



AGAW Democratic Movement (ADM), Benshangul Human Rights Foundation (BHRF), Gambella Liberation Front (GLF), Kemant Advocacy Group (KAG), Sidama National Liberation Front (SNLF), Congress for Somali Cause (CSC), Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), and the Wolayta People Liberation Movement (WPLM)

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For Immediate Release

Joint Press Release Concerning the Reescalation of the War in Tigray and Continued Civil War in the Rest of Ethiopia



The war in Tigray has once again escalated to a shooting war. The war so far has left thousands of combatants dead and thousands more captured. Indiscriminate aerial attacks have caused urban residents to leave their homes ironically for the relative safety of refugee camps, augmenting the number of forcibly displaced five million that had given Ethiopia the dubious distinction of being the country with the highest number of IDPs. The eagerly awaited resolution of the conflict through negotiations has virtually dissipated.



The Ethiopian airwaves are now filled with claims of annihilation of the “terrorist” Tigrayan forces even as towns in northern Ethiopia are falling to the Tigray Defense Force (TDF) one after the other. Fighter planes and unmanned aerial vehicles of the Ethiopian Air Force have returned to the skies over Tigray, bombing civilian spaces, killing innocent children, and terrorizing residents.



This re-escalation is fraught with danger. First, the government’s strategic objective is latched on the belief that Ethiopia has an inexhaustible supply of human beings in the line of fire, and Tigray does not. The strategy is not based on the prevailing reality. The patriotic fervor which accompanied the initial “law enforcement” operation is now palpably absent. The support from Amhara ethno-nationalists following the capture and establishment of the Amhara administration in western Tigray has dissipated. A sense of betrayal, collective despondency, and a general feeling of war weariness is pervasive. With a “human wave” strategy, the war is shaping into a protracted conflict in which many more lives could perish.



Second, the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) and the regional special forces, militias, and paramilitary units are now engaged in fighting increasingly capable insurgencies in the Oromia, Kemant, and Agaw areas, Benshangul and Gambella regions. The Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), in particular, showed its growing military capabilities and reach last June when it launched coordinated attacks in western Ethiopia and Gambella. Ethiopia's security forces have also had to respond to the conflict between the Afar and



Somali regions and the attack Al-Shabaab conducted inside Ethiopia in July. Spread thin, the ENDF has been stretched to its limits, raising the specter of the breakdown of state capacity to maintain law and order.

Third, the federal government's increased defense spending to rebuild the badly damaged ENDF has exacerbated the already high inflation, thus keeping basic commodities out of reach for a large majority of city residents. The destruction of productive assets, livelihoods, infrastructure expansion, and maintenance that the civil war has wrought will make a recovery impossible. There is increasing evidence of capital flight and emigration of businesspeople. The dire economic situation has given rise to a sense of public helplessness, resignation, and apathy.

Many now are looking for a culprit to assign blame for the unfortunate turn of events. The issue is not about who started the war; it is irrelevant. As long as Tigray remained under total siege, which has now lasted more than 670 days, the war the Ethiopian government launched in November 2020 has never stopped. The Ethiopian military broke the humanitarian truce it declared on March 24 when it bombarded Tigrayan Defense Force (TDF) positions around Dedebit on August 15. This was followed by an ENDF offensive in southern Tigray on August 24, 2022.

Though delivery of humanitarian assistance had improved in recent months, the Tigray region remained cut off from the rest of the world because of the Ethiopian government's refusal to resume providing essential public services such as telecommunications, banking, and electricity. The government's refusal literally to switch on the services is the clearest indication that the talk about peace negotiations it deployed was meant to buy time to prepare for another round of war. In effect, the government is responsible for escalating the siege into an all-out war.

If the Ethiopian government was serious about a negotiated end to the Ethiopian civil war, it would have sought to open discussions with all parties in conflict to achieve a comprehensive solution. If the government had given up on a military solution, it could have taken confidence-building measures to encourage the warring parties to the negotiating table. It has now become clear that the drama of negotiations was a scheme to buy time to prepare for war. To end the war and human suffering,

1. We call upon the international community to take tangible steps to pressure the countries that are currently pouring arms to stop exporting war arsenals to Ethiopia and increase their efforts to support an all-inclusive peace negotiation that aims to achieve a comprehensive political settlement.
2. We urge the United States Congress to pass a resolution calling on the administration to resume the process to determine whether or not genocide had been committed in Tigray, which the Department of State's had paused with no reasonable explanation for doing so.

3. We call upon the international community to condemn Eritrean aggression in the strongest possible terms and to take concrete actions, including more effective sanctions, to force Eritrean troops out of Ethiopia to deter them from committing heinous crimes in the Tigray region once again.
4. We urge all Ethiopians to demand a negotiated end to the Prosperity Party's meaningless war on its own citizens and avert a violent dissolution of the Ethiopian state. Ethiopia's youth must not spill their blood for the narrow economic benefit of a privileged few. They must not participate in an immoral, unconstitutional, and unnecessary war that rewards violence and brigandage.
5. We call upon Ethiopia's nations and nationalities to reject the government's interminable war effort, whose purpose is to reverse the political progress in the long struggle to achieve self-rule. The civil war is, in effect, the Prosperity Party's war on democracy, constitutionalism, and the multinational federal system that guarantees the right of nations and nationalities to self-rule.
6. We urge the nations and nationalities to focus their efforts on fighting for their own legitimate cause. Therefore, we call upon all that have paid sacrifices in the past for democracy, pluralism, respect for the rights of nations and nationalities, gender equality, and social justice to renew their commitment to struggling against the rise of a lawless autocracy.
7. We call on the nations and nationalities of Ethiopia to strengthen their solidarity that is rooted in our fundamental values and is based on our shared common cause, vision, and destiny held together by the principles of respect for human dignity, the rule of law, freedom, equality, solidarity, and responsibility, and our collective aspiration of living together in harmony and peace.
8. We commend the Government of Tigray for its commitment to abide by a mutually agreed upon cessation of hostilities and accept a credible African Union-led peace process to end the conflict. We are encouraged by their declaration of intent to work for a negotiated end to the conflict and readiness to participate in an all-inclusive political dialogue to resolve the underlying causes of the civil war.
9. Ethiopia's nations and nationalities are united in believing that Ethiopia cannot once again become a unitary political entity and made up of citizens of an assimilated identity. Such an arrangement is neither possible to install nor strong enough to sustain. Therefore, we call upon the nations and nationalities of Ethiopia to assemble in a National Salvation Convention of all stockholders with the goal of forging a new social contract and constructing a workable political system that ensures respect for human life, lasting peace, and sustainable prosperity.