



**The Looming Civil Strife in Ethiopia:  
Putting the International Community on Notice**

It is with profound sadness that the Global Society of Tigray Scholars (GSTS) expresses its concern about the ever-increasing killings of innocent civilians, targeted assassinations of high-level officials and prominent personalities, massive detentions, and the excessive use of force by security forces in Oromia and other parts of the country<sup>1</sup>.

At a time when the transition embarked by the present government was hoped to deliver democratic elections and stability to Ethiopia, the prospect of civil strife is looming large<sup>2</sup>.

The Federal Government of Ethiopia is plunging the country into civil strife through its blatant and repeated violation of the Federal Constitution and International law. More specifically, the government has repeatedly violated the Federal Constitution, drastically infringed individual civil liberties by unjustly detaining thousands, and ignited the killings of hundreds in various parts of the country.

GSTS condemns the assassination of prominent Oromo artist, Hacaaluu Hundeessaa, and extends its deep condolences to his family and friends. Just a year ago, Ethiopia suffered from the political assassinations of several high-profile officials including the Chief of Staff of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces General Seare Mekonnen, General Gezae Abera, President of the Amhara Regional State Dr. Ambachew Mekonnen, and other officials. Prior to these killings, the death of legendary Engineer Simegnew Bekele, who was the Chief Project Manager of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), still remains suspicious in the eyes of the public. In recent months, the reported killings of local administrators in various parts of the country is a grave sign that peace and security in Ethiopia are non-existent. It is imperative that all of these killings are given a thorough and credible investigation, after which a detailed report should be issued to both the public and international communities.

Instead of initiating a thorough, comprehensive and credible investigations on the dozens of high-level targeted assassinations, the Federal Government officials are giving highly choreographed public statements that are usually signs of intrigue. The Federal Government has already announced the guilty without investigation, which also has led to widespread suspicion and public rejection.

We also condemn the killings and evictions of ordinary citizens and the destruction of properties that have been ongoing in different parts of the Oromia Region.

Our heart also goes out to all the victims of the violence, those who have lost their livelihoods, and their families.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/ethiopia-at-least-239-killed-in-ethiopia-protests-over-singers-death-2259189>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/ethiopia/defusing-ethiopia-latest-perilous-crisis>



GSTS strongly condemns the mass arrest of political leaders, and the disproportionate and unrestrained measures being taken by the Government security forces throughout Oromia. It is clear that these detrimental measures will only further deepen the political crisis.

Instead of calling for calm and candid dialogue, the Federal Government has used the crisis to mount an authoritarian crackdown on all opposition parties who hold differing electoral platforms than the Federal Government and its affiliates<sup>3</sup>.

In an attempt to limit transparency and accountability, the Federal Government has now continued the old habit of shutting down the Internet<sup>4</sup> and local media programmes<sup>5</sup> including the Oromo Media Network (OMN), Dimtsi Woyane (DW), Tigray TV, etc. It has even gone as far as to arrest journalists who diverge from the government narrative. This is especially dangerous during a time where media could be used to combat the propagation of COVID-19 and ensure information sharing on the outbreak. GSTS condemns the ever-increasing suppression of freedom of the press and expression.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms the pro-government media outlets based in the US and within Ethiopia such as the Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio (ESAT)<sup>6</sup>, Walta TV<sup>7</sup>, Fana TV, and others that repeatedly broadcast calls for ethnic cleansing and propagate hate speech with the aim of genocidal incitements. These media outlets have openly called for the detainment of Ethiopians from Tigray in concentration camps. Moreover, ESAT has recently called on foreign forces, specifically the Eritrean government, to attack the Tigray Regional State, the northern part of Ethiopia, in alliance with the Federal Government. These calls for ethnic violence mimic the active support of media outlets, especially that of the Radio Télévision Libre de Mille Collines (RTL), on the infamous genocide of the Tutsis of Rwanda. The tragedy in Rwanda should be a great reminder and early warning to the international community on the consequence of its failure to act early on decisively.

Instead of holding elections in a timely manner to ensure the legitimate exercise of government authority, the Federal Government has indefinitely extended its term in office under the pretext of the COVID-19 outbreak. Come October 2020, the Federal Government's time in office would be unconstitutional. The Federal Government has chosen to make threatening public statements and appearances, including the overuse of the military. These decisions reveal the Federal Government's intent to fuel the crises in the regional states who decided to exercise their right to self-determination, self-rule, and conduct elections.

GSTS strongly condemns the Federal Government's threats to use force against the Tigray National Regional State, which have been choreographed with foreign forces. This recent declaration is the continuation of illegal propaganda and the threat of warfare and sanctions on the Tigray people and the Tigray National Regional State for holding fast to its right to self-determination, regular constitutional elections, and rejecting the various policies of the

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/07/01/ethiopia-cracks-down-following-popular-singers-killing>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.accessnow.org/back-in-the-dark-ethiopia-shuts-down-internet-once-again/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://youtu.be/ib5QG1wW9aI>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/Dr.peter.belayneh/posts/10157375304880658>

<sup>7</sup> <https://youtu.be/ZzCNX1uSB68>



current leadership. This act of terror is in addition to constant menacing and penalization of the Tigray Regional State and its people through the imprisonment of its prominent personalities, exclusion from federal government positions, and blockage of the transportation infrastructures that connect the Tigray to various parts of the country including the Addis Ababa.

GSTS would like to put the international community on alert notice about these grave developments and calls for their attention and immediate action. The international community and the Noble Peace Committee were deceived before, and their continual complicity will drag more than 110 million Ethiopians potentially into another civil war with consequences too ghastly to contemplate including massive displacement.

Therefore, GSTS calls on the international community, in particular, the United Nations Security Council, UN Human Rights Council (OHCHR), the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR), the African Union (AU), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the European Union (EU):

1. To urge the Federal Government to pursue a political solution to the current crisis, in a manner that preserves democracy, stability, and peace, and promotes truth, dialogue, justice and reconciliation among Ethiopians;
2. To condemn without any reservation state and non-state media engaged in the incitement of hate and ethnic cleansing against ethnic groups in Ethiopia, and the invasion and subjugation of the people of Tigray by armed forces, against the will of the people;
3. To uphold its responsibility to protect by ensuring respect of international human rights of the people of Ethiopia to live in peace, exercise their rights of freedom of expression, freedom of movement, self-determination and self-rule, and to respect the will of the people;
4. To heed the public outcry, employ its mandate and engage the Federal Government to launch an immediate national dialogue with all political parties and regional states in order to prevent the country from the verge of a civil war that is unleashing;
5. To engage the Federal Government for an immediate release of all political prisoners, journalists, arbitrarily detained citizens, opening access to the Internet, restoration of freedom of press and speech and announce a roadmap for election;
6. Conduct UN-AU led investigation into all killings of innocent people, the assassinations of high-profile personalities, the kidnapping of university students, and serious human rights violations, arrests and abuses perpetrated on Ethiopians from various ethnic groups in various parts of the country;
7. We also call on the US Government to investigate the foreign based and registered media, ESAT and similar media outlets that are spreading hate speech and genocidal incitements.

The Global Leadership, GSTS  
11 July 2020