
4 February 2024

Mekete Tigray UK
TDA House,
211 Clapham Road,
London SW9 0QH,
UK

Email:
MeketeTigrayUK2020@gmail.com

Qu Dongyu,
FAO Director-General,
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla,
00153 Rome, Italy

Subject - FAO Obscenity and Obnoxiousness of Rewarding Hunger and Starvation in Ethiopia

Dear Your Excellency,

- We, Mekete Tigray UK, an independent community of Tigrayan Ethiopian Diaspora in the UK with charitable and humanitarian objective, are extremely appalled by the Food and Agricultural Organisation's (FAO) brazen and audacious decision to grant PM Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia the Agricola Medal.

“Starving Tigray a Stratagem of War. The people of Tigray, Ethiopia, are suffering a humanitarian crisis that is entirely man-made. This special report from the World Peace Foundation documents how Ethiopian and Eritrean belligerents in the war in Tigray have comprehensively dismantled the region's economy and food system. We provide evidence of their ongoing actions to deprive people of objects and activities indispensable to their survival—actions that amount to international crimes. We track the process of deprivation conducted in a widespread and systematic manner. We indicate where it is leading: in coming months, to mass starvation and a risk of famine; in the longer term, to sustained food insecurity and dependence on external assistance. Our stark conclusion is that the governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea are starving the people of Tigray. Circumstantial evidence suggests that this is intentional, systematic and widespread. In today's predicament it may be necessary for international humanitarian actors to cooperate with the authorities to provide essential assistance to the victims. It is not appropriate to praise the Ethiopian government for permitting modest acts of mercy towards the survivors of its policies.”

(World Peace Foundation at the Fletcher Tufts University, 6 April 2021)

- The granting of a prestigious FAO Medal – *the Agricola Medal for extraordinary role in undertaking outstanding and successful efforts in advancing the cause of global food security, poverty alleviation and nutrition* – to PM Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia who has presided over a famine like economy and who used hunger, starvation and famine as deliberate and strategic policy of waging war on his people, is perhaps one of the most tragic comedies, and moreover, the height of irresponsibility of an international institution such as the FAO. This is but political corruption by the Secretary General of FAO as it is inhuman insult to the millions of Ethiopian, in particular Tigrayans, who have perished due the deliberate destruction of their existential livelihoods by the Abiy government over the last five years.

“I vividly recall the shocking images back in 1984 of a million emaciated Ethiopian men, women and children, many of them from Tigray, who had fled the country in the midst of a massive famine caused by prolonged drought, widespread food shortages, and discriminatory government policies. Today, the people of Tigray are being subjected to human rights atrocities on an appalling scale,

*and they are being denied urgently needed humanitarian aid – aid that is being blocked by the Ethiopian and Eritrean militaries as well as other armed groups. **The terrible reality today is that famine, crimes against humanity and genocide are occurring in Tigray, and they are occurring for one reason: the complicity of government officials in Addis and in Asmara. In fact, there are reports that the situation in Tigray could be worse than in Darfur.***

(US Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont, Press Statement on Tigray; 6 June 2021)

- Over the last year, the PM of Ethiopia has ruled a country and people where hunger, starvation and famine are weaponised as an instrument of total war to subjugate the whole population. It is mindboggling and we wonder what universe the Director General inhabits. Specifically, we question what his response would be to the some of these established facts by reputable domestic and international institutions including agencies of the United Nations (UN)
- 33 million Ethiopians including the six million Tigrayans are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance, in particular food according to OCHA. Famine is hovering over Ethiopia and thousands are dying from hunger and starvation as we speak;
- Ethiopia has been in the midst of the most destructive phase of its history where civil wars are the norm and where the livelihood of tens of millions of Ethiopians, in particular the 85% of agrarian people, has been destroyed by the Abiy Government;
- In the genocidal war on Tigray, the Ethiopian, Eritrean and Amhara Regional Armies deliberately aimed at the destruction of agriculture by looting and burning crops, wantonly destroying farming animals and tools; prohibiting millions of farmers from ploughing their lands, and displacing millions of farmers from their lands through ethnic cleansing and war crimes.
- The Abiy Government has been accused by ICREE, OCHA, the EU, the US and UK Governments of war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing in the Tigray War, where the signature policy of the Abiy Ahmed Government has been the deliberate weaponisation of hunger and starvation as a strategy of its total war to subdue and eliminate the Tigrayan people.
- The Abiy Government has also been committing mass atrocities in Oromia and Amhara Regions of Ethiopia where the livelihood of millions of agricultural workers are the principal victims
- FAO is complicit in the false and fabricated claims of the Abiy Government that it has made progress in the Ethiopian agricultural sector. All evidence suggest that Ethiopia has regressed backwards from earlier achievement in the management of the economy. Millions of peasant farmers have been disengaged from their productive farming activities due to the widespread wars and insurgencies that have been waged in the country during the last five years, in particular since the onset of the wars in Tigray, Oromia and Amhara. during the last three years. Agricultural productivity have declined as the result of war and the disruption of the production of fertilisers, distribution and transport of agricultural produces and near total failure of economic and research institutions .

“The world’s worst humanitarian crisis is in Tigray. In the Ethiopian Region of #Tigray, the drought is compounding a man-made catastrophe for 6 million people who have been under siege from Ethiopian and Eritrean forces for 21 months. Can the world come back to its senses and uphold humanity, or the 6 million lives do not matter? Or is it the issue of ‘colour line’?”

(Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director of WHO, Twitter, 19 August 2022)

“Ethiopian government blocked Tigray famine declaration – Mark Lowcock. At the end of my time in the U.N., it was clear to me that there w-as famine in Tigray, and the only reason it wasn’t declared was because the Ethiopian authorities were quite effective in slowing down the whole declaration system,” he said during an online event held by the Overseas Development Institute on Tuesday. Lowcock left his role at the U.N. last year. Skirting around a declaration: Before he left office in June 2021, Lowcock said that “there is famine now” in the war-torn region, even though the U.N. put out a statement that didn’t go as far — saying people were “on the brink” and at “risk” of a “looming famine.”. Absent a declaration, the aid sector has used phrasing such as “famine-like conditions.”

(Sara Jerving; Devex; 7 June 2022)

“Tigray is edging closer to famine. Evidence is growing that starvation is being used as a weapon of war in Ethiopia. PEOPLE FLEEING war are often driven by a fear of bullets and shells. But in Ethiopia’s northern Tigray region, where fighting broke out in November between government forces and the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), a former ruling party that reverted to being a guerrilla movement, guns are not the only weapons of war. The United Nations has received reports of rape by soldiers.

Millions face the threat of starvation, owing in part to the actions of the Ethiopian government's forces and its allies. The suffering is widespread. Central and eastern Tigray, as well as parts of the north-west, are facing "crisis" or "emergency" hunger levels, according to the UN's Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), meaning that households are suffering from acute malnutrition (see map). The next and final phase on the IPC scale is "famine" marked by an extreme lack of food, resulting in starvation or death. Before the conflict broke out, Tigray was largely free from hunger; now the UN estimates that 4.5m need food aid."

(The Economist, 22 April 2021)

- The consequences and aftermaths of the genocidal war on Tigray is catastrophic. Over 2 million are Internally Displaced, unable to return to their homes. There is a continuing occupation of Tigrayan territories by Eritrean and Amhara forces, contrary to the Pretoria Agreement. Furthermore, the suspension of humanitarian assistance for the last ten months by the World Food Programme and USAID has exacerbated the existing catastrophic humanitarian crisis resulting in the deaths of thousands from starvation. Recently, the humanitarian situation in Tigray has been described as 'in meltdown'. Relatives report that two families receive 15 kilos of grain to sustain them for two weeks.
- The wars in Tigray, Oromia and Amhara have damaged the environments and eco-systems in the country, where wanton destruction of crops, property, farm animals and the landscape are some the signatures the war machinery of the Abiy Government.

"Ethiopia: Advocates Warn of Environmental Destruction in Ethiopia's Tigray. A British environmental group warns the war in Ethiopia's Tigray region is driving deforestation. It says blockades limiting fuel and aid to the region have forced Tigrayans to chop down trees, worsening food shortages in a region the U.N. says is already at risk of famine. Tigray has been under a de facto humanitarian blockade for more than nine months now, with Ethiopian government forces and rebels accusing each other of preventing aid from reaching the war-torn region. The U.N. says one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world is taking place inside Tigray, with an acute lack of food. Ordinary Tigrayans are said to be desperate to find resources for day-to-day living. A report by the U.K.-based nonprofit group the Conflict and Environment Observatory says the war and lack of aid in Tigray is having a serious impact on the environment that could cause problems for Tigrayans for decades. By analysing satellite images in Tigray, the report concludes "conflict driven-deforestation" is happening at an alarming rate."

(Henry Wilkins; YAll Africa; May 2022)

- Finally, we demand that FAO and its Director - General rescind its decisions and apologise to the Ethiopian people, in particular the Tigrayans people, for its flagrant disregard to their sufferings by awarding a completely undeserving award to PM Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia. We believe it is perversion and political corruption of historic magnitude to award a Government that has been conclusively accused of weaponising hunger, starvation and famine as a strategy of total war that have claimed the death of one million people, the near total destruction of the livelihoods of millions of people and effected policies that has brought the spectre of famine in Tigray and Ethiopia.

Yours respectfully,

Ethiopian Tigrayans in the UK
Mekete Tigray UK Members and Steering Committee
Tigrayan Women in the UK
Tigrayan Youth Network
Global Tigrayan Diaspora

Copy:

H.E. Antonino Guterres, UN Secretary-General;
The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP; Prime Minister of the UK;
The Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell MP; Minister of State; FCDO;
The Rt Hon Baroness Evans of Bows Park; Leaders of the House of Lords;
H.E. Darren Welch; British Ambassador to Ethiopia;

The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer MP; Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition;
The Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP, Deputy Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition;
The Rt Hon David Lammy MP; Shadow Secretary of State for FCD Affairs;
The Rt Hon Sir Ed Davey MP; Leader of the Liberal Democrats;
The Rt Hon Baroness Smith of Basildon; The Shadow Leader of the House of Lords;
The Rt Hon Alicia Alexandra Martha Kearns MP; Chair of Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee;
The Rt Hon Chris Bryant MP; Member of Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee;
The Rt Hon Sarah Champion MP; Chair of International Development Sub-Committee;
The Rt Hon Kate Osamor MP; Member of International Development Sub-Committee;
The Rt Hon Helen Hayes MP; UK House of Commons;
The Rt Hon Fleur Anderson MP; UK House of Commons;
The Rt Hon Paula Barker MP; UK House of Commons;
The RT Hon Harriet Harman MP; UK House of Commons;
The Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP; UK House of Commons;
The Rt Hon Lord David Alton of Liverpool; UK House of Lords;
The Rt Hon Lord William Hague of Richmond; UK House of Lords;
The Rt Hon Lord Triesman; UK House of Lords;
The Rt Hon Baroness Kennedy; UK House of Lords;
The Rt Reverend Dr Christopher Cocksworth; The Lord Bishop of Coventry; UK House of Lords;
The Rt Reverend Justin Welby; The Lord Archbishop of Canterbury; UK House of Lords;
The Rt Reverend Stephen Cottrell; The Lord Archbishop of York; UK House of Lords;
The Rt Reverend Christopher Chessun; The Lord Bishop of Southwark; UK House of Lords;

Appendix:

APPENDIX

<p>PM Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia Awarded the Agricola Medal by FAO for presiding over a three year genocidal war where one million people have been killed by deliberate policy of using hunger, starvation and famine as a strategic policy of a total war where peoples livelihood are deliberately, where 33million are in need of emergency assistance.</p> <p>Where a government deliberately denies the existence of hunger and starvation.</p> <p>Where a government rundown the economy , in particular the agrarian economy by five years long war against the people in Tigray, Oromia and Amhara regions</p>	<p>Hunger crisis in Ethiopia threatens to eclipse prior famines</p> <p>Sertan Sanderson</p> <p>02/02/2024February 2, 2024</p> <p>Drought, conflict, graft: the reasons for Ethiopia's hunger crisis are varied, and some could have been avoided. As Ethiopians go to bed hungry, the distribution of food aid is suffering setbacks.</p>

