



Tigray Diaspora Inter-Religious Council (TDIRC)

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Subject: Urgent call on the Religious Leaders of the world and Ethiopia to defend and stand for the sanctity of Tigrayan lives and that of others in Ethiopia!

We, the leaders, and members of the Tigray Diaspora Inter-Religious Council (TDIRC) believe in the sanctity of human life irrespective of peoples' political, ethnic, religious or any other form of affiliation. However, the genocidal pattern that has been evolving in Ethiopia against Tigrayans and some other groups with no voice has shocked and saddened us to the core. The recent incident which you might have seen on social media – the burning of Tigrayans in the Metekel Zone of Benishangul - Gumuz region of Ethiopia - raised outrage against the Ethiopian security forces who committed the crime but also against the Ethiopian government that encouraged hostility and deliberate atrocities against Tigrayans in Tigray and elsewhere in the country. It is part of Ethiopia's campaign against the people of Tigray since the war started in November 2020. Despite Ethiopia's attempt to cover up the massive atrocities, hideous crimes and acts of genocide are leaking in social media, and reported by international media

We received details of information about the killings and the burning of Tigrayans in the Benhsangul - Gumuz region of Ethiopia. The Tigrayans were incarcerated in one of the prisons just for being Tigrayans and were after some days released by the court. On March 03, 2022, the Tigrayans who were released from prison were put on public transport by the Ethiopian Security Command Post managing the area before they were met by the Ethiopian state security forces, Amhara, and forces from southern Ethiopia who subjected them to the most inhumane acts of killing by burning while alive. Eight of them were killed and their body burned while two others were burned alive (captured in video). Two other victims of Benishangul - Gumuz origin were also mercilessly killed together because they were accused of associating with the Tigrayans. The fact that it is done jointly by federal and regional security forces is clear evidence that the atrocities are sanctioned by the Ethiopian state.

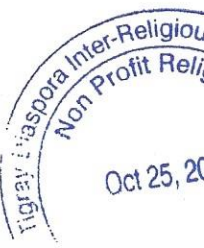
Such violence against Tigrayans and other ethnic minorities has been ongoing, encouraged by televised hate speeches by Ethiopian federal and Amhara State government officials, religious leaders, and public figures. Many had perished without even making headlines. Ethiopia has become a fertile ground for hate-based human rights violations spearheaded by public media, and all state machinery of Ethiopia, regional states, and with heavy assistance from foreign countries such as Eritrea, Somalia, United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Iran, China, and Russia.

Ethiopia has become a hell on earth for Tigrayans. The people of Tigray are under a complete siege and humanitarian blockade for the past 16 months. During this period, many Tigrayan civilians including children, mothers, the elderly and religious leaders have been mass-murdered, killed and burned, drone-bombed, and starved to death. Tigray had been cut off from communication, banking, electricity, transport, trade, supply of food, medicine, fuel and cash preventing millions from accessing their savings, receiving money from family and friends in the diaspora as well as forcing aid agencies to halt their operations. There can't be any reason people can be denied of humanitarian assistance, but Ethiopia refused to comply to the provisions of the international humanitarian law by deliberately denying aid to more than 6 million people of Tigray. A recent report by Ghent University estimated since the start of the war half a million Tigrayans have been killed due to human-made famine, diseases, and other heinous crimes

Tigrayans in other parts of Ethiopia are also not spared. Hundreds of thousands of Tigrayans who have been living in Addis Ababa and other cities and towns across the country are now interned in several concentration camps, some tortured and killed and others dying due to lack of medicine, appalling hygiene, and inhumane prison conditions.

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The Golden Rule: "Treat Others The Way YOU Want To Be Treated"





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Therefore, we call on the Ethiopian religious leader:

1. We believe it is your responsibility to stand for the sanctity of human life. As His Holiness Abune Mathias, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, boldly did two days ago we call on all other religious leaders to denounce such gruesome acts of violence by the Ethiopian government forces, call for the immediate release of the tens of thousands of Tigrayans still in concentration camps as well as the urgent lifting of the siege and humanitarian blockade to Tigray by the allied Ethiopian, Eritrean, Amhara State and Afar state government forces. As they say, "silence is violence" and your silence is a disgrace to the faith you stand for.
2. stand for what our Creator values – human life: when such genocidal acts are repeatedly done by state structures, federal and regional security forces, encouraged by state officials and elites' rhetoric, it is an act of genocide. So, make your leadership count by denouncing genocide against Tigrayans and other Ethnic minorities. You are failing God and Humanity.

We call on the religious leaders and affiliated institutions of the world to:

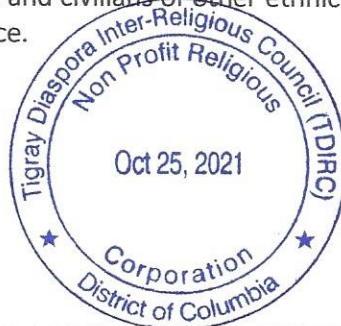
3. pray for the lives of Tigrayans and other voiceless minorities who are silently being exterminated in several areas of Ethiopia such as in the Amhara region (Qimant, Agew, Oromo), Benishangul - Gumuz Region and other parts of Ethiopia.
4. call up on your counterparts in Ethiopia to respect the sanctity of human beings by denouncing the atrocities committed by the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments.

We call on the citizens of the world, international organizations, and media outlets to:

5. expose the human rights violations perpetrated by Ethiopian state machineries on individuals or collectively on the people of Tigray and other minorities. We call on you to show the same outrage you displayed on the Russian atrocities against the people of Ukraine. You have witnessed the level of destruction and loss of human lives in just two weeks of war in Ukraine. Imagine what the people of Tigray have been and are going through for the past 16 months.
6. make sure the international humanitarian law is abided by the Ethiopian government and its partners. Denying access to humanitarian assistance and the disrespect for human rights should not be tolerated in the 21st century. Human rights violation against one group of people is a violation against all humanity.

Once again, we make an urgent call on all whose voice counts - the religious leaders, the international community, people of good will in Ethiopia and around the world, to show their resolve to the respect of human rights and international humanitarian law by publicly denouncing genocidal acts against Tigrayans. These acts of cruelty on Tigrayans and civilians of other ethnic groups is a collective failure of all humanity in front of God and human conscience.

Washington DC
Date, March 18, 2022



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