



Official Correspondence GSTS-O.C-2021-128
The Global Society of Tigray Scholars
and Professionals (GSTS)ⁱ

Classification: OPEN

H.E. Michelle Bachelet

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Geneva

Re: Urgent Alert on the Mass Incarceration, Summary Execution of Tigrayan Civilians and Escalating Genocidal Rhetoric in Ethiopia

Your Excellency,

The Global Society of Tigray Scholars and Professionals (GSTS) would like to call to your urgent attention the current mass arrests, incarceration, internment in camps, and extra-judicial killings of Tigrayans across Ethiopia.

The ethnic profiling, arbitrary arrest,¹ incarceration, and forcible disappearance² and torture of Tigrayans have progressively escalated over the last three years in Ethiopia, with a marked intensification following the declaration of the genocidal war against Tigray on the 4th of November 2020. These actions have further spiked to an unprecedented and alarming level following the declaration of a draconian State of Emergency (SoE) by the Ethiopian regime on the 2nd of November 2021.³ Following the SoE, Tigrayans are being arbitrarily arrested from their workplaces, homes, on the streets, and being held at various police stations and unknown concentration camps based on their Ethnicity. Moreover, thousands of Tigrayan businesses in Addis Ababa and across Ethiopia, including restaurants, bars, cafes and other places, have been closed and sealed with no apparent reason than being Tigrayans.⁴

GSTS would particularly like to draw your attention to the following alarming elements of the current strategy of mass incarceration of Tigrayans in Addis Ababa, the Amhara Region, and other parts of Ethiopia.

1. Scale and Extent of Arrests and Incarceration

The current mass arrests and incarceration in concentration camps, of Tigrayans in Ethiopia, is particularly characterized by its scale, nature, and extent. Following the declaration of the draconian SoE, the Ethiopian regime has instituted:

¹ <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/ethiopia-authorities-must-release-tigrayans-activists-and-journalists-and-reveal>

² <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/08/18/ethiopia-ethnic-tigrayans-forcibly-disappeared>

³ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/11/08/ethiopia-international-action-needed-prevent-atrocities>

⁴ <https://apnews.com/article/africa-race-and-ethnicity-racial-injustice-b1a97f2569592f499565bfb6e673dc3d>

- a. door-to-door searches and arrest of Tigrayans from all walks of life without warrants⁵
- b. a call to civilians to take up arms⁶
- c. a mechanism that encourages people to report and inform on their Tigrayan neighbors, friends, and family⁷
- d. a command for all landlords to urgently register the identities of tenants at police stations⁸.

These actions have led to the detention of tens of thousands of Tigrayans of all ages and genders. Amongst those arrested have been university professors, lecturers, businessmen, priests, professionals⁹ as well as at least 16 UN staff with their dependents¹⁰ and 72 drivers of the World Food Programme¹¹, effectively crippling humanitarian operations into Tigray that have already been stalled for months as a result of the siege and de-facto blockade imposed by the regime in Addis Ababa. All detainees including the elderly and breastfeeding and expecting mothers are currently being interned in existing and newly set up concentration camps across the country.

2. Heightened Genocidal Rhetoric

The recent intensification of hate speech against Ethiopians of Tigrayan descent by high-level officials of the Ethiopian regime, including the Prime Minister and Amhara political leaders, as well as social media activists and government-affiliated media is reason for the deepest alarm. These coordinated campaigns include explicit incitement for the extermination of Tigrayans living outside of Tigray as well as calls to round up and intern Tigrayans in concentration camps. The calls for attacks against Tigrayans are not only limited to social media but are also propagated by government-owned and affiliated mainstream media with tens of millions of followers.

For example, on October 31 Facebook removed a statement by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed calling on all Ethiopians to “take up arms and bury the TPLF” which had been transmitted on all platforms.¹² H.E. Alice Wairimu Nderitu, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide once again expressed concern at the intensification of ethnically motivated hate speech (amongst other things) on the 8th of November.¹³

We at GSTS would like to stress that the current escalation of hate speech, genocidal rhetoric, and incitement to violence further exposes the policy intention of those forces

⁵ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/11/08/ethiopia-international-action-needed-prevent-atrocities>

⁶ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-58163641>

⁷ [livl https://www.chanel4.youtube.com/watch?v=rpvKzsd2chI](https://www.chanel4.youtube.com/watch?v=rpvKzsd2chI)

⁸ <https://addisstandard.com/news-soe-operation-command-orders-landlords-to-register-their-tenants-identities-at-the-police-stations-within-a-week/>

⁹ <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/ethiopian-authorities-detain-more-than-70-un-drivers-un-email-2021-11-10/>

¹⁰ <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/un-says-least-nine-staff-dependents-detained-ethiopia-2021-11-09/>

¹¹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/10/ethiopia-detains-72-drivers-working-for-wfp-un>

¹² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-59154984>

¹³ <https://www.un.org/sg/en/node/260549>



who waged war on Tigray. It is to be remembered that, in his report to the EU parliament, on the 15th of June 2020, European Union special envoy to Ethiopia, the region, and Finland's foreign minister, Pekka Haavisto said "When I met the Ethiopian leadership in February, they really used this kind of language, that they are going to destroy the Tigrayans, they are going to wipe out the Tigrayans for 100 years and so forth."¹⁴

3. Government Sanctioned Vigilantism

On the 10th of November 2021, Channel 4 News ran a segment from Addis Ababa which highlighted groups of "volunteers" engaged in a hunt for Tigrayans.¹⁵ This piece serves to highlight the alarming extent to which vigilantism is not only increasingly sanctioned by the government but is also replacing legitimate security and policing. Recent precedence, particularly in the Amhara Region, where Tigrayans have and continue to be systematically persecuted, attacked, and murdered by sanctioned vigilantes, reveals the ultimate horrific consequences of franchising security and policing to vigilantes. This is already evidenced in reports from credible sources that reveal that the impunity of vigilantes and the cover provided by the draconian SoE has already resulted in hundreds of deaths in just the last few days. Moreover, witnesses – including families of those that have been detained – as well as reliable sources persistently indicate the involvement of Eritreans in the security and intelligence network that is running the current campaigns against Tigrayans.

GSTS would like to stress that this underscores the urgent need for intervention as the attacks by vigilantes are carried out with official tacit or overt support by the Federal and regional governments.

4. Ongoing Context of the Genocidal War and Humanitarian Blockade on Tigray

All actions being taken by the Ethiopian regime to target, disenfranchise, and criminalize Tigrayans across Ethiopia should be understood from within the context of the yearlong coordinated and multi-pronged genocidal campaign of the allied Ethiopian, Amhara, and Eritrean forces which has included the weaponization of starvation to exterminate Tigrayans. This determination has been evidenced by the genocidal invasion of and total onslaught on Tigray launched on the 4th of November 2020. The ensuing brutal occupation characterized by large-scale massacres, weaponized sexual violence, and the decimation of public and private infrastructures including health centres and schools as well as the ongoing siege and humanitarian blockade that has led to an entirely man-made famine affecting the lives of more than a million people aimed at annihilating millions.

With this state of affairs in mind, GSTS implores the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to urgently:

¹⁴ (https://apnews.com/article/europe-ethiopia-africa_ffd3dc3faf15d0501fd87cafe274e65a.)

¹⁵ <https://www.channel4.com/news/un-demands-answers-from-ethiopia-over-aid-blockade-as-conflict-fuels-ethnic-divisions>



1. Condemn in the strongest terms the mass incarceration, summary execution of Tigrayan civilians, and escalating genocidal rhetoric in Ethiopia;
2. Press upon the Ethiopian government on its obligation for an unconditional observance of international laws and norms on protection of civilians at times of conflict and demand the immediate and unconditional release of all civilians imprisoned because of their Tigrayan identity;
3. Establish UN-mandated independent investigation into all ongoing crimes being committed on Tigrayans outside of Tigray and make perpetrators accountable;
4. Pressure the regime in Ethiopia to lift the SoE which is designed and being used as a pretext to detain, arrest, kill and torture people of Tigrayan ethnic identity; and
5. Call for United Nations bodies and diplomatic missions based in Addis Ababa to immediately act and offer alternative forms of protection, including, as practiced by most countries, temporary refuge within their premises to those seeking protection from threats to their lives.



Sincerely,
The Global Society of Tigray Scholars
and Professionals
16th November 2021

CC:

H.E. António Guterres

Secretary-General of the United Nations
New York

H.E. Antony Blinken

Secretary of State of the United States
Washington DC

H.E. Josep Borrell

High Representative of the European Union for Foreign
Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission
Brussels

¹ GSTS is a 501(C), and 33/2011 legally registered non-partisan, not-for-profit, and autonomous Global Knowledge Network of over 3,500 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.