



May 25, 2021

President Joe Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
NW Washington, DC 20500

RE: Eritrean and Amhara forces deliberately disrupting farming operations throughout Tigray, Ethiopia

Dear President Biden:

We, members of Security and Justice for Tigrayans in Ethiopia (SJTE), are writing again desperately seeking help for our families that we left behind in Tigray. We are US citizens and diaspora sons and daughters of Tigray farming families fortunate enough to live and work in America but terrified at the deplorable and alarming news coming from the region.

The most recent news that we are hearing is that the armies of Eritrea, Ethiopia, and the Amhara militants have intensified implementing their evil ploy to starve our families by preventing them from preparing their fields at this critical juncture. These forces have already caused food crisis that has escalated to Level 5, the highest level it can ever get according to some USAID officials. People are already dying from starvation and associated diseases because these evil forces are using their guns to prevent aid from reaching our desperate families. According to OCHA of the UN, only 1.8 million people of the 5.2 million in need of food assistance were reached since March. Now they want to make this misery permanent by preventing farming and any kind of food production in the state.

Mr. President,

Nearly all Tigray farmers are subsistence farmers, meaning they consume much of what they produce each year to sustain their families. Some years, some families may not harvest enough and must be helped. Any natural or human action that disrupts their farming routine, can easily throw their harvest off balance and wreak havoc to their families and communities.

Today the farmers and the people of Tigray overall are facing that danger. On top of the gunfire, shelling, and aerial bombardment that the entire Tigray has been enduring over the last six months, the Eritrean army as well as the Amhara militia have been deliberately disrupting farming operations throughout the region. Last week, a senior official appointed by Mr. Abiy's



government said that “there is a campaign by those tasked with law enforcement to prevent farming in Tigray.” He interpreted this campaign to mean a deliberate action to starve and annihilate the people of Tigray.

Just last week on May 16th, the Amhara regional government announced that it is auctioning farmland that it is occupying in western Tigray. It referred to this land as free meaning it has no owner. Actually, this land has owners. But the owners were killed or violently evicted from their farmlands and homes by Amhara militants supported by the Eritrean and Ethiopian militaries as reported by the New York Times on February 26, 2021. Now the Amhara government wants to populate these farmlands by ethnic Amhara luring them with “free” land.

We are appalled by this announcement and urge you, Mr. President, to do whatever is necessary to prevent the looming danger of a long-term famine like the one the world saw in 1984. Farming in Tigray starts now in May and continues until all grains have been sown in June. Disrupting this operation or auctioning land owned by Tigray farmers means disrupting and eventually halting food production for the year. We respectfully urge you to do whatever you deem necessary to stop those that are trying to plunge Tigray into further food crisis.

To us at SJTE, the solution is not complicated--removing the Eritrean and Amhara forces from Tigray soil would change the situation overnight and give Tigray farmers desperately needed breathing room to resume their operations. As we indicated in our previous letter, enough pressure needs to be applied on the Eritrean as well as Ethiopian governments to remove the perpetrators out of Tigray. We don't see any reason why the same amount of pressure used in the former Yugoslavia cannot be used on Eritrea and Ethiopia today.

We appeal to you, Mr. Biden, to save our farmers and our people who are facing the greatest danger they have ever faced, even worse than the 1984 famine in which more than one million people perished in less than two years. We sincerely thank you for what you have done for Tigray up to this point but hope that you will continue until the people of Tigray are free again like other Ethiopians.

Most respectfully,

SJTE



SECURITY AND JUSTICE FOR TIGREANS IN ETHIOPIA (SJTE)

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