19 November 2020

Open Letter To:

His Excellency and Highness Khalifa Al Nahyan; President of the UAE and Emir of Abu Dhabi; and

His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum; Prime Minister and Vice President of the UAE

Subject - The UAE Involvement in and Support for the Genocidal War against the Tigrayan People of Ethiopia

We, concerned British citizens and residents of the UK of Ethiopian origin strongly condemn the UAE's flagrant involvement in and support for the genocidal war waged by the Abiy Ahmed and Isaias Afewerki's Ruling Parties against the Tigrayan nationality of Ethiopia. There is now substantial and confirmed evidence that the Government of the UAE have been providing the dictatorial rulers of Ethiopia and Eritrea not only financial and personnel support but also genocidal weaponry launched from the UAE bases in Asab and airfields in Eritrea, in particular Drones that target civilians and civic institutions including churches and mosques[i]. Weapons used to bomb civilians include the use of Mig-23 and Sukhoi-27 jet fighters, and attack helicopters. The attack on the St George Church of Mekelle in Tigray on the 17 November 2020 is such an example. Similarly, the Drone attack in Tigray and aerial bombardment carried out against the University of Mekelle and the civilian population of Mekelle, the capital city of Tigray, on 19 November 2020 confirm the use of weapons of mass destruction. These Drones also have been attacking vital infrastructure in Tigray, such as hospitals, schools, universities, industries and electrical power stations. Furthermore, these weapons of mass destruction and state-sponsor terrorist acts have been employed to target and assassinate the leadership of the Regional National State of Tigray, which is an autonomous and self-governing regional member state of the Ethiopian Federal Democratic Republic.

We call upon all peace-loving peoples, agencies, governments and countries of the world to:

- Condemn and call upon the UAE to stop its involvement in and support for the genocidal war being waged by the dictators Abiy Ahmed and Isaias Afewerki against the Tigrayan People and Nationality of Ethiopia;

- Condemn the use of UAE's provided weapons of mass destruction and the state-sponsored terrorism against the Tigrayan people; including the bombing of civilians, infrastructure and attempts to assassinate regional leaders;

- Call upon all Arabs and Muslims to condemn the use of UAE's provided drones that are being used against Tigray, which is the land of the Al Najashi, an Ethiopian-Tigrayan king who provided asylum and refugee to the First Migration, Hijrah (Hijrah il-al-Habshah), of the Companion and relatives of the Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) in the 7th AD.

- The UAE must cease and desist from exacerbating the political instability and the danger of regime failure in Ethiopia by supporting the war efforts of the dictators Abiy Ahmed and Isaias Afewerki by providing financial support and weapons of mass destruction. Moreover, the UAE's involvement risks regionalising Ethiopia's internal political instability into the wider Middle-Eastern geopolitical crisis and rivalries.[ii] Furthermore, the UAE involvement increases the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the politically unstable region fuelling and inducing regime failure in Africa, in particular the Horn of Africa.[iii]

- The one and only viable and constructive role the UAE can play is to support the ending of the genocidal war waged against Tigray; and to call for an all-inclusive political dialogue by all stakeholders to resolve pertinent political challenges prevailing in Ethiopia.

From: ***British Citizens and Residents of the UK of Ethiopian Origin***

Copied to:-

The UAE Ambassador to the UK
The Saudi Arabian Ambassador to the UK
The Egyptian Ambassador to the UK
The Qatari Ambassador to the UK
The Sudanese Ambassador to the UK
The Government of the UK
Her Majesty's Official Opposition Party
The Chairperson of the African Union
The Chairperson of IGADD
The Chairperson of the Arab League
The President of the EU
The General Secretary of the UN
The Ethiopian Ambassador to the UK
The Eritrean Ambassador to the UK
The British Media
The Arab Media
The African Media

End Notes

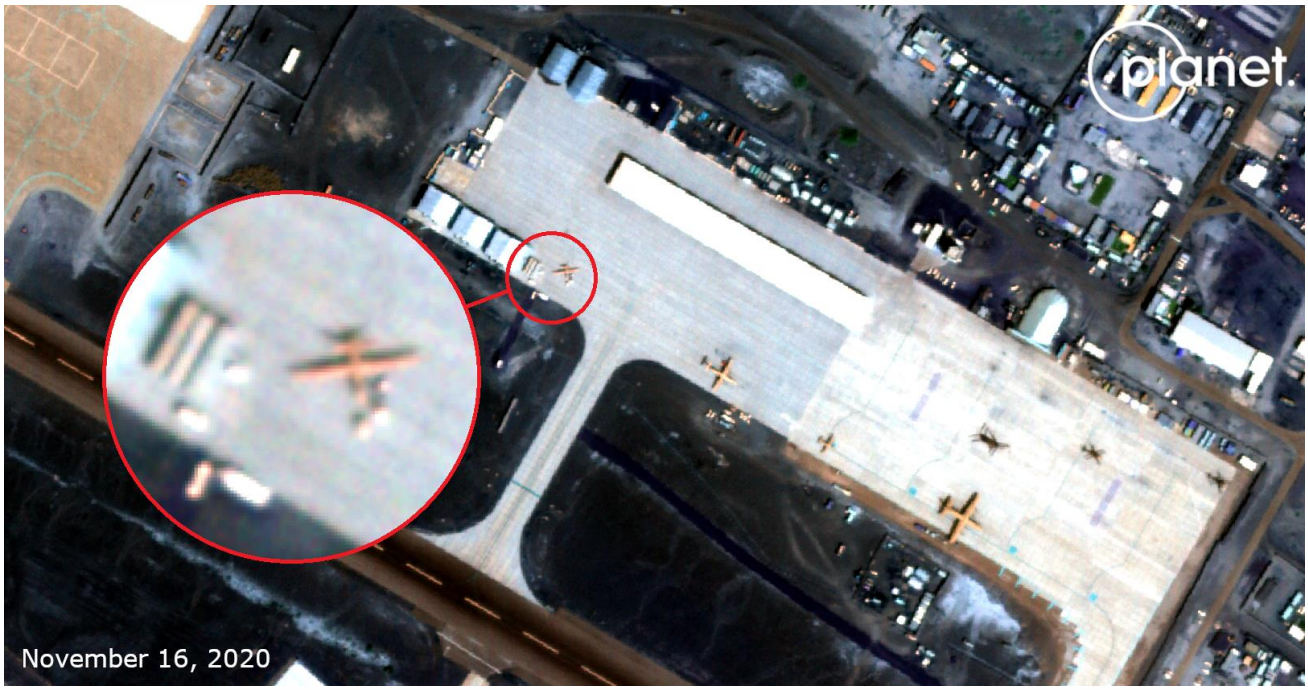
[i] According "Bellingcat", a Humanitarian Disarmament Project: "The Ethiopian Prime Minister has only stated that the Air Force conducted 'targeted strikes' against the militants without specifying the weapons used.

Could Emirati drones, other drones or piloted aircraft have been used in these airstrikes?

Satellite imagery obtained by Bellingcat suggests that the United Arab Emirates air base in Assab, Eritrea is indeed home to drones consistent with China's Wing Loong II model of armed uncrewed aerial vehicles.

The imagery, provided by Planet Labs, shows a drone with a wingspan of just over 20 metres, matching the features of the drone model produced by China's Chengdu Aircraft Industry Group.

The UAE acquired Wing Loong II drones in 2017. They have also used the drones to conduct operations in Yemen in the war against various militant groups, including the Houthis".



Satellite imagery from Planet Labs. Used with permission

The drones seen in these images are consistent with those operated by the UAE. Furthermore, the recently built drone hangars at the base suggest a larger presence of drones in the area, though their active deployment over Ethiopia is not yet confirmed. However, the imagery provides a strong indication of the possibility for their use.

The Ethiopian Air Force also operates Russian-made MiG-23 and Sukhoi-27 jet fighters and attack helicopters that could also have been used in the strikes."

[ii] According to the ERITREA HUB, a Research and Information Service on Africa specialising on the politics of East Africa, the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea have become a major focal point of global and regional forces that drive the regional geopolitics. "This has resulted in a scramble for influence across the region, and the establishment of foreign bases.

The UAE was among the first new actors – with a base in the Eritrean port of Asab, which served its war in Yemen. The Saudis also had a foothold here

Today the Red Sea is home to navies from around the world, with the UAE having extended its influence considerably."

According to Eritrea Hub: "Isaias a Afewerki of Eritrea and Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia are playing geopolitics to crush the minority Tigrayan Nationality in Ethiopia from both the North and South."

(Source: https://eritreahub.org/international-dimensions-of-the-tigray-war-and-how-it-might-end , 19 November 2020)

[iii] According to Aljazeera News on 19 November 2020:

US senators seek to halt Trump's $23bn UAE arms sale

Senators cited national security concerns and the UAE's 'behaviour' in Yemen and Libya as reasons to halt the sale.

United States President Donald Trump plans to sell Reaper drones and other munitions to the United Arab Emirates [Dominque Faget/AFP]
19 Nov 2020

Three United States senators on Wednesday said they would introduce legislation seeking to halt the Trump administration's effort to sell more than $23bn of drones and other weapons systems to the United Arab Emirates, a showdown with the president two months before he is due to leave office.

Democratic Senators Bob Menendez and Chris Murphy and Republican Senator Rand Paul announced they would introduce four separate resolutions of disapproval of President Donald Trump's plan to sell billions of dollars' worth of Reaper drones and other munitions, F-35 fighter aircraft and air-to-air missiles to the UAE. The lawmakers said the Trump administration, seeking to rush the sale of the sophisticated weaponry, circumvented the normal congressional review process. They said the US State and Defense Departments also refused to respond to inquiries about how the administration would deal with national security risks associated with the proposed sales. Murphy was also concerned with the **UAE's "behaviour"** in the region, according to a joint statement he and Menendez released on Wednesday.

"The Emiratis are an important security partner, but **their recent behavior indicates that these weapons may be used in violation of U.S. and international law. The UAE has violated past arms sales agreements, resulting in U.S. arms ending up in the arms of dangerous militia groups, and they have failed to comply with international law in Libya and Yemen,**" Murphy said in the statement. The US Senate Foreign Relations and House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committees have the power to review and block weapons sales under an informal review process.

"A sale this large and this consequential should not happen in the waning days of a lame-duck presidency, and Congress must take steps to stop this dangerous transfer of weapons", said Murphy, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee."

(Source: Aljazeera and news agencies, 19 November 2020: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/11/19/us-senators-hope-to-stop-23bn-arms-sale-to-uae?fbclid=IwAR0nnD2oXkNPFECCY6zmDmeWRcXzAM9S_5X9DHbnpLtfDMr5thLcYTeWtPc)