



ETHIO-CANADIAN NETWORK FOR ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT

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March 10th, 2021

The Right Honorable Justin Trudeau
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear The Right Honorable Justin Trudeau,

Warm greetings from Ethio-Canadian Network for Advocacy and Support (ECNAS) and Ethiopian community associations in Canada.

ECNAS is a registered non-profit organization that has chapters throughout Canada. It works closely with Ethiopian communities to advocate and support for equality and justice for all Ethiopians under the motto; "One Ethiopia for All Ethiopians".

This letter is to voice our concerns on the growing disinformation campaign following the current conflict in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia. We appreciate the concerns of the international community regarding the need for humanitarian assistance and the alleged Human Rights violations in Tigray. We would like to urge the Canadian government and the international community to be cognizant of the large-scale disinformation campaign underway against Ethiopia by the ousted leaders of the Tigray Liberation Front (TPLF) and their sympathizers in the diaspora.

After 27 years of authoritarian rule by TPLF which was characterized by gross human rights violations, social injustice, widespread corruption, and economic and political marginalization, a popular uprising in 2018 ushered in the reformist government of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. The new administration introduced multisectoral reforms, opened political space by freeing political prisoners and inviting back exiled political parties, allowed media to flourish, and revised restrictive laws targeting civil society.

The effort to democratize the political system is welcomed by the majority of Ethiopians except the ousted leaders of TPLF who were engaged in a relentless effort to derail the reform the past three years. The TPLF leaders were bankrolling and arming anti-peace elements and fomenting on religious and ethnic violence throughout the country to make the country ungovernable. Multiple assassination attempts were made against Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. The TPLF leaders also conducted an illegal election in violation of the country's constitution and in defiance of the House of Federation's decision to postpone the National Election following the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the past three years, the TPLF engaged in a massive military buildup, training over two hundred thousand militia including child soldiers to intimidate the Ethiopian people and government, and to return to power by force.

Through all these, the Federal Government exercised extreme restraint and tried to solve political differences amicably via dialogue. However, TPLF opted to stage an armed insurrection on November 4, 2020 by attacking several military bases of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces Northern Command stationed in Tigray, killing the unsuspecting soldiers and taking many servicemen and women captive. It is then the Ethiopian government was forced to conduct a law enforcement operation to uphold the constitution and to restore law and order in Tigray while bringing the perpetrators of the insurrection to justice. After completing the active military phase of the operation in three weeks, the Ethiopian government is currently engaged in providing humanitarian assistance, rebuilding the region while striving to bring perpetrators of any crime to justice.

The susceptibility of the region to drought and acute food shortages even during normal times (close to 1.8 million people live off of safety net and daily food assistance) compounded by desert locust infestation and the current conflict have created enormous need for humanitarian assistance in Tigray. The Ethiopian government is working closely with humanitarian organizations that are currently operating on the ground to meet the urgently needed assistance in the region. Most of the assistance (70%) is coming from the government coffers, therefore, it is important for the international community to scale up support. The government is giving unfettered access to humanitarian agencies to operate in the region to provide assistance and to see the situation firsthand.

We believe all alleged Human Rights violations to be thoroughly investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice. Preliminary investigation reports by international human rights organizations thus far, unfortunately, have left us with more questions than answers. Moreover, we sadly noted that all human rights violations committed during this conflict, such as atrocities committed in Maikadra and Benishangul, were not rendered equal degree of importance nor were they reported with the same fervor, leaving us puzzled if there is a degree of political motive at play in terms of how issues are viewed from the outside. We urge Canada to thoroughly examine, and hold investigations and researches done by human rights organizations to the highest degree of integrity in order to render them free of selection bias and possible conflict of interest. To this end, working with the independent Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and other federal investigators, who understand the context and nuances of the reality on the ground, is vitally important to ensure accountability for any human rights violations.

We, Ethiopian-Canadians, appreciates Canada's unwavering support to the reform process in Ethiopia. We strongly condemn the undue pressures directed to Ethiopia by the international community that undermines the unity and sovereignty of the country. Only a stable and democratic Ethiopia remains an anchor of peace in the region.

Therefore, we kindly request the Canadian government to constructively engage with the Ethiopian government to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Tigray, and support the ongoing reform process, and the effort to restore peace and security across Ethiopia.

Respectfully,

Signatories

Ethio-Canadian Network for Advocacy and Support (ECNAS)

Calgary Ethiopian Community Association

Ethio-Canadian Community Association of London, Ontario

Ethiopian Association in Halifax

Ethiopian Association in Hamilton

Ethiopian Association in Kitchener

Ethiopian Association in the Greater Toronto Area

Ethiopian Canadian Community Association in Edmonton

Ethiopian Communities of Ottawa

Ethiopian Community Association in Montreal

Ethiopian Community Association of BC

cc. Hon. Marc Garneau, Member of Parliament and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada
Hon. Karina Gould, Member of Parliament and Minister of International Development
Hon. Rob Oliphant, Member of Parliament and Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs
of Canada
Sven Spengemann, Member of Parliament
Hon. Michael D. Chong, Member of Parliament
Stéphane Bergeron, Member of Parliament
Kerry Diotte, Member of Parliament
Peter Fonseca, Member of Parliament
Hon. Hedy Fry, Member of Parliament
Garnett Genuis, Member of Parliament
Jack Harris, Member of Parliament
Marty Morantz, Member of Parliament
Robert Oliphant, Member of Parliament
Ruby Sahota, Member of Parliament
Ya'ara Saks, Member of Parliament