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TIGRAY EXTERNAL AFFAIRS OFFICE

WEEKLY BRIEFING NO. 17

DECEMBER 3, 2021

BRINGING TIGRAY CLOSER TO THE WORLD

1. OVERVIEW OF THE HUMANIATRIAN SITUATION

1.1. Humanitarian Catastrophe Like no Other

It has been a little over a year since the commencement of the genocidal war on Tigray. Since the genocidal army hastily departed from most parts of Tigray at the end of June, including Mekelle, the Abiy regime has imposed a devastating siege on Tigray to achieve that which has eluded it on the battlefield: starve the people of Tigray into subjugation and/or out of existence.

For over 5 weeks since October 18, humanitarian cargo movements had come to a grinding halt.
On November 26, and 27, a total of 78 trucks arrived in Tigray. While the arrival of any number of trucks is a welcome development, the 78 trucks that arrived pale in comparison to the number of trucks needed to meet the needs of millions of people at risk of starvation. In fact, aid agencies had revised the number of required trucks per day to 282 from a previous estimate of 100 to make up for lost ground due to persistent obstruction that led to the delayed delivery of humanitarian supplies.

Since mid-October, due to the depletion of humanitarian stocks and the suspension of humanitarian aid delivery to Tigray, humanitarian partners have managed to serve less than 18 percent of the 870,000 people who need to be assisted on average per week in order to reach over 5.2 million people within a six-week cycle. Meanwhile hundreds of aid trucks bound for Tigray remain stranded in Semera as the regime manufactures one excuse after another.

1.2 Pernicious Impact on Children, and Pregnant and Nursing Women

The Abiy regime's siege on Tigray has been deadly for millions of Tigrayans. But it has also disproportionately impacted the most vulnerable segments of the Tigrayan society: children, and pregnant and nursing women. Of the 28,000 children under five screened for malnutrition between November 16 and 22, 777 or 2.8 percent were diagnosed with severe acute malnutrition (SAM), which is staggeringly higher than the global emergency threshold of 2 percent. Another 5,600 or 20 percent were diagnosed with moderate acute malnutrition (MAM). Similarly, 18,800 pregnant and nursing women were screened for malnutrition, of whom 11,600 or 69 percent were diagnosed with malnutrition.

At the moment, humanitarian agencies are subject to severe constraints due to a critical shortage of operational cash and fuel, which has forced aid agencies to significantly reduce their operations, and, in some cases, halt their activities altogether. In fact, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, over 1.6 million children under 5 years and pregnant and nursing women in Tigray require preventative and treatment interventions in the realm of malnutrition. But the constraints the criminal regime has imposed on humanitarian operations means that the vast majority of those people will not be served.

1.3. Impact on and Internally Displaced People (IDPs)

The obstruction of humanitarian operations by the Abiy regime has also severely constrained humanitarian partners' ability to serve another vulnerable segment of the Tigrayan people: IDPs. IDPs, in virtue of having been forcibly evicted from their homes, are subject multifaceted trauma, such as economic, social, and psychological. However, humanitarian partners' response has been negatively impacted by a consequence of Abiy's cruel blockade on Tigray: severe shortage of fuel.

For instance, according to OCHA, about 420,000 IDPs living in 131 IDP sites require 6,200 cubic meter water per day. Water trucking services are critical in light of the deliberate destruction of Tigray's water plants that has left over 3.5 million people without access to safe drinking water. Undertaking the aforementioned operation requires about 2,200 liters of fuel per day. However, because no fuel tanker has entered Tigray since early August, it has become the scarcest commodity in Tigray. Consequently, humanitarian partners have had to significantly downscale their operations. For instance, out of 46 WASH (water, sanitation and health) partners, only 11 are operating in 22 Weredas in Southeastern, Central, Eastern Zones, as well as Mekelle. What is more, 16 Mobile Health and Nutrition Teams are operational in Tigray, down from 47 in September.

2. OTHER NOTABLE DEVELOPMENTS

2.1. Escalation of Drone Strikes on Civilian Targets

The criminal regime of Abiy Ahmed has made a habit of compensating for battlefield losses by mercilessly bombarding civilians in Tigray from the air. While the regime has been bombing civilians and non-military institutions since mid-October by deploying its bombers, in its latest aerial aggression, the regime has deployed drones. At around 9 AM local time on November 26, the criminal regime's air force used its drone to fire missiles onto a densely populated residential neighborhood locally known as Diaspora. The strike destroyed the roof of the second floor of the primary "target"—a house belonging to a young couple; the woman had recently given birth to a little baby—and many of their belongings. The attack also inflicted significant damage to adjacent buildings.

On the same day, around 12:30 PM local time, the criminal regime's air force jet dropped four bombs on the outskirts of Mekelle near a village called Dagya, creating craters on nearby farms.

On November 30, 2021, the criminal regime once again sent its drones to Mekelle twice. Shortly before 1 PM local time, the second drone fired missiles on the outskirts of Mekelle in an area known as Ashegoda.

Through its indiscriminate aerial bombardments targeting civilians and civilian installations, the criminal regime is adding to an already horrific body of war crimes. It is high time the international community held this barbaric regime accountable.

2.2. The Bombing of Tekeze Hydroelectric Dam

Early on the morning of November 30, 2021, the criminal regime of Abiy Ahmed bombed the Tekeze Hydroelectric Dam, plunging the whole Tigray into darkness. It is to be recalled that on the heels of its defeats on the battlefield and hasty retreat from most parts of Tigray in late June, the genocidal regime had cut off electricity to the entire region, among numerous cruel and inhumane acts. However, the Government of Tigray managed to get the system back on. Deeply dissatisfied with the extent of the damage it inflicted on Tigray's infrastructure and apparently unhappy that the people of Tigray have been enjoying intermittent access to electricity, the genocidal regime in Addis once again showed its vindictive, petty and inhumane side—apparently, the only side—by deliberately damaging a civilian installation providing a basic necessity to millions of people.

2.3 The British Ambassador to Ethiopia Visits Mekelle

The British Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ambassador Alastair Mcphail made a brief visit to Mekelle on November 25, 2021. During his visit, the Ambassador met with Tigray President Debretsion Gebremichael and discussed the war on Tigray and Ethiopia's grave political crisis.