

Washington Update - by Mesfin Mekonen

March 22, 2023

The U.S. government has made engagement with Ethiopia a high priority as it tries to balance commitments to punishing human rights abuses with the provision of desperately needed humanitarian assistance. The U.S. has also gone on record as noting that it had failed to call out human rights abuses when the TPLF was in power.

"Getting to justice, bringing people together, that's the way to make sure that peace lasts and that people can move on with their lives and the country can really move forward," Secretary of State Anthony Blinken told reporters in Addis Ababa.

Blinken conceded that the United States failed in calling out atrocities when Ethiopia was led by Tigrayan-dominated government, the Washington Post reported. "We and others were insufficiently vocal about these abuses in the past," Blinken said.

Following the visit, Blinken issued a statement on war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing in Ethiopia. He also announced a large-scale humanitarian relief package.

"After careful review of the law and the facts, I have determined that members of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF), Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF), Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) forces, and Amhara forces committed war crimes during the conflict in northern Ethiopia," Blinken said in a formal statement. He called for formally recognizing atrocities committed by all parties and for those "most responsible" to be held accountable. Blinken urged "all parties to follow through on their commitments to one another and implement a credible, inclusive, and comprehensive transitional justice process."

Reuter news report that Human rights violations by all sides, including extra-judicial killings, rapes, looting and displacing people by force, have been documented by U.N. bodies, Ethiopia's state-appointed human rights commission, independent aid groups and media including Reuters.

Ethiopia government said that the U.S. determination was "selective" since it exonerated Tigrayan forces from accusations of rape and sexual violence.

State Department on Ethiopia and the U.S. relations, statement: Through the World Food Program and the Joint Emergency Operation consortium of implementing non-governmental organizations, U.S. assistance will reach more than 13 million extremely food-insecure Ethiopians.

Ethiopia is one of the target countries for Feed the Future (FTF), the U.S. government's flagship global hunger and food security initiative. FTF works hand-in-hand with partner

countries to develop their food systems to be resilient, inclusive, and sustainable, and break the vicious cycle of poverty, hunger, and malnutrition.

At recent State Department press conference, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Molly Phee said that "To put that relationship in a forward trajectory, we will continue to need steps by Ethiopia to help the cycle of ethnic political violence that has set the country back for many decades, including most acutely in this recent conflict."

Peace and stability depend on abandoning the ideology of ethnic division and launching a project to revise the Ethiopian constitution. The present constitution was created to exacerbate ethnic divisions. It will lead to the destruction of Ethiopia.

The State Department announced more than \$331 million in new humanitarian assistance for Ethiopia that will be delivered between in the next six months. The funds will be used to provide food, shelter, safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, healthcare efforts, education, and other key services.