

MARCH 2026

SITUATION REPORT

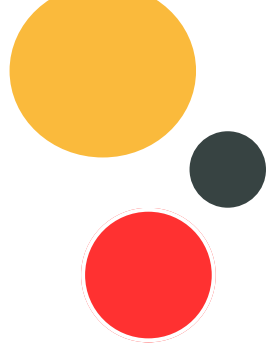
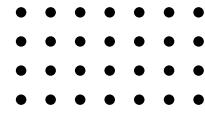
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Executive Summary



March 2026 marks five years and four months since the onset of the genocidal war on Tigray waged by Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Amhara forces. More than three years after the Pretoria Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) was signed, Ethiopia's failure to fully implement it has triggered renewed clashes between the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) and the Tigray Defense Forces (TDF) in occupied Tigrayan territories. These clashes in late January 2026 were followed by ENDF drone strikes that killed at least one person in central Tigray, and the Federal government's cancellation of all flights to the region – a suspension which was lifted and reinstated several times since. Concurrently, the Ethiopian government has been deploying thousands of its soldiers to Tigray's borders, encircling the region, while tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea are also reaching a boiling point.

Ethiopia's Ministry of Defense has also declared a state of maximum alert, and discharged officers have been recalled to active duty. Following these developments, twenty international human rights organizations warned that Ethiopia is "on the brink" of renewed large-scale conflict. The International Crisis Group characterized the situation as a "powder keg," warning that a deadly conflict could erupt at any time with the potential to plunge the whole Horn of Africa region into a proxy war. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Israel would back Ethiopia, while Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt would support Eritrea, and Tigray would be caught in the middle and forced to choose a side. The Horn of Africa is set to be transformed into a theater for competing global interests with catastrophic consequences for the people of Tigray.

In early February 2026, Ethiopia's House of Federation ordered the removal of five electoral districts — Humera, Adi Remets, Tselemti, Korem Ofla, and Raya Alamata — from Tigray's regional oversight ahead of the upcoming 7th General

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Election. These districts encompass areas from which hundreds of thousands of Tigrayans were ethnically cleansed during the war, and analysts have described the move as a deliberate act of war preparation that formalizes the territorial dispossession driving the post-Pretoria Agreement crisis. Although the Federal High Court temporarily suspended the National Election Board of Ethiopia's (NEBE's) implementation of the ruling, the decision reflects a broader federal pattern of dispossessing Tigrayan territory and impeding Tigrayan political representation. The House of Federation's decision follows the NEBE's earlier ban on the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), Tigray's main political party and signatory to the Pretoria Agreement, from participating in future elections. Rather than restoring these territories and facilitating the return of displaced populations as mandated by the Pretoria Agreement, the Ethiopian federal government has moved to reward ethnic cleansing with electoral legitimacy while eliminating meaningful Tigrayan political representation.

In parallel to the continued Tigrayan disenfranchisement, an increase in tensions and continued threat of renewed war, the humanitarian crisis in Tigray continues to deepen. Food aid to Tigray declined by over 50% between January and November 2025. Aid beneficiaries dropped from 1.66 million to just 726,000, a catastrophic reduction driven by the suspension of USAID operations and the broader retreat of international humanitarian engagement. About 900,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) remain in Tigray, with the vast majority having been displaced for more than three years. Starvation remains the leading cause of death across all age groups. Between November 2022 and August 2023, over 300 IDPs died at Hitsats IDP Camp. The healthcare system is near collapse, with over 90% of facilities damaged and two-thirds non-functional. On March 5th, 2026, Tigray's Health Bureau warned of imminent total health system collapse. Meanwhile, fuel restrictions imposed by the federal government continue to strangle humanitarian operations and essential services.

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Compounding these failures, Tigray's internal political landscape has undergone significant upheaval and division, partially driven by Ethiopia's neglect of the Pretoria Agreement. In early 2025, there was a change in the leadership of Tigray's Interim Regional Administration (TIRA). After the relationship between the TPLF leadership and Getachew Reda reached its breaking point, in late March 2025, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed replaced Getachew as President of TIRA with a compromise figure, Lieutenant General Tadesse Werede. However, this move does not reflect the Abiy administration policy towards the TPLF and Tigray, as it continues to administratively and economically strangle the region, support anti-TPLF insurgencies, and slowly break down and divide Tigray. This is occurring as the people of Tigray have lost trust and faith in their leadership.

The broader global climate of war has contributed to the apathy and inadequate response to the crises in Tigray since the start of the genocidal war on Tigray. The most recent onslaught of bloodshed as the US and Israel declared war on Iran is no exception. This spiralling and devastating regional war – with reports of atrocity crimes – has engulfed the very alliance systems arrayed around the Ethiopia-Eritrea divide, militarized the Red Sea corridor that sustains Ethiopia's economy and Tigray's humanitarian lifeline, and consumed the international attention and diplomatic bandwidth that would otherwise be available for de-escalation in the Horn. Under this cover of global crisis, Prime Minister Abiy has issued his most direct threat yet to Eritrea, Sudan has formally accused Ethiopia of allowing drone attacks from its territory for the first time, the TDF has responded to the federal buildup by deploying heavy weapons, and the Ethiopian government has launched a systematic media crackdown mirroring the information blackout imposed at the start of the 2020 war.

For the people of Tigray, the reality remains one of silent genocide: a population suffering from deepening humanitarian and healthcare crises, persistent occupation of approximately 40% of their constitutional territory, ongoing atrocity crimes in occupied areas, and complete absence of justice and accountability. This silent genocide is at risk of once again becoming active. At a

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mass demonstration against the House of Federation's electoral decision in Mekelle, Tigray's Interim Administration President Tadesse Werede warned that if the current dispute leads to war, "it will endanger not only Tigray but the whole of Ethiopia." Every indicator — military, diplomatic, informational, and humanitarian — is flashing red, and the world is looking the other way. The international community's response continues to be woefully inadequate. The premature termination of international accountability mechanisms — including the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE) and the AU Commission of Inquiry — has left victims without recourse. The AU's Monitoring, Verification, and Compliance Mechanism (MVCM) has proven ineffective. The emerging proxy war dynamics between competing alliance systems threaten to engulf Tigray in yet another devastating conflict driven not by the interests of its people but by the geopolitical ambitions of external actors. Without an urgent course correction, the Pretoria Agreement will not only remain unimplemented, its weaponization against the people of Tigray will have been successful.

In the subsequent sections of this situation report, in a first instance, Tigray's deepening humanitarian crisis and a lack of implementation of the Pretoria Agreement will be described, followed by an overview of Tigray's internal crises and the Ethiopian government's disenfranchisement of Tigray as a precursor to more war. The next sections of the report will look outward at the threat of war, geopolitical considerations, and what the global climate of war means for Tigray and the Horn of Africa region at large.

DEEPENING HUMANITARIAN CRISIS


A key component of the Pretoria Agreement was unfettered humanitarian access for a population that had been under siege for years, including a complete siege from June 2021 to November 2022. Yet, since the Pretoria Agreement, Tigray has effectively remained under siege with limited to no federal government support and a gross reduction in international humanitarian aid operations. Tigray has been experiencing a silent genocide – which has only worsened as tensions between Tigray and Ethiopia have risen.

Food Insecurity and Starvation

The humanitarian situation in Tigray has deteriorated dramatically. Food aid has declined by over 56% since January 2025, with beneficiaries dropping from 1.66 million to just 726,000 by November 2025. This collapse is driven primarily by the suspension of USAID operations, which halted 37 projects and 295 activities affecting 1.5 million people across 83 districts in Ethiopia. A 2024 study found that starvation was the leading cause of death across all age groups in Tigray between November 2022 and August 2023, accounting for 49.3% of verified deaths, with children under five at particularly high risk. Those especially at risk are the almost one million internally displaced persons (IDPs), who are left with grossly inadequate shelter, a lack of access to healthcare, and inconsistent, if any, food aid. The same 2024 study found that over 300 IDPs died at Hitsats IDP Camp over eight months.

Displacement: A Protracted Emergency

According to September 2025 data from the Tigray Bureau of Social Affairs and Rehabilitation, approximately 900,000 IDPs remain in Tigray, with 83% displaced for more than three years. An overwhelming 95.6% of IDPs expressed a desire to return to their places of origin, but the continued occupation of their home makes this impossible for most. A 2026 comprehensive report on the implementation of the Pretoria Agreement, The Pretoria Agreement Implementation Report (PAIR), documented that IDPs have been weaponized by



both the Ethiopian federal government and factions within the TPLF for power politics. In August 2025, the federal government announced plans to return about one million IDPs, but the Tigray Interim Administration unilaterally rejected this proposition without consultation. Around the same time, thousands of IDPs from Western Tigray staged a protest at the Office of the President of the Tigray Interim Administration demanding immediate repatriation. Their pleas have continued to fall on deaf ears, as their living conditions only worsen. For instance, the conditions at Hitsats IDP camp have only deteriorated as there is an escalating hunger crisis with growing numbers in critical condition.

Healthcare Collapse

While the hunger and displacement crises continue, so does the healthcare collapse. The Tigray Health Bureau has received very limited budgetary support from the federal government. Healthcare facilities are overstretched, serving populations nearly three times their standard capacity. Over 90% of facilities have been damaged, and two-thirds remain non-functional. Over 900 healthcare professionals resigned in late 2024 due to unpaid salaries. Meanwhile, illegal gold mining has surged across Tigray, with toxic chemicals, including mercury and cyanide, contaminating water sources and causing child deaths. Moreover, the poor physical health of Tigrayans caused by the genocide and targeted healthcare destruction is compounded by the trauma endured and the deteriorating mental health of the population.

The humanitarian crisis has been exacerbated by a cash liquidity crisis. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has warned that limited cash availability in Tigray's banks is directly affecting aid delivery to displaced populations, as humanitarian organizations cannot access the funds needed to operate. Simultaneously, the Tigray Health Bureau has issued an urgent appeal warning of imminent and total health system collapse due to acute shortages of fuel and medicine. These warnings — from the region's own health authority — represent an official acknowledgment that the system that was "near collapse" has reached its breaking point.

Education System Devastation

As part of the genocidal war on Tigray, the region's education system was targeted and destroyed. In the 2024/2025 academic year, only 47% of students returned to school, with 53% unable to attend. Over 411 schools are non-operational due to occupation and damage. During the Grade 12 Matriculation examination, only 9% of students passed, with 48 government schools recording zero passes. Over 1.2 million children are currently out of school in Tigray, representing a devastating blow to the region's human capital and the prospects of an entire generation.

Fuel Restrictions as a Weapon

As part of the Ethiopian federal government's continued siege of Tigray, fuel restrictions have been imposed and continue to cripple humanitarian operations. By October 2025, deliveries had fallen to one truck per day, with new security clearance requirements on the Semera-Mekelle corridor further restricting movement. Thirty-five percent of humanitarian partners reported negative impacts on their operations, with 23 partners warning of budget returns to donors and 21 warning of potential deaths of children and vulnerable populations as a direct consequence.

Given these dire and worsening humanitarian conditions in Tigray, renewed war would be catastrophic.

OVER THREE YEARS OF THE PRETORIA AGREEMENT: A COMPREHENSIVE FAILURE

The 2026 Pretoria Agreement Implementation Report (PAIR) study, the most rigorous assessment of the Pretoria Agreement's implementation to date, reveals systematic failure across virtually all substantive provisions. Research with over 100 participants, including 29 interviews, 18 surveys, and 56 participants in two expert focus groups, documents a stark dichotomy: the agreement delivered negative peace while positive peace remains elusive.

Constitutional Order Not Restored

Over 80% of survey respondents and 100% of interview and focus group participants reported that constitutional order has not been restored in Tigray. Large parts of Tigray's constitutional territory remain outside the control of Tigray authorities, under Eritrean forces in the north and Amhara forces in the western zones. The federal presence is described as "symbolic rather than substantive" and "largely ceremonial." It is limited to deploying police units at airports without extending effective governance into occupied territories (PAIR, 2025). The federal government's proposal to hold a referendum on contested areas was rejected by the Tigray Interim Administration as unconstitutional.

Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR): Weaponized and Incomplete

While the African Union verified the disarmament of Tigray Defense Force (TDF) heavy weapons, the process was premature and poorly sequenced. Disarmament was completed without guarantees that occupied territories would be vacated or that Tigray's civilian population would be protected. Reintegration packages of approximately ETB 90,000 (USD 1,300) were deemed grossly inadequate, and female ex-combatants were systematically excluded from reintegration programs and vocational training.

Reports of TDF soldiers abandoning their posts and protesting in Mekelle after months without salary underscore the fragility of this incomplete DDR process. Additionally, the continued existence of the TDF alongside reports of the establishment of new armed forces, including the federal government's Tigray Peace Force proxy based in Afar, suggests remilitarization rather than sustainable demobilization.

Abandoned Transitional Justice

Almost 90% of PAIR survey respondents stated that neither party could be trusted to deliver justice. Over 75% were entirely unaware of any transitional justice initiatives. The premature termination of ICHREE by the UN Human Rights Council in October 2023 and the quiet dissolution of the AU's Commission of Inquiry represent what the PAIR report calls "perhaps the most consequential abandonment of Agreement commitments" (PAIR, 2025). The Ethiopian federal government launched a transitional justice policy that civil society has criticized as temporally flawed, creating false equivalence between recent genocide and decades-old crimes. The transitional justice framework is geographically limited and designed to protect perpetrators rather than serve victims. Civil society organizations have documented thousands of cases of violations, yet there is no credible mechanism for independent investigation or prosecution.

Non-Existent Economic Recovery

Over 70% of PAIR respondents perceived recovery efforts as entirely absent or ineffective. The Commission of Inquiry on Tigray Genocide documented war damage and losses exceeding USD 145 billion — including USD 84 billion in productive sector losses, USD 47 billion in forestry and environmental destruction, USD 5 billion in infrastructure, and over USD 10 billion in social sector damage. Despite the scale of this destruction, virtually no systematic post-war rebuilding effort has begun. The federal budget allocation of 13 billion birr for 2024/25 was grossly inadequate and ignored war damage entirely. The limited economic activity in Tigray has been restricted to illegal gold mining, which is a highly corrupt and dangerous process involving toxic chemicals and multiple armed actors. As one PAIR respondent stated, "Tigray is still in the emergency relief stage" (PAIR, 2025).

Ineffective Monitoring Mechanism

Half of the PAIR survey respondents were unaware of any reports produced by the AU's formal monitoring three years after the agreement's signing. Multiple respondents described the monitoring body as closely aligned with federal government positions and incapable of providing genuinely independent oversight. Only three major formal meetings were held in three years, and a planned AU Peace and Security Council field mission to Tigray in May 2024 was cancelled. The AU Peace and Security Council has yet to visit Tigray, **the site of one of Africa's (and the world's) most devastating wars and genocides in 30 years.**

REPRESSION FROM WITHIN: PRESS FREEDOM, POLITICAL SPACE, AND HUMAN RIGHTS UNDER THE TIGRAY INTERIM ADMINISTRATION


Any honest accounting of the crisis in Tigray must acknowledge that the people of the region face threats to their rights and freedoms not only from the federal government, Eritrean forces, and Amhara militias, but also from the regional authority that governs them. The scale and nature of abuses differ fundamentally, as the federal government allows the occupation and disenfranchisement of 40% of Tigray's territory and strangles the region economically. However, the record of suppressing dissent, silencing media, and detaining critics without due process under Tigray's regional governance represents a failure that compounds the suffering of a population already enduring the consequences of a genocidal war and a continued silent genocide of attrition.

Understanding the governance dynamics in Tigray is central to making sense of how repression in Tigray has taken hold and requires distinguishing between the TPLF as a political party and the Tigray Regional Interim Administration (TIRA) as the regional interim governing body. This is a distinction that has become increasingly blurred since early 2025 when tensions within the TPLF and between the President of TIRA at the time, Getachew Reda, and TPLF led to Getachew's replacement. He was replaced by Lieutenant General Tadesse Werede as a compromise figure. Since this leadership change, the boundary between party and government in Tigray has effectively collapsed, with TPLF structures, regional security forces, and the TIRA operating as overlapping institutions. The abuses occurring in Tigray are therefore attributable to this intertwined governance apparatus — in which the TPLF as a party, the TIRA as the formal regional government, and the TDF as the armed forces increasingly overlap — rather than to any single institution.

Formal authority rests with the TIRA, but the TPLF exercises dominant influence over both the civilian administration and the security forces, and the boundaries between party directives, government decisions, and military actions have become difficult to distinguish.

The pattern of media repression within Tigray has escalated markedly since this consolidation of power. Armed men stormed Mekelle FM in March 2025, taking the station off air and replacing its leadership; it was reduced to broadcasting only music and pre-recorded shows under armed guard . In July 2025, a reporting team from Tigray Broadcasting Services (TBS) and Tigray Public Media (TPM) covering protests in Adi Gudem were detained by militia at gunpoint, told "stop filming or I will shoot," and forced to flee disguised in villagers' clothes, abandoning their equipment and escaping with only their memory cards. TBS and TPM condemned the incident as a deliberate attack on press freedom aimed at suppressing truth and keeping Tigray under authoritarian control. Weeks earlier, police had detained TBS camera operators Bereket Teklegerima and Ermias Gebrekidan for three days in Axum, with the local TPLF office accusing them of lacking authorization and attempting to create "chaos" (CPJ, Oct. 2025). In September 2025, senior TPLF official Fetlewerk Gebregziabher publicly declared a "zero tolerance" stance toward media, accusing them of advancing "the enemies' agenda," calling critical outlets "poison," and stating that both the party and the army had agreed to enforce the crackdown. TBS head Abel Guesh responded that his staff were braced for either death or detention, and described the statement as the climax of the region's political tension, with the media as the first victim. In 2025, nine journalists told CPJ that press freedom in Tigray remains precarious, with a Mekelle University journalism lecturer observing that what remains is difficult to even call journalism.

The repression extends beyond media to encompass exerting undue pressure against the court system, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, and the suppression of political opposition. The Tigray Judges Association has raised alarm over growing pressure on judges handling rape and murder cases, warning that both "internal and external" interference is threatening judicial independence, and that sexual violence and killings have increased in the region over the past two years. In January 2026, Human Rights First documented a pattern of abductions and detentions across the region, including the disappearance of Filmon Gebrehiwot, a cameraman abducted in Mekelle months earlier whose fate remains unknown; the abduction of Birhane




Gebreghergis, a long-time TPLF supporter who disappeared in Shire after publicly criticizing the party; and the detention of Brigadier General Guesh Gebre, a former senior TDF commander held without court appearance after disagreements with the Tigrayan military leadership. The Raya community of Southern Tigray has accused the TIRA of committing arbitrary detentions, disappearances, killings, and mass displacement, reporting that more than a dozen schools and vocational training centers have been turned into military camps. The community expressed solidarity with political parties operating in Tigray under challenging and repressive conditions and appealed to the federal government to exercise its constitutional responsibility to protect the people of Raya from systematic atrocities committed by regional actors.

On March 11, 2026, Shewit Wudassie, a member of the opposition party Salsay Woyane, producer of the Romanat Online podcast, and a public political commentator, was detained by regional security forces in Mekelle for his political commentary. The arrest of a member of the very party that formally condemned the House of Federation's seizure of Tigray's districts — and that appealed directly to the AU, the U.S. Secretary of State, and IGAD for international intervention — underscores how political space in Tigray is shrinking from both directions simultaneously. It is worth noting that multiple political parties continue to operate in Tigray, including Salsay Woyane Tigray, the National Congress of Great Tigray (Baytona), and Tigray Democratic Solidarity, all of which have publicly challenged both the federal government's decisions and aspects of TPLF and TIRA governance — often at considerable risk.

These developments paint a picture of a population trapped between two forms of authoritarian control: a federal government that is strangling Tigray economically, stripping its territories, banning its dominant party from elections, and preparing for war; and a regional governance apparatus that is silencing critics, disappearing dissenters, militarizing civilian institutions, and failing to protect its most vulnerable.

The people of Tigray, who endured a genocidal war and continue to fight for survival, deserve both liberation from external occupation aggression and accountability from those who govern them locally. The silent genocide being perpetrated against Tigray by external forces does not excuse the silencing of Tigrayan voices by internal ones.

THE GETACHEW REDA PARADOX: FROM ACCUSING ABIY OF GENOCIDE TO SERVING HIS GOVERNMENT



The trajectory of Getachew Reda illustrates the corrosive effect of the post-Pretoria political landscape on accountability and justice for the people of Tigray. During the genocidal war, as TPLF spokesperson, Getachew was one of the most prominent voices condemning the federal government's atrocities. He publicly accused Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed of having "perfected genocide into an art form" and repeatedly named Abiy as the architect of a genocidal campaign against the Tigrayan people (Al Jazeera Head-to-Head, Nov. 2025). After the Pretoria Agreement, however, Getachew's position shifted dramatically. Appointed as TIRA president by the Prime Minister in March 2023, his loyalties effectively shifted to the federal government and Abiy Ahmed. During his two-year tenure, he was widely criticized by Tigrayans and opposition parties for failing to meaningfully confront the federal government on its comprehensive implementation failures: the continued occupation of 40% of Tigray's territory, the strangling of the regional economy through withheld subventions, and the absence of accountability for wartime atrocities.

The extent of Getachew's realignment became fully visible when he went from TIRA president to being appointed Special Adviser for East African Affairs with the rank of minister by Prime Minister Abiy. He completed a political reversal that many Tigrayans describe as a betrayal. In October 2025, he formally broke from the TPLF and founded a new political party: Tigray Democratic Solidarity, known as Simret. The National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) officially recognized Simret in December 2025, while simultaneously refusing to reinstate the TPLF's registration. Since becoming a Special Advisor and forming his own political party, Getachew has illustrated his moral bankruptcy first by minimizing the role of Ethiopia in the genocide in Tigray and then by publicly stating that he would no longer use the word "genocide" while working with the federal government (Ethiopia Insight, Feb. 2026).

Getachew's trajectory is significant not as a personal story but as a window into the political dynamics that have failed Tigray's people from multiple directions. The TPLF under Debretsion cited Getachew's alignment with the Ethiopian government as justification for ousting him — a claim that his subsequent actions have substantially validated. Yet the governance apparatus that replaced him has proven no more committed to democratic governance, press freedom, or political inclusion. The people of Tigray are thus left without meaningful representation from either camp: the TPLF's former spokesman now serves the government many hold responsible for the genocide, while the party that claims to defend Tigray silences dissent, disappears critics, and marginalizes all opposition. This is the paradox at the heart of Tigray's internal political crisis.

ELECTORAL DISENFRANCHISEMENT: THE HOUSE OF FEDERATION'S SEIZURE OF TIGRAY DISTRICTS


On February 3, 2026, Ethiopia's House of Federation ordered the removal of five electoral districts from Tigray's regional oversight for the upcoming 7th General Election, until what the upper chamber described as the resolution of "ownership claims." The five districts include Humera and Adi Remets in Western Tigray, Tselemti in Northwestern Tigray, and Korem Ofla and Raya Alamata in Southern Tigray. These districts will have their federal parliamentary elections conducted under the direct supervision of the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), bypassing both the Tigray and Amhara regional administrations.

While the Federal High Court temporarily suspended the National Election Board of Ethiopia's (NEBE's) implementation of the ruling, the initial decision

represents a de facto formalization of the territorial dispossession that has defined the post-Pretoria Agreement period. These are the same districts from which hundreds of thousands of Tigrayans were forcibly expelled during the genocidal war. A 2023 US Department of State report determined that Amhara forces committed the crime against humanity of deportation or forcible transfer and committed ethnic cleansing in western Tigray. Rather than restoring these territories and facilitating the return of their displaced populations, the federal government has now stripped Tigray of any administrative role in their governance — rewarding ethnic cleansing with electoral legitimacy. The decision must also be understood as a deliberate act of war preparation. Having dangled Western Tigray before both Amhara and Tigrayan actors since the Pretoria Agreement, the federal government is now using the electoral process to drive a wedge between the two groups — whose developing convergence against the federal government represents one of the most significant threats to Abiy's grip on power. The decision is therefore not merely about elections; it is a calculated move to fragment opposition ahead of a military offensive.

The House of Federation's stated rationale that these areas remain "contested" and must be managed neutrally is not in alignment with the country's constitution nor the main tenets of the Pretoria Agreement — which should have been implemented years ago. The Pretoria Agreement was premised on restoring Tigray's pre-war constitutional boundaries, not adjudicating them as open questions. The decision is particularly egregious in the context of the ongoing displacement crisis. The vast majority of the nearly one million IDPs from these districts remain unable to return to their homes due to continued occupation by federal and Amhara regional forces. Holding elections in these areas while the original population remains displaced and disenfranchised does not constitute democratic governance. It constitutes the electoral ratification of ethnic cleansing.

The exclusion of Tigray from the electoral process goes beyond the seizure of these five districts. The National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) has banned the TPLF from contesting the 7th General Election entirely. The NEBE is effectively eliminating any meaningful Tigrayan political representation in the upcoming parliament. The NEBE's manipulative actions go beyond Tigray, as the board has also endorsed a host of thinly veiled proxy parties across the country while reshaping the electoral board into what critics describe as a tool of ruling party consolidation.



The conditions for a free and democratic election do not exist, resulting in Tigray's remaining political parties broadly rejecting any planned elections without meaningful changes. The National Congress of Great Tigray (Baytona) has refused to submit preliminary candidate data, citing destroyed election infrastructure and persistent insecurity, and insisting that full implementation of the Pretoria Agreement is a prerequisite for any election. Salsay Weyane Tigray has condemned a legislative proposal by NEBE that would allow IDPs to vote from within displacement camps as their land remains occupied, arguing that this would violate their rights and contravene the Pretoria Agreement. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party has also warned that genuine democracy cannot occur without the release of political prisoners, an end to ongoing conflicts, and the presence of independent observers.

The House of Federation's initial decision galvanized an unprecedented public protest in Tigray. A peaceful demonstration was held at Baloni Stadium in Mekelle, where Tigray Interim Administration President Lt. Gen. Tadesse Werede warned directly: "If this issue which should be resolved politically leads to war, it will endanger not only Tigray but the whole of Ethiopia." He argued that the matter is "fundamentally political rather than legal" and that the federal authorities' decisions "risk making Tigrayans homeless and further scattering communities." TPLF Chairman Debretsion Gebremichael warned of what he described as a "plot aimed at permanently disintegrating Tigray," calling on the public to remain united in defending the region's interests. Multiple political parties operating in Tigray attended the demonstration and condemned the decisions as politically motivated threats to Tigray's sovereignty. The TIRA separately issued a formal statement condemning the House of Federation's decision as an act that "openly contravenes both the Constitution" and the Pretoria Agreement (Addis Standard, Feb. 2026). A legal challenge to the NEBE decision has been brought before the courts, which have adjourned the case without ruling — leaving the matter unresolved as election preparations proceed.

Tigray faces total electoral disenfranchisement: its territories stripped from regional oversight, its dominant party banned from running, its displaced population unable to vote from home, and its remaining parties denied the minimum conditions for participation. This is not a neutral act of electoral administration. It is the weaponization of democratic processes to consolidate ethnic cleansing and prepare the ground for war.

RENEWED FIGHTING AND THE COLLAPSE OF THE CEASEFIRE

The most alarming recent development has been the resumption of armed hostilities in Tigray and the massive military buildup that has followed. After years of the Ethiopian government failing to fully implement the Pretoria Agreement and return Western Tigray to Tigrayan governance, on January 26, 2026, the TDF moved into Tselemti in northwestern Tigray, resulting in clashes with ENDF units and Amhara regional militias that lasted at least three days. Days later, on January 29, TDF forces entered Korem and Alamata in southern Tigray's Raya district without apparent federal resistance. The Ethiopian government responded by cancelling all flights to the region – a suspension which has since been lifted and reinstated several times. On January 31st, the government reportedly carried out drone strikes on vehicles in central Tigray near Enticho, killing at least one person. At the same time, the Tigray Peace Force (TPF) — a force numbering several thousand based in the Afar region with reported ties to the Ethiopian government — launched probing attacks into Southern Tigray. This attack opened a second front against TDF positions, threatening to escalate the conflict beyond containability. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission reported displacements from Alamata and other towns due to renewed conflict and troop movements.

The federal government's response has gone far beyond containing the January clashes. By mid-February, thousands of federal soldiers were being redeployed toward Tigray from across the country. They were pulled from Wollega in Oromia, Metekel in Benishangul-Gumuz, Jigjiga, Harar, and Dire Dawa in eastern Ethiopia, and from Bahir Dar, Debre Berhan, and Central Gondar in the Amhara region. Widely circulated images showed artillery convoys and requisitioned trucks heading northward. The Ministry of Defense declared a state of maximum alert and called for thousands of discharged and retired officers to return to the army. The Army General Staff opened registration for experienced combat troops, with stringent conditions to ensure loyalty to the federal government. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed framed

the military expansion as a "regional shield" intended to deter threats and end conflicts swiftly, while highlighting the creation of a technologically advanced elite force equipped with drones and precision systems.

The scale of these redeployments is itself destabilizing other regions. Analysts warn that ENDF withdrawals from Oromia and Amhara are creating security vacuums that armed groups may exploit. The Fano insurgency in the Amhara region has metastasized into a force far larger than a year ago, numbering tens of thousands and unified under former Amhara Special Forces Commander General Tefera Mamo and Zemene Kassie. The Oromo Liberation Army in Oromia, now approaching its eighth active year, shows no sign of abating. The government's renewed shift of attention to Tigray is thus weakening its already tenuous grip on other conflict-affected regions. This has created a dynamic that could cascade into multiple simultaneous fronts if a full scale war resumes in Tigray. Twenty international human rights and humanitarian organizations warned that Ethiopia is "on the brink" of renewed large-scale conflict, citing escalating violence, heavy weapons use, drone strikes, and arbitrary detentions.

A tightening of information access grimly reminiscent of the strategy employed throughout the genocidal war on Tigray has once again been orchestrated. The federal government has implemented a systematic assault on press freedom that the Committee to Protect Journalists describes as moving Ethiopia "toward an information blackout" (Al Jazeera Journalism Review, March 9, 2026). Beyond blocking an AFP journalist from travelling to Tigray and revoking Addis Standard's operating license on February 24, 2026, the government revoked Reuters journalists' credentials on February 14 after their RSF training camp exposé, declined to renew BBC credentials, and imposed restrictions on Deutsche Welle and Wazema Radio. Foreign correspondents, including reporters for The Economist and The New York Times, have been expelled. Ethiopia is now sub-Saharan Africa's second worst offender in terms of imprisoning journalists after Eritrea, with at least eight journalists currently jailed. As Deutsche Welle and Wazema Radio stated: "Being a journalist in Ethiopia is synonymous with living in fear" (Al Jazeera Journalism Review, March 9, 2026). This crackdown is a sign of imminent war.

The clashes in February represent the most significant breach of the ceasefire since the Pretoria Agreement was signed. Tigray's occupied territories of

Tselemti, Raya, and Western Tigray have been at the center of the implementation impasse. During the war on Tigray, Amhara militias joined federal forces in their campaign of ethnic cleansing, expelling hundreds of thousands of Tigrayans from these areas and establishing Amhara administrations. More than three years after the Pretoria Agreement, most displaced Tigrayans have not returned home. Thousands who attempted to return to Tselemti in 2024 under army protection reported being denied access to their homes, facing discrimination, or being re-expelled. Moreover, the federal government has consistently looked for ways of institutionalizing the dispossession of Tigrayan territories. Among its propositions were holding a referendum on these territories, instead of restoring pre-war boundaries as mandated by the Pretoria Agreement. The Ethiopian government not fully implementing the Pretoria Agreement has put peace in the region at grave risk. The International Crisis Group warned in its February 2026 briefing that spiraling conflict in northern Ethiopia could, in the direst scenarios, drag Ethiopia and Eritrea back to war. The Pretoria Agreement's regional brokers, which include Kenya, South Africa, and Nigeria, must urgently re-engage both sides to prevent the ceasefire deal from completely collapsing.


ETHIOPIA-ERITREA ESCALATION: A REGION ON THE BRINK

Since the start of the genocidal war on Tigray, the Ethiopian government has not only obfuscated the presence of Eritrean forces within Tigray and Ethiopia's borders, but it has also left civilians in Tigray at the hands of brutal and violent occupying Eritrean forces. A recent change in Ethiopia's tune regarding Eritrean forces presence in Ethiopia indicates that a deterioration of Ethiopia-Eritrea relations has reached a critical threshold. On February 7, 2026, Ethiopian Foreign Minister Gedion Timothewos formally demanded that Eritrea immediately withdraw its troops from Ethiopian territory. In a letter to his Eritrean counterpart, the Foreign Minister described the presence of

Eritrean forces as "not just provocations but acts of outright aggression" (Al Jazeera, Feb. 8, 2026). Ethiopia also formally notified the United Nations Secretary-General that Eritrea was "actively preparing for war" (Al Jazeera, Feb. 8, 2026).

In addition to acknowledging the presence of Eritrean troops in Ethiopia in early February 2026, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed publicly acknowledged for the first time that Eritrean troops had committed atrocities during the war in Tigray, specifically referencing "mass killings" in Axum, as well as looting of factories and destruction of homes. This marked a dramatic reversal from years of denial and diplomatic cover for Eritrea's role in the conflict — though notably, Abiy has remained silent about the fact that the Ethiopian and Eritrean armies had worked together openly as allies during the genocidal war. Abiy's attempt to reframe his government's role has been directly challenged by former Foreign Minister Gedu Andargachew, who publicly disputed Abiy's claim that he had been dispatched to Eritrea to protest atrocities, stating that his January 2021 mission was in fact to congratulate Asmara, not object to its conduct. Eritrean Information Minister Yemane Gebremeskel rejected Abiy's allegations as "cheap and despicable lies," noting that Ethiopia's government had until recently been "showering praises and state medals" on Eritrean officers (Al Jazeera, Feb. 18, 2026). Eritrea continues to deny the presence of its troops on the Ethiopian side of the border.


The rhetoric has continued to escalate into March 2026. In a Tigrigna-language interview aired on March 3, Abiy issued his most direct threat to Eritrea yet, warning: "If they attempt it [to harm Ethiopia] again, it will be their final attempt" (Addis Standard, March 3, 2026). While continuing to ignore Ethiopia's role in the war on Tigray, Abiy expanded his acknowledgment of Eritrean atrocities beyond Axum to include systematic destruction in Adwa, Adigrat, and Shire, stating that his government had "tactically prevented them from entering Mekelle because they committed destruction in every city they occupied." He also alleged that Eritrean forces "continue to appear and disappear in certain areas" of Ethiopian territory. In southern Ethiopia, Abiy staged a provocative parade of special forces demonstrating combat maneuvers widely interpreted as a message to Eritrea, with a banner depicting a soldier breaking down a door toward the port of Assab.



Ethiopia's rhetoric around Eritrea has also become increasingly bellicose and focused on territorial ambitions. At a recent military ceremony, a vast banner featured an image of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed alongside the words: "Whether they like us or not, we will not live as a landlocked state" (Sahan Global, Issue 320, Feb. 24, 2026). This wording was a barely veiled reference to Abiy's aspirations of acquiring Assab, Eritrea's port city on the Red Sea. A study by the Ethiopian Policy Studies Institute has been deployed to bolster this narrative of Ethiopia needing sea access. The institute has claimed that Ethiopia's landlocked status costs the country USD 19–31 billion annually, or up to 23% of its GDP. The government has activated the Red Sea Afar Democratic Organisation, built new drone facilities, placed the military on a war footing, and created a technologically advanced elite force equipped with drones and precision systems. A senior ENDF commander, Lieutenant General Zewdu Belay, was filmed urging the TPLF, Fano, and the OLA to cease fighting so the military could better prepare for a "major operation" against Assab (Sahan Global, Ethiopian Cable archives). Saudi emissaries have repeatedly pleaded with senior Ethiopian officials, including Abiy himself, in recent weeks to avoid war with Eritrea, but these requests have been brushed aside.

These rising tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea are happening in parallel to rising tensions between the Ethiopian government and Tigray. The International Crisis Group (ICG)'s February 18, 2026 briefing characterized the situation in Ethiopia and Eritrea as a "powder keg," warning that tensions between the federal government, the Tigray region, and Eritrea could tip into full-scale conflict with multiple possible triggers. Eritrea is hedging its bets. Despite Eritrea's President Isaias Afwerki effectively rejecting the Pretoria Agreement's core premises by maintaining military positions in northern Tigray, continuing to frame Tigray as an existential threat, it is reportedly cultivating ties with the TPLF.

Per the ICG, TPLF Chairman Debretsion Gebremichael publicly revealed in September 2024 that talks with Asmara had begun six months earlier in Dubai. By mid-2025, the alignment had taken visible form: Eritrean troops removed a military checkpoint in northeastern Tigray [though they still occupy Tigrayan territories], local activists reopened the Zalambessa border crossing for the first time in five years, and Debretsion publicly congratulated Eritrea on its Independence Day. The initiative, referred to as the Tigrigna term "Ximdo," meaning connection or alignment, has been presented by both



the TPLF and the Eritrean government as people-to-people diplomacy. This rapprochement, however, would more aptly be described as strategic, as parts of the TPLF believe a closer relationship with Eritrea would protect Tigray from again facing Ethiopia and Eritrea simultaneously, while also providing a northern supply route to break the federal government's ongoing siege. For Eritrea, the strategic logic is equally clear: aligning with Tigray provides a buffer against Ethiopian aggression, particularly given Abiy's increasingly explicit ambitions toward the port of Assab.

The alliance has provoked sharp backlash among many Tigrayans, for whom the prospect of their regional leadership cultivating ties with the very forces that committed mass killings, systematic sexual violence, and industrial-scale looting across Tigray during the genocidal war represents a profound moral betrayal. Former TPLF leaders Gebreab Bernabas and Tsegay Berhe have openly accused the current leadership of betraying the memory of Eritrean war crimes, with Gebreab describing Ximdo as "political prostitution" (IDN-InDepthNews, Aug. 7, 2025). The TPLF leadership has dismissed these concerns. An analysis in the Addis Standard warned that the alignment with Eritrea erodes the TPLF's moral standing among survivors, deepens internal divisions, distances the party from international allies, and most critically, jeopardizes Tigray's security given that Eritrea's enduring objective has been to ensure that Tigray remains weak, dependent, and politically marginalized (Addis Standard, July 12, 2025).

At the same time, Eritrea is allegedly maintaining its relationship with Fano militias in the Amhara region. The resulting thaw between Eritrea and some Tigray's leadership has infuriated the Ethiopian government. There are reports of a developing convergence among the Ethiopian government's opposition — including reported meetings among the OLA, Fano, TPLF, and Asmara in Sudan.

Tigray sits in a precarious position amid tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea, its own tensions with the Ethiopian government, and being forced to pick a side in an impending war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. As reported in the recent Pretoria Agreement Implementation Report (PAIR), Tigray faces what the PAIR report termed a "neutrality trap": any attempt to balance among adversaries' proxies is interpreted as hostility by all sides, an inherently unstable posture that magnifies existential risk. Additionally, the

resulting triangular dynamic — in which the federal government, the TPLF, and Eritrea are each simultaneously antagonists and potential co-belligerents — has transformed Tigray into a potential theater for proxy war, with the civilian population bearing the catastrophic risk of every side's strategic calculations.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, appealed on February 10 to all parties to step back, warning that "the situation remains highly volatile and we fear it will further deteriorate" (UN News, Feb. 10, 2026). A war would be devastating for all three players and would overlap with fighting in neighboring Sudan, potentially dragging in powerful states from outside the Horn of Africa and further destabilizing the volatile Red Sea region.

GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

The Horn of Africa is experiencing a period of unprecedented volatility, with the Ethiopia-Eritrea confrontation now embedded within two competing alliance systems that span the Gulf, the Middle East, and beyond. What was already the most dangerous moment since the 2018 rapprochement has become a potential flashpoint for a proxy war of truly regional, and possibly global, dimensions. The region's current proxy war in Sudan reached Ethiopia's doorstep in March 2026 with Sudanese army forces recapturing the Al-Sillik area in Blue Nile state, from the RSF.

The alignment of external actors has hardened into identifiable axes. On one side sits what analysts describe as the Ankara-Cairo-Riyadh axis: Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Eritrea, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), and Pakistan. On the other side, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has announced plans to forge a "hexagon" of alliances — explicitly referencing the UAE, India, Greece, Cyprus, and other unnamed Arab and African states as a counterbalance to what he termed both the "radical Shia axis" and the "emerging radical Sunni axis." The UAE, Ethiopia, Somaliland, and Abraham Accords signatories Bahrain and Morocco are likely partners in this emerging formation. Israel's December 2025 recognition of Somaliland was quietly facilitated by the Emirates and represents Tel Aviv's first securitized foray into the Horn of

Africa, seeking a foothold on the Gulf of Aden to counter Iranian interests via Houthi proxies and developing Turkish stakes in Somalia.

These competing alliance systems converged on Addis Ababa in the final week of February 2026, underscoring Ethiopia's position as a contested prize. Turkey is the second-largest source of foreign direct investment in Ethiopia behind only China. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan visited Ethiopia to mark the centenary of the Turkish embassy, publicly urging Abiy not to follow Israel's recognition of Somaliland and declaring that "the Horn of Africa should not be the battlefield of foreign forces" (Sahan Global, Issue 320, Feb. 24, 2026). Days later, Israeli President Isaac Herzog arrived in Addis, reflecting the deepening formal alliance between Tel Aviv and Abiy's government — an alliance built on the foundation of UAE financial support and weaponry that remains critical to the Ethiopian state's survival. The UAE's role is central to both the Ethiopia-Eritrea confrontation and the broader regional architecture. During the genocidal war on Tigray, the UAE supplied drones and maintained a supply air bridge that was essential in halting the TDF advance on Addis Ababa and forcing the TPLF into peace talks. Today, satellite imagery has confirmed a new Emirati military training base under development in Ethiopia's Benishangul-Gumuz region in the Mengi district — a facility believed intended to house Rapid Support Forces fighters who have been accused of countless atrocity crimes and war crimes). Ethiopia has thus been drawn, most likely at the UAE's behest, directly into the Sudan war, training and facilitating Emirati-backed RSF forces on its own soil.

The proxy war dynamics escalated dramatically on March 3, 2026, when Sudan for the first time formally accused Ethiopia of allowing drones to be launched from its territory to carry out attacks on Sudanese soil. The Sudanese foreign ministry described Ethiopia's actions as "a blatant violation of the country's sovereignty and an open act of aggression" and warned that Sudan "affirms its right to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity, including the right to respond to such attacks by all available means" (Reuters, March 3, 2026). This formal accusation represents a qualitative escalation in the regionalization of the conflict. Sudan is now threatening retaliatory action against Ethiopia, meaning that the Ethiopia-Eritrea-Tigray confrontation is no longer merely adjacent to the Sudan war — it is actively merging with it.



Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia has aligned with Eritrea and the SAF in parallel to Egypt cultivating close ties with Eritrea. These ties include a high-level security dialogue and an investment deal pertaining to Eritrea's Assab port that allegedly grants Egypt naval access. Such a naval access agreement directly threatens Ethiopian ambitions for the same port. Saudi Arabia has also considered investing in Assab as part of efforts to counter Emirati influence in the region, making the port a convergence point and a key piece of the geopolitical board game. The Egyptian-Eritrean alignment is further cemented by the ongoing dispute over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), completed in 2025, which Egypt views as a fundamental threat to its water security. South Sudan has called on Egypt and Sudan to join the Cooperative Framework Agreement on equitable Nile usage, while Cairo has urged continued dialogue and warned against its exclusion in any framework.

Despite the US' effort for Ethiopia to remain in its sphere of influence since the appointment of Abiy Ahmed, Ethiopia's diplomatic positioning has shifted dramatically in recent times. The Ethiopian government has moved closer to Moscow and Beijing, procuring Russian fighter jets and receiving promises of nuclear energy, while Chinese investment now accounts for nearly 50% of Foreign Direct Investment. India and Ethiopia elevated their relations in December 2025 with a visit by Prime Minister Modi, and India is anticipated to play a prominent role in Israel's emerging "hexagon" alliance. These deepening ties with non-Western powers reflect Addis's calculation that it can pursue military objectives without facing decisive Western pushback — a calculation reinforced by the Trump Administration's cessation of USAID programs, its stripping of legal protections from Ethiopian refugees, and its broader disengagement from African diplomacy.

Russia has reportedly delivered up to six Yak-130 advanced trainer and light combat aircraft, along with at least one Orion combat drone, to Ethiopia. On February 27, 2026, Ethiopia also signed a comprehensive defense agreement with Azerbaijan covering drone technology, armored vehicles, artillery shell production, air defense systems, T-72 tank refurbishment, and electronic warfare capabilities. These procurement channels, alongside existing UAE drone supplies and Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's "strategic working visit" to the UAE on March 12, as well as Turkish Bayraktar deliveries, mean Ethiopia is acquiring advanced military hardware from at least five distinct sources as it prepares for potential conflict.

Erdoğan's warning that the Horn should not become a foreign battlefield spoke directly to fears about the externalization of the Ethiopia-Eritrea confrontation, as a regional proxy war threatens to unfold and the war in Sudan and potential war between Ethiopia and Eritrea could converge. Eritrea's alleged cultivation of Ethiopian opposition groups — including the TPLF and Fano — and Asmara's ties to the SAF mean that any war would involve a constellation of state and non-state actors across multiple fronts. Reports of meetings among the OLA, Fano, TPLF, and Asmara in Sudan suggest a developing convergence among Addis's enemies — born not of ideological alignment but strategic positioning.

The AU's recent leadership change — with Chairperson Mahamoud Ali Youssouf of Djibouti replacing Moussa Faki — offers a potential opening for renewed regional mediation, and there have been reports of African Union and Saudi mediation attempts in recent weeks. However, concrete action has yet to materialize, and Djibouti's own strategic positioning between competing axes will test whether the new leadership can serve as an honest broker.

For Tigray, these dynamics are existential. A proxy war fought on Tigrayan soil would dwarf the devastation of 2020–2022. Today, with the Sudan war raging next door, a confirmed Gulf military base on Ethiopian soil, and tanks heading north, the people of Tigray — already enduring a silent genocide of attrition — face the prospect of becoming collateral damage in a conflict whose stakes and actors extend far beyond the Horn of Africa.

THE IRAN WAR: WHAT IT MEANS FOR TIGRAY AND THE HORN

The US-Israeli strikes on Iran that began on February 28, 2026 have reshaped the geopolitical landscape in which the Ethiopia-Eritrea-Tigray confrontation is unfolding.

First, the two alliance systems that were already arrayed around the Ethiopia-Eritrea divide are now at war with each other on a second front. Israel and the UAE — Ethiopia's allies — are at the center of the anti-Iran campaign. Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt — aligned with Eritrea— have condemned the strikes. The war could either accelerate or dampen the proxy competition in the Horn: if the UAE and Saudi Arabia are consumed by the war in Iran, they may have less bandwidth and fewer resources to fuel their competing proxies in Ethiopia and Sudan. Alternatively, the destruction of their shared Iranian adversary could free up resources and attention to double down on Red Sea competition, with Ethiopia and Eritrea as the primary proxies.

Second, the Iran war makes the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb strait even more strategically critical. The Strait of Hormuz has been disrupted, oil prices have spiked, and global shipping routes are being rerouted — all of which elevate the importance of the Red Sea corridor that runs directly along the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia's pursuit of Assab port, Israel's recognition of Somaliland to secure a Gulf of Aden foothold, and the dense concentration of foreign military bases in Djibouti all acquire heightened strategic significance in a war that is militarizing the entire maritime corridor from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean.

Third, the Houthis in Yemen, Iran's most capable regional proxy, pose a direct military threat to the Horn. The Critical Threats Project has assessed that Houthis could target Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti, which hosts over 4,000 US personnel and lies less than 100 miles from the Yemeni coast. Somaliland's Berbera port, operated by the UAE and now linked to Israel through diplomatic recognition, is another potential target. Iranian retaliatory strikes

have already hit facilities in the UAE and Bahrain. The Red Sea and Gulf of Aden are no longer adjacent to the conflict zone; they are part of it.

Fourth, Ethiopia has faced an immediate economic shock. Approximately 90–95% of Ethiopia's petroleum imports enter through Djibouti. Disruption to the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea corridor directly threatens Ethiopia's fuel supply at a moment when fuel restrictions are already strangling Tigray's humanitarian operations. Rising global oil prices and freight costs will compound Ethiopia's existing economic fragility, as the birr is already depreciating, inflation is squeezing the population, and the government is under International Monetary Fund (IMF) fiscal discipline. A prolonged Iran war could devastate Ethiopia's capacity to sustain military operations, let alone fund reconstruction or humanitarian relief.


Fifth, and most critically for Tigray, the Iran war consumes the international attention and diplomatic bandwidth that would otherwise be available for de-escalation in the Horn. The United States — the only external actor with sufficient leverage to prevent an Ethiopia-Eritrea war — is now wholly consumed by its military campaign in Iran. The Senate has already rejected a war powers resolution. Secretary of State Rubio, who Tigray's political parties have directly appealed to, is focused on managing a multi-front Middle Eastern war, not on the Horn of Africa. The AU, IGAD, and European partners are similarly distracted. The Iran war does not merely create a permissive environment for renewed conflict in Tigray — it creates one in which the world is looking the other way entirely.

For the people of Tigray, the Iran war exacerbates an ongoing state of catastrophe. The alliance systems that underpin the Ethiopia-Eritrea confrontation are now engaged in a shooting war. The maritime corridor that sustains Ethiopia's economy and Tigray's humanitarian lifeline is being militarized. The international community that could be preventing the next genocide is consumed by the US-Israeli war on Iran. Further, the economic shock from rising energy prices will hit the most vulnerable hardest — including the nearly one million Internally Displaced Persons in Tigray already dying of starvation. The tanks heading north toward Tigray are moving under the cover of a global crisis that has rendered the Horn of Africa invisible.

CALL TO ACTION

The convergence of worsening humanitarian conditions in Tigray, renewed hostilities, an unprecedented military buildup, electoral disenfranchisement, comprehensive implementation failure of the Pretoria Agreement, and the crystallization of competing global alliance systems around the Ethiopia-Eritrea divide demands urgent and decisive action. The window for preventing a return to catastrophic conflict is narrowing by the day. We call on the international community, domestic stakeholders, and all parties to the Pretoria Agreement to act immediately on the following:

- Immediate de-escalation of hostilities between the ENDF, EDF, and TDF, withdrawal of forces redeployed toward Tigray, dissolution of the Tigray Peace Force proxy, and the resumption of structured political dialogue between the federal government and Tigray, as called for in the Pretoria Agreement;
- Urgent international diplomatic engagement, particularly by the United States, to prevent a proxy war between Ethiopia and Eritrea fueled by competing Gulf and global interests, leveraging all available tools including credible warnings, sanctions, and sustained preventive diplomacy;
- The immediate and verifiable withdrawal of all Eritrean and Amhara forces from Tigray's constitutional territories, and the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons to their homes;
- Reversal of the House of Federation's decision to strip five Tigray districts from regional oversight, reversal of the NEBE's ban on TPLF participation, and rejection of any electoral process that disenfranchises displaced Tigrayans and legitimizes ethnic cleansing;
- Revitalization of the Pretoria Agreement through the creation of a "Friends of the Pretoria Agreement" group comprising the US, EU, AU and UN, with robust compliance mechanisms and meaningful consequences for non-compliance;

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- The establishment of an independent, international or hybrid accountability mechanism for atrocity crimes committed during the Tigray war, to replace the terminated ICHREE and AU Commission of Inquiry mandates;
 - The immediate lifting of fuel restrictions that are strangling humanitarian operations and causing preventable deaths;
 - Urgent mobilization of humanitarian assistance to address the catastrophic food security crisis, including replacing the aid lost through the suspension of USAID operations;
 - Comprehensive reconstruction planning and resource mobilization to address the estimated USD 145 billion in war damage and losses, including a standalone donors' conference for Tigray's recovery;
 - Support for an inclusive, victim-centered transitional justice process developed with meaningful participation of conflict-affected communities, survivors, women, and marginalized groups;
 - Official recognition of the Tigray Genocide committed by the ENDF, EDF, Amhara Special Forces, and Fano Militia against the Tigrayan people.

Despite over three years since the signing of the Pretoria Agreement and over five years since the start of the war on Tigray, the crises in Tigray are not over as silent genocide continues. Whether the lessons of implementation failure are heeded will be measured not in diplomatic communiqués but in human lives — in the return of displaced families to their homes, in the provision of justice to victims, in the reconstruction of shattered communities and, ultimately, in the ability of one of Africa's oldest political communities to transition from the trauma of war to the promise of sustainable peace. Unfortunately, the situation is close to becoming even worse. We are at a critical juncture with war impending. As foreign leaders shuttle in and out of Addis Ababa building alliances and courting favors, for all the choreography, the immediate reality for Tigrayans remains a lack of basic necessities, insecurity, fear, and a suffocating threat of renewed war.

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