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**OLLAA EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER USE OF INFLAMMATORY AND
VIOLENCE-INCITING LANGUAGE BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS FOLLOWING
CAPTURE OF STRATEGIC CITIES BY REBEL FORCES**

Falls Church, Virginia (11/01/2021) – The Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA) expresses grave concern for the escalating use of inflammatory and violence-inciting language by Amhara Regional Government and Ethiopian Government officials over the weekend, following [claims](#) by rebel forces of the capture of strategic cities. OLLAA unequivocally condemns any and all “incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence”, which is prohibited under international law, and calls for an immediate end to all hostilities.

The Ethiopian Government has put further pressure on civilians to join in the fight against Tigray over the weekend, following claims by the Tigray Defense Forces (TDF) that they had seized control of two strategic cities in the Amhara region, Dessie and Kombolcha. Although the government disputes these claims, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed [called](#) for civilians to use “...any weapon and resources they have to defend, repulse and bury the terrorist TPLF,” in a Facebook post on Sunday. This follows a campaign of almost daily airstrikes by the Ethiopian government in the Tigray region over the past two weeks. The Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) also [announced](#) they had taken control of Kemise over the weekend, a town located in the Oromia Special Zone of the Amhara region, an area almost entirely populated by the Oromo people.

On Sunday, the Amhara regional government [issued](#) a decree suspending all regular services by government institutions, calling for all resources to be redirected into the “survival campaign” and imposing a state-wide curfew. They also called for all citizens to come out and join the war, ordering all privately-owned vehicles and weapons to be used for the “survival campaign”. The decree goes so far as to state that: “Security forces will take the necessary measures at any stage of the operation against anyone or any group who obstructs the survival campaign activities to ensure the success of the campaign.”

Highly divisive and even genocidal language has dramatically escalated on Facebook and Twitter over the weekend. Perhaps one of the most disturbing posts came from a well-known political activist, whose heavily violence-inciting [post](#) calling for the Tigrayan enemy to be “weeded out” included the words “do it even if it makes you sad”. Another [post](#), from an ESAT journalist (Ethiopian Satellite Television - which is headquartered in Washington DC) called for all Tigrayans living in other regions to be placed in concentration camps, evoking Nazi-era language. Despite the blatantly inflammatory nature of these posts, which could even be interpreted as a call to genocide, [reports](#) have shown that Facebook (now Meta) has been very slow to take any action, rejecting numerous reports that these posts violate Facebook’s

community standards before eventually taking it down. There are numerous other examples of potentially genocide-inciting language used by government officials, which can be found [here](#), and [here](#).

In the midst of this, Facebook [continues](#) to actively censor and silence Oromo users, with OLA the only political actor in Ethiopia to be designated on Facebook's Dangerous Individuals and Organizations (DIO) blacklist. In response, thousands of Oromos took part on twitter campaign against Facebook on Friday, October 29th, saying #OLAFightsforMe. While Facebook did little to stop hate speech and violence that was being promoted on its platform, the little it did was to target OLA, activists and opposition party leaders who are opponents to the current, and potentially genocidal regime.

A special [report](#) by Channel 4 (a UK-based broadcaster) on Saturday October 28, conducted interviews with the local Amhara militia, known as Fano, including a US citizen who goes by the name "Mekonnen" in the Channel 4 report, and travelled to Ethiopia to take part in the war, as well as many young children and youths - students and farmers that will now find themselves in "one of the bloodiest conflicts in the world".

It is crucial that the international community puts urgent pressure the Ethiopian Government, led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to:

1. Halt hostilities in all impacted regions of Ethiopia and a call for civil discourse that prepares a path toward a negotiated agreement that includes Oromos and other parties representing all the affected areas.
2. Return foreign and regional armed forces engaged in combat to their respective bases, either regional, state, or sovereign state;
3. End the use of military command posts and martial law throughout the country, and ensure the return of military forces to barracks to allow civilian administration to be put into place;
4. Immediately cease the coerced recruitment of youth from all regional states into the armed forces of Ethiopia and to the forcible transfer of these untrained, ill-equipped combatants to the battlefield

OLLAA will continue to advocate on behalf of the human rights of all Ethiopian citizens, and to call for an inclusive dialogue and transitional government that includes representatives of all the major ethnic groups in Ethiopia to address the conflict engulfing the entirety of Ethiopia, which we see as the only way to achieve lasting peace and regional stability throughout the Horn of Africa.

OLLAA is an umbrella organization that represents dozens of Oromo communities around the world.