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Press Release

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Memory and Betrayal: Marking Five Years Since the Tigray Genocide and Three Years of a Hollow Peace.

The Pretoria Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) signed on 02 November 2022 on three fundamental pillars intended to end the conflict and build a sustainable peace: unhindered humanitarian access to Tigray, the restoration of constitutional order, and the protection of fundamental human rights. The systematic failure to realise these pillars forms the basis of the legal case against the Government of Ethiopia.

The Federal Government's actions to politically marginalise the TPLF represent a fundamental breach of the spirit and letter of the Pretoria Agreement, which predicated on the party's involvement in Tigray's political future.

Unlawful Proscription of the TPLF: In May 2025, the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) stripped the TPLF of its legal status, effectively banning it from political participation. This decision concocted on administrative grounds, specifically the party's failure to convene a general assembly within a state-mandated periods. However, this administrative pretext ignores the political reality that the Pretoria Agreement itself implicitly restored the TPLF's legitimacy as a signatory party. The TPLF and credible international diplomatic observers in Addis Abeba have argued that the peace deal guarantees the reinstatement of its legal standing, rendering the NEBE's re-registration process "unnecessary" and a violation of the accord. This move is a clear act of political exclusion that undermines the entire peace architecture.

Exploiting Internal Divisions: The Federal Government's position exacerbated by its apparent exploitation of internal divisions within the TPLF. The faction led by Debretsion Gebremichael has been extremely critical of the Pretoria Agreement, viewing it as a threat to the TPLF's power, while the faction previously led by Getachew Reda has been more aligned with its implementation. The federal government's engagement manipulates these divisions, a strategy that fosters instability and violates the good faith commitment required for a lasting peace.

Constitutional Dereliction: The Failure to Restore Territorial Integrity and Order: - A central pillar of the Pretoria Agreement was the restoration of constitutional order in Tigray. The Federal Government has demonstrably failed in this obligation, primarily by allowing the continued occupation of Tigrayan territory. Failure to Restore Constitutional borders have

grave consequences. The Pretoria Agreement's Article 8.2 explicitly commits the Ethiopian National Défense Force (ENDF) to "safeguard the sovereignty [and] territorial integrity of the country," which logically includes the territorial integrity of Tigray within the federal system. Despite this, large parts of Tigray remain occupied by Eritrean forces and Amhara militias. The African Union's own report acknowledges that the "withdrawal of non-ENDF forces" remains a critical outstanding issue, and Tigrayan officials consistently stress that the "constitutional restoration of Tigray's territory" has not been achieved. This constitutes a grave violation of Ethiopia's own constitution and the peace agreement.

Obstruction of IDP Return and Humanitarian Access: The continued occupation directly prevents the safe and dignified return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Furthermore, despite provisions in the Pretoria Agreement guaranteeing unrestricted humanitarian access, reports indicate that 40% of Tigray remains cut off from vital aid, with aid convoys facing systematic obstruction. This has exacerbated "a man-made famine" and a deep humanitarian crisis, violating both the agreement and international human rights law.

Bad Faith Security Engagement: Proxies, Threats, and Silenced Guns- Instead of fostering a secure environment for peace, the Federal Government has engaged in actions that actively undermine security and threaten a return to conflict, directly contradicting AU principles.

The Federal Government is arming of Splinter Groups. There are credible reports that the Federal Government is arming and supporting militant groups opposed to the TPLF within Tigray, such as the "Free Land" (Hara Meret) forces. Lieutenant General Tadesse Woreda, President of the Tigray Interim Administration, has publicly acknowledged clashes with these "insignificant" groups and stated that his administration is "working for a negotiated solution regarding those supported by Afar Regional State and the federal government". This tactic of using proxies is a subversive act that violates the AU's core agenda of "Silencing the Guns" and the good faith principle of the peace deal.

Belligerent Rhetoric and Threat of Force: Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has repeatedly used inflammatory rhetoric. In a parliamentary address, he warned that the "situation could escalate dangerously—even to the point of war" if the TPLF failed to comply with the Election Board's decisions. More recently, the TPLF has issued statements claiming the Federal Government is "threatening another round of invasion," creating "fear and anxiety" among the population. Such threats are incompatible with peaceful conflict resolution and demonstrate a failure to commit to political dialogue as the sole means of dispute settlement.

The Justice Deficit: Accountability, Transitional Justice, and Human Rights: The Federal Government has failed to establish credible mechanisms for accountability and justice, perpetuating a cycle of impunity for atrocities committed during the conflict. Failure on Transitional Justice and Accountability is inexcusable undertaking. The Pretoria Agreement envisioned a process of transitional justice. However, the Federal Government has failed to establish a credible and independent transitional justice policy/AU Action Plan. An AU report notes the "delays in the implementation of major clauses," which includes this critical component. Without a legitimate process for accountability, consistent with the FDRE Constitution and 'international standards,' the rights of victims denied, and sustainable peace remains unattainable.

Ongoing Human Rights Violations: Despite the agreement, reports continue of human rights abuses against Tigrayans, including unlawful detentions based on ethnicity. The act of detaining artists and civilians at cultural events for raising famine concerns or simply for being Tigrayan constitutes a severe violation of fundamental human rights and undermines the reconciliation

process. The Federal Government still revokes DW International and other media groups licence.

International Law and Diplomatic Breaches: The Federal Government's actions have also violated international law and its commitments to regional bodies, undermining AU Monitoring and Verification Team. The African Union's Monitoring, Verification and Compliance Mission (MVCC) tasked with overseeing the implementation of the Pretoria Agreement. However, the TPLF leadership has urged the AU panel to operate with "impartiality and integrity," highlighting that armed forces have yet to withdraw from Tigray as stipulated. An AU "Lessons Learned" report itself identified a critical flaw: "the absence of an impartial guarantor has held back the full implementation," and that this absence "eroded the credibility and trust in the peace process". This indicates a failure by the Federal Government to fully cooperate with and empower the agreed-upon monitoring mechanism.

The FDRE government failure to Secure International Borders, the continued presence of Eritrean forces in Tigray, and the Federal Government's failure to ensure their withdrawal as per the Nairobi Declaration, points to a dereliction of its constitutional and international duty to safeguard Ethiopia's borders from foreign incursion. This failure compounded by escalating tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea, with the TPLF warning that the people of Tigray being dragged into a wider devastating conflict,

The Complicity of Inaction - International Guarantors and the Betrayal of the Pretoria Agreement

The violation of the Pretoria Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) by the Ethiopian Federal Government is not an isolated act of bad faith, but a direct consequence of a permissive environment created by the systematic failure of its designated international guarantors—the African Union (AU), the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), and the United States. These entities have transitioned from architects of peace to passive observers of its dissolution, making them complicit in the ensuing human suffering and constitutional collapse.

The African Union- A Watchdog That Refused to Bark! The African Union, as the primary facilitator of the Pretoria Agreement, bears the greatest responsibility for its monitoring and enforcement. Yet, the AU and its Peace and Security Council (PSC) have been conspicuously absent at critical junctures, allowing violations to become entrenched facts on the ground.

Failure to Uphold Its Own Protocol: The TPLF has explicitly invoked Articles 6(c) and 7(1)(a)-(d) of the AU PSC Protocol, which empower the council to mediate disputes and uphold peace deals. Despite a formal plea from the Tigray Regional State to convene an emergency session of the High-Level Panel on Ethiopia to mediate the "legal status" dispute and to assess NEBE's compliance with the Pretoria Agreement, the PSC failed to act decisively. This inaction allowed the Ethiopian government to unilaterally reframe a core political issue—the legitimacy of a signatory party—as a mere administrative matter, fundamentally undermining the peace process.

The Silent Endorsement of the NEBE Decision: The AU's failure to publicly condemn or intervene in the National Election Board of Ethiopia's (NEBE) decision to revoke the TPLF's legal status represents a catastrophic abdication of its role. The TPLF has argued that this decision "fundamentally violates the validity and integrity of the Pretoria Agreement." By remaining silent, the AU effectively endorsed a move that one TPLF statement warned "threatens to unravel the cornerstone" of the agreement that ended the devastating two-year war. An analysis of the AU's role identified a critical flaw: "the absence of an impartial guarantor has held back the full implementation," which eroded all credibility and trust in the peace process. The AU's motto is, "We brought you to the table, but we won't stop you from flipping it."

Inability to Secure Territorial Integrity: A cornerstone of the Pretoria Agreement and the subsequent Nairobi Declaration was the "withdrawal of foreign and non-ENDF forces from the region" Despite the continued occupation of parts of Tigray by Eritrean forces and Amhara militias, the AU has taken no measurable action to enforce this clause. Its Monitoring, Verification and Compliance Mission (MVCM) have rendered impotent, unable to secure the most basic precondition for peace: the end of a foreign occupation that the agreement itself designed to terminate. The AU appears to believe that monitoring a violation is the same as stopping it.

The International Chorus of "Quiet Diplomacy": The UN, EU, and US: The wider international community of observers/guarantors has chosen a path of "quiet diplomacy," which in practice has meant turning a blind eye to egregious violations to maintain a facade of stability and strategic partnership.

Aid and Legitimacy for a Violator: Despite the Ethiopian government's obstruction of humanitarian access—a direct violation of the agreement's core humanitarian pillar—international donors have normalized relations. The EU, for instance, used the Pretoria Accords as a rationale to normalise relations and provide a substantial grant package, effectively rewarding the Abiy government before it had fulfilled its most basic commitments. This sends a clear message that strategic interests trump contractual obligations and human rights. They paid for the performance, so they will applaud it even if the lead actor has abandoned the script. The same is True for the AU – UN Peace and Security joint meeting in Addis Ababa. The AU Demand for financial support to the EU and UN is undeserving.

Ignoring the "Silent Genocide": The TPLF and TIRA have directly accused these guarantors of inaction in the face of what it describes as a "silent genocide" in Tigray, citing worsening humanitarian conditions and the continued displacement of millions. The international community's failure to mount a robust, public response to these allegations or to use its considerable leverage to demand compliance has broken the trust of the Tigrayan people. It has created a culture of impunity where the Ethiopian government feels no pressure to honour its signatures. The "international community" is a community in name only, united in its ability to issue statements but paralysed when it comes to enforcing them.

The AU established a world-class monitoring mission to confirm that the agreement remains violated. Their reports are impeccable-in their internal reviews, they can tell you the exact date, time, and GPS coordinates of each unimplemented clause. It's a shame their mandate didn't include actually doing anything about it." The UN, EU, and US are like guarantors for a tenant who not only stopped paying rent but set the building on fire. Their response? 'We're monitoring the situation and remain hopeful the tenant will voluntarily decide to stop the arson. In the meantime, here's next month's partial rent subsidy. This is a mockery of justice & Shame to humanity! Have we learned from the untimely dissolution of ICHREE by EU & AU intrigue? No.

The failure of the African Union's Peace and Security Council and the other international guarantors is not one of inability, but of political will. By refusing to hold the Ethiopian Federal Government accountable for its systematic violations—from the political dissolution of the TPLF to the ongoing occupation and humanitarian siege—they have become enablers of the agreement's collapse. Their inaction has not only betrayed the people of Tigray but has also set a dangerous precedent that in the Horn of Africa, peace agreements are merely suggestions, not binding commitments. For any future peace to be credible, a new, enforceable mechanism with impartial and empowered guarantors is an absolute necessity.

The evidence presented demonstrates a pattern of deliberate and systematic violations of the Pretoria Agreement by the Ethiopian Federal Government. From the political dissolution of the TPLF and the constitutional chaos of ongoing occupation to the bad faith security practices and the total deficit in justice and accountability, the Government has actively undermined the foundation of the peace it pledged to uphold.

The Legal Imperative for Safe and Dignified Return of IDP's: The political gamble on forcing or encouraging the return to unsafe and militarised territories constitutes a clear violation of both international law and Ethiopia's own constitutional obligations. The international community has established clear principles for the return of IDPs. The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement stipulate that returns must be voluntary, safe, and dignified, and occur with the consent of the returnees. The current conditions in Western Tigray, which Human Rights Watch describes as an ongoing campaign of "ethnic cleansing," fundamentally violate these principles. Returns are not voluntary when IDPs would send back to areas where their ethnic group is systematically targeted. They are not safe nor dignified when the land and homes of Tigrayans occupied by new settlers from the Amhara region, a process documented as a deliberate strategy to alter demographics. The CoHA designed to end hostilities and restore constitutional order in Tigray. A fundamental component of this is the restoration of territorial integrity. The TIRA official policy note confirms that "around 42 % of Tigray is still under occupation by Amhara and smaller degree by Eritrean forces". Returning IDPs to these occupied territories would effectively legitimise this illegal occupation and reward the ethnic cleansing campaign, directly undermining the agreement's foundational goal of restoring pre-conflict constitutional boundaries.

Constitutional Failures and Lack of Administrative Capacity: The Ethiopian constitution guarantees rights and protections to its citizens. Returning IDPs to areas under the control of hostile forces and an illegal administration means they would return to jurisdiction where the federal constitution and the legitimate Tigrayan regional authority cannot function or provide protection. The Tigray Interim Administration itself has explicitly warned against unilateral returns by the federal government that bypass the CoHA framework, stating that such moves are "unacceptable" and that the security of Tigray's territory can only be achieved through the agreement. Without the re-establishment of the legitimate regional administration and the withdrawal of occupying forces, the necessary administrative capacity to protect returnees and uphold their rights is non-existent.

The CoHA as a State-Level Agreement, not a Personal Deal:

The Ethiopian Federal Government's attempts to personalise and undermine the Pretoria Agreement represent a serious breach of its international commitment. The Cessation of Hostilities Agreement is a formal pact signed between two parties: the Federal Government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), representing the Tigray regional state. It is not an agreement between individual personalities. Any rhetoric from federal officials that attempts to reduce the CoHA to a deal with specific "former signatory individuals" is legally incoherent and politically subversive. Such language seeks to de-legitimise the TPLF as the representative authority of Tigray and, by extension, absolve the federal government of its obligations to the Tigrayan people as a collective. This directly violates the principle of *pacta sunt servanda* (agreements must be kept) a cornerstone of international law.

Systematic Undermining of the Agreement: The TPLF has itself accused the federal government of "political deception" and failing to implement key provisions on IDP return. This is part of a broader pattern of non-compliance. The federal government's failure to ensure the withdrawal of Eritrean forces and Amhara militias, its inaction on transitional justice, and the NEBE's politically motivated revocation of the TPLF's legal status all point to a systematic effort to hollow out the CoHA. Personalizing the agreement is a tactic to justify this non-compliance,

suggesting that the federal government's duties are contingent on the status of individuals rather than being a binding regional state-to-National state obligation. Denial of the conflict's devastating human cost and the nature of the crimes committed undermines any foundation for genuine reconciliation and safe return. Independent investigations have produced credible and consistent findings on the scale of the tragedy. The Newlines Institute concludes there is a "reasonable basis to believe that members of the ENDF, the Amhara Special Forces..., and the EDF have committed genocide against Tigrayans". This includes acts of killing, causing serious bodily harm, and deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about the destruction of the Tigrayan ethnic group. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have extensively documented the war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the ethnic cleansing campaign in Western Tigray. UK inquiry Report, ICHREE reports are credible.

The False Narrative of Reconciliation of Tigray with Eritrea and Fano Militia: Promoting a false narrative of reconciliation while hostilities persist is a tactic designed to sabotage the implementation of the CoHA. Reports from 2024 confirm that "Eritrean government forces committed rape and sexual violence against women and girls, and abducted, and pillaged civilian property in areas they occupied" in Tigray. Similarly, Amhara forces (Fano) remain active in parts of Tigray and implicated in serious human rights violations. The idea that Tigray has reconciled with these entities is a fiction. This is a Strategic Lie to Undermine CoHA. This narrative is strategically planned to deflect from the federal government's core obligation under the CoHA and the subsequent Nairobi Declaration: to secure the complete withdrawal of all foreign and non-ENDF forces from Tigray. By claiming reconciliation is underway, the federal government seeks to create a false pretext that the security situation is normal, thereby obviating the need for the politically arduous task of confronting its allies, Eritrea, and Amhara forces. This is a deliberate effort to "frustrate and kill the CoHA" by creating an alternative, false reality that ignores the ongoing occupation and security threats.

According to international law, the return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to their homes must be voluntary, safe, and dignified, and can only occur when the conditions that forced them to flee have ceased. The current situation in Tigray, with the continued presence of occupying forces and widespread insecurity, fails to meet these fundamental legal requirements.

The Legal Framework for IDP Return

The cornerstone of IDP protection is the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which state that national authorities have the primary responsibility to establish conditions and provide means for voluntary, safe, and dignified return. This means returns cannot be forced or coerced, and IDPs have the right to make a free and informed choice. Crucially, the principles protect IDPs against forcible return to any place where their "life, safety, liberty and/or health would be at risk." An individual considered an IDP—and entitled to these protections—until they have achieved a durable solution, which is only possible when their assistance and protection needs are no longer linked to their displacement. The Guiding Principles are not a binding treaty but are based on international humanitarian and human rights law, and their authority is globally recognized. For Ethiopia, as a member of the African Union, the Kampala Convention provides a legally binding regional framework that incorporates these same core principles.

The Impossibility of Return Amidst Genocidal Actors: Forcing Tigrayans to return to areas controlled by forces that have been accused of committing genocide against them is unthinkable under international law. It would place victims back under the authority of their perpetrators. The Newlines Institute report specifically notes that Ethiopia has failed in its responsibility under international law to prevent and punish acts of genocide. Until there is a credible, independent transitional justice process and the perpetrators are removed from positions of power, the safety of returning Tigrayan IDPs cannot be guaranteed. Denying the

death toll, which estimates range from 600000 to one million, the rape of 154000 women & girls, the killing of over five hundred girls after being raped is a continuation of the impunity that fuels the conflict and makes return impossible.

Applying this legal framework to Tigray reveals that the return of IDPs to their places of origin is currently not permissible. A core requirement for safe return is the restoration of security and the rule of law. However, international reports confirm that Eritrean troops and Amhara forces have not fully withdrawn from western and southern parts of Tigray, despite the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) requiring them to do so. The continued presence of these forces, who are documented to commit human rights abuses including rape, sexual violence, and pillaging, means the very conditions that caused displacement are ongoing. Furthermore, the situation is compounded by a severe humanitarian crisis and a lack of basic services, which means that even if security were restored, the capacity to receive returnees and ensure their dignified survival is not yet in place. Returning IDPs to areas under foreign occupation and active conflict would not only violate the principles of voluntariness and safety but would also constitute a return to a situation where their lives and health are at risk, which is explicitly prohibited by international standards.

The Path Forward:

The path forward must be guided by law and the explicit terms of the agreements already in place, not political expediency.

The international Community must Insist on Benchmarks: Any discussion of returns must be conditional on the full implementation of the CoHA, starting with the verifiable withdrawal of Eritrean forces and Amhara militias from all parts of Tigray. The international community must continue to support the work of independent investigative bodies like the UN International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE) must be reinstated to document atrocities and maintain pressure for accountability. The voices of displaced Tigrayans must be paramount. Their consent is the non-negotiable foundation for any return process, as required by international law.

Therefore, in accordance with international law and the frameworks of the African Union, the following actions are demanded:

1. Immediate Reinstatement: The Federal Government must direct the NEBE to reinstate the TPLF's legal status unconditionally.
2. Complete Withdrawal: Ensure the immediate and verifiable withdrawal of all Eritrean forces and Amhara militias from the entire constitutionally designated territory of Tigray.
3. Guarantee Humanitarian Access and Safe Return of IDP's: Lift all sieges and allow unhindered humanitarian access to all parts of Tigray & secure, dignified, and timely return of IDPS according to international law and protocols.
4. Cooperate with Monitoring: Provide full and transparent cooperation to the AU's MVCC and other international monitors.
5. Establish a Credible Transitional Justice Process: In accordance with the African Union Transitional Justice Policy, establish an independent and internationally supported transitional justice mechanism.

The international community, particularly the African Union, must move beyond rhetoric and take decisive action to hold the Ethiopian government accountable to its commitments.

End.