EDITOR’S NOTE

Between October 13 and 16, 2023, Tigrayans worldwide partook in three days of mourning for all the lives lost in a genocidal war that has spanned 3 years. There were lives taken on the battlefield, as Tigrayans from all walks of life—farmers, professors, priests, students, and survivors of unspeakable atrocities—valiantly defended their people, their families from genocide.

In the days and weeks preceding the mourning period, families across Tigray, including those suffering in internally displaced camps, were officially informed of the martyrdom of their loved ones. The toll the genocidal war took on the people of Tigray became clear and memorialized. The loss of tens of thousands, of a generation of young people, in an effort to protect their families. There were also of course the hundreds of thousands of Tigrayan civilians who were killed at the hands of invading and genocidal forces. At the height of the war, Tigrayans had to make the decision to stay vulnerable to unimaginable atrocities carried out in Tigray’s cities, towns, and villages, or risk their lives and join Tigray’s defense forces to defend against the genocidal onslaught.

We mourn and honor each and every life lost—each grandparent, mother, father, sibling, relative, and friend taken. We also promise to continue to be a voice for those silenced and amplify Tigrayan voices. We will persist in our efforts for justice and accountability for all crimes committed, past and present, against the people of Tigray.

To the people of Tigray, you are not forgotten.

To allies and the international community, we urge you to take note of the ongoing immense suffering and atrocities taking place in Tigray and advocate for and facilitate an end to both.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

November 4, 2023 marks three years since the onset of the genocidal war on Tigray. Over the last three years, Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF), Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF), Amhara regional forces and Fano militias have unleashed a campaign of terror and destruction that has devastated Tigray. The most conservative estimates indicate that over 800,000 people have died in Tigray as a result of the genocidal war while tens of thousands more have been injured. The weaponized Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) unleashed by the invading forces has affected tens of thousands of survivors and victims who still have not accessed the care and support they desperately need. The wholesale destruction as part of the war and subsequent siege by the Ethiopian government which prevented the transportation of vital supplies including food, medicine, among other humanitarian aid, into Tigray gave rise to famine which has claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. Over 60,000 Tigrayans have been forced to flee to neighboring Sudan, where they are facing extremely dangerous conditions due to the conflict that erupted there in April 2023. Moreover, there are over 2 million internally displaced Tigrayans, many of whom have been ethnically cleansed from their homes in Western Tigray by Amhara regional forces and Fano militias. Internally Displaced People (IDPs) remain unable to access basic necessities including food and clean water, and are sheltering in makeshift camps, abandoned buildings, and schools in Tigray.

Overall, in terms of the magnitude of destruction and loss, the genocidal war on Tigray is the worst conflict of the 21st century to date.

The aerial bombardment, deliberate destruction, and urban warfare undertaken by Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Amhara forces has destroyed vital infrastructure, public facilities, and private property throughout Tigray. Facilities like hospitals, universities, and factories were deliberately targeted and destroyed by the invading forces, and most still remain non-functional. Health outcomes have worsened in the region, as hospitals are unable to provide the same level of care they did before the war. As such, people are dying due to illnesses and conditions that are treatable. Moreover, the disruption of medical supplies and vaccines has meant that childhood diseases that were nearly eradicated have returned.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Additionally, most children in Tigray have not been able to resume their studies as many schools are either completely destroyed or being used to shelter IDPs. The April 2023 decision by a number of humanitarian organizations, most notably the United Nations’ World Food Programme (WFP) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), to suspend food aid in Tigray and in Ethiopia more broadly has severely exacerbated the famine crisis in the region and has already resulted in the deaths of thousands of people. In all, the destruction unleashed in Tigray over the last three years has decimated the region and will require a significant mobilization of resources to remedy.

Despite the November 2022 Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA), human rights violations and atrocities continue unabated in Western Tigray, which is under the control of Amhara forces, and in Irob and other occupied areas in northern Tigray under the control of Eritrean forces. There are reports of sexual violence, forced displacement, enforced disappearances, illegal imprisonment, torture, and killings in and around these areas under occupation. It is incumbent on the signatories and facilitators of the CoHA to ensure that the terms of the agreement are implemented and adhered to.

This requires the immediate and verifiable removal of Amhara forces from Western Tigray and the resettlement of Tigrayan IDPs back in their homes and the verifiable removal of Eritrean forces from all parts of Tigray. Moreover, rehabilitation and support for all those affected by the war is desperately needed. Finally, it is vital for all stakeholders to ensure the establishment of a robust and legitimate justice and accountability mechanism. With the Human Rights Council’s failure to renew the mandate of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE), it is incumbent on all states to establish an independent mechanism to ensure accountability for the war crimes, crimes against humanity, and acts of genocide perpetrated against Tigrayans.
Since the genocidal war on Tigray began in November 2020, millions of Tigrayans have been displaced both within and beyond the borders of the region. An estimated 60,000+ Tigrayans became refugees, finding temporary relief in Sudan after fleeing ethnic cleansing, massacres, and detention. Within Tigray, there are an estimated 2.2 million Tigrayans IDPs. In occupied Western Tigray, civilians continue to be forcibly displaced from their homes. Addis Standard reported in April 2023 “that at least 47,000 newly displaced individuals had arrived” at an IDP Center near Shire [1]. As of September of 2023, 1,436 people were displaced from Western Tigray, “many seeking refuge at the Endabagune Internally Displaced Persons Center, located near Shire in the Northwestern Tigray zone [...].” [2]. Many of the recent IDPs were released from detention camps where they had been subject to horrific violence for months on end. One survivor told Addis Standard that for seven months he was beaten and deprived of food. These acts of torture and brutalization illustrate the root cause of the displacement of Tigrayans over the last three years and evidence the ongoing forcible displacement of Tigrayans due to occupation and ethnic cleansing.

About 3 miles outside of Mekelle, 70 Kare camp for internally displaced people (IDP) hosting about 7,000 Tigrayans displaced by ethnic cleansing and other crimes against humanity. The Guardian, August 07, 2023.
DISPLACEMENT

Under the CoHA, the Ethiopian government is responsible for ensuring the safety and return of Tigrayan IDPs to their homes. To date, this has not happened. In October of 2023, the Tigray Regional Interim Administration (TIA) raised concerns about a report from the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) that claimed many displaced Tigrayans had been returned home and were receiving aid. The TIA condemned the EHRC report, noting that these claims were unfounded and “irresponsible misinformation” [3]. An October report by the United Nations (UN) found that in Tigray, “IDPs continue to shelter in 106 schools due to lack of support to return to villages of origin or to be relocated to alternative land, causing 163,000 children to remain out of school for three consecutive years” [4].

IDPs in Tigray have and continue to face a myriad of challenges that make them particularly vulnerable. A lack of access to basic necessities such as food, water, and shelter has made the community vulnerable to malnutrition, disease, and violence. Due to their displacement, the livelihood and education of Tigrayans IDPs have been impacted - with consequences likely to be felt for years on. Finally, the suspension of food aid across Ethiopia disproportionately impacts IDPs, who are at higher risk because of their limited access to a stable home, basic necessities, and sources of income. The aid suspension had led to an increase in crime and women having to resort to sex work for survival.

Tigrayan refugees in Sudan also face numerous challenges that are exacerbated by the ongoing genocidal war in Sudan that has resulted in the displacement of seven million Sudanese civilians. William Carter, Sudan country director of the Norwegian Refugee Council, told Arab News that “refugees face a painful dilemma of whether to go back to where they fled from, it’s a tragic choice they have” [5]. Amid this violence, many Tigrayan refugees in Sudan have been trafficked to Libya. According to a report by The Guardian, refugees in several camps in southeastern Sudan were deceived into believing they were being offered opportunities for agricultural employment, only to be trafficked to Libya. One of these refugees, Selassie, narrates his ordeal, which began when he fled attacks in his hometown in Western Tigray, an area being systematically ethnically cleansed by Amhara forces. After finding temporary refuge in the Tunadybah refugee camp in Sudan, he was subsequently trafficked through a series of traumatic events, including torture, detention, and exploitation for ransom, across five different trafficking networks and facilities in the desolate regions of Libya. Selassie’s attempt to seek a better life in Europe led him to board a boat with other refugees, which tragically capsized. Survivors, including Selassie, were apprehended and held in custody by the Libyan coast guard and police.
From the onset of the genocidal war on Tigray, Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Amhara forces attacked food security in Tigray, in an effort to subjugate the entire population. In December 2020, a month after the declaration of war, humanitarian agencies began warning about the growing food insecurity in Tigray as the Ethiopian government and its allied forces enacted a blockade. Throughout the months they occupied Tigray, Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Amhara forces exacerbated this food insecurity. These forces stole food supplies and destroyed what they could not steal, including silos and stored supplies. They razed farmlands, burnt crops, destroyed farming implements, and prevented farmers from working on their lands. Moreover, they worked to systematically block the transportation of food aid into Tigray by closing the region off on all sides. While the Amhara government blocked the roads to Tigray on the region’s southern and southwestern borders, the Eritrean and Ethiopian governments ensured that aid could not be transported through any other avenue. This genocidal campaign gave rise to a devastating famine that claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people, including children, the elderly, pregnant women, and mothers.

In June 2021, Tigray Defense Forces (TDF) liberated most parts of Tigray, expelling the ENDF and EDF from many areas. Following this development, the Ethiopian government enacted a complete and illegal siege that led to the deaths of thousands. All road and air transportation into Tigray was halted, communications lines were blocked, and essential services including electricity were disconnected. Additionally, the Ethiopian government and its allies utilized their control of all roads to block the transportation of humanitarian aid into the region. For months, as civilians in Tigray continued to suffer from a lack of food and medicine amid a famine, the Ethiopian government deliberately denied humanitarian agencies access to the region. Despite repeated warnings that its policies would result in the deaths of the most vulnerable people, the Abiy regime maintained the deadly siege, using weaponized hunger to wage war against the entire Tigrayan population.
Following the November 2022 CoHA, there were some efforts to restore humanitarian assistance to Tigray. While the aid coming in was grossly inadequate and far less than what was needed to avert the worst of the famine, it provided some relief to a population that had been besieged for nearly two years. However, in April 2023, the WFP and USAID suspended food aid in Tigray amid reports of misappropriation by Ethiopian and Tigrayan authorities. This suspension has had devastating consequences. By June 2023, hunger had killed at least 700 people, primarily children. In Axum, central Tigray, there was a 96% increase in the hospitalization of children under five due to malnutrition, while starvation deaths were reported in southeastern Tigray as well. Additionally, deaths were also reported at sites hosting IDPs in Abiy Adi, May-Kintetal, and the capital Mekelle. By August 2023, the number of starvation-caused deaths had climbed up to 1,400, affecting people across eastern, north-eastern, and south-eastern Tigray. While exact figures are unavailable, with food aid still suspended, it is likely that many more people have perished in Tigray since August. Aid workers and officials state that the suspension of food aid is having a more devastating impact than the siege imposed by the Ethiopian government. Combined with a looming drought, which has already destroyed 20% of Tigray’s farmland, the suspension of food aid exacerbates the famine in the region and jeopardizes the lives of hundreds of thousands of vulnerable people trying to survive genocide.
One of the most egregious aspects of the genocidal war on Tigray is the weaponized CRSV used as a tool of war, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. Largely - though not exclusively - targeting women and girls, CRSV has had a devastating impact on survivors, families, and entire communities. While the atrocious attacks against Tigrayan women, girls, men, and boys have been widely reported with some estimates reaching 120,000 survivors, little is known about the true scale and magnitude of CRSV in Tigray. ICHREE highlighted the atrocity crime of sexual violence in its latest report, highlighting the widespread and systematic perpetration of sexual violence across all zones and phases of the war on Tigray. The report describes the high incidence of multiple-perpetrator rapes committed by Eritrean, Ethiopian, Amhara, and Afar special forces and Fano militias. The report further reveals that women and girls, as young as 9 years old and as old as 60, were often raped in front of their children or other family members. Finally, the report demonstrates the extremely brutal nature of these attacks, wherein rape was often accompanied by additional physical violence including deliberate infliction of burns and insertion of foreign objects.

CRSV has not ceased in Tigray even after the signing of the November 2022 CoHA. A September 2023 report by Amnesty International titled “Today or Tomorrow, they should be brought before justice” details incidents of rape and sexual slavery committed by Eritrean forces in Tigray. The report shows that months after the signing of the CoHA, EDF soldiers raped, gang-raped, and sexually enslaved Tigrayan women. Similarly, an August 2023 report by Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) and the Organization for Justice and Accountability in the Horn of Africa (OJAH) documents the incidence of CRSV in Tigray after the CoHA. Out of the 305 medical records reviewed by researchers, 128 incidents occurred after November 2022, showing that the patterns of sexual violence remained largely unchanged after the CoHA.

In addition to enduring the terrible trauma of CRSV, survivors in Tigray have been unable to access vital medical and psycho-social care and support in the aftermath of these attacks. This is in part due to the destruction of health facilities in Tigray, which prevented survivors and victims from accessing care. Many survivors are still dealing with the devastating consequences of these brutal attacks, including reproductive organ injuries and disorders, unwanted pregnancies, and Sexually Transmitted Infections, such as HIV. Moreover, survivors are facing a myriad of other consequences including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicide. Significant medical and psycho-social support is needed immediately to aid survivors, families, and communities cope with the egregious CRSV carried out over the last three years. Furthermore, a robust, independent, and international justice mechanism needs to be instituted to ensure that survivors and victims receive justice and accountability. Given that most reports concur that Eritrean forces committed the worst of the CRSV, a domestic transitional justice framework cannot deliver justice for these crimes.
The CoHA signed over a year ago between the Government of Ethiopia and Tigrayan representatives noted that “disarmament of heavy weapons [by the TDF] will be done with the withdrawal of foreign and non-ENDF [federal military] forces by the region” [6]. In January 2023, the TDF started handing over heavy weapons to the Ethiopian National Defense Forces, with Getachew Reda, the President of the TIA, stating that “Tigray has handed over its heavy weapons as part of its commitment to implementing the Pretoria agreement, and the Monitoring & Verification Team has confirmed it. We hope & expect this will go a long way in expediting the full implementation of the agreement” [7].

Despite the compliance and commitment by the Tigrayan side to adhere to the principles laid out in the agreement, the CoHA is not fully implemented, and it has yet to alleviate the suffering and ongoing humanitarian crisis in Tigray while foreign and non-ENDF forces, namely Eritrean and Amhara forces, continue their brutal occupation within Tigray.

Eritrean troops continue to occupy parts of northern Tigray, particularly lands inhabited by the Irob and Kunama people, as well as Tigrayan border towns like Zalambessa. Moreover, Amhara forces still maintain control of Western Tigray and occupy parts of Southern Tigray, continuing their illegal annexation campaign. The Eritrean and Amhara occupation has been marked by extreme violence, with accounts of ethnic cleansing, extrajudicial killings, rape, and looting, which are still ongoing despite the CoHA. In Irob, for example, Eritrean troops continue to loot livestock and kidnap people, with the advocacy group Irob Anina noting in August 2023 that there have been 56 disappearances from Irob and the neighboring district of Golomkeda since the ceasefire, with fears many of those abducted have been forcibly recruited into Eritrea’s military.

In June 2023, Human Rights Watch reported that Amhara occupiers continued to forcibly expel Tigrayans as part of an ethnic cleansing campaign in Western Tigray since the CoHA, with their research finding that two officials, Col. Demeke Zewdu and Belay Ayalew, who were previously implicated in abuses, continue to be involved in arbitrary detention, torture, and forced deportations of Tigrayans.

The ongoing occupation raises serious concerns about whether the fragile peace will hold as the Eritrean and Amhara troops not only continue to commit gross human rights violations but continue to jeopardize progress on the CoHA, for example, by preventing a monitoring team from carrying out their work. Amanuel Assefa, Chief Cabinet Secretariat of the TIA, noted that trust building between Tigray and the federal government is making “good progress,” but “Tigray cannot be rebuilt while many of its parts are still under a control of an external force. ‘The priority of the TIA is to re-establish the livelihood of Tigrayans who are displaced and affected by the war. But we cannot do this unless the land where they are displaced is under the control of our administration’” [8].
Despite international stakeholders and partners rushing to normalize their relations with Ethiopia since the CoHA, there is growing instability and violence across Ethiopia, threatening to destabilize the country and the wider Horn of Africa region. Below is a snapshot of the domestic situation.

The presence of occupying forces committing atrocity crimes in Tigray jeopardizes the success of the CoHA. It is incumbent on the signatories of the agreement and international partners who facilitated the CoHA to ensure that it is fully implemented.
DOMESTIC CONDITIONS

Ongoing Violence

Throughout the rest of the country, including in Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz, and Amhara, among others, violence, insecurity, and instability persist. The conflict that has been raging in Oromia – Ethiopia’s largest region – for several years has worsened in recent months, with reports of renewed government offensives throughout the region. These offensives by the Ethiopian government have entailed widespread violations of human rights including extra-judicial killings, imprisonment, torture, and sexual violence. In the Amhara region, the escalating conflict between the ENDF and local Fano militias has jeopardized the safety and security of civilians. Recent reporting has revealed that Ethiopian soldiers have been killing and detaining civilians and looting properties across numerous localities in the Amhara region. After declaring a nationwide state of emergency on August 4, 2023, the Ethiopian government has escalated its attacks across the region, reportedly using airstrikes and drones that have killed civilians. Finally, there have been reports of increasing instability in western and southern Ethiopia, where armed groups are killing and injuring civilians.

In October 2023, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide issued a press release expressing alarm at the heightened risk of genocide and related atrocity crimes in Ethiopia given the continued fighting across several regions. This echoes the conclusions of ICHREE, emphasizing in their last report the risk of further atrocity crimes being perpetrated.

Humanitarian Crises

The United Nations estimates that more than 20 million people are currently food insecure in Ethiopia, a condition that has only worsened due to ongoing conflicts across the country. More than a million people in Tigray are said to be at high risk of starvation after a two-year genocidal war, exacerbated by a severe drought that is affecting many parts of Ethiopia. Conditions have worsened since the WFP and USAID suspended humanitarian aid due to widespread theft throughout the country. In August 2023, the TIAs Commission for Disaster Risk Management told the BBC that since the food aid had been halted, 1,411 people had starved to death in three zones.

In Afar, Amhara, Somali, and Tigray regions, drought-like conditions persist, severely impacting crop production, livestock health, and households’ access to water. The desert locust infestation in parts of Afar, Amhara, Somali, and Tigray regions further aggravates the risk of food insecurity. The convergence of these shocks with disease outbreaks, such as cholera, malaria, measles, and leishmaniasis, further deepens the vulnerability of the affected communities, including IDPs and returnees. In October 2023, local charities called for an urgent malaria outbreak response in Western Oromia, warning that the malaria epidemic could worsen in the next two months if not promptly addressed. Urgent funding and government action are needed. These growing crises are happening at a time of vast unaddressed pre-existing humanitarian needs, while access remains constrained and inaccessible due to insecurity and foreign occupation. For example, areas in Irob, Tigray, are under the control of Eritrean troops, making it challenging to provide and access public services as well as deliver humanitarian aid.
DOMESTIC CONDITIONS

In Somali region of Ethiopia, near the town of Hargele, thousands of women and children are displaced by severe drought and are staying in dire conditions. ©UNICEF Ethiopia/2023/Mulugeta Ayene

GEOPOLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

While largely depicted as an internal or civil war—the genocidal war on Tigray has always been an international one—shaped by geopolitics and facilitated through military assistance from countries in the East and West. For the purpose of this report, we highlight three interrelated dimensions of the current geopolitical moment relevant to Tigray: escalating rhetoric around sea access, the Pretoria Agreement, ICHREE, and an overall global climate of war.

Escalating rhetoric

In recent months, the Ethiopian government and its official and unofficial outlets have been repeatedly raising the issue of Ethiopia’s right to access the Red Sea. First raised in closed-door meetings chaired by PM Abiy Ahmed and later openly and repeatedly discussed on state-controlled media. A documentary also aired on Ethiopian television reiterating claims that Ethiopia has a historical right to access the Red Sea and that Ethiopia’s coastline is “occupied by three countries” [9].
GEOPOLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

These discussions have raised concerns among neighboring countries. Since 1991, when Eritrea seceded, Ethiopia has been landlocked, accessing the Red Sea port through agreements with its neighbors. However, in recent months, PM Abiy has begun discussing Ethiopia’s right to sea access as an existential issue, openly stating that he will pursue every means at his disposal to make sea access a reality. This rhetoric has been met by increasingly more alarmed responses from regional actors, who see it as a precursor to potential conflict. These statements around sea access are creating increasing insecurity and uncertainty in the region and have led to worries that another conflict might be in the making.

International partners that have a vested interest in ensuring the silencing of the guns must ensure that Eritrea swiftly withdraws from Ethiopia so as not to provide a justification for more war by arguing that Eritrea is obstructing the CoHA. Another war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, likely causing further devastation for Tigray, will surely destroy more lives and livelihoods across the Horn of Africa.

Pretoria Agreement

The genocidal war on Tigray has not ended. Eritrea continues to occupy Tigryan lands, families continue to be displaced, and millions of refugees and IDPs await the opportunity to return to their homes. At the one-year mark of the signing of the CoHA, the stated aims of the agreement have yet to be fulfilled. The CoHA, signed in Pretoria, South Africa, must be upheld in order for measures for justice and accountability to be imagined and implemented. All parties involved in the facilitation of the Pretoria agreement, including the AU Horn of Africa envoy, US Horn of Africa envoy, and AU leaders such as former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, former deputy president of South Africa Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, and former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, must ensure that the peace agreement is upheld and fully implemented. Disarmament, ceasefire, and lifting of the siege are not enough—all actors involved in the facilitation and signing of the Pretoria agreement must ensure that Eritrean troops withdraw from Tigray and that the territorial integrity of Tigray is recognized. As it stands today, facilitators of the Pretoria Agreement are content to use the Agreement as a rubber stamp seal of approval for their normalization of relations with Ethiopia despite insignificant improvements in the country’s human rights situation.

The International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE)

While the CoHA has put a pause on active combat between TDF and the ENDF, questions concerning accountability and justice for Tigray have not been resolved. Many Tigryanans held hope that the facilitation of an independent investigation of human rights violations in Tigray would create a pathway for recognition of, and accountability for, the genocidal war waged by Ethiopia, Eritrea, and armed Amhara forces and militias, such as Fano. In May of 2023, the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights terminated “the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry on the Situation in the Tigray region” without much context or an explanation regarding the decision [10].
GEOPOLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE)

In September of 2023, investigators from the International Commission of Human Rights Experts (ICHREE) stated that their work needed to continue and that there was “an overwhelming risk human rights atrocities would continue” without them [11]. Local reports and testimonies documenting the ongoing occupation of Tigray and displacement of Tigrayan families evidenced this concern. Human rights organizations and community-led organizations led a campaign urging the UN HRC to renew the mandate for ICHREE.

During the October 2023 meeting of the UN HRC, a motion for renewal was not put forth. Therefore, the vital work of the investigative team made up of top human rights experts will end in December. The initial report issued by ICHREE was undermined by the Ethiopian state, which denied investigators access to Tigray—limiting their research to virtual interviews with survivors and community members. As the Guardian reported, Ethiopian officials “denounced the UN commission as politically motivated, blocked its investigators and tried to defund it [11].”

The failure of the UN HRC to renew ICHREE illustrates the disregard that the international community and international human rights organizations, such as the UN, have had for the genocidal violence faced by Tigrayans for over three years. It also sent a clear message that the international community has abdicated its responsibilities and commitment to human rights and is content with the lack of appropriate and adequate accountability mechanisms for these violations that will likely result in continued violence and impunity in Ethiopia. Members states, namely the United States and European Union, chose to return to normal relations with Ethiopia over accountability and justice for millions of Tigrayans who have faced genocide.
GEOPOLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A Global Climate of War

Since the genocidal war on Tigray began in November 2020, it has been followed by large-scale wars of significant geopolitical significance, receiving attention worldwide. In February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, igniting the Russo-Ukrainian war—which saw many of the same strategies and tactics used in Tigray employed by Russia's army. With the backing of much of the world led by the West—primarily the United States and Western European countries—Ukrainians have fought to maintain their territorial integrity. For the Ukrainians, it has been a fight to maintain their sovereignty and preserve their identity, while for the West, it has been a struggle to maintain their sphere of influence and global power against Russia. As the war in Ukraine is in its second year, the West has shifted its attention and support to the Israeli state.

In a struggle with roots in 1947 with the forced displacement of millions of Arab-Palestinians from their homes and the establishment of the State of Israel in May 1948, the Israel-Palestine conflict reignited on October 7, 2023. On October 7, Israeli civilians were killed and taken as hostages in acts that were the largest attack on Jewish people since the Holocaust. The Israeli government reported that 1,400 Israelis had been killed. Since then, per Gaza’s Ministry of Health, at least 9,488 Palestinians have been killed—75% of them women and children—as Israel enacts a telecommunications blackout amid the largest bombing campaign of Gaza since the start of the conflict. The United States and Europe have stood firmly behind Israel, while Iran, Turkey, Algeria, and Yemen have supported Palestine. A large global people's movement has emerged in support of Palestinians' rights—amid the continued bombing and at a time when there is an increasing number of Islamophobic and anti-semitic attacks against civilians across the world.

While the United States and the West are squarely focused on their steadfast financial and military support of the Israeli state, their policy on the Horn of Africa is far from their priority—while their Middle Eastern allies—namely the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia—exact their influence in the Horn of Africa being involved in Ethiopia’s current aims of obtaining a port on the Red Sea and Sudan’s civil war which has displaced millions. An escalation of violence already seen in the region today will continue as they look away.
Though the world powers have moved on from the atrocity crimes committed in Tigray despite their ongoing nature, the situation for people in Tigray has never been more precarious as a silent genocide continues and Tigrayan lands remain brutally occupied. Unfettered humanitarian access to the region and adequate distribution of aid—both food and medical—is not taking place despite being stipulated in the CoHA signed on November 2, 2022. In fact, WFP and USAID continue to limit aid to Tigrayans, causing irreparable damage and deaths. Immense levels of human suffering remain unaddressed and relief from the genocidal war has yet to come for the vast majority of Tigrayans.

Despite the dire situation in Tigray and the volatile and violent conditions that continue in the remainder of the country, the international community has turned its back on victims and survivors of some of the worst atrocity crimes committed this century by terminating ICHREE, the only internationally-mandated independent mechanism for justice and accountability. It is, however, not too late to change course. We, therefore, call on:

- The World Bank and International Monetary Fund to halt any funding to Ethiopia until the country is able to bring peace to the region of Tigray, fully implementing the peace deal;
- The US to continue suspending Ethiopia from the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) trade deal until human rights violations have ceased across the country;
- International support for a robust monitoring and verification mechanism intended to help drive implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement;
- The UN Human Rights Council to establish a mechanism to drive justice and accountability in Tigray to complement and extend the victim-trusted work of ICHREE;
- The AU Peace and Security Council to create an ad hoc regional tribunal to prosecute atrocity crimes committed in Ethiopia.
CALL TO ACTION

So as to facilitate:

- Immediate humanitarian access and the continuation of aid into all of Tigray;

- Immediate internationally monitored and verifiable withdrawal of Eritrean and Amhara forces from all parts of Tigray and the restoration of pre-war territorial boundaries;

- Ensured safety and security of Tigrayans as Tigray Defense Forces disarm;

- Immediate restoration of all essential services, including banking, electricity, telecommunications, transportation, and trade across all of Tigray;

- Immediate protection of Tigrayans who are facing ethnic cleansing in occupied Western Tigray and an end to the state-sanctioned ethnic profiling and ethnically-motivated attacks against Tigrayans living across Ethiopia;

- Release of all Tigrayans detained on the basis of their identity, including journalists, 22,000 Tigrayan ENDF members, and Tigrayans deported from Saudi Arabia;

- An arms embargo on Ethiopia and Eritrea;

- Justice and accountability for all victims affected across the duration of the war;

- An inclusive, internationally-mediated national dialogue that includes the Tigray regional government and other relevant stakeholders; and

- Official recognition of the Tigray Genocide committed by the Ethiopian National Defense Forces, Eritrean Defense Forces, Amhara Special Forces, and Amhara Fano Militia against the Tigrayan people.


[7] Getachew K Reda. [@reda_getachew]. (2023, January 11). “Tigray has handed over its heavy weapons as part of its commitment to implementing the #Pretoria agreement, and the Monitoring & Verification Team has confirmed it. We hope & expect this will go a long way in expediting the full implementation of the agreement. We hope & expect!” [Twitter]. https://twitter.com/reda_getachew/status/1612928216192192514


