

World Health Organization (WHO) should declare the Outbreak of cholera in the Amhara and Oromia region of Ethiopia
(by Haileeyesus Adamu)

As a public health and disaster medicine specialist, I can easily see clear indication of large scale cholera outbreaks in the Amhara and Oromia region of Ethiopia. There are an alarming reports coming from sources inside the Ministry of Health, and Amhara and Oromia regional health bureaus about the intentional spread of the vibrio cholera bacterium by the current Ethnic minority Tigrean dominated regime as a tactic and method to undermine the current Amhara and Oromo people protests. Health and medical professionals are not allowed to provide cholera related health education and promotion activities. For instance, in the Amhara regional capital city of Bahir Dar, the center of Amhara people protest, more than 1200 cholera cases and 60 cholera related deaths are reported. The regime is trying to deceive and misinform the people by changing the medical term of this deadly and highly contagious cholera disease in to the so called "Acute Watery Diarrhea (AWD)". In addition, health professionals are not allowed to publicly speak about the magnitude and severity of this cholera outbreak.

In normal circumstance, it is the responsibility of the government to to declare the outbreak of deadly diseases such as cholera but in especial situation such as in the case of Ethiopia , we shouldn't relay on tyranny regime which killed thousands of its own citizen in order to prevent massive catastrophe of human loss. Authoritarian regimes could afford to hide the outbreak of deadly diseases as it was the case in previous outbreaks and they have little incentive and accountability to avert it .

The World Health Organization (WHO) shouldn't remain silent while hundreds of people are dying from this cholera outbreak. WHO has a mandate, responsibility and duty to intervene when the government fails to fulfill its international obligation. Aid agencies, donors and the international media should consider the current situation in the country as humanitarian crisis and WHO should immediately declare the outbreak of cholera in Ethiopia.

The international community should be aware about the past record of this regime regarding to the handling of previous humanitarian situations. This is the regime which was using humanitarian food and medical aid for military and political purposes. Human Right Watch report, entitled "Development without Freedom How Aid Underwrites Repression in Ethiopia" documented that the ruling Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) has used donor supported humanitarian emergency programs as political weapons to control the population, punish dissent, and undermine political opponents. Dr Aregawi Berhe and Mr. Gebremedhen Araya, who were senior TPLF commanders, witnessed that the current ruling party (TPLF/EPRDF) was used Millions of dollar of Western aid money to buy weapons which were intended to buy food and medicine for starving Ethiopians during the country's 1984 famine. Recently declassified document from the CIA by WikiLeaks support these claims. "Some funds that insurgent organizations are raising for relief operations, as a result of increased world publicity, are almost certainly being diverted for military purposes," the Agency wrote in a secret 1985 report.

Therefore, WHO should declare cholera outbreak in the Amhara and Oromia region of Ethiopia before it is too late. We shouldn't afford another loss of thousands of human lives from cholera outbreak in the 21th century.

Best Wishes,
Haileeyus