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Mekete Tigray UK

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The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP,
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom,
10 Downing Street,
London, SW1A 2AA

OPEN LETTER

Dear Prime Minister,

Subject – A Call to End Eritrean Occupation of Tigray and its Renewed Aggression Against Tigray, Ethiopia

1. As we demonstrate today in front of the UK Parliament in Parliament Square, London, against the flagrant aggression of the Eritrean Regime against the Tigrayan people - we, concerned UK citizens and residents of Tigrayan Ethiopian origin organised under an open, independent, democratic and inclusive platform of Mekete Tigray UK, are yet again writing to the UK Government to convey our continuing horror of the failure of the UK Government, the UN system, the EU and the international community to end the unlawful occupation of Tigrayan territories and the continuing provocation for a second round aggression by the Eritrean regime against Tigray.

“It is not the fault of the Tigray people. Many barbarisms have been conducted in Ethiopia, but what is happening in Tigray is of the highest brutality and cruelty. This is genocide of an entire people. They want to wipe-out the people of Tigray from the face of the Earth. I have said a lot of things but no one allows the message to be shared. Rather, it is being stifled and censored. The whole world should know it. The World must act now including all religious organisations to make their voice to stop the genocide.”

(The Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Abune Mathias, 8 May 2021)

2. The Eritrean regime led by President Isaias Afewerki, in collusion with the Ethiopian regime and Amhara regional forces, have committed systematic and widespread mass atrocities in Tigray, including war crimes, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and genocide since the start of the war on Tigray on 4 November 2020. According to the US Government Press Statement of 23 August, 2021:

“The Eritrean Defence Forces (EDF) are responsible for massacres, looting, and sexual assaults. EDF troops have raped, tortured, and executed civilians; they have also destroyed property and ransacked businesses. The EDF have

purposely shot civilians in the street and carried out systematic house-to-house searches, executing men and boys, and have forcibly evicted Tigrayan families from their residences and taken over their houses and property. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Tigray have described a systematic effort by the EDF to inflict as much harm on the ethnic Tigrayan population as possible in the areas the EDF controls. IDPs reported that in some cases, the EDF used knives or bayonets to slash open the torsos of pregnant women and then left them for dead. The EDF have forced survivors to leave the bodies of the dead where they lie or face execution themselves. Countless IDPs recounted instances of witnessing the rape, murder, and torture of friends and family members by the EDF. Sexual violence is being used as a weapon of war and a means to terrorize and traumatize the entire population; the majority of rapes are committed by men in uniform, such as the EDF. IDPs also spoke of a "scorched earth" policy intended to prevent IDPs from returning home."

(U.S. Department of the Treasury, 13 August 2021)

"Ethiopia: Genocide is happening in Tigray. The targeting of young people, indiscriminate killings and widespread sexual violence - including the rape of nuns - is part of genocide against the Tigrayan ethnic group of northern Ethiopia, according to a source close to the Church. The source, anonymous for security reasons, told Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) that Eritrean soldiers are continuing to slaughter civilians. ACN's source said: "This is clearly genocide against the people of Tigray. This is not just fighting, they are killing everybody - that is a sign of genocide. "Many people are escaping from Tigray to Sudan and some of them, especially the young, are escaping because they are being targeted. They are deliberately targeting the young. Young people are killed, our ladies and women are abused with sexual harassment - that is a sign of genocide itself." The source was the latest to claim the attacks constituted genocide, following Patriarch Mathias, the head of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, who earlier this month described events including the rape of women and the bombing of churches in the region as genocide. The source went on to describe the spate of sexual abuse which Tigrayan women - including nuns - have been subjected to at the hands of troops from neighbouring Eritrea. The source said: "Our sisters have been raped. Some of them we had to take to hospital, even nuns have been raped. The women and the girls are receiving a different kind of abuse, like you've never heard before, things that are very bad. Some of the places that can help support us are closed by the soldiers." Last November, fighting broke out in Tigray after Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed sent federal troops, with the support of troops from Eritrea, to fight the Tigray People's Liberation Front, which he accused of holding illegitimate elections. The source said: "The situation as you heard is very, very bad here... Nearly 90 percent of people in Tigray are displaced." He added: "This war has brought about a huge humanitarian crisis, manifested by overwhelming numbers of civilian killings, the displacement of millions, the destruction of economic and social foundations, psychological pain and panic... "In this regard, the most affected are pregnant mothers, children, disabled and elderly members of society." The source stressed that the region desperately needed international support. He said: "The Church is everywhere - it is opening its hand. I remember Aid to the Church in Need, I remember for a long time we are partners, you are very kind." He added: "The current crisis in Tigray is unparalleled to any humanitarian crises that have happened to date or that we know in memory. ACN's help for Tigray has included emergency support for nuns and monks as well as mass stipends. Since 2019 ACN has supported nearly 100 projects in Ethiopia including construction of chapels and monasteries, formation of catechists and support for transport.

(Fionn Shiner, Independent Catholic News (ICN); 28th May 2021)

3. In spite of US sanctions against three Eritrean military and political leaders, excluding the President, and four Eritrean economic entities, the Eritrean regime continues to show no behavioural change. To the contrary, it has consolidated its occupation of large areas of Western, North Western and North Eastern Tigray and continues to inflict mass atrocities as well as using economic blockade and military siege in order to starve millions of Tigrayans. Moreover, adamantly opposed to any peaceful resolution of the War on Tigray and other conflicts in Ethiopia, the regime in Eritrea has continued with its war-mongering preparation and provocation for second round invasion of Tigray.

"I vividly recall the shocking images back in 1984 of a million emaciated Ethiopian men, women and children, many of them from Tigray, who had fled the country in the midst of a massive famine caused by prolonged drought, widespread food shortages, and discriminatory government policies. Today, the people of Tigray are being subjected to human rights atrocities on an appalling scale, and they are being denied urgently needed humanitarian aid – aid that is being blocked by the Ethiopian and Eritrean militaries as well as other armed groups. The terrible reality today is that famine, crimes against humanity and genocide are occurring in Tigray, and they are occurring for one reason: the complicity of government officials in Addis and in Asmara. In fact, there are reports that the situation in Tigray could be worse than in Darfur."

4. The War on Tigray is characterised by systematic and widespread mass atrocities, the wanton destruction of Tigray's infrastructure and economic sectors including agriculture, industry, banking, civil infrastructure, health facilities, schools and universities, telecommunication, the Internet and transport, which have inflicted horrific harm to Tigrayans. This was confirmed by the EU Special Envoy to Ethiopia, the Finnish Foreign Minister, Pekka Haavisto, who reported back to the EU that the Ethiopian Leadership told him that they are determined to ***“wipe out and exterminate Tigrayans, degrading them to socio-economic conditions that existed 100 years ago”***, as reported by Cara Anna for the ABC News on 18 June 2021. ***Similarly, the pillage and damage done to Tigray's two millennia old Christian, Judaic and Islamic cultural, traditional and religious artefacts and institutions are deliberate, strategic and extensive. Looted Tigray's historical artefacts are already being sold on e-bay.*** For 18 months Tigray has been purposefully starved off by 360 Degree suffocation and strangulation - ***“An Anaconda Strategy and Plan of Total War”*** - through a complete economic and transport blockade and military siege. The latest study by the Ghent University based in Belgium as reported by Geoffrey York on the Globe and Mail on 14 March 2022 states that up to 500,000 Tigrayans have perished due to the onslaught of the war, man-made hunger and famine and the deliberate blockade of world humanitarian aid reaching Tigray: ***“As many as 500,000 people have died from war and famine in Tigray Region of Northern Ethiopia over the past 16 months. The estimate by experts, who have closely monitored the Tigray conflict since its beginning, is a rare attempt to calculate the war-related death toll in a Region that has been largely cut off from the outside world”***.
5. In its 20th month, the war in Tigray continues to inflict unimaginable pain, devastation and horror on the people of Tigray. There is credible, corroborated and widespread evidence by multiple domestic and international agencies and institutions that war crimes, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and genocide have been committed by the armed forces of the regimes in Ethiopia, Eritrea and the Amhara Regional Government. Hunger, starvation and famine; and sexual violence and rape whose scale had not been seen since the Second World War have occurred and are being weaponised as the preferred stratagem of war in Tigray. According to the University of Mekelle damage assessment study, over 120,000 Tigrayan women and girls have been raped and sexually violated. This number does not include those who live in currently occupied Western and North Eastern Tigray where ethnic cleansing and war crimes are most pronounced. According to a report by Declan Walsh for the New York Times published on 26 February 2021, an internal United States Government Report obtained by the New York Times shows the evidence of widespread and systematic ethnic cleansing of Tigrayans: ***“Fighters and officials from the neighboring Amhara region of Ethiopia, who entered Tigray in support of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, are deliberately and efficiently rendering Western Tigray ethnically homogeneous through the organized use of force and intimidation”***. Over 1.2 million Tigrayans have been ethnically cleansed from Western Tigray by Ethiopian, Eritrean and Amhara Regional forces, which has been emphatically characterised as ethnic cleansing by US Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken, in March 2021.
6. Despite the ***Humanitarian Ceasefire*** announced on 24 March 2022 and the Tigray Government doing its agreed parts, Tigrayan people continued to be starved due to an economic blockade and military siege where hunger and starvation is being used by the Ethiopian and Eritrean regimes as a weapon of war, which is against international humanitarian law. Over two months since the announcement of the humanitarian truce only 5% of the required and agreed amount of humanitarian support has been allowed to reach Tigray. Is there any more damning evidence of the intention and action of a deliberate use of hunger and starvation as a weapon of war? Yet, Western governments continue to be complicit in the unfolding genocide in Tigray to the point of being delusional about the genocidal intentions and actions of Abiy Ahmed and Isaias Afewerki. Both the UK Minister for Africa, Vicky Ford, and the Chief Administrator of USAid, Samantha Power, have described the 5% humanitarian assistance reaching Tigray over two months as ***“A Trickle”*** but utterly failed to condemn it or to suggest other policy and action alternatives or come to the conclusion on its genocidal implications. This is in fact the horrific history of Tigray for the last 20 months, only platitudes of concern and worries by governments and institutions but not bold or concrete actions to alter the fact on the ground, which is genocide in slow-motion. Professor Mukesh Kapila, an international health humanitarian who worked for the UN and

witnessed many genocides including, in Rwanda, Darfur and Bosnia, aptly described the use of hunger and starvation in Tigray as a weapon of modern genocide more than a year earlier:

“Modern genocides aren’t done Nazis style. Cheap, stealthy, smart way to do it is by starving, pillaging, raping, displacing. World then automatically demands humanitarian aid which will come but always little & late - allowing ethnic cleansers to finish job first #Ethiopia #Tigray”

(Professor Mukesh Kapila; @mukeshkapila; 23rd March 2021)

The world’s response to the #TigrayGenocide has been shameful. A total of 5.2 million people in Ethiopia’s Tigray region (91% of its population) need emergency food aid. Up to 500k Tigrayans have been killed over the past 578 days. @bbc, @theguardian, @cnn, @trtworl, @skynews

(@RestlessBeings; Tweet, 5 June 2022)

“Ethiopian government blocked Tigray famine declaration – Mark Lowcock. At the end of my time in the U.N., it was clear to me that there was famine in Tigray, and the only reason it wasn’t declared was because the Ethiopian authorities were quite effective in slowing down the whole declaration system,” he said during an online event held by the Overseas Development Institute on Tuesday. Lowcock left his role at the U.N. last year. Skirting around a declaration: Before he left office in June 2021, Lowcock said that “there is famine now” in the war-torn region, even though the U.N. put out a statement that didn’t go as far — saying people were “on the brink” and at “risk” of a “looming famine.”. Absent a declaration, the aid sector has used phrasing such as “famine-like conditions.”

(Sara Jerving; Devex; 7 June 2022)

7. The Mekete Tigray UK has witnessed the emerging horrors of the current war in Ukraine as the result of the blatant aggression unleashed by the Government of the Russian Federation against the sovereign Ukrainian Nation and people. We have begun to see the unfolding spectre of war crimes and crimes against humanity being committed against the Ukrainian people. The Mekete Tigray UK, the Tigrayan people and the Tigray Regional Government have rightly condemned the aggression against the nation and people of Ukraine as well as supporting the robust and all-rounded response to date by governments and global institutions. Yet, the Mekete Tigray UK’s British citizens and residents are perplexed, deeply saddened and hurt when the UK Government’s little or double standard responses to the genocidal war on Tigray is compared and contrasted with the robust and all-rounded response to the war in Ukraine. Similarly, the general lack of concern and response to the Tigray Genocide by Her Majesty’s Official Opposition has been extremely disappointing to say the least. The war in Tigray and its attendant war crimes and crimes against humanity are largely forgotten by the world media, much more so in the aftermath of the Ukrainian War.

“The war has gone on too long. It has caused a lot of suffering, death and destruction. No, I am not talking about the war in Ukraine. I am talking about the civil war in Ethiopia that has raged since November 2020. More than 500,000 people have died and many more have been displaced and left helpless because of this brutal conflict. While Tigrayans starve away under siege with only scanty help from the international community in a conflict that has lasted more than two years, last week the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen hosted a fundraiser for Ukraine at which over 9 billion Euros were raised for Ukrainian refugees... It is not difficult to understand why the international community has been scarcely bothered by the protracted conflicts in Africa. For certain it is not for a lack of resources but for a lack of sufficient interest as these areas are of no significant strategic value. Unlike the Ukrainian conflict that spells danger for Europe, the conflicts in Africa are of no serious direct consequence.... So, the commitment is not to peace and protection of life but to the protection of white lives. And there we have it, the racism that underlies the little interest in these other conflicts. It is not that the suffering of non-white peoples has been ignored. To add salt to the wound, statements have been made to the effect that non-white peoples are more accustomed, even more deserving of living in conditions of war and conflict. ...Thus, when one compares the attention that has been given to the Ukrainian conflict to the scanty attention given to the Ethiopian conflict, one cannot help but recall the incisive assessment of W.E.B DuBois who wrote at the dawn of the 20th century that the problem of the twentieth century was the problem of the color line. More than a century later, DuBois’s assessment rings truer in our day. I am certainly no DuBois but dare I say that the problem of the twenty-first century is the problem of the color line. Steve Biko knew better when he said, “Black man, you are on your own.”

(Trevor Lwere, The Observer; 11 April 2022)

“There’s Genocide in Tigray, but Nobody’s Talking About it. The reasons range from Internet shutdowns to just pure racism. A humanitarian crisis is taking place in northern Ethiopia, but you may not have read about it in the news. In fact, you may have never heard of the Tigray National Regional State, which is currently encircled by Ethiopian and Eritrean forces. Those troops are setting up blockades, burning food silos, and going from village to village committing genocidal massacres and rapes. If we compare the situation in Tigray to other ongoing armed conflicts, the numbers are startling. Looking at civilian deaths, for example, the war in Ukraine has resulted in less than 3,000 Ukrainian deaths, according to the UN Human Rights Office, while Tigray has seen upward of 500,000, as per estimates by Ghent University. To be fair, some outlets, such as Al Jazeera, have provided ample coverage. But it is not enough, and it is dwarfed by the coverage of Ukraine or the Bosnian genocide before it. “I don’t know if the world really gives equal attention to Black and white lives,” WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, himself an ethnic Tigrayan based in Geneva, said at a press conference given on April 13. “I need to be blunt and honest that the world is not treating the human race the same way. Some are more equal than others.” This is one of the longest and worst sieges of modern history,” Tedros told me recently. “There are 7 million people sealed off from the outside world for 18 months now. I haven’t spoken to my relatives in Tigray in 18 months, because telecoms are cut off. They are starving. But I can’t send money because banks are closed.”

(The Nation; David Volodzko; 10 May 2022)

8. We urge the UK Government to take bold and concrete actions:
 - I. To end the Eritrean occupation of Tigray’s territories and its oppression of Tigrayans as well as to stop its war preparation and provocation for a second round of genocidal war on Tigray.
 - II. To stop Eritrean regime’s policy and actions of economic blockade and military siege that uses hunger, starvation and famine as a weapon of war.
 - III. To stop being an obstacle to the peaceful resolution of the conflicts in Tigray and the rest of Ethiopia as well as desist from destabilising the Horn of Africa region.
 - IV. To press for an independent, transparent and internationally led investigation of the mass atrocities committed in the war on Tigray and Ethiopia at large, and ensures that all perpetrators of mass atrocities are brought to face justice.
 - V. To press the Ethiopian Regime to allow unfettered humanitarian access to Tigray and to end its economic blockade and military siege which are used to starve the people of Tigray.

9. Finally, we thank you for your time and attention, and trust that the Government will do much more of what is morally, politically and legally right to address our concerns as British citizens and residents of Ethiopian origin. We look forward to getting an audience with your ministers and civil servants, and to hearing your response to our concerns. The Petitioners of this Letter - Ethiopian Tigrayans in the UK - can be contacted at the above-referred Email and Address. Thank you very much.

Most respectfully,

Ethiopian Tigrayans in the UK
Mekete Tigray UK Members and Steering Committee
Tigrayan Women in the UK
Tigrayan Youth Network
Global Tigrayan Diaspora

Copy:

The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP; Deputy Prime Minister of the UK;
The Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP; Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs;
The Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP; Secretary of State for Defence;
The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP; Chancellor of the Exchequer;
The Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP; Secretary of State for International Trade;
The Rt Hon Vicky Ford MP; Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Africa);
The Rt Hon Baroness Evans of Bows Park; Leaders of the House of Lords;
Sir Simon McDonald KCMG; Permanent Under-Secretary and Head of Diplomatic Service;
H.E. Dr Alastair McPhail CMG OBE; KCVO British Ambassador to Ethiopia;
The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer MP; Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition;
The Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP, Deputy Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition;
The Rt Hon David Lammy MP; Shadow Secretary of State for FCD Affairs;
The Rt Hon Baroness Smith of Basildon; The Shadow Leader of the House of Lords;
The Rt Hon Tom Tugendhat MP; Chair of Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee;
The Rt Hon Chris Bryant MP; Member of Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee;
The Rt Hon Stewart Malcolm McDonald MP; Member of Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee;
The Rt Hon Sarah Champion MP; Chair of International Development Sub-Committee;
The Rt Hon Kate Osamor MP; Member of International Development Sub-Committee;
The Rt Hon Helen Hayes MP; UK House of Commons;
The Rt Hon Sarah Champion MP; UK House of Commons;
The Rt Hon Fleur Anderson MP; UK House of Commons;
The Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP; UK House of Commons;
The Rt Hon, Daisy Cooper MP; UK House of Commons;
The Rt Hon Claire Hanna MP, UK House of Commons;
The Rt Hon Paula Barker MP; UK House of Commons;
The Rt Hon Virendra Sharman MP; UK House of Commons;
The RT Hon Harriet Harman MP; UK House of Commons;
The Rt Hon Margaret Hodge MP; UK House of Commons;
The Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP; UK House of Commons;
The Rt Hon Edward Miliband MP; UK House of Commons;
The Rt Hon Jeremy Corbyn MP; UK House of Commons;
The Rt Hon Lord David Alton of Liverpool; UK House of Lords;
The Rt Hon Lord William Hague of Richmond; UK House of Lords;
The Rt Hon Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park; UK House of Lords;
The Rt Hon Lord Triesman; UK House of Lords;
The Rt Hon Viscount Waverley; UK House of Lords;
The Rt Hon Baroness Kennedy; UK House of Lords;
The Rt Reverend Dr Christopher Cocksworth; The Lord Bishop of Coventry; UK House of Lords;
The Rt Reverend Justin Welby; The Lord Archbishop of Canterbury; UK House of Lords;
The Rt Reverend Stephen Cottrell; The Lord Archbishop of York; UK House of Lords;
The Rt Reverend Christopher Chessun; The Lord Bishop of Southwark; UK House of Lords;
His Eminence Vincent Cardinal Nichols; Archbishop of Westminster;
Sir Graham Wrigley; Chairman of the CDC Group PLC;
Nick O'Donohoe; CEO of the CDC Group Plc;
His Holiness Pope Francis; Sovereign of the Vatican State;
His Holiness Abune Matias, The Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church;
The Rt Hon Ian Blackford MP; Leader of SNP in the UK House of Commons;
The Rt Hon Sir Ed Davey MP; Leader of the Liberal Democrats;
The Rt Hon Liz Saville Roberts; Leader of Plaid Cymru in the House of Commons;
H.E. Antonio Guterres, Secretary -General of the UN;
H.E Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission;
H.E. Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs;
H.E. Annette Weber, EU Representative for the Horn of Africa;
H.E. Michelle Bachelet; UN High Commissioner for Human Rights;
H.E. Antony Blinken; Secretary State of the United States;
Richard Sharp; Chairman of the BBC Board;
Tim Davie; Director General of the BBC;

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