



# Bylaw of Tigray community in Chicago

25 Feb 2024

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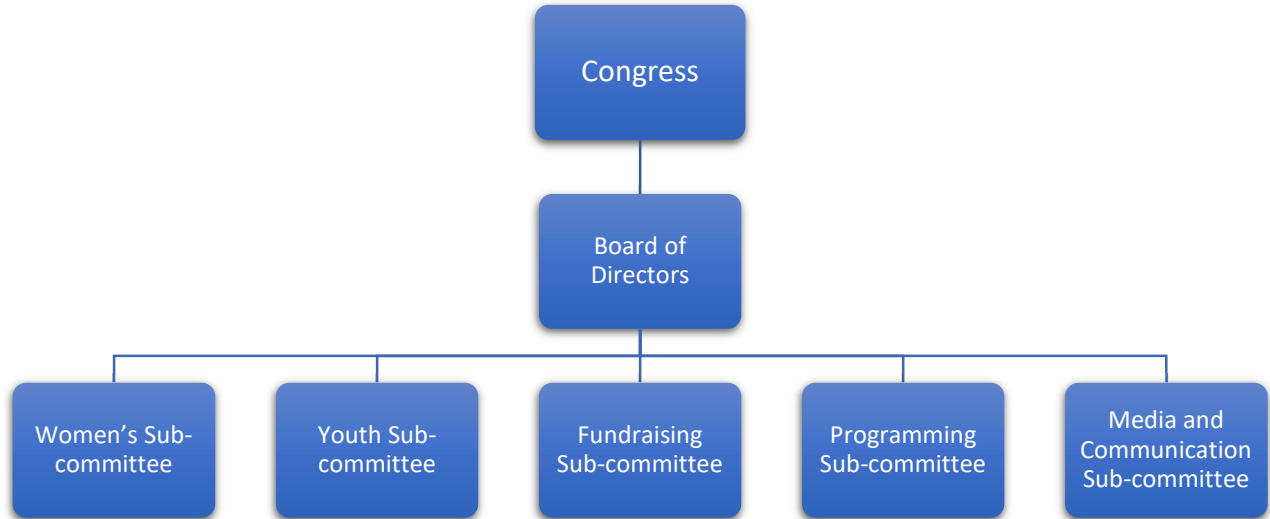
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## **I. Introduction**

We, the residents of Chicago, Illinois and Surrounding Cities and States have adopted an organization known as "Tigray Community in Chicago" here under referred to as "Community". The community is non-profit and free from politics and religion and is established to help us achieve our common goals. We have adopted this bylaw to enable its leaders and members effectively and efficiently carryout their responsibilities and achieve goals of the community.

- 1- **Short title of this bylaw:** Bylaw of Tigray community in Chicago
- 2- **Effective date of the bylaw:** February 25, 2024, date the congress of the community adopted the bylaw.
- 3- **Definition of words and phrases:** Unless the context otherwise requires, the following words and phrases contained in this bylaw will have the following meaning:
  - A. **Member:** Members who are registered because they are eligible per Article 4 of this bylaw and who have fulfilled their obligations per Article 6.
  - B. **Bylaw:** Legal document that lists duties and responsibilities of leaders, obligations and benefits of members and overall management of the community including its property and finance.
  - C. **Dependent:** Children (including adopted), parents and others who reside with a member and depend on the member for their day-to-day needs. Higher education students who live far from their family qualify as dependents only until they start earning their own income.
  - D. **Congress:** Annual general meeting of community.
  - E. **Urgent congress:** A general meeting of community held because of a necessity.
  - F. **Chicago and its Surrounding:** Chicago and surrounding Cities and States.
  - G. **Youth Sub-Committee members:** Children and family members of registered members who are between the ages of 16 and 26.

## II. Organizational Structure



### Article 1. Goals

- 1.1. Bring together experiences, skills, and resources of members to enhance the overall wellbeing and development of members through different programs.
- 1.2. Create brotherhood, sisterhood, friendship, and love among members.
- 1.3. Support each other in time of challenges that are beyond individual capacity.
- 1.4. Equip our children with knowledge of their identity, culture, history, and language ensuring a strong connection to their roots.
- 1.5. Foster an inclusive environment that welcomes all members regardless of background, ensuring everyone feels valued and respected.

### Article 2. Dissolution of the community

The community can be dissolved if it's decided in a general meeting that it's unable to support the objectives of the community for different reasons.

### Article 3. Finance and property of the community

- 3.1. All properties of the community will always be in the name of the community and not in the name of members or other institutions.
- 3.2. Finance of the community will be in a bank account number that is under its name and not under name of individuals or other institutions.
- 3.3. If it's decided that the community will be dissolved under article 2 of this bylaw, all debts of the community will be paid off and any remaining

balance will be donated to a similar nonprofit institution based on the decision of a general meeting.

#### **Article 4. Eligibility for Membership**

A person could be registered as a member of the community when he/she satisfies the following requirements:

- 4.1. Is a Tigrayan, born or raised in Tigray, or related to a Tigrayan by marriage or adoption.
- 4.2. Accepted this bylaw and is willing to carry out his/her responsibilities stated in Article 6 of this bylaw.
- 4.3. Is above the age of 18 years and lives independently.
- 4.4. Lives in Chicago or surrounding cities or state. Tigrayans who reside in distant places can be members of the community if they satisfy membership requirements.

#### **Article 5. Rights of Members**

Members have the following rights:

- 5.1. Attend general meetings organized by the community and share ideas, support, abstain or reject a suggested notion.
- 5.2. Vote for board of directors and other offices.
- 5.3. Be a candidate to be elected to serve in different positions and provide service if elected.
- 5.4. Ask questions and get answers.
- 5.5. In case of divorce, continue as an individual member by paying 50% of the initial registration fee of USD 200.
- 5.6. Get financial donation from contributions that members make whenever a member or his/her registered dependent passes away.

#### **Article 6. Obligation of members**

A member shall comply with the following obligations:

- 6.1. Accept and implement provisions of this bylaw and other rules adopted by the community.
- 6.2. Participate in meetings and campaigns organized by the community, inform the board of directors in case of inability to attend.
- 6.3. Complete and submit a membership form individually or as a family.
- 6.4. Pay initial registration payment of USD 200.
- 6.5. Pay membership fee of USD 20 per month, monthly or annually.
- 6.6. Pay USD 100 when a member or his/her dependent passes away.

- 6.7. Registration fee, membership fee and contribution payment for when a member or his/her dependent passes away are non-refundable.

**Note:** A Member who could not make any of the payments because of unemployment or illness could apply to the board of directors in writing.

## **Article 7. Meetings**

The community has the following four meetings:

- 1- Congress (Annual General Meeting)
- 2- Board of directors Meeting (conducted at least every month),
- 3- Urgent congress Meeting (Called by the board of directors or by a signed request of more than one third of the members of the community for urgent cases that can't wait for annual general meeting),
- 4- Urgent board of directors meeting (Called by Chairperson of the board of directors or when more than one third of the members of the board of directors submit a signed request).

## **Article 8. Meeting procedures**

- 8.1. Congress meetings should be held on the first Sunday of December every year.
- 8.2. In order to ensure participation of as many members as possible, congress meetings must be communicated to all members at least 30 days in advance using all communication channels the community uses. Congress meetings will be conducted with members who are present.
- 8.3. Virtual meeting options should be made available and communicated to all members through communication methods the community uses so that members who can't be present in person can join virtually.
- 8.4. The chairperson or Vice Chairperson in the absence of chairperson opens the meeting after ensuring 8.1 and 8.2 are adhered to with the members who are present.
- 8.5. The agenda for the day will be presented by the secretary and get approved.
- 8.6. Participants of the meeting can attend the meeting after it's confirmed that they have fulfilled their responsibilities.
- 8.7. Attendance will be taken and documented.
- 8.8. The secretary will invite participants to forward agenda items.
- 8.9. Participants will get a chance without discrimination to express their opinions.
- 8.10. The secretary will register the minutes of the meeting.

- 8.11. For the meeting of the board of directors, the secretary will secure the signatures of all board of directors who attended the meeting.
- 8.12. The meeting of the congress comes to an end after the chairperson, vice chairperson and secretary read and sign the meeting minutes. All decisions adopted by the congress are binding to all members.
- 8.13. The Chairperson can dismiss a meeting and postpone it if disagreement between participants of the meeting makes it impossible to conduct a peaceful meeting.

## **Article 9. Congress**

Formal (annual) meeting performs the following activities:

- 9.1. Listens and evaluates report by the board of directors and sub committees.
- 9.2. Approves the plan and budget for the coming year.
- 9.3. If necessary, elects members to the board of directors and other sub committees.
- 9.4. Discusses and decides on different issues listed in the agenda.
- 9.5. Amends provisions of the bylaw, repeals or adopts new articles.
- 9.6. Terminates membership of members who failed to accept and implement provisions of the bylaw as listed in Article 6.

## **Article 10. Voting for motions in the Congress**

- 10.1. One member will have only one vote.
- 10.2. Although spouses are registered jointly, each of them will have one vote each.
- 10.3. Only participants of the meeting can vote.
- 10.4. Voting could be accomplished by card or by raising hands.
- 10.5. The chairperson or Vice Chairperson in the absence of the chairperson declares the result of the vote to the meeting participants.

## **Article 11. Decision of the Congress**

An opinion is considered accepted when the majority of the attendants support it.



## **Article 12. Board of Directors**

- 12.1. It is the highest power of the community next to the congress. It implements the decisions of the congress and runs the day-to-day activities of the community. It consists of 11 members who are elected by the congress. Its members are:
  - 1) Chairperson
  - 2) Vice chairperson
  - 3) Secretary
  - 4) Accountant
  - 5) Treasurer
  - 6) Fundraising Sub-Committee Chair
  - 7) Programming Sub-Committee Chair
  - 8) Youth Sub-Committee Chair
  - 9) Women Sub-Committee Chair
  - 10) Media and Communication Sub-Committee Chair
  - 11) Board member
- 12.2. The term of office of the board of directors is two years. They stay in their position until new members are elected, property is transferred, and the new board of directors start their term.
- 12.3. Members of the board of directors are not paid for the service they provide.
- 12.4. The board of directors adopts an opinion voted by the majority of the participants.
- 12.5. All reports from the board of directors and sub-commitments directed to the congress will be in writing.

## **Article 13. Responsibility of the board of directors**

- 13.1. Monitors activities of the board of directors and sub-committees and works on the implementation of the decisions of the congress.
- 13.2. Prepares and presents annual plan and budget to the congress for approval.
- 13.3. Recommends to the congress the demotion of members of the board of directors who weren't able to carry out their responsibilities.
- 13.4. Recommends to congress replacement for demoted members of board of directors.
- 13.5. Manages the finance of the community.
- 13.6. Fully controls and supports activities of sub-committees.

- 13.7. If found necessary, takes proper procedural measures on members including suspension from membership.
- 13.8. Prepare legal documents that serve the function of the community.

#### **Article 14. Responsibilities of the chairperson**

- 14.1. Is the top leader and monitors the day-to-day activities of the community.
- 14.2. Together with Vice chairperson and the secretary, prepares agendas for the congress and meeting of the board of directors.
- 14.3. Calls for meetings of the congress and board of directors.
- 14.4. Chairs meetings of the congress, urgent congress and board of directors.
- 14.5. As the official representative of the community, attends meetings and other activities on behalf of the community after securing approval of the board of directors.

#### **Article 15. Responsibility of Vice chairperson**

- 15.1. Together with the chairperson and the secretary, prepares agendas of the congress and the board of directors.
- 15.2. Represents the chairperson in the absence of the chairperson.
- 15.3. Performs assignments given to him/her by the congress and the board of directors.

#### **Article 16. Responsibilities of the secretary**

- 16.1. Registers members and keeps records.
- 16.2. Takes meeting minutes of all meetings and gets them signed.
- 16.3. Disseminates necessary information to members.
- 16.4. Ensures the proper handling of the documents of the community.
- 16.5. Keeps the stamp of the community and distributes letters prepared by respective community officials to indicated persons.
- 16.6. Performs other activities assigned to him/her by the board of directors.

#### **Article 17. Responsibilities of the Accountant**

- 17.1. Records day-to-day financial records of the community.
- 17.2. Ensures that income is collected through official receipt and all payments are made according to the budget.
- 17.3. Is responsible for reviewing bookkeeping entries, performing account and balance sheet reconciliation, and preparing financial statements and reports.

- 17.4. Collaborates with the audit committee as needed.
- 17.5. Performs other financial tasks assigned by the board of directors.

### **Article 18. Responsibility of the treasurer**

- 18.1. Collects income of the community against a receipt.
- 18.2. Deposits the money collected in the bank account of the community.
- 18.3. Organizes and submits monthly reports and necessary documents.
- 18.4. Collaborates with audit committee as needed.
- 18.5. Keeps community's bank check.
- 18.6. Makes payments based on the approval of the board of directors against signature of the chairperson or meeting minute by the board of directors.
- 18.7. Submits copy of check/receipt within three days to the accountant.
- 18.8. Performs other financial tasks assigned by the board of directors.

### **Article 19. Sub-committees**

There are five subcommittees that carry out specific activities: Each subcommittee has three members, Chairperson, Secretary and a member. Their term of office is two years. The sub-committees are:

- 1) Women
- 2) Youth
- 3) Programming
- 4) Fund raising
- 5) Media and Communication

### **Article 20. Duties and responsibilities of Women's Sub-committee**

- 20.1. Raise awareness of issues affecting women in the community.
- 20.2. Provide leadership and educational training for women.
- 20.3. Encourage women to be more active within the community.
- 20.4. Offer mentorship programs or opportunities for women of the community.
- 20.5. Work on other duties that benefit women of the community.

### **Article 21. Duties and responsibilities of Youth Sub-committee**

- 21.1. Promote youth issues within the community.
- 21.2. Encourage the youth to participate at all levels in community life.
- 21.3. Provide guidance for various youth activities.
- 21.4. Work on other duties that benefit the youth of the community.

## **Article 22. Duties and responsibilities of Programming Sub-committee**

- 22.1. Coordinates Tigrinya lessons for kids and the youth as needed.
- 22.2. Facilitates sport, educational and other events that improve the skills, knowledge, and wellbeing of members.
- 22.3. Ensures activities for kids, the youth, women, and the elderly are incorporated in all events the community hosts.

## **Article 23. Duties and responsibilities of fundraising Sub-committee**

- 23.1. Works on getting federal or state funds for the community.
- 23.2. Organizes and leads fund raising forums of the community.

## **Article 24. Duties and responsibilities of Media and Communication**

- 24.1. Administers the community website in line with the goals of the community.
- 24.2. Manages social media of the community.
- 24.3. Promotes presenting of poems and short articles in events.
- 24.4. Works on other tasks to achieve community goals.

## **Article 25. Audit committee**

- 25.1. Is a committee established by the congress. It consists of three members, chairperson, secretary, and a member.
- 25.2. The term of office of the Audit committee is two years.
- 25.3. Audit committee is accountable to the congress.

## **Article 26. Responsibility of Audit committee**

- 26.1. Audits the proper handling of incomes and payments.
- 26.2. Audits if incomes are collected and expenses are made using legal documents.
- 26.3. Audits proper handling of all properties of the community.
- 26.4. Presents its findings to the congress after it completes its audit.

**Note:** All members of the community and board of directors are required to fully cooperate with the Audit committee during the execution of its tasks.

## **Article 27. Election committee**

The Election committee is committee that is established by the congress a year before election date to facilitate the election of new board of directors. It is also tasked at ensuring a smooth transition. It consists of three members, chairperson, secretary, and a member.

## **Article 28. Responsibility of election committee**

- 28.1. Assures voters satisfy the requirements listed under article 6 and 31 of this bylaw.
- 28.2. Assures that candidates satisfy requirements of article 30 of this bylaw.
- 28.3. Witnesses transfer of documents, finance, and property to the newly elected committee.
- 28.4. The election committee stays in its position until the transfer of responsibility from the outgoing to the incoming board of directors is completed.
- 28.5. Conducts elections per Article 32.

## **Article 29. Election**

- 29.1. All elections of the community are carried out by the election committee appointed by the congress.
- 29.2. Election of different committees is conducted every two years in congress or urgent congress meetings.
- 29.3. An effort should be made to ensure that women hold minimum of 30% of positions in board of directors, committees, and sub-committees.
- 29.4. Youth Sub-Committee Chair should be 26 years old and under.

## **Article 30. Requirements to be a candidate**

All candidates who compete to serve the community in the board of directors, committees or sub-committees of the community should satisfy the following requirements:

- 30.1. They should not be leaders of religious or political institutions.
- 30.2. They should be registered as members of the community at least six months before the election.
- 30.3. They should have paid their monthly membership payments and other payments and have no remaining balance.
- 30.4. They shouldn't be the family of another candidate.
- 30.5. They shouldn't have been elected to the board of directors two times consecutively.

## **Article 31. Requirements of voters**

- 31.1. Should be a member that registered minimum of six months before the election.
- 31.2. Should have paid all monthly membership payments and other payments with remaining balance not exceeding membership fee of three months.

## **Article 32. Election Procedure**

- 32.1. The election committee invites members to submit nominations for the board of directors and sub committees 2 months before the congress meeting.
- 32.2. The election committee ensures that nominated candidates have fulfilled all requirements listed under article 30.
- 32.3. The election committee announces nominated candidates.
- 32.4. Up to 13 candidates to board of directors and up to 3 candidates for each sub-committee will be nominated.
- 32.5. Elections could be conducted through voting cards, online system or by raising hands.
- 32.6. The election committee Counts the votes after the completion of the voting process in front of one witness from the board of directors and one witness from members.
- 32.7. Candidates who won the top 11 votes will be members of the board of directors. If the vote is a tie, reelection will be conducted among those who received equal votes.
- 32.8. Candidates who won the top 2 votes for sub-committees will be members of each sub-committee.
- 32.9. The candidates who got the lowest votes will be kept as a reserve for the board of directors and sub-committees, two for the board of directors and one for each sub-committee.
- 32.10. The election committee submits signed minutes of the process and result of the voting to the newly elected secretary of the board of directors.

## **Article 33. Electing absent members**

A volunteer member who satisfies the requirements could be a candidate to a position in his/her absence.

## **Article 34. Replacing of member of a committee or Sub-Committee**

A member of a committee or a Sub-Committee who resigned from his/her position before the expiration of the term of office will be replaced by the reserve member per article 32.9.

## **Article 35. Property management in transition**

- 35.1. Old committee transfers documents, finance and property to the newly elected committee in the presence of the election committee.

- 35.2. All members of the outgoing and incoming members and election committee will sign the transfer document and all will take copies of the document.
- 35.3. Transition should be completed within two weeks.
- 35.4. Newly elected board of directors start working on their position after transfer of documents, finance and property is completed.

## **Article 36. Procedures of measures**

- 36.1. The board of directors can decide to terminate a member of board of directors from membership of the board of directors if he/she:
  - A. Is unable to perform his/her duties because of change of residence.
  - B. Is absent from a meeting of the board of directors for more than three times,
  - C. Voluntarily resigns from membership of the board of directors.
- 36.2. A member of the board of directors can be removed from his/her position only when the case is brought to and decided by the congress.
- 36.3. Procedures for reinstating membership:
  - A. A member of the board of directors removed from membership of the board of directors by the board of directors has the right to appeal to the congress. If the congress dismisses the decision of removal by the board of directors, the member will retain his/her membership of the board of directors.
  - B. If a member is dismissed from membership by the congress, he/she can return to his/her membership when he/she requests the congress to forgive him/her and receive the forgiveness of the congress. Such a member can renew his/her membership after he/she satisfies all his/her obligations during his previous membership and from the time he/she stopped his/her membership to the time of forgiveness. This is the only means a dismissed member can be reinstated to his/her membership.

A member who voluntarily wants to terminate his/her membership has to inform the board of directors in writing. If the member later decides to rejoin the community, he/she can rejoin after paying all remaining balances from previous membership.

**Article 37. Amendment of Bylaw**

Articles of this Bylaw can be amended, changed, cancelled, or updated with new articles only by the congress.

**Article 38. Accountability**

Members of the community and members of the board of directors will not be responsible either individually or as a community for loans or activities of the community. They are free from charges and punishments directed against the community. However, if the wrong is proved crime that emanated from carelessness, dishonesty, or deliberate act, those leaders who committed the crime will be held responsible.