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Forum: Human Rights Council
Issue: Taking measures to protect civilians in the Tigray region of Ethiopia from war crimes and human rights infractions.
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I. **General Overview**

Introduction

The Tigray, a region in the north of Ethiopia is currently place of one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world. 9.4 million people are targeted, the population is suffering hunger, war and war crimes. More than two million people have been displaced in the affected regions Tigray, Afar and Amhara. There have been at least 10,000 reported deaths and 230 massacres, as stated in a UN Human Rights joint investigation covering the period from November 2020 to June 2021.

War between government forces and the Tigrayan party T.P.L.F. (Tigray People's Liberation Front) erupted in October 2020, when Tigrayan forces were found guilty of attacking army bases to steal weapons crossing a "red line" as the Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed stated. He won the elections in 2018, taking over Ethiopia's administration after a period of 21 years of T.P.L.F. government. The T.P.L.F. has been designated a terrorist group – negotiations have been precluded by the government. Attacks and riots have forced the government into "a military confrontation".

Both sides were joined by other forces, intensifying the conflict and worsening the threats for the population. This includes the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF), Eritrean Defense Force (EDF), Amhara Special Forces (ASF), Amhara Fano and other militia all fighting for the government; and the Tigrayan Special Forces (TSF), Tigrayan militia and other allied groups make up the other side – the rebellions.

Access to the areas in needs is made extremely difficult by both sides. Reports state that thousands of people are in dire need of assistance with no humanitarian aid received since June due to limited availability of food, relief supplies, fuels and cash to sustain operations.



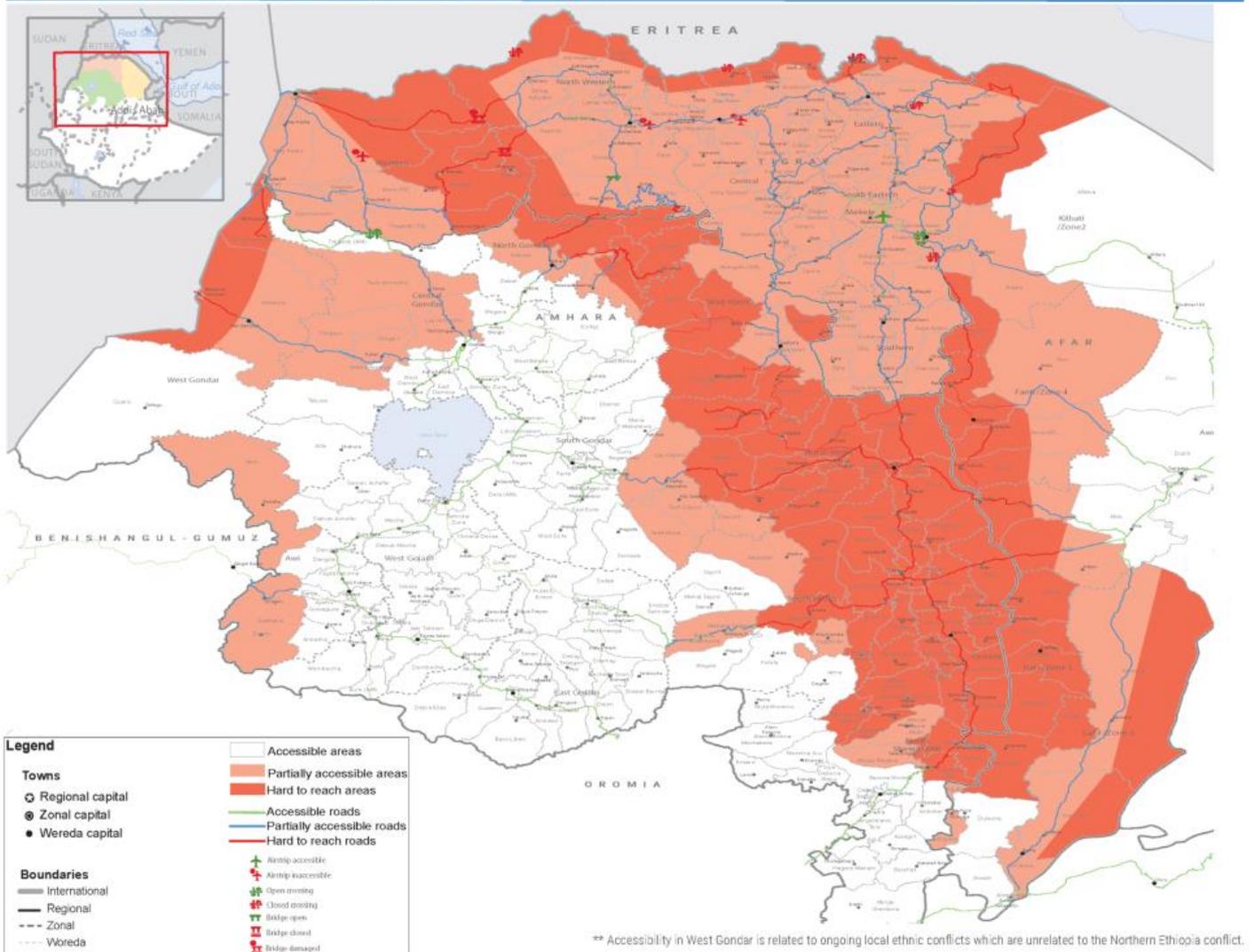
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The government has cut fundings long before the eruption of war in order to contain rebellious conduct by the Tigrayan Administration. Additionally, most citizen have lost their homes and all belongings due to looting and damage to their home. The government counts on cutting supply and support as an approach to weaken and pressure Tigrayan forces. Some experts assume that the government's plan is to purposefully starve the Tigrayan population. Government forces are stopping food supply and humanitarian aid deliveries. Moreover, food is burnt, farmers are forcibly stopped from ploughing the land, hospitals and clinics are looted



ETHIOPIA Northern Ethiopia - Access Map

As of 30 November 2021



- 1. Accessible:** The population has optimal access to humanitarian assistance and services. The operational environment to relief operations - from a security perspective - is enabling, partners should apply caution as per normal. There are no physical access constraints impacting relief activities.
- 2. Partially accessible:** The population is able to access limited humanitarian assistance and services. Insecurity continues to affect the safety and security of the population and aid workers, impeding relief operations on an intermittent basis. There are some restrictions on the operating environment, including in terms of the rights of the population to access aid. While some partners may be operating in the area, caution should be applied in light of risks and mitigation measures put in place. Some physical access constraints may impact relief activities.
- 3. Hard-to-reach:** The population's access to humanitarian assistance and services is highly restricted. The security situation is extremely volatile, compromising the safety and security of the population and aid workers, impeding relief operations on a permanent basis. Aid personnel need to be extremely cautious when planning and conducting operations, which should be restricted to life-saving activities, and need to put in place extraordinary mitigation measures and consider alternative operational approaches. Physical environment constraints are having a major impact on relief operations and people's access to aid.

Human rights violations and infractions

Even though the government announced an official ceasefire in June, the conflict expands further, entailing the worsening of the humanitarian conditions and the following of further human rights violations. All parties are involved in *violations of international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law* to varying degrees. These include:

a) *Attacks against civilians and indiscriminate attacks:*

All parties and involved forces either directly attacked civilians and civilian objects, including houses, schools, hospitals, and places of worship or carried out indiscriminate attacks resulting in civilian casualties and the destruction and damaging civilian objects.

b) *Unlawful or extrajudicial killings and executions:*

This means the killing of a person by governmental authorities without the sanction of any judicial proceeding or legal process. These crimes were committed by both sides. Furthermore, there have been cases where selected civilian groups were killed by systematic attacks.

c) *Torture:*

All sides are guilty of torture and ill-treatment of civilians and captured. Reasons for militia to torture victims are their political affiliation, however it can also be traced back to their ethnical background. Mostly civilians identifying as Amhara were targeted, though this occurred mainly in the Western Tigray.

→ E.g., victims are beaten with electric cables and metal pipes; threatened with guns to their heads and deprived of food and water

d) *Widespread arbitrary detentions, abductions and enforced disappearances:*

The ENDF (Ethiopian National Defense Forces) were reported by civilians to be guilty of the detainment and abduction of individuals in secret locations and military camps. Reports entail that civilians disappear and are killed, chosen arbitrarily in many cases.

e) *Pillage, looting and destruction of property:*

Large scale destruction and appropriation has affected education, health care and food supply. Crops and food are taken and civilians have to rely on community members and humanitarian assistance to survive; lootings of health centers entail the loss of access to health care; schools are used for military purposes.

f) *Sexual and gender-based violence:*

Degradation and dehumanizing victims through rape and other forms of sexual violence such as gang-rape. This leads to unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

g) *Forcible displacement of civilians:*

Civilians are forced to flee as a result of killings, rapes, destruction etc. Forced displacement is caused by both sides and not carried out to protect the security of victims nor justified by military imperatives as required by conventional and customary international humanitarian law.

➔ Such acts may also amount to *crimes against humanity* and *war crimes*

h) *Refugees:*

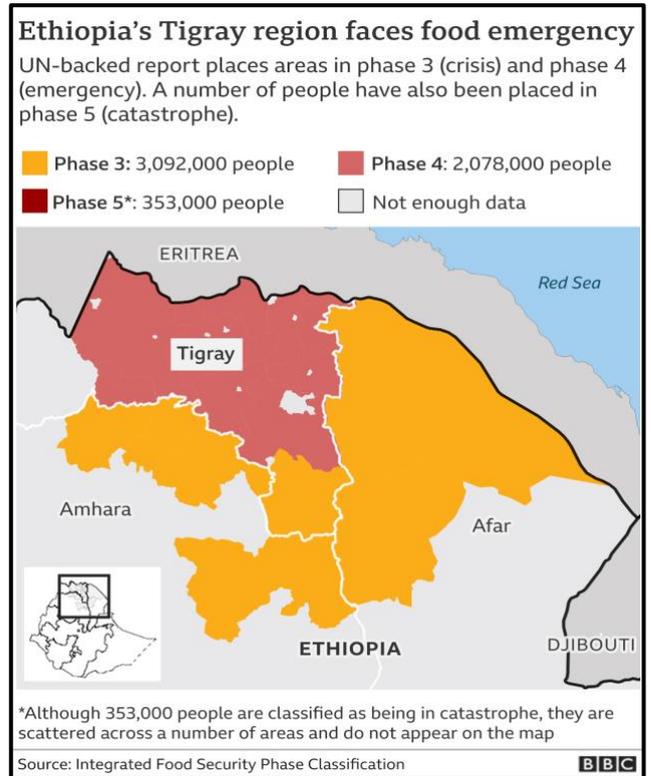
Between November 2020 and January 2021 TSF and EDF violated refugee camps in Tigray sheltering Eritrean refugees. Fighting around the camp they put thousands of refugees at risk resulting in displacement, disappearances of refugees and destruction of the refugee camp.

➔ Violation of the fundamental principle of *non-refoulement* by forcefully returning at risk Eritrean refugees to Eritrea

Famine

The conflict results in war crimes and human rights violations, which also includes the issue of extreme famine and food shortages in the affected areas. Communication has largely been cut in the Tigray, which is one of the reasons why aid workers are unable to access the area. There have also been reports by civilians of predation of food and health care centers.

“As the conflict has escalated, with civilians as ever caught in the middle, it is vital that all parties heed the repeated calls to end hostilities and seek a lasting ceasefire,” Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

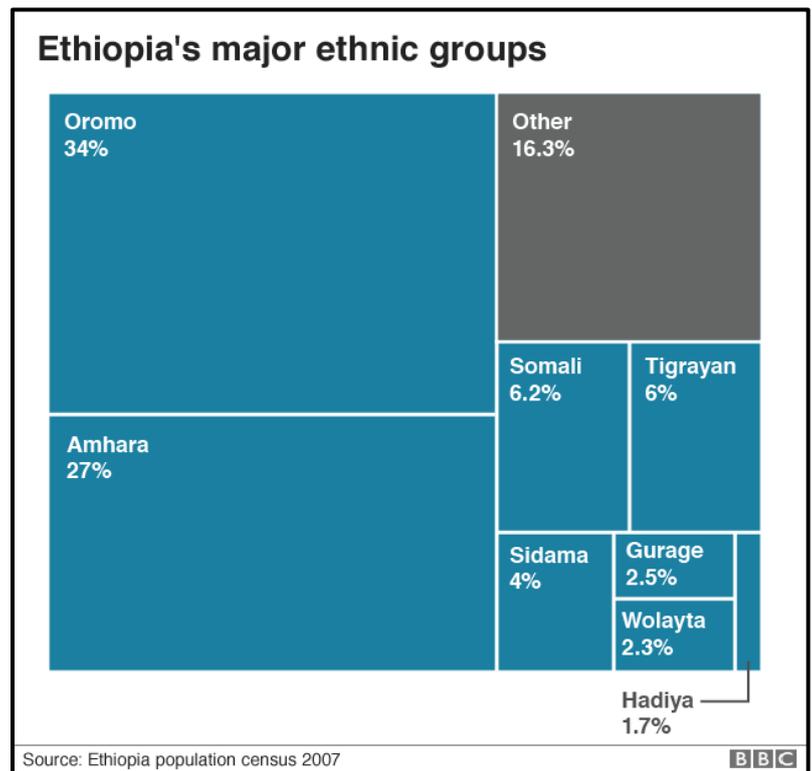


II. Major Parties involved

- T.P.L.F. – Tigray People’s Liberation Front
- Prosperity Party – Prime Minister Abiy party
- T.S.F. – Tigrayan Special Forces
- O.L.A. – Oromo Liberation Army
- E.N.D.F. – Ethiopian National Defense Force
- A.S.F. – Amhara Special Forces
- E.D.F. – Eritrean Defense Force

III. (Historical) Background Information

Ethiopia is home to many different ethnic groups, the Oromo and Amhara making up 60 percent of the population. During the 70s and 80s the political scene was dominated by four parties based on ethnicities. Even though Tigrayans, the third largest group, only make up about 7 percent of the population the T.P.L.F. still became the most powerful rebel force in the country, leading an alliance in 1991 that toppled the government with a military junta in 1991. They ruled the country in a coalition until in 2018 the current Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed was elected.



Timeline

1975: T.P.L.F. was founded

1991, June: T.P.L.F. and coalition partners overthrow the military government of Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam. T.P.L.F. dominates the ruling alliance, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (E.P.R.D.F.)

1995, August: The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is proclaimed; T.P.L.F. leader Meles Zenawi becomes Ethiopia's first Prime Minister → Tigrayans dominate senior ranks of government

2012: Meles Zenawi's (Prime Minister 1995-2012) death; under him Ethiopia emerged as a stable country and enjoyed economic growth – meanwhile systematic repression of political opponents and curtailing of free speech, torture was commonplace in government detention centers



2018, April: Abiy Ahmed was elected as prime minister, after he was part of antigovernment protests that erupted in 2016; signed a piece treaty with the Eritrean Prime Minister ending two decades of hostilities between their country

2019: Abiy forms the nationwide Prosperity Party after dissolving the E.P.R.D.F., but T.P.L.F. refuses to join

2020, August – September: Abiy postpones elections due to Covid-19 – T.P.L.F. accuses Abiy of attempting to extend his hold of power and they therefore hold their own regional elections

2020, November 4: Election is deemed unconstitutional, the federal government sends in troops – Tigray regional forces launch attack, claiming self-defense

2020, November 7: Parliament declares Tigrayan government illegal, votes for forming an interim government for the northern regions; Sudan has closed their borders

2020, November 10-13: Thousands flee to neighboring Sudan, after massacre

2020, November 28: Abiy announces that operations are over since soldiers control Mekelle, the Tigrayan capital

2021, March 23: Abiy confirms that Eritrean troops entered the Tigray after months of denial from both nations (Eritrea claims they have not been involved in and abuses)

2021, June 11: UN claims that 350,000 Tigrayans are experiencing famine, millions more at risk

2021, June 29: Tigrayan forces take control of Mekelle; Ethiopian and Eritrean troops withdraw from most of Tigray

2021, November 3: Abiy calls on citizens to take up arms against rebels (Tigrayan and the joined Oromo forces)

IV. **How to prepare as a delegate**

In order to discuss the issue, all delegates should be aware of the urgency and importance of finding measures to protect civilians from war crimes and human rights infractions in the



Tigray. This will be the basis to find innovative solutions and new approaches and ideas during the debate. So please make sure you are informed and well prepared.

All delegates should know their countries view on the Tigray conflict or if no information can be found, their approach to human rights issues and war crimes. Research if your country has been part of peace keeping missions or humanitarian aid organization groups. It will also be important to know your countries allies and enemies in order to position yourself as a delegate correctly during the debate. Make sure to develop some innovative and useful solutions and research approaches to peace keeping missions. Furthermore, please be aware that the 3rd committee is only able to develop non-binding resolutions.

If you need more general information on the topic, the UN, WHO and UHC websites offer a wide range of information – if you are looking for specific information on your country, make sure you sources are valid and trustworthy, such as governmental websites and news articles.

V. Sources:

<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/ET/OHCHR-EHRC-Tigray-Report.pdf>

<https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/ethiopia/>

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27756&LangID=E>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-57422168>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/05/ethiopia-tigray-war-who-is-fighting-and-what-has-been-the-toll>