International Community's Response to the War on Tigray
On November 4, 2020, the Ethiopian government began an offensive against the people of Tigray, disguised as a law-and-order operation. Despite the government alleging that the prime targets were top Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) officials, the series of events that followed the November 4th declaration of war tell a different story.

Tigray was closed off to the world, telecommunications were cut off, and international media and humanitarian organizations were barred from the region. Under the cover of this information blackout, enabled by the Abiy administration’s imprisonment of political opposition and journalists, the genocidal campaign was waged.

As access began to gradually and intermittently open up, evidence emerged of wide-scale atrocities, including rape and massacres, exacted on the civilian population by the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF), Eritrean forces, and invading Amhara militias. It is apparent that the target was and continues to be the Tigrayan population.
Ethiopian and Eritrean governments have denied the widespread atrocities committed by the ENDF, Eritrean troops, and Amhara militia. Ethiopia and Eritrea denied the presence of Eritrean troops for the first 6 months of the war, despite eyewitness testimony and photographic and video evidence showing Eritrean troops committing human rights violations.

Reports by CNN, New York Times, Amnesty International, human rights groups, and NGOs have corroborated civilian testimonies and confirmed multiple human rights violations, such as the rape of tens of thousands of Tigrayan girls and women, indiscriminate killings, looting, and blocking of aid, which has led to a famine.

There is consensus among the international community that an existential threat exists for Tigrayans. The following slides present the international community’s response to what is happening in Tigray.
European Union (EU) Response

The EU has voiced its condemnation of the atrocities being committed against Tigrayans since the beginning of the war.

On December 16, 2020, the EU announced that it was postponing 109 million dollars in budgetary support to Ethiopia for the refusal to open humanitarian corridors to allow aid to reach Tigrayans. It was the first concrete action initiated by the EU to pressure the Ethiopian government to allow aid access.

After visiting Ethiopia in February 2021, EU envoy Pekka Haavisto stated, “My picture was that even the [Ethiopian] government themselves do not have a clear picture, particularly areas controlled by Eritreans, probably areas controlled by Amhara militias.”

It was not until 4 months after his visit that Haavisto made the genocidal intent of the war clear, when he quoted Ethiopian officials who had told him “they are going to wipe out the Tigrayans for 100 years.”

Most recently, Janez Lenarcic, EU Crisis Management Commissioner, had this to say after Ethiopia declared a “ceasefire” in Tigray: "It is not a ceasefire, it is a siege and starvation is used as a weapon of war."
Canada, along with fellow G7 members, has condemned Ethiopia for flagrant violence against the civilian population along with the destruction of Tigray’s infrastructure.

In a statement published on July 1, 2021, the UK government declared that “The violence must now stop and unfettered humanitarian access granted. Eritrean forces should also leave Tigray.” Such a statement highlights that despite the Ethiopian government’s declaration of a “ceasefire,” invading forces, including Eritrean forces and Amhara militia, remain in Tigray, committing atrocities against civilians and preventing aid organizations from reaching civilians.

On June 28th, 2021, the UK and Ireland, along with the United States, called for a UN Security Council (UNSC) meeting to discuss the crisis in Tigray, given the egregious hostilities and worsening circumstances. On July 2, 2021, the UNSC met to address “Peace and Security in Africa,” beginning with the conflict in Tigray. Members of the Council discussed at length the humanitarian crisis and the importance of facilitating an immediate ceasefire.
The United States has increasingly sounded the alarm upon further investigation into the wide-scale horrors being inflicted on the civilian population in Tigray. White House officials, U.S. diplomats, congressional representatives and senators have been outspoken in their rebuke of the human rights violations taking place in Tigray.

When Rep. Karen Bass asked U.S. Secretary of State Blinken about a peacekeeping intervention, Blinken responded saying that Amhara and Eritrean forces must first leave Tigray and be replaced by "a force that will not abuse the human rights of the people of Tigray or commit acts of ethnic cleansing, which we've seen in Western Tigray."

State Department spokesman Ned Price, White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan, and U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield have all called for independent investigations into the wide-scale atrocities committed against Tigrayans and a cessation of hostilities, while also expressing grave concern regarding the use of weaponized rape and famine.
On May 23, 2021 Secretary Blinken tweeted that the U.S. government was taking steps to impose visa restrictions on select Ethiopian and Eritrean politicians and government in the wake of unrelenting large-scale human atrocities in Tigray.

Shortly after Secretary Blinken’s announcement, on May 24, 2021, Assistant Secretary for the State Department’s Bureau of African Affairs Robert Godec stated that the U.S. federal government was imposing “wide-ranging economic sanctions.” U.S. sanctions also reportedly include the curtailment of security and defense assistance.

On May 26, 2021, President Joe Biden released a statement on the crisis stating, “The large-scale human rights abuses taking place in Tigray, including widespread sexual violence, are unacceptable and must end [...] All parties, in particular the Ethiopian and Eritrean forces, must allow immediate, unimpeded humanitarian access to the region in order to prevent widespread famine.”

Just recently, in June 2021, Michael McCaul, the U.S Representative for Texas, stated that “War crimes, crimes against humanity, and acts of genocide have been carried out against Tigrayan people, and according to the U.N., systematic rape and sexual violence is rampant.”
United Nations and other Human Rights Organizations

The UNSC has repeatedly expressed concern about the violence committed upon the Tigrayan civilian population and, in particular, the sexual and gender-based violence against women and children in Tigray:

"The members of the Security Council expressed their deep concern about allegations of human rights violations and abuses, including reports of sexual violence against women and girls in the Tigray region, and called for investigations to find those responsible and bring them to justice." -- Reuters, April 22, 2021

On June 10, 2021 UN Humanitarian Chief Mark Lowcock stressed the dire situation that civilians in Tigray are facing and hence the importance of opening humanitarian corridors. In plain speech, Lowcock stated that “There is famine now in Tigray [...] The number of people in famine conditions ... is higher than anywhere in the world, at any moment since a quarter million Somalis lost their lives in 2011."

On June 24, 2021, during the 41st Session of the Human Rights Council, a call for a resolution on Tigray was made. In that resolution, extrajudicial murder of civilians and aid workers, weaponized rape, deliberate destruction of infrastructure, looting, and other crimes against humanity were testified to. The resolution was signed by multiple international NGOs, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.
Conclusion

The international community agrees there is a grave humanitarian crisis in Tigray. These selected quotations from government officials and international bodies demonstrate the extent of the crimes and violations committed by the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments, and their condemnation. It has been well-established that the ENDF, Eritrean forces, and Amhara militias have committed countless atrocities, including man-made famine, weaponized rape, looting, indiscriminate murder and targeted destruction of essential infrastructure.

However, these international actors must do more than merely condemn these genocidal acts, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. In 1991, the world witnessed one of the most horrific displays of state-sponsored genocide in Rwanda, where 1 million people were killed. History is now repeating itself with state-sponsored genocide in Tigray.

The international community must take concrete steps to prevent more atrocities, including deaths due to starvation, from taking place in Tigray by working with the elected government of Tigray.
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#TigrayGenocide, #TigrayCantWait

Sources

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