



FORUM: OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



UNITED NATIONS

QUESTION OF: PROVIDING HUMANITARIAN AID AND PROTECTION TO THE TIGRAY REGION OF ETHIOPIA

INTRODUCTION

Human Rights are an essential part of life. They are independent from any of the factors and inherent to all human beings. According to the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, “Human rights are rights we have simply because we exist as human beings - they are not granted by any state. These universal rights are inherent to us all, regardless of nationality, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status.” (OHCHR). “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948, was the first legal document to set out the fundamental human rights to be universally protected. The UDHR, which turns 75 on 10 December 2023,

continues to be the foundation of all international human rights law.” (OHCHR).



The latest conflict in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia which took place between November 2020 and November 2022 is continuing its effects even though the war has

ended. The situation in Tigray focuses on the civil war between the Tigray Special Forces (TSF) or Tigray Defense Forces (TDF) and the other named Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF). Many people were forced to leave their homes with barely any belongings and walk for hours in rough terrain to reach “safer” remote border points. Many of them are women and children. The endless arrival of refugees who are aiming to reach a safer place to relieve the fatigue of long hours of walking is overwhelming the capacity of current aid and more humanitarian aid is urgent.



“We did not know what was going on when we heard the gunshots. Many people were killed – we could see ten to twenty bodies lying on the ground. That’s when we decided to leave. I walked until my legs were injured and bleeding. I thank God that we are safe here and we have something to eat.” – Gannite, Ethiopian refugee woman who fled into



Sudan from clashes in the Tigray region (UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency).

The majority of people are trying to flee into Sudan by crossing into Ethiopia. Many of the remote points have very little infrastructure and are located way far from the nearest big towns which makes it difficult and time-consuming to reach humanitarian aid such as food and supplies. Most of the people at border points are facing the risk of diseases such as Covid-19. The safety of civilians and 96.000 Eritrean refugees that are located in four camps in Tigray is at stake, and the first aim of the OHCHR is to provide all civilians including Eritrean refugees immediate humanitarian aid and call for all parties in the UN to allow access to reach people in need. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR), since the violence began, more than 50.000 people have fled to Sudan to reach humanitarian aid; however, the arrival of more than 1000 people to safer points per day is overwhelming the capacity of providing humanitarian aid for everyone and greater support is required.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Internally displaced person(s) is an individual or group of people who have been forced to leave their homes to avoid the effects of humanitarian crises such as armed conflicts and without crossing any borders; instead, they migrate within the country.

A **refugee** is a person who has a fear of being persecuted because of their nationality, race, religion, political opinion, etc., and is outside of the country or trying to leave his/her country due to reasons listed and is not willing to turn back his/her country because of the fear of being persecuted or killed.



The main difference between the terms **refugee** and “**internally displaced person**” is; that while the refugee, who crosses an international border, is recognized by international law with rights specific to his/her case, an internally displaced person moves within a country and the name is merely descriptive.

Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) are the federal armed unions of Ethiopia divided into two, which are the Ground Forces, and the Ethiopian Air Force. It has one of Sub-Saharan Africa’s greatest militaries and carries out activities both inside and outside of the country such as the Tigray Conflict (2020,2022)

Tigray Defense Forces (TDF) are armed unions of Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front, which was established in 1975 as an opposing union to the military government.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Tigray is a historical region in northern Ethiopia. The region is rich in its historical background. It includes the core of the Aksumite kingdom (an ancient civilization), the kingdom’s capital Aksum; Adwa, the historic woreda where the Italian invading forces were defeated in 1896; and a ruined town Yeha. Most of Tigray’s people make their living through agriculture and livestock raising. Tigray was a strong region with its control of the Red Sea



ports of Massawa and Asseb; until it lost its coastal areas to the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century. The area before the location for trading caravans and merchants then lost status and was threatened by Egyptian, Sudanese, British, and Italian armies trying to penetrate the interior. After the occupation by Italy between 1935 and 1941, it was governed by government officials from Addis Ababa. In 1975 the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front was established to create a rebellion

against the military government. They were against the governance of Tigray under the Ethiopian Military. The conflict between the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front and the



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military government exacerbated/intensified the drought and famine between 1984 and 1985. International outcry prompted government pause, but by then approximately 100,000 people died, and “ hundreds of thousands more sought refuge from civil war and famine in Sudan and Djibouti”(The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica). Tigray Defence Forces (TDF) liberated the region in 1989, and in 1991 Ethiopian Government overthrew Tigray with the support of the TDF. The replacement of government with one led by Tigray leaders caused the conflict to persist throughout the 1990s. Another source of conflict was between Ethiopia and neighbouring Eritrea, which two countries claim they have rights over the Tigray. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica)

CURRENT SITUATION

“In November 2019, Ethiopia's nearly 30-year ethnic-based ruling coalition, the EPRDF, merged into a single unity party called the Prosperity Party; however, the lead coalition party, the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), declined to join (*Ethiopia - the World Factbook*). In November 2020, a military conflict erupted between two groups, which were TPLF and EPRDF. The conflict caused lots of deaths and migration throughout the region and forced millions to leave their home to find safer places for their family and themselves. After two years of war, the conflict ended in November 2022 with an agreement made between the Tigrayan leaders and the Ethiopian Government. However, the effects of war continue as humanitarian aid is still essential.

Below are listed facts about the Tigray conflict between 2020-2022 according to "[Refugees International](#)":

- “An estimated 5.2 million people are now critically food insecure and require sustained life-saving assistance to prevent them from falling into famine.”
- “Relief aid is not getting in. At the end of June, the Ethiopian government imposed a blockade on Tigray. Since then, according to USAID, only 10% of the necessary relief assistance required is being allowed entry to the region.”
- “Since the blockade took effect in June, banks have remained closed, preventing civilians from accessing their money to purchase food.”
- “The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) reported that the number of children under the age of five suffering from severe acute malnutrition in Tigray had jumped from 33,000 to 160,000 in just three months(...)”



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- “Humanitarian agencies are concerned that the extreme shortage of food supplies and basic services caused by the blockade will continue to drive famine.”

MAJOR PARTIES INVOLVED

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

OHCHR is involved in the situation by recording the damage and need for humanitarian aid in the area. They are responsible for reporting the news in the area to other humanitarian support organizations and officials to provide support and humanitarian aid to the area as soon as possible. On July 13th, 2021, the Human Rights Council adopted three resolutions on “Human Rights in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia, Human Rights in the Context of HIV and AIDS, and on Violence against Women and Girls with Disabilities” (OHCHR).



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Further information can be accessed via the links attached:

Resolution I (Human Rights in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia): [A/HRC/47/L.20/Rev.1](#)

Resolution II (Human Rights in the Context of HIV and AIDS): [A/HRC/47/L.15](#)

Resolution III (Accelerating Efforts to Elimination All Forms of Violence against Women and Girls): [A/HRC/47/L.18/Rev.1](#)

European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)

ECHO is helping children affected by devastating conflict in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia. They are helping provide education for millions of children in Ethiopia. They ensure the protection of at-risk children and work for their reintegration into society. Partners and volunteers of ECHO are providing educational activities and conducting “Back to school” campaigns in schools and house-to-house visits. (“Helping Children in the Aftermath of the Northern Ethiopia Conflict”)



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USEFUL LINKS

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/11/10/two-years-of-ethiopias-tigray-conflict-a-timeline>

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Ethiopia/Socialist-Ethiopia-1974-91>

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Ethiopia/Religion>

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41591-022-01921-0>

<https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/apr-20-2022-united-states-provides-nearly-313-million-additional-humanitarian-assistance-people-northern-ethiopia>

https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/we-need-humanitarian-access-tigray-urgent-first-step-towards-peace-ethiopia_en

<https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-humanitarian-impact-drought-flash-update-1-22-december-2023>

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/aug/07/people-are-under-siege-why-ethiopias-war-in-tigray-isnt-over>

Important Resource:

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/OHCHR-EHRC-Tigray-Report.pdf>



BIBLIOGRAPHY

About internally displaced persons

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-internally-displaced-persons/about-internally-displaced-persons>

Ethiopia - The World Factbook

<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/ethiopia/#introduction>

OHCHR-EHRC-Tigray-Report

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/OHCHR-EHRC-Tigray-Report.pdf>

Helping children in the aftermath of the northern Ethiopia conflict

https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/stories/helping-children-aftermath-northern-ethiopia-conflict_en

Oral Update on the situation of human rights in the Tigray region of Ethiopia and on progress made in the context of the Joint Investigation

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/03/oral-update-situation-human-rights-tigray-region-ethiopia-and-progress-made>

Human Rights Council Adopts Three Resolutions on Human Rights in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia, Human Rights in the Context of HIV and AIDS, and on Violence against Women and Girls with Disabilities

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2021/07/human-rights-council-adopts-three-resolutions-human-rights-tigray-region>

7 Facts You Need to Know about the Famine in Tigray

<https://www.refugeesinternational.org/7-facts-you-need-to-know-about-the-famine-in-tigray/>

Ethiopia Situation – Tigray Emergency Response

<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/working-group/284?sv=0&geo=295>

Tigray



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<https://www.britannica.com/place/Tigray-historical-region-Ethiopia>

Ethiopia Tigray emergency | UNHCR

<https://www.unhcr.org/emergencies/ethiopia-tigray-emergency>

Tigray Conflict | Human Rights Watch

<https://www.hrw.org/tag/tigray-conflict>