

Official Correspondence GSTS-O.C-2021-096
The Global Society of Tigray Scholars
and Professionals (GSTS)

- **Excellencies, The G-7 Leaders**
- **Excellency, Mr. Antony Blinken**
Secretary of State of the United States
- **Excellency, Ambassador Martin Kimani**
The Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kenya to the United Nations
President of the Security Council for the Month of October
- **Excellency, Mr. Antonio Guterres**
Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN)
- **Excellency, Mr. Martin Griffiths,**
The UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief
Coordinator
- **Excellency, Ms. Ursula von der Leyen**
President of the European Commission
- **Excellency, Mr. Jose Borrell**
High Representative of the European Union for Foreign
Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission
- **Excellency, Mr. Jens Stoltenberg**
NATO Secretary General

Re: An Urgent Call for Direct Aerial Delivery of Humanitarian Aid to Tigray

It has been over three months since the World Food Program (WFP)¹ said it was hoping for air bridge to Tigray to deliver desperately needed humanitarian supplies. The 11-month-old war and 3-months long de-facto humanitarian aid blockade by the Ethiopian government and its allies has been rightly described as a “catalogue of horrors”². It targeted the civilian population from the outset and has been characterized by deliberate starvation, large-scale ethnic cleansing, weaponised widespread gender-based sexual violence including gang-rape and deliberate infection of women and girls with HIV/AIDs and other STDs, mass massacres of civilians, destruction of religious and cultural heritage, looting and the systematic destruction of schools, hospitals, factories, and infrastructure including bridges on vital arteries for humanitarian services. The Ethiopian, Eritrean and Amhara forces left a trail of scorched earth, in which they deliberately burned crops ready for harvest, grain, and homes; and looted and slaughtered livestock. To ensure no harvest for next season, forces worked in tandem blocking vital agricultural supplies, including seeds, destroyed and looted farm tools oxen, and during the most crucial period prevented farmers from tilling their land.³ Before federal Ethiopian troops

¹ <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/wfp-says-delivering-food-tigray-hopes-air-bridge-soon-2021-07-02/>

² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-58189395>

³ <https://theconversation.com/how-ethiopias-conflict-has-affected-farming-in-tigray-166229>



and their allies retreated from large parts of Tigray at the end of June, eight months of the war and the deliberate obstruction of humanitarian access had already put the Tigrayan population on the brink of an entirely man-made disaster with over a million people living in famine like condition. The air bridge delivery of humanitarian aid was meant to address critical shortages of food and medicine that existed by the end of June. Deceptively declaring 'unilateral humanitarian ceasefire' to allow better humanitarian, the Ethiopian government and its allies destroyed bridges, blocked any road and air transport, cut communication, electricity, fuel and banking services, putting the entire population of Tigray under complete brutal siege. There has been only one humanitarian delivery by air and even that was after Ethiopian authorities in Addis Ababa had coerced the removal of medical supplies from the delivery. The Ethiopian government tightened its chokehold on humanitarian deliveries by land after June, with deliveries over the last 3 months falling to a trickle, leading the UN to conclude in September what was obvious all along that the Ethiopian government has put Tigray under a de-facto humanitarian blockade⁴.

Consistent with their declared intention of wiping out Tigrayans⁵ "for a 100 years", as H.E. Mr. Pekka Haavisto, EU's envoy to Ethiopia, was told by Ethiopian authorities, the Ethiopian regime together with its allied forces have now generated a famine that is killing hundreds, if not thousands, of people on a daily basis in majority of districts in Tigray and if unabated, the number of those starved to death will grow exponentially. Right now, millions of Tigrayans are under conditions of an entirely man-made active famine and are at immediate risk for starvation or death attributable to the combined factors of malnutrition and disease, with alarming scale among children, elders, pregnant and lactating women. Alarms raised by OCHA and other humanitarian agencies about dwindling food, medical and fuel supplies have fallen on deaf ears, with Ethiopian authorities pursuing their starvation objective through a pattern of blocking aid for as long as possible but allowing a limited access only when after international pressure reaches levels they can no longer resist. It is ironic that this pattern instead of drawing strong and unanimous condemnation, it has allowed the Ethiopian government to be thanked or praised by some in international community for the little it allows while it is continuing to successfully pursue its starvation objectives of "surrender or starve" to great effect.

⁴ <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/statement-acting-humanitarian-coordinator-ethiopia-grant-leaity-operational>

⁵ <https://apnews.com/article/europe-ethiopia-africa-ffd3dc3faf15d0501fd87cafe274e65a>



By now it should be abundantly clear that the international community cannot rely on pleading to the goodwill and gestures of the Ethiopian government to halt man-made famine that has already claimed thousands innocent lives in Tigray. The outrageous move by the Ethiopian government to expel top UN officials for speaking the truth about humanitarian crisis in Tigray has made that clearer for those who had any remaining doubts. The current Ethiopian government is only perfecting starvation strategies pursued by previous ones (1984/85), a fact that leaders in the current government and their supporters are not ashamed to admit. Therefore, it should be obvious that solutions to the humanitarian access that do not depend on the Ethiopian government or flights through Addis Ababa are long overdue.

Repeated diplomatic efforts and pleading to convince the Ethiopian government to allow unfettered and unhindered aid to Tigray have failed multiple times. The Global Society of Tigray Scholars and Professionals (GSTS) calls on the international community to act swiftly and establish direct aerial delivery of humanitarian aid (air bridges and air drops) as an alternative solution to deal with the dire humanitarian crisis in Tigray directly, that don't involve the Ethiopian government. Among others, the establishment of air bridge and air drop services will:

- 1) Immediately save the lives of tens of thousands of children, women, elders and other walks of society currently starving to death in Tigray
- 2) Allow for guaranteed delivery from Djibouti or the Sudan regardless of the security situation on the ground
- 3) Force the Ethiopian government to allow for unhindered and unfettered access using ground convoys as the international community has been (unsuccessfully) requesting from start of the conflict
- 4) Stop the Ethiopian government from continuing to use starvation as a weapon with impunity while also putting pressure on the government to respond positively to calls for negotiated solutions as has been advocated by the UN, US, EU, and others
- 5) Halt the unimaginable suffering Tigrayans and other peoples in Ethiopia from becoming a 'stain on the conscience' of the entire world in the 21st century as the Ethiopian government follows blatantly with more determination the starvation strategies of previous despotic regimes
- 6) Force the Ethiopian government to restore all essential services including electricity, telecommunications, banking and financial services, fuel, civilian transport (land and air), trade and other public services in Tigray

Air bridges and air drops have been successfully used for humanitarian access in various countries, including in Syria, Sudan, and Afghanistan, for a number of besieged and hard-to-reach communities. The GSTS believes the desperate situation in Tigray requires immediate similar interventions to end to the inhumane siege and before hundreds of thousands of Tigrayans perish. Failure to act now will lead to one



of the most catastrophic humanitarian crises in modern history and indeed a “stain on the conscience” of the international community.



Sincerely,
The Global Society of Tigray Scholars
and Professionalsⁱ
5th October 2021

CC:

- **Excellency, Dr. QU Dongyu**
Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
- **Excellency, Mr. David Muldrow Beasley**
Executive Director of the World Food Programme
- **Excellency, Mr. Janez Lenarèiè**
European Commissioner for Crisis Management
- **Excellency, Ms. Samantha Power**
U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Administrator
- **Excellency, Ms. Michelle Bachelet**
United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights
- **UNSC Permanent Members**
- **All UN Diplomatic Missions in Geneva**
- **All Diplomatic Missions in Addis Ababa**

ⁱ GSTS is 501(C) and 33/2011 legally registered non-partisan, not-for-profit, and autonomous Global Knowledge Network of over 3,200 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.