



**For Immediate Release**

February 7, 2021

## **Ill-Advised Statement Points to Failed Policies of the Past**

The recent ill-advised statement from the U.S. Embassy in Asmara with regards to Eritrea felt like a slap in the face for the hundreds of thousands of Eritrean Americans, with critical presence in many swing states, who voted the Biden-Harris team into office hoping to see a new era of cooperation between our two countries and a respectful treatment of Africa and Africans. We hope that we will not regret this civic act.

However, we are profoundly disappointed to see such a statement which points to a past of failed policies, not a future of possibilities of working together in U.S.-Eritrea relations.

The policies of the past two decades were largely driven by relentless campaigns of lies generated and orchestrated by the Tigray Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF) when it was in power in Ethiopia. We fear the current trend as indicated by this week's statement may also be influenced by a similar campaign--this time driven by the remnants of the group abusing channels of international diplomacy they had cultivated when they controlled Ethiopia's foreign policy.

We take no pleasure when we point out that the failed policies of the recent past, according to the leaked embassy cables leading to the 2009 sanctions, were partially based on relentless wave of deliberate disinformation and misinformation originating from the U.S. Embassy in Asmara, recycling and laundering, as the cables show, lazy innuendos about Eritrea compiled from TPLF-operated websites.

Similarly, as the Ethiopian attorney general stated a few days ago, the TPLF in a premeditated attempt to internationalize its anticipatory war against the Ethiopian National Defense Forces based in Tigray had "made the uniforms of Eritrean security forces" and distributed it to its special forces, militia and criminals in order to frame Eritrea.

As early as one week after the start of the internal Ethiopian conflict on November 4, 2020, a BBC news analysis summarized in its "Ethiopia's Tigray conflict sparks spread of misinformation" exposed how pictures from different countries as far as Armenia and Russia and as near as Yemen were photoshopped by TPLF supporters to peddle lies. Later in December and January, more pictures from different countries were collected from the internet and dished out as if they were evidence of atrocities happening in Tigray and TPLF supporters were openly boasting on social media how to exploit the gullibility of some

policy makers. For example, a little girl whose picture was taken from social media was presented as a child killed in Adi Grat, Tigray, Ethiopia. The poor girl was forced to post on Facebook stating, “I am alive and well in California!”

*The Washington Post* on February 5, 2021 stated how “In Ethiopia’s digital battle over the Tigray region, facts are casualties” lamenting Twitter “accounts with opaque credentials claim expertise or positions aimed at boosting their credibility. They claim to be academics or aid workers but have little or no online presence beyond Twitter, making their credentials difficult to verify. These accounts may be problematic because they can obtain significant ‘reach’ based on unsubstantiated claims.”

Earlier in November the *Post* had written “Hate speech and disinformation have spread rapidly among politicized groups in Ethiopia.” In fact, the disinformation campaign in Ethiopia is so rampant that some Ph.D. candidates are now using it as a topic for dissertation research.

We would also like to point out the hypocrisy that is apparent when a permutation of some Obama-era officials who had no moral courage to ask the TPLF-led Ethiopian government to immediately vacate sovereign Eritrean territories that it was occupying in breach of an international treaty which the US was a witness and a guarantor, are now rearing their familiar biased heads in yet another administration to accuse Eritrea when the Ethiopian government is telling the world “The TPLF itself ... started the war with the calculation of how the process should be internationalized, to claim that foreign countries have joined forces with the Ethiopian army.”

Recycling failed policies and practices of the past is no way to bring about peace--much less durable one--in the Horn of Africa.

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*The National Council of Eritrean Americans (NCEA)*