February 1 – March 31, 2021

Social Media Situation Report on Tigray Conflict
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Summary

- Despite the Ethiopian Federal Government’s denial, reports show that fighting between the ENDF (and ‘Allies’) and Tigray’s People Liberation Front, (Hereinafter referred as TPLF) is still intensifying.

- Various reports of human rights abuse have been reported. Of Atrocities, Extreme Sexual Violence and Extrajudicial Killings are being reported vastly. The report released by amnesty international exposed the killing of hundreds of civilians the northern city of Axum on 28-29 November, 2020. The Human Rights Watch also released a report showing the killings of hundreds of civilians in Axum on the same period of time. Both Amnesty and Human rights watch called The United Nations to establish an independent inquiry into war crimes and possible crimes against humanity in Tigray region.

- On March 23, 2021, The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission released a preliminary report on the Axum Massacre. The report claims that grave human rights abuses have been committed and over 100 civilians were killed by Eritrean Soldiers on November 28-29, 2021.

- News reports from several media outlets also came out with credible allegations of massacres, extreme sexual violence, destruction of public and civilian property and mass looting. These news reports controlled the social media atmosphere for the past several weeks.

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1 Prominent TPLF leaders including Dr. Debretsion Gebremichael and Getachew Reda repeatedly use the name ‘TDF’ on various media outlets such as Tigrai Media House (TMH) and Dimtsi Weyane to refer the forces fighting on their side.

2
Context

It has been over 140 days since the conflict between Federal Forces and TPLF erupted in Tigray Region erupted. Ever since the war started, the international community have been putting immense pressure on the Ethiopian government. The pressure has gone mounting over the past three months. Continuous calls were made for the permission to unhindered humanitarian access, withdrawal of Eritrean and Amhara forces and opening for independent investigations into the alleged human rights abuses.

As a result of immense pressure from the international community, the Ethiopian government allowed access to humanitarian aid into Tigrai on February 12, 2021.

For the first time since the start of the Tigray war the Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed admitted the presence of Eritrean troops in Tigray during his wide ranging speech to parliament on March 23, 2021. He also mentioned that soldiers committed sexual violence and war crimes.

As communication lines are not yet fully restored (the internet is still shut down in the entire region and telephone lines are only working in Mekelle and a few towns), well-founded fears exist that the recent reports only uncover the tip of the iceberg.
1. Reports of Atrocities, Extreme Sexual Violence and Extrajudicial Killings

Amid the continuation of fighting, atrocities, summary executions and extrajudicial killings are being reported to have been committed on many places across Tigrai. For the purpose of this report, only the ones verified by relatively independent organizations are presented.

The first organization to document human rights violation at the level of atrocity as far as the Tigrai War is concerned is Amnesty International. After a release of results of an investigation on the Mai-Cadra Massacre, Amnesty released another report on 26th February, 2021, about a massacre, this time in Axum. The report exposed the systematic and deliberate killings of hundreds of civilians by Eritrean troops in the northern city of Axum on 28-29 November 2020.

The Human Rights Watch also released a report showing the killings of hundreds of civilians on the same period of time in Axum. Both Amnesty and Human rights watch called The United Nations to establish an independent inquiry to investigate possible war crimes and crimes against humanity in Tigray region. Both organizations also noted that knowing the exact number of deaths requires full scale investigation.

On March 24, 2021, The Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRC) followed in releasing a preliminary report on the Axum massacre. The report claims that grave human rights abuses have been committed and over 100 civilians were killed by Eritrean soldiers on November 28-29, 2021.
On February 27, 2021, CNN released an exclusive report about a massacre on Maryam Dengelat, a church near the town of Edaga-Hamus. CNN said it has received the names of 50 people (though the exact figure may be double that), including children as young as 15, women and elders, who are killed by the Eritrean Troops. On the other hand, CNN mentioned that the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments denied the involvement of Eritrean Army in the Tigray war.

Voice of America reported that according to the Irob Advocacy Association, a non-governmental organization, Eritrean soldiers have killed 63 civilians and set fire to 58 houses in Irob Woreda of Tigray State. Moreover, Irob advocacy group says further difficulties loom as the Irob wereda remains under communications blackout, coupled with the prevalence of Eritrean military in the area.

The complex situation of a Irob Ethnic Minority population in #Tigray, inhabiting the Ethio-Eritrean border district is not getting needed attention. As vulnerable minority, in a war zone with complete comms blackout & at the mercy of Eritrean forces, we demand mandated protection.
In March 24, 2021, Medecines Sans Frontieres/Doctors without Borders (MSF) East Africa tweeted that their staff members witnessed extrajudicial killings of civilians. In an interview with channel 4 news on 25th March, MSF’s emergency coordinator explained what her colleagues had seen. She reported that people were being dragged out of public transport minibuses and killed by members of the Ethiopian army. Moreover, she stated that the killings were acts of active revenge over an ambush by the TPLF forces. She also mentioned that their driver was beaten by the back of the gun.

“We are horrified by the continued violence in #Tigray , #Ethiopia. This includes the extrajudicial killings of at least 4 men who were dragged off public buses & executed by soldiers, while our staff members were present, on Tuesday 23 March " Read: bit.ly/31cOI6T

Figure 6: A tweet from Medecines Sans Frontieres/Doctors without Borders (MSF) East Africa

Widespread rape is another devastating aspect of the Tigray war. Womens’ Bureau of Tigray Interim Government spoke to Deutsche Welle Ahmaric about rape cases being reported to hospitals on March 13, 2021. DW Amharic’s report uncovered that 500 rape cases were reported to health centers in the capital, Mekelle, Adi-Grat and surrounding areas during the period of December to February only.

Figure 7: Screenshot from Deutsche Welle’s website

Channel 4 News made an exclusive report on the victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence in Tigray. According to the medical professionals interviewed by the news agency, since the commencement of the war, more than 260 cases of rape have been reported to Ayder Referral Hospital alone. Testimonies of rape victims also indicate mass use of rape as a weapon of war and repression.
The use of the term ‘Ethnic Cleansing’ has been more frequent as various actors explain what is happening in the disputed territories of western Tigrai.

Similarly, as per The New York Times, a confidential U.S. government report labels the acts of Amhara militia driving ethnic Tigrian residents off western Tigray as ethnic cleansing. According to NY Times Fighters and officials from the neighboring Amhara region of Ethiopia, who entered Tigray in support of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, are “deliberately and efficiently rendering Western Tigray ethnically homogeneous through the organized use of force and intimidation,” the report says.

Similarly, The Reuters reported that despite the Ethiopian government declaration of victory over TPLF, tens of thousands are again being displaced from their homes.
Voice of America Amharic program reported that more than 700 thousand Tigrians are displaced from Western Tigray Zone as per the statement from Etenesh Niguse, Communications Bureau Head, Tigray Interim Government. On the other hand, Mr. Gizachew Muluneh, Communications Bureau Head of Amhara Regional Government stated that “Such a large number of Tigrayans do not live in the area.”

Figure 12: A Screenshot from VOA Amharic’s Facebook page
2. Intentional Destruction of Public and Private Property and Widespread Looting

Reports of intentional destruction of public and private property and widespread looting were made by numerous organizations.

According to the Human Rights Watch, Ethiopian federal forces carried out apparently indiscriminate shelling of urban areas in the Tigray region in November 2020 in violation of the laws of war. Artillery attacks at during the armed conflict struck homes, hospitals, schools, and markets in the city of Mekelle, and the towns of Humera and Shire, killing at least 83 civilians, including children, and wounding over 300 says Human Rights watch.

Moreover, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) situation report on Tigrai’s humanitarian situation of Feb 8, provides that looting of humanitarian supplies and destruction and vandalization of different humanitarian infrastructure have been reported by national and international organizations, including the UN, operating in Tigray. At least 85 incidents of looting of humanitarian vehicles have been documented, and many health centers, water points, warehouses and offices have been looted or vandalized.

Medecines Sans Frontieres/Doctors without Borders (MSF), an international crisis medical organization reported that Health facilities across Tigray have been looted, vandised and destroyed in a deliberate and widespread attack on healthcare. Of 106 health facilities visited by MSF teams between mid-December 2020 and early March 2021, nearly 70% had been looted, and more than 30% had been damaged; just 13% were functioning normally says MSF.

Contrary to MSF’s report, on March 15, 2021, The Committee of Ministers of the National Emergency Coordination Center (ECC) said 75% of hospitals in Tigray region are now operational while 10% are operating partially and more than 90% of health care workers are onboard.
Hundreds of buildings burned around Tigray town, research group says

By Reuters Staff

NAIROBI (Reuters) - Fires that appear to have been deliberately set destroyed more than 500 structures this week in and around Ethiopia’s Gijet town, an analysis of satellite imagery shared with Reuters has found, adding credence to reports of continued conflict in parts of the northern region of Tigray.

Fires that appear to have been deliberately set destroyed more than 500 structures in and around Ethiopia’s Gijet town during the period February 20 - 23, an analysis of satellite imagery shared with Reuters has found, adding credence to reports of continued conflict in parts of the northern region of Tigray.

On March 3, 2021, Alex Dewal stated in his news report for the World Foundation of Peace that Eritrean and Ethiopian troops cut down the mango orchards at Adeba and Tseada on the Zamra river in south-central Tigray.

A few days ago, Eritrean and Ethiopian troops cut down the mango orchards at Adeba and Tseada on the Zamra river in south-central Tigray. It’s a normal procedure, a man said. It’s to help the local people. In a phone call from nearby on March 3, my friend and colleague Malgosa Sekedive said this.

Social Media Situation Report on Tigray Conflict
3. Humanitarian Crisis

The Tigray war started in November, before crops could be harvested. As a result, the 6 million people living in the region are suffering under severe humanitarian crisis.

Figure 16: A Screenshot taken from Independent’s website

On February 11, 2021, Independent reported that according to Ato Abera Tola, the president of the Ethiopian Red Cross, has spoken of the large humanitarian crisis in Tigray, with almost 3.8 million people there needing urgent assistance and 80 per cent of the region currently unreachable.

On 30th March 2021, UNOCHA issued the following statement thereby providing the latest update on the humanitarian situation in the region.

“Almost five months on since the start of the conflict in Tigray, the humanitarian situation on the ground is extremely dire and far from improving, despite very significant efforts from the UN and its partners to scale up assistance. The ongoing hostilities, with clashes and ambushes reported in most parts of the region, not only impact safety and wellbeing of millions of civilians but also constrain humanitarian actors’ ability to operate and support people affected. In parts of Southern and South Eastern Tigray, for example, access has been curtailed for over a month and the road from Alamata to Mekelle remains closed, blocking humanitarian operations in the area.”
4. Disinformation and Misinformation

4.1 The Unknown Diplomat

A twitter account was opened in the name of a person called ‘George Bolton’, a political analyst, human rights diplomat and former UN official. George Bolton described the TPLF leadership as “brutal” and recalled PM Abiy’s Nobel Peace Prize. He also said the US should stay out of the conflict.

This tweet was posted by the official Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) Facebook page and on its Amharic and Tigrigna pages.

However, there is no online profile or biography about George Bolton. The BBC also reported that it has not received any information about the individual’s biography and there is no evidence that he has ever worked for the United Nations.

Since March 27, 2021, the account has been suspended by Twitter, which claims the account violated Twitter Rules.

Figure 17: A tweet from George Bolton

Figure 18: Screenshot of Bolton’s twitter account

Figure 19: A Screenshot of George Bolton’s account after suspension by twitter

Since March 27, 2021, the account has been suspended by Twitter, which claims the account violated Twitter rules.
4.2 The Axum “Priest”

On February 25, 2021, Tigrai Media House (TMH) released a documentary on its YouTube channel. The video is captioned as “THESE ARE VICTIMS OF #TIGRAYGENOCIDE, Their Stories Have Been Re-enacted For Dramatic Effects”. It dramatizes the situation in which the real people died. The video narrates the stories of several people, which it claims to have been killed by Ethiopian and Eritrean Forces in cities across Northern, Western and North-Western Tigray, which among others include Axum, Shire, Mai-Cadra and Adi-Grat.

The main source of controversy about this video was related to a clip of the above-mentioned video performed by Michael Berhane, a resident of Boston, USA. The man narrated the story of “priest Woldemariam”, who reportedly was killed by Eritrean Soldiers in Axum, Saint Mary Church of Zion. This short video was circulated on social media two days prior to the release of the documentary for promotion purpose. However, the warning (caption) “Re-enacted For Dramatic Effects” was not included in it.

As a result, a lot of Pro-Government actors presented this video as if Mr. Michael Berhane was falsely presenting himself to be a priest who witnessed killings in Axum.

The Ethiopian News Agency citing Abba Peter, a priest from the New York-based Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, said the man in the video was not a member of the church.

“Imposter Michael Berhe posed as Priest Woldemariam in a video where he alleged to be an eyewitness of the perpetrated massacre at Axum St. Mary. Amnesty Int’l incorporated the testament of the Boston resident in its report.”

ena.et/en/?p=22059 via @Ethiopian News Agency

Figure 20: A tweet from Amb. Fitsum Arega

The Ethiopian ambassador to the US, Amb. Fitsum Arega shared EPA’s report in his official Twitter account. He also mentioned that Amnesty International incorporated Michael Berhe’s testimony in its report. However, Amnesty International denied this allegation.
4.3 Fake USAID Investigation

Figure 21: A Screenshot taken from EPA’s Facebook page

The Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) once again disseminated another misleading report. The report stated that “Axum massacre neither occurred nor substantiated as USAID investigation confirmed that there were no victim or burial place”. Except that the quoted USAID investigation was not real.

The USAID stated in a tweet that it neither conducted an investigation nor sent a team to investigate the events in question.

[1/2] Contrary to a recent report in the Ethiopian Herald about a USAID investigation in Axum, USAID has neither conducted an investigation nor sent a team to investigate the reported events that took place in Axum.

3:45 PM · 3/9/21 · Twitter Web App

1,381 Retweets 260 Quote Tweets 1,659 Likes

Figure 22: A tweet from USAID Ethiopia

Furthermore, AFP fact check states that EPA’s post about USAID founding no evidence of Axum massacre in Tigray region is false.

4.4 The Partly Destroyed Church

Figure 23: A Screenshot taken from Facebook page of ‘Tigray Tube’

This is a post from a Facebook page of ‘Tigray Tube’, whose caption roughly can be translated as
“Eritrean monsters, you will pay for what you did!! My people, Keep your faith and defend yourself”

Not only Tigray tube, but many other Tigrian activists and facebookers also posted this photo of two mothers praying at a partly destroyed church. It was presented as an evidence of the destructions resulted from the conflict.

Meanwhile, the reverse image search based on this photo disagrees with these allegations. Based on a reverse image search, the photo traces back its origin from 2018 Facebook post, well ahead of the Tigray conflict.

4.5 Thirsty Children
Many people have used a photo of children drinking muddy water from a street puddle to campaign for the existing humanitarian crisis in Tigray. Mr. Temesgen Afework, an artist based in the US tweeted on February 27, 2021 is an instance here, though he deleted it afterwards.

Figure 24: A from Temesgen Afework

The picture was not shot in Tigray, but rather in the Somali region of Ethiopia. It was first used in a Facebook post of Sayid Abdirahman on February 2, 2021.

4.6 The Destroyed Hospital

Figure 25: A Screenshot taken from Zehabesha Facebook page

In March 16, 2021, a Facebook page with 1.5 million likes i.e. Zehabesha posted three photos of looted and destroyed health facility. The caption used for these photos is translated as:

“Look at how TPLF destroyed public health facilities as it was defeated and removed from power”

The first source of these pictures is however, the Medecines Sans Frontieres/Doctors without Borders (MSF). MSF released the photos in its website on March 15, 2021 as a representation of the widespread looting and destruction of health facilities in Tigray by Eritrean and Ethiopian forces.
5. Tigrians Remain Angry

Many Tigrians and people of Tigrian origin have expressed their discontent and resentment against the federal government of Ethiopia. Various groups and a lot of individuals have manifested bitter grievance against the Government for the ongoing human suffering in Tigrai.

5.1 The Juba Incident

An incident happened among Ethiopian peacekeepers on February 22, 2021 at Juba airport. Reportedly, there was a brawl between the soldiers who refused to go on board and those who tried to force them into the airplane. According to Kassa Hailemariam, a pro-TPLF activist, 15 out of 39 Tigrian peacekeepers were handed to UNHCR by the South Sudan military for they claimed they were being taken to Ethiopia without their willingness.

Following the juba incident, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has reportedly been following the case of Tigrayan ethnic Ethiopian peacekeepers, who currently are serving in South-Sudan. According to Kassa Hailemariam, 12 other Tigrayan ethnic Ethiopian peacekeepers in South-Sudan are also by now under the protection of UNHCR.

Figure 26: A post from Kassa Hailemariam displaying the photo of a man in Ethiopian military uniform with blood on his face and his t-shirt

Figure 27: Kasssa Hilemariam’s post claiming 12 peacekeepers in South-Sudan have acquired legal protection from the UNHCR.
The Ethiopia National Defense Forces (ENDF) did not waste any time for a response. On 23rd February, Major General Mohammed Tessema, the director of indoctrination at the ENDF, said that the military officers were “ethnic Tigrayans who represent the TPLF”, according to ENDF Facebook page. As per Addis Standard Major General Mohammed Tessema said their refusal to return home was an attempt to entice violence at Juba airport and further accused them of trying to use the media to defame and betray their country; they created chaos at the airport “by shouting and rolling on the ground” to attract the attention of the international community and “defame the image of Ethiopia”. He also said they were backed by “ethnic Tigrayans working with the UNHCR and other radical diaspora Tigrayas who live in the region.” Maj. Gen. Mohammed also said that the UNHCR should admit that what it did was wrong and demanded an apology.

5.2 Civil Disobedience
Residents of major cities in Tigray have had a couple of instances, where civil disobedience was practiced. The first apparent civil disobedience in Tigray was held on March 10 – 12, 2021, in which residents of major cities of Tigray stayed at home. The civil disobedience was called by a media house based abroad, Tigrai Media House (TMH). It was held against the arrival of group of elders, religious people and celebrities in Mekelle.

Figure 28: Streets of Mekelle City on March 10, 2021

The second time when people stayed at home was due to the arrival of a group diplomats in Mekelle. On March 10, 2021, representatives of the European Union and member states of the union visited Mekelle and consulted with the Interim Government of Tigrai.

At the same time in Mekelle, businesses including government owned (like Banks) were closed, Public transportation was absent, and people stayed at home.
5.3 Birhane Gebremariam’s Resignation

On March 10, 2021, that Mr. Birhane Kidanearam, deputy head of the Ethiopian embassy in the U.S. In a statement he released on his twitter account, Mr birhane mentioned that he previously had many grievances on the top leadership of the Federal Government, PM Abiy in particular. Mr. Birhane however, indicated that the immediate factor causing his resignation was the “mishandling of the situation in Tigrai”.

However, according to ESATjournalist, Mesay Mekonnen, the deputy head has already been told to return to Ethiopia two months earlier to his resignation. Mr. Mesay attached a letter, which was sent to Berhane Kidanemariam ordering him to come back to Ethiopia, in his tweet.

Figure 29: A tweet from Mesay Mekonen’s twitter account

5.4 Refusal to Celebrate

Artist Esayas Tadesse, an award winner on “GUMA Film Awards” made a controversial speech on the stage. He made a short speech in Tigrigna though he won the award for his Amharic short film entitled “ቀብድ” (meaning Earnest) and this is the reason why so many people relate his speech with the current situation in Tigrai. He said, “I cannot celebrate for this award while my mother is crying”.

Figure 30: Screenshot of a story displayed in BBC’s website

5.5 The Demonstrations

Demonstrations against the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments were staged by Tigrians in major cities around the world.

Image 1: Pro-Tigray protest in NewYork, March 26, 2021
Image 2: Pro-Tigray protest in New York, March 26, 2021
Supporters of the Ethiopian and Eritrean Governments also staged demonstrations in various cities of the world in support of their respective governments.
6. The International Community’s Stand on The Tigray War

The relationship between Ethiopia and the international community over the past two months can be labelled as complicated. The international community have been pressuring the Ethiopian government on various points of concern.

The major points of concern for the international community are basically the human rights abuses, access to humanitarian aid and the presence of Eritrean and Amhara forces in Tigrai. Countries and international organizations put various mechanisms into place to compel the Ethiopian government address their concern.

The United States is alarmed by the humanitarian and human rights situation in Ethiopia. To that end, we have deployed a Disaster Assistance Response Team to lead the scale-up of U.S. government humanitarian assistance in the Tigray region.

Biden Discusses Crisis in Ethiopia’s Tigray Region With Kenyan Leader: White House

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. President Joe Biden, in a call with Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta on Thursday, discussed the crisis in Ethiopia’s Tigray region, the White House said.

Biden and Kenyatta “discussed the deteriorating humanitarian and human rights crises in Ethiopia’s Tigray region and the need to prevent further loss of life and ensure humanitarian access,” the White House said in a statement.

The United States has expressed concern over the crisis in Tigray, where the Ethiopian government has claimed victory over a rebellious regional government in a conflict that began in November.

[2/2] The U.S. government encourages independent investigations into all reported incidents of atrocities and remains committed to providing humanitarian assistance to all people affected by the ongoing conflicts in Tigray and other parts of the country.

Figure 31: A tweet from Amb. Linda Thomas – Greenfield

Figure 32: A tweet from USAID Ethiopia

Figure 33: A screenshot taken from Reuters’s story on “President Biden discussing crisis in Tigray with Kenyan leader on 26th February 2021”
Figure 34: A readout of phone call between U.S. Secretary of Blinken and PM Abiy, in which the former pressed the later for the immediate end to hostilities and withdrawal of Eritrean and Amhara forces from Tigray.

Figure 35: A screenshot taken from the website of EU External Action Service on joint statement by HR/VP Borrell and Commissioner Lenarčič on massacres in Axum.
EU floats Ethiopia sanctions over humanitarian aid

Ethiopian authorities and others obstructing humanitarian aid into the Tigray region could end up on an EU sanctions list, under a new idea floated by the European Commission. The Brussels executive, on 10th March, said it will consider listing people who violated international humanitarian law under its EU sanctions regimes.

Budget halt has already been employed by the different countries of the west. It is to be recalled that the European Union (EU) suspended €90 million aid to Ethiopia, back in December over the Tigray crisis.

As a result of immense pressure from the international community, the Ethiopian government allowed access to humanitarian aid into Tigray on February 12, 2021.

Moreover, For the first time since the start of the Tigray war the Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed admitted the presence of Eritrean troops in Tigray during his wide-ranging speech to parliament on March 23, 2021. He also mentioned that soldiers committed sexual violence and war crimes.

On the same day, The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission released a preliminary report on the Axum Massacre. The report claims that grave human rights abuses have been committed and over 100 civilians were killed by Eritrean Soldiers on November 28-29, 2021 in the city of Axum.

Furthermore, on March 26, 2021, PM Abiy Ahmed announced on his twitter account that the Eritrean government agreed to withdraw its forces from the Ethiopian border and the ENDF will take over guarding the border areas effective immediately.
Meanwhile, many Pro-Tigrai activists doubt the PM’s announcement as too good to be true. Moreover, on an *interview* with Tigrai Media House (TMH) on 29th March, Getachew Reda, member of TPLF executive committee, mentioned that Eritrean forces will not withdraw from Tigray, rather more soldiers are coming in.

Despite the controversies, the international community is demonstrating interests to work with the Ethiopian government. For example, The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) announced that it has agreed with The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to conduct a joint investigation into the human rights violations and abuses allegedly committed by all parties in the context of the Tigray conflict, as part of the much-needed accountability process for the victims.

However, Tigrian activists are unhappy with the involvement of the EHRC in the investigation as they believe that a government agency should not be allowed to investigate cases in which the same government’s interests are at stake. Many individuals have been sharing a tweet from The Ministry of Foreign Affairs *twitter* account to demonstrate that EHRC would not be neutral pertaining to the investigation. The tweet from MFA quotes Dr Daniel Bekele’s speech in a *virtual discussion* entitled as “A lasting peace taking root in the Horn of Africa after Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed’s operation to uph”. In the discussion Dr. Daniel says that it is comforting to learn that the operation did not result in as severe consequences as it was originally feared to be, there was a much-hyped about bloodbath, civilian casualties, breaking up of the country. **Figure 38:** A tweet from The Ministry of Foreign Affairs quoting Dr. Daniel’s speech

In general, the interaction between Ethiopia and the International Community for the past two months was not only of contention, but also of cooperation.
7. Incitement, Hate Speech and Communal Relations

Figure 40: Tweet from Betty GeZe displayed an edited photo of U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken with a caption read as “In the inside Weyane has been found to be white. All traitors”

Figure 41: A tweet from የተግራጭ እሆበታይ(ፍቶራር ባዳ) I blocked all ከዕማ ወደ and I’m gonna unfollow all Tegaru who doesn’t post about #TigrayGenocide tomorrow.

9:29 AM · 3/22/21 · Twitter for iPhone

Figure 42: RAYA PRESS falsely claims that Monlisa’s father said she was injured in Mekelle on November 4th, 2020

RAYA PRESS March 4 at 11:23 AM · 8
Other than the ones dealt under previous parts of this report, many other issues have been widely discussed on social media.

- A deaf and blind lawyer, inspiration to many women and men, Haben Girma released a video on her Twitter and Facebook accounts. In the video, she claimed that she had to experience attempts to crush her voice from many people including relatives and trolls digging up old photos and mocking her disability, all due to her activism on the Tigray war. Haben also stated that she will continue to speak up about the human suffering in Tigray.

- According to the BBC, on 1 March, 2021, BBC journalist Girmay Gebru was detained by the Ethiopian military and released without charge on 3 March. No reasons were given for his detention. BBC also reported that a local journalist, Tamrat Yemane, and two translators Alula Akalu and Fitsum Berhane, who were working for the Financial Times and AFP news agency were detained for the same period.

- Aljazeera reported an interview held Monalisa Abraha, an 18-year-old girl, who lost her one arm and one leg as she defends herself from Eritrean forces trying to rape her. The story of Monalisa Abraha was shared by so many people and even twitter campaign with #JusticeforMonalisa was launched. Afterwards various activists started sharing different pictures of military women claiming that they were Monalisa and that she was a member of Tigray Special Force.

- Twitter campaigns for and against the Ethiopian government were launched in the past two months. The ones in support of the government were made with hashtags like #TPLFisaTerroristGroup, #TPLFisTheCause #TPLFStartedTheWar etc. Whereas the ones against the government had hashtags like #TigrayGenocide, #BidenActNow, #EritreaOutofTigray etc.

- Several videos in related, in one or another way, with the Tigray war have gone viral. To mention few: Getachew Reda’s interviews with Tigrai Media House (TMH) (links here, here), A video of allegedly members of ENDF killing and throwing dead bodies off a cliff (Warning: Graphic Content link here), Members of ENDF beating individuals( Warning: Disturbing Content links here, here), Members of Tigray Defense Forces singing in group (link here).

- The celebration of 46th anniversary of TPLF’s establishment (Yekati 11th) in Sudan Refugee Camps was shared as a symbol of resilience by many Tigrian activists.
Image: Celebration of Yekatit 11th in Hamdayt Refugee Camp, Sudan, February 19, 2021