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Introduction

The Ethiopian civil war centering around Tigray, one of the nation’s northernmost regions, lasted from November 2020 to November 2022. Raged between The Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Ethiopian federal government, as well as the Eritrean government—which sided with the latter—the civil war resulted in mass casualties across Ethiopia and drew international attention. Investigations by international communities reported countless incidents of “mass atrocities” and human rights violations, making it clear that the issue required immediate solutions and a ceasefire. Despite the official ending of the war in late 2022, Ethiopia suffers from its aftermath and worsened humanitarian and economic crisis. To start off, the ethnic tensions within the nation have only deteriorated due to the war. To make matters worse, an estimated number of 28 million Ethiopians need humanitarian assistances for reasons such as starvation due to drought and famine, internal displacements, and minor conflicts that are still present in parts of the nation. A record-high inflation adds on to the Ethiopian government’s burdens. The war might be over, but for Ethiopia to overcome its new challenges, it more than ever requires assistance from the international community.



Soldiers of the TPLF

Background

TPLF had long been the most dominant political party of Ethiopia under Meles Zenawi’s autocratic regime as a soldier-politician from 1991 to 2012. Six years after Zenawi’s death in 2012, Abiy Ahmed Ali was named the Prime Minister of Ethiopia with the help of international



influences, ending the TPLF’s reign of the federal government. It was hoped by the world that Abiy would promote peace and end ethnic struggles within the nation.

At first, it looked like Abiy was the right pick for Ethiopian peace. By the time he “ended violence at the Eritrean border”—winning a Nobel Peace Prize for it—his promise to truly unify Ethiopian ethnicities proved optimistic. Such prospect began to fade, however, when the Tigrayan leadership, in response to Abiy’s term extension and his government’s failure to host national elections as planned, blatantly disobeyed the federal rule and carried out their own local elections. They further enraged the national government with their statement that any form of interference would now be considered a “declaration of war.” Abiy responded with an accusation against Tigrayan troops, claiming that they looted a national military camp. Many worried that ethnic tensions were escalating dangerously.



Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister of Ethiopia

Concerns became reality with Abiy’s initiation of the Mekelle Offensive on November 4th, 2020, where he dispatched Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) against Mekelle, the capital city of Tigray. Tigrayan leaderships responded by sending out their own troops of Tigray Defense Force (TDF). A civil war had officially been raged.

By 2021, April, troops from regions of Oromo, Amhara, and Afar joined the conflict: Oromo sided with TPLF, while the latter two joined the federal government. Although intensifying pressures from international actors eventually made possible “a cessation of hostilities agreement” in November of 2022, signed between the Ethiopian federal government and the TPLF, tensions have not entirely dissipated, and humanitarian and security concerns remain over northern Ethiopia.

Problems Raised

War Crimes

The United States classified the war as an ethnic cleansing from the side of the Ethiopian government. Shortly after the war had begun, media started reporting incidents of civilian



targeting and mistreatments. It was contradictory to Abiy’s claims that the offensive strictly targeted leaders of the TPLF. Controversies furthered when Eritrean troops (a nation north of Ethiopia; the two had once clashed in war during Zenawi’s reign) were discovered to be directly interfering and fighting alongside Ethiopian soldiers in Tigray, reports estimating them to have killed close to a hundred Tigrayan civilians by December of 2020, which included the massacre of Tigrayans in the city of Axum. Civilian killings peaked with a drone strike on January 7th, 2022, that targeted a group of Tigrayan refugees gathered in a school. The strike killed over 50 civilians and wounded over 40.



Ethiopian Soldiers

Investigators of war crimes have further accused Eritrean soldiers of sexual slavery and rape. Forces from Amhara were discovered to have partaken in sexual violence, rape, murder, and persecution. They were also responsible for forcible deportations in western Tigray.

War crimes were not only committed by the side of the Ethiopian government. The United States government condemned the Tigrayan government as well of war crimes such as mass killings of civilians and rapes. Tigrayan forces were also reported to have committed shelling and looting in the Afar regions in early 2022.

Human rights reports listed violent acts towards children, “ethnically targeted killings,” and rape as common grounds of human rights violations from all parties involved in the civil war. War crime accountabilities are yet to be carried out; as Anthony Blinken, the United States secretary of state, says, “We urge the government of Ethiopia and the government of Eritrea as well as the TPLF to hold those responsible for these atrocities accountable.”

Humanitarian Crisis

The civil war brought about a massive humanitarian crisis, involving no less than 28 million Ethiopians. The aftermath of the war, combined with an economic crisis and a continued drought within the country, largely contributed to ranking Ethiopia as the second nation in the world with the most “risk of worsening humanitarian crisis in 2023” (“Crisis...”).

This year marks Ethiopia’s yet another rainy season of failure—its sixth one in a row. An estimated number of 30 million people have been affected by the drought. 20 million of them face severe food insecurity, with people dying due to starvation every single day. The drought has also brought about a shortage of drinking water, causing an outbreak of cholera in Oromia. Despite continuing problems, however, only 12% of those affected by the drought remain provided with humanitarian assistances.

To add onto Ethiopian government’s burdens, inflation mounted up to 37.7% in 2022. “High rate of livestock deaths” is also a leading cause to high food prices that makes it even more difficult for people to access food. An estimated 1.66 billion dollars is needed to resolve the current drought-related humanitarian crisis. The situation is further intensified in regions of Benishangul-Gumuz, Afar, and Oromia that are still undergoing relatively minor conflicts. It is important to note that all these factors combined are producing high tolls of Ethiopian refugees leaving the country—resulting in a refugee crisis.

International Actions

Fundings

Organizations and nations around the world are funding Ethiopia to help it meets its humanitarian needs. Antony Blinken, the US Secretary of State, has announced in March 2023, that over 331 million dollars would be used to provide humanitarian assistance to Ethiopians that suffer from food insecurity, drought, and the aftermaths of the conflict. The European Union (EU) has assigned over 80 million Euros for the same reasons. The money was used to assist those displaced and impacted by natural disasters, as well as asylum-seekers and refugees, and save lives of those directly affected by the conflict. The World Bank holds large fundings in Ethiopia, aiming to revive its economy. Through the International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank has consistently assisted Ethiopia’s developments.

Humanitarian Aids

The world is taking actions to resolve the situation in Ethiopia—not only by their provision of funds—but by actual humanitarian aids as well. The UN announced on the December of 2021 that up to 100,000 tons of food and another 10 tons of vital humanitarian



items besides food have reached Ethiopians in need, with the help of over 20 organizations. Prominent NGOs such as *Save the Children*, *World Vision*, and *Cure International* are also currently helping Ethiopians in need. These NGOs work to “implement emergency relief and...long-term development programs” (“About...”).



Distribution of aids in Ethiopia

Key Players

United States

The United States have been an influential foreign power to the Ethiopian conflict. Not only has it continuously condemned the Ethiopian government of their raging the civil war but have also shown efforts to help resolve the conflict. The Agreement for Lasting Peace through a Permanent Cessation of Hostilities (COHA) was signed by both the Ethiopian government and leaders of the TPLF in sight of the United States representatives, as well as those from the African Union and the United Nations. The United States remain the largest donor and humanitarian assistance provider for Ethiopia, having provided over 3 billion dollars for humanitarian crisis response.

Eritrea

As mentioned previously, Eritrean forces had fought alongside Ethiopian soldiers against the TPLF. The Eritrean forces’ war atrocities, as well as Eritrea’s general impact on the civil war, is graver than what is assumed. Many suspect that the Eritrean involvement in the war was planned beforehand with the establishment of a peace pact signed between Abiy Ahmed and Isaias Afewerki, the Eritrean dictator. In fact, the European External Programme with Africa have reported Eritrean invasion on a town in Tigray a day before Ethiopian forces officially broke out the civil war. Eritrean forces were also discovered to have contributed to the food insecurity in Tigray, with them having burnt



Eritrean Soldiers in the war

farmlands, killed livestock, and damaged irrigation networks in the region. Their various human rights violations and war crimes are still to be held responsible for by Eritrean government.

Possible Solutions

International Support

It is no surprise that for Ethiopia to overcome its dire economic and humanitarian situation, international assistance is crucial and necessary. UN organizations, relevant NGOs, and member nations need to continue their efforts to alleviate Ethiopian circumstances. It is recommended that cooperation with the Ethiopian government be made to ensure that aids will reach conflict-affected regions—effectively. Organizations could establish a network to effectively apportion assistances and keep track of how they are being handed out (to avoid any embezzlement by government officials); continuously collect data to locate areas in need of urgent help; and, for individual nations, to discuss a possible resource or business exchange with the Ethiopian government for handing out humanitarian assistances. For despite massive efforts, only a small percentile of those impacted by the war remain assisted. It is time that organizations work together to expand campaigns and programs to more effectively cater to all Ethiopians in need—offering nutritional, medical, psychological, and accommodation-related helps.

Concerning Eritrea

Curiously enough, neither of the two peace agreements signed between the TPLF and the Ethiopian government make clear what must be done about Eritrea. The country has been a key factor in the civil war; and investigations into its war crimes accountability, as well as its complete military withdrawal from Ethiopia, remain crucial for peace. The international community must pressure Eritrea to make up for the damages it caused in Tigray, taking a closer look at what its troops have done in the region. Intervention from the International Criminal Court (ICC) is encouraged. Furthermore, there must be established treaties and UN resolutions to ensure Ethiopia—especially Tigray—cleared of Eritrean forces. With the war over, there is no reason for foreign troops’ presence in the region.

All Guns Aside



The Ethiopian Civil war between the federal government and the TPLF may be over—but conflicts remain in the country. Security in Amhara is especially concerning, as Amhara forces persist in their efforts to conduct an ethnic cleansing against Tigrayans (resulting in yet more human rights violations) and continue their territory dispute against Tigray. Further complications due to FANO's (Amhara militia) involvement in Amhara Security can only disrupt Ethiopia's stride towards peace and a complete ceasefire. There must be a definite approach in terms of negotiations concerning all armed parties relevant to end all minor conflicts in Amhara and other regions such as Oromia and Afar. Intervention from influential international actors such as the UN Security Council and the United States may reap security improvements. The Ethiopian government must cooperate with such key players to promote disarmament for all regional and local forces, as well as to protect Tigrayans' rights as citizens of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.



Unrest in Amhara

Glossary

Mass Atrocities

Instances of large-scale, systematic violence against civilian populations.

Ceasefire

A temporary suspension of fighting, typically one during which peace talks take place; a truce.

Cessation of Hostilities

A temporary halt in fighting, usually non-binding and commonly happening at the start of a peace process.

Food Insecurity

The condition of not having access to sufficient food, or food of an adequate quality, to meet one's basic needs.



TIANMUN

NGO

A non-profit organization that operates independently of any government, typically one whose purpose is to address a social or political issue.

Humanitarian Crisis

A singular event or a series of events that are threatening in terms of health, safety, or well-being of a community or large group of people.

Ethnic Cleansing

Rending an area ethnically homogeneous by using force or intimidation to remove from a given area persons of another ethnic or religious group.



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