



Conference Report

Hosted by
MEP Jordi Solé, MEP Ignazio Corrao
& the UNPO

Electoral Debrief: **A dialogue with civil society community representatives on the recent Ethiopian elections**

Communities:

Agaw, Amhara, Benishangul, Gambela,
Oromo, Kemant, Sidama, Somali,
Tigrayan

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Introduction

On June 21, Ethiopia held its general elections for 547 members of the federal parliament and local councils in ten regional states.

Despite being the first multi-party election in Ethiopia since 2005, this was not an event to celebrate. The vote occurred has been postponed for a year because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, it is occurring in the midst of violence, human rights violations, political tensions, harassment of media, a recent telecommunications blackout and detention of opposition members. Our members report that these elections have hardly been free or fair.

As a result, according to most recent press, 110 out of 547 constituencies could not hold elections due to “security and logistical challenges”. Elections for those constituencies are expected to be held in September of this year.

According to the EU High Representative Josep Borrell, the deployment of an EU Election Observation Mission was cancelled, because “it was not possible to reach an agreement with Ethiopian authorities on key parameters for the deployment of an EU Election Observation, namely the independence of the Mission and the import of Mission communication systems, something that is key for the security of EU observers, in particular in the context of a challenging security environment.”

The Greens/European Free Alliance of the European Parliament and the UNPO hosted a webinar on 1 July 2021 to discuss the meaning of the Ethiopian elections for its ethnic minorities. Titled “Electoral Debrief: A dialogue with civil societies on the Ethiopian elections”. This event was put together with close coordination with the Oromo Legacy Leadership & Advocacy Association, which served as the primary interface with the community members alongside the UNPO.

The event brought together European Parliamentarians with a panel combining leaders of civil societies who represented the following communities: Agew, Amhara, Benishangul, Oromo, Kemant, Sidama, Somali and Tigrayan. Speakers were asked to discuss best practices, challenges, and possible election-related irregularities that they might have witnessed.

This report consolidates the speeches made and findings from that event. The event proceeded in three core sections: (1) opening statements of European Parliamentarians; (2) testimony from Ethiopian civil society representing different ethnic groups; and (3) a discussion on the ability of different communities to work together. A video of the meeting can be accessed at <https://youtu.be/Vs6xAfm2P4k>.

Ultimately, the session was notable for bringing together such a diverse range of ethnic community representatives to discuss this sensitive topic and the high-quality of the debate that ensued. Because of this representatives of the nine communities agreed on participating at close door civil society dialogue hosted by the UNPO. The meeting is scheduled to be held online on 19-20 August 2021.

Summary of Key Interventions

Member of the European Parliament Jordi Sole stated that, “Today’s session is a great opportunity to get first-hand information that we are lacking. We want to hear people and nations who too often are not given the chance to express themselves. I hope that we can have an informative and constructive debate that contributes to understanding of the complex situation on the ground and to a better future that involves communities, here today, with democracy and equality for all.”

Member of the European Parliament Ignazio Corrao added, “We know that Ethiopia is a key partner for the EU in the region,” and that Ethiopia should be a beacon of stability and peace in East Africa. He also spoke of European investment in Ethiopia, and about trying to remedy “blind areas” that aid workers cannot reach. He said this is especially important given the ongoing food crisis that has placed 90% of the Tigrayan population at risk of starving. He ended by noting that, “we want to know more from your side and try to understand what we can do.”

Vice President of the European Parliament Fabio Massimo Castaldo spoke next, saying, “Ethiopia is one of the most prominent countries in Africa and should be a pillar of stability. It is very positive that representatives from all Ethiopian communities have made it here today with us, and this could be an important exercise of mutual dialogue. When speaking of democracy, we should be reminded that it should give spaces to minorities and the most fragile parts of society that are often not heard or not heard enough. Holding elections has been an immense task, and those elections are in the middle of a serious conflict.” As well, “Integrity of our missions is a cornerstone. If critical participants are excluded, [then elections are undermined]. We hope that dialogue and inclusion and representation of all people happen so that all feel included and represented. I have hope that this is a good starting place, so I am eager to listen to your testimony and what you can do to help your voice rise and what we can do.”

Member of the European Parliament Jan-Christoph Oetjen couldn’t attend, but he made a video message that was played during the opening remarks. He expressed his concern over the elections in Ethiopia, and acknowledged the disenfranchisement of the Ethiopian people. He said that, “Democracy means inclusiveness and fairness and having agency over your own life”, and he said the “EU guarantees that it stands ready to work with Ethiopia and its people to make sure human rights are protected. Important to this process is your role and your opinion. Today is an opportunity for your voice to be heard.”

Mr Admassu Tsegaye Tessema, the Leader of the Agew Human Rights Advocacy Group, gave background information on the Agew people. There are about ten million in Ethiopia, and the majority of them are Christian who live in the Amhara region. Most have been undercounted because they haven’t disclosed their identity due to fear imprisonment and displacement from land. Mr Admassu made five major points. First, he said that the pre-election restrictions made the election inaccessible for the party representing Agews. Second, farmers were told to only elect the ruling party, the Prosperity Party, or they would not get land or fertilizer. Third, the party, its leader and supporters have

been targeted. Notably, the party's leader and other candidates disappeared, and nine of the fifteen party's executed members were in detention for six months. On election day, the government tried to restrict polling stations. As well, the town was stormed on May 15 with an M14, and the party's office was hit and partially destroyed. Fourth, the government has started a strategic takeover of the region by settling almost 100,000 people, which displaced the Agew people who are now homeless and jobless. Fifth and finally, the Agews have lost trust in the political system and feel excluded and marginalized post elections. Mr Tessema concluded his remarks by emphasizing the urgent need for the Agew people to get the attention of the international community.

Mr Tewodrose Tirfe, the Director of the Amhara Association of America, shared the adversity the Amhara ethnic community has faced, which includes the government undercounting Amharas in the 2007 census and forcing them to flee areas in Tigray when the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) invaded during civil war. In response to disenfranchisement, the Amhara created its own opposition party in 2008. However, the government took numerous steps to limit organization and campaigning like using violence and threats of violence. Mr Tirfe concluded that the elections of June 2021 would not be fully free nor fair as a result. The voter fraud that Mr Tirfe referenced strengthened this conclusion, as did the arrest of Amhara's party's leader on a "ludicrous terrorist charge". He dispelled the notion that the Amhara region feels the government represents them, and expressed the need to "get past false narratives and scapegoating of entire ethnic groups."

Mr Okok Okok, the Representative of the Southwest Indigenous People Humanitarian Organization, explained that his organization represents 20 minority groups in the Southwest of Ethiopia. He has also noticed voting irregularities and thinks the election was a sham. One of these irregularities include more ballots than there were registered voters. This hurt the political party that was made to represent the Southwestern indigenous people that has been struggling for 25 years. Given the circumstances, he recommends negotiations with a multilateral organization rather than elections. He said, "People are fighting for self-determination, but the ruling party is fighting to centralize power." He calls upon the international community to make this election void.

Mr Ibrahim Alkhanagy, the Chairman of the Benishangul Human Rights Foundation, spoke of the two million people who live along the border of Ethiopia and Sudan. This area is rich with natural resources, and the British handed out their land, enslaved, genocided, and "replaced them with the Agews from the highland". He also stated that, "from 1898 to now, rulers have never treated them as humans," but rather, as a subhuman class. He said that there never has been, and there still is not, free and fair elections in Ethiopia. According to Mr Alkhanagy, the army is killing his people, and Ethiopia doesn't have CNN or other major media outlets to report what is happening to the world.

Mr Zakariye Abdulaahi Hassan, a journalist, activist, and human rights advocate from the Somali Region, explained that the Ogaden region is located in the East of Ethiopia and adjacent to Somalia, and the people who live there are exclusively Muslim Somalis. This region is the second largest in Ethiopia and the most resource rich, and it has been "marred with devastating conflict for the past several decades." He mentioned how the Somalis who live there feel voiceless, and how Somali people have not experienced free and fair elections. In spite of this, the "political parties in the Ogaden

region are more than willing to take part in elections this upcoming September as long as the space is set for free and fair elections”. Further, the Ogaden people fear that the peace they have secured in the region will not last.

Ms Seena Jimjimo, Executive Director of the Oromo Legacy Leadership & Advocacy Association, was representing Oromo, the largest community in Ethiopia, though she noted that the ruling party has tried to decrease its size. She recalled how torture and famine have been used against the opposition, and she criticized how the Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed was crowned leader even though he took part in abuses and killed thousands. The capital city is located in the heart of Oromia and indigenous people have been displaced from their land there. She stated, “it took Abiy only six months to declare a state of emergency when he started bombing Oromia” and carrying out torture, burning, and rapes. A fifty-page document shows “how he was eliminating Oromo to consolidate power.” Oromo community members on the ground have reported prisoners with clear signs of torture. There were no Oromo candidates in the past election, and there were many voting irregularities.

Ms Abeba Teferi, the President of the Kemant Advocacy Group, spoke of how people have lived in the Amhara region of Ethiopia for 6,000 years, and now have been tortured, maimed, and killed systematically. “Every group has a right to promote its culture and to preserve its history. Every nationality has the right to self government.” She condemned the national government as “corrupt and oppressive” with many secrets about the atrocities it has committed.

Mr Samuel Sijuarie Sakkuma, an Executive Council Member of the Sidama Diaspora Community, talked about the Sidama people and how they have lost self-rule since 1890 and have since been struggling since to regain it. Notably, the Sidama people led a peaceful ‘Ejjeetoo’ movement, which is a series of peaceful demonstrations and stay-at-home protests. This was met with the government killing 100 Sidama civilians in a 13-month period. During the most recent election, the opposition parties weren’t given equal opportunity because, in Mr. Sakkuma’s words, the “government controls everything”. Mr. Sakkuma presented a series of recommendations ending with suggesting that the European Union and the international community assist Ethiopia to enact them.

Ms Meaza Gidey, the leader of the Omna Tigray, reported how the Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has postponed elections twice and blamed the Covid-19 pandemic and logistical constraints. “Meanwhile, the Tigrayan Council conducted its constitutionally mandated elections and Abiy condemned it.” At this regional election, over 2.8 million voters were registered and there was a 97% turnout. “Tigrays decision to proceed with elections led Abiy to lead war against government and people of Tigray on November 1st. There were several irregularities.” As well, Tigray was left out of the national elections this year. War crimes, arbitrary arrests, starvation, rape, displacement, and genocide are high. She stated that, “Elections... need to ensure representation of all groups. Election results were premeditated. 2021 elections have only weakened trust in public systems.” Further, “national elections... need to be null and void and peace and national consensus needs to be reached through dialogue.” She urged the international community to push for viable and immediate withdrawal of Eritrean soldiers from Tigray, the cessation of violence in Tigray, and access given to international aid agencies so that the people there

can get assistance. She also called for better infrastructure, as the Tigrayans are cut off through poor internet and a destroyed bridge.

European Parliament Perspective

Member of the European Parliament Jordi Sole

Good afternoon from Brussels from the European Parliament.

Welcome, everyone, for attending this webinar on electoral process that took place in Ethiopia on 21st of June.

Let me start by thanking UNPO for this great initiative aiming to give voice to different communities that compose Ethiopia.

Today we will hear from representatives of the communities of Amhara, Agaw, Beninshangul, Gambela Somali, Oromo, Qemant, Sidama, and Tigrayan.

And I want to thank all the representatives that will take the floor on behalf of their communities for being with us today.

And I also want to thank my fellow MEPs that have also joined this initiative, especially Ignazio Corrao, Fabio Massimo Castaldo, Jan-Christoph Oetjen, and I also see here, Katrin Langensiepen.

Thank you all and also your offices for your collaboration.

As you all know, the elections took place in a context where some parts of the country are witnessing huge violence, human rights violations, attacks to the freedom of the press, and where the political opposition is being persecuted. In 1/5 of the constituencies, elections had to be postponed until September due to security and logistical problems.

And as we all know, in the Tigray region, elections could not be held at all due to the ongoing war in which the rebel fighters are continuing to gain ground after recapturing the capital, Mekelle, from government forces, and in which there are continuing to be horrendous acts of violence, like last week's air strike targeting civilians in a marketplace in a village near Togoga.

Unfortunately, we, as EU representatives, couldn't have first-hand information on the electoral process because the European Union Election Observation Mission was cancelled due to the impossibility of reaching an agreement with Ethiopian authorities and to grant full access to European Union service. However, today's session is a great opportunity to get this first-hand information that we are lacking. And we will get it from our invited speakers and representative of peoples and communities that too often are not given the opportunity, the chance to express themselves.

Given the socially, economically, politically difficult situation in Ethiopia, I hope that we can have an informative and constructive debate that contributes to a better understanding of the complex situation on the ground and that could also contribute to a better future for all the communities represented here today, a future in democracy, peace, and equality for all.

That's all from my side. Thank you very much for being with us, and I hand it over to Lucia.

Thank you.

Member of the European Parliament Ignazio Corrao

Thank you to all the colleagues and communities who are here with us today. It is great to see many many communities, many of you gather in this event with nine people and we have the chance to hear from all of them. Listening, giving them a chance to speak is a big part to understand what is going on and we will, of course, try to make good use in our way.

The situation is extremely complex and delicate but we have to bring people together with dialogue, and it's nice to see all of you accepted to participate. It's important to understand for us the causes of the problem and I hope that a series of other events will follow this one. We, of course, with the colleagues will try to circulate the report to make sure to amplify your voices to other colleagues, MEPs, and of course feel free to send us further documentation. We hope to bring more people from other political parties too and that this discussion will be taken seriously by other national parliaments.

We hope this report will allow Ethiopia to always improve and do better. So, from our side, we know that Ethiopia is a key partner for the European Union and the region, it has taken a leading role in promoting economic integration, peace, and stability in East Africa.

What we also implement is an ambitious national reform agenda. The European Union's development cooperation is one of the largest in Africa and in the world, amounting to 815 million for the year 2014-2020. Moreover, the boundaries also one of the [sic] major beneficiaries of the European Union and Emergency Trust fund for Africa, which I worked on in the last term. Over 271.5 million for 2020 and 2019.

The ongoing food crisis is worrying and the famine [sic] reports that 90% of Tigray population is affected by this crisis, and the famine has been getting worse. The humanitarian workers cannot reach the territory, the so called blind areas as we know.

This happens in a country that has been awarded for its hospitality. Over the years more than 800,000 people were fleeing from Eritrea Afwerki's regime, and a country with a structured reception system. Entire neighbours for the reception of refugees were created in Addis Abbaba, a light of hope, peace, and stability for the entire area of East Africa.

We want to know more from your side and try to understand what can we can concretely add from the European Parliamentary side.

Vice President of the European Parliament Fabio Massimo Castaldo

Thank you very much, distinguished guests, speakers and friends, I really would like to thank the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization and all my colleagues especially MEPs Jordi Sole and Ignazio Corrao for organizing this extremely interesting and important exchange and for inviting me to deliver a few welcoming words. I also salute the participation of other colleagues that are here with us for example Jean Christof Oetjen, but also Katherin Langensiepen.

As a Vice President of the European Parliament with the human rights and democracy portfolio, as well as a very active member of the AFET committee, as standing Rapporteur for the Horn of Africa and also as a member of the Democracy and Election Group of the European Parliament, I firmly believe that is one of my responsibilities to be together with you today to listen to the ideas, the concerns and the points of views of all the representatives of the civil society in order to truly comprehend the state of the country democracy [sic], a crucial one for democracy.

As was mentioned before it is one of the most prominent countries in Africa from a demographic and economic point of view, it is pillar and it should be a pillar of the stability of the continent and of the African Union.

It is very positive of all the ethnic communities are here today together with us and I also think that this meeting could represent an extremely important exercise of collaboration and mutual dialogue. Therefore I thank you all for your participation because when we are speaking about democracy we should remind that democracy is giving space to the minorities, to all the voices, and in particular to those fragile part of the societies, especially minorities that are often not heard or are not enough heard.

Holding an election is an immense task, you can think about the multitude of challenges to overcome despite all the efforts. However those elections happened in the midst of a peace and security challenge and it proved difficult to hold elections in a number of areas, more than 1/5, due to logistical and security concerns. As you know, the EU unfortunately was not able to deploy an Election Observation Mission to Ethiopia.

While it is truly disappointing, let me say that the integrity of our Mission is a non-negotiable cornerstone of the EU support for democracy. Therefore it is even more important to have alternative exchanges with you, with the civil society representatives of the Ethiopian ethnic communities to discuss best practices, challenges, all the possible irregularities and violence that you might have eventually witnessed before, during and after this electoral process.

In plural societies like the Ethiopian that has to manage ethnic diversity, equitable representation for all the communities is very crucial. If critical participants are excluded from the process, the credibility and the election will inevitably be put in question. I strongly hope that this election, regardless of the outcome, will result in an effort of convening an inclusive national dialogue to rebuild and share consensus on the future of the country.

Ensure inclusion and representation of all the groups is fundamental and it requires broad consultation. People have to feel that they are represented in the process and in the outcomes of the dialogue too. However this process must account for realities on the ground and not being naive. In particular the violent conflict in the Tigray region, the other inter-ethnic conflicts elsewhere in Ethiopia that are less visible, the detention and the stifling of critical voices of the political opposition, the political prisoners and the recent violence and assassinations and displacement.

I hope that this is a good place in which a real dialogue can start. That is why I am eager to listen to your testimonies and reflections and understand also what the European Union and the European Parliament in particular can do to help your voice be amplified to help you to raise issues and the attention on the situation that you are living everyday.

I would also be happy to keep a dialogue within this platform and to arrange a follow up meeting with the UNPO to understand the outcome and the impact of the report that will be produced after today's meeting. I am sure that Mr Bunche, Secretary General of the UNPO and Lucia Parrucci will do, as usual, an excellent job.

I sincerely believe that the EU has to play a constructive and diplomatic role in putting pressure and supporting the government in such process of national dialogue might have the potential to increase the democratization and to sustain the reforms to strengthen democracy and human rights in the country that we all hope to seen very soon.

I thank you very much and I would be very glad to continue listen to all the remarks, the concerns and everything you would like to share together with us.

Do not forget that the European Parliament is and will always be your house.

Thank you.

Member of the European Parliament Jan-Christoph Oetjen

Dear Members of civil society of Ethiopia, Dear MEPs, Dear all, First, I would like to thank you for inviting me to this conference. Unfortunately, I could not attend. Please accept my apologies for this.

As author of the urgency resolution on the situation in Ethiopia of December 2020, I am very worried about the process of the elections in Ethiopia of the 21st of June 2021. In the run-up of the elections, it had already quickly become clear, that in many parts of Ethiopia, the elections would not be sufficiently inclusive.

But democracy means inclusiveness. Democracy means fairness. Democracy means having a choice on the future of your own life, your city, your constituency and your country. I understand that many of you must feel disenfranchised by the manner in which political events have unfolded in the last year. That is why I want to thank you for attending in such high numbers and to call for more democracy and most of all, for the right to exercise your right to choice, no matter which ethnicity or background you come from.

A European Electoral Observation Mission for the elections in Ethiopia was cancelled. This was a deeply worrying decision, as it could have provided more guarantees for fair, free and peaceful elections. But, despite this development, the EU guarantees that it stands ready to work with Ethiopia and to work with its people to ensure that peace, inclusiveness and human rights are fundamentally protected. Important in this process and most of all, in all forms of cooperation, is your role and your opinion.

Today is an opportunity for your voice to be heard. As civil society and citizens of Ethiopia you have this right. And as a parliamentarian myself, I understand how important it is to be represented at all levels. I thank you for your unrelenting engagement and I wish you a great debate and discussion.

Ethiopian Civil Society Testimony

Mr Admassu Tsegaye Tessema, Leader, Agaw Human Rights Advocacy Group

Honourable Jordi Sole, Members of European Parliament, Lucia Parrucci, Project Manager on Horn of Africa and other guests,

I would like to thank you for giving the opportunity to speak on behalf Agaw Diaspora Human Rights Group.

For your information, the Agaws are indigenous people who contributed considerable civilizations for mankind in animal domestication, plant discovery and architecture. It is also spelled in Amharic Agew instead of Agaw. The Agaws ruled Ethiopia peacefully under Zagwe Dynasty from the 10th century to 13th century until their empire was overthrown in 1270 AD.

Official statistics about the Agaw population is sadly distorted and represents about 3.2% of the population of the Amhara State. Though, this percentage only represents the Agaw language speakers. In reality, including Amharic speaking Agaws, today there are about 10 million people who identify themselves as Agaw in Ethiopia, which represents the 33.3% of the population of the State. Most of Agaws are Christians.

A majority of them live in the Amhara Region (provinces/zones of Agew-Awi, Gojjam, Wag-Himre, Kemant Gondar and North Wollo, Lasta), but most of them have been repressed to not disclose their identity publicly due to coercive acts of the Amhara Regional Government and its supporters including: assassination, displacement from their land, imprisonment and dismissal from their jobs.

Having said that, let me focus on my presentation topic indicated above. In the Amhara Region there are three Agaw administrative areas or provinces called Wag Himre, Kemant-Gondar and Awi. In these areas, four parties participated in the election, among them there was the Agew National Congress, known as Shengo, which aspired to create autonomous states for the Agaw people within Ethiopia.

For Agaw people, the election 2021 was a meaningless wastage and an injustice. I mean it was not fair, free or democratic in the Amhara Region, particularly in the Agaw areas.

My conclusion is based on facts on the ground, processes, pre-election restrictions, persecutions and bans conducted against the party on the election day. Let me brief you on these bans and persecutions carried out before and during the election.

The pre-elections restrictions include:

Unfavourable situations for town hall meetings, making a public meeting hall inaccessible for the party, either by over pricing the service fee or by making fake schedules. Because of these obstacles from the

ruling party/government, plus resource constraints, the party was unable to conduct even a single town hall meeting with the public.

The party was banned from using the campaign time allocated to the Amhara Regional media. Despite the campaign being funded by the Ethiopian Election Board, the Amhara media refused to broadcast the party's campaign message as per its agreement with the Board. The media told the party that it didn't like its campaign message. The Election Board failed to arrange an alternative media for the party.

Mandate on Farmers and Civil Servants and Their Families:

The farmers were strictly told to elect only "Lamp", the ruling party's election sign. The farmers were also told they would not get fertilizer if they would elect Shengo and be peeped with a camera for execution.

Civil servants and their families were imposed a mandate to elect the ruling party called Prosperity Party. Business community members were warned over taxation if they would elect the Agew party, Shengo.

Pre-election Persecutions on the Party Leaders and Activists:

There were /are persistent persecutions against the party namely Shengo, including keeping in detention without due process party's leaders and storming the party's office. The violence was carried out by the government armed gangs, militia members and by armed groups called Fano sponsored by National Movement of Amhara, the right-wing extremist.

On May 15, the party's office located in Jawi, Awi Zone, in the town of Fundeca, was stormed with an M-14 automatic gun. The office was hit with 15-bullets in the midnight and partially destroyed the facility and miscellaneous documents and supplies.

Mr. Alamerew Yirdew, the party's Chairman survived two assassination attempts. The latest attempt was carried out on May 28 in Bahir Dar, while he was on a court premise.

In June, Mr. Fekadu Mesfin, candidate and Executive member, Mr. Shimelis Agidew, the Awi Zone party's Officer and two local party activists were detained for a brief period in Jaw.

In the first week of June, because of continuous persecutions, the party's Executive members and the election candidates, Mr. Fetalew Abayneh and Mr. Gebrehiwot Mullaw, sought asylum (ጥይልም) in Sudan.

Similarly, in the same week, the Party's Wag Himre leaders, Mr. Wolde Micael who serves as zonal public & relations representative and was also a candidate, along with the two other candidates, disappeared. Their whereabouts are not known. They were also detained in November 2020.

9 out of 15 the parties executive members were in detention for 6-months without due justice after they tried to have a meeting with the public at the town of Injibara, Awi Zone, on March 15, 2020

On the election day, June 21, party observers were restricted to visit any of the polling stations.

Intentions of Persecutions:

The regional government's persecution against Agaw's political party and its supporters are not just intended for political control, but rather, it is part of a strategic plan to eradicate the Agaw and Kemant people in the area to take over their rich heritage and lands. For example, the government has engaged in intensive settlement in the Agaw Awi areas. So far, it has settled:

More than 60,000 people in Jawi, about 10,000 people in Zigam, and more than 6,000 people in Ayo.

All these settlements are done in the pretext of investment by displacing the indigenous Agaw people from their lands. The displaced Agaws are currently homeless and jobless. Some of the victims' whereabouts are not known.

Positive Part of Election:

I believe a positive part of the current election is a good intention from the Ethiopian Election Board to hold a relatively fair election. For instance the board acknowledged the existence of irregularity in the process. Ms Birtukan Mediksa, the Head of Board, in her press conference on June 21, acknowledged travel restrictions on the opposition parties on the election day, in the Amhara Region and the Southern Region. But, it was too late.

Post-Election Views:

The party Agew National Congress (Shengo) is committed to peaceful resistance. As a result, its leader issued a statement to the media last week, party members and supporters, not to involve themselves in any post-election violence. We do not expect any non-peaceful dispute in relation to the election.

However, we as the Agaw community, felt and we still feel dismay in both the process and the outcome. We lost trust in the Ethiopian political system and we felt excluded and marginalized, and felt a gloomy future for our continuity as a people. As mentioned above, this will happen unless the international community pays attention to our case.

Thank you.

Mr Tewodrose Tirfe, Director, Amhara Association of America

Mr. Solé, Mr. Corrao, UNPO officials, and distinguished guests, thank you for the opportunity to represent the Amhara ethnic community at this timely and important event. My name is Tewodrose Tirfe, and I am the co-founder and current chairman of the Amhara Association of America, or AAA for short. Created in 2016, AAA is a non profit civil society organization that represents the Amhara diaspora in the United States. Our work includes investigating and documenting human rights abuses against Amharas and other ethnic communities in Ethiopia, coordinating humanitarian relief to Amharas in need, and serving as a voice for the Amhara people to media outlets, think tanks, and human rights organizations. We also educate American federal policymakers on issues affecting Amharas and Ethiopia and advocate for ways the United States can help advance Ethiopia's democratic transition.

Ethiopia's 2021 national elections have come at a time of war, ethnic violence, and political repression across the country. Most, if not all, of my fellow Ethiopian speakers today will likely touch upon how these issues have plagued their communities, and the Amharas are no exception. These issues preceded Election Day but continue today with increased intensity, presenting an existential threat to Ethiopia itself.

First, I would like to give some background information on the Amhara people. Recent, partial estimates from outside sources suggest that more than 30 million Amharas live across Ethiopia. That would make the Amhara at least the second largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, alongside the Oromo. The last Ethiopian census, taken in 2007, recorded Amharas as approximately 27% of the population. However, significant controversies arose with the census that suggest Amharas were systematically under counted across the country. The lack of a new, comprehensive census since then – a census that would allow all Ethiopians to freely identify with one, multiple, or zero ethnic groups – makes the Amhara percentage figures a difficult and sensitive topic. However, for clarity's sake, I will use the 2007 census data as a reference point.

This map shows all of Ethiopia's Zones, or second-level administrative units, colour coded by their ethnic-based region per the Constitution.

All the yellow zones are part of the so-called "Amhara Region." This is the part of Ethiopia where Amharas are constitutionally recognized as the "native" or "indigenous" people. In most of those Zones, Amharas make up more than 90% of the population. The exceptions are Agew Awi and Oromia Special Zone, where there are sizeable Amhara minorities, but the Zones are carved out for the Agew and Oromo peoples respectively.

No Region in Ethiopia is ethnically homogenous. Outside the Amhara Region, all the circled Zones on the map represent where Amharas make up more than 10% of the population. The red underlined names are for the chartered cities of Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa and the Harari Region. Amharas make up sizeable minorities in each and are a plurality in Addis. The two Zones in Tigray with red

asterisks recorded Amhara populations of only a few percentage points in the last census (2007). However, these areas used to be part of the non-ethnic based Gondar and Wollo provinces, prior to the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) taking them over in the late 1980s. Many Amharas lived there (“Western Tigray Zone). When the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) invaded these areas during the civil war, many Amharas were forcibly expelled or pressured into fleeing to Sudan or what is now the Amhara Region. Those Amharas that remained were subject to persecution and repression by the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) government for three decades, leading many to identify as Tigrayan or another ethnicity. AAA and the Amhara community at large feel that because of this, the 2007 census numbers for both Zones undercount the Amhara population as part of the former government’s attempt to justify their inclusion in the Tigray Region.

Like any ethnic group, the Amhara are not a monolithic entity. When it comes to religion, a majority of Amharas are adherents of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. However, a sizeable minority – perhaps 20% of Amharas – are Sunni Muslims, while smaller groups have converted to Protestant Christianity in recent years. While nearly all of us speak the Semitic Amharic language, regional variations and influences from other peoples are substantive. But in general, Amharas are united by their belief in the Ethiopian state and their support of all its diverse peoples.

Many Ethiopians initially welcomed the appointment of Abiy Ahmed as Ethiopia’s Prime Minister in April 2018. His government announced an agenda to try furthering Ethiopia’s democratic transition after 27 years of authoritarian rule. This included a commitment to facilitate the country’s first free and fair elections, which were initially scheduled for August 2020. Elections were initially scheduled for August 2020, but in March of last year, Ethiopia’s Parliament postponed Election Day because of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the elections were eventually rescheduled for June 2021, developments occurred that led many Amharas, including us at AAA, to conclude that the elections would neither be fully free nor fair.

As Ethiopians waited for a new election day to be scheduled, the country was hit with a series of violent crises. This of course includes the war in Ethiopia’s Tigray Region, where the resulting humanitarian atrocities against the Tigrayan people have garnered significant international concern. For my community, the biggest crisis has been a series of massacres against Amharas mainly living outside the so-called “Amhara Region”. The perpetrators of these attacks have mainly been armed nonstate actors in the Oromia and Benishangul-Gumuz Regions, but massacres have also taken place in other parts of the country, including within the Amhara Region and as part of the war in Tigray. In some cases, complicity by local officials in the massacres of Amharas has either been alleged or acknowledged by the government itself.

A combination of reporting from human rights groups such as Amnesty International, Western and Ethiopian media outlets, and AAA’s own field investigations show that more than 2,000 Amharas have been killed in targeted attacks over the past year. Hundreds of thousands of Amharas have been internally displaced due to these massacres, and the fear of further attacks are on the minds of most Amharas today. The Ethiopian federal government has yet to properly acknowledge or respond to these

massacres with a comprehensive political and security strategy. Amid this chaos, elections have been a much lower priority for the Amhara community.

At the same time, Amharas who tried to organize politically outside of the ruling Prosperity Party system were treated as criminals by the government. The opposition National Movement of Amhara, or the National Movement of Amhara (NaMA) for short, was formed in 2018 to represent the Amhara people both within and beyond the Amhara Region. The National Movement of Amhara (NaMA) strongly opposes Ethiopia's ethnic federal system, as does AAA, but the party felt that the only way to have a voice in the country's political future was to organize Amharas nationwide.

National Movement of Amhara's growing popularity among Amharas clearly posed a threat to the Prosperity Party, and the government took numerous illegal steps to try weaken its electoral prospects. For example, in October 2020, the governments of the Amhara Region and Addis Ababa banned the National Movement of Amhara (NaMA) from holding peaceful protests against the massacres of Amharas across Ethiopia. Attempts for the National Movement of Amhara (NaMA) to hold election rallies during the campaign season were restricted multiple times by local governments, all of which are controlled by the Prosperity Party. In February 2021, an electoral rally by the Oromia Region Prosperity Party branded the National Movement of Amhara (NaMA) as an "enemy of the state" alongside other opposition movements, clearly to intimidate Amhara residents in Oromia. In the Benishangul-Gumuz Region, the ongoing violence against Amharas and other "non-native" ethnic groups there led to the murder of at least one of the National Movement of Amhara's (NaMA) candidate in April and the suspension of its campaign activities there. Also, in the Amhara Region, multiple university students were killed in May after refusing to participate in a rally for the local Prosperity Party branch.

This political oppression was not only felt on the campaign trail. In the run up to the rescheduled elections, Amharas who were suspected of supporting the National Movement of Amhara (NaMA) faced significant difficulties in registering to vote. This does not even include the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced Amharas, whom the National Election Board of Ethiopia lacked the capability to even try registering. And due to the government's inability to resolve conflicts across Ethiopia, numerous constituencies – many of which have large Amhara populations – are not scheduled to vote until September.

All these issues culminated in an election with lower-than-expected voter registration and turnout. Unfortunately, the worst of the Prosperity Party's repression tactics against the National Movement of Amhara (NaMA) were saved for the election itself. Evidence continues to be collected, but the National Movement of Amhara (NaMA) has publicized accounts of the Prosperity Party threatening their election observers, confiscating voters' registration cards and casting ballots on their behalf, and stopping the vote count at some polling locations when it was clear that the National Movement of Amhara (NaMA) candidate was leading.

I would be remiss to mention that while it does not organize along ethnic lines, the Balderas Party is supported by many of the Addis Ababa's Amhara residents who want a city not dominated by a single

ethnic group. The party's founder and leader, Eskinder Nega, is a prominent freedom of speech activist and former journalist who faced many years in prison on politically motivated charges by the former ruling government. Sadly, because Balderas' popularity in Addis posed a threat to the ruling Prosperity Party, the government took steps to neutralize Eskinder. In July 2020, during the protests and deadly violence stemming from the murder of Oromo singer Hachalu Hundessa, federal police arrested Eskinder yet again. It took three months for a criminal charge to actually be levied. Once again, Eskinder was accused of a ludicrous "terrorist plot" by the government, and his detention and trial have been marred by numerous due process violations. Eskinder's situation most symbolically Amharas that despite the change in government, not much has changed for the better when it comes to those who speak out against the ruling political party.

Despite these incredible obstacles and challenges for the Amhara community, there are signs that the elections will yield some progress. As of today, the National Movement of Amhara (NaMA) appears to have won at least six parliamentary seats and 11 regional assembly seats in the Amhara, and more could come in the following weeks. A last-minute court ruling forced the Election Board to allow Eskinder Nega's name on the ballots in Addis, and it appears he may win his seat despite being in jail. While the Prosperity Party will likely win a large majority of elections nationwide, these small steps towards multiparty democracy cannot be ignored.

I want to close by saying that there are many misperceptions about the Amhara people that have been shaped by other Ethiopians and outside scholars and journalists. One of the main accusations is that Amharas collectively support Prime Minister Abiy and are the only ethnic group that feels the current government represents their interests. On behalf of AAA and millions of Amharas in Ethiopia and in the diaspora, I want to ensure that everyone here knows this is false. I am sure that all the other speakers here can discuss political repression and a sense of estrangement from the Prosperity Party, and Amharas are no exception to that. It is my hope that once we get past the false narratives, and the demonization and scapegoating of entire ethnic groups, we can start to focus on real solutions for ensuring equal rights and justice for all Ethiopians. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to answering any questions you have for me.

Mr Ibrahim Alkhanagy, Chair, Benishangul Human Rights Foundation

The Benishangul state is located in the western part of Ethiopia, eastern part of Sudan along the boarder between Sudan and Ethiopia. Its has a landscape of 400 thousands km square. It is very, very rich with natural resources, water resources, farming lands, minerals resources of millions tons of gold. A population of 6 million people live along the boarder of the two countries and it consists of four main major indigenous tribes of Berta, Gomuz, Kumo and Mao. The state has three zones: Asossa zone has eight districts, Matakal zone has seven districts and Kamashi zone has five districts. In addition there is the special district of Tago.

Since the British handed out our land to Abyssinians upon occupation of Sudan, we became under the ugliest occupation any human race experienced on earth to date.

It started with slavery and then ethnic cleansing, repetitive genocide and forced migration and replacement of other people on our lands that resulted in us being kicked out from our homelands. We have been witnessing continuous systematic atrocities against us over the last 123 years.

All past regimes that ruled from 1898 didn't treat us as humans but sub-humans, 3rd degraded class.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Regime is no exception, but what is worse is that all the above mentioned violations became the norm. We become under siege where we and our people would prefer to die than to live under viscous savage torture where the entire state is under military command post in every square metre.

Therefore talking about free and fair elections is just a nice dream we never had in the past, neither happens now under Abiy's regime, where all our parties, politicians and community leaders are either buried in mass graves, detained or - the luckiest - escaped in exile. This fulfilled the regime's aim to empty the land with no citizens because what they want are our lands and wealthy national resources, but not us.

What happened in June 26 in Benishangul during the state election was a joke and definitely not a serious election. Starting with the detention of all electoral participants and observers, they released them after PP cadres filled the voting boxes in favour of themselves before the vote started. This happened in Kurmuk district, Surquli, Mengi and Abdulu districts.

In Awoda district no election took place as Abiy's Army were killing our people, the same happened for the entire Kamashi and Matakal zones. In fact, no election took place there because all the participants were in jail, including PP members because they are from indigenous people and are not trustworthy to the regime.

In Asossa, they declared that they were running out of voting papers when they discovered that people were voting for PP opponents. Therefore, they decided to declare orally that Asossa zone election was not a valid election even though the commissioner refused to give written statements to the opponent participants.

Thank you for giving us this opportunity to participate in this conference.

Mr Okok Okok, Representative, Southwest Indigenous People Humanitarian Organization

Dear Ms Lucia Parrucci, Project Manager Horn of Africa of the UNPO, dear Mr. Jordi Sole, Member of the European Parliament, dear Mr. Ignazio Corrao, Member of the European Parliament, dear Mr. Fabio Massimo Castaldo, Vice President of the European Parliament, dear Mr. Jan-Christoph OETJEN, Member of the European Parliament, dear listeners of this conference, ladies and gentlemen,

My name is Okok Okok, the representative of the Southwest Indigenous Peoples Humanitarian Organization (SW-IPHO), an organization that represents more than 24 different minority indigenous peoples and communities in the South-western Ethiopia.

First and foremost I want to thank you for inviting me to speak at this very important conference about Ethiopia's June 21, 2021 election and talk about what we may draw as best practices, challenges, and possible irregularities with regard to the Southwest indigenous peoples or communities. However, due to the new changes in the new Ethiopian administrative structure that eliminates the existence of the Southern Omo Valley Zone of the pastoral indigenous communities, I will only focus my presentation on the Gambella region's electoral issues.

I would like to provide you with a brief background on the region. We have three zones. The Gambella region is one of the most turbulent regions in Ethiopia, where most of the ethnic cleansing, conflicts and genocides are taking place by the Ethiopian government. In order to repair this situation - the political situation - facing the indigenous peoples in this region, it has been created a political party that is called "Gambella" Peoples Liberation Movement (GPLM), which has been struggling for more than 45 years now. This party was invited by PM Abiy Ahmed. I invite all the political groups to come to the country to contest peacefully on the election which took place on June 21, 2021.

During and prior to the contest, we've seen a lot of irregularities and challenges with regards to the election contest in the region. Our organization has witnessed denial in accessing for position party, which is called GPLM. We've seen it in one of the zones, which is called the Nuer zone. GPLM did not register completely in this zone.

One of the irregularities is the unrealistic total of 414,950 registered voters. And this has been escalated, in fact the number is so high compared to the population of 435,999. This means that about 4.8% who could not be there should be unregistered children, and all those who could not pass their ballots. So we see this was unrealistic, that total number of registered voters, which is a source of fraud [sic].

Moreover, we witnessed problems in the initial handover of ballot boxes to the Election Board, to the Regional Justice and Security Bureau, a practice that exposed the ballots to fraud. In fact, when the ballots papers were released from Addis Ababa to the Gambella region, those were first handed over to the Gambella Regional Justice and Security Bureau whose top leaders were members and officials of the Election Board Regional Office that was also the contesters for the ruling party, the Prosperity Party (PP).

The law prohibits any contender to be a member in the Electoral Board Office in order to avoid fraud in the election. Despite that, top leaders of the Regional Justice and Security Bureau remained in the system. They made a lot of irregularities in the system.

To conclude, the ruling party - which is the PP - has been aware of losing support from indigenous populations. Therefore it mobilized refugees and the newcomers and gave them more polling stations and ballots papers than the locals.

These are the irregularities that took place before the election.

During the election, one of the irregularities was that people have seen or experienced shortages of ballot papers in the polling stations where the indigenous populations were the majority, meaning that they gave more ballot paper to in locations where the ruling party held a majority. In Itang town, the chairman forcefully pushed out indigenous local observers and filled the ballot boxes with unlawful ballot papers in favour of the ruling party, the Prosperity (PP).

In the Gambella town, the Gambella Regional State Vice Governor was also caught red handed with two ballot boxes in his home while he was distributing these ballot papers to his supporters and there was no action taken against the crimes he committed.

Another point is in Abobo, Godere, and Gambella town (in the area of special name call New-Land) the indigenous populations votes were compromised to the new highland Ethiopians and refugees for the Prosperity Party (PP).

Regarding irregularities and challenges that have been occurring in the post-election, after June 21, the ruling party is making a lot of effort to swap ballot boxes in constituencies where the opposition party has won the election. This is threatening the security of the regions because the public is resisting. Killing has occurred in some places by government security agencies.

Lastly, to conclude, in the Gambella region, the government ran a sham election. According to witnessed from the region, the election was simply a political gesture by the Prime Minister Abiy to legitimize his ruling party and the leadership. In my personal opinion according to these irregularities, given the political turmoil and instability in Ethiopia, election is not currently the right option, I suggest to proceed thorough negotiation and building multinational federalism and confederation to heal the country.

In our region, people are struggling for self-determination but the ruling party is fighting to centralize their power which goes in opposite ways and this is a threat to peace at any time. In these elections we are seeing a lot of problems that came up. Therefore, we are calling the international community to make these elections void.

Thank you for listening.

Mr Zakariye Abdulaahi Hassan, a journalist and human rights defender from the Somali Region

My name is Zakariye Abdulaahi Hassan, I am journalist, an activist and a human rights advocate from the Ogaden Region.

Starting off, I would like to thank members from the different organizations and the Members of the EU Parliament that are taking part in this conference.

The Ogaden region is located in the East of Ethiopia and adjacent to Somalia and it is 450,000 km. The people who live in this region are exclusively Somali who are 100% Muslim. The population of Ogaden is estimated to be about 8 million, though only 5 million are registered. The region consists of 11 provinces and 94 districts. It is the second largest region in Ethiopia and the most rich in resources in Ethiopia, with oil, gas, petroleum and fertile lands.

For the Somalis in the Ogaden region, the recent changes in Ethiopia over the past couple years are viewed by many as a lost opportunity. Sure they have peace but many are uncertain on what the future holds.

The Ogaden is a region that has been marred by devastating conflicts for the past several decades. However the past three years have differed, with peace coming following the peace deal between the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and the Ethiopian government.

Despite the overall peace, most Somalis feel left out of the picture and remain voiceless and politically marginalized on their own soil. The postponement of the elections in the Ogaden region is one example.

When Ethiopia's current ruling government took power in 2018, many Somalis viewed it as a chance to finally be allowed to decide their faith and future both politically and community based-wise, where leaders elected by ordinary Somalis could be given an opportunity to govern and serve the needs of the community. However these hopes seem to have become futile and ill explain.

The National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), which oversees elections on behalf of Ethiopia's federal government, stated that elections would be postponed in the Ogaden due to voting irregularities with the distribution of the voting cards in the region, however this was a manufactured issue concocted by Ethiopia's ruling party known as Prosperity Party (PP).

In the year or so running up to elections, the Somali branch of the Prosperity Party (PP), which is the current governing body in the Ogaden region, began initiating rogue tactics and using methods akin to voter suppression, which were prevalent as of recently just prior to National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) announcing postponement of elections in the Ogaden.

The ruling party in the Ogaden would seize and confiscate voting cards to prevent the public from accessing them in large numbers in various towns and districts with the aim of controlling the voting process. They've also forged many voter registration cards by filling them out with many non existent

names as witnessed in different parts of the region. On top of that, countless individuals from different political parties have been arrested in various areas in Ogaden and held under arbitrary detention for long periods of time.

As a result of this, all the rival political parties in the Ogaden voiced their concern over this by reaching out to the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) and issuing multiple joint statements. This led to all the opposition parties in the region stating that they would not take part in the elections until these irregularities and issues are addressed and undone in order for free and fair elections to take place in the region.

The National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) responded by completely postponing elections in the Ogaden until September, while not being transparent and holding Ethiopia's ruling party, the Prosperity Party (PP), accountable for their role in creating this manufactured election mayhem in the Ogaden region.

Scores of candidates and political parties in the Ogaden have been barred from registering in order to take part in elections, which can be attributed to how the ruling party is adamant on controlling the outcome of any election in the Ogaden region.

To make matters worse, the people of the Ogaden are not allowed to vote freely in different parts of the region. For example those born in Western Ogaden can not vote in Eastern, Northern or Southern Ogaden knowing everyone is only allowed to vote in their place of birth and knowing most of the inhabitants in the Ogaden are nomads and pastoralists, it makes it even harder for the vast majority of the population to exercise their democratic right to vote.

As a result, many people were dismayed and even demoralized. The people of Ogaden have witnessed their livelihoods and futures thrown in peril by consecutive governments in Ethiopia and fears are growing that the current ruling government might follow footsteps of its predecessor, in regards to postponing these elections.

Media landscape in Ogaden is not how it used to be. Prior to 2018, when one of the regions was embroiled in the conflict, journalists were barred from entering the area due to the fact that Ogaden was under military siege. As of 2018, the region opened up. Yet most journalists who come to Ogaden today are not allowed to report on sensitive issues and are persecuted by local authorities, as well as Ethiopian federal government.

All the political parties in the Ogaden are more than willing to take part in the elections this upcoming September as long as the space is set for a free and fair process, though only time will tell us if that comes to fruition.

As of today, the people in the Ogaden live in peace. Nonetheless, nobody is sure how long this peace will last knowing the Ethiopian federal government is yet to implement its side of the deal following the peace agreement between the ONLF and Ethiopian government. There are concerns that this might lead to instability or even full blown conflict in the near future.

Thank you.

Ms Seena Jimjimo, Executive Director, Oromo Legacy Leadership & Advocacy Association

Distinguished guests and fellow civil society members, I would like to start by thanking MEP Jordi Sole, MEP Ignazio Corrao, the UNPO, and the Partner organizations for inviting me to this very special platform to represent the Oromo voice.

As the space for civil society is shrinking within international institutions, I deeply value this opportunity to bring us together where others failed to do so on the scope of this discussion. In this regard, I very much look forward to listening and learning from my fellow Ethiopians to work together for constructive solutions to the current crisis engulfing our country. In Ethiopia millions are suffering from man-made famine, rape is used as a weapon of war not just in Tigray, inter-ethnic violence and many unreported atrocities are spreading across the country, including in Oromia.

My name is Seena Jimjimo, I am the Executive Director of the Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA). OLLAA is an umbrella organization representing over 50 Oromo communities across western countries, but we are based in the United States, where half of these communities are also based. I am a refugee, survivor of the previous regime that ruled Ethiopia for 27 years. Like my father, I was born in a struggle, and here I am today, still struggling in my 30's. While many in Ethiopia and other parts of the world had just begun to learn how brutal the Ethiopian regime is against its own people, I am here to tell you the abuses we see, the rape we read, the torture we hear, and the man-made famine we watch and have always been part of Ethiopia's history. It feels good now to live in a world that can see and understand it.

In fact, the change that brought the current Prime Minister to power was paved and paid for by over 5000 Oromo youth, who sacrificed their life to these issues. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed was crowned as a change leader to transition into a democracy, even though he is a part of a system that abused and killed thousands of Ethiopians, especially Oromos.

Oromos represent the single largest ethnic group in Ethiopia and Horn of Africa, and the second or third largest on the African continent. In Ethiopia alone, Oromos make up over 50 million of its population. Oromia is home to gold, coffee, many rivers, and natural resources, including 57% of the Nile water. Sadly, the size of the Oromo population and national resources have made Oromo's and Oromia targets to all Ethiopian regimes. However, without Oromia, there is no Ethiopia.

Ethiopia is a country of over 80 ethnicities and Oromos are just one, making up half the whole population. However, for political purposes, all ruling parties have minimized the Oromo number to as low as 35%, but even by that account, Oromos account for nearly 40 million people.

Oromia is located at the heart of Ethiopia. In fact, the capital city, Addis Abba is located at the centre of Oromia, surrounded by Oromo farmers who were pushed out of their land. Addis Ababa was founded at the start of the Scramble for Africa, displacing the indigenous Oromo clans like Galan and Abichu. Sadly today, one can hardly find persons from the Galan and Abichu groups, and if they did, they are most likely the gate keepers to their father's land.

Many Ethiopian ruling parties have tried to paint Oromos as radicals to gain support from the West. In truth, Oromos are half Muslim, and the other half are Christians and Waqefana faith followers. While I can say so much about the persecution of Waaqeffannaa faith followers, today I am here to highlight the immediate and current crisis destabilizing Ethiopia and the Horn. As much as the world want to focus and make the current crisis about small minority groups, this crisis began long before the war in Tigray.

It took the Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed only six months before declaring a state of emergency in Western Oromia, where he officially began bombing Oromos. The 2019 Amnesty International annual publication shows mass arrest, extrajudicial killings, village burning, torture, rape, of the Ormo people to name a few. The 50-page document listed exactly how the Ethiopian Defense Force was silencing and eliminating Oromos they considered a threat. This was two years ago. This was before Hacaaluu's murder. This was before the November war.

Today, according to opposition parties, the Oromo Study Association, and our volunteers on the ground, at least 50,000 Oromo remain in prison, including Colombia and Stanford graduate and the American citizen, Jawar Mohammed.

The latest press release from the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission published on May 6th, 2021, shows mothers and children aged five-months old in prison since last summer. The report also listed prisoners with clear sign of torture. Many courts freed prisoners, and yet the police refused to comply, like in the case of Abid Regassa and many more.

In the end, I would like to finish my statement by telling these distinguished guests, fellow panellists, and hosts that last night, 20 Oromo communities met to pass a resolution that calls for three basic demands ahead of the dialogue. These demands are:

1. Stop the war in all parts of Ethiopia and stop killing civilians;
2. Remove federal, Amhara, and Eritrean soldiers from Oromia;
3. Release all political prisoners;
4. Hold an all-inclusive dialogue.

Also, as with regards to the elections, while Oromia is home to nearly 60% of the Ethiopian population yet, there were no Oromo opposition parties as they were pushed out. Today one piece of good news is that there is an almost universal recognition that the election held on June 21st was unfair and not credible. Some of the irregularities noted during the elections are:

- In Ambo, a few kilometres away from the capital city, police and security forces went to homes to collect voters' cards.
- In Asasa, residents' voting cards were collected nearly five weeks earlier but were told to come to the voting station to get their fingerprints.

- In Shashamane, poll watchers made voters put the card for the Prosperity Party (PP) box by showing them where to put the card. They were pinched if you made a mistake.

Ethiopia's 6th general election took place where major opposition parties were pushed out in Oromia, where over 50 political remained in prison, where the country was at war in Tigray, where the country was invaded by Eritrea and Sudan soldiers, where part of Oromia and Amhara remained under a state of emergency and where over 100 constituencies were not able to participate all. Election fever had pushed out millions of Ethiopians seeking refugees in neighbouring countries.

In the last two weeks of June, over 600 refugees died off the coast of Djibouti. The majority of these migrants are Oromo who were seeking political asylum. It is not surprising that thousands of refugees will be flocking out of Ethiopia trying to make it to Europe and the Middle East. Sadly no one wants them. Neither do they want to leave Ethiopia either, but they are left with no other choice. In this way democracy will never be stabilized in the country.

Ms Abeba Teferi, President, Kemant Advocacy Group

Members of the European Parliament, Members of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the subcommittee on Human Rights, Members of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization and distinguished guests,

On behalf of the Kemant people, I am Abeba Tefari, and I thank you for the opportunity to convey the violence and political oppression at the hands of the current regime. Because you are shining the light of public scrutiny on the events in Ethiopia, you are giving hope to countless people who would otherwise have none.

The Kemant, are an ancient people. Having lived in Ethiopia for approximately six thousand years, primarily in an area of north western Ethiopia, more recently known as the Amhara Region. The Kemant are also a well-known people with a distinctive culture, identity, religion and historical language. Currently, more than 1.5 million people identify as Kemant in Ethiopia.

The last decade has brought regularly occurring, sustained, and deadly violence against the Kemant at the hands of national and regional forces. The Amhara Regional Government's Special Forces, sanctioned by the Ethiopian Federal Government, organized and armed local youth groups and militias known as Fanno or Gobezaqqa to execute mass ethnic killings. These armed militias and others commenced an organized campaign to mutilate, castrate, impale, and rape the Kemant people while the Special Forces used mechanized forms of violence, ranging from machine guns to bombs.

Since 2015, the number of Kemant deaths at the hands of the Ethiopian Federal Government has reached thousands. Homes, churches, clinics, farms, and businesses are being bombed and burned. Men and women are raped, burned, mutilated, and tortured publicly, and ashes are left where villages once existed. This barbaric campaign of violence carries the specific intent of wiping the Kemant from the Earth as an ethnicity and destroying any residual political impact of its remaining people.

This plan was foreshadowed in 2007, when the Ethiopian Census omitted Kemant as a choice of ethnic registration. Since that time, the Kemant people went from merely oppressed, to completely unrepresented. The intervening years have confirmed this course of action, as the Kemant have remained under attack with reasonable fear of more attacks.

In many ways, the Kemant people have prepared for the 2021 election for several years. The purposeful omission of the entire Kemant population in the 2007 Census left them fearful but determined. The Kemant people organized themselves for ethnic recognition and self-rule under Provision 39 of the national constitution. According to this article of the constitution, every nation, nationality, and people of Ethiopia has the right to speak, write, and develop its own language, to express, develop and promote culture, and preserve history. Every nation, nationality and people in Ethiopia have the right to full measure self-government. This includes the right to establish institutions of government in territory that it inhabits and equitable representation in state and federal governments. That work resulted in the establishment of the Kemant Democratic Party (KDP), the first political party in Ethiopian history to

fully represent the Kemant people. This work did not go unnoticed by the government, and was met with swift and sustained resistance.

Local self-governance is precisely why the Kemant people invested their hopes and aspirations into the June 2021 election. Although the national government is corrupt and oppressive, many ethnic groups are allowed self-governance under constitutional Provision 39. The Kemant people merely aspired to such local governance and self-determination.

Local authority is self-evidently important for any population, but it is an especially important cause for the Kemant. Despite a history in Ethiopia older than the written word, the Kemant have historically been treated as inferior by the ruling classes. In fact, the Kemant have never had the right of local self-governance, enjoyed by most Ethiopian groups in recorded history.

Most recently, the lack of Kemant officials in any level of government have left its population with no redress for grievances arising from the ethnic massacres-attacks by local, regional, and national forces.

The June 2021 election was more than a political contest. It became the source of achieving some measure of safety from government attacks and a full measure of identity as a people.

In the two months preceding the election, the ongoing attacks were elevated to an existential crisis. The latest round of attacks against Kemant commenced in April 2021 in Aykel, Chilga, Gondar, and surrounding areas, where Kemants dominate in population. As the town lay battered, the smoke rising up from the burning buildings met more lethal artillery raining down from the sky.

As the election approached, the Kemant people understood that a large election turnout would receive the full ferocity of a tyrannical regime clinging to power. Notwithstanding that danger, the Kemant Democratic Party pursued justice at the ballot box.

The Prosperity Party, formed in 2019, held its election campaign in the area, expecting to receive unanimous support by the locals. The Kemant Democratic Party however, which had recently legally registered in the elections, campaigned and won the clear support of the local residents.

The government's response was brutal. The town of Aykel, Chilga, Gondar and surrounding areas fell under siege by not just the Amhara Special Forces, but also the Ethiopian Federal Government, and now, Eritrean troops. They have cut all telecommunication lines and internet, power, water, and public and private transportation services. Without access to communications or utilities, it is impossible to quantify the dead, the displaced, the wrongfully imprisoned, or the wounded in need of medical attention.

To maintain their shroud of secrecy over these atrocities, government forces will not even allow burials of the dead in these mass killings. At the end, they closed most Kemant area voting locations as unsafe.

Much like Tigray and other regions of the country, the residents of Aykel, Chilga remain at the mercy of the Ethiopian federal government and Eritrean troops, Amhara Special forces and Fano.

The Kemant people, and countless others across Ethiopia, agree with the observation by the American Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken, who remarked that:

“The June 2021 elections in Ethiopia took place against a backdrop of grave instability, including increasing inter-ethnic and inter-communal conflicts, and an electoral process that was not free or fair for all Ethiopians.”

Secretary Blinken was correct in that the elections were neither free nor fair. The violent voter suppression and intimidation prevented the election from reflecting the will of the Ethiopian people. Neither the turnout nor the results were honest or trustworthy.

For the foregoing reasons, we believe the election should be nullified and then conducted with safe ballot access, safe areas at and near voting locations, and international election monitors at all locations where votes are cast and counted.

As of today, the Kemant people face the dual existential threats of systemic government oppression and ethnic cleansing. The acts of the current regime are antithetical to every basic human right.

Thank you for your time and attention to this most urgent crisis.

Mr Samuel Sijuarie Sakkuma, Executive Council Member, Sidama Diaspora Community

Dear Lucia, dear members of EU Parliament, dear fellows speaker and other guests, I am honoured to speak here today.

My name is Samuel Sikuarie Sakkuma and I am a member of Executive Committee of the Sidama Diaspora Community.

I am here to present Sidama's prospective on the current crises and elections. Before I speak about the election let me give you a background about the Sidama people.

Sidama is the fifth largest nation in the country with an estimated number of population of six million. Until recently, it is the only among the big five without a regional state.

Sidama people are located about 270 kilometers south of the capital city Addis Ababa. We share 87% of border with Oromia, and 13% with the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR). When it comes to the economy, it is the biggest economy in the country by being the second biggest source of foreign currency through coffee production. Culture wise, Sidama has distinct culture and it has its own lunar new year that is Fichee Chambalaala, registered by UNESCO. We have 'Affini' cultural system where the elders come together and sit down to resolve disputes. Sidama has its own language, the SidaamuAfoo.

When it comes to its involvement in politics, Sidama lost its self-rule in 1890. Ever since we have been relegated to second-class citizens. Since then, the Sidama people have been struggling to regain self governance, preserve its culture and identity.

So what does Sidama's struggle look like during the reform? By the reform I mean since Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed assumed power in April 2018. The struggle of Sidama continued to spearhead the peaceful 'Ejjetto' movement that united the proponents of multinational federalists and revealed stark ideological differences between the unionists. The 'Ejjetto' united all the Sidama people to demand its long overdue right to self rule and Sidama nation pushed hard with its peaceful demand for self rule through peaceful demonstrations and stay-at-home protests.

Regardless of the peaceful demands, the government responded with brutal force and killed more than 100 Sidama civilians between June 2018 and July 19, 2019.

Related to that, thousands of Sidama have been arrested and finally the regime was obliged to conduct the referendum on November 20, 2019. The result was resounding 98% for statehood, so Sidama became a state.

Despite Sidama being a state and gaining its autonomy, the ruling party made decisions to weaken the region and undermine the voice of Sidama people. As a result a well know and historical political party, the Sidama Liberation Movement (SLM) that was expected to pose the biggest challenge to the ruling

party - the Prosperity Party - in the region, was assimilated with the ruling party denying our people a solid option to choose from.

So the election, regardless of all those facts and that the county is in chaos, we were basically in a civil war and the election went ahead, and it was conducted on June 21, 2021. It has been said that 12 political parties participated in the Sidama region in the election. However, during the campaign the opposition parties were not given equal platform for the obvious facts that the government controls almost everything including media and logistics.

After the election took place, one of the opposition parties that participated on the election, the Sidama Unity Party has requested to the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) to re-conduct the election mentioning illegal activities that took place during the election process.

We therefore, do not believe the election was conducted in sufficient fair and free environment, given sizeable portion of the country that either did not participate in the election due to the ongoing conflict and the war, or did not go to vote because their preferred candidates were thrown in jail, we believe our country missed a great opportunity to make a successful transition from dictatorship to democracy.

So given all those facts, we don't believe the election is the solution for the crises we are in. Therefore, what do we recommend as a Sidama Diaspora Community?

1. All political prisoners must be released
2. An all-inclusive dialogue needs to begin immediately
3. National reconciliation is the only viable way out of the current political crises
4. The only way forward for Ethiopia is multi-national federalism where the rule of law governs the affairs of nations' both collective and individual rights under the current constitutional framework
5. Urge all stakeholders to take a step back, think through the seriousness of the mess we are in and make a wise decision towards a peaceful coexistence
6. We propose for all stakeholders to agree on a compromised solutions and work towards a united & democratic multi-national federal Ethiopian state that recognizes the interdependent and intertwined nature of the fate of our peoples

Therefore, Sidama humbly suggests the EU and the rest of the international community to assist Ethiopia to achieve these.

Ms Meaza Gidey, Leader, Omna Tigray

Good afternoon, good evening to all esteemed attendees and participants and thank you to the UNPO for organizing this event and inviting Omna Tigray to share the Tigrayan perspective on the Ethiopian elections held on June 21st.

We at Omna Tigray are an advocacy organization with a mission of amplifying and advocating for the people of Tigray. Specifically, our vision is to fight injustice, advocate for peace and economic development, and amplify the voices of the people in Tigray, via our sustainable, long-lasting platform.

Tigray is the northernmost region of Ethiopia, bordering Eritrea to the north, Sudan to the west, and the Amhara region of Ethiopia to the south. With an estimated population of over 7 million, the people of Tigray make up approximately 7% of Ethiopia's population. Despite our small numbers, we are ethnically and religiously diverse. Within Tigray, the largest ethnic group are Tigrayans, who speak Tigrigna and are either Christian Orthodox or Muslim. The region is also home to two ethnic minorities, the Irob and Kunama, who speak their own respective languages.

I will explain the situation before, during and after the elections and how the community perceive the elections.

Abiy Ahmed postponed the national elections twice since coming to power in April 2018 and like other dictators around the world blamed the coronavirus pandemic and logistical constraints. Meanwhile, the Tigrayan Regional Council conducted its constitutionally mandated regional elections in September 2020, which Abiy's administration condemned. According to the Addis Standard, the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) won 98.5% of the 190 seats during the regional elections in Tigray. Over 2.6 million voters were registered, and turnout was 97%. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed saw Tigray's decision to proceed with the regional elections and the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front's win as a threat to his power and ambitions to consolidate power. This eventually led Abiy to wage the ongoing genocidal war on Tigray on November 4, 2021.

There were several irregularities during the national elections. Soon after coming to power, Abiy Ahmed dissolved the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a political coalition that had ruled Ethiopia for three decades. He then merged three out of the four ethnic-based parties to form the Prosperity Party (PP). The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) was the only Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) coalition party that refused to join the Prosperity Party (PP), deeming its formation unconstitutional. With most dominant media outlets in Ethiopia being state funded, the Prosperity Party (PP) has considerable influence over its coverage and the narratives surrounding it. As a result of the blurred lines between state and party affairs, the Prosperity Party has the state apparatus at its disposal. It has access to parts of the country that opposition parties rooted regionally cannot easily access, considerable financial means, and national name recognition. While opposition parties faced challenges registering their candidates for constituencies, the Prosperity Party (PP) is the only party that managed to register all of its candidates

in all 673 constituencies, leading opposition parties to put forth complaints of bias in favour of the incumbent to the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE).

In addition to forming his own party, Abiy Ahmed ensured that there were no strong opponents who could challenge his rule during an election. He imprisoned or eliminated opposition leaders from the political landscape before the elections. There were also several opposition parties that boycotted the elections across the country for unfair treatments, negatively impacting the credibility of the national elections.

Abiy Ahmed had no interest in holding democratic elections, nor did he have any interest in having voters that represented different regions or interests. With a genocidal war on Tigray and prominent political leaders and community members in other parts of the country put in prison, including Bekele Gerba, Jawar Mohammed, and Hamza Borena of the Oromia region, Abiy Ahmed set the stage for his victory. There are reports that Abiy's administration attempted to inflate the number of voters in rural areas by tying possession of voter cards with some benefits like having access to fertilizer and seeds.

No parties that represented the Tigrayan communities participated in the national elections. The government did not even attempt to hold elections in Tigray. Tigray was simply left out of the equation during the national elections this year. The contest in the national election was then only among Addis Ababa's urban politicians and ethnic Amhara's camp that share the same ideology and vision of State building for Ethiopia. They are committed to eventually dismantling the existing multinational federal arrangement and replace it with the pre-1991 an Amharanized and centralized state.

On the other hand, the political camp that represents the human and demographic realities of the country of more than 80 ethno-linguistic groups - envisioning to further democratize and consolidate a federal and decentralized Ethiopia that respects and promotes the diverse cultures while politically empowering populations to administer their own affairs at regional and local level - have been systematically sidelined from the arena by trumped-up political charges of their prominent figures and, of course, with the bloody armed conflicts in Tigray, Oromia and Benshangul regions.

The number of Tigrayan politicians who have been arrested is currently unknown. However, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), most of the leaders and/or other Tigrayan party leaders who had active roles in Tigray's political arena are currently fighting Ethiopian and Eritrean forces in Tigray.

Moreover, it is not easy for journalists to access Tigray at this time. The Ethiopian and Eritrean governments had controlled most of Tigrayan lands until recently. International and local journalists have been limited from entering and covering the war on Tigray since Abiy Ahmed waged war in November 2020, all to conceal the war crimes and ethnic cleansing happening in Tigray.

What is the situation in the region and what was the reason given by the National Election Board of Ethiopia?

The federal government had opposed Tigray's decision to proceed with regional elections in September 2020, as it had called for national postponement of the elections due to the coronavirus pandemic. In fact, as a partial result of holding these elections, the Ethiopian government declared war on Tigray.

This war has caused over 2.2 million Tigrayans to be internally displaced and over 75,000 Tigrayans to flee to Sudan. According to the United Nation World Food Program (WFP), over 5.2 million Tigrayans are also at risk of starvation. Thus, Tigrayans were in no position to vote during the national elections held on June 21, 2021.

How did the people feel regarding the fact that they could not vote?

According to reports from the United Nations (UN), over 5 million Tigrayans are on the verge of mass starvation, along with facing numerous crimes against humanity. Abiy Ahmed had also designated the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the elected regional party of Tigray, as a terrorist organization a month before holding national elections. It is clear to Tigrayans that this was not an election that sought their voices.

What did the government do to incentivize people to vote prior to publicly say that the elections have been cancelled? What happened in the region after the announcement that it was postponed?

The National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) announced that voting would not take place in the war-torn Tigray on June 6, 2021. There are currently no plans to hold elections in Tigray.

Abiy Ahmed has led the country to the verge of complete disintegration through political repression, state-sponsored genocide, and fuelling ethnic violence. Before any legitimate election can occur, cessation of violence, national dialogue, and reform need to take place to ensure the safety of the electorate and the people of Ethiopia. The elections should also ensure the representation of all of its citizens.

The outcome of the 2021 elections were predetermined. With the genocidal war on Tigray and several prominent opposition groups eliminated or imprisoned, the 2021 national elections have only weakened public trust in the system. Ethiopia will not benefit from fraudulent national elections. Thus, the national elections should be postponed until peace and national consensus is achieved through inclusive dialogue.

To reach a national consensus, the international community must push for:

1. Verifiable immediate withdrawal of Eritrean and Amhara invading forces from Tigray
2. Cessation of all hostilities in Tigray and against Tigrayans across Ethiopia
3. Unfettered and unrestricted humanitarian access to Tigray
4. Official restoration and recognition of Tigray's elected leaders
5. Restoration of the federally cut off public infrastructure in Tigray including phone and internet services
6. Independent, UN and UN only led investigation into war crimes and crimes against humanity the people of Tigray have endured for the past 8 months

7. The immediate release of all political prisoners in Ethiopia including those from Tigray and Unrestricted access for local and international media to all parts of Tigray.

Thank you very much.

Discussion on inter-ethnic cooperation

Speakers were asked to respond to the following question that generated a constructive debate in the chat: "Every ethnic group has painted a picture of ethnic/political violence and repression, both between communities and at the hands of the current government. If everyone agrees that their community has been victimized, how can Ethiopians use that as a starting point for a productive national dialogue and political reform?" Due to time constraints not all participants were able to respond, as the meeting hosts had to depart.

Mr Admassu Tsegaye Tessema, Leader, Agew Human Rights Advocacy Group

If those at the government and its supporters, especially Amhara and politicians are willing to practice the exiting constitution, these whole problems would not happen. They have to be willing to use the Constitution. Our request is that the government should respect our constitutional rights. The whole problem circulates around respecting and the practising the Constitution.

But now it is too late, now it is a different situation. We need to reorganize the transitional government led by neutral organizations, maybe foreigners and civil society from the country and maybe from political parties. But the current government should not be the leader of the transitional organization. Because of that, we can re-conduct free and fair elections in the country.

Mr Tewodrose Tirfe, Director, Amhara Association of America

I would like to quickly address some of the statements that were made and the question that was pose, it is really important to understand that the prime minister Abyi is an Oromo from the Prosperity Party. It is also important to understand that the Amharas are not in power, Amharas have not been in power in Ethiopia since the fall of emperor Salassie. Therefore it is a very very long time.

That said, I think that there is an opportunity for a truly inclusive dialogue, especially at this moment, what all Ethiopia truly needs and want. This can happen if we can have a platform where non violent political actors, civil society organizations, religious institutions and also community leaders, even at a local level can have an opportunity to participate in a conversation to talk about what kind of Ethiopia we want.

I believe that majority of Ethiopians want peace, walk away from violence, where they can have a stable country, economically, a developed country and have real true genuine democracy. This is not something that cannot be done and also all the ethnic rights of all the communities can be protected.

One of the things that are truly important to notice is that Ethiopia is on of the oldest countries in the world and with that in mind we do not have to lose the ethnic-based constitutional framework of the past 27 years, which is the only reference point. There are many reference points that we can use, in

Ethiopia's long history there is also other reference points that we can utilize in thriving democracy around the world, some countries in the European Union are exemplary in that, in the United States, Canada and many others.

I think we can enjoy, respect and appreciate the diversity of Ethiopia. Ethnic diversity, religious diversity, there are many diversities within the country, but we do not have to use ethnicity as the sole and only component of political representation. If we do not openly talk about this, and look at what the underlined issues are, and continue to use the ethnicity and the sole and only component in political organizations and if we keep alive a system that fosters distrust between ethnicity where you have an ethnic group governing from the top and repressing all the others we will continue have this problem of innocent civilians, especially minority groups in these ethnic bases regions to be targeted by harmed groups and also local militias. Thank you.

Mr Ibrahim Alkhanagy, Chair, Benishangul Human Rights Foundation

If the foreign actors will be at the table we will accept that because in Ethiopia nobody trusts anyone. The speaker before he kept talking that he and his tribe has been exposed to ethnic cleansing and this is the problem with Ethiopia, that people keep lying just the way keeps lying to you [sic], to the world despite the Nobel Prize.

We in Beninshagul region, what we experience is slavery, genocide and ethnic cleansing. In the imperial time, in the communist time, in the federal time and in this time. When I say slavery I mean that we still have people the Plemana shugar King now have been enslaved people. The renaissance dam that in Amhara and in the rest of so called Ethiopia say should be bring us prosperity is a actually a dam killing our people every day. The day in which they put the first stones to build it, two thousand people have been killed and ended up in mass graves. There are six million on Beninshangul people that have been killed. Therefore, for us, the existence of this country it means the continuation of atrocities, ethnic cleansing and slavery.

This is a racist country built on racism, nothing in common between them. When you are told there three thousand year of Ethiopian history they are lying at you. Even the name Ethiopia does not belong to them. Our lands have been stolen. Wake up world, what is happening in Ethiopia is a shame for the world and I would like the European Union not to go to Addiss Ababa, but to the rest of the regions to meet with the people, see what happened and how they eradicated us. We don't ask for water of internet, we simply ask to exist, we want to live as human beings. World wake up!

Ms Seena Jimjimo, Executive Director, Oromo Legacy Leadership & Advocacy Association

The saddest thing that makes me very angry is that there is this illusion that Abyi Ahmed, being Oromo, respects Oromo, but he is the very person that has been targeting Oromo from the beginning.

Long before he took Tigray he declared state of emergency in Oromia, he bombed western Oromia until these days and the world have not paid attention before Hachalu Hundessa, the most popular Oromo singer was killed last year exactly on the 29th of June. Nearly 200 people were murdered in few hours and the state of emergency was declared across the country. The government security forces killed and when they kill they do that along with the Amhara regional forces. For many years, like it happened in Benishangul, we have been terrorized by Amhara extremist. Abyi Ahmed can be Oromo, but his vision clearly envisions Amhara supremacy to Ethiopia.

Even though Oromo are the majority in number, 50% of the Ethiopian population is Oromo, still we are treated like a minority. We have been forced to become refugees by the previous regime's twenty-seven years and it is all in the name of the Amhara supremacy. We see Abyi Ahmed as anything Oromo. The Constitution says that me as Oromo and also Benishangul, Tigrayan and Amhara can belong to Ethiopia. In Oromia there are nearly nine million citizens, among them 70% are Amhara, which represent the elite and the richest people in Oromia and nobody kills them, they are safe, but yet Oromo are accused and Amhara to claim that federalism is bad for them.

To answer the question here, the answer is only the dialogue here if we want the country to exist. Benishangul, Kemant and Agew are a minority and they need to be protected in their own region. Dialogue has to take place and has to be truly independent. There are nine speakers and everybody is talking about federalism, everybody wants to feel part of Ethiopia. In Ethiopia we don't trust each other.

Conclusion

Closing remarks from MEP Ignazio Corrao

First of all, thank you Lucia thanks to anyone that the floor that may have things that you say and that you wrote also in the chat because I was trying to follow both sides and sometimes it's not easy.

I understand that there are many things since you discuss many things to clarify. I think it might be a good point to have a follow up as Lucia was saying in a second event. In the meanwhile, we can try to put things together. With that, thank you the UNPO to write down this report so we can inform the other colleagues of the Parliament.

We will try to do it as soon as possible because we understand that there is urgency. You live it everyday and of course we unfortunately are not so fast because we are a bureaucratic body. You know how parliaments and institutions work, they aren't as fast as citizens and peoples need, but we will try to do our best on the basis of the information and the report that we have. I thank you again also in the name of Jordi, who is our fellow colleague of the group, of the parliament. Let's just keep in touch with UNPO and try to do what is possible to foster a dialogue and solution.

Decision

The representatives of the nine communities agreed on participating at close door civil society dialogue hosted by the UNPO. The meeting is scheduled to be held online on 19-20 August 2021. The meeting will be the first national dialogue among civil societies and aims at finding constructive solutions for a democratic, inclusive and peaceful Ethiopia.