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The FAO's Shameful Legitimisation of Ethiopia's Genocidal Regime: A Betrayal of Global Justice and Food Sovereignty

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The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has reached a new low by hosting its high-profile food systems conference in Ethiopia—a country led by a regime accused of genocide, war crimes, and systematic starvation as a weapon of war. The image of Deputy UN Secretary-General Amina Mohamed shaking hands with Abiy Ahmed, a man whose forces have been implicated in the mass slaughter and sexual violence against the Tigrayan people, is not just a diplomatic misstep—it is a moral catastrophe. By granting legitimacy to a regime that has committed heinous atrocities, the FAO and the broader UN system are complicit in whitewashing crimes against humanity and undermining the very principles of justice and accountability they claim to uphold.

A Genocidal Regime Masked as a Development Miracle: Abiy Ahmed's government has been accused by international human rights organizations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, of overseeing a campaign of ethnic cleansing in Tigray, where mass executions, systematic rape, and deliberate starvation were employed as tools of war. The Ethiopian National Défense Forces (ENDF), alongside Eritrean troops and Amhara militias, besieged Tigray for two years, blocking food aid, destroying farms, and targeting civilians in what experts have labelled a genocide. The UN's own reports confirm widespread sexual violence and forced starvation, yet instead of isolating this regime, the FAO has chosen to platform it, effectively endorsing its crimes.

This is not just hypocrisy—it is a direct assault on the credibility of global institutions. How can the UN claim to stand for human rights while its leaders smile alongside a man whose forces have raped women en masse, burned crops, and weaponized hunger? The message this sends to victims of state-sponsored violence worldwide is clear: geopolitical convenience trumps justice.

Falsified Data and the Illusion of Food Security: Ethiopia's claim of agricultural success is a fraudulent narrative constructed to hide the catastrophic reality of its food system. The government routinely manipulates agricultural statistics, presenting inflated harvest figures while millions face starvation. The FAO, rather than scrutinizing these claims, has become an unwitting accomplice in this deception.

Consider the following facts:

1. **Deliberate Starvation in Tigray:** During the war, Ethiopian and Eritrean forces systematically destroyed crops, looted grain stores, and blocked humanitarian aid, leading to famine-like conditions. The UN estimated that over 5.2 million people in Tigray needed emergency food assistance at the height of the blockade. Yet, Ethiopia's federal government continued to deny the crisis, even expelling UN aid workers who dared to speak out.

2. **Fertilizer Shortages and Collapsing Productivity:** In regions like Amhara and Oromia, farmers face severe shortages of fertilizers and seeds due to economic mismanagement and the diversion of resources to war efforts. The government's much-touted "agricultural transformation" is a myth—productivity has stagnated, and food inflation has soared to over 30% in 2024.

3. **FAO's Blind Eye to Manipulated Data:** Ethiopia's showcase of "banana clusters" and model farms in Bora (East Shewa) is a staged performance designed to mislead visiting delegations from Syria, Bangladesh, and other developing nations. These Potemkin villages do not reflect the reality of smallholder farmers struggling with drought, conflict, and state neglect.

The Myth of Food Sovereignty in a War-Torn Nation: Ethiopia's government boasts of achieving food sovereignty, but the truth is the exact opposite. Food sovereignty—the right of people to control their own food systems—has been obliterated by:

Land Grabs and Displacement: Millions of Ethiopians, particularly in Oromia and Benishangul-Gumuz, have been forcibly displaced to make way for large-scale commercial farms tied to foreign investors and regime cronies.

Dependence on Food Imports: Despite claims of self-sufficiency, Ethiopia remains one of the world's largest wheat importers, spending billions annually while its own farmers are deprived of basic inputs.

Suppression of Dissent: Researchers and journalists who expose food insecurity risks are jailed or silenced. The regime's control over data ensures that only fabricated success stories reach international bodies like the FAO.

The FAO's Complicity and the Collapse of UN Credibility

By holding its conference in Addis Ababa and allowing Abiy Ahmed to posture as a champion of food security, the FAO has committed an unforgivable betrayal. This is not neutrality—it is active collaboration with a regime that has used hunger as a weapon. The UN's failure to hold Ethiopia accountable for its crimes mirrors its past failures in Rwanda, Srebrenica, and Syria.

If global institutions continue to legitimize genocidal regimes for the sake of political expediency, they forfeit any moral authority. The victims of Tigray, the starving farmers of Amhara, and the dispossessed Oromo peasants deserve justice—not hollow conferences hosted by their oppressors.

A Call for Boycott and Accountability- The international community must:

1. Demand the FAO withdraw from Ethiopia and cease all collaboration until independent investigations into war crimes are conducted.
2. Sanction Abiy Ahmed and his officials under global human rights statutes, including the Magnitsky Act.
3. Support independent food security assessments by NGOs, bypassing Ethiopia's falsified data.
4. Pressure the UN to suspend Ethiopia from leadership roles in international bodies until it complies with humanitarian law. Anything less is an endorsement of genocide. The FAO's conference in Ethiopia is not just a farce—it is a stain on the conscience of the world.

Shame on the UN. Shame on the FAO. And shame on every leader who shakes hands with a dictator drenched in the blood of his own people!

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