency, Ms. Ursula von der Leyen  
President of European Union Commission
- Excellency, Mr. Peter Maurer  
President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- Excellency, Ms. Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger  
President of the United Nations Human Right Council (UNGRC)
- Excellency, Ms. Michelle Bachelet Jeria  
Chief of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Excellency, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka  
Executive Director of UN Women

**Subject: Public call to ensure the safety and security of stranded migrants**

We, members of the Global Society of Tigray Scholars (GSTS) jointly with other associations of Ethiopians in the Diaspora and inside Ethiopia (**see list in Appendix-I**), are closely following the news on the horrific state of stranded migrants that are emerging from various parts of the Middle East and Africa, particularly from Jizann in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Rago in Yemen and so forth.

As part of the response to counter Covid-19, many countries of transit and destination have taken harsh measures that put migrants in unnecessary risk of infection, infestations, hunger and illness. The congested places of detention and stay have inflicted and are inflicting massive harm on migrants' lives and human rights. Encampment of migrants in hostile areas with no hygiene or access to humanitarian assistance has put the lives of migrants under grave risk, including reported deaths.

In the recent months, as before, some of the Middle Eastern countries are not only abruptly deporting Ethiopian migrants on cargo planes but have detained tens of thousands of migrants in very confined and unhygienic spaces. As a result, there are more than 11,000 Ethiopian migrants in Jizan Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. More than 19,000 Ethiopians are also stranded in the border between Yemen and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.



Thousands of irregular migrants stranded in various countries are facing grave risks to their lives. Those migrants are living in overcrowded and often cramped makeshift shelters, detention centers and desert border areas, which is against the declared WHO measures to contain the spread of the infection (physical distancing, handwashing and contacts, etc.). Treatment and hospitalization are unavailable to these migrants, and thus the possibility of devastating Covid-19 outbreak and associated illness and deaths cannot be ruled out.

Besides, it is also quite important to note majority of the stranded migrants are women who are not only susceptible to contract COVID-19 but also highly exposed to potential sexual violence and gender-based discrimination by anyone around them.

The protection of migrants lies in the host state and must guarantee equal and non-discriminatory treatment of all persons irrespective of their immigration and citizenship status until they are regularized or repatriated. Host countries are also obliged to protect migrants from health risks, including the COVID-19 and associated stigma and xenophobic attacks. The states of host countries need to ensure the provision of essential medicines, prevention and treatment facilities for migrants wherever they are stranded. The plight of these migrants is not a grave threat to the lives of the migrants only but also the host communities. As Ethiopia is getting overstretched in its response to COVID-19, returning of these migrants would further propagate the virus transmission. Given that IOM and UNHCR have called for temporary suspension of return and resettlement, the best option, for now, is offering the migrants the protection and full-scale assistance they need wherever they are.

While the United Nations agencies such as UN resident coordinators, IOM and UNHCR representatives are trying their best, the governments of the host countries, and the embassies of Ethiopia need to act in tandem with the UN agencies to ensure the safety and security of the migrants.

Therefore, we call:

1. The UN agencies such as IOM, UNHCR and other relevant stakeholders to facilitate the release of migrants in encampment and detention; the safe and healthy return of the stranded migrants.
2. The host and origin (Ethiopia) countries and all regional and international stakeholders to facilitate the safe passage of stranded migrants;
3. The UN agencies in the Middle East countries to strictly follow up on its appeal on the suspension of the deportation of the migrants during COVID-19 crisis and the international community to put pressure on all countries of transit and destination to cease any deportation and detention of migrants at the time of pandemics;
4. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and other countries of transit and destination to avoid detention, facilitate the safe passage of stranded migrants in border areas, and consider regularizing of these migrants with temporary residence permits until such a time when the pandemic could permit the organization of safe return to Ethiopia;
5. The humanitarian agencies to provide aid and assistance to the migrants to protect themselves from COVID-19 infections;
6. The UN and humanitarian agencies to focus on ensuring the safe passage, humanitarian aid and protection to migrants stranded in the border areas;



We call upon all Ethiopians to urge the International Community to act swiftly to ensure the safety and security of all Ethiopian migrants in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and other Middle East countries.

CC:

- Amnesty International
- Human Rights Watch
- African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
- Gulf Cooperation Council
- International Rescue Committee
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
- The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- The Embassies of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- The United Arab Emirates

The Global Society of Tigray Scholars (GSTS)  
North America, Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia and Middle East  
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### Appendix - I : List of Organizations and Associations calling for Immediate Action

- The Global Society of Tigray Scholars (GSTS)
- Union of Tigreans in North America (UTNA)
- United Tegar Youth in North America (UTYNA)
- Tigray Communities forum, North America
- Tigray Äthiopischer Verein in Deutschland E.V.
- Union of Tigreans in Europe, Germany Chapter
- Union of Tigreans in Europe, England Chapter
- Union of Tigreans in Europe, Italy Chapter
- Union of Tigreans in Europe, Sweden Chapter
- Union of Tigreans in Europe, Netherlands Chapter
- Union of Tigreans in Europe, Norway Chapter
- Union of Tigreans in Europe, Switzerland Chapter
- Tigray Women Association in North America
- Association of Tigray Ethiopian in South Africa
- Tigray Development Association in North America (TDA-NA)
- Tigray Development Association in Germany
- Tigray Frauen Verein in Deutschland E.V.
- Seb Hidri Civil Society Tigray