

Forum: Security Council

Issue: The conflict in Ethiopia. Solving the outburst in the Tigray Region whilst minimising civilian casualties

Student Officer: Elisabeth Van Meer

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Definitions of Key Terms	5
Marxist-Lenin state	5
Coup d'état	5
Ethno Territorial	5
Coalition	5
Background Information	6
Post WWII- 1974	6
1974–1991	6
1991-2018	7
2018-Present	7
Major Countries and Organisations Involved	8
Ethiopia	8
Eritrea	8
Sudan	9
African Union	9
European Union	10
United States of America	10
Timeline of Events	11
Relevant UN Resolutions	15
A/HRC/RES/47/13- "Situation of human rights in the Tigray region of Ethiopia"	15

Security Council Resolution 2286	15
Security Council Resolution 2417	15
Security Council Resolutions 1888, 2467 and 1960	16
Security Council's Open Debate of Cybersecurity (29 June 2021)	16
Possible Solutions	17
The termination of violence	17
Addressing the humanitarian crisis	17
Dialogue as means to solve the conflict	17
Bibliography	18

Introduction

The conflict between the Ethiopian government and the Tigray forces has caused disorder throughout Ethiopia and is reason for international concern. The feud between Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government and Tigray's dominant political party, Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), had escalated in time prior to the war.

The Tigray region, although it accounts for 6% of Ethiopia's population, had a large influence over the country's politics until Abiy Ahmed was elected in 2018. Prior to Abiy's election, the TPLF was the head of the coalition that dominated Ethiopia for twenty seven years. Tensions rose when Abiy promised to establish peace with Eritrea, a country that had been in "border stand off" with Ethiopia throughout the years that the TPLF ran the country. Abiy then additionally dissolved Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, which the TPLF didn't take lightly. In fact, the TPLF refused to take part in the new Prosperity Party. When the Ethiopian government postponed its August elections in 2020, the TPLF held unsanctioned regional elections and the new election leaders of the Tigray region refused to recognise Abiy's government. "Rebels" is what the government labelled the TPLF as a response to this. In October, the government voted to withhold budget subsidies to the Tigray region.

On the 3rd of November in 2020 when, justifying it as a response to an attack on a military base housing government troops, Abiy, who has won a Nobel Peace Prize for making peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea, ordered a military offensive against the regional forces in Tigray. The Tigray War had begun. The Ethiopian government fights alongside the Ethiopian Federal Police, the Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF), regional police, gendarmerie forces from Amhara and Afar regions, and the Eritrean Defence Forces (EDF). Since the initiation of the war, thousands of people have died and nearly 500,000 people are living in famine conditions.

The nationwide state of emergency that was declared on 2 November 2020 led to mass arrests. Those who were arrested consisted largely of people who were believed to be

sympathetic to the TPLF. Mid December 2021, it was estimated that over 5,00 people remained detained, which included United Nations (UN) staff members. Many are detained incommunicado and the locations at which they're held is unknown.

War crimes have been committed by all sides during this conflict, but most prominently by the ENDF, EDF and Tigray Defence Forces (TDF). UN reports show that as 2021 came to an end, 7 million were then affected by the conflict and over 2.4 million people have been internally displaced, numbers which are expected to have risen since then. There is a need for food, access to clean water and shelter. Increased risks of hunger, abuse and separation between children and parents have been prominent as people look to seek refuge both within Ethiopia or in neighbouring countries, such as Sudan. It is clear an alarming humanitarian crisis has been developed.

Definitions of Key Terms

Marxist-Lenin state

It refers to the communist ideology which generally is in favour of proletarian internationalism and socialist democracy, and opposes anarchism, fascism, imperialism, and liberal democracy.

Coup d'état

This is “a sudden decisive exercise of force in politics”, which usually refers to the overthrow of an existing government (Merriam Webster).

Ethno Territorial

In regards to the framework of the functioning of a nation, as used in the context of this issue, this refers to the territorial divide of nations by ethnic groups.

Coalition

A coalition, within the bounds of this discussion, refers to the group formed by different political parties to obtain a common goal.

Background Information

Post WWII- 1974

In 1952, Emperor Haile Selassie developed a federation with Eritrea. He then dissolved ten years later, which resulted in the Eritrean war of Independence. A failed coup d'état occurred in 1960, which would merely be one of the many coups that would take place in Ethiopia throughout the following decades. In 1963, Haile played a crucial role in the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). The 1973 oil crisis increased the cost of living, which were responded to by the Ethiopian people with various demonstrations and strikes. This led the cabinet to topple, and a new government was formed.

1974–1991

The new government, the Derg, was led by Aman Andom and consisted largely of military officials and police. Only a year later, Aman and government officials were executed and replaced by the Provisional Military Administrative Council led by General Tafari Beni. They abolished the monarchy and in 1975 declared Ethiopia a Marxist-Lenin state. The Derg was confronted by coups, uprisings, droughts and refugee problems. Between the years 1976 and 1978, Red Terror spread through the nation. This consists of the political repression of opposition to the Derg. In 1977, Somalia invaded Ethiopia and the Ogaden War began. In the war, Ethiopia received support from the USSR, Cuba, South Yemen, East Germany and North Korea. The Derg dissolved ten years later, in 1987, and the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (PDRE) was established. The new constitution modelled that of the Soviet Union written in 1977. EPRDF, which was led by the TPLF, emerged in 1989 against authoritarian rule. In the same period of time, the Soviet Union dismantled their vision of building world communism, which substantially reduced soviet aid in Ethiopia and negatively affected the Ethiopian economy. The fall of Marxism stopped all aid. In May of 1991, the EPRDF moved in on the capital, Addis Ababa, and the Soviet Union did nothing to stop this.

1991-2018

It was July of 1991 when the Transitional Government of Ethiopia was established. However, throughout the next two years, political parties were withdrawing from the government. In April of 1993, Eritrea gained independence from Ethiopia. A year after this, a new constitution was written and Ethiopia followed a Bicameral Legislature and judicial system. The first multiparty elections were held in 1995 and won by the EPRDF. They pushed a ethno territorial federal model, which promised cultural and administrative autonomy to regions. The Eritrean-Ethiopian war lasted from May of 1998 to June of 2000 about a border dispute. During the multiparty elections held on the 15th of May in 2005, opposition groups and parties claimed the elections were fraud. In 2010, various parties merged into a coalition to oust EPRDF. They won the most votes in the 2010 federal elections, but EPRDF stalled the counting of votes. The EPRDF claimed the election. It was the 5th of August in 2016 when mass protests occurred (1) against human rights abuses, (2) for the release of political prisoners, and (3) for the redistribution of wealth. In response, hundreds were shot and killed by police. On the 6th of October of 2016, Ethiopia declared the country in a state of emergency until August of 2017. Later that year, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn was the first in modern Ethiopian history to make way for reforms.

2018-Present

The new, and current, Prime Minister is Abiy Ahmed. Within his first year as Prime Minister, he ended the 20 year conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea for which, in 2019, he won a Nobel peace prize. He, additionally, released political prisoners, introduced economic reforms and allowed access to websites previously censored. However, the country was not at peace: In the years that followed, there were spikes in violence between different ethnic groups; On the 22nd of June 2019, there was an attempted coup d'état. Due to the pandemic, the government postponed elections until a Covid-19 vaccine would be developed and accessible to the public. This angered the TPLF and they held elections within the Tigray regions anyway. The relationship between this region and the Ethiopian government began to deteriorate.

Major Countries and Organisations Involved

Ethiopia

Rather self explanatory, this nation is most affected by the issue at hand. Due to the conflict in the region, nine in 10 people now require humanitarian assistance in Tigray. Over 400,00 people are living in famine conditions (United Nations) and at least two million people have been displaced due to the conflict. The UN humanitarians raised alarm to the issue in June of 2021, however only limited help has been allowed into the region. Unless international or national measures are taken to terminate the fighting, the conflict poses a legitimate threat to the stability of not only the country, but the greater Horn of Africa. Although fighting has continued on Tigray's borders, in 2022, the federal government said it will not push further into the region. It also released some jailed opposition leaders in early January.

Eritrea

Although Eritrea gained its independence from Ethiopia in 1991, the nations went back to war over a border dispute in 1998-2000, a time during which the TPFL dominated Ethiopian politics. Abiy Ahmed won the Nobel peace prize for signing a peace agreement with Eritrea, in which it was planned to develop "intimate cooperation", after he got elected in 2018. Abiy's improved relationships with Eritrea contributed largely to the deterioration of the relationship between Abiy, the TPLF and the regional administration of the Tigray. When the violent conflict was initiated in November of 2020, both governments denied the Eritrean troops were involved in the fighting. However, as time has gone by, and footage and statements have come to light, it is internationally recognised that Eritrea is assisting the Ethiopian government fight against the Tigray.

Sudan

Sudan has a long-running border quarrel with Ethiopia. Since November of 2020 and the fighting began in Ethiopia, over 25,000 refugees have crossed the border and entered Sudan. Even though Sudan is currently governed by a joint civilian-military government that is struggling to develop peace deals with a number of armed groups, most Tigray refugees that manage to leave Ethiopia leave for Sudan. This is because there is the only strip of border that isn't controlled by Ethiopian or Eritrean forces.

African Union

The AU plans to focus on eight issues this year, one of which is securing a ceasefire in Ethiopia. In prior years, the AU has been criticised for its lack of action in regards to the conflict in Tigray as a whole, however the inclusion of the issue in the AU's priorities show a will to solve the issue. Action the AU can take varies. First, it makes plans to facilitate dialogue, similarly to the EU. It stresses to "formally cease hostilities" before arranging a ceasefire and working with Ethiopia to lift restrictions on humanitarian aid in the Tigray region. It plans to convince Eritrea to remove its military from Ethiopia and distance itself from the conflict. The AU is discussing to advocate for the release of civilians that are detained under Ethiopia's emergencies within and supports the international and regional investigations of human rights abuses during the conflict. The AU intends to work together with the US, the EU, and other international partners.

European Union

Between the years 2014 and 2021, the EU has provided 815 million euros of development aid to Ethiopia and an additional 409 million euros of projects, whose main focuses were that of supporting refugees and hosting communities in the country. In January of 2021, the EU suspended budget support for Ethiopia, which was worth 88 million euros. This was due to Abiy's lack of interest in peacefully resolving the conflict in Tigray. The EU stresses the need for dialogue that "leaves no one behind" as means to solve the conflict, and is willing to work with nations to achieve this (European Union). Recent releases of political opposition leaders and the creation of the National Dialogue Commissions are what the EU considers to be "postions steps" towards reaching an end to the conflict (European Union). Regardless, the conflict seems to be long from over as reports of violence are frequent. The EU also stresses the importance of opening up the Tigray region to international assistance. Access to the region is limited, both for the media and humanitarian aid.

United States of America

The United States, like various nations, is eager to see an end to the conflict in Ethiopia to "prevent further violence", Secretary of State Antony Blinken outs. It is encouraging the Ethiopian government to take immediate action and withdraw Eritrean solids and Amhara forces. It believes that the responsibility to prevent the continuation of this humanitarian crisis " falls squarely on the Ethiopian government's shoulders" (Linda Thomas-Greenfield, US ambassador to the UN). However, the US is hesitant to intervene. By criticising the Ethiopian government as means to attempt to prevent further harm, it is risking the US-Ethiopia ties and the nations' cooperation in regards to fighting regional terrorism.

Timeline of Events

September 2020

In defiance against the orders of the central government, the Tigray region goes ahead with elections anyway.

October 2020

Mr. Abiy introduces the idea of military intervention in the Tigray region. He starts moving military troops from neighbouring regions into Tigray.

3rd of November 2020

The TPLF carry out a surprise attack on two Northern Command bases of the ENDF. People are killed, infrastructure destroyed and many are injured.

4th of November 2020

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed sends troops into Tigray as a response. Eritrean soldiers mobilise to assist Ethiopian troop.

9th of November 2020

Ethnic killing begins and Tigrayans begin to flee from the region into Sudan.

14th of November 2020

Two Amhara airports and at the Eritrean capital Asmara are hit by TPLF rockets. The TPLF accuses Eritrea of sending soldiers into Tigray.

28th of November 2020

Abiy tells parliament that operations in Tigray are over and that he controls the Tigrayan capital.

29th of November 2020

Eritrean troops kill hundreds of people in the Tigray region.

February - March 2021

Tens of thousands of civilians leave the Tigray region. Some fleeing Tigrayans accuse the Amhara forces of rapes, killings and lootings. According to the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, "acts of ethnic cleansing" are being committed.

23rd of March 2021

Abiy confirms that Eritrean troops have moved into the Tigray region.

4th of April 2021

Whilst both Ethiopia and Eritrea say that Eritrean troops are leaving Tigray, civilians argue they haven't noticed a difference and that the troops are still killing civilians.

April 2021

Eritrean soldiers are accused of holding Tigrayan women as sex slaves.

11th of June 2021

The UN accuses Ethiopia for using hunger as a weapon of war as the government blocks off aid to Tigray region, which the Ethiopian government denies.

23rd-24th of June 2021

An airstrike in the Tigray region kills over 50 people, whom the Ethiopian government says are combatants, whilst pictures and documents record otherwise- they're killing children.

29th of June 2021

Tigrayan forces take control of Mekelle, and Ethiopian and Eritrean troops withdraw from most of Tigray except Western Tigray.

13th - 19th of July 2021

Tigrayan forces push south and west into land claimed by the neighbouring regions. They then push east to attack the neighbouring Afar region.

23rd of August 2021

The US implements sanctions on the chief of staff of the Eritrean Defence Forces, alleging serious human rights abuse in the Tigrayan conflict.

29th of September 2021

Limited food is reaching the region and as a result, the U.N. accuses the government of a de facto blockade.

11th of October 2021

Ethiopia launches pushes Tigrayan forces out of Amhara and Afar. Then, Ethiopia restarted air strikes in Tigray.

4th of January 2022

Tigrayan forces had killed 150 civilians in Alamata during the previous days.
Aid agencies report that 143 people have been killed and 213 injured in airstrikes in Tigray since October 2021.

10th - 11th of January 2022

An airstrike in Mai Tsebri kills 17 people. US President Joe Biden raised concerns with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed about civilian

death caused by the airstrikes. The next day, another strike leaves two more people dead.

February 2022

Amnesty International accuses Tigrayan rebel forces of gang-raping children in Ethiopia.

Relevant UN Resolutions

A/HRC/RES/47/13- “Situation of human rights in the Tigray region of Ethiopia”

The most relevant UN resolution distributed in the general Assembly on the matter at hand is that one developed by the UNODC on the 13th of July of 2021. The Human Rights Council adopted a new resolution regarding human rights in the Tigray region. In response to international alarm towards “serious human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law and international refugee law allegedly committed by all parties in the Tigray region since the start of the conflict”(UN Human Rights Council). It discusses the need for Eritrean troops to leave the region and holding those who committed human rights violations/abuses accountable. It reinforces the following of international humanitarian laws and encourages dialogue about the human rights violations.

Security Council Resolution 2286

This resolution “condemns attacks on medical facilities and health workers” in conflict or war zones. The regular attacks on healthcare workers in the Tigray region has been a clear violation of international law. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) workers have been murdered and the Ethiopian government has prevented ambulances from helping at airstrikes.

Security Council Resolution 2417

In Tigray, over 400,000 people are living in famine conditions. Over 33,000 children are malnourished and “face death without immediate help” (UNICEF). This resolution outlines the process that the Security Council wishes to initiate once it is notified of “conflict-induced famine” or “food insecurity in armed conflicts” by the Secretary General. On the 15th of June in 2021, the Security Council held a private discussion on the hunger in Tigray, but currently hasn’t taken any further steps to address the issue.

Security Council Resolutions 1888, 2467 and 1960

Rape and sexual violence of women and girls have characterized the Tigray conflict. UN SC resolution 1888 enforced a need for a team of experts to gain understanding of the sexual violence in an armed conflict. No measures have been taken to have this group of experts in the Tigray. To monitor and report sexual violence as a tactic of war is asked in UN SC Resolution 2467. Resolution 1960 calls for data collection of “incidents, trends, and patterns” of rape and sexual violence to allow the SC to take the appropriate actions (UN Security Council).

Security Council's Open Debate of Cybersecurity (29 June 2021)

Since the conflict was initiated in November of 2020, phone and internet services don't work in the entire Tigray region. Complete phone and internet communication were cut off for a while right when conflict started. The UN SC held an open debate on the matter of cybersecurity. It highlighted the importance of an “open, free and stable” cyberspace (UN Security Council). By dismantling communication equipment from the Tigray region to the rest of the world, the Ethiopian government creates everything but an open, free and stable cyberspace.

Possible Solutions

To many nations and international organisations it is clear that in order to solve the outburst in the Tigray Region whilst minimising civilian casualties, there are three steps that are vital: (1) The termination of violence, (2) to address the humanitarian crisis in Tigray and (3), to resolve the matter through dialogue. The extent to which measures are taken and the manner through which these goals are obtained are what are at the heart of the discussion.

The termination of violence

Violence is being used by all sides involved in the conflict. Effects of the violence, largely on the Tigrayan people, vary from migration and the destruction of infrastructure to sexual violence, rape and death. Unless addressed rapidly, the escalation of this chaos doesn't just affect the Tigrayans, or even the Ethiopians, but it challenges the stability of the Horn of Africa.

Addressing the humanitarian crisis

The vast majority of the Tigray population now lives in famine-like conditions. People have been killed, villages have been destroyed and people have been forced to leave their homes. There is still limited access to the region and it is preventing greater numbers of help to reach the region.

Dialogue as means to solve the conflict

Regardless of whether war is stopped or not, there is a political clash that is the root of the war that needs to be addressed. This could be done through dialogue within Ethiopia, dialogue involving international supervision, or solutions can result from dialogue in the committee. Due to the war, there is now also the need to address the human rights abuses and violations.

Bibliography

Pankhurst, Richard. "POST-WORLD WAR II ETHIOPIA: BRITISH MILITARY POLICY AND ACTION FOR THE DISMANTLING AND ACQUISITION OF ITALIAN FACTORIES AND OTHER ASSETS, 1941-2." *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, vol. 29, no. 1, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1996, pp. 35-77, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44259274>.

Khannenje, Hassan. "The Future of Democracy in Africa: COVID-19 and Geopolitics." *Horizons: Journal of International Relations and Sustainable Development*, no. 19, Center for International Relations and Sustainable Development, 2021, pp. 222-33, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48617366>.

International Crisis Group. *Ethiopia's Civil War: Cutting a Deal to Stop the Bloodshed*. International Crisis Group, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep36476>.

"At Least 33,000 Children in Parts of Tigray, Ethiopia, at Imminent Risk of Death as Conflict Increases Famine Threat." UNICEF, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/least-33000-children-parts-tigray-ethiopia-imminent-risk-death-conflict-increases>.

"The Conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray Region: What to Know." Council on Foreign Relations, Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/conflict-ethiopias-tigray-region-what-know>.

"Crisis Grips Families in Northern Ethiopia." UNICEF, <https://www.unicef.org/stories/nutrition-crisis-grips-families-tigray>.

"Ethiopia Election: Abiy Ahmed Wins with Huge Majority." BBC News, BBC, 11 July 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-57791868>.

"Ethiopia." Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.,

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

"Ethiopia's Tigray Conflict Explained: How a Year of Bloodshed Has Sparked Fears of a Wider Civil War

CBC News." CBCnews, CBC/Radio Canada, 9 Nov. 2021,

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/ethiopia-tigray-conflict-tflp-abiy-ahmed-1.6241519>.

"European Union - African Union Summit, 17-18 February 2022." Consilium, 17 Feb. 2022,

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2022/02/17-18/>.

"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." OHCHR,

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=27303&LangID=E>.

Marks, Simon. "Ethiopia's Internal Conflict Explained." POLITICO, POLITICO, 19 Nov. 2020,

<https://www.politico.eu/article/ethiopia-internal-conflict-explained/>.

"Northern Ethiopia - Humanitarian Update." Situation Reports,

<https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/ethiopia>.

Person, and Giulia Paravicini Katharine Houreld. "Doctors Say Lives Are Lost in Hospitals in Ethiopia's Tigray Due to Dwindling Supplies, Blame Blockade." Reuters, Thomson Reuters, 5 Jan. 2022,

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/doctors-say-lives-are-lost-hospitals-ethiopias-tigray-due-dwindling-supplies-2022-01-05/>.

Person. "Ethiopia Government Says Military Won't Cross into Tigray for Now." Reuters, Thomson Reuters, 24 Dec. 2021,

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/ethiopia-government-says-military-wont-cross-into-tigray-now-2021-12-23/>.

Person. "Tigray Forces Withdraw from Neighbouring Ethiopian Regions -Spokesman." Reuters, Thomson Reuters, 20 Dec. 2021,

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/tigray-forces-withdraw-neighbouring-ethiopian-regions-spokesperson-2021-12-20/>.

Reports, Special. "In Ethiopia War, New Abuse Charges Put Focus on Tigrayan Former Rulers." Reuters, Thomson Reuters, 28 Dec. 2021,

<https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/ethiopia-conflict-tp/f/>.

"Tigray Conflict: Report Calls for Accountability for Violations and Abuses by All Parties." OHCHR,

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27756&LangID=E>.

"Tigray Conflict: UN Experts Call for Urgent Action to Stop Violence against Women - Ethiopia." ReliefWeb,

<https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/tigray-conflict-un-experts-call-urgent-action-stop-violence-against-women>.

"Tigray | UN News." United Nations, United Nations, <https://news.un.org/en/tags/tigray>.

"Tigray." Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.,
<https://www.britannica.com/place/Tigray-historical-region-Ethiopia>.

"UN: Aid to Ethiopia's Tigray Region Lowest since Last March." Anadolu Ajansı,
<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/un-aid-to-ethiopia-s-tigray-region-lowest-since-last-march/2481547>.

"A Very Ethiopian Tragedy: Tigray, the TPLF, and Cyclical History." Georgetown Journal of International Affairs, 26 Jan. 2021,
<https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2021/01/28/a-very-ethiopian-tragedy-tigray-the-tplf-and-cyclical-history/>.

Walsh, Declan, and Abdi Latif Dahir. "Why Is Ethiopia at War with Itself?" The New York Times, The New York Times, 5 Nov. 2020,
<https://www.nytimes.com/article/ethiopia-tigray-conflict-explained.html>.