



Official Correspondence GSTS-O.C-2021-043  
The Global Society of Tigray Scholars  
and Professionals (GSTS)

## Open Letter

**Prime Minister Boris Johnson**  
**The President of G-7 Leaders' Summit**  
**The G-7 Leaders**  
**Carbis Bay, Cornwall, UK**

### **Abiy Ahmed Ali is a Force of Instability and Disintegration**

Excellencies,

1. We, the Global Society of Tigray Scholars and Professionals (GSTS)<sup>i</sup>, note that many countries, particularly the diplomatic missions in Addis Ababa, believe that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and his so-called reform need to be salvaged. Contrary to this, realities on the ground in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa prove that Abiy Ahmed is a force of instability and disintegration. None of the much-needed reforms have been realized, democratization and stability have proven elusive. Instead, Abiy's centralization of power and dictatorial tendencies have brought conflict, egregious human rights violations, ethnic based massacres and massive humanitarian crises. With him at the helm, the country, indeed the Horn of Africa, will remain at the cusp of civil and international wars. For the sake of peace and security of Ethiopia, the Horn of Africa and the global peace and order, he should be forced to resign.

2. Despite coming to power in 2018, following widespread youth protests and general public discontent, his reforms were just a mirage of false promises masking his dictatorial and imperial ambitions. Three years in power, the country is entangled in devastating civil wars in Tigray, Oromia and other parts, rising ethnic tensions, armed insurgencies, and an upsurge in civilian massacres that have left tens of thousands dead, millions displaced, and several million at risk for starvation. Ethiopia is at a low-intensity war with Sudan in the disputed border areas. It is now clear that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's push for a strong central state is causing Ethiopia to unravel.

3. Not only does Ethiopia's unravelling highlight the Abiy's false start, but it also demonstrates how Abiy's mismanagement of Ethiopia's delicate political transition has left the country at risk for a dangerous fragmentation along ethnic lines. Ethiopia was considered a fulcrum of stability and a net exporter of peace and peacekeepers for the three decades before the rise of Abiy Ahmed to power in 2018. Ethiopia is now a source of instability in the region. Given the volatile geopolitics of the Horn of Africa, the fallout from Abiy's failed leadership in Ethiopia is a major threat to the stability of the entire region.



4. Ethiopia has a very complex political history that involves a long list of unitary heads of state who refused to recognize and govern diversity. A more recent example is the military dictatorship (Derg) that reigned between 1974-1991 under Mengistu Hailemariam - after overthrowing the imperial system. However, the assimilationist nationalism that defined the Imperial and Derg regimes did not fare well. The collapse of the Derg in 1991 would reign in both new leadership of the Ethiopia People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) that instituted multinational federalism in Ethiopia.

5. Abiy Ahmed, from the beginning, had been centralizing state power beginning by dissolving the multi-ethnic EPRDF and establishing the Prosperity Party (PP). Abiy has shown a complete disregard for the core values of the federal system enshrined in the Constitution. He supported "unitary nationalism", which inherently is culturally biased to a group, indicative of the return of Ethiopia's previous assimilationist nation-building efforts and marginalization that plagued Ethiopia.

6. Abiy has forced communities and their regional states to once again defend their constitutional rights by protest and, in some cases like Tigray, Oromia and Benishangul-Gumuz, taking up armed resistance. The civil wars in Tigray, Oromia and Benishangul-Gumuz, are direct outcomes of the blatant violations of the Constitution.

Tensions between the Abiy's administration and the Tigray regional government continued to escalate when Tigray moved forward with its mandated regional elections despite Abiy's indefinite postponement of national election as the pretext of COVID-19. Tigray's opposition exposed the postponement for what it was, an unconstitutional delay designed to prolong Abiy's rule. As a result of the postponement in election, tensions between the two administrations continued to rise, with each questioning the legitimacy of the other and Abiy implementing a harsh financial penalty (e.g., withholding the regional budget and donor-assisted basic safety net program for over a million people) as a means to cripple Tigray's economy and society. While Abiy cited a November 4 "attack" by the TPLF on the Northern Command as his rationale for deploying troops, there is overwhelming evidence that Abiy's administration was preparing to attack Tigray. Hence, it is clear that Abiy's aim in this war was to oust the TPLF led elected government from power in the region and subdue the people of Tigray never again to challenge his rule.

7. While Abiy initially phrased the conflict as a quick law-and-order operation targeting only a few top TPLF leaders, the large-scale offensive was clearly designed to inflict massive damage on Tigray and Tigrayans. The war on Tigray has now turned into a prolonged and gruesome genocide and dire a humanitarian crisis. He has invited the Eritrean army without whom he cannot sustain his war on Tigray. Despite the deliberate communications blackout and limited external access to Tigray, Ethiopian and Eritrean forces and Amhara state militia are reported to be committing grave mass atrocities. More specifically, reports of widespread sexual and gender-based violence, weaponized starvation, civilian massacres, ethnic cleansing, and mass



imprisonment are consistently being brought forth. Displacement is also hitting record numbers, with an estimated 2.2 million internally displaced and more than 70,000 people fleeing over the border to Sudan. The worst may be yet to come; with talks of looming famine and no end in sight to the ongoing war crimes, the very cohesion of the country is at risk.

8. Abiy's centralization efforts have also not bode well in his own region of Oromia. The region has experienced a sustained period of instability after the assassination of Hachalu Hundessa, a prominent Oromo activist and musician, in June of 2020 and imprisonment of formidable Oromo political leaders and thousands of opposition party members most on trumped up charges. However, Abiy's attempt to mitigate dissent by arresting thousands of opposition activists, politicians, and protesters has only furthered divisions. The Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) is one of Abiy's most staunch critics in the region, with the group currently involved in an armed insurgency against the administration.

9. Ongoing clashes between members of the Amhara and Oromo ethnic groups have led to several civilian deaths in Amhara. There are also reports of ethnic attacks against Amhara civilians and politicians in the South Wollo and North Shewa zones of the Amhara region. The region has also been a hotbed of ethnic violence against other groups, as there are reports of targeted attacks against non-Amhara ethnic groups. On April 20, 2021, hundreds of thousands across the Amhara region came out to protest against the targeted persecution of Amharas. Protesters not only denounced the attacks but also called for the removal of Abiy's Prosperity Party. The unrest is likely to threaten both peace and stability in the region, and Abiy may lose a key ally in his ruling coalition.

10. As of late, there seems to be no end in sight to the ongoing war, ethnic strife, or armed insurgency. The Tigray Defense Forces have vowed to continue fighting until all invading forces leave Tigray and the legitimate government of Tigray is restored to power. Insurgency militias in Oromia and Benishangul throughout the country remain steadfast in their fight against a unitary Abiy's government.

11. Abiy will continue to destabilize the country. The dire situation in Ethiopia has left Abiy at a crossroads, with, under the pretext of reform, pursuing a centralized state at one end and Ethiopia's disintegration at the other. Given Ethiopia's geopolitical significance, the negative implications of its potential disintegration are ghastly to contemplate, not only for Ethiopia but also for the entire Horn of Africa and indeed the broader international community. The International Community must realize Ethiopia faces imminent danger of implosion while Abiy remains at the helm.

12. Thus, the international community need to:

- a. recognize that Abiy has fooled many and used the "reform" as a camouflage to create a centralised state that is already marred by conflict, instability and potential disintegration;



- b. stop propping his government, which is hurting Ethiopians and aiding Ethiopia's imminent disintegration;
- c. call for postponement of the elections until a peaceful resolution of the civil wars in Ethiopia and the establishment of a transnational government comprising all political forces;
- d. condemn all atrocities committed against civilians, refugees and assassination of high-level officials, hold all perpetrators to account and refer the situation in Ethiopia to the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions and other violations of international humanitarian law;
- e. ensure the protection of civilians, refugees and the safety and security of international humanitarian aid workers, and under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations;
- f. establish a mechanism to ensure the immediate, unconditional and verifiable removal of all Eritrean forces as well as Amhara troops and militia from Tigray;
- g. deploy rapid, unconditional, unfettered, and sustained delivery of humanitarian aid and items essential to survival, including setting a "lifeline humanitarian corridor" from Sudan to Tigray under a de-militarised route designated for safe passage of humanitarian supplies.



Sincerely,  
The GSTS  
11 May 2021

CC: All Embassies in Addis Ababa

<sup>i</sup> GSTS is a 501(C), and 33/2011 legally registered non-partisan, not-for-profit, and autonomous Global Knowledge Network of over 3,000 Tigray Scholars and Professionals aimed at creating Knowledge-based economy and society in Tigray, and beyond. It stands for academia, multidisciplinary and cross sectoral research and applied policy development, human capital development, fostering and advancing science, technology, and innovation, technology and knowledge transfer, youth and gender development, migration and displacement, and other educational and development related endeavors. It also works in educational advocacy and collaborates with various stakeholders towards promoting peace, good governance, human rights, and humanitarian activities.