



Statement on “an open call by African intellectuals for urgent action on Ethiopia”

August 29, 2021

We, the Board members of the Global Ethiopian Scholars Initiative (GESI), have read with interest and disappointment the [recent statement](#) issued by concerned African intellectuals with reference to the conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

[GESI](#) is a non-profit organization of leading scholars from across Ethiopia’s diverse regions and registered in the US state of New York, with a mission to generate evidence relating to developments regarding that country, with particular emphasis on external public opinion and internal policy initiatives.

The Board members of GESI sincerely appreciate the concern expressed by our fellow African intellectuals on the ongoing conflict in Ethiopia, and its catastrophic impacts on civilians, properties and infrastructure, and genuinely thank them for their recognition of Ethiopia’s continental significance and its glorious contributions to advance the interests of African nations as the home of the African Union (AU).

However, we are extremely dismayed by the flagrant injudiciousness of the writers in disrespecting Ethiopia’s sovereignty, and their effrontery to draw a blatantly false equivalence between a [terrorist organization](#) and an independent and sovereign nation. The flawed recommendations intended to appease the terrorist group are not only a direct insult to the victims of TPLF’s atrocities, but also a prescription for disaster that would set a dangerous precedent for similar extremist groups to destabilize nations across the continent.

We are equally appalled by the statement’s unfavorable characterization of the integrity of the AU and Ethiopia’s neighbors, in a disturbing amplification of the rhetoric of certain Western countries, which aim to advance the caustic agenda of the TPLF at the expense of peace and stability in that part of the world.

Notwithstanding the insinuation of the statement that Ethiopian scholars are unable to express their opinions regarding the current situation, the peace-loving people of Ethiopia—both at home and abroad—are overwhelmingly united, now more than any other time in their recent history, to save their country, with unwavering resolve and determination, from the destructive aggression of the TPLF and related criminal forces.

We are distressed to note that the concerned intellectuals appear to be, wittingly or unwittingly, ill-informed of the TPLF’s criminal past and current transgressions, which are immeasurably horrific even

by the standards of totalitarian regimes in the African continent. As most genuine and informed African scholars can affirm, before the group was ignominiously removed from power by a popular uprising in 2018, the leaders of the TPLF had ruled the country with an *apartheid-style* iron fist for twenty-seven years. The crimes committed by the group during those tragic years have been extensively documented by humanitarian organizations, including [Amnesty International](#) and [Human Rights Watch](#), as well as in successive [US State Department Country Reports](#). It is also widely known that the [TPLF had embezzled billions of dollars of aid money](#) that is now being used to finance a vicious disinformation campaign to advance its nefarious agenda.

The esteemed intellectuals may take note that following its disgraceful dislodgment from power in 2018, the terrorist group continued its vicious and subversive activities, despite all efforts by the central government to bring it to the negotiation table. Its most unforgivable and egregious crime includes the treasonous attack it committed against the Northern Command of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces in the wee hours of November 4, 2020, in which thousands of non-Tigrean soldiers and officers were systematically massacred. After its total defeat in the ensuing counterattack launched by the central government to restore law and order, the TPLF, which has now been officially declared as a terrorist group, committed genocidal crimes in places like [MaiKadra](#), and eventually resorted to waging a relentless [campaign of disinformation](#) to befuddle world opinion, professional institutions and unwitting intellectuals, with the strong patronage of certain Western media institutions and governments.

Disregarding the central government's declaration of a unilateral ceasefire on June 28, 2021, and repeated calls to the leaders of the terrorist group leaders to surrender and lay down their arms, the TPLF has now launched its barefaced aggression in the Amhara and Afar regions, using child soldiers, massacring innocent civilians, looting properties and destroying irreplaceable cultural and historical heritage.

It is ironic that the statement issued by the concerned intellectuals not only conveniently ignores the dark history of the terrorist group and [the crimes the group is still committing](#), but also conspicuously fails to express regrets for the silence of the same intellectuals who did not find it worthy of their time to raise their voices when the TPLF atrociously ruled the land with terror and vicious force for close to three decades.

As scholars, we do respect the academic freedom of intellectuals to express honest views and opinions with unfettered freedom. However, the statement, which reads like a page borrowed from the propaganda playbook of the TPLF, appears to be another futile attempt by the terrorist group to camouflage its ugly crimes in the shadow of African intellectuals. Otherwise, our African literati would not choose such impertinently inflammatory terms as the Tigray Defense Forces or TDF, knowing fully that Tigray is not a sovereign nation. One also wonders whether it was by accident or design that the statement was published in the journal *African Arguments*, [which was co-founded](#) by the [World Peace Foundation](#), whose [head is reportedly a fervent pro-TPLF apologist](#).

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