



July 9, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
NW Washington, DC 20500

**RE: Urgent appeal for action to relieve a dire humanitarian crisis in Tigray**

Dear President Biden,

Security and Justice for Tigrayans (SJT) would like to sincerely appreciate the steps you and your administration have taken to date to end the genocidal war in Tigray which has subjected the people to unimaginable agony and misery. The people of Tigray and SJT owe you a debt of gratitude for firmly standing with the truth during this painful and challenging time. History will always remember you for putting the crisis in Tigray as a priority agenda in your administration.

Today, we are writing again as we have done in the past because, despite the Ethiopian government's announcement of ceasefire, conditions in Tigray are still dreadful and desperate and require your immediate attention and action.

On 28 June 2021, the Ethiopian federal government announced a unilateral ceasefire which many countries and international organizations have applauded as a promising first step. SJT would have joined these organizations in supporting such a ceasefire if it were genuine. However, the facts on the ground are utterly different and even alarming. The Ethiopian government in the days after the announcement has not ceased fire. Instead, it has replaced the guns with siege as a weapon of war. The government has turned off all basic services that it controls to Tigray including banking, electricity, health services, water, telephone, internet, and transportation. The people have no access to their own money. The entire Tigray is in total darkness because of the deliberate power outage.

The government continues to block all Tigray-bound roads and humanitarian assistance. Just days after it announced the ceasefire, government forces in collaboration with Amhara forces destroyed two vital Tekeze river bridges that connect western Tigray with the rest of Ethiopia. This plus deliberate food aid blockage by the government has prevented aid agencies to replenish depleted food stocks in Tigray. The government's plans are clear to us. Once its military was defeated and driven off Tigray soil, it is tightening the noose around Tigray to starve the people and win the war.

So, clearly, the ceasefire it announced was not genuine. We believe it was a tactical retreat to buy time, regroup its forces, and try another foolish military adventure. Just a day ago, the prime minister warned that his government has the ability to recruit and train a million young men in a short time, an eerily similar warning he made prior to launching the November 2020 war. So not only is the ceasefire he announced insincere, he may be planning to launch another offensive with



much more lethal military campaign. The world should not be fooled by this criminal who has made lying his modus operandi of his government.

Just this week, after the announcement of a unilateral ceasefire, the government has intensified its practice of profiling, harassing, and arbitrarily arresting and jailing Tigrayans outside Tigray. Their businesses have been shut down for no reason other than being owned by Tigrayans. These arbitrary arrests and business shutdowns have been confirmed by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) which has warned about aggravating risks of ethnic profiling.

The government had already in custody a large number of Tigrayans including top military officers, politicians, and ordinary citizens as political prisoners. It had also rounded up and jailed all 17,000 Tigrayans who were serving in the Ethiopian National Defense Forces when the government declared the war in November 2020. The whereabouts of these Tigrayans has remained secret and unknown to their families. There are reports of deaths due to harsh prison conditions and torture.

Mr. President,

The people of Tigray are overjoyed to see the elected regional government return to Mekelle. However, a significant part of Tigray is still occupied by Amhara forces aided by Ethiopian and Eritrean forces. Eritrean forces have retreated from central Tigray but they still occupy parts of northern Tigray.

SJT pleads with you to take all tangible measures you deem necessary to pressure or force Mr. Abiy's government to:

1. Withdraw all invading forces from the remainder of Tigray and allow the return of more than one million displaced persons from western Tigray to their homes and farms.
2. Open all road and air transportation and stop blocking the distribution of humanitarian assistance to Tigray.
3. Restore all basic services including electricity, water, telephone, internet, fuel, and banking to all of Tigray.
4. Stop the jailing and harassment of peaceful Tigrayans in all of Ethiopia by government security agents.
5. Release all Tigrayans including the 17,000 members of the military placed in jails and concentration camps throughout Ethiopia for no reason other than being Tigrayans.

Respectfully Submitted,

SJT