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## ETHIOPIA DECLARES STATE OF EMERGENCY AMID GROWING PRESSURE FROM INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

*Falls Church, Virginia (11/03/2021)*

### **Ethiopian Government Declares State of Emergency**

On Tuesday, the Ethiopian government [declared](#) a six-month, country-wide state of emergency, effective immediately. This came in the wake of rebel advances over the weekend, and was accompanied by calls from authorities for citizens in Addis Ababa to register their weapons and prepare to defend the city. OLLAA is deeply concerned by this move as it allows the government to cut telecommunications, put in roadblocks, impose curfews and even impose military control over certain areas. Under this measure, those considered to be in violation of this emergency can face up to [ten years in prison](#), which can be for offences such as providing moral support to “terrorist groups”, or any suspected links. As many civilians already face brutal government [targeting](#) for purported connections to opposition groups, this OLLAA is concerned that this will lead to further arbitrary arrests and detentions.

### **US Suspension of Ethiopian Access to AGOA program**

The Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA) welcomes the decision by the Biden administration to suspend Ethiopia’s access to the significant US trade program, the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), due to a lack of compliance with its stringent human rights eligibility requirements. The US government also flagged forthcoming sanctions under the executive order signed by President Biden in September. OLLAA applauds the strong pressure this places on the Abiy administration to address human rights violations, however continues to urge the US government to do more to acknowledge the conflict and human rights violations ravaging Oromia and other southern regions of Ethiopia.

The AGOA program gives eligible sub-Saharan African countries duty-free access to the US markets, making this decision by the US government a significant hit to the Abiy administration. In order to retain membership to the program, Ethiopia will have to engage in “urgent action” to address these human rights violations by January 1. The US Embassy in Ethiopia further stated that the Ethiopian government should allow humanitarian aid to conflict areas, restore telecommunication services and allow the UN Human Rights Investigation Office to conduct an investigation into human rights violations. OLLAA applauds these actions, which represent a much needed strengthening in the language and sanctions taken against the

Ethiopian government, particularly in light of disturbing calls to mass violence by government figures over the weekend.

OLLAA was, however, disappointed at Special Envoy Feltman remarks that it is the war in northern Ethiopia, and specifically in Tigray, Amhara and Afar, that are “prompting the US’s consideration of new measures”. While it is imperative that the conflict in northern Ethiopia comes to an end, OLLAA urges Special Envoy Feltman and the US government to do more to acknowledge the “violence, humanitarian catastrophe and atrocities” that are currently taking place in Oromia and other southern regions. By providing only a cursory acknowledgment of the conflict in other regions, the US government risks undermining the effectiveness and strength of these important and deeply needed actions.

### **UN-EHRC Joint Report**

The long-anticipated joint UN and Ethiopian Human Rights Council [report](#) into Tigray was also released today. The report concluded that human rights violations have been perpetrated by all parties to the conflict, some of which may amount to crimes against humanity, and calls for accountability for victims of human rights violations. While OLLAA appreciates the focus of this report on shining a light on human rights violations associated with the conflict, we remain disappointed that the investigations were limited to violations stemming from the conflict in northern Ethiopia. It should also be noted that OLLAA has previously raised [concerns](#) about the independence of the EHRC, and others have [raised concerns](#) about perceived bias in this report. Leading Tigrayan advocacy groups, such as Omna Tigray, have [rejected](#) this report and called for the UN Human Rights Council to establish an independent commission of inquiry to investigate atrocities in the region. Similarly, Human Rights Watch has [welcomed](#) the report but also called for a more thorough independent investigation. OLLAA therefore calls for the UN to consider launching a commission of inquiry into allegations of human rights abuses committed across Ethiopia, including in Oromia.

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