



## **Response to Secretary Antony Blinken’s Statement regarding COHA**

### **From International Amhara Movement (iAM)**

**May 4, 2023**

On 2 May 2023, the United States Secretary of State, Hon. Anthony J. Blinken, issued a press statement entitled: “Statement Marking Six-Month Anniversary of the Cessation of Hostilities in Northern Ethiopia.” In this connection, the International Amhara Movement (IAM) wishes to register its dismay over the deliberate misrepresentation of the reality on the ground regarding the implementation of COHA and the unfounded allegations and demands contained in the statement by Hon. Secretary of State.

The so-called “Cessation of Hostilities Agreement” (COHA) signed in Pretoria, on November 2, 2022, between the Ethnic-Apartheid Regime of Ethiopia and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front is utterly flawed, as it fails to address the root causes of the conflict and excludes significant stakeholders, especially the Amhara people who endured the most suffering and destruction caused by the two-years conflict in North Ethiopia. The Hon. U.S. Secretary of State is fully aware that the Amhara people, 50 million strong and the largest in Ethiopia, have been deliberately excluded from the so-called peace process, despite their request and readiness to participate and represent their legitimate interests in the talks. Consequently, important matters, including issues related to accountability for the Genocide TPLF committed against Amharas in Wolkait and Raya as well as border demarcation between Tigray and Amhara region, were dealt with without representation of the Amhara people and to impose arbitrary solutions that would only perpetuate the conflict in the region.

With respect to the assertion in the statement of the Hon. U.S Secretary of State that “significant progress has been made in the implementation of the COHA,” the facts on the ground suggest otherwise: the most important part of the agreement requiring the full disarmament of the TPLF within thirty days of its signing has not been fulfilled to date. Despite the staged and manipulative efforts to create an appearance of a successful disarmament process, the TPLF still maintains most of its well-trained forces and heavy weaponry and, brazenly, is currently engaged in recruitment and training of more fighters to launch another war on the Amhara people.

The fact that TPLF has not been fully disarmed, as stipulated in the COHA, was confirmed, and even justified, by the ethnic-apartheid Government’s chief negotiator and the Prime Minister’s National Security Advisor in his public testimony to the Ethiopian parliament. Allowing TPLF to maintain its forces and heavy weapons intact is not a mere incidence but a

deliberate act encouraged and supported by the Ethiopian regime with the aim of using it as leverage for consolidating its dictatorship and advancing its wider political objective of weakening, marginalizing, and subjugating the Amhara people.

Accordingly, only days after celebrating the “success” of implementing its agreement with TPLF and declaring peace in the country, the Ethnic Apartheid regime opened an all-out war on the Amhara people, deploying tens of thousands of troops and heavy weapons. It has already caused significant civilian casualties, displacement, and gross human rights violations in many parts of the Amhara region. Regrettably, for the Hon. U.S Secretary of State, these alarming acts of the Ethiopian regime against the Amhara people did not merit any attention while claiming that “significant progress” was made in the implementation of a failed agreement, which is now being used as justification for the ongoing war on the Amhara people. If this reckless attack on the Amhara people continues, with the perceived encouragement and support of the U.S. and other external actors, we may soon witness a human tragedy of far greater proportions and with grave consequences for the peace and stability of Ethiopia and beyond.

The International Amhara Movement is further dismayed by the Hon. U.S. Secretary of State’s reference to withdrawing non-federal forces from Tigray. While the statement did not specify the non-federal forces and the particular areas of Tigray they should withdraw from, they can be mistaken as echoing TPLF’s false claims on Amhara ancestral territories of Wolkait/Tegede and Raya, liberated from TPLF’s illegal annexation of 30 years and now returned to their rightful owners: the Amhara people. In that regard, we call upon the Hon. U.S Secretary of State and all others concerned to refrain from making such ill-informed, vague and partisan statements, which would only embolden the TPLF and encourage it to engage in another costly military adventure against the Amhara people.

On various occasions, the Amhara people expressed their position on the COHA, stating that it did not address the root causes of the conflict and failed to ensure justice for the crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by all sides during the conflict. The conflict claimed over a million lives, while tens of millions have been displaced and tens of thousands subjected to unspeakable atrocities, including rape and torture, the majority of whom were innocent Amharas. The COHA did not address these atrocities. It was designed only to resolve the power struggle between the Oromo and Tigrayn factions of the former Ethiopian Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF): the Oromo People Democratic Party and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front.

Amharas, who have been subjected to more than three decades of unending attacks and facing real risks of extinction, have no options but to defend themselves to ensure their survival as a people. At the same time, as peace-loving people who have sacrificed immensely to build the Ethiopian state and to ensure its survival thus far, Amharas are also committed to the peaceful resolution of any disputes and to living in dignity, mutual respect, and peace with all Ethiopians, including their neighbors, the people of Tigray. In this regard, we urge the U.S. government to play a constructive role in pressing for justice, accountability and all-inclusive peace and reconciliation in Ethiopia and refrain from fueling tension in the country through perceived and actual partisan policies and public statements.

## **Signing Organizations:**

### United State:

1. Federation of Amharas in North America, FANA
2. Amhara Association of America, AAA
3. Amhara Professional Union, APU
4. Amhara Association of Arizona
5. Amhara Association of California, San Diego
6. Amhara People Civic Organization Dallas TX (DFW)
7. Amhara Association of Chicago, AAC
8. Amhara Association of Colorado, AAC
9. Amhara Association of Los Angeles
10. Amhara Association of Michigan
11. Amhara Association of New England
12. Amhara Association of Nevada
13. Amhara Association in Seattle
14. Amhara Association in South Dakota
15. Amhara Heritage Society of Minnesota
16. Georgia Amhara Association
17. Washington Area Amhara Association, WAAA

### Canada:

18. Canadian Amhara Societies Alliance, CASA
19. British-Colombia Amhara Association
20. Calgary Amhara Association
21. Edmonton Amhara Association
22. Dejen for Amhara Survival
23. London Ontario Amhara Society Forum
24. Ottawa Amhara Support Group
25. Toronto CASA Chapter
26. Winnipeg Amhara Support Group

### Europe:

27. Amhara Union in München, Germany
28. Association Amhara Éthiopienne en France, AAEF
29. Amhara Association of Berlin
30. Amhara Association of Germany
31. Amhara Association of Italy
32. Amhara Association of Norway
33. Amhara Association of Switzerland
34. Amhara Heroes Trust, UK
35. Metekel Support Group, UK

Australia:

36. The Federation of Amhara Associations in Australia (FAAA)
37. Amhara Association in Western Australia
38. Amhara and Amhara Families of Ethiopian Association in Auckland
39. Amhara Association in Queensland
40. Amhara Unity Melbourne
41. Amhara Association in New South Wales

New Zealand:

42. Amhara Support Relief and Rehabilitation Association Christchurch
43. Amhara Families Society of Wellington
44. Amhara Society Social Forum, ASSF
44. Amhara Association of New England

Africa:

46. Amhara Association in South Africa

Asia:

47. Amhara Association in Israel

International:

48. Mager Media
49. Genocide prevention in Ethiopia, GPE
50. Amhara Human Rights and Genocide Warning, AHRGW