

# The Disintegration of Ethiopia: How Regional Conflicts in Opposition to Ethiopia are Once Again on the Rise

BY RAJEERA GELETA

**E**THIOPIA IS ONCE AGAIN disintegrating. After Abiy Ahmed took over in 2018 as the new Prime Minister of Ethiopia, replacing the former Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), conflicts around the country have once again sprung up. Ahmed was a Nobel Peace Prize laureate in 2019 for his effort to bring peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea. However, since he took office, a civil war and several armed conflicts sprouted in nearly every region of Ethiopia. We will look at the two biggest armed conflicts that are in opposition to the Ethiopian government.

Ethiopia is a country in East Africa composed of 10 ethnic-based regions as seen in the map below. This division in administration is called ethnic/multinational federalism and was created in the '90s when the TPLF, a political party and former rebel group based in Tigray, took power in Ethiopia. One of the goals of this system was to give indigenous nationalities to Ethiopia a certain level of autonomy instead of complete secession which was the popular choice for several groups, especially among the Oromos who reside in Oromia, the biggest region in terms of land and population according to the latest Ethiopian census.

The biggest conflict that could lead to the disintegration of Ethiopia is the civil war that began

on November 4th in the Tigray region. According to a report that the Ethiopian government made out to the international community, TPLF attacked the Northern Command of the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF). In response, the federal government has started a war to oust the political party. The TPLF, on the other hand, has claimed that Eritrean forces have joined the conflict backing ENDF. In response, TPLF has sent rocket attacks to Eritrea's capital city Amara according to US intelligence and several media outlets. With that response, this civil war could potentially turn into a regional war. Both sides of this war claim they are winning so far, and Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has stated in a press release that the international community should not get involved unless Ethiopia asks for assistance. If this war continues under these terms, it may be a long and costly war for both sides.

In the Oromia region, a completely different struggle has taken place since June against the government. Hachalu Hundessaa, a prominent Oromo activist and singer, was interviewed on the Oromia Media Network (OMN) in June 2020, where he publicly criticized the Ethiopian government and the romanticization of Ethiopian history at the expense of the Oromo people. According to Aljazeera, after the interview people called

for his death on social media, and he was assassinated a week after the interview took place. After his assassination, the Oromia region exploded in protests. The Ethiopian government security forces have arrested and killed several Oromo activists, journalists, politicians, and innocent Oromo civilians. News stations and political offices that have been openly critical or in opposition to the government have also been shut down in Ethiopia. Because of these actions taken against the Oromo people, armed conflicts have grown in several parts of the Oromia region between the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and the government.

Since Ethiopia was created by conquering other nations into the empire, many ethnic groups feel as if they are being marginalized by the government. As new regimes continue to marginalize these groups of people, it is expected that new armed conflicts will emerge and old ones solidify. As these groups grow, we may see Abiy Ahmed's regime being the last chapter in the nation's history.

## Concordia 451

BY ALEXANDRIA GOSEN

**F**ORMER ASSOCIATE JUSTICE of the supreme court Potter Stewart once said, "Censorship reflects a society's lack of confidence in itself." Censorship is a sort of secret topic. As students, we hear about it and we read about it, but we do not realize what little power we have over it. Sure, we can protest, but ultimately if a person with power slams their proverbial gavel and order a gag order on anyone, it will pass. This is actually a major issue here at Concordia, but I think it's one that is seldom discussed. But, we are all affected: professors are censored, the arts are censored, and student opinions could be censored.

Many students don't completely realize this, but most of our professors are under their own personal gag order. Many (all of whom will go unnamed) have expressed concerns about losing their jobs if they say the wrong thing, particularly in regards to their own personal politics. If they express a view that a student doesn't agree with and that student snitches, any professor could get in trouble. Because of this, we as students are missing out on the ability to learn to think for ourselves. We don't get to disagree with our professors and have these important conversations. We are taught the basic

beliefs of Concordia, and thus we ultimately are carbon copies. It's no different than the mentality of high school.

Furthermore, it is no secret that the theatre program is one of the most censored areas on campus. This is because many shows tackle quite intense topics. The Concordia theatre department does its best to put on meaningful, family friendly shows, but even then there are people who are outraged by costumes, plot points, and innuendos made with in a show (which, really, is all of Shakespeare). However, has it ever occurred to those who encourage this theatrical gag order that this limits those attempting to pursue a theatrical career? It's hindering our training as performers. We don't learn how to play intense roles because we aren't given the opportunity. Why aren't we given the opportunity? Because there is a social expectation for any and all shows put on the stage to be fun, happy, and good for the whole family. It's unrealistic to life. Aristotle once said, "the aim of art is not to represent the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance."

In continuation, there is a lot of tension between conservatives and liberals on campus. Maybe you don't

notice it, but plenty do. And, while I do not agree with many conservative views, I recognize that they have a right to express their opinion. We're in a really interesting place when our First Amendment rights are all being exercised: the right to assemble and protest what we disagree with; the right to express our opinions, however unsavory they may be to others; and the right to freedom of the press. However, nobody recognizes how easily some of these things could be subtly dismissed by the people in charge at Concordia. If anyone who sponsors the paper doesn't like what they read, articles could get pulled and topics could be censored.

Censorship can be defined in one word: toxic. If we forever fear uncomfortable conversations, how will they ever become comfortable? If we forever give more power to silence than solutions, how can we expect anything to be done in anyone's favor? Ray Bradbury said, "There is more than one way to burn a book. And the world is full of people running about with little matches." The question is, are we going to spark conversation, or are we simply going to burn?