

Washington Update - by Mesfin Mekonen

January 16, 2023

1. Illusion of peace in Tigray. The TPLF has started relinquishing heavy weapons as part of the African Union-led peace process. Governments and media in the U.S. and Europe that are celebrating a tenuous truce in Tigray have not paid much attention to the scale of suffering caused by the unnecessary conflict. Estimates of the numbers of civilians and soldiers killed and injured vary, but credible accounts indicate the devastation far exceeds the horror in Ukraine. It will take a generation or more to heal the wounds.
2. Ongoing conflicts. The world is averting its eyes from the atrocities that are occurring throughout the rest of Ethiopia. And even the most astute observers are ignoring the root causes of the violence that is tearing apart Africa's second-most populous country. Lasting peace and prosperity are impossible as long as Ethiopia is governed by a weak, corrupt and incompetent government that suppresses democratic and human rights under a constitution that enshrines ethnic divisions.

Prime Minister Abiy is inciting violence by failing to come to the assistance of Amhara who are being killed, brutalized and displaced by OLF/OLA and Oromo regional force

He has falsely called Amhara who are attempting to defend themselves terrorists and has suggested that they are equivalent to the Shane Oromo terrorists.

Amhara are being killed and attacked with impunity every day. At least 1,566 Amhara civilians were killed in Oromia last year. This includes a massacre in Gimbi district in June that saw Oromo-speaking gunmen – identified by residents as OLA – kill hundreds of Amharas.

An investigation by the Amhara Association of America (AAA) shows that the atrocities are ongoing. It found that in the first two weeks of January 2023, Oromia Special Forces, Oromia Region police, government representatives, and local youth intensified ethnically motivated demolitions of houses belonging to non-Oromo residents (and especially ethnic Amhara residents) in the newly established Sheger city administration of the Oromia Regional State. These are areas which were formerly part of Addis Ababa

city and were unilaterally transferred by the ruling Oromo Prosperity Party to the Oromo regional government. The investigation found that security forces have killed at least three innocent individuals and seriously injured 62 others in January. They have demolished at least 3,415 houses belonging to non-Oromo owners (most of them belonging to Amhara owners), leaving tens of thousands of people homeless and vulnerable. This is just one example of the terror that is spreading throughout the country.

3. Also in January, Amnesty International has raised the alarm about human rights workers who have been illegally imprisoned. AI reports that “Daniel Tesfaye, Bizuayehu Wendimu, Bereket Daniel and Nahom Hussien, who work for the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO), were arrested on 5 January in the Alem Bank area south of Addis Ababa while investigating cases of forced evictions.” “These four human rights defenders did not commit a single recognizable criminal offence. They were simply carrying out the important work of documenting forced evictions of poorer residents. They should never have been detained in the first place and should be released immediately and unconditionally. Nobody should be criminalized for carrying out crucial human rights work,” said Tigere Chagutah, Amnesty International’s Director for East and Southern Africa.
- 4.
5. Journalists are also being killed, jailed and harassed in Ethiopia. The Committee to Protect Journalists notes that more than 60 reporters have been arrested in Ethiopia since November 2020, “most for prolonged periods without formal charges.