



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

December 8, 2020

Dear President-Elect Biden,

On behalf of the 10 million members, supporters and activists of Amnesty International around the world, we write to you to urge you to prioritize addressing the human rights impact of the conflict in Tigray state, Ethiopia.

As you know, at the beginning of November a military operation in every aspect but name was launched by the government of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in response to the attack on a federal military outpost by the forces of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF).

While it has been extremely difficult to verify allegations due to restricted access and the shutdown of all lines of communications in Tigray, what we do know is extremely troubling: the Ethiopian Defense Forces (EDF) engaged the air force in bombing Tigray and the TPLF, firing missiles into Amhara state and the neighboring country of Eritrea. Over 47,000 people have fled into Sudan, and while we have verified only one massacre to date that claimed the lives of over 300 in the town of Mai Kadara, we have heard claims of other atrocities. While the government has captured the Tigray capital Mekelle there is a real danger that the TPLF will wage an insurgency that could destabilize Ethiopia, Eritrea and the entire region.

Mr. President-Elect, we are concerned that the humanitarian crisis unleashed by the fighting in Tigray will overwhelm an already fragile situation regarding displaced persons and food insecurity in Ethiopia. Further, we are concerned about the impact on the respect for and protection of human rights if there is no accountability for reported human rights abuses by both the TPL and the EDF and if the Abiy government follows through on its promises to hunt down TPLF leadership and those responsible for the fighting.

We appreciate and respect that your term as president does not start until January 21, 2021, but this crisis will not wait until then. We therefore urge you to use your good offices

to encourage the United Nations, African Union and leaders of Ethiopia's different ethnic groups to press Prime Minister Abiy to:

- Allow unrestricted humanitarian assistance to people in need of urgent humanitarian support in Tigray, including to internally displaced people (IDPs) and refugees, and provide increased technical and monetary support for urgent humanitarian needs of IDPs in Tigray.
- Ensure fair trial of people, including ethnic-Tigrayans detained during the course of the government's military operations in Tigray.
- Allow an independent investigation into all alleged atrocities committed during the military action in Tigray, with the aim of holding accountable persons responsible for abuses. This must be accompanied by ensuring accountability for intercommunal violence that has occurred in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

The United States and the international community should also help transform the Ethiopian security forces into an institution in which the Ethiopian people have trust and confidence by:

- Providing technical support in provision of civilian police training, including providing urgent capacity enhancement support for members of the security forces to respect, protect and fulfill human rights; and
- Increase support to local civil society, media and human rights defenders to defend and promote human rights in the country through monitoring, documentation, reporting, advocacy and campaigning.

We hope that your administration will meet this critical challenge and place human rights at the center of your policies toward Ethiopia and around the world. We stand ready to answer any questions you may have or provide more information.

Sincerely,

AIUSA Board of Directors

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