

Eritrean and Tigrayan Australians solidarity media release

Media Release, Melbourne, Australia

20 February 2021

Concerned and/or Prominent Eritrean and Tigrayan community members in Australia condemn atrocities committed in Tigray (Ethiopia) and call for immediate action

We, the undersigned concerned Australian citizens and residents of Eritrean and Tigrayan origins are calling the international community to expeditiously intervene to stop the killings of innocent and defenceless people and the violence against women and children in Tigray, to bring an end to the pillaging and destruction of civilian infrastructure including places of worship in Tigray. We commend the UNSC resolution demanding immediate action. We also strongly support the resolution for unobstructed humanitarian access in Tigray and to commission an independent international body to investigate the war crimes perpetrated in Tigray.

Members of the two communities expressed grief and horror over the latest atrocities committed against women and children in Tigray region in Ethiopia. It has been three months since the devastating war broke out in Ethiopia's Tigray region between the Ethiopian Federal forces and the Tigray regional state forces. This has resulted in a grave and widespread humanitarian crisis that has led to the deaths and displacement of hundreds of thousands of Tigrayan civilians and Eritrean Refugees an untold number of casualties from both forces¹. The tragic war has been aggravated by the involvement of the Eritrean troops, which is reportedly engaged² in an ongoing rampage within Tigray amid a complete communications blackout in the region. Reports by various international humanitarian organizations, including the United Nations indicate that the Eritrean troops are engaged in wanton destruction³, and committing massacres, rape, abduction, vandalism and looting across towns and villages. There are also alleged reports of infiltration of armed actors in the Eritrean refugee camps in Tigray, of killings, abductions and also some forced return of Eritrean refugees (who were under international law protection) to Eritrea at the hands of Eritrean forces present in the area.⁴ According to several reports, religious leaders and faith institutions have not been spared from the indiscriminate violence against civilians that could amount to war crimes.

"We absolutely repudiate violence and rape of women and children" said Dr. Ahmed, who is Victorian Australian of the year 2009 and adjunct professor, the University of Melbourne. The situation in Tigray requires urgent action from the international community. The violence needs to stop, and millions of people need basic necessities, including food, water, electricity, medicine, and services.

We, members of concerned Eritrean and Tigrayan communities in Australia are appalled by the human rights abuse against women and children perpetrated in Tigray. We, therefore urge the international community to commit their full support to avert this humanitarian crisis and prevent future mass atrocities and lay the groundwork for sustainable peace. To this end, we respectfully call upon the international community to:

¹ <https://abcnews.go.com/International/ethiopias-hidden-war-tigray-threatens-return-ethnic-violence/story?id=74499425>

² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-55825560>

³ <https://sites.tufts.edu/reinventingpeace/2020/12/23/who-will-call-out-eritreas-war-crimes-in-tigray/>

⁴ [UN: Eritrean Refugees in Tigray Face Humanitarian Crisis | Voice of America - English \(voanews.com\)](#)

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- Condemn the ethnic cleansing of Tigrayan, using violence, massacres, rape, abduction of Eritrean refugees, vandalism and looting by Eritrean troops.
- Urge Ethiopia and Eritrea to stop their military offensive in Tigray, and that Eritrean forces should immediately withdraw from Tigray and stop meddling in Ethiopia's internal affairs.
- Urge Ethiopia to immediately remove its military forces from Eritrea and stop using Eritrea as a base to wage a war against its own people and avoid any further instability and future potential war between Eritrea and Ethiopia.
- We condemn the use of food as a weapon to starve the people of Tigray, impacted by the war in particular the most vulnerable (children, pregnant and lactating women, elderly). About 4.5 m people in dire need of food.
- We condemn the abduction and killing of Eritrean refugees in Tigray by the Eritrean army, who are under the protection of international law
- Urge all parties to address their grievances through dialogue and work to stabilise the imperilled peace and security of the Horn of Africa region.
- Call for free and unobstructed access to humanitarian aid across Tigray.
- Call for independent investigation by international bodies on the human rights violations and war crimes committed during the Ethio-Eritrean campaign in Tigray.
- Refer Isayas Afewerki to the International Criminal Court for systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations and committing crimes against humanity, not only against the Eritrean people for decades (30+ years) but also war crimes committed against the people of Tigray (aligning itself with the Ethiopian Government) in the current war between the Ethiopian Government and its own people, the Tigray forces and the people of Tigray. UN Inquiry in 2016 found that the Government led by Isayas Afewerki committed gross human rights violations and crimes against humanity in Eritrea for over two decades.⁵

Signatories are:

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|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Dr. Berhan Ahmed</i> | 14. <i>Mr. Berhe
Tewoldeberhan</i> | 24. <i>Dr. Hiluf Gebrehiwot</i> |
| 2. <i>Mr. Kennedy
Weldemariam</i> | 15. <i>Mr. Nasser Issa</i> | 25. <i>Dr. Atakilti Hailu</i> |
| 3. <i>Mr. Makonnen Woldu</i> | 16. <i>Mr. Jemal Hiabu</i> | 26. <i>Mr. Hashim Semra</i> |
| 4. <i>Mr. Mulugeta
Demewoz</i> | 17. <i>Mr. Ghebremedhin
Atsebaha</i> | 27. <i>Ms. Senait Habte</i> |
| 5. <i>Mr. Yasseen Musa</i> | 18. <i>Mr. Teferi
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| 8. <i>Ms. Muna Gebrehat</i> | 21. <i>Mr. Amdom Worres</i> | 31. <i>Mr. Haile Berhane</i> |
| 9. <i>Mr. Solomon Haile</i> | 22. <i>Mr. Dedta Dest</i> | 32. <i>Mr. Ogbagaber
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| 10. <i>Mr. Jemal Ahmed</i> | 23. <i>Dr. Tilahun Negash</i> | 33. <i>Dr Haily Abrha</i> |
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| 12. <i>Ms. Muna Fshaya</i> | | |
| 13. <i>Dr. Amanuel Elias</i> | | |

⁵ [OHCHR | UN Inquiry reports gross human rights violations in Eritrea](#)