

To the Global Community, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed, Ethiopian Embassy

From Concerned Ethiopians Across the Globe

Subject: Communique Urging Prevention of Genocide and Balkanization of Ethiopia

July 19, 2019

Ethiopia is on the precipice of civil conflict, and perhaps civil war and possible genocide that are triggered and championed by ethnic elites, fundamentalists and their foreign sponsors. For more than 40 years, the primary target of ethnic-demonization, killings, ethnic-cleansing, forcible evictions, abductions and recurring displacements has been the Amhara population. Predictably, the virus of identity politics has now spread far and wide affecting others and threatening the very existence of Ethiopia.

Ethnic suspicion, hatred, fear and division have been normalized and propagated primarily by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) that had issued a Manifesto in 1968 declaring that the Amhara people are "enemies of the people of Tigray. It labelled Amhara as criminals. It sent a chilling signal to all other ethnic elites to rise-up and target Amhara wherever they live. This is why so many were murdered in cold blood; and numerous bodies thrown over the cliff in Arba Gugu in the early 1990s.

Ethiopia's 1994 Federal Constitution divided Africa's second most populous country and the seat of the African Union as well as numerous UN agencies into 9 ethnic and linguistic antagonistic states and two federal cities. The intent was and still is to "divide and rule" and to pit one ethnic group against another. The consequence is a cycle of violence, instability and insecurity. For this reason, the signatories of this communique, other Ethiopians and the world community can no longer afford to remain indifferent and silent until Ethiopia becomes the next Cambodia or Rwanda or Syria. It is time to act now.

Ethiopia's ethnic and language based federal structure has aggravated ethnic tensions and polarized Ethiopian society. Ethiopians prefer a multiethnic federal and democratic system of government that is based on constitutional law that guarantees free and fair elections as well as the right to live and own property in any part of Ethiopia. The assertion by TPLF and its allies that Ethiopia's problems emanate from oppression by the Amhara is patently false and conflict prone. An illustration of the pitfalls of ethnic politics are the assassinations and alleged coup d'état of June 22, 2019 that vibrate to this day.

Following the horrific killings of Dr. Ambachew Mekonnen, President of the Amhara region; his colleagues Mr. Azez Wassie, Advisor to Mr. Mekonnen; Mr. Migbaru Kebede, Attorney General; and General Asaminew Tsige, Head of Security-- members of the Executive Committee of the Amhara Democratic Party-- and several soldiers in Bahir Dar, the seat of the regional government on June 22, 2019; as well as General Seare Mekonnen, Chief of Staff of Ethiopia's Defense Forces and his friend and colleague General Gezae Abera in Addis Ababa, authorities alleged the indefensible proposition of a "coup d'état."

Tragically, authorities compounded the tragedy further by arresting and incarcerating more than 1,000 Amhara youth, civic and human rights activists, journalists, military officers and business persons.

Appalled by the assassinations and wholesale incarcerations, concerned Ethiopians across the globe decided to issue this communique that contains a set of recommendations for action. A detailed annex in support of our recommendations is attached to this communique.

Signatories commend the Amhara Support Association in South Africa for conducting a prayer vigil following the horrific assassinations, support their demand for the immediate release of political prisoners

of conscience and for the immediate restoration of civil liberties and human rights in Ethiopia. Ethiopia is at a turning point. It isn't too late to prevent disaster, but if something isn't done soon, the situation could deteriorate quickly. For this reason, Ethiopia needs to transform itself structurally and constitutionally in order to overcome its self-inflicted pain of perpetual ethnic-elite "divide and rule" that keeps the country poor and technologically backward. Over the past 28 years of Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) rule dominated by the TPLF and currently by the Oromo Democratic Party (ODP), the Amhara, other ethnic groups and the entire society of 110 million people suffered from intolerable levels of crimes against humanity, crushing theft, graft and massive illicit capital flight with lasting social and political impact.

Our set of recommendations notwithstanding, our overarching recommendation is this. Crimes against humanity and recovery of the stolen billions of dollars must be investigated urgently by an impartial, competent and independent Commission of Ethiopians and world-renowned experts drawn from within the country, the Diaspora, Multilateral development agencies, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the African Union.

More specifically, the undersigned:

1. Express our grief and sorrow to the families of all those assassinated in Bahir Dar and Addis Ababa.
2. Stand firm in solidarity with the Amhara cause, with all Ethiopians and with Ethiopia.
3. Reject the TPLF blackmail and blame of the Amhara people and the Amhara unwavering resolve to defend itself and preserve Ethiopia's territorial integrity and sovereignty.
4. Condemn TPLF's coordinated campaign of suspicion, fear, hatred and division; and call on all Ethiopians to disavow TPLF's venomous attribution of Amhara and Amhara regional and other leadership as "chauvinists" responsible for the assassinations and alleged coup; and Oromo Ethiopians as "narrow nationalists."
5. Demand that the TPLF apologize for the atrocities it has committed and continues to commit against the Amhara immediately and unconditionally.
6. Demand that the TPLF stop warmongering and allow the people of Tigray to rejoin the peaceful change process underway.
7. Demand that the TPLF, its surrogates and foreign governments cease making Ethiopia ungovernable and a potential blood bath immediately.
8. Commend the Amhara Democratic Party's principled position and urge unity.
9. Call on the government of Ethiopia, regional and non-state actors as well as ethnic parties such as the TPLF and OLF to stop the coordinated and deliberate rounding up and mass incarceration of Amhara youth, activists, intellectuals and military officers from many parts of Ethiopia immediately.

These mass arrests have absolutely nothing to do with the assassinations in Bahir Dar and Addis Ababa and with the alleged coup. We are deeply concerned wholesale arrest and incarceration are intended to pave the way for replacing one ethnic elite by another.

10. Call on all Ethiopian stakeholders to convene an all-party conference to discuss and change the TPLF imposed ethnic-political and constitutional structure; and in its place create a non-language and non-ethnic based constitutional and administrative structure that guarantees individual freedom, rights and liberties before Ethiopian society collapses.
11. Demand that the government of Ethiopia stop its coordinated and inflammatory campaign and harassment of journalists, human rights advocates and Amhara activists; release all prisoners of conscience; allow freedom of the press, movement and assembly; and restore the protection of the human rights of all citizens impartially and unconditionally.
12. Urge that the government of Ethiopia bring the ring leaders and assassins in Bahir Dar and in Addis Ababa to the highest court of the land; and hold them accountable.
13. Demand that the federal government allow the region's police and other units to defend citizens; and refrain from disarming regional defense units.
14. Demand that the federal government, the OLF, Qeerro, the city administration of Addis Ababa and surrogates of the TPLF cease and desist intimidating, frightening, harassing and arresting leaders and members of NAMA, independent media, the Addis Ababa Trustees' Council (የባለአደራ ምክር ቤት), Amhara entrepreneurs and businessmen; and cease selective disarmament of self-defense persons and units in the Amhara region immediately.
15. Demand that Prime Minister Dr. Abiy and his cabinet commit publicly that Ethiopia deserves national institutions staffed by high caliber and competent persons that reflect its diversity; state publicly that dominance of national institutions by one ethnic group is anathema to Ethiopia's national unity and territorial integrity; and further demand that Prime Minister Dr. Abiy's government reconfigure the composition of Ethiopia's security, defense and federal police forces as well as the judicial system with a view of ensuring that no single ethnic group dominates the command and control structure of Ethiopia's federal institutions.
16. Urge the UN Security Council and the African Union Secretariat to convene emergency sessions and condemn the TPLF's July 10, 2019 shameful statement of warmongering and concerted campaign against the Amhara Democratic Party, the Amhara people and the Abiy reform program; use their leverage to compel the TPLF to cease its 'reign of terror' and; oblige the TPLF to rejoin the EPRDF change agenda immediately and unconditionally.
17. Urge the UN Security Council, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the African Union, the Congress of the United States and the European Parliament to side with the Ethiopian people and defend justice, peace, stability, unbridled ethnic and religious equality, respect for the rule of law and the protection of human rights; and support the peaceful reform process.
18. Urge that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to dispatch a Special Rapporteur to Ethiopia to investigate the killings in Bahir Dar and Addis Ababa, the alleged "coup d'état" in the Amhara regional state as well as the arrest and torture of an estimated 1,000 people without due process of law at the earliest opportunity; and disclose its findings.
19. Recommend highly and urgently that, in its capacity as a strategic friend of Ethiopia, the government of the United States, including Congress, should send strong signals to the Ethiopian government that it must respect human rights, the rule of law and democracy.

20. Suggest that it is in America's national interest to demonstrate that the deteriorating situation on the ground in Ethiopia it sees poses risks for the country, the Horn, Africa and the world; and that it cares. The Ethiopian government must be persuaded to respond to the hopes and aspirations of its people.
21. Implore the governments of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, China, Russia, Japan, members of the African and European Unions and the Arab League, international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Freedom House and others to quickly apply their leverage on Dr. Abiy's regime to refrain from assaults on human freedom and selective persecution of Amhara and other ethnic groups.
22. Urge members of the United States Congress and the European Parliament to look into the dangerous trend unfolding in Ethiopia before the country enters an unstoppable phase.
23. Flag to Ethiopians and the world community that internal and external forces are deliberately manipulating and dividing people on the basis of ethnicity in order to achieve their objectives.
24. Urge all Ethiopians within and outside the country to stop the use of social and other media in fomenting and inflaming ethnic and or religious hatred, violence and division; and urge Ethiopians to learn, think and collaborate beyond ethnicity and advance the common good.
25. Ask Ethiopia's Diaspora, academia and others, especially Amhara and friends to come out of their ivory tower, dialogue and offer constructive alternatives to save Ethiopia and Ethiopians.
26. Recommend that Ethiopians in the Diaspora and in Ethiopia convene all-inclusive forums and interject fresh and innovative approaches to solve ethnic conflicts and chart roadmaps, including an alternative transition that will lift the country out of its quagmire.
27. Recommend that the Diaspora approach Prime Minister Dr. Abiy's government and administrative authorities to stop taking sides in the deliberate harassment of the Addis Ababa "Trustees' Council (የአዲስ አበባ የባለአደራ ምክር ቤት) led by Mr. Eskinder Nega immediately; and instead convene a public forum of stakeholders to iron out differences peacefully, amicably and democratically.
28. Recommend that the Diaspora anywhere reach-out to their local authorities, places of worship, academic institutions and foundations and promote Ethiopia's case in a sustainable manner.
29. Recommend that the Diaspora leverage its influence on opposition parties to take a principled position with regard to the assaults on Amhara and refrain from justifying gross human rights violations by federal and regional authorities.
30. Recommend that the Diaspora across the globe demand that Mr. Herman Cohn, an American, who took an active role in the dismemberment of Ethiopia and the establishment of the current ethnic federal system apologize for demonizing the Amhara people; and for provoking ethnic hatred of the Amhara that may lead to ethnic genocide and the Balkanization of Ethiopia.
31. Recommend that the Diaspora send a barrage of tweets and letters to the government of the United States, the US Congress and academic institutions that Mr. Cohen's inaccurate and irresponsible accusation and conclusion on the historical role of the Amhara will severely

undermine the long term and strategic interests of the American and Ethiopian peoples; and will, instead embolden extremist and terrorist groups in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa.

Signatories urge quick consideration of our recommendations. Signatories will be happy to respond to queries.

Global List of Signatories

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5. Dr. Ambachew Woreta
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Appendix to Communique

Why is Ethiopia facing an existential threat?

After 27 years of cruel and dehumanizing rule commandeered by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), Ethiopians were elated by the prospect of a post-TPLF era of sustainable peace, stability, broader civic and political space and a solid foundation for democracy that will lead to prosperity for the vast majority of Ethiopians. This euphoria is understandable when we consider the level of ethnic hatred, suspicion and fear imposed on Ethiopian society by the TPLF. In its party Manifesto of 1968, the TPLF declared itself as an anti-Amhara front of independence and spread virulent tribalism as an instrument of divide and rule. The TPLF and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) imposed a language and ethnicity based Constitution that allows secession. Today, the TPLF operates as an independent state. Its current strategic focus is to degrade Amhara and its leaders; and to make Ethiopia ungovernable. **Horrendous Challenges Ethiopia Faces**

1. Ethiopia suffers from recurring ethnic violence aimed at specific targets, routinely Amhara. A famine-prone country, it is now home to the largest population of displaced persons (IDPs) in the world. Unreported and under reported episodes of ethnic violence compound violations of human rights and engender insecurity and instability. These emanate from extreme ethno-nationalism and "fundamentalism" akin to those that occurred in the Balkans, Chechnya, Darfur, Iraq, Rwanda and Sri-Lanka. Ethnic hate, suspicion and fear have spread beyond the Amhara.
2. Crimes against humanity, extrajudicial killings and arrests, tortures, state failures, sabotage, decline in economic productivity, hyper inflation and unemployment are common. Conflicts might potentially lead to civil war and genocide. We believe that Ethiopia is on the edge.
3. The TPLF and OLF fabricated an untruthful historical narrative of national oppression by the Amhara in order to stigmatize and delegitimize the group exposing members to relentless hate and marginalization; and most recently to a deliberate weakening and unjustifiable disempowerment of Amhara political, youth, media and other capacity building institutions.
4. Selective justice and punishment are common. The most recent irresponsible state and non-state sponsored acts include the imprisonment more than **1,000 people**, including members of the Addis Ababa Trustees' Council (የባለአደራ ምክር ቤት) initiated by Activist and Journalist Mr. Eskinder Nega and 500 members of the National Movement of Amara (NAMA); and the recriminalization of freedom of the press and protest. On July 9, 2019, Amnesty International summed up the deteriorating human rights situation. "This new round of arrests is a hugely regressive move that risks rolling back the progress witnessed in 2018. All journalists arrested must be immediately released and all charges against them unconditionally dropped."
5. On July 9, 2019, the Committee to Protect Journalists expressed concern that Ethiopia is backsliding. In "Anti-terrorism is back" it says this. "In era of reform, Ethiopia still reverts to old tactics to censor press." There is no reliable data on the number of people jailed. "Over 200 people were arrested in the aftermath of the alleged attempted coup, Deutsche Welle reported. Of those, at least two—**ASRAT** manager Berihun Adane and Getachew Ambachew, a volunteer at the station—were detained under Ethiopia's anti-terror law." The Wolkait website provides specific data with names and locations of more than **738 political prisoners in** Beni-Shangul, Oromia

regions as well as in Addis Ababa following the assassinations and the alleged coup d'état. Almost all of them are Amhara. This is why we underscore selectivity as a problem.

Authorities argue wrongly that there is a 'link between the horrific killings in Bahir Dar and Addis Ababa on the one hand and massive arrests and reversal of rights on the other. The TPLF's shameful press statement of July 10, 2019 associates the incident as well as Ethiopia's unfolding tragedy squarely on the Amhara Democratic Party (ADP) and on "chauvinist Amhara." The standard practice of blackmailing Amhara for the country's ills that was **concocted and inflicted by the TPLF** and its ethnic cohorts is nothing new. We find it chilling that those assassinated in Bahir Dar are Amhara and the TPLF blames the victims as perpetrators. We find no credible evidence to support the linkages for the alleged coup d'état or the blackmail. The TPLF places blame to evade responsibility. It should be held accountable.

6. The world renowned Eskinder Nega changed the narrative on Addis Ababa zeroing in on the democratic rights of the city's 5 to 7 million residents. We find it baffling why the Prime Minister would attack Eskinder and allow the persecution of his group while remaining quiet concerning the divisive and vitriolic attack by the **fundamentalist Jawar Mohamed and the disruptive** Qeerro movement.
7. The government of Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed has reintroduced the flawed narrative perfected by the TPLF and OLF that truthfulness and falsehoods are tradeable to justify political ends by, for example, reintroducing "terrorism" in order to arrest activists and to diminish human freedom and the rule of law. The unintended consequence is that the TPLF has targeted the ADP, ODP and Abiy Ahmed's team. The lion's burden is being borne by the Amhara.
8. The reintroduction of a state of siege environment is extremely dangerous for the Amhara and Ethiopia. The hope that the Prime Minister and his team would undue the TPLF and OLF injected poison pill of ethnic hatred, division and distortions of history imposed on an entire generation of Ethiopians with a new vision of national renaissance have begun to wane abruptly.
9. Throughout Ethiopia's distinguished evolution as a multiethnic country that spans between 6,000 and 7,000 years, the Amhara people, the vast majority of whom belong to the Ethiopian Orthodox faith, have spread widely and live throughout the country, intermarrying with and adopting indigenous cultures. Except for linguistic differences, there is no physical distinction among the vast majority of Ethiopians. Ethiopia's problems are its governance and not its diversity.
10. The Amhara's sense of belonging to Ethiopia rather to their narrow ethnic enclave has made them vulnerable. They are a target for recurring onslaught by ethno-nationalist groups such as the TPLF as well as religious fundamentalists. The vast majority of Ethiopians accept the notion that Ethiopia's continuity and resiliency and Ethiopia's reform program are virtually untenable without Amhara engagement and participation. The TPLF believes the opposite.
11. For more than a quarter of a century of TPLF rule, ethnic elites propagated ethno-nationalism as the defining narrative of Ethiopia's socioeconomic, political and cultural superstructure. Signatories genuinely believed that the artificial edifice of "divide and rule" on the basis of ethnicity and language imposed and defended by the TPLF will evolve peacefully and organically into a multiethnic, all-inclusive and national polity under Prime Minister Dr. Abiy.

Contrary to the high expectations he raised in the first months of his Premiership as an “Ethiopian,” the Prime Minister has, instead, strengthened institutions such as National Defense and Security, National Revenue and Customs by populating them primarily with Oromo policy and decision-makers. The Qeerro movement has been allowed to establish its own well-financed intimidating “military” like unit and is exercising its muscle. This asymmetrical treatment has become a fodder for TPLF propaganda.

Dr. Abiy received overwhelming support from the vast majority of Ethiopians, especially Amhara, who believed in **citizenship rights and representative institutions** staffed by competent personnel. A cross-section of Ethiopians now perceives that Dr. Abiy has become the Prime Minister of the Oromo Democratic Party (ODP). This widely held view buffets the perception that the ODP has replaced the TPLF. This is further strengthened by Dr. Abiy’s visit to Tigray and his one on one discussion with the leader of the TPLF; and by his visit to Dessie in the Amhara region at which he opined that the region was squandering its budget on “self-defense.” Shortly thereafter, the inexplicable killings in Bahir Dar and Addis Ababa took place. Some question whether there is “a secret deal” to crush the resurgence of Amhara nationalism whose ultimate objectives are self-preservation and Ethiopia’s continuity.

Ethiopians prefer a multiethnic democratic system of government based on constitutional law that guarantees free and fair elections as well as the right to live and own property in any part of Ethiopia. The TPLF is adamant that the current reform is unacceptable; and is determined to reverse the changes by any means necessary. **We believe that the change process should be supported.**

12. There is a plethora of evidence that shows that Ethiopia is a country of lawlessness where mobs and extremist groups roam from one part of the country to another making the country unsafe and ordinary citizens insecure. We believe that the primary responsibility of a government is the safety and security of citizens.
13. In Tigray, the TPLF and in Oromia a fragment of the OLF continue to operate with impunity, the former protecting human rights abusers and thieves of State; and the later arguably robbing banks, pillaging villages and beating innocent people in Wollega and other Ethiopian provinces.
14. Ethnic conflicts that threaten to tear Ethiopia apart are the result of the **1994 Constitution** established by the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and embraced by the Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front. The Constitution reconfigured the country from a centrally unified multiethnic republic to a federation of nine antagonistic ethnic and linguistic regions in a country of 86 ethnic groups; and two federally administered city-states. The system is replete with internal inconsistencies that leave ethnic minorities exposed and vulnerable. Ethiopia must embrace its minorities. **It is high time to revisit and change Ethiopia’s form of federalism.**
15. The flawed Constitution is the basis for the simmering ethnic conflicts that could explode into civil war and genocide. Prime Minister Dr. Abiy can achieve fundamental transformation if Ethiopia embraces a different kind of federalism, for example, one that is territorial (መልካምድር) and not ethnic. This option might deepen democracy, protect the rights of minorities wherever they live; and avert any form of dictatorship. For federalism to succeed, it must be fair, just, equitable, participatory, rule of law based, democratic, inclusive, balanced and empowering.

16. Instead expressing grief and sorrow following the assassinations in Bahir Dar and Addis Ababa, the tribalistic and warmongering TPLF issued a shameful communique on July 10, 2019 blackmailing and threatening the **Amhara Democratic Party (ADP) for conspiracy** and accusing the Amhara nationality of “chauvinism.” Why did the TPLF, an arrogant team that has “de-facto declared itself as an independent republic” issue such a statement? Might there be a link between the horrific assassinations and the alleged coup d’etat on the one hand and the TPLF leadership and foreign powers on the other? Only time and due diligence will reveal the truth.
17. Last year, the United States House passed H.R. 128 pinpointed crimes against humanity committed by the TPLF dominated Ethiopian government against its own people and noted further that the TPLF-led EPRDF regime held “sham elections, stifled dissent and free speech by outlawing non-governmental organizations and by blocking Internet access.” Ethiopians were elated that H.R. 128 explicitly stated that the “Ethiopian government's cooperation with the U.S. in battling terrorism did not and does not justify human rights abuses.”

Signatories believe that it is time for Congress to re-affirm this commitment and to apply the Magnitsky Act in bringing Ethiopian thieves of state and human rights abusers to account in a court of law.

Signatories are convinced that ethnic suspicion, fear and hatred lead to genocide similar to Rwanda. The devastating consequences of Interahamwe are still fresh. “The Interahamwe is a Hutu paramilitary organization. The militia enjoyed the backing of the Hutu-led government leading up to, during, and after the Rwandan Genocide.” Those who murdered thousands have since been disbanded. They operate as a terrorist cell in the heart of Africa. **Ethnic genocide claimed the lives of between 800,000 and one million innocent lives in Rwanda. In Cambodia horrendous civil war claimed 1.7 million lives. Ethiopians should avoid an “Interahamwe” as well as civil war at any cost.** The way out is not more conflict. Instead, all stakeholders including the TPLF and civil society have a moral obligation to avert potential catastrophe by working together; and not by threatening one another.

Ethiopia is sliding into a dangerous cliff of ethnic conflict and potential Balkanization. Signatories believe and urge all stakeholders to reach out to one another; convene sustained, honest and all-inclusive conversations concerning the root causes for the quagmire; and offer alternatives that are inclusive.

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed inspired Ethiopians with lofty promises of freedom of the press, speech, association, movement, assembly, political pluralism, togetherness, rapid socioeconomic transformation with the private sector playing a pivotal role. His emphasis on the centrality of Ethiopia and Ethiopiawinnet (ኢትዮጵያዊነት) was especially empowering in a country that was ethnically polarized, morally **bankrupt and corruption-ridden. Signatories joined the celebration of what all believed was a new beginning of hope and promise that we still believe should be salvaged.**

For Ethiopia’s 110 million people of whom an estimated 50 million are Amhara, this new promise has begun to dissipate. An estimated 3.5 million people have been displaced because of tribalism. The federal government reports that it has resettled most of the displaced. If not contained fast and soon, ethnic conflict and targeting Amhara and others will explode displacements multifold.

In September 2018, almost 60 non-Oromo nationals were hacked to death in Burayu near Addis Ababa. Homes and churches were torched and a number of Amhara were killed in Ataye and Kemissie districts of Northern Shoa. Similar selective killings of Amhara took place in Beni-Shangul Gumuz and Jimma.

Forcible evictions of Amhara persist in the Amhara, Oromia, SNNP, Gambella, Beni- Shangul Gumuz regions as well as in Legetafo and other suburbs of Addis Ababa.

Twenty bank branches were robbed in day light allegedly by “organized Oromo people” most of them in the Oromia region. Authorities have done little in bringing those who robbed banks and those who committed crimes against humanity to a court of law. Lack of accountability is a core problem. Following the horrific killings of Dr. Ambachew Mekonnen, President of the Amhara region; his colleagues Mr. Azez Wassie, Advisor to Mr. Mekonnen; Mr. Migbaru Kebede, Attorney General; and General Asaminew Tsige, Head of Security-- members of the Executive Committee of the Amhara Democratic Party-- and several soldiers in Bahir Dar, the seat of the regional government on June 22, 2019; as well as General Seare Mekonnen, Chief of Staff of Ethiopia’s Defense Forces and his friend and colleague General Gezae Abera in Addis Ababa, federal authorities alleged the indefensible proposition of a “coup d’état.” This assertion of a conspiracy theory of a coup d’etat is not shared widely. The definition of “coup d’état” is different from the eruption of a local conflict. If someone or a group assassinates the governor of a state in the United States or Germany or Brazil such an incident won’t be characterized as a coup.

The Amhara face an existential threat by a well-financed and armed security and military machine from Tigray, with money stolen and or misappropriated from the Ethiopian public purse and or the private sector, including grants and loans appropriated for projects in different parts of the country during three decades of TPLF hegemony. Signatories note with pride that tens of millions of Ethiopians are of mixed bloods. They contribute immensely to the country’s social cohesion and to its economic productivity. The spread of the Amhara, whose loyalty to Ethiopia is unshakable is an asset. It assures unity with diversity and buffers Ethiopia’s nation building efforts and its continuity as a country.

Signatories accept the heated debates in the Amhara region and opine that there is no credible evidence these debates among brothers who belong to same ethnicity that has been assaulted throughout Ethiopia and is trying to defend itself from relentless defamation and displacement amounts to a coup. The lion’s share of the loss is absorbed by the Amhara. It lost its heroes and leaders. The current character assassination of “Amhara chauvinism” echoed by the TPLF and propagated by its surrogates compounds the harm; deepens regional divisions and weakens the Amhara and Ethiopia even further. The primary beneficiaries are the **TPLF, fundamentalists** and Ethiopia’s traditional foreign adversaries.

In characterizing Amhara leadership differences as a coup and in making **unnecessary linkages** authorities gave the term a new meaning and used it as an excuse to go after Amhara activists. They created a precedent that is dangerous. By the same definition an internal conflict in Gambella might also be called a coup. An allegation of a coup attempt against the Abiy Administration would have been more plausible. There have been incidents against the change since Prime Minister Dr. Abiy assumed power.

Signatories support active federal government intervention in any region to preserve Ethiopia’s territorial integrity and sovereignty; and to protect innocent civilians. Going forward, signatories urge the government of Ethiopia to establish a set of criteria in allowing regional states to establish “special forces,” militias and police that correspond to local requirements; limit excesses that threaten others; and bar non-state actors from forming armed units. In this regard, Dr. Abiy’s judgements are asymmetrical. It is hard to explain why military training and the provision of military hardware in Oromia and Tigray are tolerable while similar projects in the Amhara region are deemed a threat and “criminalized.”

The larger existential threat is the politicization and militarization of ethnic politics. It is high time for Ethiopia to learn from the best practices of other African governments that bar political formation on the basis of ethnicity and religion. Governance on the basis of ethnicity must be changed for a compelling set of reasons. Ethnicization and political party formation on the basis of tribal affiliation adds fuel to the fire and poses an existential threat for Ethiopia. It undermines capital mobility.

This core issue cannot be attributed solely to the Amhara. Wrong attributions to Amhara injected by the TPLF continue to be propagated especially by Tigrean elites and its allies. Some in the Diaspora provide hateful and cancerous ammunition. [Blaming Amhara and injection](#) of ethnic hatred, suspicion and fear of Amhara must stop before Ethiopia becomes the next Syria or Yugoslavia.

One of the darkest days in Ethiopia's political history occurred on June 22, 2019. This event is being paraded as an affront to the Ethiopian ethnic federal system and to the preeminence of the Oromo Democratic Party. The ODP replaced the ethos of an identical ethnic preeminence by the TPLF. Signatories are not saying that post-TPLF Ethiopia is identical to its disastrous and inhumane past. Ethiopians enjoy a modicum of freedom under Dr. Abiy. However, there is a strong public perception that Ethiopia has entered a new phase of another cycle of ethnic dominance.

Signatories subscribe to the overarching principle that the spirit of Ethiopiawinnet (ኢትዮጵያዊነት መንፈስ ነው) binds each of Ethiopia's 110 million people. The question is the extent to which this sacred principle is embraced by all ethnic elites. Defamation of the Amhara as "chauvinist" does not advance Ethiopiawinnet. Assassinations degraded the capacity of the Amhara people to defend themselves. Signatories suspect this might be the intent of the alleged coup d'état. The evidence that surfaces each day supports that those who wish to diminish and degrade the Amhara using a "perfect" excuse of a coup have achieved their primary goal. However, this victory is illusory.

The ploy reminiscent of the past 27 years is now deployed to intimidate and kill Amhara and make them leaderless and defenseless. Experts report that 1,000 Amhara representing a cross-section of members and supporters of independent media, opposition groups, [NAMA and the Addis Ababa "Trustees' Council" and](#) others are incarcerated. A press conference held by Eskinder and his team was disrupted by a mob in Addis Ababa, the seat of the federal government and the African Union. Eskinder escaped from a thunderous mob who wish him dead.

Why are mobs allowed to disrupt meetings with impunity?

It is clear from the barbaric assassinations that Abiy's "seismic transformation" is cosmetic; and has stalled. National institutions are still weak. The federal government has failed to provide security to its citizens even in Addis Ababa. It is hard for us to imagine transformation without security and peace.

Signatories of this appeal maintain good will towards the Abiy-led reform process. [We want the reform to succeed.](#) In April this year, we sent a letter of appeal to Prime Minister Dr. Abiy urging him to safeguard Mr. Eskinder Nega's human rights. Dr. Abiy responded to us on March 28, 2019 indicating that he respected Mr. Eskinder and would "meet" and discuss with him mutual concerns. We took it in good faith that the Prime Minister would live up to his words. The Eskinder incident shows that things are worse today than they were then. The harassment and threat of Mr. Eskinder has escalated.

The harsh treatment of Amhara, especially youth, shows that Ethiopia may be heading back to the days when freedom of the press and political expression were crimes. The change of events and direction took place months after UNESCO commended Dr. Abiy for championing human rights and the rule of law.

The abnormal has become normal. Signatories note with utter disbelief that a singular focus of ethnic cleansing and forcible evictions that began before the TPLF-led ethnic coalition took power in 1991 is the Amhara. Amhara were killed in droves, the dead were thrown over cliffs, many were jailed in unknown locations and numerous Amhara girls were compelled to marry Tigrean nationals against their will, and others were forced to accept orders and abandon their properties. Their lands were confiscated and incorporated into Greater Tigray. This is the flashpoint and backdrop of conflict in Wolkait Tsegede, Setit-Humera, Raya and Azebo as well as Metekel, all lands that belong to the Amhara population. The virus of ethnic hatred, suspicion and division has spread like wild fire. The situation in Guji, Gedeo, Harar, Dire Dawa, Jimma, Sidamo, Wollega etc. shows that ethnic hatred and displacement is no longer confined to the Amhara population. Ethnic exclusion and disenfranchisement are spreading faster than the capacity of federal authorities to contain it. Crimes against humanity were perpetrated against the Amhara in Oromia, Harar and Dire Dawa, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP), Gambella and Beni-Shangul Gumuz.

Under the watch of Prime Minister Dr. Abiy, gross violations of human rights, massive displacements in Gedeo, Guji, Gondar and in the suburbs of Addis Ababa; and rise in the number of jailings of journalists and human rights activists, closure of the Internet under the pretext of fighting “terrorism” all indicate a movement towards another ethnic-elite based dictatorship similar to that of the TPLF.

Signatories acknowledge that Ethiopia must guard against terrorism and arrest those who commit or plan to commit terrorist acts. Such arrests should not be selective and ethnic. They must be based on due process of law and assure the protection of domestic and international human rights laws.

A clear illustration of the dangerous direction the Dr. Abiy Administration is heading is that those arrested have been hauled like cattle to an army camp in Sandafa. Reports indicate that political prisoners are being beaten and tortured forcing them to confess “state crimes” they never committed. Dr. Abiy was commended for the release of 100,000 political prisoners. Yet; he has begun to jail hundreds. For this reason, signatories post a central question. Who is the real Prime Minister Dr. Abiy?

In the light of the forgoing, concerned Ethiopians across the globe call on the global community, the government of Ethiopia and the country’s Diaspora to avert an imminent danger of civil war, genocide and Ethiopia’s Balkanization.

Signatories urge all Ethiopians irrespective of affiliation that each and every one of us focus on the commonalities that bind Ethiopians as human beings and as Ethiopians; and halt fueling hatred and division. It is irresponsible to pass judgements without evidence; and to propagate suspicion, fear and ethnic hatred in a country that needs healing.

Signatories are convinced that immediate response to and implementation of the above recommendations are in the interest of Ethiopia’s 110 million people, the Horn of Africa and the world.

7/2019