

## **TPLF's Minority Ethnic Monopoly of the Armed forces in Ethiopia**

**( A revisit after four years)**

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The monopoly of key government decision making positions in Ethiopia by individuals of one ethnic group, the TPLF led Tigrean elite, over the past twenty three years has never had precedence in Ethiopian history. This is even more an anomaly as the TPLF claims that it fought to champion ethnic equality in Ethiopia.

This monopoly of power is in staggering display particularly in the leadership of the armed forces of the country and the security agency. What is even more becoming increasingly disquieting is that even the small number of non Tigreans that were thrown in to show some semblance of ethnic mix is fast fading. Many Ethiopians today are not increasingly referring to the ruling political system in Ethiopia as an “ethnic apartheid” system without a good reason. When it comes to ethnic composition, the only lookalikes in history to the Ethiopian military today are only the armies of colonial forces and states and organizations under systems of apartheid. With time, the TPLF has even stopped pretending that it is ruling over a multi ethnic country and continues to maintain an apartheid regime without even considering the serious consequences that this will bear on the country's future.

There is widespread discontent among the regular army as well as rank and file officers that is predominantly drawn from the large non Tigrean ethnicity some of whom are referring to themselves as becoming slaves to a Tigrean dominated system. For several years now there is widespread and simmering discontent with this domination but questions related to these issues are not normally raised or discussed in public. Routine evaluation sessions the TPLF refers to as the “*gimgemma*”, conducted at all levels periodically and supervised by Tigreans, are used to stamp out these criticisms of this dominance and monopoly. The TPLF would use one of its

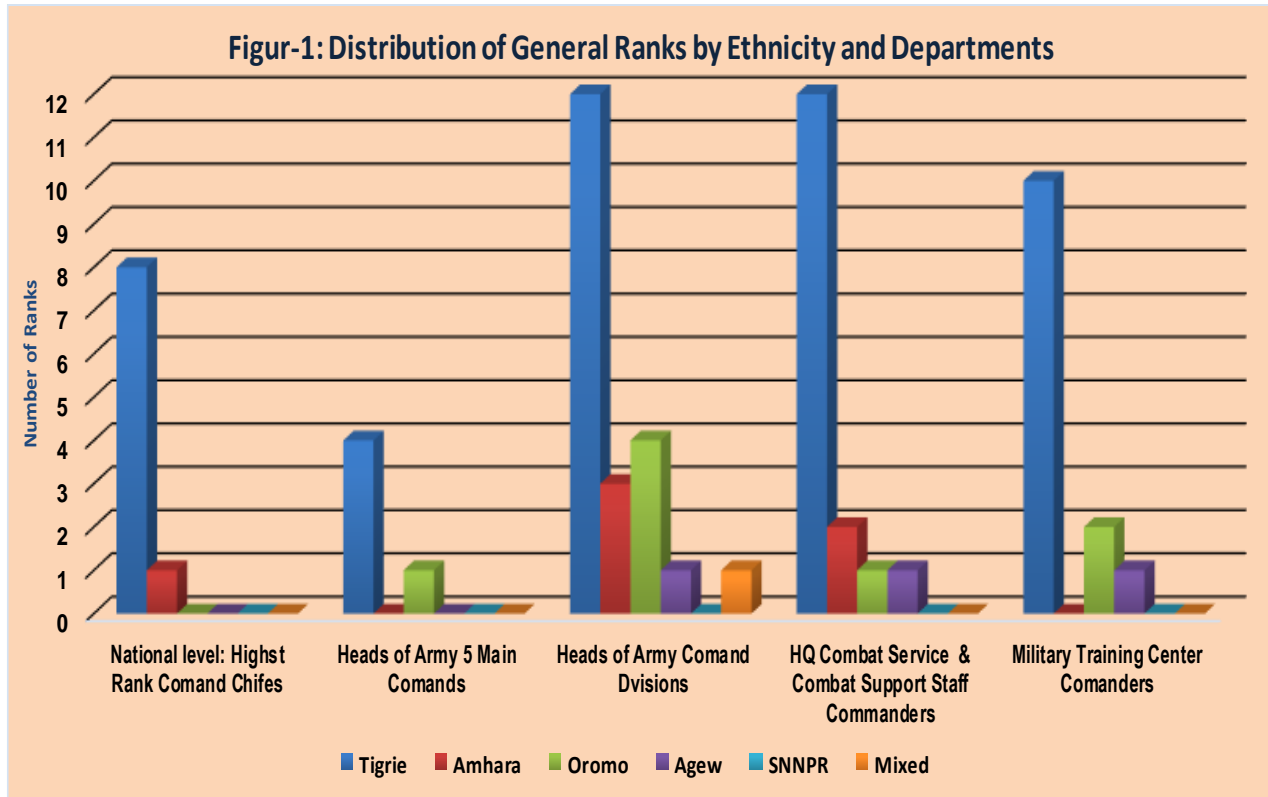
several labels - such words as hate politician, terrorist, ethnic chauvinist, narrow nationalist etc., on any one who questions the system or as they often call it, “exhibits a tendency” to oppose the status quo. Many have perished for raising these questions even in good faith. There have been several incidents of severe reprimands of individuals who raised these issues. Some members of the army who are now serving life in TPLF dungeons are those who raised such questions of the need to diversify the leadership. Many did raise the question in good faith and sensing the discontent in the rank and file. Some among the few high ranking non Tigrean officers have left the country and cited this slave like relations to even less qualified Tigreans superiors as their reasons for their leaving. Desertions by members of the regular army for this same reason are numerous and often remain unreported. Those who get the chance to tell their stories often speak of the indignity they underwent while in the army.

During the first few years of their rule, TPLF officials, including Meles Zenawi, tried to justify this monopoly of power by the dominance in terms of number and organization of the TPLF fighting force during the fighting to topple the Military dictatorship of Mengistu Hailemariam. The promise they often made was that the force will be ethnically diversified with time. Now nearly a quarter of a century later, what we see is a more intensified and ethnically purified monopoly of power. Merit and competence are forgone in favor of ethnicity so much that a good number of those in leadership positions have limited formal or technical education as compared to many of their subordinates.

Throughout the social and economic system, including the economy and key operations of government, we are witnessing an increasing dominance of the Tigrean elite. The existence of a government within the government that is exclusively lead by ethnic Tigreans composed mostly of the leaders of the armed forces and the mafia like security gang is now an open secret among Ethiopians. Even the very few non Tigreans that are in leadership positions complain that they have only become conduits through which decisions made by the TPLF cabal are announced and implemented. These include people like Hailemariam Desalegn, who holds the nominal position of Prime Minister.

This staggering level of monopoly over national military power and intuitions is however displayed more blatantly in the composition of the leadership of the armed forces than probably

elsewhere in the civilian administrative force. For Instance, Figure-1 shows that among the total of 64 highest military ranks in four departments and commands, 49 of them are Tigrians, two Agews and one from Mixed tribe, while the remaining number of Ormos, Amharas, and SNNPR are eight, four, and zero, respectively (for details see figure 1 and Annex-1-table 1).



Furthermore, the Military Affairs Team of Ginbot 7 has meticulously surveyed numerous divisions, regional commands, training academies and the defense headquarters in Addis Ababa and around the country; as a result it developed a detailed list of military leaders based on the most recent date gathered. (See Annex-1:Table-1 &2). According to this survey, the existing military governance system is highly skewed to one minority ethnic group, TPLF Tigrians. In general, the survey indicates that the system being followed by the current TPLF government is comparable to the old colonial and apartheid military organization systems, which now have become relics of history.

**Annex -1- Table -1: Top Military Leaders by Ethnic distribution and departments**

<b>Military Ranks</b>	<b>Tigrie</b>	<b>Amhara</b>	<b>Oromo</b>	<b>Agew</b>	<b>SNNPR</b>	<b>Mixed</b>	<b>Total position</b>
National level: Highest Rank Command Chiefs	9	1	0	0	0	0	10
Heads of Army Commands(Six Cores)	4	0	1	0	0	0	5
Heads of Army Command Divisions	13	3	4	1	0	1	22
HQ Combat Service & Combat Support Staff Commanders	13	0	1	0	0	0	14
Military Training Center Commanders	10	0	2	1	0	0	13
<b>Total Number of Generals</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>64</b>

**Annex -1-Table-2: Detail Information on the current distribution of Generals in the Armed Forces Highest Commands**

<b>Highest Ranking Command Chiefs and Heads of Main Departments of Defense</b>				
<b>No</b>	<b>Full Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Ethnic Group</b>
1	Samora Yens	Armed Forces Chief of Staff	General	Part Tigre
2	Se'are Mekonnen	Head of Training	Lieutenant General	Tigre
3	Ibrahim Abdujell	Head of Logistics	Major General	Tigre
4	Gebre Dela	Head of Intelligence	Brigadier General	Tigre
5	Abebaw Tadesse (Fired recently)	Head of Campaign	Lieutenant General	Agew
6	Berhane Negash	Head of Defense Force Infrastructure & Construction Sector and Minister of State	Major General	Tigre
7	Adem Mohmmmed	Chief of Air Force	Major General	Amhara from Wollo
8	Kinfe Dagnaw	Head of Defense Industry Sector	Brig. General	Tigre
9	Yohannes Gebremeskel	Head of Mission Force Commander	Lieutenant General	Tigre
10	Mohammed Esha	Head of Special Security Force	Brigadier General	Tigre
<b>Heads of Army Commands</b>				
<b>No</b>	<b>Command</b>	<b>Full Name</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Ethnic Group</b>
1	Central Command	Yohannes Woldegiorgis	Major General	Tigre
2	Northern Command	Gebrat Ayele	Major General	Tigre
3	Western Command	Birhanu Julla	Major General	Oromo
4	Eastern Command	Abraha Woldemariam	Major General	Tigre
5	South Eastern Command	Fisseha Kidanu	Major General	Tigre

<b>Heads of Army Command Divisions</b>				
<b>Central Command</b>				
<b>No</b>	<b>Command Division</b>	<b>Full Name</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Ethnic Group</b>
1	8th Mechanized Division	Jamal Mohammed	Brigadier General	Tigre
2	31st Army Division	Tesfay Weldemariam	Brigadier General	Tigre
3	35th Army Division	Misganew Alemu	Brigadier General	Agew
4	24th Army Division	Mohammed Tessema	Brigadier General	Amhara
5	22nd Army Division	Gebregziabher Beyene	Brigadier General	Tigre
6	33rd Army Division	Amha Gebru	Brigadier General	Tigre
<b>Northern Command</b>				
<b>No</b>	<b>Command Division</b>	<b>Full Name</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Ethnic Group</b>
1	14th Army Division	Abdurahman Ismael	Brigadier General	Oromo
2	21st Army Division	Wagnaw Amare	Brigadier General	Amhara
3	11th Army Division	Adamneh Mengestie	Brigadier General	Tigre
4	25th Army Division	Zenawi Gebrezigabhar	Brigadier General	Tigre
5	22nd	Belhai Seyoum	Brigadier General	Tigre
6	4th Mechanized Division	Hintsaw Woldegiorgis	Brigadier General	Tigre
<b>South Eastern Command</b>				
<b>No</b>	<b>Command Division</b>	<b>Full Name</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Ethnic Group</b>
1	19st Army Division	Tigabu Yilma	Brigadier General	Amhara
2	44th Army Division	Abreha Tesfaye	Brigadier General	Oromo
3	13th Army Division	Yemane Mulu	Brigadier General	Tigre
4	12th Army Division			
5	32nd Army Division	Kedir Ararsa	Brigadier General	Oromo
6	6th Mechanized Division	Woldegebriel Babi	Brigadier General	Tigre

<b>Western Command</b>				
<b>No</b>	<b>Command Division</b>	<b>Full Name</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Ethnic Group</b>
1	23rd Army Division	Ataklti Berhe	Brigadier General	Tigre
2	43rd Army Division	Mulatu Jeldu	Brigadier General	Oromo
3	26th Army Division	Fisseha Beyene	Brigadier General	Tigre
4	7th Mechanized Division	Aserat Damero	Brigadier General	Mixed
<b>Defense HQ Combat Service Support &amp; Combat Support Staff Commanders</b>				
<b>No</b>	<b>Departments/Sections</b>	<b>Full Name</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Ethnic Group</b>
1	Defense Research and Development	Gbremichael Beyene	Brigadier General	Tigre
2	Defense Communication Department	Tarekagn Kassahun	Brigadier General	Tigre
3	Defense Industrial Sector	Kinfe Dagneu	Brigadier General	Tigre
4	Defense Indoctrination Center	Gebrekidan Gebremariam	Brigadier General	Tigre
5	Defence Justice Service	Askale Berhan	Brigadier General	Tigre
6	Defense Foreign Relations Department	Desta Abechu	Major General	Oromo
7	Information Network Security Agency (INSA )	Teklebirhan Kabsay	Brigadier General	Tigre
8	Defense Administration Department	Mehari Zewdie	Major General	Tigre
9	Defense Ethics and Discipline Directorate Director	Zewdua Kiros	Brigadier General	Tigre
10	Defense Purchasing Department	Mulu Girmay	Brigadier General	Tigre
11	Defense Industries Coordination	Wodi Negash	Brigadier General	Tigre
12	Defense Administration and Security Department	Wodi Twek	Colonel	Tigre
13	Defense Inspection General office	Zewdu Belay	Brigadier General	Amhara
14	Defense Budget Department	Berhane Aberra	State Minister for Finance	Tigre
15	Defense Peace Keeping operation	Hassen Ibrahim	Major General	Amahra

## Military Training Academy Commanders

No	Defense Training Academy/Station	Full Name	Rank	Ethnic Group
1	Defense Command & Staff College	Gigi	Brigadier General	Tigre
2	Hayelom Araya Academy	Negash Heluf	Brigadier General	Tigre
3	Wourso Basic Infantry Military Training Center	Kumera Negere	Brigadier General	Oromo
4	Awash Arba Mechanized Military Training Center	Muzey Mekonnen	Brigadier General	Tigre
5	Blate Special Force Military Training Center	Abreha Tesfaye	Colonel	Tigre
6	Defense Engineering College	Halefom Egigu	Brigadier General	Tigre
7	Military Health Science Academy	Tesfay Gidey	Major General	Tigre
8	Mulugeta Buli Technical College	Mulye Amare	Brigadier General	Tigre
9	Defense Logistics College	Yayne Seyoum	Brigadier General	Tigre
10	Defense Intelligence College	Guesh Tsige	Brigadier General	Tigre
11	Defense Resource Management College	Driba Mekonnen	Brigadier General	Oromo
12	Birr Sheleko Military Training Center	Salih Berihu	Brigadier General	Tigre
13	Mekelle Hibret Military Academy	Yimer Mekonnen	Brigadier General	Agew