

AUGUST 15, 2021

Tigray External Affairs Office

Briefing From The National Government of Tigray

I. Humanitarian Concerns

Humanitarian workers have not been able to take advantage of the improved road access internally as road access into Tigray is still greatly constrained, the banking system remains non-operational, and the communication blackout continues to greatly impede coordination. Although conditions under the siege prevent the Government and aid organizations from updating assessments of the extent of the humanitarian crisis, we can confirm that over 500,000 people are on the verge of famine in addition to over six million people who remain in need of emergency assistance. The demographic reach of the humanitarian crisis continues to grow as the blanket suspension of banking services introduces food insecurity even into high-income urban households.

The supply of humanitarian goods is still being constrained into dysfunctionality; of the 1,400 trucks that would have been necessary to meet humanitarian needs between July 30 - August 12, only 152 have been permitted access, this is 10.85 % of what's needed.



Despite evident difficulties, the first-round assessment of health facilities was conducted by the Tigray Bureau of Health in 200 health facilities across seventy-three Woredas in Tigray. Health facilities scored a total average of 21% in terms of their capacity to provide basic essential services. Diagnostic laboratory facilities have been completely incapacitated, the ability to provide reproductive and maternal care and address the needs of gender-based violence survivors has been deliberately destroyed. Global Acute Malnutrition has shown an increase in the past week as Severe Acute Malnutrition has remained stable; over 100,000 children are at risk of fatal malnutrition.

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The deliberate destruction of over 80 % of Tigray's health system, previously ranked as among the best in the developing world, has led to its complete collapse. Its obliteration by the confluence of forces that invaded Tigray focused principally on medical facilities for agricultural communities and the rural poor. Tigrayans have been forced to depend almost exclusively on two university hospitals whose budgets have been discontinued by the Federal government. Only 55 of 153 health facilities are functional, 4 of 5 general hospitals and 4 of 12 of the primary hospitals are all but out of function.

The government recognizes a report published by Amnesty International on *Rape and Other Sexual Violence in the Conflict in Tigray, Ethiopia*. The report highlighted the systematic use of rape as a weapon of war in Tigray; recording incidents of gang rape, sexual slavery, sadistic rape, beating, humiliation, and sexual assault on women seeking refugee in Sudan. No matter how explicit and detailed the report - we would like to assure the international community that the full extent of abuse committed on Tigrayan women by Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers as well as Amhara militia is yet to be uncovered. The Government reiterates its call for a full and independent investigation into all crimes committed to hold all perpetrators accountable and get justice for survivors.

II. Hate Speech and Incitement of Genocide

Although Anti-Tigrayan hate speech has informed the PR activities of Abiy Ahmed's populist regime from the outset, there has recently been a noticeable uptick in language conflating the civilian population of Tigray with the National Government of Tigray's armed forces. This effort is designed to entrench and enforce the systemic criminalization of the Tigrayan identity and popularise the removal of 'cancer' and 'weeds' amongst the Ethiopian public.

III. Ethnic Cleansing in Western Tigray

Reporting on western Tigray is ripe with the regurgitation of pernicious 'narratives', including the mass displacement of Amhara residents of Western Tigray following the enactment of the Ethiopian constitution. The 1978 Ethnic composition map of north Ethiopia proves conclusively that despite being under the administration of Gondar, these areas were overwhelmingly occupied by ethnic Tigrayans. All statistical evidence indicates that the population of Amhara residents of Western Tigray significantly increased during the EPRDF period from 3% percent in 1994 to 6.5% in 2007.

Indulging the 'narrative' that 'ancestral claims' can overturn the constitution, the highest law of the land, through a genocidal war fallaciously predicated on 'law enforcement' is naivete the people of Tigray can ill afford.

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Ethnic cleansing efforts spearheaded by Amhara militia and underwritten by Abiy Ahmed's Prosperity Party have intensified in Western Tigray following the liberation of Mekelle. Reports of bodies being pulled off the Sudanese side of the Tekeze river are harrowing, the Government of Tigray reiterates its intentions to carry out its duty to protect the right to life of all its civilian residents.

Facilitating the immediate and independent investigation of all atrocities committed in western Tigray upon its liberation will be a priority for our government.

IV. Ethnic Profiling in Ethiopia

The Abiy Ahmed regime has indicated through the ENDF's social media that it will be prosecuting the estimated 17, 000 ENDF soldiers of Tigrayan origin on fabricated charges of high treason with penalties including execution. It is to be recalled that a rapid operation of disarming and interning all Tegararu members within the ENDF's fighting units was implemented following the Tigray National Government's decision to hold regional elections within a constitutional timeframe. Following the military confrontation in Tigray, the ENDF notched up its internment program with the Awash and Tolay camps dedicated solely for the holding of Tegararu soldiers and officers. Communicating with prisoners in these two camps is extremely difficult and the number of prisoners held is unknown. Detainees at various camps have all reported a growing level of hostility toward Tigrayans that corresponds with the ENDF's defeat in Tigray. Furthermore, news of lost ENDF soldiers, as well as the public demonization of Tigrayans have precipitated a spate of violent attacks, beatings, and executions.

Tigrayans throughout the country have been subject to the illegal seizure of private property, closure and forced sale under the market value of businesses, and the suspension of banking services for all accounts opened in Tigray. In Addis Abeba alone the Ahmed regime has announced the closure of over 610 establishments belonging to Tigrayans following Mekelle's liberation.

There has been a new wave of enforced disappearances and mass detainment of ethnic Tigrayans in inhuman conditions on the basis of identity. Tigrayans across the country are being denied the right to free movement, representation, due process, and visitation. There are extremely worrying reports of the massacre of Tigrayan civilians arrested upon repatriation from Saudi Arabia at the Awash Amba military camp in Afar where many abducted Tigrayans are being held.

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We call on the international community to condemn these heinous acts and ensure the safety and immediate release of all victims of state terror and hate crimes.

V. Military Concerns

The Military Command of Tigray Defense Forces announced this week the launch of 'Operation Sun Rise' following the successful conclusion of Operation Mother's of Tigray and Operation Alula Aba Nega with the liberation of much of Tigray through its spokesperson Colonel Gebre Gebretsadkan. In the course of the operation in Afar and Amhara regions, the TDF has so far managed to take hold of multiple armaments from the ENDF.

The Government of Tigray would like to assure its partners that advances into neighboring regions by its Defense Forces are being done in an attempt to break the siege on Tigray and not with intentions of expanding territory. We would also like to thank the people of Afar and Amhara regions for welcoming and supporting the Tigrayan Defense Forces.

VI. Other Matters

Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) have reached an understanding to cooperate and coordinate their military, political, media, and diplomatic activities in their struggle to end the Abiy's violent directorship and ensure an orderly transitional arrangement. The Tigray government in its most recent statement indicated that the details of the agreement would be made public in the near future.