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The Hidden Genocide in Ethiopia



Image by Jack Prommel.

The Ethiopia of Abiy Ahmed and his Prosperity Party, is a dark and frightening place, where anyone challenging the government are at risk of violence and arrest.

People from the Amhara ethnic group are particularly targeted; killing of Amhara men, women and children is a daily occurrence in what constitutes a genocidal campaign of hate. Uniformed thugs, federal and regional, as well as Oromo militia (Oromo Liberation Army or Shene), carry out the killings. Drones hover in the skies; faceless messengers of death used to slaughter Amhara civilians in the streets as they go about their daily lives.

A suffocating shadow of fear hangs heavy over Amhara people, in villages, towns and cities. Fear of being identified as Amhara, fear of imprisonment for being Amhara or speaking out about the Amhara genocide. Fear that family members and friends will be murdered, their wives or sisters raped, their homes taken from them or ransacked.

Stop killing Amhara civilians is the desperate cry of rational peace loving Ethiopians throughout the country and abroad; end the discrimination, the persecution and unlawful arrests, the spying and monitoring. Stop the Amhara genocide Abiy Ahmed.

Homeless and scared

In the five years since Abiy and Co. came to power tens of thousands of Amhara have been killed and millions displaced from Oromia, the largest region in the country; their land, property and cattle stolen by Oromo extremists.

And now these people, many of whom have either been the victim of violence or witnessed the killing of family members and friends, are the subjects of a forced relocation programme. Pushed to return to the very places they were evicted from. Towns and villages that are unsafe, where the armed gangs that attacked them are still at large, and where no alternative accommodation is being offered.

At best this is a chaotic plan by an inept regime attempting to present a fiction of regional safety, at worst it is a deliberate act by a brutal dictator to force people back into harms way.

In addition to murder and forced displacement, a mass programme of unlawful arrests of Amhara people as well as Oromo opposition supporters is in place. Hundreds of thousands of Amhara have been arrested, with many inmates being executed. The prisons are full to overflowing, leading to detainees being located in unknown semi-industrial units, where there are reports of captives being injected with highly contagious fatal diseases and left to die.

Ethnic profiling by government bodies is widespread and highlights the fact that individuals are targeted based on ethnicity, beliefs, and opposition to the Amhara genocide.

Internet access is closely monitored, social media accounts are scrutinised; arbitrary stop and search operations are in force; mobile phones are searched, and as The International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE) found, any images discovered of historical Amhara figures or national flags bereft of stars arouses suspicion and potential arrest.

Leave them defenceless

After being subjected to ethnic based violence for years, in April 2023 the federal government announced unconstitutional plans to disband the only force protecting Amhara communities, the Amhara Special Forces (ASF). This triggered huge protests throughout the region. Abiy sent in the Federal Army (ENDF) and fighting erupted between the ENDF and Fano, a regional militia made up of poorly armed, but determined volunteers, together with ex members of the ASF.

Indiscriminate killing of Amhara civilians by ENDF forces exploded. In a recent report, Amnesty International (AI) documented serious violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) by the ENDF, which they say, “may amount to war crimes.” Amnesty highlight examples of extrajudicial killing of Amhara civilians by ENDF troops in Abune Hara, Lideta and Sebatamit, and acknowledge that these are but the tip of an iceberg of death and intimidation.

Unable to overcome the Fano and unwilling to withdraw and reinstate the ASF, a State of Emergency (SoE) was imposed in the Amhara region on 5 August 2023.

The shadowy declaration gives the government far reaching powers to arrest/imprison people without due process, impose curfews, ban the right to assembly and search property without a warrant. Draconian powers that the government has employed widely and indiscriminately. Violence and unlawful arrests against Amhara people have increased exponentially.

In its six monthly report the Amhara Association of America (AAA) document, 1606 deaths, and injuries to 824 Amhara civilians (August – February 2024); 37 drone attacks, resulting in 333 civilians killed; Rape of at least 210 young girls and women; Mass arrest of over 10,000 ethnic Amharas.....with detainees facing physical and psychological torture”. These numbers according to AAA, shocking as they are, represent a small fraction of the total killed, raped and arrested.

Despite overwhelming evidence of killings, mass arrests and executions, on 6 February PM Abiy Ahmed told parliament that, “since we think along democratic lines, it is hard for us to even arrest anyone, let alone execute them.” A sick joke perhaps? Either Abiy is completely deluded and actually believes his own propaganda, or he is an habitual liar — probably both.

Hope killed

Swept along by a belief that change could come about, in 2018 when Abiy and his cohorts took office there was tremendous optimism in the country. That hope soon evaporated as it became clear that the new regime was no different to the previous mob – the EPRDF, in fact many believe they are worse.

The ruling Prosperity Party is a dictatorship led as they all seem to be, by a narcissist, under the guise of a democratically elected coalition government. Contrary to his liberal eulogising and pre-election pledges to respond to historical grievances and ethnic discrimination, Abiy has emboldened extremists and fuelled division and hatred.

Not only is the county fractured as never before, as a result of Abiy’s arrogance and misjudgments, Ethiopia is increasingly isolated within the Horn of Africa and the wider region.

Among the international community and mainstream media, there is little or no interest in the fractured state of the country. For almost thirty years western nations turned a blind eye to EPRDF suppression and violence, and now, despite the human rights reports, the UN warnings and calls for action, despite the suffering and pain of millions of people, the pattern of neglect and apathy continues.

Why are these people ignored? They are poor, black and African, this, many suspect, is the reason for global indifference.

Imagine for a moment that such atrocities were taking place in Europe say, or the US. There would rightly be outrage and immediate action. And there should be the same response to the Amhara genocide taking place in Ethiopia. Action that impacts Abiy and his government directly; targeted sanctions applied by the US and allies, as well as international institutions to directly hurt the men in power.

Dictators like Abiy, and the world is littered with such monsters, do not suddenly curb their behavior and embrace justice and democracy, they must be forced to do so.

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