

SGBV as a Weapon of War and Tool For Genocide

The systematic and brutal nature of the sexual violence in Tigray, especially the sexual torture and mutilation points to the weaponization of sexual violence and its use as a genocidal tactic.

Sexual assaults and violence have occurred across the Tigray region with rape camps created in several locations by federal allied troops.

1. Ethnic Cleansing
2. Sexual Slavery
3. Intentional Transmission of HIV
4. Irreversible damage to Reproductive Systems



Ethnic Cleansing in Western Tigray

Soon after the federal government declared war on Tigray, various armed groups from the neighbouring Amhara region joined the offensive against Tigray to annex land in Western and Southern Tigray that they claim historically belongs to them.

Over 70,000 Tigrayan refugees fled to neighbouring Sudan came primarily from Western Tigray. Refugees detailed how Amhara forces systematically rounded up Tigrayans in house-to-house searches. Those that managed to escape described massacres, kidnappings and arbitrary detention by armed forces from the Amhara region.





Survivors who managed to escape to Sudan recalled militia telling them “You Tigrayans have no history, you have no culture. I can do what I want to you and no one cares.”

Amhara militia operate with total impunity in Western Tigray and openly tell survivors their goal is to cleanse the Tigrayan bloodline. Another survivor was told “If you were a man we would kill you but girls can make Amhara babies”

Refugee accounts also show that Tigrayans are having their IDs destroyed and being issued Amhara ID cards, are being barred from speaking their native language and that women are facing SGBV with the explicit intent of ‘Amharanizing’ them.

The full-fledged campaign of ethnic cleansing in Western Tigray continues until this day.



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oOlhNSJSE_U&t=224s

Sexual Slavery



“It was like they were fetching water” - A rape survivor describing how soldiers would line up outside her cell waiting for their turn to rape her.

Survivors reported being held for days or weeks as they were repeatedly raped by several soldiers. They were taken off streets, buses and directly from their homes by soldiers.



Items that doctors retrieved from the vagina of a rape survivor are seen at a hospital in the town of Adigrat, Tigray. March 18, 2021

Women in Tigray have reported that soldiers told them they are HIV positive and intentionally wanted to infect them. One survivor warned the soldiers that she was HIV positive. She showed them her medicine as proof but they gang raped her without any protection. She believes they must have been HIV positive. They said they wanted to spread HIV among the women and girls in Tigray.

Another survivor was able to go to the hospital after her attack to get some post-exposure HIV drugs. The soldiers who attacked her learned about this as they often frequent the hospitals and returned to her home. They said “We want you to be sick. We’re here to make you HIV positive.”



https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=263&v=EC0sByGmiQ&feature=emb_title

Destruction of Healthcare System



Medical equipment lies damaged and looted by Eritrean soldiers at a hospital which they used as a base, according to witnesses.

Ben Curtis/AP

Initial assessments by MSF of 106 facilities in Tigray between December 2020 and March 2021 show that nearly 70 percent of facilities were looted, 30 percent damaged, and only 13 percent in Tigray were functional.

“I’ve been doing this work for a long time and I’ve never seen the complete collapse of a healthcare system as in Tigray. It’s shocking.”— Médecins SansFrontières emergency manager on the ground, April 2021

In April, UNFPA reported that only 1% of health facilities in Tigray had the capacity to provide comprehensive gender based violence services. UNFPA also projects that approximately 22,500 survivors of sexual violence in Tigray will seek clinical care this year alone. This shows the dire gap between the growing needs of survivors and the lack of support available for them.

Hospitals were also occupied by federal allied troops. Hospital staff told Human Rights Watch that soldiers would come into the facilities searching for specific rape survivors or health records. When a rape survivor was admitted into a hospital, Eritrean troops heard about this and came into the hospital a few times looking for her.

Manufacturing a Famine

Destruction of farms and cropland: large-scale damage to vital farming infrastructure, where the troops have burned farmhouses, intentionally ruined seeds, and destroyed grinding mills.

Prohibition of farming: Federal allied troops prevented farmers from ploughing their land in time for rainy season and many farmers missed an entire cycle of production.

In May 2021, a member of Tigray's former interim government, appointed by Abiy Ahmed, admitted this campaign was taking place. He stated, "There is a campaign that has been started to prevent farming. Regrettably, this campaign is being done by some of those tasked with law enforcement."



Abrehet Wubet in Samre, Tigray showing her burned grains. Here grinding mill and her grains were burned by invading troops..



ETHIOPIA

Tigray Humanitarian Operational Capacity

As of 11 November 2021

Summary of resources needed to deliver humanitarian response

CASH (ETB)

300M

NEEDED WEEKLY TO DELIVER TARGET

FUEL (LITERS)

200K

NEEDED WEEKLY TO DELIVER TARGET

SUPPLIES (TRUCKS)

100

NEEDED DAILY TO DELIVER TARGET

Resource availability by cluster activity

0 – 14 days 15 – 28 days 29 – 60 days + 60 days

HOW LONG DO THE AVAILABLE RESOURCES LAST TO IMPLEMENT THE ACTIVITY

PEOPLE AFFECTED BY THE (UPCOMING) SUSPENSION

	PEOPLE TARGETED	ACTIVITY STATUS				
Food						
Food distribution	5.2M	Partially active (10%)	0 days	0 days	7 days	5.1M
Health						
Delivery of emergency kits	2.3M	Suspended	0 days	N/A	0 days	2.3M
Vaccination for cholera (second dose)	1.5M	Suspended	0 days	N/A	0 days	1.5M
Child Protection						
MHPSS services for children, adolescents, and caregivers	11K	Active	0 days	0 days	N/A	10K
Prevent and respond to separation of children from families	18K	Partially active (1%)	0 days	0 days	N/A	18K
GBV prevention and response	436K	Partially active (10%)	0 days	0 days	0 days	424K
Protect children & affected populations from SEA	288K	Partially active (10%)	0 days	0 days	N/A	218K
Gender-Based Violence						
Provide health, social work or justice/law enforcement services	7K	Partially active (1%)	0 days	0 days	0 days	7K
CP and GBV risk mitigation, prevention, and response services	180K	Active	0 days	0 days	0 days	71K
Provide dignity kits to women and girls of reproductive age	299K	Partially active (10%)	0 days	0 days	0 days	256K
PFA and MHPSS	43K	Active	0 days	0 days	0 days	27K

Humanitarian Blockade

Martin Griffith, Current U.N. Undersecretary General for Humanitarian Affairs (Nov 12, 2021)

“The women are still, after these many, many months, so traumatized that it's difficult for them to speak.

We said to the women, what do you want for your children? The answer that they gave us was, we want food. They have no horizon beyond survival, beyond tomorrow...And I think that was perhaps the most shocking example of the depth of need in Tigray.”

“Tigray is probably the worst place in the world to live in right now.”

Mark Lowcock, Former U.N. Undersecretary General for Humanitarian Affairs (Oct 6, 2021)

“What's happening is that Ethiopian authorities are running a sophisticated campaign to stop aid getting in by, for example, making it impossible for truck drivers to operate by setting up checkpoints with official and with militia people, by preventing fuel getting in.

And what they are trying to do is starve the population of Tigray into subjugation or out of existence..”

Mass Arrests of Tigrayans Across Ethiopia

On November 2, 2021, The Ethiopian government issued a nation-wide State of Emergency because Tigrayan forces inched closer to Ethiopia's capital. Federal authorities began mass arresting Tigrayan civilians from their homes, work and places of worship.

In an interview with Vatican News, Fr. Giuseppe Cavallini, a Comboni missionary who has served in Ethiopia for 30 years, explained that even churches have not been spared amid the government crackdown.

"A few days ago," he said, "the military entered the Catholic Cathedral of Addis Ababa looking for people of Tigrinya ethnicity. And these raids are being done throughout the capital."



A vigilante group searching for Tigrayans who they believe are sympathetic to the Tigrayan government

Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC)

- State-funded and Head Commissioner, Daniel Bekele, is state-appointed
- Played a biased and inflammatory role since the first days of the war ex. Mai Kadra massacre reporting where Tigrayan victims were painted as perpetrators.
- Public statements made by Daniel Bekele support government's narrative
 - "It's comforting to know the military operation didn't result in as severe consequences as it was originally feared to be. There was talk of a huge bloodbath, talk of huge civilian casualties..." (Jan, 2021)

EHRC and UN Human Rights Joint Investigation



An injured resident of Togoga arrives to a hospital in Mekele on June 23, a day after a deadly airstrike on a market in Ethiopia's war-torn northern Tigray region. Yasuyoshi Chiba—AFP/Getty Images

- Little to no mention of crimes perpetrated by Amhara militia and special forces
- Victims lacked trust in state-appointed investigators and declined to speak to them
- Deliberate exclusion of credibly reported atrocities ex. Axum massacre, Togoga massacre, Humera massacre

Commission of Inquiry

We are calling on the UN Human Rights Council to hold a special session and pursue establishing a Commission of Inquiry.

The influence and participation via the EHRC of the Government of Ethiopia – a belligerent in the conflict and the principal party accused of war crimes, crimes against humanity and acts of genocide – is a violation of not only principles of impartiality and neutrality, but contravenes longstanding UN norms.

A Commission of Inquiry would be a crucial first step in ensuring full accountability for all atrocities. It will uphold the principle of “do no harm.” Victims can also regain confidence in these investigations.

Recommendations for U.S Senate

On September 23, the House of Representative passed the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY2022, H.R 4350 Amendment 555 which requires the Secretary of State to submit a determination of whether atrocities committed in the Tigray region constitute genocide or crimes against humanity.

The NDAA is coming before the senate in the coming weeks, we are urging senators to introduce a similar amendment to ensure that Amendment 555 is kept in the final adoption of NDAA FY2022.

Resources to Help End the Tigray Genocide

Omna Tigray: U.S based advocacy group

<https://omnatigray.org/>

Health Professional Network For Tigray: Tigrayan-led organization working on the ground in Sudan refugee camps

<https://hpn4tigray.org/>

Tigray Youth Network: UK based advocacy group

<https://tigrayyouthnetwork.org/>