

Washington update - May 4, 2021 - by Mesfin Mekonen

Five U.S. Senators have written to Ambassador Jeffrey Feltman, U.S. Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa urging him to use U.S. influence to “advocate for peace, reconciliation, and tolerance throughout Ethiopia.”

The letter is important because it calls for a holistic approach. The tragedies it mentions –in Tigray and other parts of Ethiopia – are the consequence of a constitution that sows ethnic conflict and division as part of a deliberate divide-and-rule strategy.

Ben Cardin (D-Md.), along with Senators Tim Kaine (D-Va.), Jacky Rosen (D-Nev.), Cory A. Booker (D-N.J.) and Ed Markey (D-Mass.) called on Feltman to “use all diplomatic tools available to ensure that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed fulfills his commitments to provide unfettered humanitarian access to the region, to secure the withdrawal of Eritrean troops from Tigray, to allow independent investigations into human rights violations, and to hold perpetrators accountable.”

They added: “We hope that you will support the independent investigation of human rights abuses committed in Oromia, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, Tigray, and other regions, with full accountability for those found responsible. We also encourage you to promote a process of national dialogue that brings together all of the country’s ethnic and political groups to chart a more stable, harmonious, and inclusive future for Ethiopia.”

Importantly, the letter acknowledged “numerous massacres by non-state armed groups have targeted ethnic Amharas and smaller ethnic communities around Ethiopia.” It warned that “these trends have triggered large demonstrations across the Amhara Region and prompted a number of opposition parties to withdraw from the planned upcoming national elections.”