

Ethiopians Mobilize to Halt Western-backed Coup Attempt

Rebel groups fighting the central government are being encouraged to further fragment the Horn of Africa state

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Since November 4 of 2020, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia has been under attack by former rulers of this East African state.

The Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) has openly defied the government of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed who was recently elected by a wide margin to establish an inclusive administration representing the various regions and ethnic groups inside the country.

A TPLF-controlled Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) party took power in May 1991 at the aegis of the former President of the United States George H.W. Bush, Sr. The TPLF-EPRDF regime remained in charge of the country over a period of 27 years when they were ousted in a popular uprising during the early months of 2018.

Since the ascendancy of Abiy he has lifted a years-long state of emergency, released thousands of political prisoners, opened up avenues for broader participation of women in political life and negotiated a resolution to a border dispute with neighboring Eritrea. Abiy signed agreements with Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki which ended hostilities between the two Horn of Africa states which went to war in 1998 and 2000. Prior to the independence of Eritrea in 1991, the political leadership of the country, a former Italian colony, waged a thirty-year war against Ethiopia.

As a result of these measures enacted during his first few months as leader of the vast country of 115 million people, Prime Minister Abiy was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway in 2019. Prior to receiving the Nobel Prize, he was awarded the Peace and Reconciliation Award for his efforts in resolving a 27-year split within the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church (EOTC), one of the oldest Christian denominations in the world.



Ethiopia Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed with the First Lady and Church Patriarch (Source: Abayomi Azikiwe)

Yet despite these achievements, the TPLF and its allies refused to recognize the new emerging political dispensation. During 2020, the central government proposed a postponement of the regional and national elections due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The TPLF, which still controls the northern Tigray province, rejected the government's delay and held their own separate elections. Later reports emanating from the government of Prime Minister Abiy stated that the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) stationed in Mekelle, the capital of Tigray, were attacked by the TPLF-aligned military units.

After the attacks on November 4, 2020, the Ethiopian federal military forces moved into Tigray and took control of the provincial administration. The government declared the deployment a "police operation" to bring the province under federal authority.

Nonetheless, the Tigray Defense Forces (TDF), the TPLF military wing, regrouped and continued to launch attacks on the ENDF in the province. In July of 2021, Abiy announced a unilateral ceasefire with the TPLF and withdrew federal forces from Mekelle and other areas. However, the Tigray military units continued to advance outside of the area launching attacks in neighboring Amhara and Afar provinces.

In recent weeks reports indicate that the TPLF has taken control of two towns in the north central region of the country, Dessie and Kombolcha, located in the Amhara province. The seizure of these two towns prompted a response from the prime minister who reimposed a state of emergency in Ethiopia and called for a countywide mobilization of all citizens against the attempted takeover of the government in Addis Ababa.

[An editorial](#) published in the state-owned Ethiopian Herald on November 6 said:

"[R]esidents across Ethiopia have been expressing their readiness to defend the sovereignty and unity of Ethiopia against the satanic divisive prophecies of the terrorist groups Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and OLF-Shane with their western coalitions. Yesterday, tens of thousands of Ethiopians from different regional states

including Oromia, Gambela and Dire Dawa rallied in support of the unity and territorial integrity of their beloved Ethiopia, and denounced the war waged against the state in a concerted manner by both internal and external elements. What has been chanted loud among the people is that: 'We, Ethiopians, at home and in every corner of the world reaffirm commitment to repeat the victory secured as a result of the fallen fathers at the Adwa Battle (1896).' They said it loud and clear: 'We have never, and we will never, compromise on our sovereignty and unity. Rather, we defend them by defeating the conspiracies of terrorist TPLF and its local and external allies.'"

Western Imperialists Led by the United States Behind the Current Conflict

Another major factor underlying the recent attacks on Ethiopia is the plan by the government to make operational the Grand Renaissance Dam Project (GERD). Neighboring Egypt, a close ally of Washington and the second largest recipient of U.S. aid after the State of Israel, has vehemently opposed the filling of the dam saying it would threaten its dominance over the water flow from the Blue Nile.

Former U.S. President Donald Trump during 2020 attempted to impose an agreement on Ethiopia which was contrary to its national interests. Trump suggested that the Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi would have no alternative than to blow up the project. Such provocative language set the stage for the armed insurrection against the central government in Addis Ababa.

President Joe Biden, the successor to Trump, has maintained the same interventionist and imperialist foreign policy towards Ethiopia. Several months ago, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, issued threats against the Ethiopian government accusing the Abiy administration of preventing humanitarian aid from reaching Tigray.

These threats signaled to pro-U.S. elements in the U.N. to echo such accusations prompting the Ethiopian government to expel several officials of the international body. These expulsions led to further condemnations of the Abiy administration within the U.S. and western media outlets.

In early November, the Biden administration suspended Ethiopia from eligibility for the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), a program adopted in 2000 under the presidency of Bill Clinton which provides incentives for corporations to establish light industrial production facilities in various continental states. Biden placed the Ethiopian government in the same category as Mali and Guinea, where the U.S.-trained military officers have staged coups against elected governments in 2020-2021.

The political situation in Ethiopia must be viewed separately from the developments in Mali and Guinea. In Ethiopia, the recently elected administration of Prime Minister Abiy and the Prosperity Party, are struggling to maintain civilian rule and national unity. In Mali and Guinea, a clique of military officers trained in Pentagon war colleges overthrew the governments in defiance of the 15-member regional organization the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the 55-member states African Union (AU). Guinea and Mali are operational centers for the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) which has thousands of Pentagon troops stationed on the continent.

In another public relations maneuver, nine opposition groupings including the TPLF and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), signed a pact in Washington, D.C. on November 5 pledging to

overthrow the existing government in Ethiopia. Such an action would not have been allowed if these organizations were not working in the interests of U.S. imperialism.

Spokespersons for the Ethiopian government immediately denounced the opposition groups' announcement in Washington, D.C., saying that the majority of the organizations involved in the press conference have no real presence on the ground inside the country. Although the Biden administration has recently called for a cessation of hostilities, its actions in providing diplomatic and other forms of support to the rebels reveals that they are working on behalf of the State Department.

[According to a report](#) in Africa News:

“Ethiopia’s government on Friday (Nov. 5) called the alliance ‘a publicity stunt,’ asserting that some of the groups involved ‘are not really organizations that have any traction.’ It also asserted that life in the capital had a ‘sense of normalcy’ and rejected any notion of a siege. The prime minister’s spokeswoman, Billene Seyoum, addressed the alliance when she tweeted that ‘any outliers that rejected the democratic processes Ethiopia embarked upon cannot be for democratization,’ pointing out Abiy’s opening-up of political space after taking office in 2018. His reforms included welcoming some opposition groups home from exile.”

These events related to Ethiopia illustrate clearly the role of imperialism in fostering division and balkanization in Africa. The continent needs greater unity among its governments and people in order to realize genuine development and sovereignty. The Biden administration’s posture towards Addis Ababa follows the same pattern as its destabilization efforts against Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Iran, China, the Russian Federation, Syria, Zimbabwe and many other states within various geo-political regions internationally.

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Featured image: Ethiopians protest US intervention in their affairs on Nov. 7, 2021 (Source: Abayomi Azikiwe)

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