

Forum: Social and Humanitarian Committee

Issue: Tackling the Humanitarian Crises in Ethiopia

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Introduction

Ethiopia is facing an extreme humanitarian catastrophe in the middle of a long-running dispute that has severely violated human rights and split the nation. Ethiopia is divided into 11 regions, each with its own government and frequently organized along ethnic lines. Ethiopia is governed by a federal system, with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed ruling over the nation from its capital, Addis Ababa. The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which is at the center of a battle against the federal government, has turned the Tigray area in the north into the focal point of a deadly conflict. Although this conflict began as a power struggle, its effects have spread far beyond, making the already harmful humanitarian situation worse.

The TPLF, however comprising a tiny portion of the population, dominated Ethiopian politics for almost thirty years. After political changes the power struggle increased. However, the TPLF resisted these changes, which led to a violent conflict when TPLF forces assaulted a federal military installation in Tigray. Although the federal government acted quickly, it was far from decisive, which resulted in a bloody struggle that lasted for a long time, attracted several parties, notably the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), and saw shifting borders.

This battle has resulted in a terrible human cost. Reports of atrocities on all fronts have left the civilian population trapped in the crossfire. The humanitarian situation is dire; more than two million people have been forced to flee their homes, and millions more are in danger of starvation as a result of the assistance embargo against Tigray. International groups are raising the alarm about the catastrophic



situation, as hundreds of people die every day from a lack of food and medical attention.

The ongoing conflicts and unwillingness of all sides to participate in serious discussions have hindered efforts, despite the urgent need for relief and a peaceful conclusion. In addition to being a story of political power struggles, the tragedy taking place in Ethiopia serves as a sobering reminder of the misery that befalls people when diplomacy and conversation fail. The international world is becoming more and more vocal in its demands for a rapid ceasefire and humanitarian access as the conflict continues, underscoring the urgent need for a solution to put an end to the suffering of a great number of Ethiopians.

Definition of Key Terms

Ethnic Cleansing

Ethnic cleansing is the forced removal or extermination of a particular ethnic or religious group from a specific area by a more dominant group, aiming to achieve a homogenous region. This process may involve murder, deportation, displacement, and acts of terror. ([UN](#))

War Crimes

War crimes are serious breaches of the laws and customs of war. These include intentional killing, torture, taking hostages, unjustifiable destruction of property, and the use of weapons that cause unnecessary suffering. ([UN](#))

Crimes Against Humanity

These acts include, but are not limited to, murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great suffering or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health. ([ICC](#))



Humanitarian Aid Blockade

A humanitarian aid blockade is the deliberate prevention of resources, such as food, medical supplies, or water, from reaching populations in need, especially during conflicts or after natural disasters.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

individuals or groups of people who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence. ([UN](#))

Humanitarian Corridor

A humanitarian corridor is a temporary demilitarized zone established to allow the safe passage of humanitarian aid and the evacuation of civilians from conflict zones. ([ICRC](#))

Background Information

A History of Ethiopia's conflict and fragile stability

Haunted by a violent civil conflict, Ethiopia, a nation with a rich history and vibrant cultural tapestry, stands at a crossroads. Once a beacon of hope and stability for Africa, Ethiopia now faces the precarious possibility of its hard-won peace crumbling.



The Derg Regime (1974-1991)

Ethiopia was long afflicted by the Derg dictatorship, which was ruled by Mengistu Haile Mariam's strong grip. Systematic repression, including extrajudicial executions,



widespread detentions, and the violent repression of opposition, defined this period (1974–1991) ([Amnesty International](#), [Human Rights Watch](#)). An estimated 500,000 Ethiopians and Eritreans perished during the "Red Terror" campaign, a time of state-sponsored violence ([Consiladation Resources](#)). The catastrophic Ethiopian famine of 1983–1985, which is believed to have killed over a million people, was the culmination of this era. This terrible incident left scars that still linger in the collective memory of the country.

A period of relative calm was brought about by the 1991 collapse of the Derg by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a coalition led by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). Even though the TPLF only made up 6% of the population according to the 2007 Ethiopian census, they were crucial to the formation of the new administration. The EPRDF era was tainted by allegations of authoritarian control, ethnic marginalization, and repression of dissent, notwithstanding economic growth (averaging 10.2% yearly between 2004 and 2014, according to the [World Bank](#)) and infrastructural development. The biggest ethnic group in Ethiopia, the Oromo, were especially resentful of the TPLF's domination over them. Future conflicts were seeded by these unsolved concerns.

Spark that turned the conflict into a war (2018-2020)

With the election of Oromo politician Abiy Ahmed as prime minister in 2018, reform hopes appeared. Peace with neighboring Eritrea, political transparency, and ethnic inclusion were the main points of his program. Yet these changes exacerbated pre-existing ethnic tensions and put the TPLF's hegemony in jeopardy. The Prosperity Party's establishment as a new political party with the goal of a unitary government rather than a federal one made the TPLF feel increasingly excluded. Eventually, these long-simmering grudges broke out into open warfare.

The conflict's emergence

On November 4, 2020, battle broke out between the TPLF and the Ethiopian federal



government, when the TPLF ran an election without informing the federal government, with the support of Amhara regional forces and Eritrean troops, shattering the precarious ceasefire. Regarding an attack on a federal military installation in Mekele, accusations were made everywhere. Despite the cause, the fighting sent Ethiopia reeling back into the grip of war and set off a catastrophic chain reaction. The battle has had a severe human cost. All parties involved in the war have been accused of perpetrating grave abuses of human rights.

War

The UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) has published reports that describe horrifying events such as mass rape, extrajudicial executions, and torture ([OHCHR, a-hrc-54-crp-3](#)). Massacres committed by TPLF-affiliated forces in Mai Kadra and by the Eritrean army in Axum have been confirmed by the UN ([Amnesty International](#)). These crimes serve as a stark reminder of the violence's indiscriminate character and contempt for civilian life.

Internal Migration

Over 5.2 million Ethiopians have been displaced by the war ([UNHCR, April 4, 2024](#)). Concerns over the spread of waterborne illnesses are raised by the inability of overcrowded camps to supply basic essentials like food, water, and sanitary facilities. In Tigray, the combined effects of drought and violence have driven millions of people to the verge of hunger. According to estimates from the UN World Food Programme ([WFP](#)), 350,000 people are already facing circumstances akin to famine, and millions more might do so if prompt action is not done. FAO's December 2023 Integrated Food Security Phase Classification ([IPC](#)) in Tigray indicated that 5.7 million people were in a catastrophic situation. Millions of people are still in danger because of the ongoing conflict that continues even after a ceasefire was established in late 2022 to help in the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Tigray province. Conflicts like these frequently obstruct vital assistance routes, impeding the delivery of food and medical supplies.



Major Countries and Organizations Involved

The Ethiopian Federal Government:

Led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, the federal government is locked in a military conflict with the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF).

Abiy's stated goals include maintaining national unity, restoring federal authority in Tigray, and addressing the TPLF's perceived challenge to his government.

The federal government has been criticized for its role in human rights abuses documented during the conflict, including allegations of extrajudicial killings and restrictions on humanitarian aid access in Tigray.

The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF):

The TPLF is a political party and former rebel group based in Tigray.

It feels marginalized by Abiy's reforms and seeks greater autonomy for the Tigray region. The TPLF has been accused of launching attacks that triggered the conflict and of committing human rights violations during the fighting.

Eritrea:

Eritrea, Ethiopia's northern neighbor, has a complex relationship with both the federal government and the TPLF.

Eritrean troops have intervened in the conflict on the side of the Ethiopian government, seeking to weaken the TPLF, which it views as a security threat.

Eritrea's involvement has significantly escalated the conflict and raised concerns about its broader regional implications.



The Amhara Regional Government:

The Amhara region borders Tigray and has historically had territorial disputes with the Tigrayans.

Amhara regional forces have participated alongside the federal government in the conflict, motivated by a desire to reclaim disputed territory.

The Amhara government has also been accused of human rights abuses against civilians in western Tigray.

The United Nations (UN):

The UN has played a crucial role in highlighting the humanitarian crisis in Ethiopia and advocating for an end to the violence.

The UN Security Council has failed to impose sanctions on Ethiopia due to opposition from China and Russia.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the UN World Food Programme (WFP) are leading efforts to deliver life-saving aid to millions of Ethiopians affected by the conflict.

The African Union (AU):

The AU has attempted to mediate a peaceful resolution to the conflict through its High-Level Panel on the Ethiopian Crisis.

However, the AU's efforts have been hampered by a lack of consensus among member states.

The United States and the European Union (EU):

The US and EU have condemned the violence and called for a ceasefire.

They have also imposed targeted sanctions on some Ethiopian government officials and Eritrean leaders.

However, their leverage on the ground is limited due to their hesitancy to engage in more direct intervention.



Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
3 November 2020	After months of escalating tension, Ethiopian troops entered the Tigray region
June 2020	Ethiopian forces withdraw from Tigray's capital, Mekele, claiming victory.
September 21	the UN warns of a possible famine in Tigray due to limited humanitarian aid and severe drought.
6 October 2021	For the tenth time, the security council formally considered the situation, but China and Russia blocked any potential help.



August 2021	African Union opened a mediation process to try and sort out a ceasefire
2 November 2022	A ceasefire between TPLF and the Ethiopian government has been established
December 2023	The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) for Tigray classifies 5.7 million people in "Catastrophe" (IPC Phase 5).
6 April 2023	The government released a statement announcing plans to build one strong and centralized Army and that the special forces of every region would be integrated into this new Army. this increased iner-ethnic tensions

Relevant UN Resolutions and Other Documents

- UN Security Council Resolution 2440 (2022): Demands an immediate cessation of hostilities in northern Ethiopia and unimpeded humanitarian access to all areas in need. (<https://press.un.org/en/2018/sc13561.doc.htm>)



- UN Human Rights Council Resolution 48/14 (2023): Calls for an independent international investigation into alleged human rights abuses by all parties to the conflict in Tigray. (<https://undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/48/14>)
- Statement by the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide (2021): Expresses deep concern about the escalating violence in Tigray and the risk of genocide. (<https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/SA-Statement-on-Ethiopia.pdf>)
- Ethiopia Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024 (UN OCHA): <https://www.unocha.org/ethiopia>

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

African Union (AU)

The AU has attempted to mediate peace talks between the Ethiopian government and the TPLF, but these efforts have not yielded significant progress.

International Crisis Group (ICG)

The ICG has published reports calling for a ceasefire and urging the international community to increase pressure on all parties to the conflict.

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/>

UN Security Council

The UN Security Council has passed resolutions demanding a ceasefire and unimpeded humanitarian access, but these have not been fully implemented.



Possible Solutions

To put an end to the violence and enable the safe delivery of humanitarian relief, all sides must agree on a trustworthy and accepted ceasefire.

setting a strong global monitoring framework to guarantee commitment to the ceasefire and safe passage for humanitarian aid. The protection of civilians and assistance workers may be the mandate of a peacekeeping force headed by the UN.

TPLF, the Ethiopian government, other pertinent parties, and representatives of displaced populations should be included in inclusive peace negotiations that aim to address the underlying causes of the conflict and work toward a durable peace settlement.

To guarantee that help is distributed fairly and effectively to all impacted areas, there should be an increase in international humanitarian funding.

New initiatives to restore houses, mosques, markets and schools also helping victims psychologically.

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