

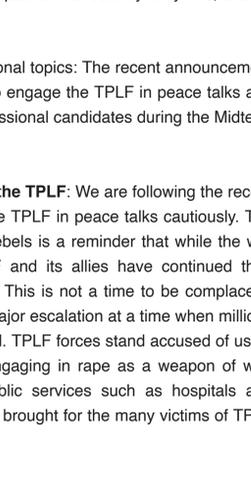


NEWSLETTER

July 2022, Vol 2 No.7

Dear Friends,

I write to you following the unforgivable massacre of Amhara citizens in Wollega by the terrorist group OLF-Shene. Reports of those who were murdered range from 300 up to 1,500. On behalf of AEPAC, I share our deepest condolences with the loved ones of those who were killed. The perpetrators of this crime and their enablers should be brought to justice and all Ethiopians, irrespective of which part of the country they live, should hold hands together to demand action.



I would also like to weigh in on two additional topics: The recent announcement by the Federal Government of Ethiopia to engage the TPLF in peace talks and AEPAC's endorsement process of congressional candidates during the Midterm election here at home.

Ethiopia Announced Peace Talks with the TPLF: We are following the recent government announcement to engage the TPLF in peace talks cautiously. The continued attack on civilians by armed rebels is a reminder that while the war has eased in recent months, the TPLF and its allies have continued their aggression in many parts of the country. This is not a time to be complacent. The terrorist groups are set to launch a major escalation at a time when millions are in desperate need of humanitarian aid. TPLF forces stand accused of using child soldiers, committing massacres, engaging in rape as a weapon of war, looting, and purposefully destroying public services such as hospitals and schools. As yet there has been no justice brought for the many victims of TPLF atrocities.

If there is to be peace in Ethiopia there must be justice and accountability. AEPAC believes the following should be considered by the Ethiopian Government and the International Community if serious talks are taking place with the TPLF.

1. We have to ensure that TPLF forces that are responsible for atrocities in Afar, Amhara, and Tigray face the full force of the law and that their victims receive compensation in order to rebuild their lives.
2. The TPLF lay down their arms and end their insurgency and terrorist activities against the Ethiopian people.
3. Afar and Amhara regions should receive the humanitarian focus and economic development they urgently need.
4. The United States and other nations must ease sanctions and re-establish free trading benefits in order to support the entire Ethiopian economy through the coming months.
5. The Ethiopian people must be allowed to emancipate themselves from an ethnocentric, divisive, and corrupt system that has plagued the country for three decades.

This is a clear message we will be taking to Washington DC in mid-July as the AEPAC leadership from across the nation heads to Capitol Hill to meet with Members of Congress, State Department officials, and other key stakeholders. It is also a message that we want to convey to the Federal Government in Addis Ababa ahead of time.

US Midterm Election Campaign and Candidate Endorsement: In regard to the Midterm Elections here in the United States, the AEPAC teams have been working hard to engage with political allies across the country as members of Congress gear up for November's poll. As you all know AEPAC is the first pro-Ethiopian political action committee (PAC) that is dedicated to strengthening ties between the United States and Ethiopia. To achieve that goal, AEPAC will support friendly congressional candidates to get elected to Congress in the Midterm election. Accordingly, we have already identified and endorsed a number of committed congressional candidates who are great allies in maintaining and advancing US/Ethiopian relations in the coming years.

AEPAC endorsed candidates have demonstrated a commitment to the Ethiopian American community in their constituencies and have been long-time advocates for a strong bilateral relationship between Ethiopia and the United States. We will release the full list of endorsed candidates once the endorsement process is finalized. It is worth noting that before we formally endorse candidates, we are undertaking a questionnaire process to ensure AEPAC's values match with the candidate's position on current and future issues that would impact the Ethiopian people.

Finally, I would like to ask Ethiopian Americans and American friends of Ethiopia that, as we move closer to the election, please do get involved where you can. Getting registered and voting is the best way to have your voice heard. Get involved and make a difference. The more friends we have in Congress, the more support we can secure for Ethiopia and the Ethiopian American community.

Yours ever,

Mesfin Tegenu, AEPAC Chairman

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

AEPAC Activity Update

- AEPAC Endorsement Update
- AEPAC Joins ESFNA in Celebrating its 39th ESFNA Event
- Candlelight Vigil in Many Cities in the US
- Media Work
- Digital

News and Current Affairs

- Ethiopia Announced Peace Talks with the TPLF
- Government Effort to Boost Relief Assistance
- New Ethiopian Ambassador to the US: Sileshi Bekele
- Six Billion Seedlings to be Planted in 2022
- Cluster Farming to Spur Ethiopia's Agricultural Potential

How You Can Help

AEPAC ACTIVITY UPDATE

AEPAC Endorsement Update

To date, AEPAC has held meet & greet events at NECC and SECC levels with a dozen candidates and/or their staffers. Of these, 4 are Ethiopian & Eritrean Americans. Furthermore, AEPAC has identified a dozen of candidates running for reelection for endorsement and their names will be announced when the endorsement process is finalized. AEPAC endorses those candidates who are friendly to the promotion of US/Ethiopia relations. The criteria for endorsement have been published and those candidates whose value aligns with AEPAC mission will be good candidates for endorsement. Once candidates are endorsed AEPAC will donate funds to their campaigns and organize campaign rallies on their behalf so that these candidates get elected to congress. These activities are transparent and endorsements of candidates are non-partisan.

AEPAC Joins ESFNA in Celebrating its 39th ESFNA Event

AEPAC is joining the Ethiopian Sports Federation of North America (ESFNA) in celebrating its 39th sports festival from July 3- 9, 2022 at the Capital One Stadium of Maryland University at College Park in Maryland. This annual event, which is held on a rotational basis in major US cities, attracts over 30 thousand Ethiopian Americans, Ethiopians, and other friends of Ethiopia where different soccer teams compete in a tournament. AEPAC will manage a weeklong booth where information about AEPAC, the mid-term elections, and other relevant information is disseminated through different platforms including T-Shirts, stickers, video shows, flyers, etc. The booth event will encourage people to join AEPAC and serve as an opportunity to raise funds. The high point of the AEPAC program is the hosting of a dinner night for about 200 friends of AEPAC at the Doubletree Hilton hotel at 8777 Georgia Avenue in Silver Spring. The Dinner event will have featured speakers including Amb. Sileshi Bekele, Mesfin Tegenu, Hermela Aregawi, Prof. Binyam Awash, and Nebiyu Asfaw. Delicious Ethiopian food will be on the menu accompanied by different entertainment activities including poem reading, raffles, book sales, etc. The ESFNA sports and cultural annual week-long event started in 1983 and is the highest social gathering of Ethiopians outside Ethiopia. This event is an opportunity for Ethiopians to travel from far and near, meet friends and alumni, and see their favorite soccer team play.

Candlelight Vigil in Many Cities in the US

Following the murder of innocent citizens of Amhara ethnic descent and pillage of their village in Gimbi, Wellega of Oromia region by members of the Shene terrorist group, anger flared in all parts of Ethiopia and beyond. This atrocity is planned and executed in a form that is characteristic of terrorists for which the Ethiopian parliament had designated the Shene and TPLF as such a couple of years ago. The Amhara people have been targeted victims of such attacks at different times in the last four years where horrific scenes of killings, pillaging of communities and mass displacements were witnessed. The government has currently started to take stern measures to go after this terrorist group. If not brought under control, the likelihood of this group being in the league of other terrorist groups like Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, and their godfather ISIS is imminent with consequential expanded destabilization of governments and costing human life and property in Ethiopia and the African continent.

Some Important Information about ESFNA

Sport & Cultural Festival:

1. **The 39th Annual Ethiopian Sports Federation in North America (ESFNA) Sport and Cultural Festival will take place in Maryland:**

- **Venue:** Capital One Field at Maryland Stadium in College Park, Maryland
- **Date:** From July 3rd – July 9th, 2022.
- **Time:** 11:00 am to 10:00 pm (Sunday to Saturday)
- **Address:** 90 Stadium Dr, College Park, MD 20742

2. **AEPAC Dinner Event:**

- **Venue:** Doubletree by Hilton Hotel Silver Spring
- **Date:** Friday, July 8, 2022
- **Time:** 6:00 to 11:00
- **Address:** 8777 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring, Maryland, 20910,
- **Phone:** +1 301-589-0800

Media Update

June has been an intense month for our media team. We have been focusing on a number of campaigns from AEPAC's activities supporting candidates in the primary elections to responding to the horrific attack by OLF-Shene against innocent Amhara citizens in Oromia. Here are just a few highlights:

Ambassador Fisseha Adugna wrote an [opinion piece for CGTN Global](#) which makes the argument for additional assistance for Afar and Amhara. He describes the people of those regions as the "forgotten victims" of the war. He welcomes aid flowing to Tigray but robustly calls for more focus elsewhere in the country.

Gennet Negussie authored [an article](#) published by Foreign Policy News focused on the Ethiopian American community's potential impact on the mid-term elections. She highlights the impact the diaspora had on Virginia's special election in November 2021 and how the diaspora is looking to take that approach around the country.

In response to the devastating massacre in Oromia, Chairman Mesfin Tegenu released a statement condemning OLF-Shene which was published by media outlets in the [US](#) and in [Ethiopia](#).

Digital Update

This month has been one of our most successful so far for digital engagement, and the channels have experienced a boost from our increasingly informative content. Specifically, our posts and videos explaining the history of Welkait have continued to be exceedingly well received, having gained over 120K impressions and 30k views across channels. The results of this are incredibly important as we seek to raise awareness of the history of the Welkait community, which has been all but erased over the past 30 years with the creation of 'Western Tigray' by the TPLF.

In addition to this, other key content we released was [interview clips](#) with Human Rights Activist, Dagnachew Teshome, who has been tirelessly working to work for the rights of ordinary Ethiopians. His messages are a reminder of why we need to speak up for those of us who cannot speak for themselves. In total, his interview has received over 14k views across channels, which helps to spread knowledge of his efforts to save lives across the country.

NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS

Ethiopia Announced Peace Talks with TPLF

On June 27, 2022, Ethiopia's Minister of Justice Gideon Timotheus announced that Ethiopia's ruling party "has decided to give a chance for peaceful talks to end the war in the northern part of the country". According to Ethiopian News Agency (ENA), the Minister further noted that the ruling party also "decided that both the process and outcome of the peace talk will be conducted in a way that safeguards the sovereignty and national interest of the country." It was also reported that the peace talks will be carried out under the direction and coordination of the African Union. In its reaction to the Government announcement, TPLF dismissed AU's mediation. According to VOA online news of June 29, 2022, TPLF said "it does not trust the AU and wants Kenya to mediate". The Federal Government and TPLF have been at war since November 4, 2020, but the Federal Government announced a humanitarian truce that allowed relief assistance to Tigray recently.

Government Effort to Boost Relief Assistance

Secretary Blinken in a press statement said the United States welcomes the progress in securing more regular access to humanitarian assistance to communities in need in the Afar, Amhara, and Tigray regions of Ethiopia. Weekly deliveries of life-saving food, malnutrition treatment, health supplies, and other essential relief items have exceeded 1,100 trucks that have reached Tigray to those who are most vulnerable because of the hard work of all the humanitarians committed to saving lives. "We particularly appreciate the cooperation of the Government of Ethiopia, Afar regional authorities, and Tigrayan regional authorities to facilitate the delivery of this assistance, as well as the efforts of the United Nations agencies, international organizations, U.S. government partners, and humanitarian organizations across Ethiopia". Since the end of March, a humanitarian truce and cessation of hostilities have resulted in improved aid deliveries.

<https://www.state.gov/humanitarian-assistance-to-communities-in-northern-ethiopia/>

New Ethiopian Ambassador to the US: Sileshi Bekele

Dr. Sileshi takes office as Special Envoy and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Ethiopia to the United States replacing Fitsun Arega who served as Ethiopia's ambassador for over two years. In the past, Dr. Sileshi has served as Minister for Water, Irrigation, and Energy and was recently named as "the Chief Negotiator & Advisor on Transboundary Rivers and GERD at the Office of Prime Minister of Ethiopia." The new Ambassador plans to give importance to executing multifaceted efforts to boost the century-old bilateral diplomatic relations of Ethiopia and the US; boosting cooperation with the Ethiopian diaspora, promote people to people relations, encouraging technology transfer, trade, and investment as well as image building, construction, tourism, and other sectors.

Six Billion Seedlings to be Planted in 2022

The fourth Green Legacy planting campaign has begun with a target of planting 6 billion seedlings during the rainy (ከረምት) season.

The launching ceremony took place at Gulele Botanical Center in Addis Ababa in the presence of senior government officials including Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. More than seven billion seedlings have been prepared for this year's planting campaign. About 52% of the total seedlings are for agroforestry trees while forestry trees account for 42% and the remaining are ornamental. Ethiopia has already planted 18 billion trees with the participation of 20 million citizens during the last three years. Launched in June of 2019, the green legacy initiative has a target to plant 20 billion seedlings within a period of four years. The Green legacy initiative aims to curb the effects of climate change and deforestation in Ethiopia.

Plant Trees, Not Plastics" Photo/Video ... worldbank.org

Cluster Farming to Spur Ethiopia's Agricultural Potential

According to the US Department of Agriculture, wheat production in Ethiopia for 2022/23 is projected at a record level of 5.7 million MT while corn is forecasted to be 10.2 million MT. The Government of Ethiopia (GOE) has identified top priorities that can increase the production and productivity of cereals through small and large-scale irrigation development, financing agricultural inputs, encouraging cluster farming, and reducing post-harvest loss. It is reported that Ethiopia this year did not import wheat, saving over \$700 million in imports. In 2021, wheat export from the US was \$88.9 million (311,010 Metric tons). Ambitious 2023 projection of expanded wheat production for home consumption and export, Ethiopia plans to export wheat to Kenya and Djibouti as part of its hard currency earning strategy next year. Despite the positive trend, the number of people going hungry increased due to food shortages caused by civil war and unrest disrupting farming in the Tigray, Afar, Amhara, and Oromia regions.

In early June, AU Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, Olusegun Obasanjo, and World Bank Ethiopia Representative and former Prime Minister of Ethiopia Hailemariam Desalegn joined Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed for visit to one of the wheat cluster farming fields in Robe, Bale (Oromia region). Following his visit to the farm and other development and tourist potential areas, Obasanjo tweeted - "The narrative about Ethiopia should change. We can say to the rest of the world, that the story you are telling about us is wrong, change the narrative."

<https://www.fas.usda.gov/data/ethiopia-grain-and-feed-annual-7>

<https://www.foodbusinessafrica.com/ethiopia-to-continue-relying-on-wheat-imports-as-demand-over shadows-local-production/#:~:text=Ethiopia%20to%20continue%20relying%20on%20wheat%20imports%20as%20demand%20overshadows%20local%20production,Ap%202026%2C%202022&text=ETHIOPIA%20%E2%80%93%20Wheat%20production%20in%20Ethiopia,the%202021%E2%22%20production%20estimate.>

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Follow

To keep up to date with AEPAC's work, please follow us on [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#) for regular updates.

Check out our website - www.aepact.org

Share

Want to help push the voice of American-Ethiopians to the audiences who matter? Then please share these Tweets so that AEPAC's message is seen by more people across social media:

[AEPAC Mission Video](#)

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