



ALLIANCE OF
CIVIL SOCIETY
ORGANIZATIONS OF TIGRAY

**Press Statement by the Alliance of Civil Society Organizations of Tigray (ACSOT)
on the Ongoing Political Crisis in Tigray**

The board of the Alliance of Civil Society Organizations of Tigray (ACSOT), a consortium of 124 Civil Society Organizations along with its secretariat, convened an urgent consultative meeting on January 25, 2025, to deliberate on the deepening political crisis in Tigray in general and the press statement issued by some “*Senior Leadership of the Tigray Army*” on January 22, 2025 in particular. It’s to be recalled that, on January 20, 2025, ACSOT along with members of the Civic-Business Coalition held a press briefing in which we proposed solutions for the peaceful settlement of the political divisions in Tigray and, also demanded for the establishment of an Inclusive Interim Council as part of the remedies to address the prevailing political crisis. We also called for convening an urgent public convention that would bring all relevant stakeholders to deliberate on the ongoing crises and set comprehensive and sustainable solutions to the crises.

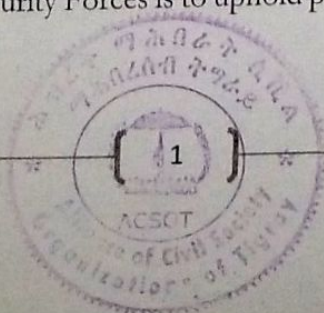
Amidst these, a press conference was held by some “*Senior Leadership of the Tigray Army*” on January 22, 2025, which has grave impact to our efforts of fostering a peaceful and inclusive resolution to the crisis. This statement not only intensified the political tensions but also has the ability of endangering the possibility of achieving a balanced and equitable solution that serves the interests of all political actors and the wider public.

We are particularly concerned that the statement largely reflects alignment of the commanders with a particular faction of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) which has the potential of exacerbating the existing political division and beyond.

In light of these developments, ACSOT issues the following points and corresponding calls:

1. To the leadership of the Tigray Security Forces

The Alliance of Civil Society Organizations of Tigray (ACSOT) firmly believes that the primary mandate of the Tigray Peace and Security Forces is to uphold peace, ensure the rule of law, and protect



the security of the people. However, the recent statement issued by the Senior Leadership of the Tigray Peace and Security Forces largely is biased towards one faction within the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). By issuing this statement, the Senior Leadership of the Tigray Peace and Security Forces have entangled itself in the internal power struggle within the TPLF instead of fostering peace and stability in line to our previous calls and initiatives.

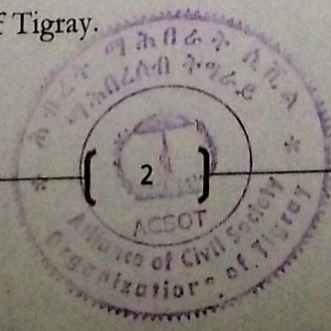
We believe that this action contradicts the fundamental mission of the Peace and Security Forces, undermines their impartiality, and it may jeopardize the smooth implementation of the Pretoria CoHA. Also, the issuance of a statement favoring one faction over another not only deepens the ongoing political crisis but also endangers the unity of the people of Tigray and the fragile political landscape of the region.

The position taken by some senior members of the Tigray Peace and Security Forces Leadership regarding the restructuring of the Interim Administration of Tigray may also undermine political pluralism, and, also the implementation of the Pretoria CoHA which is the narrow cord between Tigray Regional State and the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Moreover, it fails to consider the geopolitical realities of the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia, and Tigray. Thus,

- 1.1. We call upon the Security commanders that issued the statement to reconsider their decision and uphold their independence and impartiality.
- 1.2. We also call them to refrain from any actions that could compromise the region's stability, abstain from imposing administrative measures against other dissenting fellow commanders during internal discussions, and respect the fundamental rights of freedom of speech and freedom of movement for all Tigray people as long as these do not endanger peace and order.

2. To the TPLF Factions

ACSOT and other civic actors, have exerted immense advocacy efforts for peaceful settlement of the ongoing power struggle within the factions of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and encouraged a shift toward political dialogue by avoiding "a winner-takes-all approach". When we were about to lose hopes from the factions, we publicly called for convening a public conference to explore possible resolutions and their implementation. Unfortunately, the senior leaders of the security forces have now taken a position that may escalate the political division and ensuing political crisis in Tigray, and exacerbate the instability of the region. Against the backdrop of these, we urge both factions to refrain from employing the Security Forces for their respective political ends at the expense of safety, solidarity, and security of the people of Tigray.



3. For the People of Tigray—At Home and Abroad

The people of Tigray have endured unprecedented suffering over the past years and this is continuing. It is, therefore, imperative to reject campaigns that push the public for incite, division and violence. Violence will not bring peace or stability. It will only drag Tigray further into turmoil. The Tigray people must thus remain committed to peace and pressurize the political leaders and security forces commanders resolve their differences through peaceful dialogue.

4. For the Youth of Tigray

We call upon the youth population of Tigray to remain vigilant and reject any attempt to drag Tigray and its people into another round of conflict. We urge the youth to fulfill their historical responsibility by actively shaping the future of Tigray, rejecting the divisive narratives and political manipulations spread by political leaders and Say NO to another round of cyclic conflict-inducing trends and instead we call on the Tigray youth to invest in unity, and Tigray's peace and stability.

5. To Women and People with Disability (PWDs) in Tigray

The war on Tigray resulted in grave human rights violations, including gender-based violence and beyond. Tigray women and PWDs have suffered immense atrocities, and despite their enduring pain. Once again, further conflict and instability in Tigray would place women and PWDs at heightened risk of violence and misery. We thus call these groups to raise their voices for peace and reject any unwarranted trend that would brew violence. With this, we would also like to call on for safeguarding of the rights of the Tigray Muslim students in Axum within the framework of law.

6. For all CSOs, Political Parties, Business and Religious Organizations

We call for all organized institutions and informal peace movements of civic space actors (*Civil Society Organizations, Political Parties, Academia and Religious Organizations*) to pursue institution building approaches, upholding rule of law, enhance inclusivity in a way that could arrest the ongoing crisis of the Tigray region and ensure sustainable peace.

To do so and in line to our previous demands along with the Civic-Business Community coalition members, we call on these stakeholders to emphasize on pursuing for the establishment of all-inclusive Interim Council with a mandate of full-fledged interim legislative power, overseeing the interim administration and overseeing the implementation of the Pretoria Agreement.



7. To the Tigray Interim Regional Administration

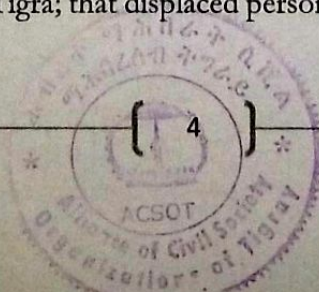
ACSOT strongly believes that the current political crisis in Tigray can only be resolved through collective action and the engagement of all Tigrayans both within the region and in the diaspora. We recognize that the advisory council being established has its own significance in Tigray's political landscape but we believe that this is not enough. Thus, we call on the Tigray Interim Regional Administration to invest in the establishment of all-inclusive Interim Council with full-fledged regional council power during the interim period.

8. To the Federal Government of Ethiopia

ACSOT recognizes the achievements gained so far as a result of the partial implementation of the Pretoria CoHA but we believe that implementation of the Pretoria CoHA remains far from comprehensive and effective. One of the daunting challenges for the effective implementation of the Pretoria CoHA is the presence of foreign and non-ENDF forces with in Tigray which is the mandate of the Federal Government. However, the federal government lacks good faith in terms of expediting the withdrawal of these forces as a result of which secured, organized and dignified return of Tigrayan refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) to many parts of Tigray in general and Western and Eastern Tigray in particular has not yet been realized. In addition, we are particularly concerned with the apparent contribution of the federal government in increasing political division in Tigray which could destabilize not only Tigray but Ethiopia and beyond. Against the backdrop of these, we call on the Federal government for effective and good faith implementation of the Pretoria CoHA in general and expediting the withdrawal of foreign and non-ENDF forces from Tigrayan territories, secured, organized and dignified return of Tigrayan refugees and IDP to their places of origin, implementation of comprehensive recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction programs in particular. We also call on call the federal government to play positive role in peaceful settlement of the political differences in Tigray and particular avoid all actions that would brew another conflict in Tigray.

9. To Stakeholders of the Pretoria CoHA

ACSOT recognizes and appreciates the efforts made by the the African Union (AU), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)US government, the European Union (EU), the United Kingdom (UK), and the international community at large to end the world's deadliest war and consolidate the peace process. Despite the concerning level of its implementation, we have been celebrating the limited dividends of the implementation of the Pretoria CoHA. The fact that huge humanitarian crisis is persisting in Tigra; that displaced persons and refugees remain in dire conditions



though they should have been returned in dignified and organized manner; that Tigray's constitutionally recognized territory is still compromised are among the top challenges that are contributing to Tigray's internal political crisis that merit urgent attention. Currently, catastrophic humanitarian, human rights and security crises are prevailing in Tigray primarily because large portion of Tigray's constitutionally recognized territories remain illegally occupied by foreign (Eritrean) and non-ENDF (Amhara) forces remain in Tigray in contravention of the clear stipulations of the Pretoria CoHA (Articles 2 (b), 4, and 5.3) and the Nairobi Declaration (Article 2.1(d)). Yet, cherishing the achievements gained so far, we call on the panel of mediators, observers and other key stakeholders to, among other things, double their efforts and investments including budget increment for the full and effective implementation and monitoring of the Pretoria CoHA. We also demand for their contribution in addressing the ongoing political instability in Tigray as it undermines the effective implementation of the CoHA.

10. To the International Community

We acknowledge and appreciate the critical role played by the international community in, among other things, supporting the signing of the Pretoria CoHA. However, Tigray continues to face enormous challenges, including the internal political instability that could escalate into a national and regional security crisis in the absence of comprehensive and effective implementation of the Pretoria CoHA. Taking these into account, we call upon the international community to take decisive action in safeguarding the Pretoria CoHA, return of IDPs and refugees, supporting Tigray's profound humanitarian, recovery, reconstruction and development needs.

Particularly, given the recent decision of the Trump administration to temporarily suspend USAID assistance to Tigray, we all on the international community to explore alternative and/or complementary humanitarian, peacebuilding and development actions not only to prevent further suffering of the displaced population but more generally to rebuild Tigray.

