



Trouw B.V
Cees van der Laan
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Re: Letter to the Editor in response to the article “De burgeroorlog in Tigray begint steeds meer te lijken op de Rwandese genocide” by Erik van Zwam article published on 23 March 2021

Dear Mr van der Laan,

The Embassy is yet again disappointed with the above-mentioned article on Ethiopia. The article is sensational, suggestive, and full of omissions and unfounded allegations. Such reporting does not match the journalistic standard one can expect from a newspaper, like Trouw.

Mr Erik van Zwam starts by alleging that “genocide” has been committed in Tigray resembling that of the Rwandan genocide. “Genocide” is a legal term with serious connotations and any reference to the Rwandan genocide, where close to a million souls have lost their lives, is a deliberate and unacceptable use of imagery of the tragic atrocity to bring shock and confusion in the context of Tigray. Sadly, the author uses the word so loosely and inappropriately, rendering it meaningless for real victims worldwide. Neither has he been able to establish any parallel whatsoever with the Rwandan genocide. It is also unfortunate that he cites clearly impartial sources to substantiate his case.

Further, the article lists a series of events but omits crucial incidents such as:

- The first attack against the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) by TPLF on 4th November 2020, which necessitated the law enforcement operations. This attack has been admitted by TPLF openly in public broadcasting. On this date, the TPLF attacked the Northern Command of the ENDF in a coordinated attack massacring hundreds of unarmed soldiers while attempting to take possession of the entire military depot. This act is high treason under the Criminal Code of Ethiopia.
- TPLF has fired indiscriminate rockets to the densely populated cities of Bahirdar and Gondar on 13th November 2020. It has also launched multiple rockets to Asmara and its surrounding aimed at regionalizing the conflict.
- The perpetrators of the brutal Mai Kadra massacre of 600 innocent civilians are not mentioned.

While the credibility of the Mr. Zwam's reporting is suspect, nevertheless, the Ethiopian government is cognizant that human rights violations are possibly committed by all sides to the conflict. Any judgement or characterization prior to independent investigations only serves the purpose of sensationalism and not that of justice. The Ethiopian government takes any allegations of human rights abuses and atrocities extremely seriously and has committed itself to undertake the necessary investigation to verify those allegations and bring perpetrators to justice. In this connection, a team composed of representatives from the Federal Attorney General and the Federal Police Commission has been deployed in the Tigray Region to carry out investigative work. In addition, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission has been investigating and reporting on human rights issues, including the Mai Kadra massacre, human rights violations in Axum, civilian casualties, sexual violence, and allegations of discriminatory treatment.

It should also be noted that the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) have agreed to conduct a joint investigation into the human rights violations and abuses allegedly committed by all parties in the context of the Tigray conflict.

The embassy kindly requests this letter to be published in the spirit of objectivity and balanced journalism. I am further committed to provide our insight into the issues at your earliest convenience.

Best regards,


Million Samuel Gebre
Ambassador

