

Social Media Situation Report on the Conflict in Ethiopia

August 26 – September 30, 2021

Summary

- Reuters’ article entitled ‘Tigray forces killed 120 civilians in a village in Amhara region - Ethiopia officials’ published on September 8, 2021, accuses Tigrayan forces of massacring civilians at Dabat on the 1st and 2nd September.
- According to [The Telegraph](#) forces occupying a major city in Tigray i.e., Humera, are reportedly throwing thousands of men, women, and children into "concentration camps", “cutting off limbs and dumping mutilated bodies into mass graves as part of an orchestrated ethnic purge”.
- The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) says 29 people have been killed and more than 40,000 displaced in attacks in KIRAMU Woreda, East Welega Zone of Oromia State. The commission said it had received reports that 18 civilians had been killed in three separate attacks in Boka Kebele of KIRAMU Woreda on September 7 and 8, 2021, while another attack in Wolmai Kebele on September 26, 2021, had killed 11 people. The commission said it does not have verified information as to who takes the responsibility for the attacks.
- U.S President Joe Biden ordered [US Department of State](#) to put in place restrictions related to security assistance for Ethiopia and a continuation of restrictions for Eritrea. The State department on its end said it has implemented policy of denial for exports of defense articles and defense services to or for armed forces, police, intelligence, or other internal security forces of Ethiopia and Eritrea.
- The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission said that it is concerned by the detention of 19 women along with their young children in Bulen Woreda of Metekel zone, Benishangul Gumuz Region. The commission said the women are wives of suspects wanted in connection with the ongoing security related interventions by the Command Post still in charge in Metekel Zone and relevant local authorities. The Commission also mentioned the arrest of seven men “suspected of granting and/or releasing on bail” suspects whom, authorities have told the Commission, later absconded on their bail.

- According to a briefing from “Tigray Foreign Affairs Office”, [150 people](#) died due to starvation in August in Mai Kinetal, Kola Tembien and Tanaua Milash in Central Zone, Hawzen in Easter Zone Silawa and Enda Mekoni in Southern Zone as well as IDP camps in Shire.
- On August 31, 2021, the [Amhara regional government](#) called on high school, technical & vocational, university students and teachers to join the fight against Tigrayan armed forces. The [statement said](#) the region was facing a war for its survival waged against it by forces affiliated with the T.P.L.F. “A war of revenge and cruelty is being inflicted on the people” of the regional state, the statement said, adding it was a “crucial time for us to stand together, more than ever, to bury our enemies and ensure our survival in the face of the threat to our very existence.” Accordingly, the regional state called on all able-bodied high school and tertiary students as well as teachers and all the youth whose age and health qualify and are fit for military service to do their part “by joining and strengthening our defense forces and special forces and playing a supportive role.”

Context

It has been 11 months since the beginning of the Federal government’s military offensive in Tigray region. Ever since the war started, the international community have been putting immense pressure on the on all parties to the conflict. However, parties to the conflict have not shown any tangible steps to resolve the conflict through dialogue.

In Tigray region, millions of civilians affected by a 11-month-long war remain under what the United Nations calls “[a de-facto humanitarian aid blockade](#)”. With the inability to bring in sufficient and sustained levels of humanitarian supplies, cash and fuel, the humanitarian situation in the North of Ethiopia is set to worsen dramatically, particularly in Tigray region, where communications with the outside world were largely cut off.

As people in northern Ethiopia remain under the communication blackout, relatives living elsewhere have turned to the internet to appeal on their behalf. The diaspora, meanwhile, has used the internet to bring to the ongoing conflict to the world’s attention, including by making YouTube and TikTok videos, to sharing personal accounts of escaping the conflict region.

Unfortunately, these are not all the damage the conflict has done to the nation; the war has incurred a huge economic cost, too, that could take years to repair. The skyrocketing inflation on foodstuff has been a source of conversation among social media users for a while now.

1. Reports of Human Rights Violations

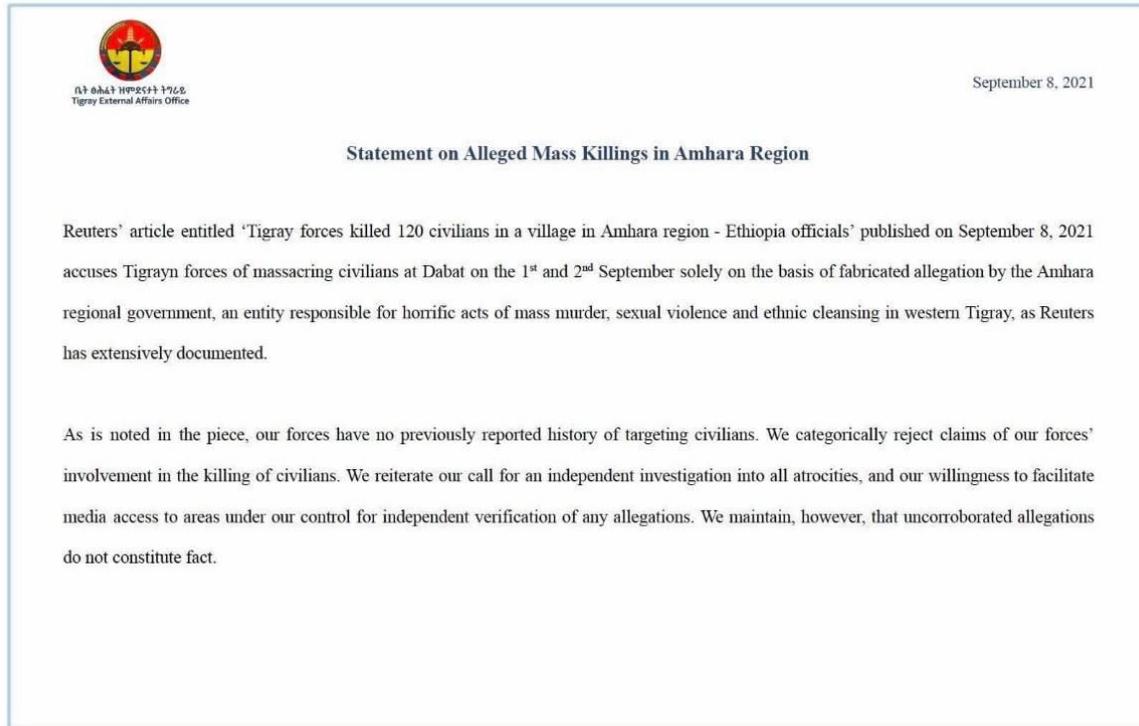
All sides to the war have been accused of perpetrating human rights abuses and mass killings. Reuters’ article entitled ‘Tigray forces killed 120 civilians in a village in Amhara region - Ethiopia officials’ published on September 8, 2021, accuses Tigrayan forces of massacring civilians at Dabat on the 1st and 2nd September.



Figure 1: A screenshot taken from [Reuters](#)

The “[Tigray Foreign Affairs Office](#)” issued a statement on these alleged killings. The statement said the allegation was asserted solely based on “fabricated allegation by the Amhara regional government, an entity responsible for horrific acts of mass murder, sexual violence and ethnic cleansing in western Tigray, as Reuters has extensively documented”. The statement “categorically rejected” claims of Tigrayan forces involvement in the killing of civilians. The statement

“reiterated the call” for an independent investigation into all atrocities”. “Tigray Foreign Affairs Office” also said that uncorroborated allegations do not constitute fact.



INFO@TIGRAYEAO.ORG

Figure 2: A statement from “[Tigray Foreign Affairs Office](#)”

According to [The Telegraph](#), forces occupying a major town in Tigray i.e., Humera, are reportedly throwing thousands of men, women, and children into makeshift "concentration camps, cutting off limbs and dumping mutilated bodies into mass graves as part of an orchestrated ethnic purge”.

Ethnic Amhara forces have been reportedly going "door-to-door" to round up anyone who is ethnic Tigrayan in the latest “harrowing evidence of population cleansing” in the civil war.



Figure 3: A screenshot taken from [The Telegraph](#)

A [CNN investigation](#) claimed to have uncovered alleged evidence of the torture, mass detention and execution of residents in the town of Humera in Tigray region. CNN reported that there are at least seven Ethiopian government detention and torture centers in the town of Humera only. The report also claimed that more than 70 dead bodies has been found floating on the Sudanese side of the Setit River, a river which flows from Humera. CNN suggested that these dead bodies with hands tied backwards, and multiple gunshot wounds might be linked to those torture centers.



Figure 4: Screenshot of [CNN's](#) report, in which CNN locates the alleged detention and torture centers in Humera town

[Reuters](#) citing Sudan's foreign minister Reported on September 8, 2021, that Sudan summoned Ethiopia's ambassador to Khartoum to inform him that the corpses found on the banks of the river

abutting Ethiopia were Ethiopian citizens from the Tigray ethnic group. Sudan's foreign ministry reportedly said in a statement on September 8 that the ambassador had been summoned on Aug. 30 and was told that the bodies had been found between July 26 and Aug. 8 on the Sudanese side

of the Setit River, known in Ethiopia as the Tekeze.



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The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) says 29 people have been killed and more than 40,000 displaced in attacks in KIRAMU Woreda, East Welega Zone of Oromia State. The commission said it had received reports that 18 civilians had been killed in three separate attacks in Boka Kebele of KIRAMU Woreda on September 7 and 8, 2014, while another attack in Wolmai Kebele on September 26, 2021, had killed 11 people. The commission said it does not have verified information as to who takes the responsibility for the attacks.

Figure 5: A screenshot taken from [BBC](#)

The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission also said that it is concerned by the detention of 19 women along with their young children in Bulen Woreda of Metekel zone, Benishangul Gumuz Region. The commission said the women are wives of suspects wanted in connection with the ongoing security related interventions by the Command Post still in charge in Metekel Zone and relevant local authorities. The Commission also mentioned the arrest of seven men “suspected of granting and/or releasing on bail” suspects whom, authorities have told the Commission, later absconded on their bail.



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Ethiopian Human Rights Commission

(EHRC) alleges that TPLF forces targeted civilians in Qobo town and surrounding areas. The commission said that the armed forces went to house to house killing and looting of civilian property.

Figure 6: A screenshot taken from Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC)

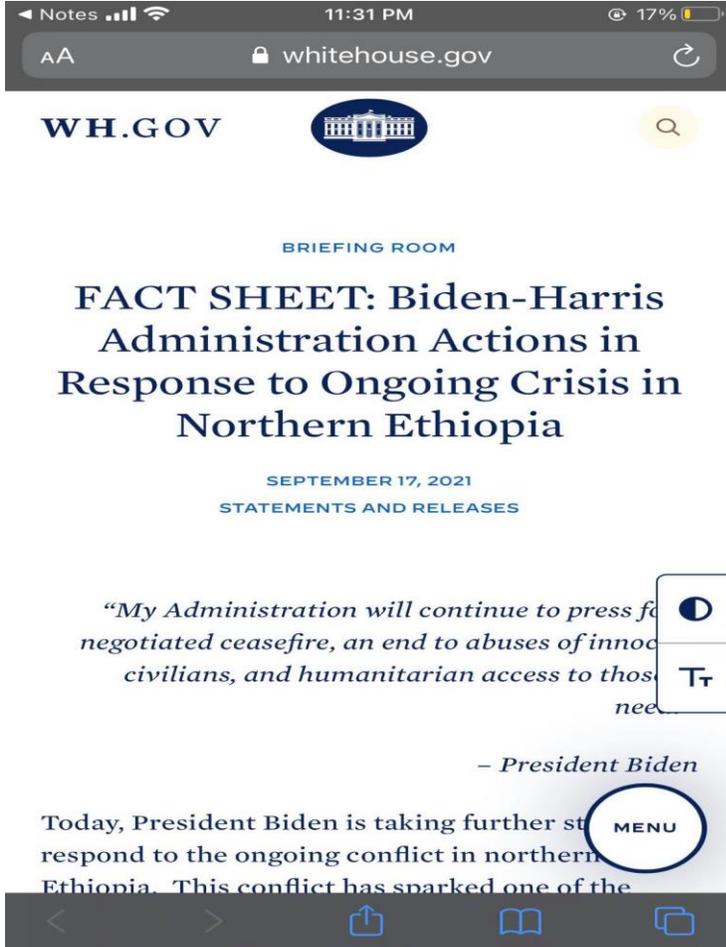


Figure 7: A screenshot taken from [Whitehouse.gov](https://www.whitehouse.gov)

United States President Joe Biden signed an executive order that allows the US government to impose sanctions against those responsible for a range of serious human rights abuses in northern Ethiopia. Pres. Biden ordered [US Department of State](https://www.state.gov) to put in place restrictions related to security assistance for Ethiopia and a continuation of restrictions for Eritrea. The State department said it has implemented policy of denial for exports of defense articles and defense services to or for armed forces, police, intelligence, or other internal security forces of Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has written [an open letter](#) following US President Joe Biden's decision to impose sanctions on participants of the war in northern Ethiopia. He criticized the United States, which he described as long-time partner to Ethiopia and strategic ally for security, but "its policy towards our country in recent years has not only been surprising but clearly beyond humanitarian concern."

2. Humanitarian Crisis

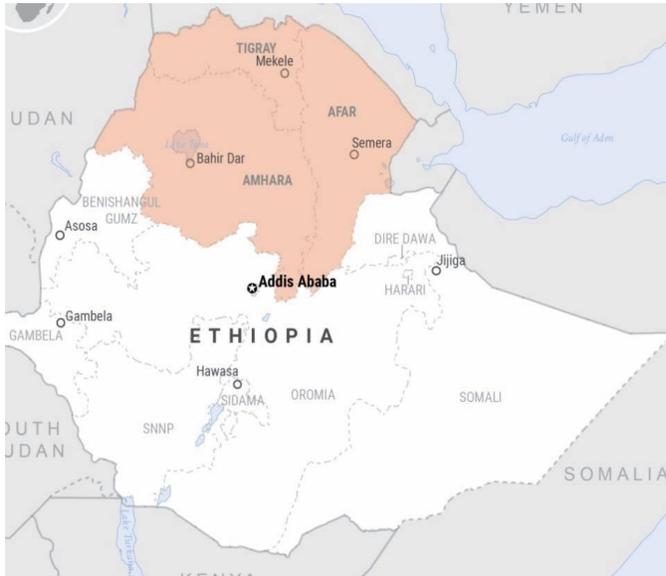


Figure 8: A screenshot taken from [UNOCHA](#)

An estimated 5.2 million people, or 90 percent of the population across the Tigray region, urgently need humanitarian assistance, including 400,000 people already facing famine-like conditions. Millions are on the brink of going hungry, including 1.7 million people in the bordering areas of the Afar and Amhara regions. Young children, pregnant women, and new mothers also suffer alarmingly high levels of malnutrition, where UNICEF recently alerted that over 100,000 children in Tigray could suffer from life threatening severe acute malnutrition in the next 12 months, which according to [UNICEF](#) is a tenfold increase compared to the average annual caseload.

Moreover, [UNOCHA](#) announced on September 23, 2021, that the remaining WFP fuel tanker in Mekelle, which other agencies had been relying on, was depleted. UNOCHA also mentioned that sixty-two trucks of humanitarian supplies arrived in Tigray via Afar, the first convoy to arrive since 7 September.

The United States State Department and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) complained of the worsening humanitarian situation in Tigray,

blamed the delay in delivery of assistance on the Federal government and called for end of hostilities and unhindered, unfettered access to population in need.

On September 1, 2021, the spokesperson of the U.S. State Department Ned Price [discussed the situation in Northern](#) Ethiopia. He said, highlighting the worsening humanitarian crisis, “Nearly one month after the USAID administrator was on the ground there in Ethiopia, she emphasized the dire humanitarian catastrophe that faces 5,2 million. The situation on the ground has gotten worse since then.”

NEWS: US ACCUSES FED. GOV'T OF STALLING AID ACCESS INTO TIGRAY; OCHA SAYS ACCESS HINDERED DUE TO 'BUREAUCRATIC AND LOGISTICAL' REASONS, CALLS FOR UNFETTERED HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

addisstandard / September 2, 2021

3.4k

The spokesperson concluded his remarks on Ethiopia by adding, “We are concerned of any and all reports of humanitarian assistance being diverted from those for whom it is intended, humanitarian assistance must be allowed to reach population in need by the government of Ethiopia and all parties that include the TPLF, these parties must cease violence that only worsens the current situation.”



Figure 9: A screenshot taken from [Addis Standard](#)

UNOCHA on its part complained in a [briefing](#) released on September 1st about the hindering of humanitarian access to Tigray by the federal government. The briefing read, “OCHA reports that the humanitarian situation in Tigray is worsening, with stocks of relief aid, cash and fuel running very low or depleted. Partners have run out of stocks for food distribution, except for some areas where supplies had already been dispatched. “The only access route to Tigray, via Afar

using the Semera-Abala corridor, has been inaccessible since 22 August due to insecurity and bureaucratic and logistical challenges” OCHA says.

[The African Union](#) also issued a statement and ‘urged’ Ethiopian government to step up efforts to ensure humanitarian access to the Tigray region to prevent starvation as aid workers struggle to reach desperate populations”. “We know the government of Ethiopia is doing its best, but we want more to be done to ensure that people are not starving,” Bankole Adeoye, African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, said on September 3, 2021.



Figure 10: A screenshot taken from [AP News](#)

As per AP News, in parts of Tigray region, people now eat only green leaves for days. At a health center, a mother and her newborn weighing just 1.7 pounds died from hunger says AP News. AP News added that in every district of the more than 20 where one aid group works, residents have starved to death.

According to a briefing from “Tigray Foreign Affairs Office”, [150 people](#) died due to starvation in August in Mai Kinetal, Kola Tembien and Tanaua Milash in Central Zone, Hawzen in Easter Zone Silawa and Enda Mekoni in Southern Zone as well as IDP camps in Shire.

Meanwhile in Tigray, the number of of aid workers killed climbs to 23. The total number of humanitarians killed in Tigray since the outset of the conflict has climbed from 12 to 23 as reports of the murder of an additional 11 aid workers from the Relief Society of Tigray (REST, an NGO

based in Tigray) have now emerged, in addition to the previously reported killing of their colleague Aman Desta Abay in Kola Tembien in May, a joint statement issued by the [UN](#) said.



Figure 11: An Image from [Addis Standard](#)

With concern mounting about the food situation in Tigray region, there are conflicting claims about why supply trucks are stuck there, unable to transport further crucial supplies. The UN says hundreds of aid trucks which made the journey up to Tigray from other parts of Ethiopia between mid-July and mid-September have not returned. In the two months to 16 September, 466 trucks had entered Tigray through the Afar region, but only 38 had made the return journey, according to the UN.

Regarding this issue the “[Government of Tigray](#)” said in a statement "The truck drivers are provided with fuel that's only enough for a one-way trip to Tigray. They are not provided with reserve fuel to return that is customary on such trips". The statement also says truck drivers, many of them ethnic Tigrayans, complain of violence and intimidation during inspections at checkpoints manned by the Ethiopian military and local security officials outside Tigray. It also says they are

not willing to go through these again to make the return journey. There are also restrictions on the amount of cash that can be carried, and with banking services suspended inside Tigray, there is no money available for them when they arrive, the statement added.



Figure 12: A tweet from [UN Ethiopia](#)

Other Talks of Social Media

Other than the ones dealt under previous parts of this report, many other issues have been widely discussed on social media.

- ✓ The suffering the conflict has done to the nation does not end in what has been said in the above; the war has incurred a huge economic cost, too, that could take years to repair. The war that broke out in the Tigray last November caused a spike in the price of basic consumer goods in Ethiopia - they were on average around a quarter more expensive in July than a year earlier. [Official statistics](#) show the cost of basic consumer goods has indeed

gone up in Ethiopia - they were on average around a quarter more expensive in July than a year earlier. The skyrocketing inflation on foodstuff has been a source of conversation among social media users for a while now.

- ✓ On August 31, 2021, the [Amhara regional government](#) called on high school, technical & vocational, university students and teachers to join the fight against Tigrayan armed forces. The [statement said](#) the region was facing a war for its survival waged against it by forces affiliated with the T.P.L.F. “A war of revenge and cruelty is being inflicted on the people” of the regional state, the statement said, adding it was a “crucial time for us to stand together, more than ever, to bury our enemies and ensure our survival in the face of the threat to our very existence.” Accordingly, the regional state called on all able-bodied high school and tertiary students as well as teachers and all the youth whose age and health qualify and are fit for military service to do their part “by joining and strengthening our defense forces and special forces and playing a supportive role.”

NEWS: AMHARA STATE CALLS ON HIGH SCHOOL, TECHNICAL & VOCATIONAL, UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND TEACHERS TO JOIN THE FIGHT AGAINST TIGRAYAN ARMED FORCES

 [addisstandard](#) /  August 31, 2021

 11.4k



Figure 13: A screenshot taken from [Addis Standard](#)

- ✓ According to [Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation \(EBC\)](#), former OLF commander Golicha Denge has returned to Addis Ababa. Golicha Denge has been leading the Shenene wing of the so-called Oromo Liberation Army in southern Ethiopia, which the government calls terrorist. He says he stopped fighting and returned to peace for two reasons. According to Golicha it is due to disagreements within the organization and the recent agreement by the Oromo Liberation Army to work with the TPLF, which led to his withdrawal. Golicha says it has been three years since the Oromo Liberation Army took over the leadership of the South Zone. He says he was under pressure from the group. The pressures that have pushed me out of my armed struggle for the past 27 years: "We have not agreed on a course. They have put a lot of pressure on me. They have tried to kill me. The current struggle and leadership are not right. I have been saying for the past three years that this needs to be renewed," he said.



Figure 14: A screenshot taken from [Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation \(EBC\)](#)

- ✓ [Reuters](#) reported on September 6, 2021, that Sudanese authorities seized 72 boxes of Russia made weapons that arrived in Khartoum from Addis Ababa via Ethiopian Airlines. Sudan Tribune stated that the weapons arrived in Ethiopia from Russia in May 2019 and that Ethiopian authorities had seized the weapons for the past two years, before authorizing its shipment to Khartoum recently. According to Sudan Tribune, the 72 boxes contain

weapons and night-vision goggles, were "destined to be used in crimes against the state, impeding the democratic change, and preventing the transition to the civil state". The official news agency said investigations are underway about these weapons, adding that this shipment may be linked to the “dissolved Popular Security of the banned National Congress Party”.



Figure 15: Screenshot taken from [Reuters](#)

On the other end, [Ethiopian Airlines](#) said the shipment of weapons to Sudan is a legal and commercial transportation of hunting guns with all proper documents of the shipper and the consignee. The hunting guns were held by security authorities in Addis Ababa for a long time for verification and the consignee sued Ethiopian in Sudanese court to either deliver the hunting guns or pay close to USD250,000 as compensation. The airlines also stated that they got a clearance from Ethiopian security authorities after completing the due verification process, we shipped them to the consignee in Sudan. They also said they have all the documentations that prove the legality of the shipment including a letter from Sudanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and attached what they claimed was “the Air waybill or consignment note” on their Facebook page.

- ✓ On September 6, 2021, [Sudan news agency](#) the Khartoum airport customs administration confirmed that the shipment procedures were indeed valid and its legal and that there is no indication of a legal violation, the clearance procedures for the supplier have been initiated

were ordinary measures of the customs authorities, and that what has been circulated in social media on this topic is a disgrace.

- ✓ [24 local civic organizations](#) in Ethiopia issued call for peace collectively. The organizations said that the political problems that caused the war in northern Ethiopia could not be resolved through war. They said “thousands of people have died in the conflict in, hundreds of thousands have been displaced and millions more are in need of emergency aid. If the situation continues, the societal values that have supported the people for centuries could be jeopardized.
- ✓ More than 50 women were allegedly killed in an attack by gunmen in Benishangul-Gumuz State, Kamashi Zone, Lo Jiganfoy Woreda on August 30 and 31, 2021, [VOA](#) reported. Guhden militants reportedly attacked five woredas in Kamashi zone, injuring civilians and government security forces, the region's deputy police commissioner, says VOA. The deputy commissioner of the woreda said the federal government should provide support before the situation escalates beyond the state's capacity.