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The Government of National Regional State of Tigray
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Office of President

ቀን 23, Aug, 2022
Date

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Ref No 21282/225/84

Open Letter

From the President of the Government of National Regional State of Tigray

To:

H.E. President Macky Sall, Chairperson of the African Union and President of Senegal

H.E. Uhuru Kenyatta, President of the Republic of Kenya

H.E. Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates

H.E. President Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa

Antonio Guterres, Secretary General, United Nations

Members of the United Nations Security Council

Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Antony Blinken, United States Secretary of State

Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission

Members of the African Union Peace and Security Council

Olusegun Obasanjo, A.U. Commission Chairperson's High Representative for the Horn of Africa

Workneh Gebeyeh, Executive Secretary, Intergovernmental Authority on Development

Your Excellencies,

I am writing to convey the position of the Government of Tigray concerning our proposals for pursuing peace with the Federal Government of Ethiopia, while the Federal Government of Ethiopia and its allies are again beating the drums of war.

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The peace process as currently envisaged by the African Union, according to the briefing by the AU Commissioner's High Representative Olusegun Obasanjo to the Peace and Security Council on 4 August, is a blueprint for legitimizing the position of the Federal Government of Ethiopia. It fails to address the causes of the war. It does not contain the necessary steps to end the war against Tigray and resolve the political crisis in Ethiopia. The peace process is being set up to fail.

Our position is that the Federal Government must fulfil unconditional legal obligations including: (a) restoration of essential services to the population of Tigray; (b) unfettered humanitarian access; (c) an end to ongoing war crimes, (d) accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity and genocide; (e) the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Tigray and (f) the restoration of the boundaries of Tigray as they existed prior to the outbreak of hostilities (i.e. the return of Western Tigray).

Defying its international obligations, the Federal Government is refusing to lift the blockade. The International community including the A.U. are not acting to avert the looming military attack on Tigray. Should this attack materialize we shall take all necessary measures to defend ourselves. However, I assure you that at all times we remain ready to engage seriously in negotiations for peace.

Your Excellencies

We have conducted two rounds of confidential face-to-face talks with senior military and civilian officials of the Federal Government of Ethiopia and reached understandings on a cessation of hostilities and the lifting of the blockade on essential services to Tigray. These facts were conveyed to the United Nations and international envoys.



The lifting of the blockade is not a matter for negotiation. The blockade consists of the deliberate and systematic deprivation of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population including banking, telecommunications, essential agricultural inputs such as fertilizer, commerce, free movement of people, as well as obstruction of essential humanitarian assistance as provided for under the Geneva Conventions. As such it is expressly prohibited under International Humanitarian Law, human rights law and international criminal law. In short, the blockade is a war crime.

Let me repeat this point to make it absolutely crystal clear. The continued perpetration of a war crime is not a matter for negotiation under any circumstances. A similar view has been expressed by the U.S. Envoy and his European Union counterpart during their recent visit to Mekelle.

Another non-negotiable issue is independent, credible and comprehensive investigation of violations perpetrated during the war. Our position is that all the facts must come out and all those responsible must be called to account.

As you are also well aware from our previous communications, the Government of Tigray has expressed its opinion on the credibility of the African Union and the High Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission. While we, in principle, recognize AU's role as a continental organization in seeking African solutions to African problems, we do not, however, consider them neutral and impartial brokers in the war in Tigray. We are dismayed by the repeated failure of African Union to fulfil its obligations consistent with the norms and principles enshrined in its Constitutive Act, when it comes to the war in Tigray.



Your Excellencies,

We are determined that any agreement that results from peace negotiations shall not be temporary truce, but shall instead be a lasting foundation for peace, development and democracy in Tigray and all parts of Ethiopia. Negotiations between the Government of Tigray and the Federal Government of Ethiopia must provide part of a solution to the wider political crisis afflicting Ethiopia. The proposed negotiations are the first, crucial step on a long road. For these reasons it is essential that the peace process be informed by an accurate understanding of the predicament facing Tigray and Ethiopia.

Tigray is undergoing a harrowing experience of mass suffering and death. Our rights are violated and our dignity impugned with impunity. The people of Tigray have come together in total solidarity to resist this attempt to annihilate us. We shall not compromise on the fundamental rights and basic security of the Tigrayan people. Our resolve has been strengthened, not weakened, by the suffering we are enduring.

The current Federal Government and its ally in Eritrea have over the last three years shown themselves to be a dynamo of destabilization. The war waged against the people of Tigray is only one of the armed conflicts they have unleashed in numerous parts of Ethiopia. These conflicts need to be resolved if there is to be peace.

Much of Ethiopia is in flames. Stability in the capital city does not mean stability across the country. The government is not administering the country. There is a major armed conflict underway in Oromia Region, which the Federal Government has intensified over recent months, with grievous atrocities against the civilian population. Beni Shangul-Gumuz region and Gambella region are the locations of armed conflicts. There is conflict between Somali region and Afar region. The Amhara region is sliding towards ungovernability. The Southern Region is fragmenting. The terrorist group Al-Shabaab is



becoming active in Ethiopia. The A.U. has totally failed to appreciate these issues. A credible peace process will need to address all of these conflicts.

The governments in Addis Ababa and Asmara are beating the drums of war and mobilizing a coalition of destruction in preference to exercising real leadership and making tough choices for peace.

The trajectory of Ethiopia is towards state failure and the international community needs to urgently arrest this slide into chaos. Those in the international community who have prevaricated over the last 12 months hoping that the country's political course will be reversed, have had ample time to test that optimistic assumption and observe that the Federal Government and its allies have failed that test. If the international community does not act quickly to expedite a credible peace process, they will find themselves bystanders to the biggest and most dangerous state failure in Africa with tremendous ramifications for the region and beyond. As with Rwanda in 1994, those who failed to prevent further disaster will forever regret their inaction for another round of genocide within a short period of time.

Your Excellencies,

The Government of Tigray stands ready to negotiate in good faith and to implement its commitments in a disciplined and effective manner. Our records testify to this.

Please do not make the mistake of seeing our patience as a sign of weakness. Our people are united in their determination to end the blockade and resolve the war. We are giving peace a chance. We have gone the extra mile for peace, not once but many times. We entered into negotiations in good faith and without precondition. Our good faith has not

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been reciprocated. Unacceptable preconditions have been inserted into the continuation of the peace process. Fundamental international obligations have been neglected.

We, the people of Tigray, are fast approaching the point at which we face death whichever way we turn. Our choice is only whether we perish by starvation or whether we die fighting for our rights and our dignity.

We trust you will act to ensure credible, impartial mediation before this moment arrives.

Debretsion G/Michael /PHD/
President

