

## PRESS RELEASE

### Major Step Toward Justice: African Commission Hears Landmark Case on Ethiopia's Abuses in Tigray

*Banjul, The Gambia – 14 May 2025*

In a powerful push for justice, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (the Commission) held a landmark oral hearing on 14 May 2025 in a case accusing Ethiopia of widespread human rights violations that occurred and continue to occur in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. Shared by advocates, survivors' voices were finally heard on an international stage.

*"Your efforts give hope not only to these survivors, but to millions of Tigrayans who have endured unimaginable suffering,"* said a representative from a Tigrayan civil society network. *"This hearing is a vital step toward accountability."*

Ethiopia has so far failed to comply with the African Commission's issuance of provisional measures in October 2022, ordering Ethiopia to cease extrajudicial killing, torture, sexual and gender-based violence, and targeting of humanitarian aid workers. Its violations did not end with the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA) in November 2022. The Commission's recent decision to proceed with an oral hearing demonstrates growing international recognition of the grave violations Ethiopia committed against civilians – ranging from mass killings and sexual violence to forced displacement, famine, and a prolonged communication blackout.

The case, filed in October 2022 by Legal Action Worldwide (LAW), the Pan-African Lawyers Union (PALU), and Debevoise & Plimpton LLP, represents victims of atrocities committed during the Tigray conflict between 2020 and 2022.

Donald Deya, CEO of PALU, stated:

*"We appreciate that there have been several conflicts and atrocities in several parts of Ethiopia in the recent past; but the one that broke out in Tigray starting November 2020 has been the most egregious. This Hearing sets the stage – and precedent – for addressing and redressing these conflicts using the African Human Rights System."*

Antonia Mulvey, Executive Director of LAW, added:

*"This hearing sends a powerful message – not just to Ethiopia, but to the international community: atrocities cannot be buried in silence. The African Commission's decision to hold an oral hearing affirms that justice matters. Survivors of the Tigray conflict have waited too*

*long to be seen, heard, and believed. Today, we take a vital step toward holding perpetrators accountable and reaffirming the promise of international human rights law and upholding international humanitarian law”.*

Christel Tham, Associate at Debevoise & Plimpton, said:

*“Today’s hearing marked a rare opportunity for Tigrayan victims to have their voices heard by one of Africa’s most prominent human rights bodies, but much work remains to be done to secure meaningful accountability.”*

It is expected that the African Commission will render a decision in due course. The legal team emphasized that justice must follow acknowledgment.

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#### Note to editors

LAW is an independent, non-profit organization of human rights lawyers and jurists working in fragile and conflict affected areas. LAW provides legal aid to victims and communities that have suffered human rights violations and abuses in Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia.

The Pan African Lawyers Union (PALU) is the premier continental membership forum of and for individual African lawyers and lawyers’ associations in Africa, operating from its Secretariat in Arusha, Tanzania. PALU was founded in 2002 by African Bar leaders and eminent lawyers to reflect the aspirations and concerns of the African people and to promote and defend their shared interests. Its membership comprises the continent’s over five regional lawyers’ associations, over 54 national lawyers’ associations and individual lawyers spread across Africa and in the Diaspora, working together to advance the law and the legal profession, rule of law, good governance, human and peoples’ rights and socio-economic development of the African continent.

Debevoise and Plimpton LLP is a global law firm headquartered in New York with a broad public international law practice, including in representing parties before regional and international courts and tribunals. Debevoise is *pro bono* counsel to LAW in these proceedings.