



QUARTERLY SITUATION REPORT

July 2024

omna tigray

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

June 2024 marked the three-year anniversary of the liberation of most parts of Tigray from invading Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Amhara forces. These forces had occupied the region starting from November 2021 and unleashed unimaginable horrors on the people of Tigray. Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Amhara forces undertook a genocidal campaign of destruction, killing hundreds of thousands of people, displacing millions, weaponizing sexual violence against at least tens of thousands of people, and destroying the region's food, water, and health infrastructure. In the wake of these attacks, which killed an estimated 600,000 - 800,000 people in Tigray and displaced millions, the Tigray Defense Forces (TDF) arose to defend themselves and their homes from these genocidal forces. Composed of ordinary men and women in Tigray who were driven to take up arms in self-defense, TDF forces fought valiantly to expel Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Amhara forces from Tigray. In June 2021, TDF forces drove out these occupying forces from the Tigrayan capital, Mekelle, and many other parts of Tigray, liberating much of Tigray and restoring the Tigray regional government. This occasion was met with jubilation and celebrations in the streets of Tigray and is commemorated as a day to celebrate the indomitable spirit and unimaginable sacrifices of Tigrayan forces.

While largely free of invaders after June 2021, Tigray continued to face a dire humanitarian crisis that is still being felt today. After being driven out of Mekelle, the Ethiopian government enacted a deadly siege, cutting Tigray off from food aid, medical supplies, utilities, and communications. In a second phase of the genocide, for months, millions of people in Tigray were encircled on all sides and denied essential food, medical, and other life-sustaining supplies. Moreover, while the TDF managed to liberate much of Tigray in June 2021, several parts of Tigray are still under the occupation of invading forces today. In particular, Eritrean forces continue to occupy Irob, and Amhara regional forces are occupying much of Western Tigray. While the signing of a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA) in November 2022 eased some of the security concerns, the humanitarian condition in post-war Tigray is still dire and complex. Food insecurity remains high after years of war, which disrupted supplies and prevented farmers from working on their land. Moreover, the destruction of public infrastructure, utilities, and institutions has proven to be highly detrimental, negatively affecting the safety, security, and quality of life in the region.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One of the most pressing problems in the region is the high number of Internally Displaced People (IDPs). Hundreds of thousands of IDPs, forced from their homes in Western Tigray, have suffered under immensely difficult conditions for nearly four years. IDPs are leading extremely precarious livelihoods in major cities across Tigray, unable to access shelter, food, or jobs. All IDPs express their desire to return to their homes and begin rebuilding their lives but have been unable to do so because their homes are still under the occupation of Amhara and Eritrean forces. In July 2024, some Tigrayan IDPs began returning to their homes, which marked some progress in the implementation of the COHA. However, only a tiny fraction of the tens of thousands of IDPs have had the opportunity to return, and there are indications that Amhara regional forces and Fano militias are mobilizing to prevent the repatriation of Tigrayan IDPs. It is, therefore, vital that the Ethiopian federal government and other stakeholders work together to facilitate the return of Tigrayan IDPs and ensure the full implementation of the COHA.

Lastly, justice and accountability for the victims and survivors of the Tigray Genocide remains a distant possibility and elusive. However, in June 2024, a report by New Lines Institute, produced by a team of independent experts in international law, found that there is a reasonable basis to believe that Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Amhara forces committed genocide against the Tigrayan people. As did the authors of this report, we urge the international community to explore and facilitate international mechanisms and pathways for justice and accountability for the people of Tigray.

INTENT TO COMMIT GENOCIDE

In June 2024, a report titled “Genocide in Tigray: Serious Breaches of International Law in the Tigray Conflict, Ethiopia, and Paths to Accountability” was published by the New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy. The report establishes that members of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF), Amhara Special Forces (ASF) and Fano militias, and Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF) were responsible for at least four of the acts constituting the crime of genocide. These include killing Tigrayans, causing serious bodily or mental harm, deliberately inflicting conditions of life upon Tigrayans calculated to bring about their destruction, and imposing measures intended to prevent births among Tigrayans.

Intent is a central element of the crime of genocide, which distinguishes it from other serious crimes. Per the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, “to constitute genocide, there must be a proven intent on the part of the perpetrators to physically destroy” a given group. The report concludes that there is a reasonable basis to believe that members of the perpetrating groups possessed the intent to destroy Tigrayans as an ethnic group. The report evidenced intent to destroy through the parties’ planning and coordination of acts, the commission of other culpable acts, the pattern of prohibited acts, and through the policies, statements, and utterances of Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Amhara civilian and military leaders.

INTENT TO COMMIT GENOCIDE

The report also outlines avenues for justice and accountability for survivors and victims. It concludes that it is likely that genocidal acts were committed in Ethiopia against Tigrayans, indicating that the responsibility for these acts is attributable to Ethiopia as a state. It further demonstrates that the Ethiopian government has failed to discharge its duty to prevent genocide. The report thus outlines a number of alternative paths for accountability, including state parties to the Genocide Convention considering their own obligations, including potential action before the International Court of Justice; the United Nations Security Council referring the situation in Ethiopia to the International Criminal Court; the international community creating an ad hoc tribunal and other mechanisms to address these crimes, and States prosecuting allegations under the principle of “universal jurisdiction.”

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND WOMEN’S PROTESTS IN TIGRAY

On June 25, 2024, large protests took place in the Tigrayan capital Mekelle, and several other cities in the region. These protests were organized and led by local women’s organizations and community leaders and sought to draw attention to the increasing incidences of violence against women and girls in Tigray. The protestors called for justice and accountability for the survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) in Tigray, in addition to calling for an end to the ongoing sexual violence and abuse Tigrayan women and girls are facing within the region. The protestors condemned the rise in attacks against women and girls, including sexual violence, intimate partner violence, kidnappings, and murders. They additionally criticized the lack of robust justice and accountability mechanisms to hold perpetrators accountable, highlighting how this has created an environment of impunity that is threatening the safety of women and girls in the region.

Attacks against Tigrayan women and girls during the genocidal war on Tigray

As has been well-documented by numerous domestic and international organizations, the genocidal war on Tigray was characterized by widespread and systematic CRSV, which affected at least tens of thousands of women and girls. While existing reports only capture a tiny fraction of the full extent of the violations carried out against Tigrayan women and girls by Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Amhara forces, they provide a glimpse into how widespread and brutal these attacks were. For instance, a recent report by Refugees International showed that nearly 50% of all Tigrayan women and girls experienced Gender-Based Violence (GBV) during the genocidal war on Tigray.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND WOMEN'S PROTESTS IN TIGRAY

Similar to numerous reports by other organizations, the Refugees International report notes that the vast majority of those who experienced GBV during the war were subjected to rape and gang rape. The reporting available on the issue illustrates that these attacks were as horrific as they were widespread, affecting those as young as eight years old to women in their 60s. Tigrayan women and girls were held in sexual slavery for days or even weeks and faced attacks at the hands of dozens of military personnel. The attacks inflicted on the women and girls of Tigray were characterized by inhumane brutality and often accompanied by beatings and torture. Moreover, survivors were subjected to dehumanizing hate speech, often being explicitly told that their bloodlines would be eliminated. These attacks frequently took place in front of families and community members and were designed to terrorize survivors and communities and disintegrate the ties that bind societies. The immense suffering of the women and girls of Tigray was compounded by the systematic attack on healthcare facilities in the region, which prevented survivors from reporting attacks and getting the medical and psycho-social help they desperately needed.

The November 2022 Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) was supposed to ensure and facilitate the withdrawal of non-ENDF troops and the protection of civilians. Yet, parts of Tigray remain brutally occupied with atrocity crimes, including weaponized sexual violence, being committed. Eritrean forces are the main perpetrators of this sexual violence in occupied areas in the northeast of Tigray. Numerous instances of sexual violence are being reported to Adigrat Hospital's one-stop center, where women are presenting for care from occupied areas. These women and girls have made long and arduous journeys to access care after having been given permission by Eritrean forces under threat and condition that they must return. In Irob and neighboring Gulomekeda, hundreds of women and girls are targeted and brutally assaulted each week as Eritrean forces continue to terrorize, subjugate, and destroy inhabitants of occupied Tigrayan lands.

After the CoHA was signed between the Ethiopian government and the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), there was also some hope that a mechanism to deliver justice and accountability to survivors would be established. Signatories to the CoHA had agreed to establish justice and accountability mechanisms for violations committed during the war. However, neither the Ethiopian federal government nor the Interim Regional Administration of Tigray (IRA) have made any progress in establishing such a mechanism.

The federal government's transitional justice framework is wholly inadequate to address the widespread and weaponized CRSV carried out in Tigray and has no buy-in from domestic stakeholders. As such, the tens of thousands of survivors in Tigray are still denied support, restitution, and justice.

Post-COHA conditions for women and girls in liberated areas of Tigray

When Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Amhara forces invaded Tigray in 2020, unleashing genocidal violence, including widespread CRSV, their intent was to destroy Tigray as a whole, including destroying its social fabric. In post-war areas, what is now evident is the success of the genocidal forces in achieving their mission.

Given the immense suffering the women and girls of Tigray experienced at the height of the genocidal war on Tigray, there was hope that the re-establishment of some order and stability within the region after the signing of the COHA would improve their condition. However, while attacks by Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Amhara forces have lessened in the liberated areas of Tigray, women and girls have been facing escalating GBV. This includes an alarming increase in violence, kidnapping, and killing of women and girls throughout the region. In Mekelle alone, the last few months have seen the murder of 12 women, ten kidnappings, and 80 rapes. Given that incidents of GBV are massively under-reported, it is not unreasonable to assume that the true number of victims and survivors is much higher. Moreover, similar trends are also emerging in other parts of Tigray.

Demonstrators and civil society organizations based in Tigray have condemned these trends and called on the IRA to protect women and girls. Civil society organizations have repeatedly criticized the interim administration's failure to prevent and punish these crimes, creating an environment of impunity. While the social disruption, unstable security conditions, and failure of state institutions are all tied to the genocidal war, as community organizers have noted, these problems have grown worse due to the IRA's unwillingness to protect women. Embroiled in factional in-fighting and more interested in preserving its standing with the federal government, the IRA is failing to fulfill its most important duty: ensuring the safety and security of its people. In addition to the IRA fulfilling its duty, there must be a resource and time investment in addressing the impacts of the Tigray Genocide on Tigray's society by the society at large through social work and psychosocial support and initiatives, also giving due attention to Tigray's men.

Violence against women is a global issue and is especially prevalent in Ethiopia, with 35% of ever-married women experiencing physical, emotional, or sexual violence. Similar patterns of GBV are also prevalent in Tigray. However, in Tigray, hundreds are mobilizing and organizing to draw attention to the issue and demanding security and justice for themselves and their fellow women. As they did during the war, many genocide supporters have attempted to use Tigrayan women's advocacy to justify or downplay the widespread CRSV committed by Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Amhara forces during the war. However, attempts to compare the genocidal CRSV unleashed to wipe out the Tigrayan population to the current trends of GBV in the region are both disingenuous and dangerous. Those attempting to weaponize Tigrayan women's advocacy against GBV do so to retroactively justify the assault of tens of thousands of women. However, undeterred by attempts to undermine their message and mission, Tigrayan women and girls continue to draw attention to the injustices they face and call for a safe, secure, and just Tigray for everyone. It is the duty of everyone fighting for a free Tigray to support this call.



Protests against violence against women in Tigray on June 25, 2024.



FOOD INSECURITY

From 2020 to 2022, an investigation conducted by Belgium's Ghent University estimated that 300,000 Tigrayans died due to starvation. This was a result of agricultural destruction, restriction of humanitarian aid, and prohibition of farming. There is substantial evidence to suggest that the ENDF and other groups tacitly obstructed the delivery of relief supplies to Tigray's civilian population and destroyed food stocks, crops, and other essential resources necessary for their survival. This was carried out deliberately and systematically as a warfare tactic.

Today, food insecurity remains rampant, with one meal a day being the norm in some parts of Northern and Western Tigray. In the nine months following the CoHA in November, hunger claimed 2,694 lives, according to a joint study by the Tigray Health Research Institute, the Regional Health Bureau, and Mekelle University. The precarious food insecurity and famine in Tigray are a result of a culmination of factors, including the destruction unleashed during the genocidal war on Tigray, a continued and consistent lack of aid, continued displacement of people from their people farmland, and a drought. Therefore, the ongoing famine in Tigray is inherently political, as the humanitarian and the political are intrinsically intertwined. The current famine is not merely an aggregate of 'people going hungry'; rather, it is the result of negligence and the prevention of adequate systems to address the man-made food crisis. The UN response has not been commensurate with the severity of the problem, amounting to a 'system failure,' per the United Nations itself.

In June 2023, Ellen Knickmeyer and Cara Anna of the Associated Press reported that the U.N. and the U.S. suspended food aid to Tigray in mid-March 2023 after uncovering a "large-scale" scheme to steal humanitarian grain. This suspension was extended to the rest of Ethiopia in June. U.S. officials believe this may be the largest diversion of grain ever recorded, with donors blaming Ethiopian government officials and the military for the fraud. This is a clear violation of Article 2 of the Pretoria terms, which mandates the safety and protection of civilian populations and unfettered humanitarian access. In an interview with the Associated Press, a senior official from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) indicated that the exact amount of stolen food aid may never be known. The suspension of aid by USAID and the World Food Programme (WFP) resulted in thousands of civilian deaths due to food insecurity and compounding the regional crisis.

According to the November CoHA signed in Pretoria between the TPLF and the Ethiopian Federal Government, Article 2 (g) mandates 'unhindered access to all in need of assistance,' and Article 2 (h) specifies 'the use of humanitarian aid exclusively for humanitarian purposes.' Despite these provisions, the mis-administration, theft, and insufficient distribution of aid took place. While the Ethiopian government, as well as some members of the regional Tigray government, are responsible for the suspension causing deaths, the humanitarian system and apparatus is as much responsible for not finding a prompt solution to make sure aid could keep reaching those who needed it most in Tigray.

FOOD INSECURITY

Ethiopia's deteriorating economy has worsened the hunger crisis, marked by significant debt defaults in the past year and soaring inflation rates that have intensified food insecurity. In June 2024, food inflation reached 22.7 percent, and general inflation stood at 19.9 percent year-on-year. Prices for staple foods in 2024 remained higher than both the previous year's prices and the five-year average. As a result, the cost of basic food needs has steadily risen over the past three years, significantly diminishing the purchasing power of households that rely on buying food.

Augustine Passilly, the special correspondent to Tigray for La Croix International, writes that regarding the famine, "The mutual assistance among locals and the dedication of NGOs are not enough to overcome this scourge. [1]" A May 2024 report from the Famine Early Warning Systems Network indicates that Tigray is currently categorized under emergency and crisis levels. The report warns that if humanitarian food assistance and social support significantly decrease or are disrupted for an extended period before the October harvest, more severe outcomes are likely to occur in Tigray. A June 2024 report from FEWS Net to OCHA forecasts that from June to September, Tigray and northeastern Amhara will experience emergency-level (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification 4) food insecurity in some areas, while the majority will remain at Crisis (IPC Phase 3) levels. High rates of acute malnutrition among children under five, as well as pregnant and breastfeeding women, persist across various regions due to disease outbreaks, limited access to essential services, and inadequate water quality and sanitation facilities. The situation, however, is likely more severe than forecast and reported by FEWS, as the situation on the ground indicates the worst of the hunger and food crisis may be yet to come.

According to the director of the Disaster Risk Management Commission in Tigray, Dr Gebrehiwet Gebregzabher, per a July [BBC report](#), as it stands today, "There are 2.1 million people that are at risk of starvation, [...] with a further 2.4 million relying on an uncertain aid supply" [2].

The question persists: for those who are capable of intervening, to what extent are they willing to confront the political consequences of challenging a status quo that perpetuates the catastrophic food insecurity Tigray faces?

A mother seeking care for her malnourished baby amid shortages of resources and medical supplies

Source: BBC



DISPLACEMENT CRISIS AND ONGOING OCCUPATION

There remain an estimated over a million IDPs in Tigray. Many IDPs are living in host communities that are struggling to maintain enough food, water, and shelter in these camps. According to health officials, 60% of households have moderate or severe hunger. IDPs only consume small amounts of donated food or whatever they can find to eat. In addition to hunger, the camps are unsanitary and unsafe.

Although many hope to return home, ongoing insecurity and continued occupation of Tigray - particularly in Western, Southern, and northeastern Tigray - continue to prevent IDPs from returning to their homes. In addition, people are still being forcefully displaced. The Tigray Labor and Social Affairs Bureau revealed that close to 60,000 individuals were registered in IDP shelters near Shire in a new wave of forced displacement earlier this year (2024). Of those 60,000, more than 11,000 were displaced from Western Tigray, and more than 4,000 fled from areas near the Eritrean border, such as Irob, Badme, and Zalambessa. Human Rights Watch has also documented evidence and reports of continued forceful expulsion of Tigrayans post-COHA.

That said, more recently, some progress has been in the return of IDPs to parts of Western and Southern Tigray. The repatriation process of IDPs has been said to begin based on a mutually agreed-upon plan between the Tigray Interim Administration and the federal government. The first group of 1,500 IDPs returned to the Tselemti district on 29 June 2024. The second phase faced a brief delay but resulted in nearly 2,200 IDPs resettling in the district. In the third phase, regional media reported that nearly 5,000 IDPs returned to Northwestern Tigray, resettling in May Tsebir town and three other locations in the Tselemti district. Additionally, 14,000 IDPs were returned to their homes in Alamata and the environs. However, there are many concerns about the return of displaced Tigrayans due to the continued unlawful occupation of these regions by Amhara and Eritrean forces. There have also been reports of Amhara militias mobilizing in parts of Tigray to prevent IDPs from returning to their homes. This has created unsafe conditions for IDPs to return to. In addition, IDPs no longer have any stable housing or resources in these occupied regions creating a perilous situation for Tigrayans. Hence, challenges persist given these serious concerns regarding returning IDPs' safety, their ability to rebuild their lives, and the provision of basic necessities. Therefore, it is critical that domestic and international partners take a comprehensive and expedited approach to ensure the safe repatriation of Tigrayan IDPs to their homes.

In addition, tens of thousands of Tigrayan refugees in Sudan are in extreme danger as fighting between the Rapid Support Force (RSF) and Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) intensifies. Fighting between forces has expanded to areas in or near eastern Sudan, creating unsafe conditions for Tigrayan refugees in these regions. On May 5, 2024, the RSF released a statement that "forces from the TPLF are fighting alongside the SAF and its allied militias connected to the terrorist former regime" [3]. This claim was refuted by the Tigray Interim Administration; however, this claim has put Tigrayan refugees at increased risk of targeted attacks.

DISPLACEMENT CRISIS AND ONGOING OCCUPATION

Many organizations are calling for the resettlement of refugees to their homes, but the situation in Tigray is also no better and precarious, leaving these refugees to suffer. Individuals still in these camps continue to face dire humanitarian crises as the threat of active war looms. Alternative measures must be taken to protect Tigrayan refugees in Sudan, who have become victims of two brutal wars and the two worst humanitarian crises globally.

LACK OF IMPLEMENTATION OF COHA

Two years after the signing of the CoHA, crucial components of the agreement have not been met and continue to threaten stability in Tigray, Ethiopia, and the Horn of Africa. The African Union has recently commended the progress made since the signing of the CoHA. On July 11, 2024, the African Union held a second strategic review of the agreement, which covered political dialogue, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration. The United States also stated that there was incremental progress toward peace in Ethiopia. However, the international pressure on the implementation of the agreement has been lackluster and largely focused on disarmament without due attention to continued atrocity crimes as Tigray continues to remain under genocidal occupation by Amhara and Eritrean forces, and there tremendous unmet humanitarian needs. The Ethiopian federal government continues to undermine the agreement and refuses to commit to the peace process.

Permanent cessation of hostilities

The agreement forbids "all forms of hostilities," both direct and indirect. Despite early reports of the Ethiopian government conducting drone strikes and heavy shelling targeting civilians violating the peace deal, militarized hostilities between the ENDF and the TDF largely have stopped since the signing of the agreement. That said, in worrisome developments, the Ethiopian government has engaged in beating the war drum with Tigray, engaging in fear-mongering and aggressive rhetoric. Furthermore, crimes committed by occupying forces in Tigray not included in the Pretoria Agreement continue unabated.

Protection of civilians

Both parties agreed to follow international human rights laws and protect civilians from human rights violations. The Ethiopian government has continuously and consistently failed to protect Tigrayan civilians. Human rights groups have documented potential war crimes and crimes against humanity, including extrajudicial killings of civilians after the signing of the CoHA.

LACK OF IMPLEMENTATION OF COHA

With regard to SGBV, there continue to be reports of sexual violence post-CoHA. The hospital in Adigrat reports several cases of weaponized SGBV weekly from areas occupied by Eritrean forces. Human Rights Watch has also found evidence that ethnic cleansing campaigns have continued in Western Tigray post-CoHA. There have been reports of continued forced expelling of Tigrayans as well as arbitrary detention and torture of Tigrayans in occupied areas. Those detained have reported dire conditions with no medical treatment and food. Fano militias also continue to harass Tigrayans and force Tigrayans to leave their homes, telling them that it is not their land. Information on current conditions in most of Western Tigray is few and far between while still under the illegal Amhara regional government.

Despite multiple warnings from the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia of an imminent risk of continued atrocity crimes, United Nations member states failed to put forward a resolution to renew the Commission's mandate at the UN Human Rights Council's 54th session, ending international monitoring of the crises.

Humanitarian access

The Ethiopian government is supposed to allow humanitarian aid into Tigray and reintegrate internally displaced persons and refugees who are facing the worst of the crisis. However, this could not be further from the truth, as has been illustrated in the food insecurity and displacement sections. There continues to be very minimal aid into Tigray as access to Western and Southern Tigray continues to be hindered, and distribution in other parts of Tigray is largely inadequate. Officials warn that more than two million people are at risk of starvation, and hundreds have already died of starvation due to lack of aid, farming tools, and drought. The federal government continues to dispute warnings of famine and deny any deaths due to starvation. The government also denies any impediments to access to Tigray. In June 2023, WFP and USAID suspended all food aid to Tigray due to evidence that the government was stealing supplies. Aid had slowly resumed in November, however, aid agencies have not responded adequately to the severity of the situation. There continues to be a lack of funding that has made it impossible to meet the extensive humanitarian needs in Tigray. This inappropriate response by aid agencies, exacerbated by federal bureaucratic red tape impeding aid into Tigray, Eritrean troops blocking access in occupied areas, and Amhara forces excluding Tigrayans from limited aid in Western Tigray, has further deepened the hunger crisis.

Basic and essential services continue to be limited in Tigray. In many parts of Tigray, telecommunication services remain unstable, and banking has not been restored in all parts of Tigray. The healthcare system in Tigray is struggling to recover from its complete collapse, and access to most basic medical supplies continues to be restricted or nonexistent. According to a 2023 WHO report, only 4% of health service points in Tigray are fully functioning, meaning most are unable to meet the health needs of the people. Health workers are running out of supplies leading to reduced treatment for infectious and non-communicable diseases, maternal and child health services, more complications, and more deaths. These conditions have not significantly improved since the signing of the CoHA and are complicated by health workers leaving the region.



Internally displaced Tigrayans protesting for their return home in Mekelle Tigray in July 2024.

Source: *Tigrai Tv*

Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration

The disarmament of the TDF and the recognition that Ethiopia has only one defense force was a component of the agreement. In January 2023, Tigrayan fighters started to hand in heavy weapons. However, in the agreement, it was said that the disarmament of Tigrayan fighters would take place at the same time as the withdrawal of foreign and non-federal troops. Yet, the federal government has not held up their end of the agreement as armed forces continue to occupy Tigray. The disarmament of the TDF while Eritrean and Amhara forces remain in the region does not respect the safety or sovereignty of Tigrayans.

International boundaries and federal facilities

As part of the agreement, the federal government stated that it would protect Ethiopia's international borders. This means that Eritrean troops should have been removed from Tigray. However, there continues to be evidence that Eritrean troops are still in Tigray actively committing crimes against humanity in Tigray. Several border districts are either fully occupied or patrolled by the Eritrean military, making it impossible for IDPs to return to their homes. Eritrean troops have abducted farmers and stolen hundreds of livestock in the border regions of Tigray after the signing of CoHA. Those living in areas bordering occupied areas live in constant fear and anxiety of Eritrean forces re-invading at any time.

Protecting Tigray's borders also means that Amhara militias should be removed from Tigray as well. However, there continues to be evidence that Amhara militias still continue to occupy and ethnically cleanse Tigray.

DOMESTIC CONTEXT

Due to the widespread conflict and insecurity throughout the country, there are about four million IDPs throughout Ethiopia. The widespread conflict, along with drought, economic crisis, high living costs, and natural disasters, has contributed to Ethiopia undergoing a severe food crisis. The FAO-WFP June 2024 Hunger Hot Spot report classified Ethiopia as one of the world's hunger hot spots, with an estimated 13 million people needing food assistance between July and September 2024, including approximately four million IDPs primarily in the Somali, Tigray, and Oromia regions. The widespread conflict has resulted in the spread of organized militia and crime as the rule of law further deteriorates in Ethiopia. A growing, alarming trend has been the rise of organized kidnapping, which underscores the inability of the state to legitimately and ably respond to the country's intersected political and security crises. It is critical that domestic and international partners support comprehensive political dialogues among warring groups, and hold the federal government accountable to ensure peace in Ethiopia, like ensuring the full implementation of the Pretoria Agreement to bring forth peace dividends.

GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

As the world's attention has largely focused on Palestine and Israel in recent months, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia continue to exert their influence and destabilize the Horn of Africa to the ambivalence of Western states. The war between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and its atrocity crimes in Sudan are ongoing. The safety of Tigrayan refugees in Sudan has been impacted by the fighting as it comes closer and closer to refugee camps. Their safety is not only put at risk by the active war but also by claims on both sides that Tigrayan forces are participating in the war. In May of this year, Tigrayan forces were accused of fighting alongside the RSF. More recently, Tigrayan forces have been accused of fighting alongside the SAF in Gedarif state, where one of the main refugee camps hosting Tigrayan refugees is located. It is vital to note that all of these accusations have been adamantly and repeatedly refuted by the Tigray Interim Administration.

In July 2024, Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed met the Sudanese army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan in Port Sudan for the first time since the war in Sudan started. Circumstances suggest that Abiy is attempting to mediate relations between al-Burhan and the UAE, as evidence suggests that it has been backing the RSF. Abiy's visit to Sudan and mediator role is the first time that Ethiopia has taken anything but a quiet observer stance on the war in Sudan. The timing of Ethiopia's new involvement in the situation in Sudan comes as the war moves closer to Ethiopia's borders, as well as on the heels of Sudanese political factions meeting in early July in Cairo, Egypt—a country that has been at loggerheads with Ethiopia due to issues pertaining to the Nile River, among them the Grand Renaissance Dam.

GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

Furthermore, Ethiopia's relationship with Sudan is influenced by changes in the Abiy administration's volatile domestic allies and the wars it is fighting internally, as well as its relationship with the UAE. The UAE has supported Abiy and propped up his government. During the genocidal war on Tigray, UAE provided Abiy with drones that killed civilians, while post-active war, the UAE and Ethiopia have signed a \$817 million currency swap agreement. Abiy's quest for sea access for Ethiopia, which has increased tensions with Eritrea and Somalia, has likely also been encouraged by the UAE as there is a struggle for influence over the Red Sea.

While the situation in the Horn of Africa has been relegated to the back burner by most of the international community, stability in the region is at an all-time low with far-reaching consequences. Despite the World Bank and IMF normalizing their relationships with Ethiopia, the Abiy administration is still fighting in several regions of Ethiopia while beating the war drum against Tigray. The war in Sudan has no end in sight, Eritrea could start another offensive in Tigray at any time, and Kenya has recently faced unrest and instability due to a new fiscal bill. It is, therefore, vital for regional and international stakeholders to exert their power to ensure stability reigns in this part of the world.

CALL TO ACTION

Under the veil of the 2022 Pretoria Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, the crisis in Tigray persists as hunger continues to claim lives, atrocity crimes persist in occupied areas of Tigray, and the consequences of the genocidal war have led to a societal breakdown and state of lawlessness. Over two million people in Tigray are at risk of starvation, while international humanitarian organizations remain negligent, and grassroots organizations cannot address the extensive need. In April 2024, the Bishop of Adigrat stated: "I am a witness to unspeakable suffering, despair, disease and death around me due to years of conflict, drought and localized rain failure as well as lack of attention to meet basic needs" [4]. Unfortunately, these dire conditions remain largely unaddressed. While the situation at best remains stagnant and at worst deteriorates, victims and survivors of the genocide in Tigray are yet to experience any progress in justice and accountability for the crimes against humanity and crimes of genocide that have been recently outlined in the June 2024 NewLines Institute report. Therefore, we call on the Tigray Interim Administration, The Federal Government of Ethiopia, and domestic and international stakeholders alike to facilitate the following:

- 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;

CALL TO ACTION

- 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; and
- The AU Peace and Security Council to create an ad hoc regional tribunal to prosecute atrocity crimes committed in Ethiopia.

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;
- 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.

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