

<b>FORUM:</b>	Security Council
<b>ISSUE:</b>	Situation in Ethiopia
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<b>POSITION:</b>	Deputy President of the Security Council

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## Introduction

Over eight months since the military crossfire in the Ethiopian conflict area of Tigray, the situation remains volatile and could further deteriorate alongside the fears of regional instability. Thousands of reported refugees have fled the country, nearly half a million people have been displaced, critical infrastructure has been destroyed, and credible reports of atrocities and war crimes continue to



*Tigrayan Children Waiting for Food*

beleaguer international security. Nearly three million Tigrayans lack necessary assistance, including access to water, food, and healthcare, further complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Millions are being perpetrated by sexual violence, ethnic-based violence, and large-scale looting.

Yet, little of these are being resolved due to the political and international ramifications. Ethiopia's military, Eritrean troops, and ethnic militias are still on the ground since the 72-hour ultimatum issued by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. At a war with itself, this conflicted region in Ethiopia is quick to take advantage of a security vacuum, which may eventually lead to the destabilization of East Africa. Until the political and humanitarian situations are resolved, there also exists a real prospect of famine, a horror that has been historically resonant in Ethiopia.

## Background

The current conflict in Ethiopia is drawn from the rising tensions between the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which dominated Ethiopia's government until their replacement with Prime Minister Ahmed's party in 2019, and Ethiopia's federal government. While many analysts note the Prime Minister's desire to enhance federal control over Ethiopia's regions, including Tigray, has abraded at what it views as an assault on its autonomy, the catalyst to the conflict occurred when the TPLF held



regional elections defying the federal government's decision to postpone Ethiopia's August general elections due to COVID-19. After holding its regional elections in Tigray in September 2020, TPLF further rejected the central government's appointment of a new general to Tigray to take charge of Ethiopia's northern command. This, in turn, resulted in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, slashing federal support to Tigray.

After several months of growing political tensions, the situation in Tigray escalated on November 4<sup>th</sup> when the Office of the Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed accused the TPLF of an unprovoked attack on the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) Northern Command, including attacking an Ethiopian National Defense Forces



*Military Insurgency in Ethiopia*

base and attempting to steal artillery and military equipment in Tigray. Since early November, the humanitarian situation continued to aggravate as thousands of people reportedly died and over 50,000 refugees fled from Tigray into Sudan. In response, the Prime Minister announced a military offensive against the TPLF, termed a Rule of Law Operation, targeting domestic terrorists with large deployments of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces and aerial bombardments. Subsequently, an emergency state of six months has been declared, alongside the power cut that disabled basic online networking systems. On November 28, the federal government had declared an end to this conflict with a victory, but armed clashes and violence have continued to be reported amid a drawn-out insurgency. Last month, the Tigray Defense Forces (TDF), a guerrilla force comprised of the Tigray regional government, the local militia, the TPLF, and others, have seized the regional capital Mekelle, following the swift withdrawal of the federal troops. This withdrawal, carried out after the declaration of a unilateral ceasefire by the Ethiopian federal government, aimed to halt the progression of the conflict into further escalation. Yet, in fact, it has further complicated the conflict in the region, as TPLF recaptured their lost territories, continued capturing other regions, and in that process, perpetrated war crimes.

## Problems Raised

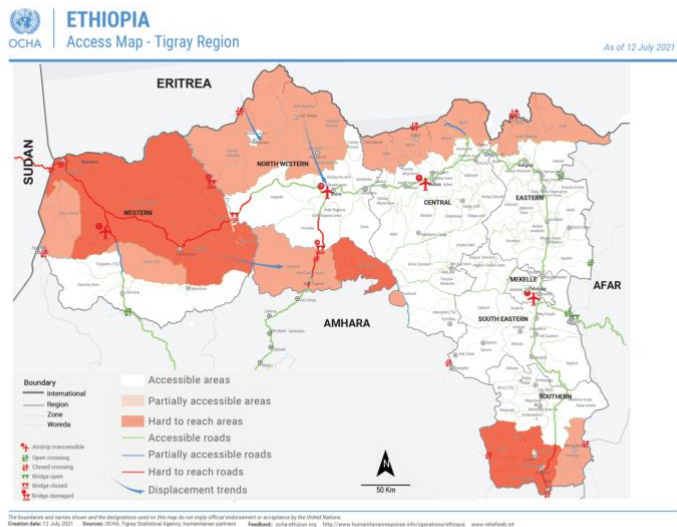
### *Access to Information*

As of now, the world does not have a sheer picture of the dire situation in Tigray, mostly due to a virtual telecommunications blackout that persists in parts of the region. Journalists and humanitarian organizations cannot access many areas due to security and bureaucratic obstacles, the most prominent among those being the expanded and ongoing war zones. This makes it difficult for the United Nations to monitor the humanitarian situation in the region, including arbitrary arrests and detentions, killings, and stigmatization of ethnic civilians. Unless this access to information isn't resolved in a faster rate, the victimization of innocent civilians, refugees, and minorities are less likely to pacify, further mounting to the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Tigray region.

ETHIOPIA - TIGRAY REGION HUMANITARIAN UPDATE  
Situation Report

VISUAL (19 Jul 2021)

Humanitarian Access in Tigray



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. © OCHA

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*Current Humanitarian Access in Tigray*

### *War Crimes*

Ever since the precipitation of wars in the region, the UN officials have warned both the local and the global communities for the war crimes perpetrated in Tigray. After reports of grave human rights violations in many regions including Axum and Dengelat, including sexual violence, large-scale looting, random shootings, mass killings and ethnic-based targeted attacks, the civilians are already experiencing a massive humanitarian crisis. According to the UN Human Rights Commission, there have been abuses by forces on the ground, and they are expected to aggravate with the destruction of humanitarian aid.

### *Security Vacuum*

Ethiopia has long been a security stabilizer in the Horn of Africa, acting as an important diplomat between Somalia and South Sudan. Yet since the conflict in Ethiopia has been granulated, a border dispute between Ethiopia and Sudan has flared up, while Sudan continues to teeter between the military and civilian elements of its transitional government. Concurrently, Somalia is facing a constitutional

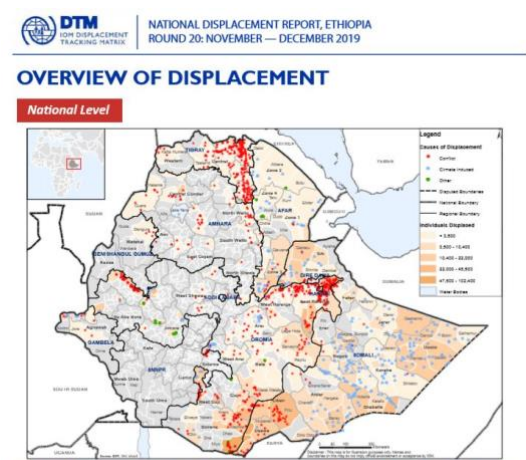


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crisis that could further hamper their past development. Ethiopia's efforts in establishing stability will be the kernels in affecting these states' future. Failures in consolidating a new political system that acclimatizes the country's multifarious population of 112 million could not only degenerate the current crisis but also lead to a massive refugee crisis. The Abiy government's move is also generating fears for the conflict between two parties transforming into a strenuous civil war between the two main ethnic groups that helped in modernizing Ethiopia: the Amharas and the Tigrayans. A multilateral conflict would be triggered, and with the addition of external countries that view Ethiopia as a strategically important region, a proxy conflict may be precipitated.

### *Large Scale Displacements*

Despite the political restructuring in the region that mainly aimed for an improvement in the human rights conditions in the country, the region was instead riven by large scale displacements resulting from disrespected human dignity, inaccessibility to fundamental freedoms and entitlements, and a disclosive economic and political system. Before the conflict, Ethiopia had 5.5 million residents, including internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees who already depended on food assistance. Since the war breakout, however, the large-scale violence and expanded warzones forced huge population across the border into East Sudan. The previous numbers of 100,000 IDPs and approximately 96,000 refugees started to increase exponentially, leading to what is now a huge refugee influx into neighboring countries. Without necessary initiatives addressing these border issues, more people are estimated to suffer from not only forced displacement but also its horrid consequences, including food insecurity, poor sanitation, and the loss of shelter.





*parties to respect the ceasefire.”* The warring parties have not yet responded accordingly considering this international action, but the international communities and experts see this as the first step to resolving the current crisis through international cooperation.

### *MSF Response*

Alongside many other international organizations, the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has contributed to providing humanitarian aids in various parts of the conflicted region. Ever since the war broke out between two parties, the MSF has been supporting the hospital in Adigrat, their medical teams are running the hospital’s emergency room, as well as inpatient, surgical, pediatric, maternity, and mental health services. In the towns of Adwa and Axum, they are providing some of the displaced and local people with basic healthcare, and this has helped hundreds of thousands of displaced persons in precarious conditions in places where healthcare systems are nearly in complete collapse.



*MSF Response in Ethiopia*

## **Key Players**

### *Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF)*

TPLF is the main political party in Tigray, Ethiopia, characterized by its ethnic nationalist actions. Currently in armed confrontation with the Federal Government of Ethiopia, it has recently seized back their previously lost territories as Abiy Ahmed declared a ceasefire and a withdrawal from the conflicted region. The TPLF, alleged of severe war crimes by the UN officials, have been constantly defying what they believe as efforts to build a unitary system of government by the current federal government.

### *The Federal Government of Ethiopia*

With the unexpected resignation by the Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn in 2018, there was a peaceful transfer of power to Abiy Ahmed in the following year, as well as his appointment as the chairman of the Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front. Immediately after Ahmed’s appointment, he and his new government cracked down on human rights abuses, but without considering



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the rising ethnic and political divisions, the period of their reforms has eventually turned into a massive violence of diverse populations. Nevertheless, their actions involved in human rights reforms have resulted in significant changes in Ethiopia, including the revision and ratification of laws such as the Media Law, the Civil Society Law, and the Anti-Terrorism Law to help better the community.

## Possible Solutions

### *Specifying Humanitarian Aids*

The international community may work to ensure that persons with specific needs, such as women and girls at risk and the disabled, are systematically identified and provided with specialized services through establishing Gender-Based violence (GBV) and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) response mechanisms and strengthening community-based protection networks.

### *Targeting the Borders*

Providing multi-sector life-saving humanitarian assistance for all new arrivals at border points and in designated settlement sites in coordination with government counterparts and through support and linkages to national social services wherever possible in line with the Global Compact on Refugees may be effective in dealing with the mass displacements that have occurred among civilians.

## Glossary

### *Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)*

According to the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the term refers to people who have been illegitimately forced to leave their home countries or shelters because of wars, to avoid generalized violence and human rights violations or disasters.



*IDPs in Ethiopia*

### *Impunity*

The term refers to an exemption from punishment often used to target specific organizations or parties who are not punished or taken under control from exerting illegal force among their country,

region, and people through committing war crimes or posing a grave threat to international and national security.

### *Extrajudicial Killings*

Considered a war crime, extrajudicial killings or extrajudicial executions are designating the deliberate killing of an individual by a state agent (or with their consent) without a previous judgment.



*Massive Extrajudicial Killings in Ethiopia*

### *Security Vacuum*

The term refers to the lack of any authority capable of addressing problems such as lack of aid workers and facing unique difficulties in reaching all those in need as they try to assist with constant threats, piracy, abductions, and roadblocks.

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