

Lessons for Advocacy by the Tigrayan Diaspora for Recognition of the Tigray Genocide: Learning from the Armenian Diaspora

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On this fourth anniversary of the start of the genocidal war on Tigray, November 3, 2020, and the second anniversary of the still unimplemented Pretoria Agreement of November 3, 2022, we need to reflect on the persistent struggle of the Tigrayan diaspora to seek justice and recognition. Drawing on lessons from the Armenian diaspora, whose sustained advocacy for recognition of the Armenian Genocide has brought historical atrocities to light, the Tigrayan diaspora can find paths forward in the global movement for genocide recognition and justice.

The journey of the Armenian diaspora has been marked by resilience, unity, and strategic advocacy that have led to global awareness and recognition of the Armenian Genocide over more than a century. Today, as Tigrayans worldwide reflect on the atrocities committed against their people and the lack of full accountability even two years after the Pretoria Agreement, these strategies offer valuable guidance. Here, we examine key lessons from the Armenian diaspora that the Tigrayan community can apply in its own advocacy for justice, recognition, and future prevention.

1. Building a Cohesive, Resilient Diaspora Coalition

A cornerstone of the Armenian diaspora's success has been its ability to unify across borders, creating a strong network of organizations, advocacy groups, and leaders dedicated to the shared goal of recognition and justice. This unity has allowed for coordinated efforts across continents, amplifying their voice and allowing a long-term commitment to recognition.

For the Tigrayan diaspora, building a similarly cohesive coalition that bridges geographic and political divides is essential. By forming umbrella organizations and cross-continental networks, the Tigrayan diaspora can increase its influence and streamline communication with international institutions. As the Armenian experience has shown, diaspora unity is foundational for an effective and resilient advocacy movement.

2. Leveraging Documentation and Survivor Testimonies

The Armenian diaspora recognized early on the importance of preserving documentation and survivor testimonies as essential tools for combating genocide denial and establishing an irrefutable historical record. These efforts provided compelling evidence that lawmakers, scholars, and the public could not ignore.

For Tigrayan advocates, meticulous documentation of evidence, testimonies, and historical records is equally critical. By collaborating with human rights organizations and academic institutions to collect and preserve testimonies from survivors and witnesses, the Tigrayan diaspora can build a record that future generations—and governments worldwide—cannot dismiss. This documentation will bolster efforts to gain formal recognition and counter attempts to obscure or deny the atrocities.

3. Establishing Memorialization and Educational Efforts

The Armenian diaspora has long recognized the importance of memorialization and education. Through the establishment of memorials, museums, and educational programs, they have kept the memory of the Armenian Genocide alive, ensuring that it remains a crucial part of both history and contemporary discourse.

For the Tigrayan diaspora, creating memorials, museums, and educational initiatives dedicated to the Tigray genocide would serve as a powerful means of preserving this history and raising awareness. Establishing these platforms helps prevent historical erasure and can be instrumental in fostering understanding among future generations. These efforts contribute to a lasting legacy that transcends the Tigrayan community and serves as a warning to humanity.

4. Mobilizing Public Awareness and Media Campaigns

Public awareness campaigns have been a powerful tool for the Armenian diaspora, especially during periods when political recognition seemed out of reach. These campaigns, often centered on public demonstrations, media outreach, and social media engagement, raised awareness among the public and built grassroots support, putting pressure on political leaders to recognize the Armenian Genocide.

For the Tigrayan diaspora, investing in public awareness campaigns that humanize the stories of victims and highlight ongoing issues is crucial. The power of social media allows for global reach and real-time engagement. By sharing the stories of survivors and emphasizing the unimplemented promises of the Pretoria Agreement, Tigrayan advocates can build a broad base of support and keep the urgency of their cause in the global spotlight.

5. Pursuing Legislative Recognition Through Strategic Advocacy

The Armenian diaspora's strategic focus on legislative bodies has yielded numerous formal recognitions around the world. Key victories, such as those in the U.S. Congress and the European Parliament, were achieved through sustained lobbying, relationship-building with sympathetic legislators, and collaboration with allies in the human rights sector.

The Tigrayan diaspora can adopt similar strategies, advocating for resolutions that formally recognize the Tigray genocide. This requires patience, persistence, and strategic partnerships with lawmakers willing to champion the cause. Even a single legislative victory can create momentum for broader international recognition, as lawmakers in other countries are often inspired to follow suit.

6. Engaging International Legal Mechanisms

Another essential lesson from Armenian advocacy is the importance of pursuing international legal mechanisms, even amid geopolitical obstacles. The Armenian diaspora has long used international courts and legal frameworks to press for accountability, bringing attention to the atrocities and pushing for legal recognition.

The Tigrayan diaspora, similarly, can engage with international courts like the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to seek accountability for those responsible for the atrocities in Tigray. This legal pursuit may be arduous and complex, but it underscores the principle that justice transcends borders. In addition, collaborating with legal experts and human rights advocates strengthens the Tigrayan diaspora's case for justice.

7. Using Commemorative Events to Foster Solidarity and Awareness

Annual commemorative events, like the Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day on April 24, serve as powerful reminders of the genocide and help build solidarity across communities. These events are marked with vigils, marches, and educational initiatives that reach broad audiences and reinforce the call for recognition.

The Tigrayan diaspora could establish an annual day of remembrance for the Tigray genocide, using this occasion to hold events, marches, and digital campaigns. These commemorative events offer a focused moment each year to unify supporters, raise awareness, and underscore the enduring need for justice, particularly given the unfulfilled promises of the Pretoria Agreement.

8. Coalition-Building with Other Communities

The Armenian diaspora has successfully built alliances with other communities impacted by genocide and mass atrocities. Through collaboration with survivors of the Holocaust, the Rwandan genocide, and other atrocities, Armenian advocates have reinforced a united call for genocide prevention and recognition worldwide.

The Tigrayan diaspora can strengthen its efforts by building coalitions with other communities affected by mass violence. Partnering with groups that have endured similar histories—such as the Rwandan, Bosnian, and Yazidi communities—can foster solidarity and amplify their collective voice. This approach aligns with a global commitment to human rights and ensures that the call for “Never Again” transcends national boundaries.

9. Preparing for a Long-Term Commitment

The Armenian diaspora's advocacy has been a multi-generational struggle, spanning over a century. Their resilience and dedication to this cause have allowed them to overcome repeated

setbacks and political opposition, ultimately leading to important victories. Today, Armenian Genocide recognition is widespread, reflecting the long-term commitment of those who never wavered in their pursuit of justice.

For the Tigrayan diaspora, preparing for a similar long-term commitment is essential. Genocide recognition and accountability are often long and politically fraught processes. This commitment may require multiple generations of advocates, unwavering resilience, and adaptability to shifting political landscapes. By embracing this long-term perspective, the Tigrayan diaspora can ensure that its pursuit of justice remains steadfast and robust.

Conclusion

On this solemn day, marking both the fourth anniversary of the start of the war on Tigray and the second anniversary of the still unimplemented Pretoria Agreement, the Tigrayan diaspora reflects on its ongoing struggle for recognition and justice. The Armenian diaspora's experience provides invaluable lessons in resilience, strategic advocacy, and global coalition-building. Through unity, legal action, educational outreach, and sustained commitment, the Tigrayan diaspora can build a powerful movement for recognition and justice.

By remembering the atrocities committed and advocating for accountability, the Tigrayan diaspora honors the memory of those lost and strengthens the global call against genocide. In doing so, they contribute to a world where the promise of "Never Again" is upheld, where justice is pursued tirelessly, and where the memory of those who suffered is preserved for generations to come.

Note: assisted by AI.

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