



Red Flag Alert for Genocide

Ethiopia

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Since April 6, when Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government announced its intention to integrate all regional special armed forces into the federal forces, violence has increased, particularly in Ethiopia's second largest region, Amhara, where many Amhara people have been killed in violent clashes with federal forces. In light of these recent developments and the overall escalating violence in the Amhara region of Ethiopia, the Lemkin Institute is issuing a Red Flag Alert for Genocide for Ethiopia.

Since April 6th, demonstrations and unrest have been increasing in Amhara and dozens of Amhara protesters have been killed, notably in Kombolcha and Bahir Dar, the regional capital. In the latter, an explosion in a bar killed two individuals and injured many others. Exact figures on the number of injured and dead remain unknown for the time being due to the turmoil on the ground and the ongoing clashes. The protesters are concerned about ongoing massacres against Amhara people, particularly in Oromia, travel restrictions for Amhara citizens, demolitions of Amhara homes in the capital city of Addis Ababa, and arrests of Amhara leaders by the Abiy regime.

The recent announcement by the federal government that they intend to co-opt local Amhara defense forces into the Ethiopian federal army is feared by Amhara representatives, as it would leave the region without armed forces capable of defending the inhabitants and therefore render the overall region at the mercy of hostile neighboring regions and federal armed forces.

This military restructuring plan is said to be unconstitutional by Amhara authorities, as the Ethiopian Constitution stipulates that States have the right to “establish and administer a state police force” (Article 52. (g)).

Moreover, the extreme violence against the Amhara community has been increasing in the Oromia region. Government armed forces, the Oromia Special Force (OSF), and local armed groups [the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and Qeerro] continue to target Amharas and to perpetrate ethnic-based massacres. On February 3, 2023, in its statement on “Ongoing Ethnic

Massacres of the Amhara People in the Oromia Region of Ethiopia”, the Lemkin Institute already warned that “all Oromia armed forces are conducting what appears to be a systematic policy of erasing the Amhara presence” via actions such as massacres, looting, burning of their houses, sexual violence, and other forms of persecution.

Furthermore, the Catholic Relief Services have announced on Sunday, April 9 that two of their relief workers have been shot dead in the Amhara region along with two Ethiopian Red Cross workers. Additionally, the World Food Programme has announced that it is halting food deliveries until further notice due to growing insecurity for its staff, leaving millions of people without humanitarian aid as the country is plunged more deeply into famine.

The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention urges the Ethiopian Federal Government to halt the widespread violence against Amhara civilians and demonstrators and, instead, to engage in peaceful dialogue with the Amhara authorities to find a non-violent way out of the political crisis. Similarly, we remind the Ethiopian Federal state and its representatives that it is their responsibility to ensure the security of all Ethiopian citizens as well as of humanitarian personnel on the ground under the Geneva Conventions and the provisions of the Kampala Convention. Any act to the contrary represents a serious violation of the international obligations assumed by the Ethiopia state authorities.

Ethiopia is facing a possible genocide against Amhara people, who are increasingly finding themselves marginalized within the existing political structure. The Abiy regime appears to be fanning the flames of anti-Amhara activities while publicly calling for calm. The Amhara, who are accused in political propaganda of being an elite group and who are held responsible for the historical resentments of Tigrayans and Oromos, among other groups, are in a perilous discursive position that could easily devolve into genocide. The Abiy administration has shown itself to be capable of committing genocide in Tigray and of pitting regional identity groups viciously against one another to achieve its agendas. There is no reason to believe it will not do so in Amhara as well.

The Lemkin Institute urges members of the regional and international communities immediately to direct their attention to the situation of the Amhara and to take concrete steps in order to stop the spread of the clashes and to restore stability in the country lest it escalate and spread to the wider Horn of Africa region. What is desperately needed is historical dialogue and accountability. We urge regional and international actors to use all tools at their disposal to prevent further atrocities against Amhara people.