The government of Ethiopia has declared a state of emergency in the country, as the rebel forces of Tigray threaten to attack the capital, and the war that has been going on for a year is rapidly escalating and brings more and more troubles and misfortunes to Ethiopians. The United States has stated that the danger has “significantly worsened” and has recalled all of its secondary diplomats and their families to leave Ethiopia while the Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has called for people to make sacrifices in curtailing the rebels. Saudi Arabia, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and other countries have also requested for their citizens to leave Ethiopia.

The declaration of a state of emergency by the Ethiopian Council of Ministers is the clearest sign of alarm from Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed’s Government, who a year ago allowed soldiers from the neighboring country Eritrea to invade the Tigray region and pursue local rebel forces together with the Ethiopian military. Since then, thousands have been killed, tens of thousands injured and the region has undergone aerial bombing which has caused irreparable damage to an already impoverished region. The Council of Ministers has warned in a statement that the Tigrayan forces and their allies present a “serious and inevitable danger” for the country’s existence.

The USA who is now taking an interest in this African country, and having not had any prior business there, has unexpectedly warned Tigrayan forces (who for a long time have dominated in the national Government before Abiy Ahmed took up his post) against any attempts to “besiege” the capital Addis Ababa after seizing control of the strategic cities Dessie and Kombolcha. This allows them to quickly move along the main road towards the capital, whose residents, according to foreign media reports, are extremely alarmed. The state of emergency is immediately taking force and will be active for six months. The government may impose a curfew which obliges citizens to undergo military training, disrupt traffic links and journeys, suspend media licenses and detain anyone suspected of
being linked to a ‘terrorist group’ for an indefinite period of time. Local administrations in some regions could be disbanded and military control may be established. Unsanctioned public gatherings and any expressions of non-compliance with the state of emergency are prohibited. Meanwhile the Security Bureau in Addis Ababa has advised any residents who own a firearm to have it registered now and has warned that for the provision of peace in the city searches will be carried out in homes and businesses.

The United Nations, as always only in words, has expressed its extreme concern at the latest events having warned that “the stability of Ethiopia and the region as a whole is at stake” and has once again called for an immediate ceasefire. It goes without saying that this call was left hanging in the air and had no effect on the opposing sides. The Prime Minister of Ethiopia reiterated his call on all citizens to fight the approaching Tigrayan forces, adding that “we must keep a close eye on those who work for the enemy and live among us.” Regular roundups of ethnic Tigrayans, their arrests and deportations are carried out in the capital.

At the same time, the Tigrayan forces say they are pressuring the Ethiopian government to lift a deadly, months-long blockade of their region of about 6 million, where basic services have been cut off and humanitarian food and medical assistance denied. This is “possibly the most egregious humanitarian obstacle in the world,” a senior US Agency for International Development official told the Associated Press. “We are witnessing a campaign of systematic bureaucratic obstacles blocking aid in areas occupied by Tigrayan forces,” affecting not only Tigray, but also areas in the neighboring Amhara and Afar regions that are currently held by Tigrayan militants, the official said on condition of anonymity.

Rebel forces moved into these regions after retaking much of the Tigray in June, displacing hundreds of thousands of residents and exacerbating the crisis. “We certainly found it difficult to get the prime minister’s attention” to this issue and any calls for a solution, a senior USAID official said after a recent visit to Ethiopia. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized otherwise. The Tigrayan forces say they are currently teaming up with another militant group, the Oromo Liberation Army, which they formed an alliance with earlier this year. Fighting could soon engulf the entire Oromo region, neighboring Addis Ababa. The ethnic Oromo once hailed Abiy as the country’s first prime minister, but since then there has been dissatisfaction with the imprisonment of a number of Oromo leaders.

Jeffrey Feltman, US Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, said the Tigrayan forces’ links with other militant groups are highly dangerous. The envoy also said that he understands why the Ethiopian prime minister does not want to sit down at the negotiating table opposite the leaders of the Tigrayan forces, but “there are many, many ways to start cautious negotiations.” In the end, Feltman was forced to admit: “There will be negotiations because neither side will win.” No one knows how the events in Ethiopia will end, yet Washington apparently has already planned and thought out everything. It is quite natural, according to the special representative, that all negotiations will take place under the watchful eye of the overseas officials of the Joe Biden administration.

Based on the example of recent events in Ethiopia, one can precisely and clearly see that Washington, being the beloved student of London, has well understood the policy of the rulers of the British Empire: “Divide and rule.” On the one hand, American officials showed “concern” for the unity of Ethiopia, while at the same time actively advocate the slogans of Tigray, thereby seeking to fragment the country and strengthen their American “order and democracy.”

How else can one understand the latest news on Ethiopia that came from Washington about the creation of a united front of a number of opposition forces against the current Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed? Ethiopian Tigrayan forces are joining forces with other armed and opposition groups to form an alliance to bring about a political transition after a year of devastating war, organizers say. The signing in Washington of the common document includes the Tigrayan forces, the Oromo Liberation Army, which is now fighting alongside the Tigrayan forces, and seven other groups from across the country.

Ethiopia’s new United Front of Federalist Forces seeks to “create a transitional mechanism in Ethiopia” so that the prime minister can leave as soon as possible, organizer Johannes Abraha, who works for the Tigray group, told the Associated Press. “The next step, of course, will be to start meeting and communicating with countries, diplomats and international actors in Ethiopia and abroad.” He said the new alliance is both political and military in nature. Oromo Liberation Army spokesman Odaa Tarbii confirmed the creation of a new alliance on a voluntary basis. When asked if this meant ousting Abiy, he replied that it depended on the Ethiopian government and events in the near future. “Of course, we prefer there to be a peaceful and orderly transition with the removal of Abiy,” he said.

The goal of the new alliance is, according to its organizers, to be as “inclusive” as possible. Everyone is well aware
that this transition requires the participation of all stakeholders. But as for the members of the Prime Minister’s Prosperity Party, “there must be some kind of process.” Many members of this party will have to undergo investigation, possibly to be prosecuted for war-related crimes.

Prime Minister’s spokeswoman Billin Seyum reached out to the new alliance when she tweeted that “any deviations that rejected the democratic processes started by Ethiopia cannot be a process for democratization,” pointing out that Abiy opened up political space after joining in office in 2018. His reforms included bringing some opposition groups home from exile and including them in the country’s political process. The spokeswoman said she had no further comment and had no information on whether the prime minister would meet with the US special envoy.

However, representatives of opposition parties, in response to the spokesman’s tweet, noted that some of the people who returned to Ethiopia were later imprisoned or put under house arrest. “A lot of goodwill and democracy have been lost over the past three years,” their statement said. In addition, oppositionists believe that the war against their citizens in Tigray lies entirely on the conscience of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who received the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize. The paradox is that he received this award “for his efforts to achieve peace and international cooperation and, in particular, for his decisive initiative to resolve the border conflict with neighboring Eritrea.” And now Abiy Ahmed got entangled in the conflict with Tigray, at a time when he could settle all this simply as Prime Minister of Ethiopia.

Alex de Waal, director of the World Peace Fund at Tufts University, expressed his opinion, saying: “The fighting has reached intense proportions and ferocity, with perhaps 100,000 soldiers already killed on the Ethiopian side. Five million civilians need food aid as a result of the conflict, and yet Addis Ababa is still buying drones and other weapons.” In other words, the current prime minister and Nobel Peace Prize laureate is committed to a military solution to the conflict. But in Ethiopia, where numerous nationalities live, a military solution to any conflict, as history has shown, is unlikely to work out.

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