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Mekete Tigray UK

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Vaclav Balek,
President of UN Human Rights Council,
Office of The United Nations High Commissioner For Human Rights,
Human Rights Council Bureau,
Palais des Nations,
CH 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

OPEN LETTER

Subject - Justice delayed or curtailed is justice denied: ICHREE Mandate must be extended and be allowed full access to Tigray to deliver credible and full investigation and justice for victims of mass atrocity crimes in Tigray

Yours Excellency,

1. We, members of the Tigray Diaspora in the UK and together with the Tigrayan Diaspora in Europe and in solidarity with the Global Tigrayan Diaspora Communities, are writing this letter and will be gathered on 21 September 2023 in front of the Office of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland, to demand that the ongoing mass atrocities committed in Tigray must be stopped, and fully and comprehensively investigated by independent, transparent and international body. As testified by the June 2023 Report on Tigray, Ethiopia, by Human Rights Watch, the Amhara Paramilitary Fano and Eritrean forces have continued to commit mass atrocities in Tigray. To date, over one million Tigrayans have perished, over 120,000 Tigrayan women and girls subjected to sexual violence and rape and over 2 million Tigrayans continued to be internally displaced due to genocidal occupation of Tigray. The mass atrocity crimes committed in Tigray is the worst mass atrocity crime humanity has witnessed yet in the 21st Century and must be fully and comprehensively investigated for justice to prevail.
2. It would be a travesty of justice to conclude widespread and systematic mass atrocity crimes investigation - genocide, ethnic cleansing, crime against humanity and war crimes - without unfettered access, without full and comprehensive investigation, without interviewing victims, without examining crime scenes, without identifying perpetrators and without addressing accountability and justice.
3. The UNHRC and the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE) must remain true to the stated mandate to :

- a. To conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into allegations of and abuses violations of international human rights law and violations of international humanitarian law and international refugee law in Ethiopia committed since 3 November 2020 by all parties to the conflict, including the possible gender dimensions of such violations and abuses, by building upon the report of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission;
 - b. To establish the facts and circumstances surrounding the alleged violations and abuses, to collect and preserve evidence, to identify those responsible, where possible, and to make such information accessible and usable in support of ongoing and future accountability efforts;
 - c. To provide guidance on transitional justice, including accountability, reconciliation and healing, as appropriate, and to make recommendations on technical assistance to the Government of Ethiopia to support accountability, reconciliation and healing;
 - d. To integrate a gender perspective and a survivor-centred approach throughout its work;
 - e. To engage with all relevant stakeholders, including the Government of Ethiopia, including regional State governments, the Government of Eritrea, the Office of the High Commissioner, the interministerial task force, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, the African Union, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and civil society (emphasis ours).
4. We support the mandate and work of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopian (ICHREE); and strongly oppose Ethiopian and Eritrean governments' attempts to hinder-terminate its mandate.
 5. Furthermore, we urge the UNHRC and the UN system in general to ensure that the ICHREE has full and unhindered access to Tigray so that it undertakes free, independent and comprehensive investigation.
 6. We urge the UNHRC and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights that the **Ethiopian Human Rights Commission** is not independent and has been severely biased and compromised as well as being privy to the commission of mass atrocity crimes in Tigray. Moreover, it would be a mockery of justice to expect the Ethiopian Government to be a credible facilitator of mass atrocity crimes investigation in Tigray or Ethiopia at large since it is the leading perpetrator of those crimes. We urge that politics and global power politics and calculation must never overcome the search for the truth and justice. We strongly believe that there cannot be meaningful transitional justice or reconciliation without first establishing the truth and identifying perpetrators.
 7. We support the November 2022 Pretoria Peace Agreement between the Tigrayan Regional Government and the Ethiopian Federal Government. Moreover, we demand its full implementation including the withdrawal of Eritrean and Amhara Regional Forces from Tigray, the return of IDPs to their homes and the unfettered flow of humanitarian assistance. Tigray is effectively under siege and hunger and starvation is still being used as an instrument of policy and silent war to subjugate Tigrayans.
 8. Yet, Western, North Eastern, North Central and Southern Tigray are still occupied and mass atrocities are being committed against Tigrayans by Eritrean and Amhara Regional armies. The provision of basic and essential services in Tigray is intermittent and is being used as a weapon of policy by the Ethiopian Government to subjugate Tigrayans. We demand the UNHRC to urge and demand these to stop, and to pressurise the Ethiopian Government to allow unfettered humanitarian access to Tigray.
 9. Finally, we thank you and we shall continue to struggle so that mass atrocity crimes are duly and fully investigated and justice is done and is seen to be done in respect of the people of Tigray, and that the perpetrators of mass atrocities are made to face justice. Our struggle and search for the full truth and justice continues. Thank you.

Yours most respectfully,

*Mekete Tigray UK – Tigrayan Diaspora in the UK,
The Global Tigrayan Diaspora Communities*

Copy:

H.E. Maira M.M. Alvarez; Vice President UNHRC;
H.E. Muhammadou M.O. Kah; Vice President of UNHRC;
H.E. Marc Bichler; Vice President, UNHRC;
H.E. Asim Ahmed; Vice President, UNHRC;
H.E. Volker Turk; UN High Commissioner for Human Rights;
Mr Mohamed Chande Othman (Chairperson), ICHREE Member;
Mr Steven Ratner; ICHREE Member;
Ms Radhika Coomaraswamy, ICHREE Member;
H.E Mr Simon Manley, UK Ambassador UN Geneva;
Mrs Maria H.E. Maira M.M. Alvarez; Vice President, UNHRC;
Isabel Fernandez Utges, UK Permanent Representative UN Geneva;
H.E. Mr Noel White, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ireland at the UN Geneva;
Mrs Eimear, Ireland First Secretary – Human Rights, at UN Geneva;
H.E. Mrs Bathsheba N. Crocker, US Ambassador at UN Geneva;
Mr Milan Vaishnav, US Permanent Representative at UN Geneva;
H.E. Mrs Michele Taylor, US Repetitive –Human Rights at UN Geneva;
The Rt Hon James Cleverly, Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development;
The Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell, UK Minister of State for Development and Africa;
Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer MP; Leader of Her Majesty’s Official Opposition;
The Rt Hon David Lammy MP; Shadow Secretary of State for FCD Affairs;