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Supporting Statement for the 42-Country Joint Statement on Ethiopia: An Urgent Call for Action on Tigray and Beyond

1 The Critical Juncture for Human Rights in Ethiopia

The joint statement delivered on behalf of forty-two countries at the 60th Session of the UN Human Rights Council represents a crucial international response to the deteriorating human rights situation in Ethiopia. This powerful diplomatic expression of concern comes at a critical moment—less than a year before scheduled elections in 2026—as Ethiopia continues to grapple with multifaceted conflicts and systematic human rights violations across several regions, with the Tigray region experiencing particularly severe atrocities. This supporting statement strongly endorses the 42-country joint statement while emphasising the urgent need for concrete actions that go beyond diplomatic expressions of concern, particularly regarding the situation in Tigray, where evidence indicates the commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The international community stands at a pivotal moment where statements must transition to tangible pressure and accountability mechanisms. While the joint statement appropriately highlights concerning patterns across Ethiopia—including in the Amhara and Oromia regions—the distinctly grave situation in Tigray demands prioritised attention and specific intervention. As documented by multiple UN mechanisms, independent investigations, and human rights organisations, the people of Tigray have endured systematic atrocities that require specialised international response. This call for action provides detailed supporting arguments for the joint statement while emphasising practical actions necessary to address the most critical aspects of the human rights crisis in Ethiopia, with particular focus on implementing the recommendations of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE), establishing independent investigations, restraining military escalation, and ending destabilising policies.

International Legal Framework and Key Findings on Ethiopia:

International Mechanism Key Findings:

- UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (2024 Report) "High number of human rights violations and abuses by both state and non-state actors" Nationwide
- UN Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (2025 Report) "Significant increase in grave violations against children" Nationwide
- International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia War crimes and crimes against humanity committed Tigray and the conflict.

- U.S. State Department 2024 Human Rights Report "Widespread killings of civilians, mass forced displacement, ethnic cleansing" Tigray, Amhara, Oromia
- UK inquiry Report
- Newline Institute independent reports
- UPR Recommendations

2 Human Rights Situation in Tigray

2.1 Pattern of Systematic Human Rights Violations

The joint statement's expression of grave concern regarding human rights violations across conflict areas in Ethiopia rightly acknowledges a nationwide crisis, but the situation in Tigray warrants particular attention due to its distinctive severity and systematic nature. In Tigray, human rights violations have occurred not as isolated incidents but as part of a coordinated pattern indicative of crimes against humanity. The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 2024 report, referenced in the joint statement, documents a shocking scale of violations perpetrated by multiple actors, including the Ethiopian National Défense Forces (ENDF), Eritrean Défense Forces (EDF), and Amhara regional forces.

The brutal nature of these violations is extensively documented. A 2025 report by Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) and the Organisation for Justice and Accountability in the Horn of Africa (OJAH) reveals that survivors in Tigray experienced deliberate forms of conflict-related sexual and reproductive violence designed to cause severe and permanent physical and psychological harm. These acts include multiple perpetrator rape, vaginal, oral, and anal rape, forced witnessing of sexual violence against family members, insertion of foreign objects into the vagina following sexual violence, forced pregnancy, and intentional transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. The data shows that 91% of health care workers surveyed reported treating patients who had experienced multiple perpetrator rape, with medical records indicating a median of three perpetrators per incident. This systematic and brutal pattern indicates these acts were not random violence but part of a coordinated strategy to inflict maximum damage on the Tigrayan population.

2.2 Conflict-Related Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War

The joint statement's mention of "extreme levels of sexual and gender-based violence" only begins to capture the horrific reality faced particularly by women and girls in Tigray. The PHR and OJAH report provides disturbing evidence that sexual violence in Tigray was employed as a deliberate weapon of war, with specific intent to inflict long-term damage on the Tigrayan population. Their research, which included over six hundred surveys of healthcare workers, review of 500 medical records, and numerous interviews, found that 74% of health care workers had provided care to survivors who reported experiencing sexual and reproductive violence more than once.

Even more alarmingly, 90% of healthcare workers reported treating patients with unwanted pregnancies resulting from conflict-related sexual violence, with 10% of medical records documenting such pregnancies. The data further indicates that 73% of health care workers provided care to survivors who reported that perpetrators expressed explicit intent to prevent future Tigrayan births, with statements such as "You will never be able to give birth". This systematic targeting of reproductive capacity, combined with the scale and brutality of the

violence, strongly suggests not only crimes against humanity but potentially acts of genocidal character, requiring further investigation under the Genocide Convention.

2.3 Humanitarian Crisis and Continued Occupation

The humanitarian situation in Tigray remains catastrophic, despite the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) in November 2022. Large parts of Tigray remain under illegal occupation by Amhara and Eritrean forces, in direct violation of the agreement. The U.S. State Department's 2024 Human Rights Report confirms that "Eritrean troops, Amhara forces, and others had not fully withdrawn from parts of Tigray" and at times "denied humanitarian access". This continued occupation enables ongoing human rights abuses and prevents the safe return of internally displaced persons to their homes.

The deliberate obstruction of humanitarian aid constitutes a grave violation of international humanitarian law. According to the State Department report, "deliberate deprivation of essential items such as food, drinking water, and medical aid" has severely impacted the civilian population in Tigray. Human Rights Watch has similarly documented how humanitarian access has been systematically denied, with aid workers facing attacks and obstructions. This has perpetuated a man-made famine condition, with millions of Tigrayans remaining dependent on inadequate international aid for survival more than two years after the formal cessation of hostilities.

Documented Patterns of Sexual Violence, Killings, and infrastructure destruction in Tigray

Documented Pattern - Multiple perpetrator rape 91%, Median of 3 perpetrators per incident, Repeated sexual violence against same survivors 74%. Unwanted pregnancies from conflict-related sexual violence 90% (few to some patients) 10% of records documented unwanted pregnancies. Perpetrator expressions of intent to prevent future births 73%. Over 670000 killed, 124700 women and young girls raped, 80% Health infrastructure destroyed, 90% factories looted and burned.

3 Systematic Closure of Civic Space and Media Suppression

3.1 Pattern of Intimidation Against Civil Society

The joint statement accurately highlights the alarming closure of civic space in Ethiopia, a concern powerfully echoed by major human rights organisations. Amnesty International has warned that proposed amendments to Ethiopia's Civil Society Organisations (CSO) Proclamation would reverse recent legal reforms and amount to a "total closure of "civic space". They affirmed the Ministry of Justice of conducting the process "in strict secrecy" with consultations limited to government-aligned groups, effectively excluding independent civil society voices. Human Rights Watch has similarly urged lawmakers to reject the draft law, cautioning that it would grant the federal government sweeping powers to restrict nongovernmental organisations.

This systematic dismantling of civil society is particularly concerning given the pre-election context in Ethiopia. With national elections scheduled for 2026, the space for independent civil society is essential for ensuring genuine political participation and accountability. The Addis Standard editorial from July 2025 described the proposed amendments as more than

bureaucratic reform, characterising them as "a direct assault on freedoms of association, expression, and accountability". The publication further warned that vague "national security" clauses embedded in the draft is used to shut down dissent and erode the remaining civic space, recreating the repressive environment of the 2009 CSO law that "silenced civic voices for nearly a decade".

3.2 Systematic Targeting of Independent Media

The intimidation of independent media and journalists represents another critical dimension of the closing civic space documented in the joint statement. This suppression has significantly impacted the flow of reliable information, particularly from conflict-affected regions like Tigray, Amhara, and Oromia. Journalists attempting to report on human rights violations or government criticism face systematic harassment, arbitrary detention, and persecution. The State Department's 2024 report notes "serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including violence or threats of violence against journalists, unjustified arrests of journalists and censorship". Examples– Renowned Journalist Yayeew Semeles , Bekalu Alamerw.

The pattern of media suppression is particularly severe in conflict-affected regions. In the Amhara region, where a state of emergency was in effect from August 2023 through June 2024, the government implemented severe restrictions on both media and civil society. Similar patterns have been documented in Oromia, where reporting on the conflict between government forces and the Oromo Liberation Army has been heavily restricted. This systematic suppression of independent voices prevents documentation of human rights violations, undermines accountability, and creates an environment where atrocities can occur with minimal public scrutiny or documentation.

4 Failure of Transitional Justice and Accountability Mechanisms

4.1 Abandonment of the National Transitional Justice Process

The joint statement rightly expresses concern about "the lack of progress with the Transitional Justice process" in Ethiopia. This concern is powerfully echoed by human rights experts and organisations that have documented the fundamental flaws in Ethiopia's approach to transitional justice. The preliminary shutting down of both United Nations and African Union independent investigative mechanisms (ICHREE), after "successful lobbying by the Ethiopian government to defer to national mechanisms," has eliminated crucial impartial investigations into atrocities. This decision occurred despite assessments finding that "the consultative process undertaken in developing the transitional justice process, as well as the implementation, does not align with AU or international transitional justice standards- The AU Transitional Justice Action Plan ".

The current transitional justice process suffers from multiple critical deficiencies. According to PHR and OJAH, the process "lacks a survivor-cantered approach, meaningful engagement with affected communities, or mechanisms to hold all perpetrator groups accountable, in violation of key international and regional standards on credible transitional justice processes". This is particularly problematic for addressing violations in Tigray, where Eritrean perpetrators—responsible for a significant portion of documented atrocities—fall completely outside the scope of Ethiopia's national transitional justice process, as Eritrea is not party to

the CoHA. Without mechanisms to address violations by all parties, including the Federal Government, Eritrean forces, any transitional justice process will be inherently nonstarter.

4.2 Culture of Impunity and Lack of Accountability

The pervasive culture of impunity for human rights violations in Ethiopia remains one of the most significant obstacles to genuine peace and reconciliation. The U.S. State Department's 2024 report observes that while "the government took limited steps to identify and punish officials who committed human rights abuses," details were "scant" regarding prosecutions of lower-level officers. Both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have criticised the government's "lack of credible efforts to provide justice and prevent such atrocities. The Ethiopia government deliberately failed to bring perpetrators to justice, as itself is implicated in most of the independently proven rape, killing and destruction in Tigray.

This accountability deficit extends to the highest levels of responsibility. The State Department report notes that in March 2023, the U.S. Secretary of State "determined members of the ENDF, Eritrean Défense Forces (EDF), TPLF forces, and Amhara forces committed war crimes during the conflict in northern Ethiopia" and that "members of the ENDF, EDF, and Amhara forces also committed crimes against humanity". Despite these determinations, there has been little evidence of meaningful accountability for these crimes. The continued absence of genuine accountability not only denies justice to victims but also creates conditions for future cycles of violence, as perpetrators operate with confidence that they will face no consequences for their actions.

5 Regional Destabilisation and Military Escalation

5.1 Internal Destabilisation and Conflict Spillover

The joint statement's call for "all parties to refrain from further violations and abuses and to engage in peaceful dialogue and negotiations to restore peace" acknowledges Ethiopia's concerning role in regional destabilisation—both internally through its domestic conflicts and potentially externally through regional engagements. The spread of conflict from Tigray to the Amhara and Afar regions demonstrate how the failure to address atrocities in one region has fuelled violence elsewhere. As documented by PHR and OJAH, "the failure to meaningfully ensure accountability and justice for violations in Tigray through the transitional justice process and other national efforts has contributed to an enabling environment for sexual and reproductive violence in Amhara and Oromia".

The internal destabilisation is particularly evident in the Amhara region, where conflict between government forces and Fano militia has led to widespread human rights violations. The State Department report documents how from August 2023 through June 2024, a state of emergency was in effect "under which there were reports of widespread government violations of human rights, including extrajudicial killings and arbitrary detentions of civilians". Even after the state of emergency expired, "reports of conflict-related human rights abuses in the Amhara and Oromia regions continued through the year". The government's futile approach to these conflicts—including documented drone strikes that killed civilians—has exacerbated rather than mitigated violence. The government obsession with use of drones to kill civilians and the regimes dream to acquire mass destruction materials (under pretext for civilian use, with Russia support) is worrisome undertaking, not only to the people of Ethiopia, but to the international community at large.

5.2 Concerning Military Partnerships and Nuclear Ambitions

Ethiopia's recent military partnerships and nuclear ambitions raise serious concerns about potential further escalation of violence and regional destabilisation. Ethiopia's recently formalised nuclear energy partnership with Russia, which includes plans to develop a nuclear power plant, represents a particularly worrying development given the broader context of military cooperation between the two countries. While officially framed as a peaceful energy partnership, this agreement—finalised between the Ethiopian Electric Power Company and Russia's Rosatom—takes place against the backdrop of Ethiopia's pursuit of more advanced military capabilities, including the documented use of armed drones in domestic conflicts.

The timing and context of this nuclear agreement are especially concerning. The deal was finalised just weeks after the opening of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed describing nuclear power as a "strategic step in becoming an active participant in AI and innovation". However, given Ethiopia's history of using dual-use technologies for military purposes and its ongoing conflicts, the international community should demand absolute transparency about the nature of this nuclear cooperation and insist on robust safeguards to prevent military applications. The joint statement's general expression of concern about human rights would be strengthened by specific attention to these emerging security threats that could dramatically escalate the capacity for violence against civilian populations.

6 Call to Action: Practical Measures for the International Community

6.1 Implementation of ICHREE Recommendations and reestablish Independent Investigations

The international community must move beyond expressions of concern to concrete actions that address the severe human rights crisis in Ethiopia, particularly in Tigray. The highest priority should be implementing the recommendations of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE), which has documented war crimes and crimes against humanity in the country. The Commission's reports, including its comprehensive investigative findings presented to the Human Rights Council in September 2023, provide a detailed roadmap for accountability that member states should endorse and implement. Specifically, the UN Human Rights Council should re-establish an independent investigative mechanism with a mandate to document ongoing violations, preserve evidence for future accountability processes, and monitor compliance with international human rights standards.

The urgent establishment of an independent, international investigative body is particularly crucial for addressing crimes in Tigray, where national mechanisms have proven wholly inadequate. As recommended by PHR and OJAH, the international community should ensure "impartial, independent documentation and investigation of serious human rights violations and atrocity crimes that have occurred, including the preservation of evidence of serious crimes under international law, by re-establishing international and regional investigative mandates to monitor and document human rights violations and other violations of international law in Tigray, Amhara, and Afar". Such a mechanism would address the current accountability vacuum and create pathways for future justice for victims.

6.2 Arms Embargo and Restrictions on Military Cooperation

The documented use of advanced weaponry, including armed drones, against civilian populations in Ethiopia necessitates immediate action to restrict the flow of weapons and military technology that could facilitate further atrocities. The international community should impose a comprehensive arms embargo targeting all parties to conflicts in Ethiopia, with particular attention to technologies that have been used indiscriminately against civilians. The UN Human Rights Council should recommend that the Security Council establish such an embargo under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, given the scale of atrocities and the risk of further mass violence.

Additionally, states should implement targeted sanctions against individuals and entities responsible for serious human rights violations in Ethiopia, including command responsibility for atrocities. These sanctions should extend to military cooperation and training programs with units and commanders implicated in war crimes or crimes against humanity. The joint statement's general call for an end to human rights violations should be complemented by these specific restrictions on the means through which such violations are perpetrated.

6.3 Conditional Engagement and Diplomatic Pressure

The international community should make all bilateral and multilateral engagement with Ethiopia conditional on verifiable improvements in human rights protection and accountability. This conditionality principle should apply particularly to:

- Development assistance and budget support: Donor countries should redirect assistance from government institutions to vetted non-governmental implementation channels until independent monitoring confirms improved human rights compliance.
- Diplomatic engagements: All high-level dialogues with Ethiopian officials should have human rights as a standing agenda item, with concrete benchmarks for progress.
- International financial institution support: Loan programs and debt relief initiatives should incorporate human rights conditionalities and independent monitoring mechanisms.

The European Union and its member states, which delivered the joint statement on behalf of the 42 countries, should leverage the EU's extensive development partnership with Ethiopia to demand specific human rights improvements, beginning with the immediate cessation of military operations against civilians in conflict-affected regions and the immediate and unconditional implementation of the Pretoria Agreements.

6.4 Protection Mechanisms for Civilians and Vulnerable Groups

The escalating violence against civilians in multiple regions of Ethiopia requires the immediate establishment of enhanced international protection mechanisms. The UN Human Rights Council should urgently deploy international human rights monitors to conflict-affected regions, with particular attention to Tigray, where the population faces existential threats and continued displacements and ethnic cleansing. These monitors should have unfettered access to all areas and facilities, including detention centres, displaced people in Tigray and should be mandated to report regularly to the Council on the protection crisis.

Specific attention must be given to particularly vulnerable groups, including:

- Conflict-related sexual violence survivors: The international community should fund and support specialised services for survivors, including medical care, psychosocial support, and economic rehabilitation programs.
- Internally displaced persons: International agencies should be guaranteed safe and unhindered humanitarian access to all IDP populations, with particular attention to the situation in western Tigray, where ethnic cleansing has been documented.
- Human rights defenders and journalists: The international community should establish protective mechanisms for those at risk due to their work documenting human rights violations, including emergency evacuation pathways when necessary.

Table: Key Actions for the International Community

Action Category	Specific Measures	Implementing Actors
Accountability	Re-establish independent international investigative mechanism	UN Human Rights Council, African Union
	Implement ICHREE recommendations	UN Member States
Military Restrictions	Impose comprehensive arms embargo	UN Security Council
	Restrict military cooperation with abusive units'	Bilateral partners.
Diplomatic Pressure	Make engagement conditional on human rights improvements	EU, U.S., other partners.
	Implement targeted sanctions against perpetrators	UN, regional organisations.
Civilian Protection	Deploy human rights monitors to conflict zones	UN OHCHR
	Guarantee humanitarian access	UN Security Council

7 The Imperative for Immediate Action

The joint statement by 42 countries at the UN Human Rights Council represents an important recognition of the severity and urgency of the human rights crisis in Ethiopia. However, without concrete follow-up actions, this diplomatic expression of concern will do little to alter the devastating reality for millions of Ethiopians, particularly those in Tigray who continue to face existential threats. The international community must now translate these concerns into decisive measures that address the root causes of the crisis and provide meaningful protection to vulnerable populations.

The gravity of documented violations—including war crimes, crimes against humanity, and acts of genocide—demands nothing less than a comprehensive response centered on justice, accountability, and civilian protection. As the 42-country statement rightly emphasises, "implementing credible transitional justice and accountability processes is not only crucial for the victims and survivors, but also to ensuring lasting peace and reconciliation in the country". By heeding the detailed recommendations outlined in this supporting statement, the international community can honour this important principle and take meaningful steps toward ending impunity in Ethiopia.

The alternative to action is unconscionable. Without robust international intervention, the patterns of violence and repression documented in this analysis will likely continue and potentially escalate, particularly as Ethiopia approaches the 2026 elections. The people of Tigray, who have already endured unimaginable suffering, cannot wait for delayed responses

or endless diplomatic processes. The time for decisive action is now, before further lives are lost and before the hope for a peaceful, accountable Ethiopia becomes impossible to retrieve.

Thank You.

Signatories of this support statement:

- Tigrayan Advocacy & Development Association - TADAUK.ORG
- Mekete Tigray UK
- Tigray Youth Network – TYN UK
- Tigray Women's Association -UK
- Tigray Advocacy Forum – UK
- Tigray Academic Diaspora in Europe