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(Mesfin Mekonen and Bart S. Fisher) - Has a Nobel Peace Prize ever been given to a less deserving candidate than Abiy Ahmed, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, who received the award in 2019? While there has been some attention in the media to Abiy's deadly war in the northern region of Tigray in Ethiopia, little notice has been made regarding his ongoing repression of the Amhara people. Under the leadership of Abiy the government has attacked churches, suppressed independent media serving the Amhara people, committed extrajudicial killings, and encouraged ethnic cleansing. At least two million Amhara people have been killed or "disappeared" as a result of the massacres, including drone strikes, that have been undertaken against the Amhara.

The United States and the global community need to support fundamental human rights for the Amhara, the rule of law, and democracy. The failure of the Biden administration to condemn crimes being committed on a daily basis by the autocratic regime of Abiy Ahmed encourages its continuing war on the Amhara people, creating needless suffering and the risk of violence that could destabilize the Horn of Africa.

The world should listen to Alice Wairimu Nderitu, the United Nations Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide, who warned the global community on October 10, 2023, of the ongoing risk of "genocide and related atrocity crimes" in Ethiopia. The Lemkin Institute has alerted the world to "evidence of an ongoing process of genocide in the country against Amhara citizens."

We suggest that the U.S. government undertake a three-part strategy focused on cessation of hostilities, sanctions, and constitutional reform.

First, the United States can and must play a significant role in promoting a settlement of this ever-escalating war against the Amhara by the government of Ethiopia. At a minimum, the United States can promote collective efforts of local, regional, and global actors to bring about an immediate cessation of hostilities and attacks by the government of Ethiopia against its own people. Lasting peace in Ethiopia requires an urgent and inclusive dialogue and reconciliation.

Second, the White House and State Department should condemn the abuses the Abiy government is undertaking and condoning, and take steps to ameliorate the situation. These steps include the imposition of targeted sanctions on the government officials who are responsible for abuses or who fail to protect the lives of innocent civilians.

Third, the U.S. government should promote the drafting of a new constitution, an essential precondition to lasting peace and prosperity. Article 39 of the 1994 constitution of Ethiopia grants rights for any ethnic group to secede and form a nation. Thus, groups such as the Tigrayans and the Amhara currently have the constitutional right to secede, which of course sparks protracted civil war. The ability of the central government to govern is undermined when every ethnic group has the right to secede. The present constitution has exacerbated ethnic tensions. If not revised, it will lead to the destruction of Ethiopia.

Failure to act imperils the safety of millions of Amhara people and increases the risk of instability in the Horn of Africa, a region of great strategic importance to the United States.

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