



**'THE THREE HORSEMEN OF
THE WAR IN TIGRAY:
MASS KILLINGS, SEXUAL
VIOLENCE AND STARVATION'**

THE TIGRAY INQUIRY

**Inquiry into the atrocities in Tigray since November 2020
conducted by the International Bar Association's Human
Rights Institute for the All-Party Parliamentary Group
(APPG) on International Law, Justice and Accountability**

September 2023

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tigrayans have been subjected to horrific atrocities during the war in the region between November 2020 and November 2022. Many of these atrocities are continuing to this day. Among the submissions received by the Inquiry, mass killings, sexual violence, and starvation were the most commonly identified crimes. The atrocities have not received enough international focus despite the war being one of the deadliest in recent years and the atrocities meeting the legal definition of international crimes.

Despite the ceasefire in November 2022, the situation of the communities is still dire. The ceasefire may have stopped the guns, but atrocities continue to be committed, including rape and sexual violence. The communities continue to face a humanitarian crisis which claims lives to this day. The destruction brought about by the war means that the communities will continue to feel the effects of the war for months and years to come.

The situation in Tigray requires urgent international attention. So far this has not been forthcoming despite the horrific reports of atrocity crimes in the region.

As the Inquiry was reviewing the evidence submitted, it found many messages from the Tigrayan diaspora in the UK whose family members were or still are in Ethiopia and sharing their stories - of pain, suffering and loss. Their family members have been killed, injured, abducted, abused, starved, and lost everything they owned. Many still do not know what became of their family members. The Tigrayan diaspora in the UK shared their continuing pain and helplessness regarding the situation in Tigray, as they lost all contact with their family members between November 2020 and November 2022 and as they continue to suffer from the consequences of the war and everything it unleashed.

Furthermore, as the Inquiry was finalising this report, information on the dire situation in Ethiopia continued to circulate. On 29 August 2023, the UN reported that in the Amhara region, following a flare-up in clashes between the Ethiopian military and the regional Fano militia, and the declaration of a state of emergency on 4 August 2023, the situation worsened considerably. The UN reported that at least 183 people have been killed in clashes since July 2023.¹

The state of emergency introduced in August 2023 equipped the Ethiopian government with broad powers to arrest without a court order, impose curfews and ban public gatherings. According to the UN, within four weeks of August 2023, more than 1,000 people have been arrested in Ethiopia, including many young Amharas suspected of Fano support. At least three journalists covering the situation in the Amhara region were arrested.

Furthermore, the UN reported that they have received allegations that

‘at least 250 ethnic Tigrayans were detained in the disputed area of Western Tigray, reportedly in joint operations by the Amhara police, local authorities and local militia, including armed youth from Wolkait. Those detained were then

¹ See: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2023/08/ethiopia-deteriorating-human-rights-situation>.

reportedly taken by armed Wolkait youth to an area controlled by the Tigray Interim Regional Administration, where they were intercepted by the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF). The ENDF then reportedly screened and gave those detained the option of either returning to Western Tigray or remaining in the Tigray Interim Regional Administration area.²

In September 2023, the International Commission of Experts on Ethiopia published their report for the 54th session of the Human Rights Council stating that ‘the conflict in Tigray has not ended, with Eritrean troops and Amhara militias engaging in ongoing violations. Past and current abuses in these four regions demand further investigation. The Government of Ethiopia has failed to effectively investigate violations and has initiated a flawed transitional justice consultation process. Ethiopia has sought to evade international scrutiny through the creation of domestic mechanisms ostensibly to fight impunity. The Commission recommends a range of measures to end current abuses and promote serious transitional justice.’³ Despite these warnings, the Commission is likely to cease to exist as its mandate is unlikely to be extended.

While this report is focused on the situation in Tigray, it is crucial to emphasise that the atrocities perpetrated in Ethiopia have affected and continue to affect many communities. All these atrocities require attention and must be investigated.

² See: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2023/08/ethiopia-deteriorating-human-rights-situation>.

³ See: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/chreetiopia/A_HRC_54_55_AUV.pdf.

The Tigray War in Numbers

600,000 - 800,000 people killed

Over 120,000 people subjected to conflict-related sexual violence

Over a million people internally displaced within Tigray

Over 60,000 Tigrayans fled Ethiopia to Sudan

About 2.3 million children remain out of school in northern Ethiopia

Thousands of people died due to starvation

Recommendations

The Inquiry recommends the following to the UK Government and other countries:

Transparency of UK Responses

- Ensure that the JACS assessment of Ethiopia is available to Parliamentary scrutiny.
- Review the responses made to date, assess their effectiveness and identify lessons learned.
- Ensure that the atrocities in Tigray, and Ethiopia more broadly, are assessed against the criteria of international crimes and an analysis is produced for the attention of Parliamentarians.

Peace, stability, and security

- Provide necessary assistance to ensure that the CoHA from November 2022 is implemented.
- Examine the issue of violence and impunity across the wider Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) region, and in particular, Sudan and Somalia.
- Provide necessary assistance to ensure the return to the constitutional order as soon as possible, including by replacing the Tigray Interim Regional Administration with an elected government, and ending the (national) state of emergency proclaimed at the beginning of August 2023.
- Provide necessary assistance and capacity building to ensure full monitoring of the continuing situation and documenting of atrocities.
- Provide continued support for a resolution of the tensions between Tigray and Amhara and between Tigray and the Federal authorities.
- Engage its counterparts in Eritrea in relation to the need for Eritrean troops to withdraw from Ethiopia, help to facilitate the immediate and complete

withdrawal of Amhara and Eritrean forces from Western and Southern Tigray - to enable the safe repatriation of IDPs and refugees back to their homes.

- Ensure that women are part of peace, stability, and security decision-making.
- Assist with capacity building that could help to deal with problems within the military, including training on the issue of preventing sexual violence in conflict (PSVI).

Assistance to victims and survivors

- Establish and support targeted programmes of help for victims of sexual violence through the hospitals and clinics of Tigray.
- Engage all humanitarian actors to ensure that their activities in Tigray are resumed in full.
- Engage all parties involved to ensure full, unfettered and sustained humanitarian access to Tigray, and the complete restoration of all services to Tigray.
- Invest in projects aimed at rebuilding the infrastructure in Tigray, including water supply, roads, and public utilities.
- Invest in livelihood programmes for women who are economically vulnerable due to stigma.
- Assist the establishment of the victims' fund to provide victims with compensation.
- Introduce a bespoke mechanism for the resettlement of Tigrayan survivors, with a particular focus on survivors and victims of CRSV.
- Invest in programmes helping Tigrayans who fled Tigray, including projects helping victims and survivors with the physical and mental consequences of the atrocities, including male victims and survivors.
- Examine challenges facing victims and survivors, among others, the situation of victims and survivors in remote rural locations, the issue of trafficking of

survivors and victims and their further abuse in other countries, especially Sudan and Kenya.

Justice and accountability

- Engage other states to ensure that the mandate of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia is extended for a term of two years, renewable. The Commission should be given full and unfettered access to Tigray and interlocutors, victims and survivors, and its findings should be actioned, including through legal action taken against perpetrators, including those in the chain of command.
- Consider bringing proceedings against Ethiopia before the ICJ for violations of the Genocide Convention.
- Consider engaging the ICC, mirroring the approach in Myanmar/Bangladesh.
- Establish an international accountability mechanism that can bring justice to survivors of the atrocities.
- Invest in projects aimed at addressing CRSV through transitional justice mechanisms through national and international mechanisms.
- Engage relevant actors to ensure the participation of women and survivors of sexual violence in the inception of the process of transitional justice.

'The Cessation of Hostilities and follow-on deliberations have resulted in the silencing of the guns. While this is a significant victory towards peace, the absence of a full-on war is not in itself peace.'

-Anonymous submission to the Inquiry

Contents

I. Background	11
II. The Situation in Tigray	16
1. Pre-November 2020	16
2. November 2020 - November 2022	19
3. November 2022 until now	22
III. Atrocity crimes in Tigray	25
1. Mass killings and extermination	25
2. The Use of Rape and Sexual Violence	35
3. Starvation and other methods to bring about the destruction	48
4. Classification of the Atrocity Crimes in Tigray	52
5. The Perpetrators	77
IV. Minorities within the minority - The situation of the Irob and Kunama numeric minority communities	79
V. The Needs of the Community	84
1. Humanitarian	84
2. Justice and accountability	89
VI. The UK Responses to the situation	94
VII. Conclusions and recommendations	100

I. BACKGROUND

In October 2022, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum issued a warning of a heightened risk of genocide in Ethiopia’s Tigray region. According to the statement, ‘the situation had deteriorated exponentially as Ethiopian security forces, supported by Eritrean forces and Amhara special forces, seized key towns and cities imperilling vulnerable Tigrayan civilians.’⁴ As the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum added,

‘ethnic-based targeting and the commission of mass atrocities have been an intentional strategy of parties to the conflict between the Ethiopian and regional Tigrayan governments and their allies that began in November 2020. In the past two years crimes against humanity and war crimes have been perpetrated with impunity. These crimes include murder, rape, sexual violence, persecution, and other inhumane acts. There is growing evidence of sexual slavery and forced pregnancy.’⁵

This is not the first such warning concerning the situation in Ethiopia and the risk of genocide. In December 2021, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum identified several warning signs of potential genocide against the Tigray people including,

‘reports of massacres and other targeted killings of Tigrayan civilians, dehumanisation and hate speech—amplified on social media—encouraging violence against members of the group, mass arrests and arbitrary detention,

⁴ See: <https://www.ushmm.org/information/press/press-releases/museum-warns-of-heightened-risk-of-genocide-mass-atrocities-in-ethiopia>.

⁵ Ibid.

and possible collective punishment in the form of a human-made famine in the Tigray region.⁶

In October 2022, the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that

‘the situation in Ethiopia is spiralling out of control. Violence and destruction have reached alarming levels. The social fabric is being ripped apart. (...) Civilians are paying a horrific price. Indiscriminate attacks — including in residential areas — are killing more innocent people every day, damaging critical infrastructure and limiting access to vital services. Hundreds of thousands of people have been forced to flee their homes since hostilities resumed in August, many of them for the second time. We are also hearing disturbing accounts of sexual violence and other acts of brutality against women, children and men.’⁷

In October 2022, World Health Organisation Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that there was a ‘very narrow window now to prevent genocide’ in Tigray.⁸

While in November 2022, Ethiopia's government and Tigray forces agreed to stop hostilities, reports suggest that some atrocities continued and continue at the time of writing. In December 2022, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum warned that despite the ceasefire agreement, ‘civilians continue to suffer egregious human rights violations perpetrated by Eritrean and regional militia forces.’⁹ Among others, according to data

⁶ See: <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/blog/risk-of-genocide-ethiopia>.

⁷ See: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2022-10-17/secretary-generals-opening-remarks-the-press-ethiopia>.

⁸ See: <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-media-briefing---19-october-2022>.

⁹ See: <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/blog/risks-of-mass-atrocities-in-ethiopia-remain-high-despite-peace-deal>.

from the Tigray Health Bureau in November and December 2022, 852 cases of rape and sexual violence were reported by survivors.

In response to the amassing evidence, in March 2023, Secretary Blinken determined that members of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF), Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF), Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) forces, and Amhara forces committed war crimes during the conflict in northern Ethiopia. Furthermore, his announcement indicated that

'Members of the ENDF, EDF, and Amhara forces also committed crimes against humanity, including murder, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and persecution. Members of the Amhara forces also committed the crime against humanity of deportation or forcible transfer and committed ethnic cleansing in western Tigray.'¹⁰

From the testimonies and reports the Inquiry received, it is clear that the evidence of the atrocities is not being collected and preserved (domestically) for future prosecutions. The issue of justice and accountability continues to be neglected. The only international body currently in existence with the mandate to consider the situation, the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, will cease its work at **the end of 2023** unless its mandate is extended in early October 2023. The Ethiopian government is working to ensure that the mandate is not extended. Without the extra external oversight and assistance, victims and survivors of the horrific atrocities in Tigray, but also other parts of Ethiopia, will not see justice.

These concerning messages about the dire situation of Tigrayans, and the situation in Ethiopia more broadly, have been raised by many Parliamentarians in both Houses. This is further elaborated upon in subsequent sections.

¹⁰ See: <https://www.state.gov/2023-report-to-congress-on-section-5-of-the-elie-wiesel-genocide-and-atrocities-prevention-act-of-2018-p-l-115-441-as-amended/>.

Aims of the Inquiry

The aims of this Inquiry are to:

- i. Consider the situation of the Tigrayans in Ethiopia and map the crimes perpetrated against the group, particularly where such crimes constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity and/or genocide; in particular:
 - a. Hate speech and incitement to violence against Tigrayans
 - b. The nature and scale of the atrocities, with a particular focus on rape and sexual violence
 - c. The use of rape and sexual violence as an atrocity crime.
- ii. Identify the assistance (legal, humanitarian, and otherwise) available to the community and its shortfalls.
- iii. Identify justice and accountability avenues for legal recourse.
- iv. Engage the UK Government and international actors with recommendations for assistance to the community.

The Inquiry Process

The Inquiry incorporates desk research, a call for written submissions, and oral hearings with experts and witnesses.

The Inquiry received an unprecedented amount of data, including testimonies from victims and witnesses. Some of the data is difficult to verify and will be marked as such. Such data is included to show the amount of information that requires further investigation and assessment, and as such, adds to the need to ensure that there is an independent body collecting, preserving and analysing the evidence.

Inquiry Team

THE TIGRAY INQUIRY

The Inquiry is conducted by the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute for the All-Party Parliamentary Group on International Law, Justice and Accountability. The Inquiry is chaired by Brendan O'Hara MP, and supported by Baroness Kennedy KC and Lord Alton of Liverpool. The Inquiry Secretariat includes Dr Ewelina Ochab and Emily Foale. The report further benefited from a review of leading experts on the topic.

II. THE SITUATION IN TIGRAY

While the report is predominantly focused on the situation in Tigray during the two years of the conflict between November 2020 and the ceasefire in November 2022, the report further comments on the situation before the war and since the ceasefire.

The atrocities in Tigray did not start with the attack in November 2020 and did not end with the ceasefire agreement in November 2022. The report briefly comments on the situation before November 2020 and some of the early warning signs that were missed. While it may be said that the situation improved and stabilised since the November 2022 agreement, severe human rights violations continue.

1. PRE-NOVEMBER 2020

Before November 2020, Tigray was governed by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). Tensions between TPLF and the federal government led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed had been escalating for many months.

Dr Sarah Vaughan, a scholar with close to 40 years of expertise on Ethiopia, commented that

‘underlying talks of reform and transition, the key topics of Ethiopia’s domestic politics during the 2018-2020 period were deepening violence and displacement; and deepening polarisation between the country’s politicians over the future of the federal project and the balance of power across the federation. (...) As the rule of law continued to unravel in Ethiopia between 2018 and 2020, it began to be clear that the Ethiopian body politic was no longer inoculated against outbreaks of extreme violence - if it ever had been.’¹¹

Martin Plaut, journalist and political commentator, added that

¹¹ Sarah Vaughan, ‘The Revival of Imperial Politics and the Path to War’ in Martin Plaut and Sarah Vaughan, *Understanding Ethiopia’s Tigray War* (Hurst, 2023) 187.

‘the period from the appointment of Abiy Ahmed as prime minister in April 2018 to the outbreak of war at the beginning of November 2020 was an intense one. (...) a series of complex shifts in the domestic politics of Ethiopia brought war closer. The ruling party which had elevated the new prime minister now turned on its founding member, the TPLF, and was reconstituted on a unitary basis to exclude it.’¹²

In September 2020, the Ethiopian government postponed the general elections, initially scheduled for May 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The TPLF disagreed with this decision and proceeded to hold its regional elections in Tigray which added to the tensions escalating the political crisis between the Tigray regional government and the federal government. Commenting on the development, Martin Plaut indicated: ‘Following the disputed elections in Tigray in September 2020, it appeared clear that Tigray was heading for a conflict with its neighbours. Social media were full of warnings.’¹³

During the years preceding the war, the Tigrayan community experienced an increased level of hate speech. As reported by Omna Tigray,

‘Hate towards Tigrayans has a long history and was widespread before the beginning of the genocidal war in November 2020. In a 1996 interview with Professor Tilahun Yilma, who frequently expressed his desire for the separation of Tigrinya-speaking people from Ethiopia, Tigrayans are blatantly described as “a malignant cancer that has been eating away at [Ethiopia’s] vital parts.” The professor then openly calls for the forcible removal of Tigrayans, stating, “If we don’t excise this cancer promptly, Ethiopia will cease to be a nation.”

¹² Martin Plaut, ‘Eritrea, the Horn and the Path to War’ in Martin Plaut and Sarah Vaughan, *Understanding Ethiopia’s Tigray War* (Hurst, 2023) 189.

¹³ Martin Plaut, ‘Eritrea, the Horn and the Path to War’ in Martin Plaut and Sarah Vaughan, *Understanding Ethiopia’s Tigray War* (Hurst, 2023) 207.

This genocidal rhetoric has been echoed through media such as ESAT, an Ethiopian satellite news network headquartered in Washington, DC, now sponsored by the current Ethiopian government. ESAT has been a consistent actor in spreading hate speech against the people of Tigray since its inception in 2010. This article from 2017 details ESAT's provocation of ethnic hatred and acts of violence towards Tigrayans. A petition was created to take action against ESAT, whose journalist Mesay Mekonnen stated it is necessary to "drain the sea" to "catch the fish," referring to Tigrayans as the "sea" and Tigrayan leadership as the "fish." Other state-sponsored media and political analysts such as Seyoum Teshome have constantly used hate speech and genocidal rhetoric to call for the extermination of Tigrayans in Ethiopia.¹⁴

Furthermore, as submitted to the Inquiry by Meaza Gebremedhin, a Tigrayan human rights advocate based in the US, and a founding member of Omna Tigray, before November 2020, Tigray had been facing political tensions, marginalisation, systemic disenfranchisement, ethnic profiling, and limited access to basic services. She described how the economic pressures affected the community making them extremely vulnerable:

'Before November 2020, Tigray enjoyed a reputation as Ethiopia's most peaceful and stable region. However, it faced challenges such as inflation and high unemployment rates, exacerbated by the closure of a road connecting Tigray to the rest of the country for over a year. Forces loyal to the Amhara region blocked the land roads linking Tigray to Addis Ababa, and the federal government failed to take appropriate measures to resolve this issue. Consequently, the flow of goods and services into Tigray was severely limited, leading to soaring inflation and the collapse of the regional economy.

¹⁴ See: <https://omnatigray.org/hate-speech-and-the-tigray-genocide/>.

Additionally, foreign direct investment into Tigray was obstructed by the federal government with Chinese investors, for example, being precluded from flying to Tigray to visit potential investment opportunities. To exacerbate matters, Tigray was hit by a locust infestation that ravaged crops and devastated farmers, alongside the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019. The federal government's response to these disasters was inadequate, offering little to no assistance to the people of Tigray. In response, Tigrayans in the diaspora mobilised resources and made efforts to provide immediate relief. However, [the] efforts were hindered by unnecessary bureaucratic obstacles imposed by the federal government, hindering our efficiency and ability to aid those in need. Moreover, **Tigrayans residing in the Amhara and Oromia regions were targeted and forcibly displaced, with their properties burned and confiscated. Furthermore, Tigrayans across the country, including businessmen, politicians, and intellectuals, were arbitrarily arrested, portraying us as a “cancer” that needed to be eradicated, subjecting us to humiliation and persecution.**¹⁵

2. NOVEMBER 2020 - NOVEMBER 2022

In November 2020, the Ethiopian federal government launched a military attack against the TPLF in response to an alleged attack on a federal military base in Tigray. This marked the beginning of the war which lasted until November 2022 before a ceasefire deal (Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA), also referred to as the Pretoria Agreement) was signed.

The two years of the war have seen unimaginable pain and suffering in the community. However, the evidence of the crimes, in their nature and severity, has been out of sight of the international community due to internet and mobile network shutdowns and a ban on international journalists visiting the region. Indeed, internet and phone services

¹⁵ Meaza Gebremedhin, written submission.

were cut as of 1:00 AM on 4 November 2020, at the start of the war. For the next two years, communications networks and electricity have only been accessible sporadically. Furthermore, Tigrayan journalists who dared to raise the situation in the region were intimidated, harassed and threatened, and some had to flee the region. All this amounts to a lack of free-flowing information about the atrocities, enabling the Ethiopian government to further isolate the Tigrayans suffering such atrocity crimes and preventing them from accessing assistance from the international community.

Among the reported atrocities are **murder and extermination of tens of thousands of civilians; rape and other acts of sexual violence against women and children; intentionally starving civilians by looting and deliberately destroying food and livelihood sources critical for survival, and intentionally denying humanitarian assistance; deportation or forcible transfer of populations; indiscriminately attacking the civilian population, including people in refugee camps, and civilian objects, including hospitals, pharmacies, schools, universities, hotels, bakeries, and industries; enforced disappearance of persons, persecution based on ethnic identity, including evicting Tigrayans from rental properties, termination of employment, revocation of business licenses, government seizure of assets, and surveillance of individuals of Tigrayan descent without due process; arbitrary detention; deliberate and extended interruption of essential services, including water, electricity, phone, internet, banking, and medical assistance; forcible return of refugees; other inhumane acts, such as preventing people from collecting the remains of their loved ones; destruction of cultural heritage, including UNESCO registered and other heritage sites, and religious and cultural buildings.**

The below discusses some of the evidence collected by the Inquiry. This is further elaborated upon in the subsequent section, with a focus on the first three sets of violations.

Among the submissions made to the Inquiry, the use of rape and sexual violence was one of the most commonly mentioned crimes. As emphasised by the Physicians for Human Rights, in their submission to the Inquiry, the conflict in Tigray has been marked by reports of widespread conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), **both before and after** the signing of the ceasefire agreement in November 2022.¹⁶ The use of rape and sexual violence continues to this day. Without any semblance of justice, these crimes are allowed to continue.

The evidence received by the Inquiry revealed numerous cases of mass killings in several localities, especially during the initial months of the war. The total number of people killed is assessed to be between **600,000 and 800,000**, although the exact number may be difficult to ascertain.

As the war in the region brought upon the community an immense humanitarian crisis, the response to the needs of the people has been deliberately neglectful. Meaza Gebremedhin submitted to the Inquiry that:

‘During the period between November 2020 and November 2022, the Tigrayan community faced severe limitations and inadequacies in receiving assistance. **The availability of humanitarian aid was greatly restricted, hampering the delivery of essential supplies like food, medical aid, and shelter.** Moreover, the assistance that did manage to reach Tigray encountered significant obstacles due to ongoing hostilities and deliberate obstruction of humanitarian operations. The international community's response during this critical time lacked the necessary political commitment required to compel Ethiopia and Eritrea to provide a humanitarian corridor and bring an end to the war on Tigray. (...) It is disheartening to witness that even countries like the United Kingdom, among others, conveyed a message that Tigrayan lives do not matter, seemingly

¹⁶ PHR, written submission.

placing their commitment to human rights as secondary to geopolitical considerations and other perceived transactional interests.¹⁷

3. NOVEMBER 2022 UNTIL NOW

While the ceasefire agreement in November 2022 brought about some change, it has not delivered on the promises it made. Indeed, **the crisis in the region is continuing with instability and weaknesses in the implementation of the CoHA exacerbating the risk of further atrocities.**

Omna Tigray reported that ‘The crisis-level food insecurity in Tigray has only worsened since the signing of the CoHA, with people dying from malnutrition and starvation-related illnesses. Conditions will only worsen as the World Food Programme (WFP) has extended its food aid suspension in Tigray and announced its countrywide suspension.’¹⁸ WFP is an international organisation within the United Nations that provides food assistance worldwide. Similarly, USAID paused all USAID-supported food assistance in the Tigray region until further notice.¹⁹ As Professor Gebremeskel Hailu, an Associate Professor in Law at Mekelle University, Tigray, indicated, despite the ceasefire agreement,

‘People are starving, people are begging but everyone is suffering in the same manner from hunger. Of course, the gun is silenced and people are not being shot but other problems are continuing. Every public institution is looted by Eritrean soldiers. In 2020/2021, we begged the commanders to stop looting public institutions but they didn’t respond positively. They loaded every material in broad daylight including doors and windows. Animals and cattle are

¹⁷ Meaza Gebremedhin, written submission.

¹⁸ See: <https://omnatigray.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/June-2023-Quarterly-Situation-Report-2.pdf>.

¹⁹ See: <https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/may-03-2023-pause-us-food-aid-tigray-ethiopia>.

slaughtered in masses. They have destroyed and burnt the ripped crops. They let the crops be raided and eaten by donkeys and camels.’²⁰

Meaza Gebremedhin submitted to the Inquiry that the destruction of infrastructure continues to affect the community:

‘The destruction of schools has disrupted education, leaving students in [Tigray] without proper facilities and supplies. Meanwhile, health centres that were ravaged and looted have yet to be rebuilt, leaving medical professionals without the necessary resources to provide essential care. Survivors of rape and conflict-related violence lack crucial medical, mental, and economic support for their healing and recovery. (...) Many civil servants in Tigray have been denied their salaries due to the Federal government’s failure to allocate the required budget. Tigrayan refugees in Sudan remain trapped in the protracted conflict, with limited assistance reaching them. Despite the cessation of active hostilities, the overall situation for civilians has not significantly improved. Insufficient humanitarian aid and the absence of a comprehensive repatriation plan continue to contribute to their ongoing suffering. Moreover, the recent suspension of US and UN humanitarian operations in Ethiopia, citing alleged aid diversion, has added to the challenges the people of Tigray face.’²¹

Despite the ceasefire, and Eritrean withdrawals from some parts of Tigray, Eritrean troops continue to operate within Tigray. Their presence constitutes an explicit breach of the terms of the CoHA.²² As reported by Omna Tigray, ‘while the CoHA calls for the immediate removal of invading forces from Tigrayan territory, Eritrean and Amhara forces continue to occupy large swaths of Tigray. While Eritrean forces are occupying parts of Northern Tigray, and in particular, the homelands of the Irob and Kunama

²⁰ Professor Gebremeskel Hailu, written submission.

²¹ Meaza Gebremedhin, written submission.

²² See: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-64635898>.

people, Amhara forces still maintain control of Western Tigray. This continuing occupation has dire consequences for the Tigrayans living under Eritrean and Amhara control, who continue to face physical and psychological torment, intimidation, attacks against their identity, and the threat of death.²³ Their presence is further associated with reports of rape and sexual violence which continue to this day.

The above-mentioned issues will be elaborated upon in the subsequent section.

²³ See: <https://omnatigray.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/June-2023-Quarterly-Situation-Report-2.pdf>.

III. ATROCITY CRIMES IN TIGRAY

1. MASS KILLINGS AND EXTERMINATION

The exact numbers of those killed are not known and are difficult to ascertain due to a lack of independent reporting and the free flow of information. In January 2023, the Financial Times cited African Union Envoy Olusegun Obasanjo stating that the war in northern Ethiopia may have killed as many as 600,000 people, making it **one of the world's deadliest conflicts of recent times**.²⁴ Commenting on the ceasefire agreement, he said that 'we have stopped 1,000 deaths every day.'²⁵

Tim Vanden Bempt, a researcher at the University of Ghent, indicated that 'based on reports from the field, the number of dead could be somewhere between 300,000 and 400,000 civilian casualties only — this from atrocities, starvation, and lack of healthcare. In addition, there were unofficial estimates of between 200,000 and 300,000 battlefield deaths, though these could not be accurately verified.'²⁶

Other estimates suggest over 500,000 (United States Ambassador to the United Nations Linda-Thomas Greenfield), and between 600,000 and 800,000 people (EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Josep Borrell).²⁷

The Ethiopian government suggests a much more conservative number.²⁸

An organisation submitted to the Inquiry that there are at least 200 massacre sites in Tigray.²⁹ Some of these mass killings have been covered by international media and

²⁴ See: <https://www.ft.com/content/2f385e95-0899-403a-9e3b-ed8c24adf4e7>.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ See: <https://english.elpais.com/international/2023-01-27/ethiopias-forgotten-war-is-the-deadliest-of-the-21st-century-with-around-600000-civilian-deaths.html>.

²⁸ See: <https://www.ft.com/content/2f385e95-0899-403a-9e3b-ed8c24adf4e7>.

²⁹ Written submission, anonymous S.

non-governmental organisations. As indicated by Tghat, a platform chronicling and documenting atrocities in the region, ‘The atrocities that have been investigated and reported on by media and human rights organisations are, however, the tip of the iceberg.’³⁰ Some of these massacres are briefly mentioned below. **The Inquiry cannot verify all of the data submitted. This should be done by an independent mechanism that can collect further evidence, including from the field, analyse the data, confirm the numbers, and identify the victims and the cause of their deaths, among others. The Inquiry merely reports on submissions made by international and local NGOs, and first-hand witnesses.**

The Axum Massacre (28-29 November 2020)

On 19 November 2020, Ethiopian and Eritrean forces took over Axum, a city in northern Ethiopia, and unleashed a litany of atrocities there. For a week, ‘the forces shot civilians and pillaged and destroyed property, including healthcare facilities. After Tigray militia and Axum residents attacked Eritrean forces on November 28, Eritrean forces, in apparent retaliation, fatally shot and summarily executed several hundred residents, mostly men and boys, over a 24-hour period.’³¹

On 28-29 November 2020, Eritrean troops are said to have systematically killed hundreds of unarmed civilians in the city. Reportedly, they opened fire in the streets and conducted house-to-house raids. Amnesty International, a non-governmental organisation working on human rights globally, indicated that the massacre may amount to a crime against humanity.³² Amnesty International’s interviews with survivors revealed **extrajudicial executions, indiscriminate shelling and widespread**

³⁰ Tghat, written submission.

³¹ See: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/05/ethiopia-eritrean-forces-massacre-tigray-civilians>.

³² See: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/02/ethiopia-eritrean-troops-massacre-of-hundreds-of-axum-civilians-may-amount-to-crime-against-humanity/>.

looting.³³ As Amnesty International reported, ‘Ethiopian and Eritrean troops carried out multiple war crimes in their offensive to take control of Axum. Above and beyond that, **Eritrean troops went on a rampage and systematically killed hundreds of civilians in cold blood, which appears to constitute crimes against humanity.**’³⁴

The number of casualties is reported as several hundred³⁵ with some suggesting approximately 800.³⁶

The Adigrat Massacres (November - December 2020)

The Adigrat massacres refer to several mass killings in and around the city of Adigrat including Zalambessa, Hawzen, and Idaga Hamus. After Adigrat, the second-largest city in Tigray, was captured by Eritrean soldiers, the media reported on summary executions of civilians.³⁷ According to a witness,

‘After Adigrat was captured, Eritrean soldiers gathered a group of young males in civilian attire and accused them of being TPLF fighters. They were taken towards the outskirts of the city, towards the road leading to Adwa (a city some 60km east of Adigrat). At least twelve of them were shot dead. I saw the bodies of other people in the city who had been killed by the same soldiers.’³⁸

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ See: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/02/ethiopia-eritrean-troops-massacre-of-hundreds-of-axum-civilians-may-amount-to-crime-against-humanity/>.

³⁶ See: <https://apnews.com/article/witnesses-recall-massacre-axum-ethiopia-fa1b531fea069aed6768409bd1d20bfa>.

³⁷ See: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/climate-and-people/eritreas-shadow-war-ethiopia-laid-bare-amid-accusations-eritrean/>.

³⁸ Ibid.

The bishop of Adigrat, Abune Merha Kiristos, is reported to have a handwritten list with the names of 1,151 people priests had reported killed in surrounding areas since the conflict began.³⁹

The Dengelat Massacre (30 November 2020)

On 30 November 2020, a group of Eritrean soldiers opened fire on Maryam Dengelat church while hundreds of worshippers were celebrating mass.⁴⁰ As CNN reported,

‘people tried to flee on foot, scrambling up cliff paths to neighbouring villages. The troops followed, spraying the mountainside with bullets. The soldiers went door to door, dragging people from their homes. Mothers were forced to tie up their sons. A pregnant woman was shot, and her husband was killed. Some of the survivors hid under the bodies of the dead. The mayhem continued for three days, with soldiers slaughtering residents, displaced people and pilgrims. Finally, on 2 December [2020], the soldiers allowed informal burials to take place but threatened to kill anyone they saw mourning.’⁴¹

Hundreds of people are reported to have been killed in the massacre. Among those killed were ‘priests, old men, women, entire families and a group of more than 20 Sunday school children, some as young as 14.’⁴²

The Mahbere Dego Massacre (15-18 January 2021)

³⁹ See: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-conflict-eritrea-killings-idUSKBN2BI372>.

⁴⁰ See: <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/02/26/africa/ethiopia-tigray-dengelat-massacre-intl/index.html>.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² See: <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/02/26/africa/ethiopia-tigray-dengelat-massacre-intl/index.html>.

In January 2021, men wearing Ethiopian army uniforms executed a group of at least 11 unarmed men before disposing of their bodies near Mahibere Dego.⁴³ CNN reported that

‘Graphic, unverified footage had surfaced of a mass killing near Dawit’s hometown of Mahibere Dego, in a mountainous area of central Tigray. In the shaky video, Ethiopian soldiers appeared to round up a group of young, unarmed men on a wind-swept, dusty ledge before shooting them at point-blank range – picking them up by an arm or a leg and flinging or kicking their bodies off a rocky hillside like ragdolls.’⁴⁴

One of the written submissions to the Inquiry described the events as follows:

‘After detaining the farmers for hours in the military camp they walked them in file and took them to a village known as Adi-Kifli and specifically to the edges of the shallow mountains of a place commonly called E’la, Gobo Rhuq Qerni, and/or Qelqel Adi’dege and executed them in three different groups. According to audio-visual evidence found from the military perpetrators, the soldiers first checked the status of the farmers gathered and found them all to be civilians. Nevertheless, they proceeded with the mass killing. (...) Four out of the 28 civilians were killed by the members of the EDF. (...) A total of 75 soldiers of the 25th ENDF military unit participated in the summary execution. Of the 75 perpetrators of the summary execution, seven of them are [killed]. Fifty civilians are estimated to have been killed (...) and 25 escaped. According to the available horrendous videos showing the atrocities being performed and confessions of the captured perpetrators (...), there are reasonable grounds to believe that over 48 civilians were killed in one day (15 January 2021) although

⁴³ See: <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/04/01/africa/tigray-mahibere-dego-massacre-video-cmd-intl/index.html?fbclid=IwAR1KqDZreRitejI8YeyhtCpUPTmQQ-33pfRlOj-eIUQB4dDyx7infnOaLw>.

⁴⁴ See: <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/04/01/africa/tigray-mahibere-dego-massacre-video-cmd-intl/index.html?fbclid=IwAR1KqDZreRitejI8YeyhtCpUPTmQQ-33pfRlOj-eIUQB4dDyx7infnOaLw>.

key informants have reported the death toll could reach as high 50, of whom 40 were residents of Mahbere Diego.⁴⁵

Another female witness describes the incident as follows:

‘First, we were abducted by the Eritrean forces and ENDF forces but they opened fire on each other and we [ran] and went into our houses. They opened fire on every house, then came to our house and told us to come out saying “juntas.” We all came out and they took my brother from amongst us and started beating him up with a stick saying “Show us where the junta is! Show us the houses of the militiamen.” When he said I don’t know they took him with them and lined him and others in two lines and took them to a lower place from where we were but we couldn’t see where they took them. My brother’s name was Yeayneshet G/wahd.’⁴⁶

According to CNN, at least 36 people were killed, but another 37 people remained missing months after the massacre.⁴⁷ BBC suggested the number of 73.⁴⁸

The Edaga Berhe Massacre (February 2021)

The massacre in Edaga Berhe took place in February 2021, with the estimated number of casualties over 40, with many more people injured.⁴⁹

‘On 1 February 2021, in a place nearby to the village the ENDF soldiers engaged in a skirmish with the TDF that ended with the crash and total defeat of the ENDF’s 25th division. Out of the 89 members of the 1st battalion, 2nd company, 2nd brigade of the ENDF, only three soldiers survived and the rest, including their

⁴⁵ Written submission, anonymous A.

⁴⁶ Written submission, anonymous A.

⁴⁷ See: <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/06/27/africa/ethiopia-massacre-tigray-mahibere-dego-cmd-intl/index.html>.

⁴⁸ See: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-56603022>.

⁴⁹ Written submission, anonymous A.

leader [Colonel] Kedir, met their demise. Furious at this defeat high ranking officers of the ENDF's 25th division, including the military personnel specifically named (...), [Colonel] Sofiyan, ordered the rest of the companies of the division to hunt for every male Tigrayan youth in the city or nearby villages, wherever they may be found, and to kill them mercilessly. [In total], the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th companies massacred more than 40 male civilian residents of the vicinity and victim families were told not to bury the bodies of the victims consequently bodies were inhumanly left at the mercy of hyenas and wild dogs.⁵⁰

The massacre has not received much attention and has not been investigated by the joint Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (OHCHR-EHRC) investigation.⁵¹

The Abala Massacre (December 2021)

Unlike the other locations which are all in Tigray, Abala is in Afar National Regional State, close to the border with Tigray. Abala's population was 70% Tigrayan at the time of the events described here. Al-Jazeera reported that witnesses testified of seeing 'hundreds of bodies littered all over the street – young men, children and even pregnant women – on 24 December 2021- just days after Ethiopian allied forces raided (...) Abala in the Afar region.'⁵² Al-Jazeera was given a list of 278 people who were allegedly killed in the attack.

According to the assessment of a Tigray-based organisation, more than 500 Tigrayans, mostly male but also women and children, were killed in Abala.⁵³ The bodies were documented using GPS and aerial drone photos. The alleged perpetrators are

⁵⁰ Written submission, anonymous A.

⁵¹ See: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/AFR2560212022ENGLISH.pdf>.

⁵² See: <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/2/25/calculated-ethnic-cleansing-ethiopian-allies-accused-of-killin>.

⁵³ Written submission, anonymous TBO.

Prosperity Party-oriented Afar Militia members of the police, and informal armed youth, as well as Eritrean forces.

‘The main bloodbath started on 18 December 2021 and continued [until] 22 December 2021 though some killings continued for further two or three days. According to eyewitnesses, on 18 December 2021 armed Afar youth oriented by Prosperity Party authorities together with Eritrean military members started shooting every male Tigrayan resident and some women moving door to door. They brutally continued killing people, raping women, looting and destroying (burning) Tigrayan private and community properties for days.

As all of our (investigations team’s) informants in similar terms stated that the armed Afars first labelled (written on) the buildings with markers as “Afar Buda” and “Amharti Buda/Kirstian Buda.” Afar Buda means residence/house of Afar; Amhariti⁵⁴/Kirstian Buda means residence/house of Tigrayan. According to informants, this labelling was made so that attackers, some from Eritrea and other allied forces, can easily identify Tigrayan targets and not harm others by mistake. The labelling “Afar Buda” was also written on premises possessed by Amhara to save them from unintended attack.’⁵⁵

The Endabagerima Massacre (October 2022)

In April 2023, the Guardian reported on the massacre of Mariam Shewito, Endabagerima, Gendebta, and other villages near Adwa, in the northern Tigray region,

⁵⁴ It means ‘Amharan’ but in the Afar context it refers to all highlanders - and in this instance they are Tigrayans.

⁵⁵ Interview made with ++++++, ++++++, ++++++, ++++++, ++++++, ++++++, ++++++, ++++++, on May 10/2022 in Quiha Temporary IDP Camp, and an interview made with ++++++, on 27 July 2022 in Mekelle. Written submission, anonymous TBO.

perpetrated around the end of October 2022 as the area was engulfed by fierce fighting.⁵⁶

The Guardian reports the number of deaths as between 90 and 140, with the number including children.⁵⁷

Other Massacres

The Inquiry received information about several other mass killings. However, as they have not been independently investigated, the Inquiry is unable to verify the information. This work should be done by the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia or other similar bodies. A few of the mass killings are mentioned here for information.

The Massacre at Enda Enqura'e (February 2021)

A submission to the Inquiry suggested that another mass killing was committed on 3 February 2021:

At 3:00 [AM], members of the 4th company, 2nd battalion, 2nd brigade, of the 25th division, in a place named by the local people as Enda Enqura'e gathered 11 male youth from their respective households. The soldiers then killed the male youth, although the latter were innocent civilians. After that, as attested by capitulates⁵⁸ and relatives of the victims, the soldiers prevented the corpses of the victims from being buried. The brother of one of the victims called JJ recalls the incident like this: -

⁵⁶ See: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/apr/20/the-hyenas-had-eaten-the-rest-survivors-speak-about-the-horrors-of-massacres-in-northern-tigray>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ The submission means 'ENDF/EDF and allied forces who surrendered to or were captured by the Tigrayan/TPLF Forces.'

“One ENDF soldier [came] to my house on [3 February 2021] and told me to come with [him]. I told him that I [was] a farmer, but if you want you can check my identity card, but the soldier was not ready to hear me, and took me with him but fortunately his boss [found] us and [saw] my identity card and told him that I am old and to let me go. On the same day, the soldiers took my brother who was at his house working on weaving. The soldiers took innocent civilians with my brother named Abebe, son of Weldehanes and Mohammed Alamin to the cliffs called Enda Enqura’è and massacred and [left] them. People were asking the soldiers about their whereabouts, but the soldiers told them that the boys were sent to Axum for further investigation. At last, after four days, the soldiers told us where they [killed] them and [allowed] us to take the corpse and we took our corpse. While I [was] taking my brother's corpse, I was sick seeing the horrific massacre the soldiers have done and I am taking treatment now.”⁵⁹

The Micheal Abiy Massacre

An expert submitted evidence to the Inquiry that he interviewed many witnesses who reported on the killing of 24 people, including religious leaders, women and children during an attack on Micheal Abiy in early 2021 stating that:

‘The soldiers arrived at our village suddenly and in large numbers. Some members of the village were sitting in mourning for a deceased member of the village who died just a few days ago. Then soldiers order six men to line up and lie on the ground. They started to beat and whip each man to disclose where the “*juntas*” [were]. Where is Debretsion [president of the Tigray government]? And the men tried to explain that they [did] not know and begged mercy for

⁵⁹ Written submission, anonymous A.

their life. But the commander was heard saying that ... *even if you may not know where the juntas are, your sons might have already joined them to fight against us.*⁶⁰

According to the submission, the men were then shot at and four died on the spot.

2. THE USE OF RAPE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

As mentioned above, the use of rape and sexual violence was one of the most commonly mentioned crimes in the submissions received by the Inquiry. The below engages with some of this evidence.

Lucy Kassa, an award-winning Tigrayan journalist who writes for publications internationally, was among the first journalists to cover the issue of rape and sexual violence in Tigray. Among others, she reported the story of a woman referred to as Akberet:

‘On 8 March [2021], she fled her home on foot, her six-month-old baby strapped to her back, and her two other sons – aged four and seven – and 14-year-old brother in tow.

Some seven hours later, as they reached a bridge on the Tekeze River used by the Amhara forces as an informal border between what they say is now Amhara and Tigray, four Amhara militiamen stopped them. **The Amhara men separated Akberet from her children and brother and took her into an abandoned farmer’s house, just a few metres away.**

The four men took turns raping her. After they were done, the militiamen inserted into her genitals a hot metal rod that burned her uterus.

⁶⁰ Written submission, anonymous MA.

“I begged them to stop,” Akberet told Al Jazeera. “I asked them, crying, why they were doing that to me. What wrong have I done to you?”

“You did nothing bad to us,” she said they told her. **“Our problem is with your womb. Your womb gives birth to Woyane [derogative term used to refer to the TPLF]. A Tigrayan womb should never give birth.”**

After the militiamen left, Akberet was left there unconscious. Her brother went to get her, and with the help of other displaced people took her to a town to the east. **“The sexual assault made her infertile,”** a doctor who treated her there confirmed to Al Jazeera. Her bleeding has now stopped but Akberet, currently recuperating at a relative’s house, cannot walk and has to keep her legs spread.⁶¹

In August 2021, Amnesty International published a report based on interviews with 63 women and girl survivors of sexual violence (conducted by Amnesty International researchers between March and June 2021) concluding that sexual violence in the context of the conflict **‘has been accompanied by shocking levels of brutality, including beatings, death threats, and ethnic slurs.** (...) It is often accompanied by threats and by additional acts of physical and psychological torture aimed at causing lasting fear, and physical and psychological damage.’⁶² The majority of the interviewed women and girls were **gang raped**. The victims included children and pregnant women. Some of the abused women and girls were held in sexual slavery for several weeks. As Amnesty International concluded: **‘The patterns of sexual violence emerging from survivors’ accounts indicate that the violations have been part of a**

⁶¹ See: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/21/a-tigrayan-womb-should-never-give-birth-rape-in-ethiopia-tigray#:~:text=%E2%80%9COur%20problem%20is%20with%20your,Akberet%20was%20left%20there%20unconscious.>

⁶² See: [https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/4569/2021/en/.](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/4569/2021/en/)

strategy to terrorise, degrade, and humiliate both the victims and their ethnic group.'

In December 2021, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch published a detailed account of the situation in Tigray, based on 427 interviews and other research conducted between December 2020 and March 2022, indicating that 'Amhara security forces are responsible for a surge of mass detentions, killings, and forced expulsions of ethnic Tigrayans in the Western Tigray territory of northern Ethiopia.'⁶³ In their joint report, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch cited several testimonies of women who have been subjected to these horrific crimes including:

'I was with other women. Four men raped me. Some took me and some took some of the women who were walking with me.... The [armed men] wore uniforms all [bearing] the same flag: the Ethiopia flag. They insulted me and they urinated on my head. They said: "You and your race are a foul, toilet-smelling race and should not be in our land."'

- Samhal, a 30-year-old survivor, May 2021

'Two of them raped me and then I lost consciousness and don't know how many more raped me, if all six [did], or not. They said: "You Tigrayans should disappear from the land west of Tekeze! You are evil and we are purifying your blood." It was early morning, before 7 a.m., ... about four days after the ENDF came to town. My children were with me, and they saw what they did to me. They are 7 and 2 years old.'

- Jamila, a 27-year-old survivor from Dansha

⁶³ See: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2022/04/06/we-will-erase-you-land/crimes-against-humanity-and-ethnic-cleansing-ethiopias>. See also: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2022-10-17/secretary-generals-opening-remarks-the-press-ethiopia>.

‘Some kept my daughters in a room and others took me to another room. [I am] not sure how many were in the room with me. They were going in and out. They abused me. Most of them raped me. I lost count of how many raped me. It was around midday. They raped me all day and throughout the night and kept me for three days and continued to rape me all the time. They said: "If you were male we would kill you, but girls can make Amhara babies."’⁶⁴

A Mekelle-located organisation collecting evidence submitted to the Inquiry testimonies they collected from victims and survivors:

[a woman went back to] Adwa to bring some food for herself and her daughter. When she was coming back home, she encountered four Eritrean forces near Enda Mariam Shewito. The four members of the Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF) stopped her and took her to a nearby bush where she was raped by two members of the EDF while the other two were watching the surrounding to shield the perpetrators. The survivor testified that they raped her turn by turn for around one hour till 6:00 PM and finally, they urinated on her body. She also remembers some derogatory words and insults such as “Agame [a word commonly used by Eritreans to insult Tigrayans], you will not have a child any more.”⁶⁵

The organisation further submitted over 40 pages of testimonies of women and girls being raped, including pregnant women (including a woman who was 32 weeks pregnant), children and elderly women:

‘An 8-year-old minor [walking with other children] was going back to her village after buying food items and heard that soldiers do not allow going through Agulae. Then, they decided to get [out of] the car and go on foot, hiding

⁶⁴ See: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2022/04/06/we-will-erase-you-land/crimes-against-humanity-and-ethnic-cleansing-ethiopias>.

⁶⁵ Anonymous M, written submission.

themselves not on the street but in a different way. While they were going, they came across three Eritrean soldiers in the Eritrean defence force uniform and with such dialect. Then three of the soldiers raped her by taking turns.’⁶⁶

Rita Kahsay, a leading international advocate for Tigray, of Irob heritage, and the executive director of Irob Anina Civil Society, travelled to Sudan to volunteer in refugee camps with Tigrayan survivors of CRSV. While Rita was not in Tigray when the war started, she described how overnight she lost contact with her family members. Ten of her family members were killed as they celebrated Christmas in January 2021. She testified to the Inquiry about her work in the Um Rakuba refugee camp in Sudan. She has been collecting evidence from the survivors of CRSV, transcribing it and ensuring that it is saved and preserved. She also testified how the conflict in Sudan (which erupted in April 2023) affected the Tigrayan refugees in camps as they feared for their lives yet again.

In 2023, Rita Kahsay, Rowena Kahsay, who was elected by Tigrayan diaspora communities in the UK as their senior advocate, and Sally Keeble, a former UK MP and Minister in the Department for International Development, and international development, relief and advocacy director, published a book summarising some of the findings of their research into the issue of rape and sexual violence in Tigray.⁶⁷ In their book, they cited a survivor, a mother from Baker, who testified that:

‘Early the next day, I set off on my journey to Sudan. We went one way, and people were being difficult. We found another way through Judy’s [Yodit] Michael. I was with an old woman and a man. Three Ethiopian National Defense Force members approached us. They were extremely aggressive. By the church were fields of sorghum. I was holding Dagm, and I put him down. Yitbarek

⁶⁶ Anonymous M, written submission.

⁶⁷ Rita Kahsay, Rowena Kahsay and Sally Keeble, ‘In Plain Sight. Sexual violence in the Tigray’ (2023).

started to cry, traumatised by what these men in uniform [had done] to his father 12 days before.

The men said to us, “We were sent to protect you. Where are you running to? Do nothing and don’t think about Woyane anymore. They are gone, and they will not save you.” We lied and told them we were just visiting the church and had no intention of running away.

Enraged, one of them grabbed my arm, and the other two followed. They threw me [into] the fields, and the older lady I was with covered my children’s eyes as they took turns hurting me. They told me my womb should be destroyed, and I should never give birth again. I froze, and I couldn’t breathe. Once they were done, I lost consciousness. When I regained consciousness, I didn’t know what to do with myself. The woman found holy water and splashed it on me. I eventually dragged myself up, in utter exhaustion, disgust, and heartbreak.

I was in so much pain, and there was so much discharge. I couldn’t speak to anyone. I was wearing layers of dresses because I didn’t have bags to keep my things in. I wanted

to run easily with my children if I needed to. Every layer was soaked, and I tied a scarf around my waist. I went to the church and sobbed, then gathered my children and set off for Hamdayet. I arrived that day and collapsed.⁶⁸

A medical professional volunteering in a refugee camp in Sudan indicated that ‘among the women I treat are survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, spanning a wide age range from 14 to 52 years. It’s truly difficult to express in words the sheer horror of their experiences and the profound consequences they endure.’⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Rita Kabsay, Rowena Kabsay and Sally Keeble, ‘In Plain Sight. Sexual violence in the Tigray’ (2023), 50ff.

⁶⁹ Rita Kabsay, Rowena Kabsay and Sally Keeble, ‘In Plain Sight. Sexual violence in the Tigray’ (2023), 50ff.

Further accounts of women subjected to rape and sexual violence are incorporated in the new publication 'Tearing the Body, Breaking the Spirit: Women And Girls' Rape Stories From The Tigray Genocidal War' from Birhan Gebrekirstos and Mulu Mesfin.

Scale and nature

In February 2022, the Tigray Health Bureau estimated there were approximately 120,000 survivors of sexual violence between the ages of 15 and 49 in liberated areas of Tigray.⁷⁰ United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA) 'Ethiopia Response to the Tigray Crisis' situation report estimated that at least 26,000 rape survivors would be expected to seek medical support services (on the basis of their service needs calculator formula).⁷¹ However, it is difficult to ascertain the true numbers. It is considered that the reported cases of rape and sexual violence are only the tip of the iceberg as such crimes continue to be underreported, among others due to associated stigma. Medical professionals testified to the Inquiry that women would often report it only where they needed medical assistance due to injuries inflicted upon them.

Physicians for Human Rights, a US-based not-for-profit human rights non-governmental organisation, submitted to the Inquiry that their analysis of 305 medical records of CRSV from Tigray, Ethiopia, revealed that 304 included reports of CRSV, overwhelmingly affecting women and girls, with survivors ranging in age from six to 69.⁷² Furthermore, it concluded that:

'rape committed by multiple perpetrators accounted for the majority of documented acts (233 reported incidents; 76%), followed by rape committed

⁷⁰ See: <https://omnatigray.org/omna-tigray-calls-on-the-international-community-to-take-a-stand-and-demand-justice-for-tigrayan-women-and-girls-this-international-womens-day/>.

⁷¹ See: <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/unfpa-ethiopia-response-tigray-crisis-situation-report-15-30-june-2021#:~:text=The%20Minimum%20Initial%20Service%20Package,in%20the%20region%20is%2029%25.>

⁷² PHR, written submission.

by a single perpetrator (69 reported incidents; 23%). The incidents examined in this review most commonly were carried out in groups, with a median of 3 perpetrators. It is noteworthy that there were 10 records in which patients reported experiencing confinement during the occurrence of multiple-perpetrator rape, consistent with sexual slavery. **The incidents frequently involved perpetrators who used weapons or other forms of violence.**⁷³

In July 2023, the British Medical Journal published a study conducted by a group of medical professionals that found a high number of cases of CRSV.⁷⁴ The study was based on a community-based survey conducted in 52 (out of 84) districts of Tigray, excluding its western zone and some districts bordering Eritrea due to security reasons, randomly selecting a total of 5171 women of reproductive age (15–49 years).

The study revealed that 43.3% (2241/5171) of women experienced at least one type of gender-based violence, including 9.7% (500/5171) reported sexual violence, 28.6% (1480/5171) physical violence, 28.6% (1480/5171) psychological violence, and 7.9% (411/5171) rape.

‘Of the sexual violence survivors, rape accounted for 82.2% (411/500) cases, of which 68.4% (247) reported being gang raped. Young women (aged 15–24 years) were the most affected by sexual violence, 29.2% (146/500). Commonly reported SGBV-related issues were physical trauma, 23.8% (533/2241), sexually transmitted infections, 16.5% (68/411), HIV infection, 2.7% (11/411), [forced]

⁷³ PHR, written submission.

⁷⁴ Girmatsion Fisseha¹, Tesfay Gebregzabher Gebrehiwot, Mengistu Welday Gebremichael, Shishay Wahdey, Gebrekiros Gebremichael Meles, Kebede Embaye Gezae, Awol Yemane Legesse, Akeza Awealom Asgedom, Mache Tsadik, Abraha Woldemichael, Aregawi Gebreyesus, Haftom Temesgen Abebe, Yibrah Alemayehu Haile, Selome Gezahegn, Maru Aregawi, Kiros T Berhane, Hagos Godefay, Afework Mulugeta.

pregnancy, 9.5% (39/411) and depression 19.2% (431/2241). Most survivors (89.7%) did not receive any post-violence medical or psychological support.⁷⁵

Physicians for Human Rights submitted evidence to the Inquiry that based on their research, the use of rape and sexual violence has been widespread and systematic:

‘The scale of cases, pattern of incidents, their non-random nature, and description of perpetrators suggest that these actions were both widespread and systematic. **The findings of this investigation are consistent with other publicly available reports and are indicative of the use of rape and other forms of sexual violence as a tool of war against civilian populations to terrorize communities and inflict grave harm.** This data points to the high likelihood that military forces, likely associated with the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments, have perpetrated atrocity crimes such as war crimes (rape, sexual slavery, torture) and crimes against humanity (persecution, torture, sexual slavery, rape) in Tigray as defined in the Rome Statute and international jurisprudence.

They also show that CRSV has continued even after the signing of the CoHA in November 2022. (...) This suggests a need for an ongoing independent investigation of these crimes, accountability for perpetrators, and urgent support for survivors of CRSV.⁷⁶

Impact

The use of rape and sexual violence, as seen in Tigray, has wide-ranging consequences for victims and survivors. Among others, Physicians for Human Rights submitted to the Inquiry that:

⁷⁵ Fisseha G, Gebrehiwot TG, Gebremichael MW, et al. War-related sexual and gender-based violence in Tigray, Northern Ethiopia: a community-based study. *BMJ Glob Health* 2023;8:e010270. doi:10.1136/bmjgh-2022-010270.

⁷⁶ PHR, written submission.

‘The medical records reflect serious physical and psychological consequences of CRSV, both short- and long-term, including mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (13%) and depression (17%), unintended pregnancy self-reported by the survivor (8%), and reproductive organ injuries and disorders (11%), including urinary incontinence, faecal incontinence, abnormal uterine bleeding, uterine prolapse, chronic pelvic pain, and fistulas. Records show that in multiple instances CRSV may have resulted in pregnancy (27% of patients tested for pregnancy at the time of examination were positive) or contraction of HIV (11% of patients tested for HIV were positive).

The medical records reviewed showed that 170 incidents occurred before the signing of the CoHA in November 2022 and 128 incidents occurred after November 2022. However, the majority of records reviewed were from patient visits in 2023, indicating delays in reporting incidents of CRSV. Although it is unclear what caused the delays (e.g. stigma, fear for one’s safety, ongoing conflict affecting transportation and access to health facilities), such delays suggest an underreporting of cases of CRSV.⁷⁷

A non-governmental organisation supporting survivors in Mekelle submitted in their response to the Inquiry that:

‘As a result of the SGBV, most of the survivors [they have been in contact with] are left with serious bodily and mental health problems and some of them have attempted to commit suicide. Some of the injuries that the survivors have experienced are permanent and long-lasting, some survivors have lost their hearing, some have lost sight, some their mental capacity and emotional stability, and others their mobility. Such types of injuries are irreversible and difficult for the survivors to accept. Our organisation is working to help the

⁷⁷ PHR, written submission.

survivors by giving psychological, financial, and transportation costs to health centres and livelihood supports that can help them to be empowered and to be healed physically and psychologically, in their livelihood and help them to [get] back to their normal life.

Some survivors have lost their fertility as a result of the rape that they have experienced. Fistula and uterine prolapse are among the most serious physical reproductive health problems faced by the survivors which have resulted in the permanent infertility of the SGBV survivors. Others have lost all interest in marriage and marital relationships, while psychological stress has also caused fertility loss in many.

As a result of the rape most of the survivors were infected with HIV or STDs and some were left with [forced] pregnancies. The absence of healthcare centres made things complicated and there was no post-rape medical care (...). As the situation of most cases shows, the worst thing is that the mothers who gave birth to the children of the perpetrators are mostly facing difficulties in [having] a normal mother-child relationship. They are under stress and the psychological trauma continues, these incidents have negative impacts on the social cohesion of the community, not only the mother-child relationship but the relationship of the mother and the child with relatives and the community has also been troubled.⁷⁸

One of the main themes across the submissions was the issue that victims and survivors have not been provided with the assistance they need. A medical doctor volunteering in a refugee camp in Sudan reported the effects of the atrocities upon the victims (but also how his work affected him) and the lack of assistance:

⁷⁸ Written submission, anonymous MM.

‘As a healthcare provider, I have witnessed survivors contracting HIV, sexually transmitted diseases, facing [forced] pregnancies, and suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and depression. Listening to their stories has left me with countless sleepless nights. The lack of resources and capacity to provide adequate help only exacerbates my frustration. The absence of specialised practitioners to assist in these cases compounds the challenges. Another painful aspect is the lack of organisation and information sharing among the organisations responsible for handling cases of conflict-related sexual violence. There is no centralised one-stop centre and no clear coordination mechanism between medical, psychological, and legal avenues of care and redress. As a result, survivors often fail to receive comprehensive services, let alone legal justice. This discourages victims from coming forward and seeking the help they desperately need.’⁷⁹

Dr Hale Teka, Associate Professor in Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Mekelle University, and Obstetrician and Gynaecologist at Ayder Hospital in Mekelle reported seeing **‘women who had been raped repeatedly by soldiers, some of whom had been held captive for days or even weeks. Many of these women had also been subjected to torture, including beatings, electric shocks, and burning. We saw girls as young as four who had been raped by multiple men, leaving them with physical injuries and psychological scars that would last a lifetime. We also saw mothers as old as 90-year-olds who sustained multiple injuries from gender-based violence.’**⁸⁰

Dr Hale Teka testified to the lack of medical assistance to the victims and survivors and the difficult decisions he faced in the hospital where he works:

⁷⁹ Rita Kahsay, Rowena Kahsay and Sally Keeble, ‘In Plain Sight. Sexual violence in the Tigray’ (2023), 73ff.

⁸⁰ Rita Kahsay, Rowena Kahsay and Sally Keeble, ‘In Plain Sight. Sexual violence in the Tigray’ (2023), 77ff.

‘We were forced to wash used gloves to reuse them. Patients were asked to bring their own clothes so that they [could] be cut into pieces to be used as surgical gauze. The hospital’s drug and therapeutic committee approved the use of expired drugs—a dangerous but necessary calculus of suffering. Thousands of emergency surgeries were cancelled due to a lack of anaesthetic drugs, medical equipment, and power outages. Due to the complete absence of chemotherapeutic drugs and lack of surgeries, cancer patients were sent home to die. Patients who needed dialysis services were devoid of the right to life. The communications blackout, interruption of banking services, military curfews, and aerial and drone bombardments during the active war period brought serious impediments to patient care. Many remained at home because they [could not] afford the rarely available expensive public transport. Some others do not seek care because they believe that the hospitals are not equipped to provide care. Those who came to the hospitals seeking care usually present late in the course of their disease due to lack of transport and the disruption of referral services.’⁸¹

This had a significant effect on mortality rates in Tigray. As Dr Hale Teka reported, ‘we found out that the maternal mortality ratio stood at 840 (739-914 95% CI) per 100,000 live births corresponding to maternal mortality in Ethiopia 22 years ago.’⁸² This is a significant pushback after two decades of steady progress and improvement.

As Dr Hale Teka further added,

‘Neonatal mortality has also quadrupled, indicating a distressing impact on the survival of newborns. Additionally, infant mortality and under-five mortality rates

⁸¹ Rita Kabsay, Rowena Kabsay and Sally Keeble, ‘In Plain Sight. Sexual violence in the Tigray’ (2023), 77ff.

⁸² Rita Kabsay, Rowena Kabsay and Sally Keeble, ‘In Plain Sight. Sexual violence in the Tigray’ (2023), 77ff.

have doubled, signifying the heightened vulnerability of young children in this conflict-affected region.⁸³

3. STARVATION AND OTHER METHODS TO BRING ABOUT THE DESTRUCTION

There is a growing body of evidence suggesting that starvation in Tigray is not an unintended consequence of the conflict but indeed a method of war.

In April 2021, the World Peace Foundation, a philanthropic foundation for research into peace processes affiliated with the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, published a report engaging with the evidence of the crime of starvation.⁸⁴

This includes:

‘There has been **widespread pillage and looting**, often reaching systematic asset-stripping. Many such instances have been videotaped, photographed, described through in-person accounts, or caught on satellite and fire-imaging software. (...)

An increasing number of reports, from human rights organisations and humanitarian actors, tell of soldiers inflicting **damage to schools and universities, market stands, government offices, commercial shops including electronics and cosmetic businesses, grocers, food processing and manufacturing factories, health centres, water and sanitation offices, petrol stations, hotels, banks, microfinance institution offices, private houses, and other structures**. Soldiers have destroyed and/or taken assets including “luxury goods, machinery (such as generators and water pumps), vehicles (including bicycles, trucks, three-wheel vehicles, and cars, sometimes taken from their garage), as well as medication, furniture, household items, clothing, food, and drink.” (...)

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ See: <https://sites.tufts.edu/wpf/files/2021/04/Starving-Tigray-report-final.pdf>.

A combination of open-source satellite imagery, internal US Government reporting, and fire tracking data from NASA Fire Information and Resource Management System (FIRMS) and Fires in Settlement (FIRIS) reveal that Eritrean and Ethiopian and Eritrean forces appear to be **burning what they are not able to carry with them**. Independent analyst, Ryan O'Farrell, revealed a trail of fires, verified through satellite and FIRMS data, following Eritrean and Ethiopian forces throughout their offensives in Southern Tigray. Beginning January 15, FIRIS detected fires on the outskirts of Humera that, over four days, destroyed warehouses and the surrounding fields. Recent satellite imagery shows the burnt remains of at least 508 structures in the town of Gijet, Southern Tigray, where a Sky News team later corroborated the damage and documented the burning of **grain stores for humans and livestock**. (...)

Military campaigns have rendered regional **health infrastructure** largely non-functional. As confirmed by the Regional Health Bureau of Tigray and OCHA, many hospitals have been struck by artillery or looted of their equipment, medications, and other vital items.¹³⁸ A video documents a ransacked room of Slekleka Hospital. Teams from Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) visited 106 health facilities between mid-December 2020 and March 2021, finding only 13% functional with nearly 70% looted and 30% damaged. (...)

Water infrastructure has also been targeted for destruction and looting, with the Water, Hygiene, and Sanitation (WASH) Cluster reporting that more than 250 motorized pumps in towns were out of order by the beginning of March. Due to access constraints, the status of some 11,000 handpumps in rural areas is still unknown. Without electricity, many [watersources] were immediately rendered useless in early November. Médecins Sans Frontières told AP News in January

that just two of the 21 wells still worked in Adigrat, a city of more than 140,000.
(...)⁸⁵

Professor Gebrekidan Gebresilassie Eshetu, President and CEO of the Global Society of Tigray Scholars and Professionals, submitted that a deliberate aim of the atrocities was to destroy the socioeconomic infrastructure the communities relied upon. To this end, the Eritrean Defense Forces destroyed the water supply of Kissad Gaba.

‘According to the key informants, the incident (destruction) was committed where no war was ongoing and the area was under the control of the Eritrean forces. One of the witnesses interviewed had a small hotel and the Eritrean forces were living in his hotel for almost a month after the occupation of the town during the wartime in Tigray. He is informed that the command to fully destroy the water treatment and supply system of Kissad Gaba was given by three Eritrean commanders of that area.’⁸⁶

This has led to the people of Kissad Gaba now being forced to drink unsanitary water, with many dying or becoming unwell due to waterborne diseases.

In relation to the destruction of health infrastructure, Dr Hale Teka testified that ‘A few months into the war nearly 87% of the healthcare institutions in the region were no longer functioning. This left the civilian population in the region with few options for healthcare.’⁸⁷ This had a devastating effect on the communities.

In October 2021, Mark Lowcock, UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, commented on the issue of starvation in Tigray, including the attempts to block aid from the region:

⁸⁵ See: <https://sites.tufts.edu/wpf/files/2021/04/Starving-Tigray-report-final.pdf>.

⁸⁶ Professor Gebrekidan Gebresilassie Eshetu, written submission.

⁸⁷ Dr Hale Teka, written submission.

‘There's not just an attempt to starve six million people but an attempt to cover up what's going on. What we're seeing play out, I think, is **potentially the worst famine the world has seen in the 21st century.** (...) What's happening is that Ethiopian authorities are running a **sophisticated campaign to stop aid from getting in by**, for example, **making it impossible for truck drivers to operate by setting up checkpoints with officials and militia people, by preventing fuel from getting in.** And what they are trying to do is starve the population of Tigray into subjugation or out of existence, but to avoid the opprobrium that would still be associated with a deliberate, successful attempt to create a famine taking the lives of millions of people.’⁸⁸

In November 2021, Teklehaymanot G. Weldemichel, Associate Professor in the Faculty of Social and Educational Sciences at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, indicated that ‘several factors contribute to creating the current famine conditions in Tigray. Systematic looting and destruction of Tigray’s economy during the war, the campaign of draining Tigray’s financial resources, and the alleged “unilateral ceasefire”, declared by the Ethiopian government at the end of June when it was forced to leave Mekelle following military losses, as a form of violence and as a siege.’⁸⁹

In response to the Inquiry, Tigrayan Advocacy and Development Association, a UK-based non-governmental organisation promoting democracy, peace, human rights, justice and economic opportunities in Tigray through advocacy and development work, submitted that:

⁸⁸ See: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/ethiopias-sophisticated-campaign-to-withhold-food-fuel-and-other-aid-from-tigray#:~:text=ls%20the%20Ethiopian%20government%20trying,cover%20up%20what's%20going%20on>

⁸⁹ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/19427786211061431>.

'The Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Amhara forces left **a trail of scorched earth policy in which they deliberately burned houses, forests, and field crops ready for harvest; cut mango orchards, papaya trees, and plant nurseries; mixed grains with soil; looted and slaughtered livestock; and killed hundreds of protected wild animals.** To ensure no harvest for the next season, ENDF, EDF, ASF,⁹⁰ and Fano militia⁹¹ worked in tandem to block vital agricultural supplies, including seeds, destroyed and looted farm tools and prevented farmers from tilling their land during the most crucial period.'⁹²

4. CLASSIFICATION OF THE ATROCITY CRIMES IN TIGRAY

In March 2023, US Secretary Blinken determined that members of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF), Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF), Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) forces, and Amhara forces committed **war crimes** during the conflict in northern Ethiopia. Members of the ENDF, EDF, and Amhara forces also committed **crimes against humanity, including murder, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and persecution.** Members of the Amhara forces also committed the **crime against humanity of deportation or forcible transfer and committed ethnic cleansing** in western Tigray.⁹³

Several other actors categorised the atrocities as crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.⁹⁴ **This is despite the fact that the evidence in the joint report entitled 'We Will Erase You from This Land' may in itself suggest genocide.**

⁹⁰ Amhara Regional Police Special Forces.

⁹¹ An informal Amhara militia group.

⁹² Tigrayan Advocacy and Development Association, written submission.

⁹³ See: <https://www.state.gov/war-crimes-crimes-against-humanity-and-ethnic-cleansing-in-ethiopia/>.

⁹⁴ See: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2022/04/06/we-will-erase-you-land/crimes-against-humanity-and-ethnic-cleansing-ethiopia>.

The inclusion of ‘ethnic cleansing’ is of importance here. Ethnic cleansing is not recognised as an international crime, and the wording is often resorted to suggesting elements of the crime of genocide without a clear determination of the crime. Ethnic cleansing also does not have a universally recognised definition. A United Nations Commission of Experts mandated to look into violations of international humanitarian law committed in the territory of the former Yugoslavia described ethnic cleansing as ‘a purposeful policy designed by one ethnic or religious group to remove by violent and terror-inspiring means the civilian population of another ethnic or religious group from certain geographic areas.’⁹⁵ However, it further added that the practices could include ‘murder, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, extra-judicial executions, rape and sexual assaults, confinement of civilian population in ghetto areas, forcible removal, displacement and deportation of civilian population, deliberate military attacks or threats of attacks on civilians and civilian areas, and wanton destruction of property,’⁹⁶ and as such, blurred the lines between ‘ethnic cleansing’ and international crimes. Indeed, the practices identified by the UN Commission of Experts as ‘ethnic cleansing’ may constitute crimes against humanity and genocide and should be analysed as such. **Any reference to ‘ethnic cleansing’ should be followed by an analysis of the situation against the elements of international crimes.**

In September 2023, the International Commission of Experts on Ethiopia published its findings of international crimes stating that:

‘Given the nexus of investigated incidents and patterns to the non-international armed conflict, the Commission finds reasonable grounds to believe that many of the violations committed by the ENDF, EDF and allied regional special forces, including Amhara Special Forces and Afar Special Forces and militias, in particular fano, in Tigray region and against Tigrayans elsewhere since 3

⁹⁵ See: <https://daccess-ods.un.org/tmp/3295201.06315613.html>.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

November 2020 amount to war crimes – including violence to life and person; outrages upon personal dignity; intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population; pillage; rape; sexual slavery; sexual violence; and the intentional use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare. Members of the EDF further committed the war crime of directing attacks against personnel involved in humanitarian assistance.

In this context, the Commission finds that members of the Amhara Special Forces and Amhara regional police, with the involvement of fano, additionally committed the war crime of ordering the displacement of the civilian population from Western Tigray for reasons related to the conflict and absent military necessity or security reasons.

There are also reasonable grounds to believe that Tigrayan and allied fighters committed war crimes in Amhara region between July and December 2021 and in Afar Region between November 2021 and March 2022. The Commission finds these to be the war crimes of violence to life and person; outrages upon personal dignity; intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population; pillage; rape; sexual slavery; and sexual violence.

The Commission further finds that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the acts committed by the ENDF, EDF and allied regional special forces, including Amhara Special Forces and Afar Special Forces and militias, in particular fano, constitute a widespread and systematic attack directed against the civilian population. Accordingly, it finds that members of these forces committed the crimes against humanity of murder; torture; rape; acts of a sexual nature of comparable gravity; sexual slavery; enslavement; imprisonment or other severe deprivation of liberty, enforced disappearance; deportation or forcible transfer of population; persecution on intersecting ethnic and gender grounds; and other inhumane acts.

The Commission maintains a confidential list with the names, affiliation and rank and/or position of alleged perpetrators of violations and abuses. Given the duration and scale of the conflict in Tigray, Amhara and Afar, it emphasizes the need for further investigations, including into the roles, actions, and knowledge of individuals implicated in international crimes, including through command and superior responsibility.⁹⁷

The Commission did not comment on the issue of genocide. However, it briefly engaged with the indicators and triggers in the UN Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes. It expressed deep concern about:

‘the presence of many of the indicators and triggers contained in the UN Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes, including in particular polarisation and hatred along ethnic lines. The Commission further warned of the imminent threat of further and more pronounced atrocity crimes.

During the reporting period, the Commission continued to monitor the presence of indicators of and triggers for atrocity crimes. It remains deeply concerned that many of the risk factors remain present in Ethiopia, even after the COHA.

The Commission cannot overstate the gravity of violations and crimes perpetrated in Ethiopia since 3 November 2020 by all parties to the conflict, and in particular the ENDF, EDF and allied forces. The continuing presence of Eritrean and Amhara forces in Tigray, in particular ongoing accounts of rape and sexual violence against women and girls, are deeply disturbing. The persistence of this situation more than 10 months after the COHA confirms not only an ongoing pattern of serious violations, but strongly indicates a policy of impunity and tolerance of serious violations on the part of the Ethiopian State.

⁹⁷ See: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/chreetiopia/A_HRC_54_55_AUV.pdf.

Meanwhile, impunity for past atrocities by Ethiopian and Eritrean forces remains firmly entrenched.

Instability, tension and the potential for repetition of patterned violations and crimes including arbitrary arrests, rape and extrajudicial executions characterize the ongoing reliance on command posts and declared states of emergency. This is highlighted by the new state of emergency declared in August 2023. Alarming reports of violations committed against Amhara civilians are emerging in spite of government-imposed interruptions to internet and telecommunications.

The situation is compounded by the weakness of state structures which should offer protection. This includes lack of effective protection by national law, as well as lack of independence of national institutions, in particular the judiciary and law enforcement. Widespread mistrust in state institutions and domestic accountability mechanisms, already the product of long-standing impunity, has been exacerbated by the Government's politization of the transitional justice process. In this context, absence of effective external oversight and monitoring mechanisms, as well as threats, intimidation and harassment against human rights defenders, journalists and others is deeply troubling.⁹⁸

Could the atrocities in Tigray amount to genocide?

The issue of genocide in Tigray has not yet been considered by an independent investigation. **It is not clear from the above determinations of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing, what steps have been (or not) taken to consider and analyse the evidence against the elements of genocide in Article II of the Genocide Convention.**

⁹⁸ Ibid.

The below briefly considers the kind of evidence relevant under the different headings of the elements of genocide.

Protected groups

Genocide is a crime perpetrated against a group, targeting group identity, and not against an individual.⁹⁹ The Genocide Convention articulates four types of groups that the convention exclusively applies to, namely, national, ethnic, racial, and religious groups. For the definition of genocide to be met, one would have to ensure that the targeted people are both from a distinct group and one of the four that are identified.

Tigrayans are an ethnic group indigenous to the Tigray Region of northern Ethiopia, and as such, they qualify as a protected group for the purposes of the Genocide Convention.

Furthermore, in Tigray, there are other ethnic minority groups that are targeted, including Irob and Kunama. Their situation is discussed in the subsequent section.

Prohibited acts

Killing is often erroneously considered to be the ultimate determinant of genocide; it is but one of them. Killing is the most universally recognised method to bring about genocide, however, Article II of the Genocide Convention identifies four other genocidal methods that may be considered:

Contrary to popular belief, the crime of genocide does not imply the actual extermination of a group in its entirety but is understood as such once any one of the acts mentioned in Article II is committed with the specific intent to destroy “in whole or in part” a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ *Prosecutor v Karadžić* (Judgment) IT-95-5/18-T (24 March 2016) 541.

¹⁰⁰ *Prosecutor v Akayesu*, ICTR-96-4-T (2 September 1998) 497.

The evidence discussed in this report can be classified as the following prohibited acts under Article II of the Genocide Convention:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group.

Killing members of the group

The number of Tigrayans killed in the two years of the war is staggering and may be as high as 600,000 - 800,000 people. The above indicates several mass killings perpetrated against the Tigrayans. Many of the submissions received by the Inquiry contained names and descriptions of mass killings that have not been investigated by any independent body as yet. The above includes examples of two such cases. All cases of alleged mass killings and killings must be investigated by an independent body.

As it is clear from many past cases of atrocity crimes, mass graves can be discovered decades after the atrocities. As such, the true number of those killed may not be known for decades, if ever.

Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group and imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group

In relation to the use of rape and sexual violence, which may fall within the purview of causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group and imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group, Rita Kahsay, Rowena Kahsay and Sally Keeble commented that:

'The attempted sterilisation or forced impregnation of women in Tigray is premised on the idea that their body acts as a medium for preserving or

disrupting ethnic identity. In this context, a male perpetrator can either prevent a woman from producing children in her ethnic image through damaging her reproductive capacities or force her through rape and impregnation to have a child of his ethnic distinction, regardless of her own. She is used as a boundary-marker: a method of legitimising male collective ethnicity. One survivor referred to this as a process of “Amharisation” in reference to the attempt to transfer Amhara ethnic identity from the perpetrator to the abused women.’¹⁰¹

Furthermore, the previous section contains strong evidence of brutality that was intended to result in women being infertile and also evidence of forcible impregnation of women to ensure that their children would not be ethnic Tigrayans.

A number of individuals and groups have been collecting the data on the use of rape and sexual violence and its effects on women in Tigray. It is crucial that all this evidence is collated and analysed by an independent mechanism, for example, such as the International Commission of Experts on Ethiopia. Furthermore, the evidence should be further taken over by an international or regional tribunal to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators.

Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part

The above explains how the humanitarian crisis was deliberately inflicted upon Tigray, with the widespread destruction but also with blockages of humanitarian assistance that ultimately aimed the starvation of the people of Tigray.

Specific intent

¹⁰¹ Rita Kabsay, Rowena Kabsay and Sally Keeble, ‘In Plain Sight. Sexual violence in the Tigray’ (2023), 99.

Not all international crimes amount to genocide. For international crimes to meet the legal definition of genocide they must be carried out with the *specific intent* to destroy a protected group in whole or in part. Indeed, the key element to differentiate genocide from other international crimes is the intention to destroy a protected group. In the case of *Prosecutor v Akayesu*, Jean-Paul Akayesu, the court noted:

‘Genocide is distinct from other crimes in as much as it embodies a special intent or *dolus specialis*. The special intent of a crime is the specific intention, required as a constitutive element of the crime, which demands that the perpetrator clearly seeks to produce the act charged. Thus, the special intent in the crime of genocide lies in *‘the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such.’*¹⁰²

Specific intent may be determined directly from the words or actions of alleged perpetrators, or indirectly inferred from the surrounding facts or circumstances in which prohibited acts were committed. ‘In assessing evidence of genocidal intent, [a court] should consider whether “all of the evidence, taken together, demonstrates a genocidal mental state”, instead of considering separately whether an accused intended to destroy a protected group through each of the relevant acts of genocide.’¹⁰³

The Inquiry received submissions that may help to establish the specific intent to annihilate the protected group in whole or in part. This evidence includes examples of hate speech and propaganda. Indeed, the extensive proliferation of hate speech against the Tigrayans, including by Government officials and armed forces, is particularly illuminating in the assessment of this specific intent to destroy the protected group.

¹⁰² *Prosecutor v Akayesu* (Judgment) ICTR-96-4 (2 September 1998) 498.

¹⁰³ *Prosecutor v Karadžić* (Judgment) ICTY-95-5/18-T (24 March 2016) 550.

Hate Speech and Propaganda

Hate speech and propaganda against Tigrayans were visible during the Tigray war but also before it.

In June 2021, ABC News reported that the EU Envoy on Ethiopia, Pekka Haavisto, Finland's Foreign Minister, stated that behind closed doors, high-level Ethiopian officials, including Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and other ministers, told him in a meeting in February 2021 that 'they are going to **wipe out the Tigrayans for 100 years**.'¹⁰⁴ EU Envoy Haavisto confirmed that

'When I met the Ethiopian leadership in February they really used this kind of language, that they are going to destroy the Tigrayans, they are going to wipe out the Tigrayans for 100 years and so forth. (...) If you wipe out your national minority, well, what is it? You cannot destroy all the people, you cannot destroy all the population in Tigray. And I think that's very obvious, that we have to react because it looks for us like ethnic cleansing. It is a very, very serious act if this is true.'¹⁰⁵

Because of such ever-present rhetoric, on 8 November 2021, Alice Wairimu Nderitu, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, issued a statement on the situation in Ethiopia expressing her concerns about the deteriorating situation in the country:

'where the escalation of violence, increased incidence of ethnically and religiously motivated hate speech, displacement of populations and destruction of property display serious indicators of risk of commission of atrocity crimes. (...) Current developments occur in [the] context of a history of inter-ethnic conflict; ongoing human rights violations and absence of accountability;

¹⁰⁴ See: <https://apnews.com/article/europe-ethiopia-africa-ffd3dc3faf15d0501fd87cafe274e65a/>.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

increased politicisation of identity and past grievances; **increased inflammatory rhetoric, propaganda campaigns or hate speech**; sexual and gender-based violence and creation of, or increased support to, militia or paramilitary groups. (...)

These all constitute risk factors for atrocity crimes. Given their potential impact in triggering large-scale violence, allegations of hate speech by ethnic and religious leaders are particularly concerning. (...) Accountability constitutes an essential prerequisite for prevention and must be prioritised as such. This includes tech and social media companies, to which I am grateful for their efforts to limit the reach of inflammatory statements by political actors.¹⁰⁶

In September 2022, the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia concluded that the indicators and triggers contained in the UN Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes are present in Ethiopia including many that touch upon the issue of hate speech and propaganda, including

‘Dissemination of hate speech and absence of independent mechanisms to address it;

Politicisation of identity;

Imposition of strict controls on the use of communication channels, including Internet shutdowns.¹⁰⁷

In October 2022, Special Adviser Wairimu Nderitu expressed her dismay at

‘the use of inflammatory language by political leaders and armed groups in the Tigray conflict that continues unabated. There is discourse often propagated

¹⁰⁶ See: <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/Nderitu%20Statement%208%20November%202021.pdf>.

¹⁰⁷ See: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G22/515/29/PDF/G2251529.pdf?OpenElement>.

through social media, which dehumanises groups by likening them to a “virus” that should be eradicated, to a “cancer” that should be treated because “if a single cell is left untreated, that single cell will expand and affect the whole body” and calling for the “killing of every single youth from Tigray” which is particularly dangerous. Diaspora blogs that call for the genocide of the Tigray people are also of deep concern. Hate speech and incitement to violence is fuelling the normalisation of extreme violence not just in Tigray and neighbouring Amhara and Afar regions, but in Oromia and other parts of the country too.¹⁰⁸

Several submissions to the Inquiry raised the issue of hate speech and propaganda.

A Tigray-based organisation submitted to the Inquiry that the atrocities in Tigray were planned and the preparatory propaganda was present long before November 2020.¹⁰⁹ As they indicated, as early as 2003, Eskindir Nega, the then journalist and human rights activist and now political party leader, wrote in a magazine that

‘We, Habesha people, didn’t learn from the Germans. We couldn’t even preserve the history of our fathers. We are humiliated. Indeed, very humiliated. We should have acted with determination to eliminate racists and traitors from the face of Ethiopia. If we lacked the courage to do that, we should have at least preserved our territorial integrity and sovereignty. But we didn’t. History recorded this as a bad failure.’¹¹⁰

As a Tigray-based organisation submitted, ‘This plan [was] echoed in 2016 by [Ethiopian Satellite Radio and Television] ESAT, a private broadcast media based in

¹⁰⁸ See: <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/SA-Statement-on-Ethiopia.pdf>.

¹⁰⁹ See: Written submission, anonymous TBO.

¹¹⁰ See: Askual newspaper May 2004. As reported here: <https://globenewsnet.com/opinion/ethiopian-opposition-leader-who-called-for-extermination-of-tigrayan-forces-is-also-a-publicized-nazi-sympathizer-and-holocaust-apologist/>.

Washington DC, which openly called on all Ethiopians (95%) to stand and exterminate Tigrayans, which according to the news constitute only 5% of the total population of Ethiopia.¹¹¹ Reportedly, ESAT Media called upon its listeners:

‘So, what are we waiting for? Are we waiting for them to finish us off one by one? From now on, it is foolish and naive to expect any solutions through dialogue.

Whether we like it or not, there is only one option: pay them back in their own coin and use force to restore our freedom. One way of getting rid of rotten fish is to drain the sea.¹¹²

Other official statements made the point even stronger. For example, on 18 July 2021, Ethiopia’s Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali, in his speech, referred to Tigrayans using dehumanising language such as ‘enemies’ as a ‘cancer,’ ‘hyena,’ and ‘weed’ who must be eradicated.¹¹³ According to Deutsche Welle (DW), this rhetoric then spread across social media.¹¹⁴ As DW added,

‘On the Facebook page of DW’s Amharic language service, a flood of denigrating comments in the direction of Tigray have been appearing for weeks. Ludger Schadomsky, head of DW Amharic Service, reports a significant spike in problematic and inflammatory postings.

Even if the majority of the comments are directed against the "TPLF junta" or "TPLF mafia," Tigrayans have also been denigrated as "children of the military junta," for example, or a people who must be "destroyed and eliminated". One

¹¹¹ Written submission, anonymous TBO.

¹¹² See: <https://tghat.com/2022/06/22/ethiopias-hate-media-soundtrack-to-tigray-genocide/>.

¹¹³ See Appendix A for the full text of this statement.

¹¹⁴ See: <https://www.dw.com/en/hate-speech-in-ethiopia-abiy-ahmed-resurrects-old-demons/a-55800705>.

post mentions the hatred of the "100 million Ethiopians" for "five million Tigrayans."¹¹⁵

Furthermore, the Inquiry has heard that 'during his address to the domestic audience Prime Minister Abiy often glorified war crimes committed by ENDF and allied forces. He once proudly declared that his forces - whom he described as gallant - turned Mekelle to Beshasha, a small town, adding that they have completely stripped Mekelle of its political, economic and societal significance.'¹¹⁶

According to an unofficial translation of the speech, as reported by Tghat, Prime Minister Abiy stated:

'When we went to Mekelle seven-eight months ago, the conflict at the time was between a centre of government and a centre for both known and unknown resources. When we withdrew – with the exception of 80,000 more people that have been embedded and left (in the population) to steal and rob – **It is not at this time any different from Abiy-Adi, Sheraro, or Beshasha. It is no longer a centre with any power [economic or military] as it now stands. As things stand we see no difference (now) between Mekelle, Abiy Addi, or any other places.**'¹¹⁷

Similar rhetoric was spread by high-level officials of the Ethiopian government, including political leaders, but also social media activists and government-affiliated media.

A submission to the Inquiry suggested that:

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Written submission, TW and SM. See English translation: <https://www.tghat.com/2021/07/23/english-translation-of-statement-by-pm-abiy-ahmed-following-the-tdf-re-capture-of-mekelle/>.

¹¹⁷ See: <https://www.tghat.com/2021/07/23/english-translation-of-statement-by-pm-abiy-ahmed-following-the-tdf-re-capture-of-mekelle/>.

'The analysis has also shown that this is part of the indoctrination of the forces who were deployed to Tigray. This is evidenced by the speeches that officials and influential individuals gave to the military forces in the frontlines and videos by the prime minister and federal forces admitting the hate that the national army has adopted against Tigrayans. **On 30 June 2021, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali admitted that the federal forces see every person in Tigray as an enemy.** Daniel Kibret, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister went to the front and gave a speech to the federal forces to fight with full hate. In a televised public address, Daniel Kibret told Ethiopians that the wombs of Tigrayan women should not be allowed to produce offspring that he claimed were evil. He said, **"These people (Tigrayans and Tigray's leadership) and their likes should not be repeated; Satan was the last when it was defeated and it was not repeated. These people too shall be the last of their kind.... a land that produces a weed like them shall not exist..they should be erased including from everyone's memory."**¹¹⁸

The submission continued:

'In multiple leaked videos, Federal forces can be seen recording themselves committing atrocities and telling each other to do more. They can be heard telling each other to **"Burn the whole town down"** as they torched down residential areas in Tigray. A Federal Force officer responding to a question in a meeting told officers "that churches, general population or any youth near anyone carrying a weapon should be attacked." In another video, ENDF troops recorded themselves stating **"We will not leave these dirty Tigrayans, Together [with the Eritrean army], we will finish them off. We will cut off their scrota."** Similarly, a leader of an Amhara ethnic militia group stated **"We will follow the lice-infested Tigrayans and eradicate them."** (....)

¹¹⁸ See video here: <https://globenewsnets.com/news/us-blasts-dangerous-rhetoric-by-ally-of-ethiopia-pm/>.

A more revealing video was once recorded by federal forces stoning and abusing a Tigrayan young boy while also affirming which village he is from. “You are from Abiy Addi. Right?” said one of the members of the ENDF unit. In the video were over 50 forces, some proudly recording and others encouraging each other to beat the boy. Another member said “**Don’t kill him yet, we want them to suffer. They do not die easily. Almost all of the ones we left for dead got up,**” as they continued to stone, abuse and mock the Tigrayan child.¹¹⁹

Andargachew Tsige, an Ethiopian politician with UK citizenship who was released from death row in Ethiopia in 2018 after a high-profile government lobbying effort, is reported to incite violence by saying: ‘I tell you, you must not hesitate from resorting to the most barbaric of cruelties when you face them. (...) You must be merciless, you must act beyond what our [ethnic] Amhara or Ethiopian cultural values permit.’¹²⁰ Mehari Tadele Maru, a visiting professor at the European University Institute in Florence considered the speech as genocidal incitement against Tigrayans.¹²¹

Tghat submitted to the Inquiry that they have been collecting and archiving content under two categories: ‘The first is hate rhetoric and incitement to violence from official government entities – on both mainstream and social media. The second consists of content from influential actors– including religious leaders, social media activists and other people with significant influence.’¹²² Having analysed the evidence, Tghat concluded that:

¹¹⁹ Written submission, TW and SM.

¹²⁰ See: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/terror-and-security/briton-released-death-row-accused-inciting-genocide-ethiopia/#:~:text=Andargachew%20Tsege%2C%20an%20Ethiopian%2Dborn,speech%20seen%20by%20The%20Telegraph. See also: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UOTbCZeawJw>.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Tghat, written submission.

[hate speech] has been institutionalised and systemic. A few prominent examples establishing these elements include the speeches and press releases by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and his office, posts by the ENDF social-media page, and speeches by prominent government officials like Taye Dendea, then Peace Minister, and Daniel Kibret, Senior Advisor to the Prime Minister. In early 2021, high government officials in Addis Ababa told Pekka Haavisto, Finland's Foreign Minister and an EU envoy to the Horn of Africa at the time, that their goal was to "wipe out the Tigrayans."

Government officials and influential Ethiopians promoting the war persistently promoted stopping the "curse", i.e., the Tigrayan political movements, from "the source" – "drain the sea in order to catch the fish" - including on state-led national broadcasting television stations. Extreme brutality using graphic language was continually promoted by influential individuals, like Worku Ayteneh, an Amhara businessman, and Andargachew Tsige, a prominent politician and a close ally of the prime minister among others. Yohannes Buayalew, formerly in the leadership of the Amhara Prosperity Party, urged that the Amhara people needed to learn to hate and asked entertainers to preach hate through their artistic works.¹²³

This rhetoric from public officials and prominent individuals incited widespread calls for round-ups, slaughters, rape and sexual abuses, mob lynching and burning alive of Tigrayans, destruction and confiscation of Tigrayan-owned businesses and economic infrastructures, and breaking the Tigrayan morale, from all corners of the public. It also encouraged brutality and a sense of impunity amongst ENDF forces and their allies. Accordingly, on multiple leaked videos, Federal forces can be seen filming themselves committing atrocities and encouraging each other to more brutality. An

¹²³ See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-IVYjeCHkw>.

example of this kind of filming was later shared on Telegram groups and other social media platforms that were created solely for glorifying violence by posting images of corpses of Tigrayans, destroyed infrastructures, looted items and the aftermath of other crimes. A more detailed analysis can also be found here.

Broadcasts and publications by Ethiopian public and private media outlets based in Ethiopia and abroad that we believe contributed to the widespread demonisation, spread of hate and incitement of violence against Tigrayans.

Government-owned media broadcasters such as Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation, Fana Television and Walta Televisions at the federal level and the different regional government broadcasters such as Amhara Media Corporation have been some of the most notable platforms for spreading hateful messages and calls for violence against Tigrayans during the years leading up to the war. Among non-state broadcasters, the US-based ESAT television, we believe, laid the ground for the war and violence on Tigrayans through its hateful broadcasts for years prior to and during the war. When the war broke out, incitement of hate and violence against Tigrayans by major state media outlets and private channels like ESAT skyrocketed. These were joined by other outlets including channels affiliated with religious institutions such as Adebabay Media.¹²⁴

A Tigrayan Muslim resident of Abala reported that before each massacre authorities would engage in profiling the Tigrayans. According to her, every Afar youth, including those under age, was armed and abused Tigrayans. She said:

‘One day, I went to a nearby river with my children to wash clothes because no pipeline water was available at home. The Afar youth, including children, came and [drove] us away from the river without washing. In their discussion, some said, “she is Muslim.” Others who [knew] my identity replied, “Though she is

¹²⁴ Tghat, written submission.

Muslim, **she is Tigrayan and hence cannot use our water.**" Another day I went with other children to collect firewood from the surrounding neighbourhood. The armed Afar militants came to us and asked me whether I [was] ethnic Afar or not. Because I cannot speak Afar language I genuinely told them I am Muslim, but Tigrayan. **They beat the children who came with me and made me kneel down for hours and ultimately [sent] us empty-handed snatching what we [had] collected.** In the following days, I used to go to water or to collect firewood with Afar ethnic neighbours imitating as deaf because I cannot speak Afar.¹²⁵

The hate speech and incitement to violence would not have been possible but for the social media and their inaction to address such content.

In December 2022, a lawsuit was filed in the high court of Kenya alleging that 'Facebook's recommendations systems amplified hateful and violent posts in the context of the war in northern Ethiopia, which raged for two years until a ceasefire was agreed in early November.'¹²⁶ The lawsuit seeks the creation of a £1.3bn fund for victims of hate speech.

The lawsuit alleges that Facebook has been:

- a. Using an algorithm that prioritizes and recommends inciteful, hateful and dangerous content to Facebook users;
- b. Allowing and maintaining inciteful, hateful and dangerous content on the Facebook platform;
- c. Failing to take down inciteful, hateful and dangerous content when reasonably requested by users;

¹²⁵ Interview made with +++++, on 10 May 2022 in Quiha Temporary IDP Camp. Abala Massacre.

¹²⁶ See: <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/dec/14/meta-faces-lawsuit-over-facebook-posts-inciting-violence-in-tigray-war>.

- d. Approving and promoting ads that amount to incitement to violence and hate speech;
- e. Tying ads and other marketing promotional materials to inciteful, hateful, and dangerous content.
- f. Generally failing to adhere to constitutional standards obligating Facebook to ensure its content and business practices protect consumers;
- g. Treating Facebook users in Kenya and African countries differently from Facebook users in other countries;
- h. Continuing to treat Facebook users in Kenya and African countries differently from Facebook users in other countries in times of conflict with catastrophic consequences for said African countries.¹²⁷

The lead complainant in the case, Abrham Meareg, the son of an Ethiopian academic shot dead, alleges that his father, a professor at Bahir Dar University in Amhara, Ethiopia, was murdered after two Facebook posts targeted him as a member of the Tigray ethnic group:

‘In October 2021, Abrham reported two posts that had named his father, Professor Meareg Amare Abreha. Both included his photo and one identified the neighbourhood in which he lived. The posts made false claims that he was corrupt and was helping the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front, a paramilitary group that was at war with the Ethiopian government.

Neither post was taken down before November 3, when Professor Meareg was followed home from work by men wearing Amharan special forces uniforms. Amhara has sided with the national government in the conflict.

¹²⁷ See: <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2022-12-14/meta-sued-for-2bn-over-ethiopia-hate-speech-revealed-by-bureau>.

The men shot Professor Meareg twice, once in the shoulder and once in the leg, and then prevented his family from helping him while he died over the next seven hours.¹²⁸

The lawsuit cites several cases where Facebook it alleges Facebook played a role, including

- 'a. The mass murder and burial of Gebremichael Tewelmedhi and eleven others, following a series of posts calling for the cleansing of Amhara territories;
- b. The arbitrary arrest and murder of Hadush Gebrekirstos who was heard speaking Tigrayan at a time when there were numerous posts calling for the ethnic cleansing of Tigrayans;
- c. The murder of Hachalu Hundessa following the publishing of incitement to violence as a reaction to a video where he offered his opinion on the 19th Century Ethiopian emperor;
- d. The killing of over 100 people in Bikuji Kebele in the Metekel zone of the Benishangul-Gumuz region of Ethiopia following the publishing of a post by Gashaw Mersha calling for 'self-defence'; and
- e. The butchering of more than a dozen Qimant in Aykel following the publishing of a post by Tewodros Kebede Ayo accusing the Qimant community of supporting opposition forces and calling for their 'clean-up.'¹²⁹

The lawsuit further indicated that Facebook continues to accommodate posts which call for

- 'a. intercommunal violence;

¹²⁸ See: <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2022-12-14/meta-sued-for-2bn-over-ethiopia-hate-speech-revealed-by-bureau>.

¹²⁹ See: <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2022-12-14/meta-sued-for-2bn-over-ethiopia-hate-speech-revealed-by-bureau>.

- b. general incitement to conflict;
- c. rape as a weapon of war;
- d. murder and abuse of corpses;
- e. weaponised starvation;
- f. immediate killing to save costs;
- g. use of concentration camps;
- h. branding of human beings; and
- i. burying human beings.¹³⁰

In February 2022, the Bureau of Investigative Journalism (BIJ), a nonprofit news organisation based in London, and the Observer, a British newspaper, found that Facebook was letting users post content inciting violence through hate and misinformation, despite being aware that it helped directly fuel tensions in Tigray. The BIJ's investigation has uncovered a litany of failures:

'The company [Facebook] has known for years that it was helping to directly fuel the growing tensions in the country. Many of those fighting misinformation and hate on the ground – fact-checkers, journalists, civil society organisations and human rights activists – say Facebook's support is still far less than it could and should be.

A senior member of Ethiopia's media accused Facebook of "just standing by and watching this country fall apart". Others told the Bureau that they felt requests for assistance had been ignored and that meetings failed to materialise. These failures, they said, were helping to fuel a conflict that has already led to reports

¹³⁰ See: <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2022-12-14/meta-sued-for-2bn-over-ethiopia-hate-speech-revealed-by-bureau>.

of ethnic cleansing and mass rape. Amnesty International has accused both sides in the conflict of carrying out atrocities against civilians.

All the while posts inciting violence or making false claims designed to encourage hate between ethnic groups in Ethiopia have been allowed to circulate freely. The Bureau has identified and spoken with relatives of people allegedly killed in multiple different attacks but has not been able to cross-check specific details on the ground because of the ongoing violence.¹³¹

Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen’s leaks also show concrete evidence that Facebook knew its platform was being used to incite ‘genocidal’ violence in Ethiopia, and parent company Meta did not take sufficient action to prevent this from happening.¹³²

And while this sort of propaganda and hate speech were continuing, Tigray was facing and continues to face - internet shutdowns. As submitted to the Inquiry:

‘The communication blackout during the start of the war had left so many unable to defend themselves as they couldn’t know what was coming after them that results in rounds of atrocities in nearby communities, it also cuts us off from our families (whom we could have asked for financial support) and services such as banking that was essential for our survival. As a result, we faced hunger and our babies were prone to malnutrition. In general, the communication blackout allows extensive human rights abuses to take place to my people under the cover of darkness that made us voiceless and helpless.’¹³³

As recognised by the UN in 2018, access to the internet is protected under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as an essential forum for the enjoyment of

¹³¹ See: <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2022-02-20/facebook-accused-of-letting-activists-incite-ethnic-massacres-with-hate-and-misinformation-by-survivors-in-ethiopia>.

¹³² <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/10/25/business/ethiopia-violence-facebook-papers-cmd-intl/index.html>.

¹³³ Written submission, anonymous APT.

freedom of expression.¹³⁴ A report by research group Top10VPN found that 42% of all internet shutdowns have occurred at the same time as other human rights abuses, with the intention to stifle the free flow of information out of the country on the atrocities being committed and allow Governments to hide their crimes, and conceal evidence for future accountability efforts.¹³⁵ However, internet shutdowns do not only prevent reporting on atrocities, they also directly contribute to them. They prevent victims' access to international assistance and aid, and prevent the work of aid workers in the country, and also, prevent individuals from working in many instances and accessing vital resources. Access Now has called the prolonged internet shutdown in Tigray, 'an unequivocal human rights disaster', which is only fitting for the longest-ever internet shutdown.¹³⁶ As such, the imposition of an internet shutdown is useful in determining the mens rea in the case.

Other examples of specific intent to destroy

Some of the most convincing examples relate to the use of rape and sexual violence. As reported by many sources, such rape and sexual violence were often accompanied by extreme brutality including:

'In the morning they would come one by one and rape me ... then they would come again in the evening ... They burned my nipple with a naked flame. Before they let me go, they inserted rocks, plastic and tissue in my vagina. I had to go to hospital so they could be removed. Another woman, from south-western Tigray, showed the Commission scarring on her body, the result of severe blistering after Ethiopian National Defence Forces soldiers melted plastic on her

¹³⁴ United Nations Human Rights Committee General Comment No. 34.

¹³⁵ Top10VPN, The Cost of Internet Shutdowns, www.top10vpn.com/research/cost-of-internet-shutdowns/.

¹³⁶ See: <https://www.accessnow.org/tigray-shutdown-slowly-coming-back-online/>.

during an attack on her village. She told the Commission that after she had been gang-raped, one of the soldiers had raped her with a knife.¹³⁷

Some attackers expressed their wish to ‘render the victims infertile by permanently destroying their sexual and reproductive health’¹³⁸ or to make sure that the victims would not give birth to Tigrayans.¹³⁹

The International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia indicated that:

‘The rapes were often accompanied by dehumanising language that suggested an intent to destroy Tigrayan ethnicity. A woman who had been six months pregnant at the time recalled being raped and verbally assaulted by Eritrean Defence Forces troops in south-western Tigray:’ They were saying ‘we will cleanse your body and your blood’, and ‘we will destroy your child and stop you from giving birth.’” Another woman, who had been gang-raped by Fano members in a detention camp in western Tigray, recalled her attackers’ words: “We will drive you out of this place. We will not allow Tigray to exist anymore. We will destroy you. You don’t belong here.”¹⁴⁰

Based on the evidence received by the Inquiry, it appears there is significant evidence that the various crimes perpetrated by institutional powers may amount to genocide and warrant further consideration and analysis by an independent body, such as the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia.

¹³⁷ See: International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G22/515/29/PDF/G2251529.pdf?OpenElement>.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ See: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/21/a-tigrayan-womb-should-never-give-birth-rape-in-ethiopia-tigray>.

¹⁴⁰ See: International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G22/515/29/PDF/G2251529.pdf?OpenElement>.

5. THE PERPETRATORS

According to the information received, the perpetrators of the atrocities are multiple.

For example, Physicians for Human Rights reported that based on their research into the issue of CRSV:

‘Most commonly, survivors identified perpetrators as Tigrinya language speaking (67%), as appearing to belong to the military (96%), and previously unknown to them (99%). 30% of perpetrators were identified as speaking Amharic. The medical records included 143 instances when the survivor had identified at least one perpetrator as being from Eritrea.’¹⁴¹

In a witness statement collected by Professor Gebremeskel Hailu, Professor of Law at the Mekelle University School of Law, one of the witnesses stated that ‘the perpetrators were Eritrean soldiers. They were telling us that they [were] Eritrean soldiers. We also know them by the language they speak. We sometimes told them, we are brothers but they reply “We don’t know you... We have nothing related to you.”’

There is evidence that the perpetrators were acting on the orders of Government authorities. A Tigray-based organisation included in their submission that ‘the Afar civil servants were sent by their government superiors to move around places and write which house is Tigrayans’ and which one is Afars’, this is because there are Afars who came from other places and they don’t know the identity of the residents and it’s also to make it easily noticeable for looting and killing. When they see the labelling they can easily identify Tigrayans to be attacked.’¹⁴²

Within the perpetrators, it is crucial to recognise the role of Eritrea. Minister Mitchell, UK Minister for Development and Africa, in a letter to Lord Alton of 27 August 2023, indicated that

¹⁴¹ PHR, written submission.

¹⁴² Written submission, anonymous TBO. See video No.439A0195, time: 00:07:46-00:10:21.

‘Eritrean forces remaining in Tigray present an obstacle to the overall objective of peace and stability within the region. While we welcome the partial withdrawal of Eritrean forces from Tigray in line with the peace agreement, this is not enough. Our officials and ministers have and continue to call for their full withdrawal during meetings with Ethiopian and Eritrean counterparts.’¹⁴³

The UK Government acknowledges that the continuing presence of Eritrean troops in Tigray is destabilising (and contrary to the CoHA) and that they should be withdrawn.

¹⁴³ Letter dated 27 August 2023.

IV. MINORITIES WITHIN THE MINORITY - THE SITUATION OF THE IROB AND KUNAMA NUMERIC MINORITY COMMUNITIES

Within the horrific atrocities against Tigrayans, there are small targeted communities that require further attention, the Irob and Kunama minority communities.

The Irob is a small community of about 30,000-35,000 people who speak their own language, Saho. They mostly live in the north-eastern part of Tigray.¹⁴⁴ Because of its location, the region populated by the Irob has been claimed by Eritrea.¹⁴⁵ As Martin Plaut indicated, ‘the Irob district has effectively been annexed by Eritrea, which is treating it as part of its territory. Links with the rest of Ethiopia have apparently been cut and maps of humanitarian aid show that none appears to be reaching the area — leaving people on the edge of starvation. It’s almost as if Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy has washed his hands of the Irob.’¹⁴⁶

The community has been subjected to horrific atrocities, including a massacre of about 50 people in Irob on Ethiopia’s Christmas Day, 7 January 2021. As reported by GQ:

‘It began on Christmas Eve – 6 January in Ethiopia’s Coptic calendar – when everybody was home with family, preparing for the following day’s feasts. Eritrean soldiers knew this fact. That morning they crossed the border and plucked four young men from their gardens, marched them quietly across the river to a spot just outside town, lined them up and executed them. At first,

¹⁴⁴ See: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/aug/07/people-are-under-siege-why-ethiopias-war-in-tigray-isnt-over>.

¹⁴⁵ See the decision regarding the delimitation of the border between Eritrea and Ethiopia: https://legal.un.org/riaa/cases/vol_XXV/83-195.pdf.

¹⁴⁶ See: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/4/tiny-ethnic-group-fears-extinction-as-tigray-war-enters-6th-month>.

nobody noticed. Neighbours assumed the four men had left Irob for supplies in Adigrat. (...)

On 6 January the invading Eritrean troops committed their first killing. The following day they flooded back into Alitena, searching for young men, just as they had done on Christmas Day 1999. This time townsfolk heard them coming and locked their doors, praying the Eritreans would spare their home. (...)

Nine boys were herded downhill to tall grass beside Alitena's river and told to line up just yards from the spot where they had begun playing volleyball. Then the soldiers raised their guns and started shooting. One by one the boys fell back – some from headshots, others in the chest – into the water. (...)¹⁴⁷

Since the early days of the war in Ethiopia, the community has been facing an existential threat as 'the Irob district has been under the total control of Eritrean forces who crossed into Ethiopia to support its federal troops in the fight against the TPLF.'¹⁴⁸ Aljazeera reported a member of the community saying that 'perhaps up to 50% of the original population... fled to regional cities in Tigray and even to Addis Ababa, leaving mostly elderly and children behind.'¹⁴⁹

The situation of the community continues to be dire even after the ceasefire, as 'Eritrean troops continue to loot livestock and kidnap people in Irob and elsewhere. The advocacy group Irob Anina has counted 56 disappearances from Irob and the next-door district of Golomkeda since the ceasefire. There are fears they have been forcibly recruited into Eritrea's military.'¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ See: <https://www.gq-magazine.co.uk/politics/article/tigray-conflict-ethiopia-eritrea>.

¹⁴⁸ See: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/4/tiny-ethnic-group-fears-extinction-as-tigray-war-enters-6th-month>.

¹⁴⁹ See: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/4/tiny-ethnic-group-fears-extinction-as-tigray-war-enters-6th-month>.

¹⁵⁰ See: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/aug/07/people-are-under-siege-why-ethiopias-war-in-tigray-isnt-over>.

Rita Kahsay indicated,

‘Women from a tiny ethnic minority in Tigray, the Irob, report they were gang raped by Eritrean troops when they were hiding in the villages of Irob, then repeatedly raped by ENDF and members of Ethiopian Federal Police at Moyale. Many of these women will bear the horrors of these crimes for generations. As well as the trauma, many women will endure physical illnesses. Around half of them have become pregnant as a result of weaponised rape. With the conditions they are still in, (concentration camps, war zones and famine) they have extremely difficult pregnancies and suffer stillbirths or give birth to extremely malnourished babies who will have growth problems for the rest of their lives.’¹⁵¹

According to the New Humanitarian, ‘No Irob refugees believe it’s safe to return to their home region. It’s one of the few areas of Tigray that still remains inaccessible to aid agencies, according to the Tigray Regional Emergency Coordination Centre, a group of international and local NGOs and regional government officials.’¹⁵² Tesfaye Awala, the chair of Irob Anina Civil Society is reported saying that ‘Eritreans still occupy half of Irob.’¹⁵³ He believes that ‘Eritrea is trying to erase the Irob community and establish a military buffer zone in their strategic highlands.’¹⁵⁴

Rita Kahsay, Rowena Kahsay and Sally Keeble included in their book the testimony of an Irob woman. She testified that:

¹⁵¹ See: <https://www.centreforwomensjustice.org.uk/new-blog-1/2022/6/17/international-day-for-the-elimination-of-sexual-violence-i-would-rather-have-been-murdered-than-endure-what-i-did>.

¹⁵² See: <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2023/02/16/Ethiopia-Tigray-Amhara-peace-minorities>.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

'At the start of the war, a lot of women were raped, young men were killed and properties were looted. It was awful. I have no words to describe it. (...) After Adigrat was bombed, it wasn't safe to stay any longer. I took my baby and joined seven girls to escape to a neighbouring village called Haraze. We would travel at night and sleep during the day. It wasn't allowed to travel during the day. When we almost got to the last city before the village, we got caught by an Eritrean soldier.

For two weeks, the soldiers gang-raped me. For 14 days they wouldn't stop, despite my pleas and cries to at least breastfeed my daughter. They told me they would kill her too. My daughter was still less than two years old. They would continue raping me while my daughter cried from hunger. When I begged to feed my daughter they would say, "What is the point? She is Tigraweyti. Let her die." They said they would continue to rape me until my husband came as he was a government official. They were so many and they would take turns until my womb started bleeding and then they would come back and continue. **The men would rape us all. Sometimes three men as a group would rape a girl. They would do whatever they wanted.** You are not allowed to look them in the face. All of us were raped, they would take turns and rape us as a group while saying, **"We are cleansing your wombs, now you will have clean babies that are not Woyane."**¹⁵⁵

Other numeric minorities in Tigray include the Kunama. According to New Humanitarian, in the early 2000s, there were approximately 5,000 Kunamas in Ethiopia. Many of them settled in Ethiopia 'fleeing land expropriation and Eritrea's (often indefinite) military conscription.'¹⁵⁶ They further reported that 'When the 2020

¹⁵⁵ Rita Kabsay, Rowena Kabsay and Sally Keeble, 'In Plain Sight. Sexual violence in the Tigray' (2023), 50ff.

¹⁵⁶ See: <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2023/02/16/Ethiopia-Tigray-Amhara-peace-minorities>.

Tigray war began, the Ethiopian government allowed Eritrean forces to cross the border to fight their mutual foe – the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF). But Eritrean soldiers also kidnapped Kunama refugees, forcibly returning them to Eritrea.¹⁵⁷

The situation of these minority groups requires urgent investigation as the data in the public domain is scarce and does not enable for a proper analysis of the situation.

¹⁵⁷ See: <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2023/02/16/Ethiopia-Tigray-Amhara-peace-minorities>.

V. THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY

The below section summarises some of the needs of the communities in Tigray.

1. HUMANITARIAN

The two-year war in Tigray has brought about a humanitarian crisis in the region. The crisis has not been addressed during the war and continues to this day. Over a million people are internally displaced within Tigray. In August 2023, OCHA warned that 'over 292,554 IDPs currently living in schools in Tigray need emergency shelter or will face eviction.'¹⁵⁸ Because of the war, over 60,000 Tigrayans fled Ethiopia to Sudan¹⁵⁹ where they would face yet another threat when the conflict in Khartoum erupted in April 2023.

In August 2023, OCHA said:

'In Tigray region, there is a concern on worsening food insecurity among the vulnerable population groups, following the pause of food distributions (including in other regions) due to reports of a significant diversion of humanitarian food assistance in the region|(6)(7). Vulnerable households are facing significant food consumption gaps, due to the negative impact of various shocks on food security, including the drought, conflict, and general increase in food prices.'¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ See: <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/ethiopia/>.

¹⁵⁹ See: <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/ethiopias-tigray-refugee-crisis-explained/>

¹⁶⁰ See: <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/ethiopia/>.

In April 2023, Save the Children reported that ‘about 2.3 million children remain out of school in northern Ethiopia despite last November’s peace agreement ending two years of conflict with the reconstruction of damaged buildings yet to commence.’¹⁶¹

The war brought about unimaginable destruction to the region. Martin Plaut wrote: ‘Tigray was sealed off from the outside world since the war began. As a result, it is not possible to provide an authoritative account of the destruction of factories and shops; schools and health centres.’¹⁶²

Meaza Gebremedhin told the Inquiry:

‘The people of Tigray are in urgent need of sustained and comprehensive assistance to rebuild their lives and communities. Vital aspects include access to adequate healthcare services, psychosocial support, livelihood opportunities, and the restoration of damaged infrastructure.’¹⁶³

Alex de Waal, the executive director of the World Peace Foundation at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, commented that

‘Foreign aid donors, returning to Tigray, will find that many of the projects they funded in earlier years — medical centres, agricultural projects, water supply systems — were deliberately destroyed or uprooted and stolen by the very government that is now begging for money to rebuild them. For donors, it’s more ethical and more effective to dispatch aid directly to the affected communities, bypassing the compromised government in Addis Ababa and the paralysed authorities in Mekelle.’¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ See: <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/more-23-million-children-out-school-northern-ethiopia-despite-peace-agreement>.

¹⁶² Martin Plaut, ‘Eritrea, the Horn and the Path to War’ in Martin Plaut and Sarah Vaughan, *Understanding Ethiopia’s Tigray War* (Hurst, 2023) 278.

¹⁶³ Meaza Gebremedhin, written submission.

¹⁶⁴ See: <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2023/01/31/ethiopia-dangerously-adrift-after-tigray-war/>.

The dire situation continues. Indeed, media reported that while aid flows to Tigray resumed after the November 2022 ceasefire, the WFP and the US Agency for International Development (USAID), both major donors, paused flows because some aid was being diverted nationally from those in need (and not only in Tigray).¹⁶⁵

In July 2023, Reuters reported that 'Gebrehiwot Gebregziaher, a doctor in charge of the Tigray region for the National Disaster Risk Management Commission, said that, starting from April and May, the commission had received reports from several districts and wards in the northwest, east and southwest zones of Tigray of **people dying directly or indirectly from hunger**. He said 595 people had died so far.'¹⁶⁶

In July 2023, Professor Jan Nyssen, a Belgian physical geographer, and professor of geography at Ghent University, reported that 'numerous people in the Abiy Addi internally displaced persons (IDP) camp in central Tigray (about 100 kilometres west of Mekelle as the crow flies) have sadly perished due to problems connected to hunger. These IDP camps serve as a vivid reminder of the terrible conditions that continue to plague the population of Tigray, with hundreds of thousands of people seeking safety within its borders. Late 2020 and early 2021 saw the majority of the IDPs ejected from Western Tigray by military forces of the Amhara region that still occupy Tigray's western zone.'

Professor Jan Nyssen also quoted a letter from a friend from Abiy Addi, sent to him on 4 July 2023, reporting on the dire situation in the Abiy Addi IDP camp:

'It is very [painful] to visit the Abiy Addi IDP centre. People come running to me expecting I was far better off than them since they see that at least I manage to

¹⁶⁵ See: <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/hunger-haunts-ethiopias-tigray-region-after-years-war-2023-07-10/>.

¹⁶⁶ See: <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/hunger-haunts-ethiopias-tigray-region-after-years-war-2023-07-10/>.

survive. Among the roughly 53k IDPs, 841 are disabled and suffer from food shortages. 26 IDPs died so far. There are also unaccompanied children suffering.

A tally by the Abiy Addi Health Centre indicates that 676 people are on the verge of dying at the IDP camp.

There are 2,200 survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) in the camp, out of them 500 do not receive any help. Several of them have chronic diseases.

There are 891 women in critical condition in the camp.

The IDP centre is in a TVET (technical school), but there is no room for everybody. More than 4,000 individuals are without shelter.

Generally, the people in the IDP centre have made up their minds that they are just waiting for death by tomorrow or after tomorrow.

Most of the IDPs are from the Western zone of Tigray, particularly Humera and Maykadra.

The IDPs had a hope of returning home when the Cessation of Hostilities was announced last November; but now, 2.5 years after they were expelled from their place, they realise that there will be no returning home but that they will rather die here. They go begging everywhere in town, but they get very little support from the host community as these people also do not have income and there is no more food aid for them either. For all these years, people have not bought any clothes. Many are naked, children walk on bare feet. There is also no education for the children in the IDP centre.

The IDPs need food support, they need to return home. Formally, a protection committee for the IDPs has been set up in Abiy Addi.

Several international NGOs are present but with small means. They assist a few thousand households with flour, oil and salt. They provide clean water and organise the cleaning of the environment by volunteers. 670 women have received dignity kits. Some GBV survivors receive cash support, and training to protect themselves.

My overall impression is that the situation in the Abiy Addi IDP centre is out of control – literally from Tigrinya: “beyond capacity to manage”.¹⁶⁷

In August 2023, Professor Jan Nyssen reported on the dire situation stating that:

‘The WFP aid stoppage may have a more detrimental effect in Tigray than the siege a year earlier. Specifically in the Central and Southeastern zones, more Tigrayan households are in the worst stage of food insecurity in June 2023 than they were a year earlier, according to the first significant evaluation completed since the cessation of food aid. More than one in ten children under the age of two were found to be suffering from severe acute malnutrition, and the gross acute malnutrition rate for children under the age of five was 38%, exceeding the threshold for famine, according to a study conducted by researchers at the Tigray Health Research Institute, Mekelle University and Adigrat University. Data from the analysis indicate that the effect of the siege effect on Tigray's food security in June 2022 was not as severe as the effect of aid suspension in June 2023.’¹⁶⁸

Professor Jan Nyssen confirmed that in early August 2023, the WFP had cautiously begun distributing food aid in Tigray, of the safety net program (PSNP), and not humanitarian aid. As he emphasised, ‘the distinction is that humanitarian aid imposes no requirements on recipients, whereas safety net programs require people to engage

¹⁶⁷ Jan Nyssen, email of 5 July 2023, entitled ‘Eyewitness from the Abiy Addi IDP camp in Tigray.’

¹⁶⁸ Jan Nyssen, [Tigray] Digest 58, dated 22 August 2023. See also: <https://tghat.com/2023/08/03/new-data-suggests-the-impact-of-aid-suspension-in-tigray-may-be-worse-than-the-siege/>.

in particular public labour activities, for which many of the people who need food aid are simply too weak.¹⁶⁹ Humanitarian distributions have not started yet at the time of drafting this report.

End of August 2023, BBC reported that at least 1,400 people have starved to death in Tigray since food aid was suspended.¹⁷⁰

2. JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Justice and accountability are key to ensuring that the perpetrators answer for the crimes they were involved in but also to prevent the continuation of similar atrocities in the future.

There are some limited efforts underway to document the atrocities committed against the people of Tigray since November 2020, with the active involvement of civil society organisations on the ground. Among others, this work is said to be done by the Commission of Inquiry on the Tigray Genocide (Tigray Commission). The Tigray Commission, established by the regional Government of Tigray, consists of around 40 Tigrayans tasked with collecting information about international crimes and other violations that have occurred during the Tigray war and supporting the work of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia. According to the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Tigray Commission has assessed the inhabitants of more than 1.3 million households. Reportedly, the Tigray Commission does not have the funding needed to do its work.

Furthermore, while limited work is being done, even these organisations have met with various challenges. Among others:

‘One of the primary challenges is the lack of adequate funding and capacity to effectively document the atrocities. CSOs and human rights defenders often

¹⁶⁹ Jan Nyssen, [Tigray] Digest 58, dated 22 August 2023.

¹⁷⁰ See: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-66540039>.

struggle to secure the necessary resources to carry out our crucial work, such as conducting investigations, collecting evidence, and providing support to survivors.

Another significant obstacle is the Ethiopian government's insistence on a locally-owned transitional justice process. This poses a challenge because the people of Tigray lack trust and confidence in the Ethiopian [judicial] system, which has demonstrated bias and been weaponised against us during the conflict. We are sceptical about the local justice system's ability to deliver impartial verdicts and ensure justice for the victims.

In light of these challenges, many survivors and advocates are calling for the establishment of an independent international mechanism to guarantee justice is served.¹⁷¹

Furthermore, as reported by Rita Kahsay, Rowena Kahsay and Sally Keeble,

‘Some records were kept in those early months, but their fate is unknown. Since the Pretoria Agreement, very little is known about what happened to the evidence that was collected and stored in federal institutions, including schools, universities, hospitals, and clinics. The risk is that the data was manipulated, lost, or erased. This would directly impact the outcome of any future investigation into the atrocity crimes committed.’¹⁷²

As it was raised in the submissions, impartial investigations can only be conducted, and justice can be rightfully delivered to the survivors with and through the involvement of international entities. This ultimately means that communities do not trust domestic mechanisms, without international oversight and monitoring. Rita Kahsay, Rowena Kahsay and Sally Keeble further commented that ‘the Ethiopian

¹⁷¹ Meaza Gebremedhin, written submission.

¹⁷² Rita Kahsay, Rowena Kahsay and Sally Keeble, ‘In Plain Sight. Sexual violence in the Tigray’ (2023).

government that was responsible for inflicting violence on its citizens cannot be involved in, much less responsible for, investigating its own crimes.¹⁷³

Several submissions suggested the need to extend the mandate of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia with full access to Tigray, including physical access to the region including to mass graves.¹⁷⁴

A Mekelle-located organisation collecting evidence indicated that there have been attempts to investigate the atrocities and human rights violations committed in Tigray, however, these attempts have not been without challenges. As they commented:

[The joint investigative report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission] was limited in scope which disregarded atrocities committed in Mariam Dengelat, the shelling of Togoga, Mehbere Diogo massacre. (...) it reduces the number of victims of the Axum massacre by intentionally coining words such as more than a hundred while they were as many as a thousand according to some investigative reports. It mentioned individual incidents of rape by Tigray Special Forces and in the conclusion part, it equalises the crimes committed by both parties. It did not make any investigation into the public hate speeches and media incitements. The joint investigation has included false assertions such as the dragging of ENDF soldiers on the street.

[The International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia] has released a preliminary report with strong findings on acts of sexual violence but with less strong conclusions. The preliminary report fails to mention anything about the incitements, policy statements, and the common plan depicted by the high-level perpetrators and the ones who committed the act. (...)

¹⁷³ Rita Kabsay, Rowena Kabsay and Sally Keeble, 'In Plain Sight. Sexual violence in the Tigray' (2023).

¹⁷⁴ Meaza Gebremedhin, written submission; Rita Kabsay, Rowena Kabsay and Sally Keeble, 'In Plain Sight. Sexual violence in the Tigray' (2023).

Following the Pretoria agreement, which culminated in the deadly war on Tigray, a transitional justice process has already been initiated by the federal government out of Tigray. The green paper has been prepared by a team of scholars and a few consultation sessions have been organised. As transitional justice is led by the federal government, excluding [from accountability the] designers of the atrocities within the federal government is of high probability. (...) **The green paper gives no attention to the atrocities committed in Tigray including the sexual violence committed.** (...)

The transitional justice green document does not include international criminal accountability mechanisms. Neither does it include the establishment of a hybrid tribunal for ensuring criminal accountability mechanisms. (...)

It might seem that the Pretoria agreement does not give room for international and hybrid accountability mechanisms because it demands “national transitional justice” consistent with the [Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia] constitution and African Union transitional justice principles. This might seem to mean national transitional justice includes neither international criminal accountability nor hybrid mechanisms.¹⁷⁵

Survivors and their families are very unhappy with this situation.

A Tigray-based organisation working with survivors told the Inquiry that:

‘Ethiopia is preparing a green paper with policy options on transitional justice, and this paper is expected to be developed as a draft policy of transitional justice in Ethiopia and is also expected to consider the current realities and socio-political context of the nation. According to the reports of the survivors, the crimes of SGBV were committed by different parties (Ethiopian soldiers, Eritrean soldiers and Amhara militias). The involvement of Eritrea in the conflict of Tigray requires the legal aspect of transitional justice to be an international

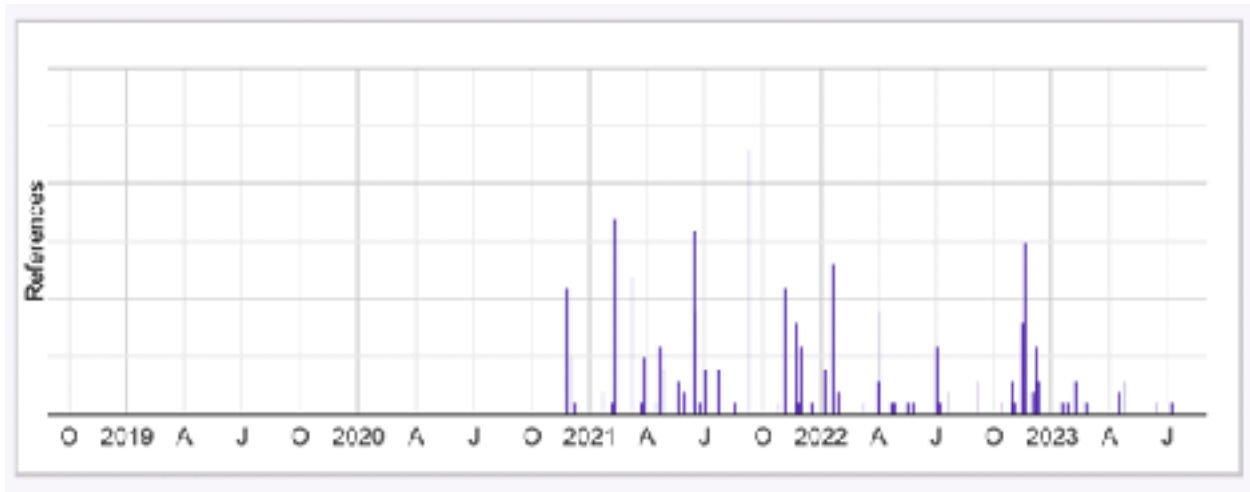
¹⁷⁵ Anonymous M, written submission.

matter, thereby leaving the local courts without jurisdiction to entertain the crimes committed by the Eritrean soldiers.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ Written submission, anonymous MM.

VI. THE UK RESPONSES TO THE SITUATION

The situation in Tigray has been raised in the UK Parliament on several occasions since the end of 2020, as presented on the graph below.



On 24 November 2020, less than three weeks after the start of the war, the House of Lords debated the situation in Tigray, in response to a private notice question of Lord Alton, asking what assessment the UK Government had made of the conflict in Tigray; and what steps they were taking to co-ordinate international action to prevent further violence.¹⁷⁷ Lord Alton raised

‘the threatened impending assault on the Tigrayan capital of Mekelle, and attacks on refugee camps—both are war crimes—along with the horrific violence against women and children, which one report suggests may be on the edge of genocide. Given that the Ethiopians say that they will “show no mercy” to Mekelle, with 500,000 in imminent danger, what will we do to fulfil our duties under the genocide convention to prevent, to protect and to punish?’

¹⁷⁷ See: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2020-11-24/debates/FC8557E3-517E-4CDD-9AA7-786A986F6AAA/TigrayConflict?highlight=tigray#contribution-1B3D8C90-A865-4545-AE69-4E129609E25C>.

Baroness Sugg, the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, responded that

‘the UK is deeply concerned by ongoing violence between federal and regional forces in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. The Foreign Secretary spoke to Prime Minister Abiy on 10 November to emphasise the need to protect civilians and allow humanitarian access. He also urged de-escalation of the violence and swift moves to political dialogue. We remain in contact with the Ethiopians, the region and our partners in the international community to achieve these goals.’¹⁷⁸

On the same day, the House of Commons has dealt with a topical question in relation to any recent assessment made of the security situation in Ethiopia, as raised by Mr Laurence Robertson MP.¹⁷⁹ The then Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs and First Secretary of State Dominic Raab responded that the UK was ‘very concerned about the conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, in terms of both the humanitarian impact and the risk of spillover and spread through the region.’¹⁸⁰ He also confirmed having communications with the Prime Minister of Sudan and the Foreign Ministers of Egypt and South Africa, in addition to Prime Minister Abiy.

On 14 June 2021, during a debate on Ethiopia in the House of Commons, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs James Duddridge responded that

‘The Government are deeply concerned about the situation in Ethiopia. Our greatest concern is the rapidly growing human rights and humanitarian crisis in

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ See: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-11-24/debates/57B891A3-D47C-4F6B-82A8-53B88CA2AD57/Ethiopia?highlight=tigray#contribution-ED6DD150-F9B1-4A32-B264-AA47E817FD6A>.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

Tigray. We are now more than seven months into the conflict in Tigray, and there is no sight of an end. It has taken a terrible toll on the people of Tigray. More than 350,000 people are assessed to be in famine-like conditions in total—more than anywhere else in the world—and, sadly, this is expected to rise. A region-wide famine in Tigray is now likely if conflict intensifies and impediments to the delivery of humanitarian aid continue. This crisis has been caused by insecurity, an ongoing lack of humanitarian access and the deliberate destruction of agricultural equipment and medical facilities. It is a man-made crisis.

Officials from our embassy in Addis Ababa have visited Tigray five times to assess the situation and guide our humanitarian response. The UK's special envoy for famine prevention and humanitarian affairs, Nick Dyer, visited Tigray last month. Our ambassador is due to visit this week. During these visits, we have heard many harrowing reports of atrocities committed by all parties to the conflict. This includes extrajudicial killings, and widespread sexual and gender-based violence. It is simply unacceptable, it must stop and the perpetrators must be held to account.

The head of the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Mark Lowcock, has said the humanitarian disaster is in part due to the presence of the Eritrean troops in Tigray. He says they are using hunger as a weapon of war, and we therefore need to see the immediate withdrawal of Eritrean forces from Tigray and Ethiopian soil now. The Government of Ethiopia have said this will happen, but it has not yet happened. I am particularly shocked about reports that Eritreans are dressing up in Ethiopian uniforms and committing atrocities.

The concern of the G7 nations about the situation was set out in yesterday's communiqué, following the leaders' summit this weekend. The G7 leaders called for an immediate cessation of hostilities and unimpeded humanitarian access to the area. I am pleased that all G7 nations in the EU, along with a growing

number of other nations, including Spain, Australia, New Zealand, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Belgium and Poland, have joined the UK's call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. His Holiness the Pope expressed his concerns and also called for an end to fighting this weekend. It is vital that that happens to allow life-saving aid to reach the hundreds of thousands in need.¹⁸¹

Several other debates took place in both Houses over the subsequent months, however, without triggering any significant response from the UK Government.

Indeed, only in May 2022, the UK Government confirmed that it was conducting the Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability (JACS) assessment. As explained by the UK Government, JACS is a strategic assessment used to underpin UK National Security Council Strategies. It was introduced by the UK's Building Stability Overseas Strategy (BSOS) in 2011 as a tool to strengthen cross-government approaches to tackling overseas conflict and instability and to "identify the situation-specific interventions that will be most likely to succeed in helping to prevent conflict and build stability".¹⁸² From March 2021, JACS was to include a section on atrocity crimes.

On 4 May 2022, in his response to Lord Alton, Minister Goldsmith of Richmond Park said that

'JACS for Ethiopia is underway. An expert from the Civilian Stabilisation Group (CSG) has been contracted with funding from the Conflict Stability and Security Fund (CSSF). The expert is working in partnership with an FCDO Office for Conflict Stabilisation and Mediation (OCSM) conflict adviser and British

¹⁸¹ See: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-06-14/debates/FFC5AFA0-DFA9-467C-8434-1EC96B35AD9E/Ethiopia?highlight=tigray#contribution-061C4AB2-DBE3-4B97-A252-6A83866D18FB>.

¹⁸² See: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/765448/JACS_Guidance_Note.pdf.

Embassy Addis staff. The JACS will be conducted throughout May and June with a final product delivered to the FCDO in July.’¹⁸³

It is unclear why the assessment was not conducted earlier, especially, why it was not done at the beginning of the war in November 2020 or earlier, as early warning signs were visible.

In September 2022, Minister Goldsmith of Richmond Park confirmed that JACS for Ethiopia was completed earlier that year. As he added, ‘the JACS was commissioned to develop a cross-HMG understanding of the drivers, dynamics, triggers and resilience for conflict, insecurity and instability in Ethiopia and the implications for UK interests and priorities. It is being used to guide HMG’s approach to supporting peace and stability in Ethiopia and prevent human rights abuses and violations as a result of conflict.’¹⁸⁴

In November 2022, after calls from Lord Alton to disclose the assessment, Minister Goldsmith of Richmond Park responded that the ‘report is an internal document and will not be published.’¹⁸⁵

While it is important that the UK Government conducts such analysis, it is concerning that the findings are not available to the UK Parliament as they prevent the UK Parliament from conducting the necessary checks and hold the UK Government to account.

In addition to several Parliamentary debates and questions, the situation in Tigray has been a subject of several parliamentary events, including as organised by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Eritrea, the Inter-Parliamentary Union British Group, the Coalition for Genocide Response, and the International Bar Association’s Human

¹⁸³ Response via email, dated 4 May 2022.

¹⁸⁴ See: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-09-08/HL2294>.

¹⁸⁵ See: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-11-17/HL3491>.

THE TIGRAY INQUIRY

Rights Institute. These parliamentary sessions aimed to provide a platform for the voices from Tigray and share the evidence with Parliamentarians.

VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Tigrayans have been subjected to horrific atrocities during the war between November 2020 and November 2022 and many of these atrocities are continuing. The atrocities have not received enough international focus despite the war being one of the deadliest wars in recent years. The atrocities may amount to the legal definition of international crimes.

In light of the above, the Inquiry recommends the following to the UK Government and other countries:

Transparency of UK Responses

- Ensure that the JACS assessment of Ethiopia is available to Parliamentary scrutiny.
- Review the responses made to date, assess their effectiveness and identify lessons learned.
- Ensure that the atrocities in Tigray, and Ethiopia more broadly, are assessed against the criteria of international crimes and an analysis is produced for the attention of Parliamentarians.

Peace, stability, and security

- Provide necessary assistance to ensure that the CoHA from November 2022 is implemented.
- Examine the issue of violence and impunity across the wider Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) region, and in particular, Sudan and Somalia.
- Provide necessary assistance to ensure the return to the constitutional order as soon as possible, including by replacing the Tigray Interim Regional

Administration with an elected government, and ending the (national) state of emergency proclaimed at the beginning of August 2023.

- Provide necessary assistance and capacity building to ensure full monitoring of the continuing situation and documenting of atrocities.
- Provide continued support for a resolution of the tensions between Tigray and Amhara and between Tigray and the Federal authorities.
- Engage its counterparts in Eritrea in relation to the need for Eritrean troops to withdraw from Ethiopia, help to facilitate the immediate and complete withdrawal of Amhara and Eritrean forces from Western and Southern Tigray - to enable the safe repatriation of IDPs and refugees back to their homes.
- Ensure that women are part of peace, stability, and security decision-making.
- Assist with capacity building that could help to deal with problems within the military, including training on the issue of preventing sexual violence in conflict (PSVI).

Assistance to victims and survivors

- Establish and support targeted programmes of help for victims of sexual violence through the hospitals and clinics of Tigray.
- Engage all humanitarian actors to ensure that their activities in Tigray are resumed in full.
- Engage all parties involved to ensure full, unfettered and sustained humanitarian access to Tigray, and the complete restoration of all services to Tigray.
- Invest in projects aimed at rebuilding the infrastructure in Tigray, including water supply, roads, and public utilities.
- Invest in livelihood programmes for women who are economically vulnerable due to stigma.
- Assist the establishment of the victims' fund to provide victims with compensation.

- Introduce a bespoke mechanism for the resettlement of Tigrayan survivors, with a particular focus on survivors and victims of CRSV.
- Invest in programmes helping Tigrayans who fled Tigray, including projects helping victims and survivors with the physical and also mental consequences of the atrocities, including male victims and survivors.
- Examine challenges facing victims and survivors, among others, the situation of victims and survivors in remote rural locations, the issue of trafficking of survivors and victims and their further abuse in other countries, especially Sudan and Kenya.

Justice and accountability

- Engage other states to ensure that the mandate of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia is extended for a term of two years, renewable. The Commission should be given full and unfettered access to Tigray and to interlocutors, victims and survivors, and its findings should be actioned, including through legal action taken against perpetrators, including those in the chain of command.
- Consider bringing proceedings against Ethiopia before the ICJ for violations of the Genocide Convention.
- Consider engaging the ICC, mirroring the approach in Myanmar/Bangladesh.
- Establish an international accountability mechanism that can bring justice to survivors of the atrocities.
- Invest in projects aimed at addressing CRSV through transitional justice mechanisms through national and international mechanisms.
- Engage relevant actors to ensure the participation of women and survivors of sexual violence in the inception of the process of transitional justice.

Appendix A

የኢትዮጵያ ፌዴራላዊ ዲሞክራሲያዊ ሪፐብሊክ ጠቅካይ ሚኒስትር

የገጠማዊ ጠላት የኢትዮጵያ ነቀርሳ የሆነውን ጠላት ነው። ጸንታው ያገኘውን የፖለቲካ ሥልጣን የገዛ ሀገሩን ለማፍረስ የተጠቀመ ምናልባት ቢታረክ ብቸኛው ዑድን ነው። አብሮ የኖረ ሰይጣን ዑቀት አይነቱም እንደሚባለው በግራ በተኝ መፍጨርጨሩ አይቀርም።

በርግጠኝነት ግን ጸንታው መልሶ እንዳይበቅል ሆኖ ይነቀሳል።

ይህ የሚሆነው ሁላችንም እንደገና ለመንቀሳ ከተረባረባን ነው። በሂደቱ ውስጥ እዚህና እዚያ ግለሰቦች ሊሳሳቱ ይችላሉ። ሐሳብ የሚከፋፍሉ መረጃዎች ሊሰሙ ይችላሉ። በግብ አንድ ሆነን የአካሄድ ክርክር ይፈጠር ይሆናል።

ያም ሆነ ይህ ከግባችን አያናጥበንም። የኢትዮጵያ ልጆች ከአራቱም ማዕዘን የጸንታውን ዕቅድ ለመቀላቀስ ተነሥተዋል። ይህ በራሱ ድል ነው። የኢትዮጵያ ልጆች ጠላታቸው ማን እንደሆነ ለይተውታል። እርሱንም ምን ማድረግ እንዳለባቸው ዕውቀታል። ያንንም ያደርገታል።

ይህ አንድነታችን ያስፈራቸው ኃይሎች የሚከፋፍሉ የመሰላቸውን ነገር ሁሉ ያደርጋሉ። ዓይነ መዓታችንን ከእነርሱ ላይ አንረግጥን በገዛ ወገኖቻችን ላይ አንድንተክል ያላረጉሉ። ፈጽሞ አናደርገውም።

አሁን የፈጠርነው አንድነት የጸንታውን የጥንት ማራ ያፈረሰ፤ ተጥሎም የሚራውን ባለቤት የሚያፈርስ፤ በመጨረሻም የተረባረባችን ሀገር በአንድነት የሚያደስ ነው።

መካከያ ኃይላችንና የክልል ኃይሎቻችን ተገቢውን ቦታ እየያዙ ነው። ያንን ለማወክ ትንኮሳ ይኖራል። ለዚያ ለራሳችን ታል የሆነውን የታኩስ አቀም እያከበርን ተገቢውን ምላሽ ይሰጠዋል።

ምንን፣ ለምን፣ እንዴት፣ የትና መቼ ማድረግ እንዳለብን ጥባቅ ዕቅድ አለን። ውጤቱን በጥቂት ጊዜ ውስጥ ወዳጅም ጠላትም ያየዋል። ሠራዊታችን አስፈላጊ ሲሆን እጅን በእኛ ላይ ለሚያሰጩን ተልዕኮ ተዘጋጅቷል።

አረሙ እንዲነቀል አድርገን እንሠራለን። አረሙን ስንንቅል ግን ስንደውን እንዳንጎዳው የሚቻለውን ሁሉ ጥንቃቄ እናደርጋለን።

በሀገራችን አረም በደቦ ነው የሚነቀለው። የኢትዮጵያ ልጆችም እርሱን እያደረጉት ነው።

ኢትዮጵያ በልጃዋ ጥረት ታፍራና ተከብራ ለዘላለም ትሩርዘ
ፈጣሪ ኢትዮጵያና ሕዝቧን ይባርክ
ሆምሌ 11፣ 2013 ዓ.ም

**The Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
18th July Abiy Ahmed Ali Statement –**

We are fighting against an enemy which is Ethiopia's CANCER. The JUNTA is perhaps the only group that has ever used earned political power to dismantle its own country. As the saying goes, the SATAN that has lived with you would never be made to leave you alone easily, so the JUNTA would continue to put up weak resistance left & right.

Certainly, the JUNTA will be uprooted, never to grow again.

This could only happen when all of us help in uprooting the INVASIVE WEED. Along the way, individuals may make mistakes. We may hear divisive information. There maybe argument even when our objective is the same.

Nevertheless, we will achieve our objective. Ethiopian children from all corners have risen to thwart the JUNTA's plans. This by itself is a victory. Ethiopian children have identified their enemy. And they know what to do. And they will do it.

Those who are afraid of our unity will do everything to divide us. They will conspire to shift our focus from them onto our compatriots. We will never do it. Our current unity has broken JUNTA's old treachery. Afterwards, it will break the source of that complot and, finally, it will reform the victim of the complot/ treachery.

Our defense forces and our regional forces are properly positioning. There would provocation to hinder that. We will respond accordingly while still respecting the unilateral ceasefire.

We have a plan that answers what, why, how, where and when to do something. The result will be seen soon by both friends & foes. If necessary, our army is prepared to carry out the impossible mission.

We will work to uproot the WEED. While we uproot the weed, we will be careful not to harm the wheat.

In our country, farmers perform weed control by working in groups (en). That's what Ethiopian children are doing.

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