

Friday, October 21, 2022 (Tikimit 11, 2015 EC)

To:

H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo, High Representative for the Horn of Africa, AU
H.E. Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta, Peace Envoy to the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region, Kenya
H.E. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Peace Envoy to the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region, SA
H.E. Mike Hammer, Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, USA
H.E. Annette Weber, Special Representative for the Horn of Africa, EU
H.E. Sarah Montgomery, Special Envoy to the Horn of Africa and Red Sea, UK
H.E. Xue Bing, Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Affairs, People's Republic of China

Cc:

H.E. President Macky Sall, Chairperson of the African Union and President of Senegal
H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission
H.E. António Guterres, Secretary-General, United Nations
H.E. Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Introduction of the Amhara People's Negotiations Delegation to promote inclusive negotiations to end war in Northern Ethiopia and ensure lasting peace and stability in the wider region

Your Excellencies,

The Amhara Association of America (AAA) continues to express its concern over the ongoing exclusion of Amharas from the negotiations process aimed to end the war in Northern Ethiopia. These sentiments were relayed in AAA's statement on July 1st, 2022, then again on August 19th, 2022 in a letter signed by twenty-eight Amhara organizations worldwide. Unfortunately, your Excellencies have yet to heed the calls of the global Amhara community. The message has been the same throughout, achieving lasting peace and stability in Ethiopia requires inclusion of Amharas in peace talks. The inclusion of Amharas as a primary stakeholder would promote justice and accountability for war crimes and ensure any negotiated settlement receives wide reception and acceptance among Amharas, the largest stakeholder in the war. In accordance with this message and as per the suggestion of the 28 organizations that wrote you a letter dated August 19th, 2022 that stated, among other things, to stay in touch with AAA on the matter of negotiations, AAA has taken the liberty of preparing a list of Amhara representatives, based on a stringent criterion, for the AU-led peace talks to end the war in Northern Ethiopia.

The newly formed ***Amhara People's Negotiations Delegation consists of four main negotiators signed on this letter with a broader delegation of more than 40 Amhara leaders from different segments of Amhara society serving in committees to support the leadership team.*** This inclusive delegation of Amharas offers a critical opportunity for all actors to seize to ensure peace talks are successful or else risk further conflict and destabilization of Ethiopia and the wider region.

Over the past three decades, Amhara people were subject to the most heinous human rights abuses imaginable under the TPLF-led EPRDF regime and the current regime including genocide, ethnic cleansing, forced sterilization, displacement, political marginalization, economic disenfranchisement and overall systemic oppression. This was due in part to the new constitution introduced by TPLF which brought a system known as ethnic federalism in a process which excluded Amharas. Under this system, TPLF expanded the boundaries of the traditional Tigray Province to incorporate ancestral Amhara lands of Welkait and Raya to form the new Tigray Regional State and similar annexations took place elsewhere in the country minoritizing Amharas and creating a society stratified by ethnic identity (e.g. Addis Ababa, Metekel, Dera, etc). Throughout this onerous period, Amharas preached peace, unity, amendment to the divisive ethnic federalism “apartheid” system and constitution, and pursued peaceful struggle through rallies and civil disobedience but to no avail. In fact, during this era, Amhara experts warned this system would lead the country on a trajectory to ethnic-based civil war but their pleas were met with ridicule.

Ultimately, these years of brutal repression culminated in region-wide protests in the Amhara Region in 2016 centered around respecting the civil rights, freedoms and liberties of Amharas in Welkait and Raya, ancestral Amhara areas forcibly occupied and annexed by the TPLF and its partners through violent occupation. In 2018, the TPLF was pushed from central power and Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali came to power with promises of reform. Unfortunately, Abiy and his Prosperity Party (PP) squandered hopes of reform with his refusal to amend the divisive constitution, constant antagonism towards Amharas and his complicity in a new wave of Amhara Genocide by various armed groups including the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and TPLF throughout the country but particularly in the so-called Oromia and Benishangul-Gumuz Regions. Meanwhile, the TPLF grew restless while being removed from power and Amharas were forced into a bloody war when TPLF attacked the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) Northern Command on November 2020 and attempted to push into the Amhara Region.

Then starting in late June 2021, Amharas and Afaris faced the full brunt of TPLF’s and OLA’s pincer assault as a direct consequence of the PP regime’s gross mismanagement of the war. Eventually the joint assault was thwarted in large part by Amhara forces including the efforts of Fano, volunteer freedom fighters who took up arms in defense of their communities. Nevertheless, the genocidal campaign caused immense suffering to residents of Amhara and Afar Regions. Invading forces caused immeasurable devastation to occupied communities including but not limited to horrific atrocities against civilians, weaponized gang rape and systematic razing of entire cities. As a result of this genocide mission, thousands of civilians were killed, tens of thousands of women and young girls were brutally raped, hundreds of thousands were internally displaced, millions were exposed to humanitarian catastrophe and property loss was estimated to be in the billions of ETB.

Then in the aftermath of the devastating full-scale invasion of Amhara Region, the PP regime intensified its campaign of mass arrests of Amhara dissidents in May 2022 arresting more than 13,000 Amharas including journalists, activists, opposition politicians and Fano veterans in an effort to stifle opposition. This authoritarian act instead reaffirmed that the PP regime lacked the support, mandate and legitimacy to represent Amharas in any shape or form. Afterall, the Amhara Region had seen the highest scale and frequency of anti-government protests in the country with protesters decrying the Amhara Genocide which has continued unabated with government complicity. In particular, the situation unfolding in various zones of Wollega in the Oromia Region where the OLA, with backing from TPLF and some Oromo

PP officials, has imposed genocidal siege and blockade against hundreds of thousands of Amhara residents awaiting imminent massacres.

Renewed hopes of a peaceful settlement were crushed particularly after the TPLF initiated yet another full-scale invasion into Amhara Region in late August 2022. At the time of this letter, TPLF's army is effectively routed and Amhara forces along with ENDF are pursuing them to ensure inter-regional borders are secure and the threat of imminent invasion is mitigated. Unfortunately, this was necessary due to the TPLF's belligerence, culture of war and military bravado which sabotaged hopes of peaceful coexistence post-2018 until the culmination of TPLF attacking the ENDF Northern Command. The cycle of invasion, withdrawal and counter-invasion is a deadly one which will only prolong pain and suffering for all. And at present, with fighting ongoing, it can be said efforts to bring about a peaceful resolution have failed.

At the core of this failure is the flawed belief that the conflict has taken place between two opposing actors, the Government of Ethiopia and the TPLF when in reality there have been many independent stakeholders, the largest and among most heavily impacted being the Amhara people. The Amhara people have fought tooth and nail in this conflict not for political ambitions but for self-preservation, freedom and liberty, including to restore freedom and dignity to Amharas living in Welkait and Raya who endured decades of genocide under TPLF occupation. This issue warrants direct engagement where major stakeholders can address the issues appropriately to bring about lasting change that the respective communities will recognize.

Hence, the newly formed **Amhara People's Negotiations Delegation** aims to address the pitfalls of the failed negotiations initiative which failed to include the Amhara people, the primary stakeholders in the war in Northern Ethiopia. This delegation is an inclusive endeavor which has brought together representatives from all factions of society including Fano and Amhara military leadership, political leadership and civic society leadership both in Ethiopia and the diaspora. To demonstrate the timeliness of this proposal, all invited representatives of the delegation agreed to participate without hesitation. Let it be known now that this delegation has been organized, there is no longer any reason for international actors to hesitate in promoting inclusion of Amharas in the negotiations process. This gesture is not only appropriate given the disproportionate cost paid by Amharas in the war but it would serve to legitimize the process in the eyes of Amharas who otherwise would not be expected to abide by any outcome of a negotiations process from which they are excluded.

AAA reiterates its commitment to work with all stakeholders to achieve lasting peace and stability for Amharas and all other Ethiopians for a united and peaceful Ethiopia. Therefore, in the interests of collective peace, AAA calls on:

- all actors to welcome the newly formed **Amhara People's Negotiations Delegation** to participate in any future negotiations process;
- the ruling PP regime to unconditionally release all Amhara prisoners of conscience including journalists, activists, opposition politicians and Fano veterans;
- the TPLF to cease all provocative military acts encroaching on Amhara territories;
- all parties to immediately and formally recognize restoration of pre-1991 administrative boundaries in Welkait-Tegede, Setit Humera, Telemt and Raya wherein they are re-incorporated

to the regions of Gonder and Wollo, respectively (present-day Amhara Region) and to immediately receive proportional budget allocations from the PP regime including to the Welkait-Tegede-Setit Humera Zone;

- all parties to commit to transitional justice for victims of the tragic Mai-Kadra massacre and independent investigations into atrocities committed against Amharas during the war and before November 2020 which includes Amhara Genocide across all administrative regions in Ethiopia including those committed by OLA and affiliates in the Oromia and Benishangul-Gumuz Regions;
- all parties to commit to an all-inclusive dialogue and openness relating to amendment of the current Ethiopian constitution and divisive ethnic federalism “apartheid” system and international actors to exert maximum pressure on PP and TPLF to promote the above critical points and encourage gestures of good will particularly from the TPLF which has exploited dialogue mechanisms in the past to “buy time” for further military operations.

The Amhara people look forward to your affirmative response.

Signed:

General Tefera Mammo *G. TEFERA MAMO*

Dr. Wondwossen Assefa Hailemariam *DR. WONDWOSSEN ASSEFA HAILEMARIAM*

Dr. Dessalegn Chanie Dagneu *Dessalegn C. Dagneu*

Mr. Tewodrose Tirfe *Tewodrose Tirfe*