

Open Letter Condemning Human Rights Watch Biased Statement on the Current Situation in Ethiopia

For Immediate Release June 7, 2023

We, the undersigned Ethiopian Diaspora-based non-governmental organizations, condemn in the strongest possible terms the patently biased, misleading, and partisan statement issued by Human Rights Watch (HRW) on June 1, 2023.

The undersigned categorically denounce the statement as pro-Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and anti-Amhara.

The allegations asserted in the statement are not only unsubstantiated and brazenly untrue, but also irresponsibly provocative and dangerously inflammatory.

The undersigned deplore the fact that hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians, including Afar, Amhara and Tigrean, have perished during the unwarranted and hugely costly war initiated by the TPLF. We believe that those who perpetrated war crimes, crimes against humanity, sexual violence, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and economic crimes must be held accountable in a court of law regardless of ethnic or political affiliation.

However, the undersigned find it astounding that HRW never ever acknowledged that the TPLF had conducted a policy of ethnic cleansing and genocide against the Amhara indigenous population before it took power in 1991 and after it formally annexed and incorporated Wolkait, Tegede, Telemt and Raya into Greater Tigray. The designation of "Western Tigray", to which HRW gives legitimacy, never existed before TPLF's forcible annexation.

Indeed, had HRW cared to adhere to international human rights laws, norms, and principles, it could have acknowledged and called for accountability concerning the slaughters and expulsions of hundreds of thousands of Amhara from the annexed region, the deliberate degradation of Amhara culture, the forcible assimilation of Amhara survivors as Tigrean, and the recent genocidal massacres of more than 1,500 Amhara civilians in Mai Kadra, all perpetrated by the TPLF.

Had HRW cared to uphold its principles, it could also have broken its silence about the ongoing violence of extermination against Amhara in the Oromia and other regions that is perpetrated by Oromo extremist forces in tacit collaboration with the TPLF. In the city of Addis Ababa and its environs alone, the Oromo Prosperity Party has demolished more than 113,000 houses, the majority owned by Amhara. Further, over the past three years alone, the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) in concert with Oromo Special Forces and authorities have slaughtered more than 30,000 Amhara elders, women, children, and peasant farmers; and displaced more than one million. At the present time, the Oromo Prosperity Party under Abiy Ahmed has declared an all-out war against Amhara on all fronts.

The undersigned find it disturbingly unjust that HRW preposterously accuses and implicates specific Amhara individuals as accountable for human rights violations. Alarming, as implied in the statement itself, the allegation against two of the Amharas is based on telephone interviews of 35 preselected Tigreans who are advocates for the restoration of the annexed lands to Tigray.

Most importantly, the undersigned believe that the timing of the statement by HRW is suspect and politically motivated. The HRW statement is issued at a time when the Amhara population, facing an existential threat, is fighting for its very survival. In the north, the Amhara indigenous population in the so-called "Western Tigray" is under constant threat of re-annexation by the TPLF. And, from the south, the Amhara are under attack by the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), Oromo Liberation Army (OLA,) and the ruling Oromo Prosperity Party.

Thus, we are of the firm opinion that the statement is intended to:- (a) divert international attention away from the current onslaught targeting Amhara, (b) strengthen TPLF's wrongful claim of "Western Tigray," and (c) justify Abiy Ahmed's disarmament of Amhara Special Forces and Fano thereby weakening Amhara capacity to defend itself.

The undersigned, therefore, ask HRW to retract its misleading and dangerously inflammatory statement and:

- Desist from advancing the unsubstantiated claim of the TPLF over the Amhara ancestral lands;
- Urge the international community to express outrage concerning the all-out war targeting Amhara perpetrated by the Oromo Prosperity Party under the pretext of restoring law and order;
- Condemn the state-sponsored demolition of more than 113,000 homes of non-Oromo residents, mostly Amhara, in the city of Addis Ababa.
- Call on the Oromo Prosperity Party to cease its savage attack against the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) and Islamic faith, including its destruction of churches, monasteries, and mosques.
- Call on the government of Abiy Ahmed to cease and desist from incarcerating and torturing thousands of prisoners of conscience, the majority of whom are Amhara.

SIGNATORY ORGANIZATIONS

1. Abba Bahrey Forum
2. Adwa Great African Victory Association (AGAVA)
3. All Shewa Ethiopian People Multipurpose International Association
4. Amhara Association in Queensland, Australia
5. Amhara Association of Chicago
6. Amhara Association of Georgia
7. Amhara Dimtse Serechit
8. Amhara Heritage Society of Minnesota
9. Amhara Wellbeing and Development Association
10. Balderas Support Group in North America
11. Bay Area Save Life
12. Bay Area Ethiopian Community Association
13. Communities of Ethiopians in Finland
14. Concerned Amharas in the Diaspora
15. Congress of Ethiopian Civic Organizations (CECO)
16. DC Joint Task Force (የዲ.ሲ. ጋራ ግብረኃይል)
17. Embilta Forum
18. Ethio-Canadian Human Rights Association
19. Ethiopian American Development Council (EADC)
20. Ethiopian Community Association of Greater Cincinnati (ECAGC)
21. Ethiopian Dialogue Forum (EDF)
22. Ethiopiawinnet – Council for the Defence of Citizen Rights (E-CDCR)
23. etHub
24. Freedom and Justice for Telemt Amhara
25. Global Alliance for Justice - The Ethiopian Cause
26. Global Amhara Coalition (GAC)
27. Gonder Hibret for Ethiopian Unity
28. Hope for Ethiopia (H4E)
29. Major Lemma Woldetsadik Memorial Foundation
30. Network of Ethiopian Scholars (NES)
31. Radio Yenesew Ethiopia
32. Selassie Stand Up, Inc.
33. The Ethiopian Broadcast Group
34. United Ethiopian Muslims Movement (UEMM)
35. Vision Ethiopia (VE)
36. Voice of the Victim's Organization (VVO - ልሳነ ግፉግግ)
37. Welkait, Tegede, Telemt, Setit Humera Global Amhara Unity Association
38. Worldwide Ethiopian Civic Associations Network (WE-CAN)