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16/07/2025

### **Abiy Ahmed's Duplicitous Strategy: Faith Leaders as a Smokescreen for Genocidal Intent in Tigray TADAUK.ORG**

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's recent deployment of faith leaders to Tigray represents nothing short of a cynical ploy—a transparent attempt to manufacture the appearance of peacemaking while actively preparing for renewed genocidal violence against the Tigrayan people. This maneuver follows a well-established pattern of deception from a leader who has systematically weaponized every institution at his disposal—from religious organizations to humanitarian ceasefires—to advance his destructive agenda against Tigray. The international community must not be fooled by this latest charade, which comes amid clear evidence of military buildup, the organization of the Tekeze Brigade to annihilate Tigrayan resistance, the arming of disenfranchised Tigrayans in Afar as proxy forces, comprehensive drone surveillance of Tigrayan positions, and overt collusion with Amhara militias and regional actors.

#### **The False Mediation: Faith Leaders as Political Pawns**

Abiy's deployment of religious figures to Tigray serves multiple nefarious purposes in his ongoing campaign against the region. First and foremost, it creates a carefully stage-managed spectacle of peacemaking for both domestic Ethiopian consumption and international observers. By positioning himself as willing to explore all avenues for reconciliation, Abiy seeks to deflect growing criticism about his government's systematic violations of the Pretoria Agreement while buying time for military preparations. This tactic mirrors his previous use of humanitarian ceasefires—declared not as genuine gestures of peace but as strategic pauses to regroup forces and intensify sieges.

The choice of faith leaders as emissaries is particularly insidious given Abiy's well-documented manipulation of religious institutions for political ends. Since coming to power,

Abiy has exploited divisions within the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC), instrumentalizing its most radical wing, the Mahibere Kidusan, to consolidate power and justify violence. His advisor Daniel Kibret, a radical deacon from this faction, has repeatedly used religious imagery and prophecies to disseminate hate speech against Tigrayans, going so far as to prepare the ideological groundwork for ethnic cleansing through coded Qene poetry. The same religious leaders now being presented as peace mediators have been complicit in Abiy's war propaganda machine—making their sudden conversion to peacemakers utterly implausible.

Moreover, this religious delegation serves as an intelligence-gathering operation—a way to "test the waters" regarding Tigrayan resilience and military preparedness after years of siege warfare. By gauging Tigrayan reactions to these overtures, Abiy's regime can calibrate its next wave of violence while maintaining deniability. The faith leaders mission is not about conflict resolution but reconnaissance—assessing whether Tigray has recovered sufficiently from the 2020-2022 war that killed an estimated 500,000 people and left millions starving.

### **Systematic Violations of the Pretoria Agreement**

Abiy's theatrical peace gestures stand in stark contrast to his government's flagrant violations of the Pretoria Agreement's core provisions. Signed in November 2022 after two years of devastating conflict, the agreement stipulated: permanent cessation of hostilities, return of IDP's & protection of civilians (never been implemented), unimpeded humanitarian access (budget & fuel embargo still in place), disarmament of Tigrayan forces (ongoing), restoration of federal authority in Tigray (completed), and transitional justice measures( not touched) . Nearly three years later, none of these commitments have been meaningfully fulfilled.

Most egregiously, the agreement's provisions regarding territorial integrity have been completely ignored. Large swaths of Tigray—including Welkait, Raya, and parts of the Northwest Zone—remain under illegal Amhara occupation, with reports indicating systematic ethnic cleansing of Tigrayans from these areas. Over 1.2 million internally displaced Tigrayans cannot return to their homes in these occupied territories, while Amhara authorities implement policies of demographic change through land redistribution and the erasure of Tigrayan cultural markers. This constitutes a blatant violation of Article 5(7) of the Pretoria Agreement, which required resolution of "issues of contested areas" in accordance with Ethiopia's constitution.

The humanitarian provisions of the agreement have been similarly disregarded. Despite promises of "unfettered humanitarian access," Tigray remains under a de facto siege—with bureaucratic obstruction, banking restrictions, and intermittent communication blackouts severely limiting aid delivery. The World Food Programme has repeatedly warned of catastrophic hunger levels in Tigray, with over 80% of the population facing food insecurity—a direct result of Ethiopia's deliberate policies. These restrictions violate Article 3 of the agreement, which mandated that "the Government shall facilitate unhindered humanitarian access".

On disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), the process has been fundamentally one-sided. While Tigrayan forces have made significant concessions— withdrawing from neighboring regions and concentrating fighters in designated areas—the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) has failed to reciprocate. Eritrean forces, despite being explicitly mentioned in the TPLF's initial ceasefire demands, continue to operate in border areas with impunity. Meanwhile, Amhara militias —responsible for some of the worst atrocities of the war—remain armed and active, now turning their violence against the Ethiopian state itself.

The transitional justice process outlined in Article 10 has been a complete farce. Rather than establishing an impartial mechanism to address wartime atrocities, Abiy's government has pursued victor's justice—targeting Tigrayan officials while shielding ENDF and allied forces from accountability. The African Union's human rights body held hearings in May 2025 regarding extrajudicial killings, torture and sexual violence in Tigray, but these have produced no meaningful consequences for perpetrators. This pattern of impunity has only encouraged further violence, as evidenced by the March 2025 massacre in Birakat, Amhara region, where Ethiopian soldiers executed 56 civilians in reprisal attacks reminiscent of Tigray war atrocities.

### **The Military Buildup: Preparing for Genocide 2.0**

While projecting an image of peacemaker through faith leader delegations, Abiy's regime is actively preparing for renewed large-scale violence against Tigray. Several alarming developments indicate this trajectory:

1. **The Tekeze Brigade Project:** Named after the river that demarcates part of Tigray's western border, this militia force represents Abiy's latest effort to create an ethnic proxy army against Tigrayans. Modeled after the disastrous "special forces" experiment that fueled conflicts across Ethiopia, the brigade draws from neighboring regions and is being trained specifically for counterinsurgency operations in Tigray's difficult terrain. Its very name—referencing a Tigrayan geographical feature—signals its intended area of operations and purpose. So far , there are around 56000 armed men , lead by Demke Zewdu and Ashite Demellow.

2. **Arming Disenfranchised Tigrayans in Afar:** In a classic colonial "divide and rule" tactic, Abiy's regime has identified marginalized Tigrayan subgroups in Afar region—particularly those displaced by the war—and provided arms and incentives to turn against their ethnic kin. This mirrors the failed strategy used during the war, where Eritrean and Ethiopian forces coerced some Tigrayan prisoners into fighting for them, only for many to later defect. The goal is both to weaken Tigrayan unity and provide plausible deniability for future atrocities ("intra-Tigrayan conflict").

3. **Drone Surveillance and Military Redeployment:** Satellite imagery and eyewitness reports indicate a significant buildup of drone capabilities along Tigray's borders, with frequent reconnaissance flights over population centers and suspected TDF positions. This surveillance serves dual purposes: intelligence gathering for potential airstrikes and psychological warfare against a population traumatized by previous drone attacks on

markets, schools and refugee camps. Meanwhile, ENDF units previously engaged in Amhara operations are being quietly redeployed northward.

4. Collusion with Amhara Regional Administration Extremists: Despite the current conflict between Fano militias and the federal government in Amhara region, Abiy maintains covert channels with Amhara hardliners regarding Tigray. His recent statement about having "done the bidding" of Amhara elites references years of symbiotic relationship where Amhara expansionism into western Tigray served as useful cover for Addis Ababa's own anti-TPLF agenda. Even as they clash elsewhere, federal and Amhara Regional forces maintain alignment on the Tigray question—a fact demonstrated by continued Amhara control of occupied territories and lack of federal pressure for their return.

5. Information Warfare Preparations: The regime is laying groundwork for another information blackout when renewed hostilities begin. Recent restrictions on independent media and expulsion of foreign journalists mirror pre-2020 war patterns. Simultaneously, state-affiliated outlets are amplifying narratives about TPLF "militarization" and "terrorism"—the same pretexts used to launch the initial invasion. Tigrayans living in Addis Ababa are flooding the prison cells.

#### The Prosperity Party's Complicity: Yes Men Enabling Genocide

Abiy does not operate alone in this destructive agenda. His Prosperity Party (PP) apparatus functions as an echo chamber of yes men—officials who either actively enable his worst impulses or remain silent in the face of escalating crimes. Several factors explain this complicity:

Ideological & faith Conformity: The PP has systematically purged independent voices since its formation, creating a party culture where dissent equals disloyalty. Ministers and regional presidents survive by anticipating Abiy's desires rather than providing honest counsel. This explains the absurd contradictions in government positions—one day calling for peace talks, the next threatening to "eliminate weeds"—with no official daring to point out the inconsistency.

Ethnic Balancing Act: The PP's fragile coalition depends on maintaining support among Oromo and Amhara elites. This forces Abiy to alternate between accommodating Amhara territorial ambitions in Tigray and suppressing Amhara autonomy demands elsewhere—a balancing act requiring constant diversionary conflicts. PP officials understand their survival hinges on maintaining this precarious equilibrium rather than principled governance.

Financial Incentives: The war economy has created lucrative opportunities for PP-connected businesses—from reconstruction contracts to control of trade routes. Western Tigray's fertile lands, now ethnically cleansed of Tigrayan farmers, have been redistributed to Amhara and Oromo investors with PP ties. This economic stake in perpetual conflict discourages any meaningful push for peace within the party.

Fear of Abiy's Security Apparatus: The prime minister has centralised security institutions under his personal control, with military and intelligence leaders selected for loyalty over

competence. The infamous "Koree Nageenya" (Circle of Trust) system ensures only sycophants access power. PP officials witness what happens to those who question Abiy—like former allies now imprisoned or exiled—and adjust their behavior accordingly.

The international community must recognise that Abiy's faith leader initiative is not a good-faith peace effort but the latest maneuver in a long pattern of deception. True commitment to the Pretoria Agreement would require: complete withdrawal of Eritrean forces, return of IDP's & occupied territories to Tigrayan administration, unrestricted humanitarian access, and a credible transitional justice process—none of which are occurring. Until these steps are taken, all talk of peace remains empty theatrics masking preparations for further genocide. The time for credulous engagement with Abiy's charades has passed; what Tigray needs now is robust international protection against the next wave of violence his regime is clearly planning.