

SUBJECT: A RESOLUTION CONDEMNING THE CONFLICT IN ETHIOPIA AND STANDING IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE OF ETHIOPIA

INITIATED BY: COUNCILMEMBER SEPI SHYNE

PREPARED BY: COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT
(Yvonne Quarker, Director)
(Andi Lovano, Community & Legislative Affairs, Manager)
(Jennifer Del Toro, Community & Legislative Affairs, Supervisor)
(Michael Watson, Community & Legislative Affairs, Intern)

STATEMENT ON THE SUBJECT:

The City Council will consider adopting a resolution condemning the conflict taking place in Ethiopia and standing in solidarity with the people of Ethiopia. The current conflict has evolved into a complex humanitarian crisis with millions of people in need of assistance due to food shortages, displacement, and a lack of basic services.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1) Adopt Resolution No. 24-_____ “A RESOLUTION CONDEMNING THE CONFLICT IN ETHIOPIA AND STANDING IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE OF ETHIOPIA”.
- 2) Direct staff to send a letter to President Joe Biden and copies of the letter to Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, USAID Administrator Samantha Power, Senators Alex Padilla and Laphonza Butler, Representative Adam Schiff, California Governor Gavin Newsom, California State Senator Ben Allen, and California Assembly Member Rick Chavez Zbur, and others as deemed appropriate.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

Ethiopia is currently experiencing a complex and dire crisis, with hunger, escalating

violence, displacement, religious persecution, and human suffering all being reported.

On November 3, 2022, the government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) signed a peace deal in Pretoria, South Africa, commonly referred to as the Pretoria Agreement, agreeing to a permanent cessation of hostilities between the two parties, thus ending a two-year conflict that had ravaged the Tigray, Amhara, and Afar regions of northern Ethiopia. The agreement did not include the Amhara and Afar regions which were at the forefront of the war. Therefore, despite the cessation of hostilities, the government of Ethiopia has failed to meet its obligation of providing basic services to much of northern Ethiopia, with concerns of human rights violations continuing unabated.

It is estimated that 20 million Ethiopians, out of the country's population of roughly 120 million, rely on food aid because of conflicts and drought. Much of this aid comes from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Nation's World Food Program (WFP). In May 2023, USAID and WFP temporarily suspended food aid to Ethiopia due to a massive corruption scheme by the government of Ethiopia, which allegedly involved diverting and selling food aid intended for famine-stricken populations.

Over 4.5 million Ethiopians are internally displaced, the largest in the world, with reports of death from hunger and lack of basic services emerging from Amhara, Afar, Tigray, and Oromia regions.

In August 2023, just months after the Pretoria peace agreement and amid an ongoing humanitarian crisis, the government of Ethiopia initiated a new conflict in the Amhara region. They declared a controversial state of emergency across the entire region under the pretext of disarming local militias. Under the state of emergency, the government of Ethiopia established a military command post in the Amhara region and deployed security forces with unchecked powers and impunity, leading to state-sponsored violence against Amhara civilians.

Additionally, the government of Ethiopia implemented a complete internet and telephone blackout and imposed restrictions on journalists entering the Amhara region. Meanwhile, reports emerged of extrajudicial killings and sexual violence against civilians. The situation escalated with mass attacks, including indiscriminate drone bombings of civilian targets and shelling of historic towns with UNESCO-protected heritage sites, all under the

pretext of targeting local militias.

In December 2023, the Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention issued an updated genocide alert for the Amhara region of Ethiopia in response to actions taken by the Ethiopian government. This alert was prompted by the continuous killings of ethnic Amharas carried out by the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF), Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), and the Oromia Special Forces (OSF). Additionally, factors contributing to the alert included the heightened use of military drones targeting the civilian population, the lasting state of emergency in the region, allegations of potential chemical weapons usage, and the current anti-Amhara sentiment in the Oromia region.

This resolution calls upon President Biden and his administration to take the following actions:

- Condemn the ongoing conflict in Ethiopia, particularly the egregious human rights violations and acts of violence against civilians;
- Urge an immediate cessation of hostilities and for the government of Ethiopia to respect international human right laws;
- Provide humanitarian assistance and ensure accessibility of aid to the people of Ethiopia in particular the Amhara region; and
- Advocate for ongoing support on an international scale, inclusive of the United Nations and its member states, to take immediate and decisive action to address the ongoing crisis, protect civilians, and facilitate a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Ethiopia.

The City of West Hollywood condemns the ongoing conflict in Ethiopia, particularly the egregious human rights violations and acts of violence against civilians. The City stands in solidarity with the people of Ethiopia, acknowledging their resilience and condemning the oppressive actions that have led to widespread suffering. Over a half century ago, Ethiopian refugees and immigrants began settling in the United States, enriching the nation's cultural fabric, and contributing to the growth and vibrancy of American cities through food, music, and arts. The Ethiopian American community has played a key role in the greater Los Angeles area in various sectors including education, healthcare,

business, technology, and so much more.

The City of West Hollywood affirms its support of human rights and has consistently been on the forefront of human rights issues and in recent years has taken several actions to oppose the hostile treatment of various regimes across the world. In October 2020, the City passed a resolution (Resolution No. 20-5338) condemning Azerbaijan’s military operation in Artsakh and in support of a peaceful resolution to the conflict. In October 2023, the city passed a resolution (Resolution No. 23-091) standing in support of the people of Israel in the wake of the tragic events that occurred on October 7, 2023.

STAFF ANALYSIS:

This item has a low impact on staff time and current departmental workplans. If this item is approved, it would require staff time to prepare and send correspondence to accompany the adopted resolution to the relevant elected officials as referenced in the report.

CONFORMANCE WITH VISION 2020 AND THE GOALS OF THE WEST HOLLYWOOD

GENERAL PLAN:

This item is consistent with the Primary Strategic Goal(s) (PSG) and/or Ongoing Strategic Program(s) (OSP) of:

- OSP-11: Community Education.

In addition, this item is compliant with the following goal(s) of the West Hollywood General Plan:

- G-1: Ensure that the community is active and engaged in the decision-making process.

EVALUATION PROCESSES:

N/A.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND HEALTH:

N/A.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

N/A.

OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:

COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT / COMMUNITY & LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS
DIVISION

CITY COUNCIL INITIATIVE CATEGORY:

LEGISLATIVE & RESOLUTIONS

FISCAL IMPACT:

None.

ATTACHMENT:

Attachment A - Resolution No. 24-_____ "A RESOLUTION CONDEMNING THE
CONFLICT IN ETHIOPIA AND STANDING IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE OF
ETHIOPIA".