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World-wide Ethiopian Civic Associations
Network (WE-CAN)

P. O. Box 45452, Phoenix, AZ 85064

August 28, 2020

The Honorable Senator Amy Klobuchar
425 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, D. 20510

The Honorable Senator Tina Smith
720 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Klobuchar and Smith,

As elected leaders of community associations of Ethiopian-Americans in various U.S. cities, it was with a mixed emotion of delight and sorrow that we read your August 26, 2020 letter to the Honorable Tibor Nagy, Jr., U.S. Undersecretary of State for African Affairs, regarding recent developments in Ethiopia.

We believe that it is in the long-term strategic interest of the United States that Ethiopia succeed in its efforts to transition into a sustainably stable, peaceful, democratic, and inclusive ally in the Horn of Africa, a region that has been a hotbed of conflict, state failure, and human tragedies. The fact that your letter acknowledges that Ethiopia "has made great strides over the last two years to build a more inclusive, functional democracy" is a constructive recognition of this interest. This was the source of our delight, and we hope you will remain constructively engaged in shaping and directing U.S. policy towards this end.

We sincerely believe, however, that you have either been misled or misinformed about Jawar Mohammad, on whose behalf your letter was apparently written. We respectfully submit the following facts and circumstances leading to his arrest and about the reality in the ground in Ethiopia, with the hope that you will take them in to consideration in formulating your position and policy issues related to Ethiopia:

1. There are highly organized, well-financed and coordinated extremist groups hard at work to undo the "great strides" that Ethiopia has been making over the last two years. These forces are united in their opposition to Prime Minister Abiy's efforts to stabilize the country and "to build a more inclusive, functional democracy." They have been working hand in glove to destabilize the country. Activities they are engaged in towards this end include: (1) armed insurrections, banditry, and bank robbery in several parts of Ethiopia's Oromia state by the OLF-Shene; (2) efforts to secede the Tigray regional state by unconstitutional means by the TPLF gang, which misruled the country for over 27 years and left it in the mess that Abiy inherited; and (3) systematic propagation of hate speech to promote inter-ethnic conflicts in the Oromia region by Jawar Mohammad and his Minnesota-based Oromia Media Network (OMN). Sadly, these efforts have been gaining momentum as this country of 110 million people is faced with enormous challenges fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Most dangerous of these forces is Jawar Mohammad. Using his OMN broadcasting network and social media, Jawar has been propagating hate speech inciting violence against minorities in the Oromia region. The indoctrination of the youth that OMN has been using are like those of Rwanda's infamous radio station (RTLM) which played a key role in the 1994 gruesome genocide against the Tutsi. OMN is, in essence, Jawar's RTLM in Ethiopia! Included among the venom that he has been spewing to his vigilante groups are such hateful slogans as "Ethiopia out of Oromia!" and "Kill all Neftegnas!" (Nefteгна is a code word primarily for Christian Amharas.)

3. Jawar has the audacity to claim that he speaks for the Oromos, one of the 80 plus ethnic groups that constitute Ethiopia, but he and his followers are a fringe element; the predominant majority of the Oromo people, both at home and in the Diaspora, are peaceful, patriotic, and unity-loving. Ethiopia is also the only country in Africa that has embraced the world's great religions of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism for centuries, and where people of all faiths co-exist peacefully.
4. Over the last 18 months, there have been three episodes that have resulted in genocidal massacres of minority groups in the Oromia region, primarily Christian Amharas. The last such episode was on June 29, 2020 when about 240 civilians were killed in a massive outburst of violence following the assassination of a famous Oromo singer, Hachalu Hundesa, a patriotic Christian Ethiopian. Here is how the Ethiopian-American Civic Council and the Ethiopian Advocacy Network described this episode:

Carefully choreographed, vigilantes were immediately called into action after the singer's killing. In the city of Shashemene, the epicenter of the violent site, the extremists used the killing as a pretext to unleash death and destruction on non-Oromo Ethiopians who reside in the Oromia region. The vigilantes went door to door with carefully prepared lists of names, checking ethnic identity cards before killing them including women and children. Those who survived the mayhem, their homes and businesses were looted and burned to the ground and many were displaced from their homes permanently. These mobs of young men were not peaceful protesters but merciless killers. They came armed with deadly weapons including machete, knives, spears in order to hunt down their victims. Non-Oromos were targeted solely for their ethnicity while Christian Oromos were targeted for their religious affinity. During such carnage and despite multiple attempts made by the victims pleading for protection, there were no government forces present in the scene. Instead, they were told the security forces were not given the order to protect civilians. In some cases, the security forces themselves have collaborated with this horrific crime against humanity.

In its July 22, 2020 report, Minority Rights Group International concluded that they "are seeing a tale-tale-sign of ethnic cleansing" and urged *"the US authorities to intervene to halt the hate speech propagated by US-based Oromo Media Network, which broadcasts messages that incite violence against ethnic Amharas, Gurages and other non-Oromo minority groups in the region."* (emphasis added.)

5. Finally, you may not be aware that Jawar has publicly "renounced" his U.S. citizenship as a condition for registering as an opposition political party member. Is he or are his misguided followers now claiming that he is still a U.S. citizen? We do not know where the truth lies as Jawar is known to lie wildly on issues big and small. According to charges filed by the Office of Ethiopia's Attorney General, Jawar was arrested on suspicion of crimes related to the assassination of Hachalu Hundesa and the inhumane acts of well-documented genocide that followed. These are serious allegations and, according to multiple media accounts, he is well represented by multiple attorneys and is defending himself in a court of proper jurisdiction in accordance with Ethiopia's criminal code. We sincerely hope that you would agree with us that is where his case and those of his collaborators belong.

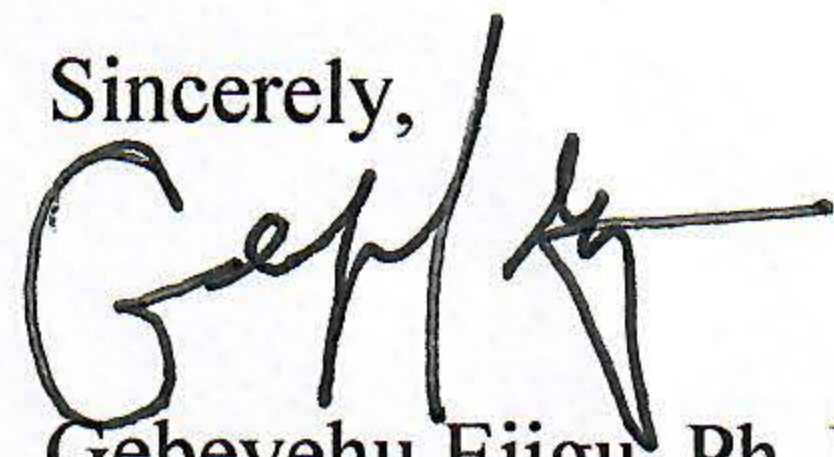
Members of our associations have been encouraging and support the Ethiopian government's efforts to bring to justice those responsible for the assassination of Hachalu Hundesa and for the gruesome massacres of minorities and Christians in Ethiopia's Oromia region. The hundreds of innocent civilians who were massacred merely because of their ethnic background and/or religious affiliations deserve justice. Indeed, our only criticism of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government is that it tolerated this extremist group and its collaborators for too long. The Ethiopian government has no choice but to administer law and order to preserve the country's sovereignty and the safety and security of its people.

We would therefore urge you to use your good offices to help U.S. policy makers understand the danger of extremism and ethnic and religious-based conflicts in Ethiopia that have the potential to disintegrate the country

and turn the entire Horn of Africa into a hotbed of conflict, state failure, and human tragedies. It is, indeed, in the long-term strategic interest of the United States of America to pursue and maintain a constructive and impartial foreign policy towards Ethiopia.

With our utmost respect -- and appreciation for your attention to our concerns,

Sincerely,



Gebeyehu Ejigu, Ph. D.

Executive Director

Ethiopian Community Association in Arizona

On behalf of Executive Directors and Boards of Directors of:

1	Ethiopian Community Association of Minnesota	12	Ethiopian Community Association of Houston
2	Ethiopian Community Association of Atlanta	13	Ethiopian Community Center of Las Vegas, Nevada
3	Ethiopian Community Association in Arizona	14	Ethiopian Community Association in Los Angeles
4	Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago, Inc.	15	Ethiopian Community Association in Louisville, KY
5	Ethiopian Community Association of Dallas ((MAAEC Dallas/Fort Worth)	16	Ethiopian Community Association in Northern Virginia
6	Ethiopian Community Association of Denver, Colorado	17	Ethiopian Community Association of Greater Philadelphia
7	Ethiopian Community Association of Greater Lansing	18	Ethiopian Community Association of Seattle
8	Ethiopian Community Association in Central Indiana	19	Ethiopian Community Association in St. Louis
9	Ethiopian Community Association in Greater Cincinnati	20	Ethiopian Community and Cultural Center of Bay Area
10	Ethiopian Community Association of Central Michigan	21	Ethiopians in Nashville
11	Ethiopian Community Association in the Milwaukee Area	22	Ethiopians in Alabama