

The Afar Still Wait for the World to Notice Their Plight

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Jeff Pearce



This won't take long. Unless you think about it hard, and you have a conscience, and then it will weigh on you for *hours*. How many stories about the horrors going on in the Afar region did you see over the weekend? How many stories racking up views on social media just today?

So where's the outrage? Better still, where's the damn increase in *help*?

I had a few brief exchanges with **Valerie Browning** today over WhatsApp; the Australian woman who runs the Afar Pastoral Development Association, who has become a legend in Ethiopia and whom the Afar gave the name of Maalika, accepting her as one of their own. She's been living and working in the region for over 27 years and is married to an Afar gentleman.

What the TPLF are doing is a "full-scale offensive" on Afar, she says, with not only military strikes but the people's livelihood "being systematically wiped out by Tigray."

Browning says three days ago in Konnaba, a German-constructed and equipped hospital was stripped, and thousands of houses were burned and destroyed.

"All this for the political, arrogant greed of TPLF leadership," wrote Browning. "They are utterly insane."

She says the TPLF distributed leaflets, telling the Afar to "either submit or be exterminated" while also ordering their soldiers to engage in looting.

“We [were] pushed out of Central West Afar on December 3rd,” wrote Browning. “They left upwards of 2,000 TPLF corpses on the battlefields of the districts.”

She passed along one disturbing story of an Afar woman “who bewailed to me that her son had phoned, asking her to pray soooooo hard.” He had been captured while herding animals, given a forced injection of drugs (a common TPLF practice used in other regions as well), and then given a “heavy weapon on his shoulder, unable to say where he was.”

“He was never heard of again.”

I asked Browning if she and her team were safe. “Quite honestly,” she replied, “it’s not about safety but the survival of the Afar.”

I asked her what else she would want to see done in terms of immediate aid or say, protection of the IDPs.

She wrote back that she wanted to see governments of the world recognize and condemn the atrocities happening in Afar right now. The region doesn’t “even have Ethiopian army support due to the recent staging of African Union Summit in Addis.” The government “has actually lied to [the] world to say [there’s] currently no conflict in the country. During the Summit, Afar died in their hundreds in Barahale.”

This past weekend, ethnic Afar activists discussed the situation in an online forum, and [Borkena reported Sunday](#), “The sentiment among Ethiopians who participated in the event is that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed’s government has deliberately ignored the plights of Afar people...”

Meanwhile, the Afar still wait, hoping someone will come and stand with them.