

4th April, 2021

Ethiopian Tigrayans in the UK,
Website: <https://meketetigray.uk>

OPEN LETTER TO THE UK GOVERNMENT

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP,
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom,
10 Downing Street,
London,
SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister,

Subject: UNHRC Must Conduct an Independent, Transparent and International, Not a Sham Investigation of the Genocidal War on Tigray

1. We are concerned British citizens and residents of the UK of Ethiopian Tigrayan origin. We are organised under a broad democratic platform known as "*Mekete Tigray UK*" (*i.e. Defence of Tigray*). We are writing again to bring our Government's attention to the War on Tigray. There are credible allegations as well as verified crime against humanity and war crimes being committed by the armies of the regimes of Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia, Amhara Regional Government and Isaias Afewerki of Eritrea. The crimes also include ethnic cleansing of millions of Tigrayans in Western and Southern Tigray by Amhara Revanchists and their Militias as attested by the US State Department Dossiers and as reported by the New York Times on 26 February 2021. The war has been raging for five months today with horrendous aftermaths and catastrophic consequences in terms of human lives, property, and livestock. The intensity and extent of the damage is such, it has damaged the sensitive landscape and biodiversity of the Region. To date, tens of thousands of people have been killed; hunger and starvation, and sexual violence and rape have been weaponised. According to the UK Parliamentary Debate on Tigray held on 23rd March 2021 over 10,000 Tigrayan girls and women have been sexually abused and raped. The Region's infrastructure has been deliberately destroyed. These are with the intention to completely subjugate the people of Tigray and bring them to surrender their autonomous and self-governing rights enshrined in the Federal Constitution of Ethiopia:

"Every now and then, East Africa breaks into world consciousness. It happened in the mid-1980s, when Ethiopia underwent a terrible famine. Teams of pop stars made two hit "Charity Singles": "We are the World" and "Do they Know it is Christmas?". Today, Ethiopia is again in the news,

for War in Tigray, a region in the country's north. What is happening there is worse than war, if such a thing is possible. Tigray is a theatre for war crimes and crime against humanity. To make it more interesting – if that is the word – Ethiopia's head of state is the 2019 Nobel Peace Laureate, Prime Minister of Ethiopia."

(Jay Nordlinger, National Review; 22 March 2021)

"A Pogrom is happening in Ethiopia. Ethiopia is killing its own citizens wantonly. That is chilling, but true: by attempting to extirpate Ethiopia of Tigrayan ethnicity and heritage, Ethiopia's military and government stands accused of purposeful ethnic cleansing, a precursor to all-out genocide, as outlawed by the UN Convention against Genocide"

(Professor Robert Rotberg, Former President of the World Peace Foundation; 28 January 2021)

"In my 30 yrs humanitarian work in brutalised places e.g. Darfur, Rwanda, Afghanistan, Bosnia, I have never come across situations like #Ethiopia #Tigray where military deliberately sets out to occupy/destroy most health facilities. World Record in Human Degradation"

(Professor Mukesh Kapila; Writer, Author & Global Health Humanitarian; Twitter; 14 March 2021)

2. We commend the UK Government's position including the call to end the fighting in Tigray and the peaceful resolution of the conflict through political dialogue; the complete and verified withdrawal of Eritrean troops from Tigray; the unfettered humanitarian access to the victims of war who are on the verge of starvation and famine. We also welcome the Government's call for an independent, transparent and international investigation of the alleged crimes committed in Tigray.

3. We also commend the positions of the European Union and the US Government on the war in Tigray. We commend the European Union's sanctions against persons and agencies responsible for human rights violations in Eritrea. We further plead for concrete UK and global actions and sanctions to stop the War on Tigray.

4. We are, however, extremely saddened to hear the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) Chief, Ms Michelle Bachelet, agreement with the Abiy Ahmed regime to conduct a joint investigation of the alleged crimes against humanity and war crimes being committed in Tigray. This is not only a major reversal of position by the UNHRC and the UN system, but also a total betrayal of the Tigrayan victims of the war. It is a travesty of justice of the highest order to involve a state sponsored institution, who quietly allowed the systematic persecution of Tigrayans all over Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), has no moral or

professional integrity to be a co- investigator. It is now well established the complicity of the EHRC in the Maikadra Massacre of Tigrayans by the Amhara Militia and Fano Paramilitary; the EHRC's deliberate cover-up and disinformation regarding the victims and perpetrators is a testimony of its incompetence and also a deliberate silence to conceal the truth. Agreeing to the EHRC as a co-investigator amounts to allowing the culprits to investigate their own crimes.

5. We feel, the Tigrayan people have again been betrayed not only by the government that is committing the atrocities, but by the UNHRC's agreement with the alleged perpetrators, and supporters and condoners of the crimes. This is ironic coming from Ms Michelle Bachelet who was a victim of the military Junta of Augusto Pinochet. Would she have allowed Augusto Pinochet's crimes to have been investigated by an institution that he set up, controlled and directed? By an institution that was staffed with his functionaries and confidants? It appears that Abiy Ahmed not only managed to deceive the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, about the non-presence of Eritrean troops in Tigray but he also managed to mislead Michelle Bachelet when she accepted the EHRC as a co-investigator of the crimes committed in Tigray. This is not only a mockery of justice but also disrespect and disrepute to the organisation she represents. This is what **Elie Wiesel** called "double killing" when referring to Holocaust Deniers. In Tigray's context, the crime committed against Tigrayans is to be investigated by the very institutions and functionaries that are complicit in the crime against humanity and war crimes, as well as ethnic cleansing, as evidenced by the US State Department dossier. Moreover, it gives a completely different and opposite meaning to the concept of independent and transparent investigation of war crimes.

6. The EHRC lacks political credibility, track record, institutional independence and human resource capacity to undertake an independent, transparent and impartial investigation of credible allegations of crimes against humanity and war crimes. In an academic 2019 paper entitled: **"The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission: Critical Analysis in its Roles of Promoting Human Rights"**, Lamessa Gudeta analyzed the EHRC's independence against the criteria of financial autonomy, the mechanism and processes of EHRC Commissioners appointments; the EHRC problems of accessibility; and the legal and operational autonomy of the institution, thereby concluding: **"In conclusion, EHRC has little or no role in promoting and protection of human rights as it stands now. The Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institution has ranked the EHRC as failing the Paris Principle."**

7. In an in-depth review of the work of the EHRC during the period 2013-2020, Amnesty International findings catalogue structural and institutional weaknesses and biases that undermine the EHRC as an independent agency:

"The ECHR has built an unenviable track record of dismissing credible allegations of human rights violations, producing questionable

investigation reports, and many times, failing to act in clear cases of human rights violations. When it has had the occasion to investigate and report allegations of torture and other ill-treatment in its submissions to the UNHRC and Ethiopia's Federal High Court, it missed the opportunity to alert the Ethiopian public about human rights violations occurring in Ethiopian prisons and to hold the authorities to account. This briefing show in detail how the Commission has often attempted to dismiss allegations of human rights violations by the authorities".

(Skirting Human Rights Violations – Amnesty International Report on EHRC, 2019)

"The EHRC failed to ensure that human rights are protected, respected and enforced and to take necessary measures when they were violated. Instead, the EHRC whitewashed human rights violations through compromised methodologies, dismissing credible allegations and eschewing a clear stand on human rights violations".

(Skirting Human Rights Violations – Amnesty International Report on EHRC, 2019)

"Our analysis shows that the EHRC is not fit for purpose as the country tries to break with the repressive past. The EHRC's brazen bias against victims and a dismissive stance towards their complaints means that the EHRC's reports on protester killings and prison conditions squandered opportunities to make things right for the victims."

(Joan Nyanyuki, Amnesty International Director for East Africa, the Horn and the Great Lakes; June 2019)

8. The irony is that even the UNHRC community in Geneva, including the predecessor of Ms Bachelet, thinks that the EHRC is a partisan institution and lacks institutional independence and capacity to investigate credible allegations of crimes against humanity and war crimes:

"Ethiopian Human Rights Commission is not as yet what is called Paris Principle-compliant and not up to the status. Therefore, it is seen as not independent by the human rights community in Geneva."

(Zied Raad Al Hussien, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2018)

9. The people of Tigray have been subjected for too long to a barbaric and genocidal war, where hunger, starvation, sexual violence and rape have been used by Abiy Ahmed, Isaias Afewerki and Amhara Expansionists. The aftermaths of the

war have been horrendous, including atrocities and massacres resulting in the death of tens of thousands of civilians; millions dislocated and on the verge of famine; the rape of thousands of girls and women; the destruction of property and infrastructure; the wanton destruction of religious, cultural and heritage sites. There have been credible and verified evidence that crime against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing have been committed in Tigray.

10. We plead to our Government, Western governments and global agencies to insist on an international, independent and transparent investigation of the credible allegation of crimes against humanity and war crimes in Tigray. We also plead further that our Government takes concrete actions to stop the War on Tigray.

11. Finally, we thank you for your time and attention, and trust that our Government will do whatever is required to ensure that justice is done and is seen to be done in respect of the crimes being committed in Tigray. We have appended testimonies on crimes being committed in Tigray. We trust and look forward to hearing your response; and we could be contacted at the above address for further information. Thanking you again.

Yours sincerely,

**UK Citizens and Residents of Ethiopian Origins,
Mekete Tigray UK Steering Committee**

Copied:

The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP; Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
The Rt Hon James Duddridge MP; Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Africa)
Sir Simon McDonald KCMG KCVO; Permanent Under-Secretary and Head of Diplomatic Service
Dr Alastair McPhail CMG OBE; British Ambassador to Ethiopia
The Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP; Secretary of State for International Development
The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP; Chancellor of the Exchequer
The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP; Home Secretary
The Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP; Defense Secretary
Baroness Evans of Bowes Park; Leader of the House of Lord and Lord Privy Seal
The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer MP; Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition
The Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP; Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
The Rt Hon Lisa Nandy MP; Shadow Foreign Secretary
Baroness Smith of Basildon; Shadow Leader of the House of Lords
The Rt Hon Edward Davey MP; Acting Leader of the Liberal Democrats
The Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP; First Minister of Scotland
The Rt Hon Mark Drakeford MS; First Minister of Wales
The Rt Hon Arlene Isabel Foster MP; First Minister of Northern Ireland
The Rt Hon Ian Blackford MP; Leader of the Scottish Nationalists Party in the House of Commons
The Rt Hon Caroline Lucas MP; The Green Party
The Rt Hon Tom Tugendhat MP; Chair of Foreign Affairs Select Committee
The Rt Hon Claudia Webbe MP; Member of Foreign Affairs Select Committee
The Rt Hon Chris Bryant MP; Member of Foreign Affairs Select Committee
The Rt Hon Stewart Malcolm McDonald MP; Member of Foreign Affairs Select Committee
The Rt Hon Chi Onwurah MP; Chair of All Party Parliamentary Group for Africa
Lord Chidgey; Co-Chair of All Party Parliamentary Group for Africa
The Rt Hon Kim Johnson MP; Vice-Chair of All Party Parliamentary Group for Africa
The Rt Hon Pauline Latham MP; Vice-Chair of All Party Parliamentary Group for Africa
The Rt Hon Patrick Grady MP; Secretary of All Party Parliamentary Group for Africa
The BBC
The Times
The Sunday Times
The Financial Times
The Economist
The Daily Telegraph
The Sunday Telegraph
The Guardian
The Observer

Appendix

Testimonies of Genocide, Crime Against Humanity and War Crimes in Tigray

The War on Tigray

"Every now and then, East Africa breaks into world consciousness. It happened in the mid-1980s, when Ethiopia underwent a terrible famine. Teams of pop stars made two hit "Charity Singles": "We are the World" and "Do they Know it is Christmas?". Today, Ethiopia is again in the news, for War in Tigray, a region in the country's north. What is happening there is worse than war, if such a thing is possible. Tigray is a theatre for war crimes and crime against humanity. To make it more interesting – if that is the word – Ethiopia's head of state is the 2019 Nobel Peace Laureate, Prime Minister of Ethiopia."

(Jay Nordlinger, National Review; 22 March 2021)

"The unfolding catastrophes in the War on Tigray: 52,000 civilians killed over 90 days; 4.5 million Tigrayans in need of urgent emergency aid to avert famine of the 1984/85 proportions; 2.2 million Tigrayans internally displaced; close to 100,000 refugees in Sudan; almost 100 % of crops in the fields in Tigray burnt; more than 75 % domestic animals in Tigray killed; and more than 75 % of health facilities, schools in Tigray looted, destroyed, or burnt".

(<https://savetigray.substack.com/p/a-special-place-in-hell-video-update?>)

Ethnic Targeting, Cleansing and Genocide

"A Pogrom is happening in Ethiopia. Ethiopia is killing its own citizens wantonly. That is chilling, but true: by attempting to extirpate Ethiopia of Tigrayan ethnicity and heritage, Ethiopia's military and government stands accused of purposeful ethnic cleansing, a precursor to all-out genocide, as outlawed by the UN Convention against Genocide"

(Professor Robert Rotberg, Former President of the World Peace Foundation; 28 January 2021)

"Ethiopian officials and allied militia fighters are leading a systematic campaign of ethnic cleansing in Tigray, the war-torn region in northern Ethiopia, according to an internal United States government report obtained by The New York Times. The report, written earlier this month, documents in stark terms a land of looted houses and deserted villages where tens of thousands of people are unaccounted for.

Fighters and officials from the neighboring Amhara region of Ethiopia, who entered Tigray in support of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, are "deliberately and efficiently rendering Western Tigray ethnically homogeneous through the organized use of force and intimidation," the report says. 'Whole villages were severely damaged or completely erased', the report said."

(The New York Times; 26 February 2021)

" When, for more than a year, the Abiy Ahmed regime conducted ethnic profiling, targeting and cleansing of Tigrayans in Addis Ababa under the nose of the diplomatic communities, including those who work for UNDP Ethiopia, the UN system failed to raise an eyebrow let alone protest. These have been the precursor of the now out-and-out genocidal War on Tigray"

(MT; MKTUK; 8 March 2021)

"Denial of genocide strives to reshape history in order to demonize victims and rehabilitate the perpetrators. Denial of genocide is the final stage of genocide. It is what Elie Wiesel has called a "double killing." Denial murders the dignity of survivors and seeks to destroy remembrance of the crime. In a century plagued by genocide, we affirm the moral necessity of remembering – 'or acknowledging and stopping it when it is happening'- MT".

(Statement by Concerned Scholars and Writers, Armenian National Institute, April 24, 1998, accessed 3 March 2021)

"What happened in Rwanda showed that despite the creation of an organization set up to prevent a repetition of genocide – for the UN is central to this task – it failed to do so, even when the evidence was indisputable."

(L.R. Melvern, an Investigative Journalist Who Researched the Rwandan Genocide)

Weaponisation of Hunger, Starvation and Famine

"Emaciated refugees to crops burned on the brink of harvest, starvation threatens the survivors of more than two months of fighting in Ethiopia's Tigray region. The first humanitarian workers to arrive after pleading with the Ethiopian government for access describe weakened children dying from diarrhea after drinking from rivers. Shops were looted or depleted weeks ago. More than 4.5 million people, nearly the region's entire population, need emergency food. Hundreds of thousands might starve to death and some already had, according to minutes obtained by The

Associated Press. There is an extreme urgent need — I don't know what more words in English to use — to rapidly scale up the humanitarian response because the population is dying every day as we speak,"

(Mari Carmen Vinales, Head of the Emergency Unit for Doctors without Borders)

"In all my years as an aid worker, I have rarely seen a humanitarian response so impeded and unable to deliver in response for so long, to so many with such pressing needs. As an international community, we are clearly failing to deliver against the humanitarian imperative we are facing. Millions of women, children and men, including refugees, are in a truly desperate situation, suffering alone without aid or protection. The entire aid sector, NRC included, must also recognise our failure to define the scale of the crisis, to respond early, to coordinate and to speak out – all of which has crippled the collective response. We must all act now and play our part to ensure aid reaches the millions of people suffering in Tigray."

(Secretary-General Jan Egeland: Norwegian Refugee Council: Aid still not reaching Tigray, 1 February 2021)

"No more whitewashing: Aid is still NOT reaching civilians in desperate need in Ethiopia's Tigray. Hunger and malnutrition reach them faster. In 40 years as humanitarian, I've rarely seen an aid response so impeded. We are failing as an int'l community"

(Jan Egeland, Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council)

"The head of the Ethiopian Red Cross Society said Wednesday that 80 percent of the country's conflict-hit Tigray region was cut off from humanitarian assistance and warned that tens of thousands could starve to death.

(AFP; 8 January 2021)

"In all my years as an aid worker, I have rarely seen a humanitarian response so impeded and unable to deliver in response for so long, to so many with such pressing needs. Millions of women, children and men, including refugees, are in a truly desperate situation, suffering alone without aid or protection. We must all act now and play our part to ensure aid reaches the millions of people suffering in Tigray."

(Statement by Secretary General Jan Egeland: Norwegian Refugee Council: Aid still not reaching Tigray; 1st February 2021)

Sexual Violence and Rape as Instrument of War

"Ethiopia confirms rape allegations in Tigray conflict -The authorities in Ethiopia have confirmed incidents of rape took place in the conflict-hit Tigray region in the wake of a military offensive against the local ruling party. It comes after the UN said it had received reports of a high number sexual violence and abuse in the region, including of individuals forced to rape members of their own family. 'We have received the report back from our Taskforce team on the ground in the Tigray region, they have unfortunately established rape has taken place conclusively and without a doubt,' Minister of Women, Ethiopia, Filsan Abdullahi tweeted on 11 February 2021."

(BBC News, Africa, 12 February, 2021)

"What is the fuss about Tigrayans women being raped, our soldiers are being killed!"

(Abiy Ahmed's Response to Sexual Violence and Rape in Tigray; House of Representatives Session, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; 23 March 2021)

"We are horrified by the reports and allegations we have received of sexual violence during the conflict in Tigray. The survivors of these alleged attacks must not be seen as statistics but as individual women and girls whose lives have been profoundly altered by the violations committed against them"

(Gemma Connell; U.N. Humanitarian Chief for East and Southern Africa)

"I am greatly concerned by serious allegations of sexual violence in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, including a high number of alleged rapes in the capital, Mekelle. There are also disturbing reports of individuals allegedly forced to rape members of their own family, under threats of imminent violence. Some women have also reportedly been forced by military elements to have sex in exchange for basic commodities, while medical centres have indicated an increase in the demand for emergency contraception and testing for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) which is often an indicator of sexual violence in conflict. In addition, there are increasing reports of sexual violence against women and girls in a number of refugee camps."

(Pramila Patten; The U.N. Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict)

"It's not just the rape – it's the way this is done. I know of a father who was tied up to a chair with a rope between his lips, forced to watch as five Eritrean soldiers took turns to rape his 12 year old daughter. They are even forcing fathers, brothers and uncles to rape their own children and relatives, and killing them for refusing – what Tigrayan will rape his own family member?! They rape pregnant women. We are also hearing accounts of Eritrean forces killing women and raping their corpses after. It's difficult to find one-time rape victims; even those who have been raped

have been raped again. I know these are unconscionable and horrifying to the human mind; I am telling you as a priest – but this is what they are doing. To them, this is law.”

(The horrors of the Tigray war: Eyewitness accounts. Eritrean Hub; January 30, 2021)

“What type of cowardly men are these to fight their wars thru the bodies of women? What kind of perverted cause can only be advanced by inflicting unspeakable sexual brutality on women? What kind of degraded nation allows the industrial-scale rape of its women? #Tigray #Ethiopia”

(Professor Mukesh Kapila; @mukeshkapila; 20th March 2021)

Crime Against Humanity

“The Maikadra Massacre of over 600 Tigrayans by Amhara Militias and Fano Paramilitary is a “Double Killing” of Tigrayans when the EHRC conspired with the Amhara Revanchists to twist it as crime against Amharas by Tigrayan Youth.”

(GSTS, 14 March 2021)

“Investigation by the very agencies that are at the centre of the Genocidal War on Tigray - as either as collaborators, supporters, or condoners of perpetrators - is the ultimate measure of inhumanity and injustice as it is complicity in covering-up crime against humanity and war crimes”

(GSTS; 14 March 2021)

“The EHRC failed to ensure that human rights are protected, respected and enforced and to take necessary measures when they were violated. Instead, the EHRC whitewashed human rights violations through compromised methodologies, dismissing credible allegations and eschewing a clear stand on human rights violations”.

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The ECHR has built an unenviable track record of dismissing credible allegations of human rights violations, producing questionable investigation reports, and many times, failing to act in clear cases of human rights violations. When it has had the occasion to investigate and report allegations of torture and other ill-treatment in

its submissions to the UNHRC and Ethiopia's Federal High Court, it missed the opportunity to alert the Ethiopian public about human rights violations occurring in Ethiopian prisons and to hold the authorities to account. This briefing shows in detail how the Commission has often attempted to dismiss allegations of human rights violations by the authorities".

(Skirting Human Rights Violations – Amnesty International Report on EHR, 2019)

War Crimes

"The attacks violated the 'laws of war'. Human Rights Watch has accused the Ethiopian military of indiscriminately shelling urban centres during the conflict in the northern region of Tigray. Homes, schools, hospitals and marketplaces were not spared when artillery was fired indiscriminately towards Tigray's towns and cities. In one attack Eighty-three civilians, including children, were killed and more than 300 others were wounded.

(BBC News, 11 February 2021; Human Rights Watch, 11 February 2021)

"Ethiopia must fulfil its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, as well as under the Rome Statute, which describes the targeting of civilians, including through deliberate starvation. Pressure must be exerted to ensure an immediate ceasefire, the withdrawal of Eritrean troops, the opening of humanitarian corridors to assist refugees and civilians, and the immediate, independent verification and investigation of possible war crimes and crimes against humanity."

(Mervyn Thomas, Founder of CSW, a non-for-profit Christian Humanitarian Group; 24 November 2020)

"The US-based group said the attacks violated the 'laws of war' and urged the government to investigate. Human Rights Watch has accused the Ethiopian military of indiscriminately shelling urban centres during the conflict in the northern region of Tigray last November. Homes, schools, hospitals and marketplaces were not spared when artillery was fired indiscriminately towards Tigray's towns and cities, according to the report. In one incident Eighty-three civilians, including children, were killed and more than 300 others were wounded, Human Rights Watch alleges"

(BBC News, 11 February 2021; Human Rights Watch, 11 February 2021)

"The attacks on Tigray's health facilities are having a devastating impact on the population. Health facilities and health staff need to be protected during a conflict, in accordance with international humanitarian law. This is clearly not happening in Tigray. Hospitals, healthcare centres and clinics across Ethiopia's Tigray region have been looted, vandalised and destroyed in a deliberate and widespread attack on healthcare, according to MSF teams on the ground. Of 106 health facilities visited by Médecins Sans Frontières / Doctors Without Borders (MSF) teams between mid-December and early March, nearly 70 percent had been looted and more than 30 percent had been damaged. Just 13 percent were functioning normally and in some places the looting is ongoing.

(Oliver Behn; MSF General Director; 15 March 2021)

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(Professor Mukesh Kapila; Writer, Author & Global Health Humanitarian; Twitter; 14 March 2021)
