

Press Release

Dear Compatriots,

This to inform you that the highly anticipated 2020 Afar Forum bi-annual conference which was planned to take place in Ethiopia, Afar Region, is canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The safety of our people and members are paramount in this trying time when the pandemic is challenging many lives around the world. As you all are aware, Afar people in Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Eritrea do not have access to adequate health care or food and clean water.

It is important more than ever to come together and stand in solidarity to help our people, to exchange ideas and ponder on evaluating and devising common strategies to highlight the serious social, economic and political turmoil the Afar people are facing. The marginalization and oppression continues and there is sufficient alarming evidence that shows further deterioration of social, economic and political conditions in all the three countries where the Afar people live.

It is considered by the government of Eritrea that the Afar people are the number one enemy of the State. The economic blockade on both land and sea is prevalent since the independence of Eritrea from Ethiopia. Because of this blockade the Afar people are exposed and subjected to unimaginable injustice, absolute poverty, and humiliation.

In Djibouti, the subjugation of Afar people by dominated Issa-Somali government has become the norm. Afars are the indigenous people of Djibouti and have been systematically and deliberately subjected to second class citizens. The living conditions where Afars live predominately are unbearable. Access to education, clean water, and health facilities are non-existent in the northern part of the country. Arbitrary arrest of the youth and opposition leaders who dare to speak up against the dictatorial regime and unfair policies has been common practice.

In Ethiopia, after the demise of EPRDF, the Afars were hoping to be free from the yoke of oppressors and corrupted rulers who suffocated the citizens from exercising their God-given rights. When Dr. Abiy Ahmed came to power he promised for change, a new beginning, yet failed to fulfill the promise that was given to the people. The old rulers who had been imposed by EPRDF on the Afar people for the last 29 years are still manipulating power using their henchmen to resist the reform. To this day, they rule the Afar region by dividing the people along clan and as low as zonal lines to instigate clan confrontation to stay in power by any means necessary.

The Afar Forum has been conducting consultative meetings and conferences for the last 29 years. These conferences highlight the predicaments of the Afar people in the countries they live, inform the international community and friends. The Afar Forum is a non-partisan organization and its mission will always be to provide the platform for all Afars to discuss issues that affect our people. Since we will not be able to hold our large gathering due to COVID-19, we shall host an online (virtual) conference. It will feature Afar intellectuals, experts of the region, political parties, and government representatives. The date of this conference will be announced soon. We are in the process of formalizing the online platform and the agenda for the conference. Stay tuned!



Afar Forum Executive Committee, June 17, 2020

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