



17 August 2020

## STATEMENT

### CRIMES COMMITTED IN ETHIOPIA SINCE 23 JUNE 2020

In the past two years our country Ethiopia has witnessed alternating periods of joy and sorrow, hope and despair. Following Prime Minister Abiy's accession to power detained journalists and politicians were freed, and exiled political groups and their leaders were able to return home and resume their activities. In general, freedom of expression, of assembly and of organization was realized.

However, certain political groups, rather than using the newly gained freedom to promote peace and development, equality and unity, respect for human and democratic rights and the prevalence of the rule of law, they embarked on preaching ethnic hatred, creating mistrust between communities and instigating ethnic conflict. Some social media networks and populists used the occasion to undermine the long standing brotherly and sisterly relationships of the Ethiopian peoples evolved through years of living together. They preached vengeance and incited violence between ethnic groups.

For certain political groups denigrating the common heritage and preaching ethnic animosity became their core message and subsequently the general situation in Ethiopia deteriorated fast and became toxic. Then, on the night of 22 June, came the assassination of singer Hachalu Hundessa. Dildiy condemns the assassination of the young singer and conveys its condolences to the family and friends of Hachalu.

Immediately following the assassination of Hachalu, cruel and horrifying acts of violence were perpetrated against residents in some parts of the Oromia region. The rampage continued for several days unchecked and the situation in the country became extremely volatile. During these latest attacks 239 persons were killed and thousands wounded and thousands more were uprooted from their neighborhoods and made homeless. Hotels, shops, and residences were looted and burnt. Other buildings and institutions were burnt down including a private college, a factory, and several large private business enterprises. Likewise, hundreds of private and public vehicles, scooter-taxis and motorcycles were burnt.

Reports indicate that the recent attacks in some parts of Oromia which targeted people based on their ethnicity and religious creed indicate that what transpired were not spontaneous acts of killing and looting. The attacks reflect the elements laid down in the UN Convention of 9 December 1948 on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. To mention but a few of the characterizing features of the crimes perpetrated recently:

- a) In the months preceding the attacks hate speech targeting ethnic and religious groups was being transmitted through public gatherings and various social media outlets.
- b) Lists of target individuals, families and institutions were drawn up before the attacks took place and from among numerous homes and organizations only those that belonged to non-Oromos, and Oromos who professed the Christian faith were selectively targeted.
- c) The similarities in the pattern of attack indicate that it was the work of an organization. In many areas the perpetrators were not even local people. Rather, they were organized groups transported to the scene of the crime by prearranged transportation facilities
- d) It was a coordinated attack executed in a similar manner at about the same time in different locations from Agarfa to Kolfe, Shashemene and Jimma.

- e) Some victims even testified that local police came and disarmed them of the guns they were licensed to carry to protect themselves and their property just a day before they were attacked.
- f) Oromia regional authorities at various levels did not intervene to stop the attacks even though they were aware of what was going on. Members of the Oromia special force and the national defense force stationed nearby did not intervene either. They claim they were instructed by their superiors not to intervene and thus failed in their duty of protecting citizens from such danger.

All the above indicate the targeted attacks on non-Oromos and Oromos who are followers of the Cristian faith in some parts of the Oromia region were premeditated acts which could be described as acts of genocide as defined by the UN Convention on Genocide. Therefore:

1. We strongly demand that all those who participated in planning, organizing and actually committing the crime, including all officials from kebele up to the regional level, police officers and members of the regional special force be investigated and tried in an open court.
2. We demand that the Oromia regional government resettle and rehabilitate the victims back into their communities and pay compensation for the loss of property they incurred.
3. We call upon federal and regional authorities meet their obligation under international human rights conventions and protect the basic human rights of all citizens and the right to work and live at any place of their choice regardless of their ethnic origin.
4. We demand that mass media outlets, political party leaders and all other people who post hate speech on such public platforms be held accountable and brought to the court of law.
5. We call upon the government to put in place an independent inquiry commission to investigate the attacks including all social and political

activities leading to the attacks which aimed at provoking inter communal violence thereby endangering the peace and security of the Ethiopian state. We demand also that the inquiry commission report its findings both to the government and the public within six months.

6. We encourage the public to demand that all political parties issue public statements condemning the targeted attacks against people and groups based on their ethnic origin and religious affiliation.
7. We stress that enforcing the rule of law is the primary duty of any government. We, therefore, demand that federal as well as local authorities of Ethiopia carry out their responsibility of maintaining law and order throughout the country.

Finally, we have decided that this statement be sent to Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed; W/o Meaza Ashenafi, President of the Federal Supreme Court Ato Tagesse Chafo, Speaker of the House of Representatives; W/o Muferiat Kamil, Minister of Peace; Ato Shimelis Abdissa, President of the Regional State of Oromia; Ato Daniel Bekele, Commissioner of Ethiopian Human Rights Commission; and W/o Hirut Zemene, Ambassador of Ethiopia to Belgium, Luxembourg and EU.

We also decided to send the statement to Ms Michelle Bechelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; Ms Ursula Von der Leyen, President of the European Commission; and to Mr. David Sassoli, President of the European Parliament.

Dildiy

Ethiopian Forum in Europe