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Open Letter to the G7 Summit, Cornwall, England 11-13 June 2021

As the gathering of the largest economies, representing 10% of the world population and 40% of global GDP that has been heavily impacted by COVID-19 over the last 18 months takes place this weekend, global economic recovery and vaccine rollout to developing countries are likely to be the main topics for discussion. This is to be welcomed and we wish the G7 success in their endeavours. However, it is vital that the G7 does not ignore the atrocious war that threatens to destabilise the Horn of Africa.

In April 2021, the G7 condemned the killing of civilians, sexual and gender-based violence, indiscriminate bombardments and the displacement of Tigray residents and Eritrean refugees. The Group added "*All parties must exercise utmost restraint, ensure the protection of civilians and respect human rights and international law*". This was welcome, but the matter cannot rest there. Now is the time to move from discussions to action.

Without immediate, well targeted sanctions against those who have perpetrated these crimes, and sanctions to prevent them from continuing these acts, these atrocities are certain to continue.

Since the outbreak of the war in November 2020, world leaders and governments have repeatedly called for a secession of hostilities and for the warring parties to resolve their differences through negotiations. Sadly, the war continues unabated with huge losses of civilian lives, appalling and systematic rape of women and girls, internal and external displacement of large number of the Tigrayan population and Eritrea refugees. In addition, the world has witnessed egregious looting including historic and religious objects, the willful destruction of infrastructure worth billions of dollars and the use of basic necessities such as food and medicine as weapons of war in what can only be described as genocidal and barbaric. The people of Tigray are now close to starvation, facing the worst famine since 1984-85.

Eritrean troops, despite calls from the International Community to withdraw immediately from Ethiopia remain in the country committing heinous crimes with impunity. PM Abiy and President Isais repeatedly promise that Eritrean forces will leave Ethiopia and indeed PM Abiy's spokesperson said at a press conference on 3 June 2021 that they (Eritrean forces) have started to leave the country. However, there is so far no evidence of them leaving. If anything, more Eritrean troops have been sent to Ethiopia since the press conference.

We plead with the G7 to spare a moment to contemplate the horrific atrocities being committed in Tigray, in particular the sexual violation of women as old as 70 and girls as young as 8 by armed gangs in uniform. These victims could be your granddaughters, daughters, sisters, mothers and even grandmothers. These are acts of stomach wrenching cruelty which the international community cannot tolerate by its inaction.

In the UK House of Lords debate on the Tigray conflict on 24 November 2020, Viscount Waverly asked: *“Is the world going to stand by yet again, knowing that mayhem is seemingly set to unfold, do nothing and then have to deal with the added consequences of regional instability and the combination of Somalia, Sudan and Yemen across the way ripe for Islamist groups or Governments to exploit?”*

Tragically, these important and critical questions remain unanswered by the British government and the wider international community.

We call upon the G7 and the international community to act immediately to halt this barbaric war. The war in Tigray has all the hallmark of the genocide in Rwanda which occurred while the world looked the other way. This war could also potentially lead to the fragmentation of Ethiopia with untold consequences.

It must be stopped!

Habte Hagos, Chairman

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