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Tigray External Affairs Office

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Statement on the Amhara Authorities' Persistent, Reprehensible Destruction of Forensic Evidence

The Government of Tigray is once again shocked by recent media reports of Amhara authorities' feverish destruction of forensic evidence to cover up their merciless massacre of Tigrayans in Western Tigray. On May 7, the BBC reported that Amhara forces, which are occupying Western Tigray, have been "digging up fresh mass graves, exhuming hundreds of bodies, burning them and transporting what remains out of the region." Sadly, the bottomless depravity of these genocidal forces' actions appear to have desensitized the international community into a deadly indifference. We call on the international community to wake up from its stupor and say 'enough is enough!'

This latest instance of evidence-tampering comes in the wake of the Ethiopian government's failed efforts to scuttle the deployment of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, created by the UN Human Rights Council to conduct an independent investigation into all atrocities committed during the war on Tigray. This shocking act represents the invading forces' last-ditch attempt at evading accountability for the atrocities they committed and continue to commit against Tigrayans. All the same, the stench of their culpability is too strong, and the evidence of their guilt too overwhelming for such inhumane tactics to have much impact on a genuine quest for justice.

While this genocidal triumvirate has committed heinous atrocities across Tigray, the brunt of their genocidal campaign has been borne by Tigrayans in Western Tigray. As extensively documented by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, Amhara forces, with the direct participation of the Ethiopian and Eritrean armies, have been engaged in a systematic campaign of ethnic cleansing against Tigrayans. The goal is to rid Western Tigray of any signs of Tigrayans ever having been there, with the ultimate goal of justifying and legitimizing the utterly baseless claim on, and illegal annexation of, a constitutionally recognized Tigrayan territory.

Desperately trying to stymie the work of an internationally-mandated investigative body, the Amhara regional government has been digging up mass graves containing the remains of Tigrayans its forces brutally massacred (see an April 5th statement by the Government of Tigray).

Second to none at nursing phantom historical grievances and a sense of victimization, Amhara authorities have been spinning fictitious narratives that the remains of Tigrayan victims of their vicious ethnic cleansing are, in fact, Amhara victims of Tigray. Sadly, such moral inversion has become the Abiy regime and its domestic and foreign allies' distinguishing feature.

Presented with copious evidence of their guilt, the criminal Abiy regime and its Amhara expansionist partners are now playing their last card: tampering with forensic evidence. To give this shameless public spectacle an aura of legitimacy, the authorities had deployed 'experts' from Gondar University to help dig up mass graves, exhume the remains and transport them beyond the reach of independent investigators. In the process, Gondar University has irreparably debased itself by deviating from its academic mission, facilitating the cover up of a heinous crime, and becoming accessory after the fact. Tragically, Gondar University's self-debasement is emblematic of the endemic moral and institutional corruption that has come to characterize Abiy Ahmed's reign.

If the international community is serious about its pledge of 'never again' and holding perpetrators of massive human rights violations accountable, it cannot let the expansionist Amhara clique get away not only with a genocidal campaign against Tigrayans but also with destroying traces of evidence establishing its guilt. It's time for the international community to go beyond platitudinous expressions of concern and take concrete actions to ensure justice for the countless Tigrayans murdered solely on account of their identity.

