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GOVERNMENT OF TIGRAY

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EXTERNAL
AFFAIRS OFFICE

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Statement on the Ongoing Mass Detention of Tigrayans

Since November 2020, tens of thousands of Tigrayans have been rounded up by the Abiy regime, solely on account of their identity. Among those mass arrested are several thousand retired and active members of the Ethiopian National Defense Force of Tigrayan identity. Hundreds of those detained have been murdered, with some others dying under extremely suspicious circumstances. The Abiy regime has also forcibly repatriated Tigrayan migrants and refugees from the Middle East. It has done so in a flagrant violation of international law—the principle of *non-refoulement*. Those that have been repatriated are being held in concentration camps across the country and treated as either prisoners of war or saboteurs.

Underscoring the extreme cruelty with which Tigrayans continue to be treated, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) issued a statement on June 29, 2022 decrying the inhumane detention of 8,560 innocent Tigrayans in Semera, Afar region. It should be noted that while this institution was established to function as an independent entity, it is a de facto appendage of the Ethiopian state. As such, it has, in one way or another, instigated, facilitated and glossed over the campaign of national extermination directed against Tigrayans. It has also dutifully parroted the Abiy regime’s talking points, amplifying its propaganda and smear campaign against Tigrayans.

What is indisputable is that Ethiopia under Abiy Ahmed’s deplorable reign has become hell for Tigrayans. But by focusing only on the thousands of Tigrayans being held in Afar, while conveniently ignoring the tens of thousands of Tigrayans being held elsewhere in the country, the Commission appears to have made a lame effort to present the former as an

isolated act of rights violation, rather than as part of a systematic campaign of brutality against Tigrayans.

The goal of the Commission’s statement is to rewrite history and present itself as an advocate for those facing repression, when in reality it is not. But no amount of sporadic statement of outrage can whitewash the Commission’s disgraceful complicity in, and legitimization of, the unimaginable atrocities being committed against Tigrayans. Its shameful indifference to, or even championing of, the suffering of Tigrayans at the hand of a vindictive and predatory regime stands in sharp contrast to the speed with it has been quick to point fingers at the Government of Tigray for alleged human rights violations. In the process, the Commission has lost whatever shred of credibility it had to act as an arbiter of dispute over human rights.

The Government of Tigray calls on the international community to press the Abiy regime to comply with its domestic and international legal obligations by releasing the tens of thousands of Tigrayans languishing in concentration camps across the country. The Abiy regime, like all authoritarian regimes—past and present—responds to nothing but preponderant economic, political and diplomatic pressures. Its egregious violations of citizens’ human rights is not a bug, but a basic feature of the regime’s overall makeup. The international community should, therefore, deploy a robust package of punitive actions to compel this genocidal regime to desist from criminalizing Tigrayan identity and release the thousands of Tigrayans languishing in concentration camps.

