

32 Dark Years in Tigray, Not in Ethiopia

Tigray Genocide Background and Context :

The conflict in Tigray, Ethiopia, also referred as the 'Tigray genocidal war' is a complex and highly contentious issue that began in November 2020. It involves multiple actors, including the Ethiopian federal government, Amhara special forces and militias, other regional forces, foreign forces (Eritrean, Somali), and middle eastern superpower countries in one side against TPLF led the people of Tigray in one side in which the people of Tigray were fighting for their survival and the other despotic groups were fighting for power struggle.

Several political elites and scholars traced the conflict to a power struggle between Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and the TPLF, which had been the dominant political forces in Ethiopia for nearly three decades until Abiy took office in 2018. Tensions escalated when the Tigray regional government defied the federal government by holding its own regional election in September 2020, which the constitutionally illegal central government deemed the regional election illegal. In response, the Ethiopian government launched a military offensive in early November 2020 in the name of law enforcement and aiming to remove the TPLF from power. The genocidal war continued for more than two years and stopped in late 2022 upon the signing of permanent cessation of hostilities between the Federal government and the TPLF in November 2022 in Pretoria, South Africa.

Scale and Impact:

The Ethiopian government imposed a media blackout and restricted access to the Tigray region, making it challenging to obtain accurate information about the conflict's scale and impact. However, reports from humanitarian organization, international media outlets, and eyewitness accounts have shed light on the dire humanitarian situation in Tigray. The war has indeed taken over one million noncombatant lives, destroyed more than 90% of Tigray infrastructures and took the region 50 years back, almost to the times when the 17 years of struggle for freedom and equality started by elites of Tigran origin which later formed an inclusive party (Ethiopian Peoples Republic Democratic Front (EPRDF) and ruled the federalist Ethiopia for 27 years.

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Tigray Leaders were sleeping:

Given the background information, the damage could potentially be more and the most catastrophic in history, certainly will be remembered as a genocidal war that has been 'cooked' for 27 years while the leaders from Tigray region have been in power and are the main actors in the EPRDF regime. Hence my paper argues TPLF and its political Tigrayan elites has all the signals a genocidal war was evolving but decided to 'sleep' on it.

The data:

The paper is an argumentative column and supported with data from Kimetrica Data Publishing (conflict model-Ethiopia/Ethiopia_acled-nov_05_2020). The data covers from 1997 to November 05, 2020. In an eventuate time scale, 1997 was two years after the second national election in which most opposition groups boycotted the election and the November 5, 2020, is one day after the start of the Tigray genocide war. It is also important to note the data presented here is limited and might not reflect a whole as access to data is hard in a despotic regime. It is deemed enough however to argue the lethargic leadership of TPLF and its political elites to predict and if not prevent the war, at least prepare, and reduce the damage was shambolic and will be remembered at the weakest point in Tigray history for generations to come.

Kimetric Data Publisher collects conflict data in Ethiopia from 1997 to 2020 and categorized data by year, event type, sub event type, event actors, locations the event occurred and fatalities. There were over 6000 events/ incidents collected and used for this analysis.

Where in Ethiopia the incidents frequently took place?

Whether it is peaceful protest, riot, armed conflicts and/or protest with force interventions by authorities, it will not be wrong to assume Ethiopia is characterized by the 'lack of none of it', especially in recent times since Abiy Ahmed came to power. Taking the time grid-scale of 1997 to 2020, the social and political unrest seems to be more frequent around central, closer to the capital, Addis Ababa, and peripherals of Southern, Western, Eastern and Northwestern parts of Ethiopia.

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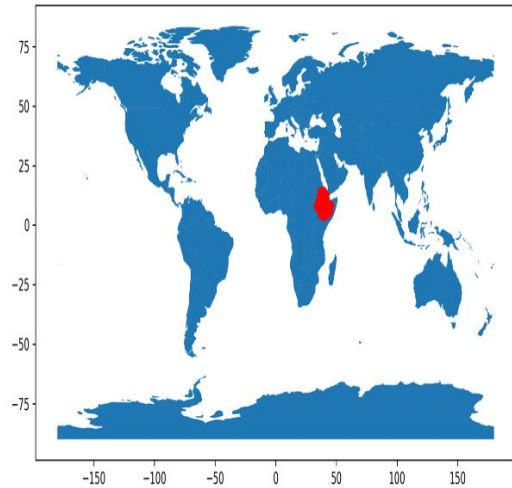


Figure 1: The Ethiopian Map

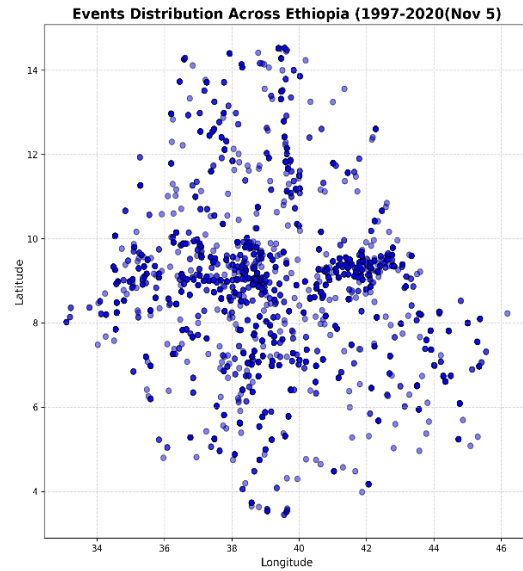


Figure 2: Incidents by Latitude and Longitude

Figure 1 is an estimate of the Ethiopian map using points from natural earth and geopandas while figure2 depicts locations of political and social unrest, and fatalities that occurred in Ethiopia from 1997 to 2020. The unrest occurrence was more frequent closer to the capital and more south. If all the fringe dots are connected, one can clearly see the Tigray region is isolated from the waves

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of the political and social discomfort during the realm of TPLF led EPRDF.

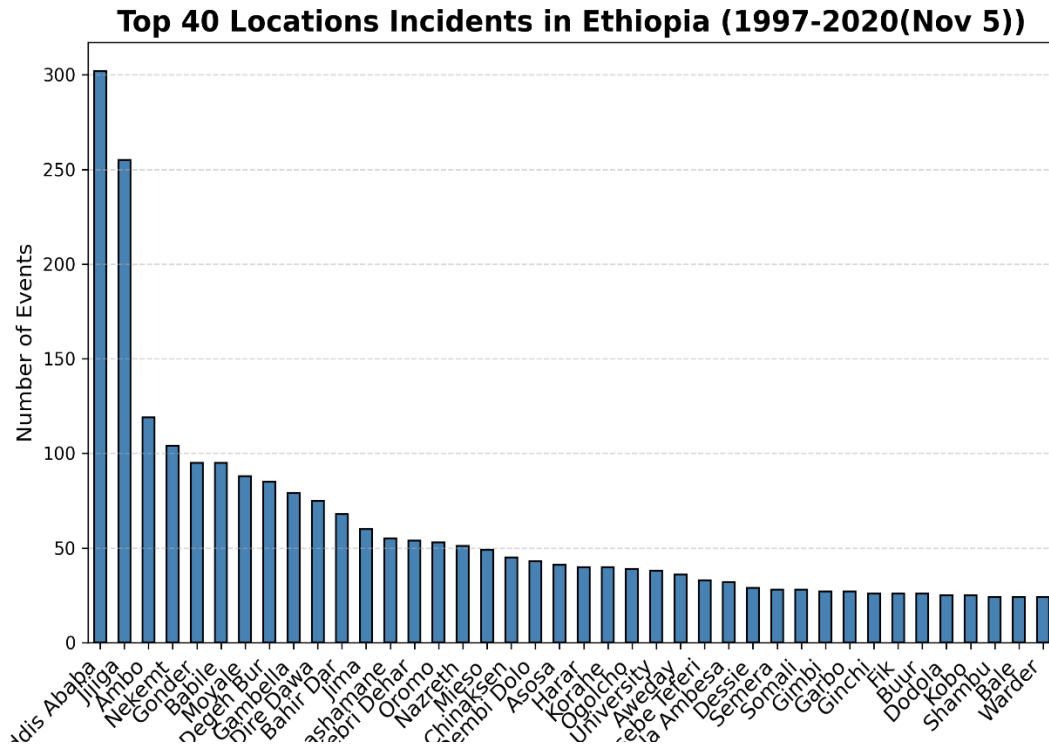


Figure 3: Events by Location

Figure 3 supports the argument social and political discomforts were indeed more popular outside Tigray from 1997 to 2020 with Addis Ababa recorded about 300 followed by Jijiga recording about 250 signaled calls against the ruling government TPLF led EPRDF whose base was in Arat Killo , Addis Abeba. Only Zela Ambesa from the Tigray region made it to the top 40 hostile places in Ethiopia from 1997-2020 and had seen resemblance of armed clash (32) and this is the fact that it is a boarder that has historical issues with neighboring despotic regium of Eritrea.

A question begs here whether Tigreans were happy with the regium, or such protests were restricted in the region? What were the implications when there is unrest in other parts of Ethiopia but not in Tigray? How did other Ethiopians see the Tigreans during the realm of EPRDF? Those and related questions will be discussed throughout this article.

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Incidents ranges from peace to bullet:

Public demonstrations are not easy in most third world countries, and they always result in clashes and fatalities of civilians. Ethiopia will be ranked top among countries who prevents its citizens the freedom of expression through peaceful protest and alike which is one of the basic human rights fundamentals in the United Nations charter the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 19. Ethiopia is a member of the UN. But what were the ranges of incidents from 1997 to 2020 and their implications and contributions towards Tigray genocide?

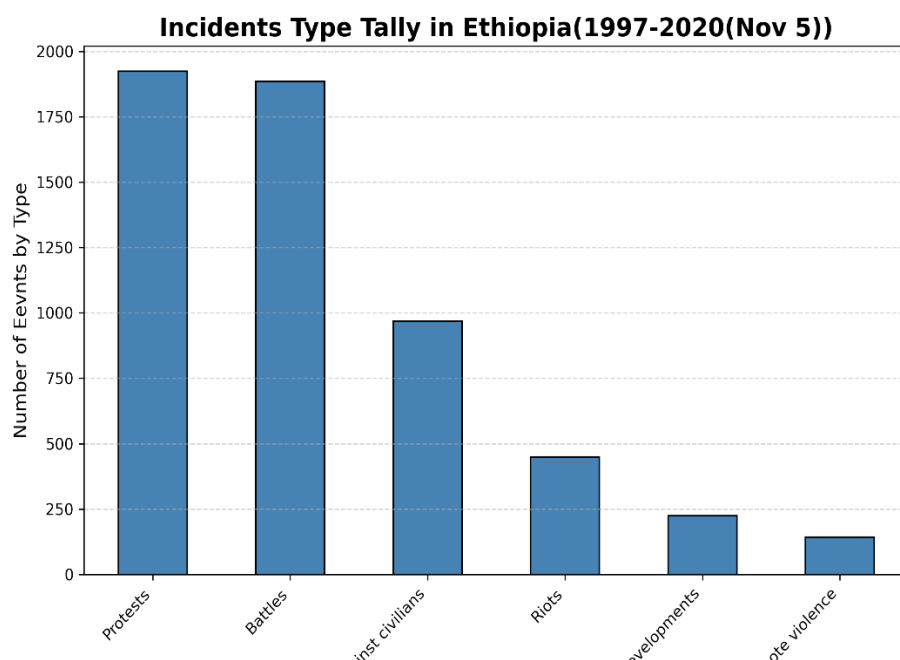


Figure 4: Incidents by Type

Since the aftermath of the second Ethiopian National election (1997) to the morning of the start of Tigray genocide(Nov 2020) there were about 1924 protests, 1885 battles, 968 violence against civilians, 449 riots, 225 strategic developments and 142 explosions/remote violence recorded, all against the party in the federal super house. Those are astonishing figures especially for a country who was applauded by world bank and IMF for its double-digit growth in this period. Figure 4 can

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be even broken further to understand whether the protest was peaceful or not or what the battles constitute into. See figures below.

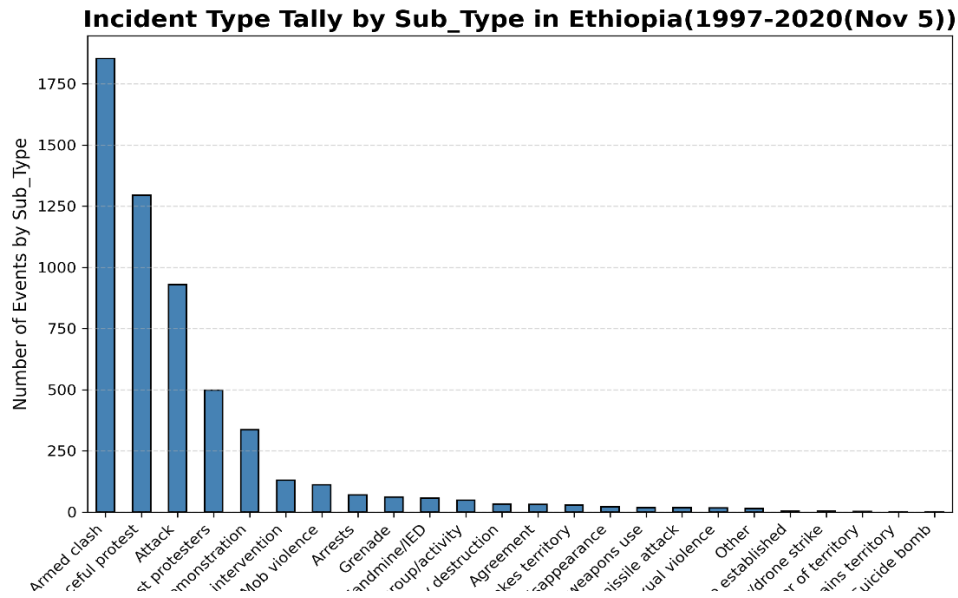


Figure 5: Incident by Sub Type

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Out[28]:
Armed clash                1854
Peaceful protest           1295
Attack                     930
Excessive force against protesters  498
Violent demonstration      337
Protest with intervention   131
Mob violence                112
Arrests                     70
Grenade                     61
Remote explosive/landmine/IED  57
Change to group/activity    49
Looting/property destruction  33
Agreement                   32
Non-state actor overtakes territory  29
Abduction/forced disappearance  21
Disrupted weapons use       19
Shelling/artillery/missile attack  19
Sexual violence             17
Other                       15
Headquarters or base established  4
Air/drone strike            4
Non-violent transfer of territory  3
Government regains territory  2
Suicide bomb                1
Name: sub_event_type, dtype: int64
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Figure 6: Incident Breakdown

There was about 1854 armed clashes and protests were rather peaceful than violent.

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What was the death toll?

One can expect the death toll to be tremendous given there being close to 2000 protests and armed clashes across Ethiopia, but it should be also noted undemocratic countries and its leaders are also experts hiding information from the public and the international communities. The fatalities in Ethiopia from 1997-2020 collected by Kimetric data publisher are shown in the figure below.

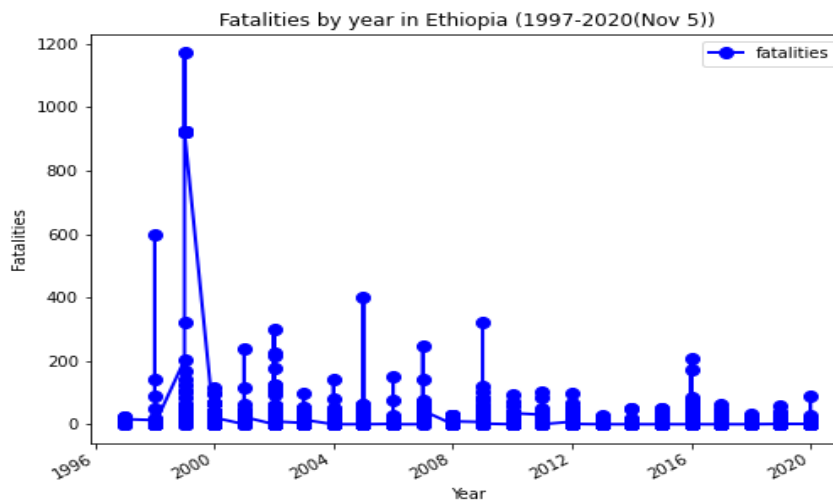


Figure 7: Fatalities

The government(EPRDF) responded aggressively throughout the years from 1997-2020,though more aggrieve during the 1997s when opposition parties boycotted the national election and Addis Ababa seems to be fallen under a party (Kinget) other than EPRDF. I am certain the death toll figures will be 10 times more that what is shown in Figure 7.

Was Tigray genocide being 'cooked' while Tigray Authorities were busy enjoying the night life of Addis Ababa?

The federal government of Ethiopia in the past and now has experienced the most public oppositions by a country's citizens. EPRDF is a party with longest tenure to lead Ethiopia as the head of state post imperialist Ethiopia. This was also the time Ethiopia have relatively seen sustained economic development but at the expense of human right violations.

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I think it is now a public knowledge, during the tenure of EPRDF, Tigray leadership has the control of the main apparatus of the economy, security, media, and justice system in Ethiopia. They controlled the banks, the tanks, the police, and the judge and the radio. Under their watch, they have seen several protests, riots, violence, and armed clashes, all outside Tigray and with a slogan message that rubbishes 'Woyane' which at most times is associated with the entire population of Tigray. Authorities responded by force during such political and social unrest which is an implication of their awareness of such occurrences but clearly failed to analyze it. Not only the incidents were almost all outside Tigray, but the protesters were also united in the messages they convey against TPLF and Woyane, ultimately the people of Tigray. One of the genocidal campaigns made against an entire population of Tigray during this period and at those protests were, 'To catch the Fish, must dry the ocean....,it is 95 million people of Ethiopia to 5 million people of Woyane....Etc'. All those and other fabricated propaganda that fuel hate were all there to be seen but Tigray leadership failed to monitor and analyze what is being showcased by those united protesters against the leaders of Tigray and hate evoked towards an entire population which resulted a genocide in the end. TPLF was sleeping all along.

Tigray political elites were also sleeping:

I think most Ethiopians, especially Tigreans agree that TPLF is a popular political party in Ethiopia and Tigray and has millions and millions of active members and if not in thousands, in hundreds political elite supporters. It should be also noted that the Tigray region have seen an increased number of scholars, a political elite during the realm of TPLF led EPRDF. In recent times, a Tigrean scholars' group (GSTS-Global Society Tigrean Scholars) announced that it has over 3000 members that have masters or PHD. However, the elite, like the leadership failed to create an awareness what's going in the broader Ethiopia and make contribution by influencing the government towards preventing a genocide in Tigray and other parts of Ethiopia. Most of the elites and university professors in fact stands with the government, not with the people of Tigray. Some elites were arrested, some were muted due to fear of arrest and harassment. It is only in recent years; Tigray is seen a multiparty system and its scholars and elites are more vocal and standing with the people. However, this was too little to late to prevent a genocide. Therefore, Tigray

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scholars and political elites are equally to blame alongside the leadership for allowing a genocide in Tigray to happen.

Conclusion:

Tigray leadership, scholars and political elites have all the evidence that an entire Ethiopia was united against fighting the TPLF led EPRDF and evoking hate towards a very 'quiet' people of Tigray during the leadership tenure. They have failed to monitor and analyze every event occurrence and unable to translate empirically or politically what they accrued towards the security and wellbeing the people of Tigray which they have the responsibility to do so at the federal and regional level. The people of Tigray were indeed 'stamped in the back' by its own leaders, elites and scholars and resulted a genocide that leaves a scar that will live with the people of Tigray for generations to come.