

Washington Update - By Mesfin Mekonen
March 10, 2021

1. Concern about U.S. State Department statement.

Ethiopian-Americans are deeply concerned by the lack of balance and objectivity in the U.S. State Department's recent statement about the situation in Tigray. The statement includes unfounded and unsubstantiated allegations, including suggesting that the Amhara people have invaded Tigray.

Ethiopia has partnered with the U.S. in the global war on terrorism, including contributing the bulk of peace keeping troops sent to South Sudan. The U.S. supported Ethiopian military action al Qaeda and Al Shabab in the Somalia region, but denies Ethiopia the right to maintain security within its own borders.

2. TPLF atrocities

The lack of balance in reporting about Ethiopia is exemplified by the world's indifference to the fate of over 600 innocent people who were killed by TPLF soldiers and militia on November 12 in Mai-Kadra. The massacre, and the identity of its perpetrators, have been described by Amnesty International and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission.

There are many other examples of ethnically motivated violence in Ethiopia, including in Metekel where ethnic Gumuz armed groups have engaged in a targeted campaign by against members of other ethnic groups in the area, including the Amhara.

The conflict in Tigray has created another set of tragedies, including loss of life and refugees. The violence was incited by the TPLF. The origins of the conflict as well as the atrocities that have been committed are clearly the responsibility of the TPLF as the aggressors and perpetrators of human rights abuses for many years

The United Nation Security Council should consider the Mai-Kadra massacre and other atrocities committed by TPLF. Rather than sanction Ethiopia, the UN should send aid, including food and shelter, to people displaced by the TPLF.

The UN should also act to force the Sudanese military to withdraw from took Ethiopian land it occupied when the Ethiopian army based in the area was withdrawn to take part in the government's operations in Tigray. The recent invasion by Sudanese armed forces of Ethiopia's territory is a

violation of international treaty obligations. The international community must condemn this incursion and demand its reversal.

3. Reject Egyptian interference

The U.S. Congress and Biden administration must reverse the Trump administration's decision to back the Egyptian government's side in the conflict over completion of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. Although 85% of the water in the Nile originates in Ethiopia, in the Blue Nile, the Ethiopian people derive very little benefit from the river. The GERD will meet Ethiopia's need for power. Today, 83% of Ethiopians lack access to electricity; 94% rely on wood for daily cooking and heating. This is an unacceptable situation, especially since Ethiopia possess abundant water resources and hydropower potential, second only to the Democratic Republic of Congo in all of Africa. Only 3% of this potential has been developed.

The GERD is also essential to improving Ethiopia's food security. Currently, less than 5% of irrigable land in the Blue Nile basin has been developed for food production.

Ethiopia is at a critical crossroads with a large and increasing population, a depressed national economy, insufficient agricultural production, and a low number of developed energy sources. The upper Blue Nile basin harbors considerable untapped potential for irrigation and hydropower development and expansion.

The famines that periodically bring mass deaths and deprivation to Ethiopia are a direct result of underdevelopment of irrigation and water resources.

Today, up to six million people are in danger of suffering from food shortages in Ethiopia. Completion of the GERD would be a major step toward alleviating their suffering.