



CARD

የመብቶች እና ዲሞክራሲ ሰደገት ማዕከል
CENTER FOR ADVANCEMENT OF
RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

**Monitoring Social Media Conversation:
The Conflict in Ethiopia, National Dialogue
and Negotiation among Conflict Parties
Mar 26 – Apr 25**

CENTER FOR ADVANCEMENT OF RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY (CARD)

Disclaimer

This report is produced as part of the CARD’s Social Media Monitoring Project under its Media Literacy Program. The project is aimed at creating an understanding of social media conversations on the conflict in Ethiopia, National Dialogue, and Negotiation among Conflict Parties. The project receives technical and financial support from partners.

Table of Contents

<i>Disclaimer</i>	2
<i>Executive Summary</i>	3
<i>Highlighted Issues</i>	4
<i>Contexts and Developments</i>	9
<i>Viral Issues</i>	13
<i>Acknowledgement</i>	18

Executive Summary

A voice recording of an alleged speech from [General Tsadkan Gebretensae](#), a top military leader in Tigray has been widely circulating across social media platforms. In the recording, Gen. Tsdkan reportedly claimed that top Tigrayan military leaders met with top Ethiopian military leaders, including with Field Marshall Birhanu Jula, chief of staff to the Ethiopian defense forces. To the contrary, Field Marshall Birhanu Jula [denied](#) the existence of such talks.

On April 6, [Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International](#) released a joint report on Crimes against Humanity and ethnic cleansing reportedly committed in the western Tigray zone since November 2020. The report entitled as “We will erase you from this land: Crimes against Humanity and ethnic cleansing in Ethiopia’s western Tigray zone” pointed out that Amhara regional forces and forces aligned with the Ethiopian government in the Western Tigray Zone committed the war crimes of murder, torture, rape, deportation, and forcible transfer, and enforced disappearance against ethnic Tigrayans. The report says attacks against the Tigrayan civilian population amount to crimes against humanity, as well as war crimes”. The report also mentions that a group of Tigrayan youth and local residents committed killing in Mai-Kdra followed by a retaliation from Amhara militia.

World Food Program (WFP) [announced](#) that 47 trucks with food, nutrition & other life-saving supplies and 3 fuel tankers are delivered to Mekelle, Tigray region on April 14 2022. On another note, the Tigray Government [announced](#) the withdrawal of their forces from Erebti.

East Shewa Zone of the Oromia region reported that armed assailants ambushed a vehicle carrying about 100 members of Oromia special forces and militia and [killed](#) scores of them while injuring others. The attack reportedly took place on March 29 in the village of Awra Godana in Amorabet Kebele, bordering the Oromia region.

On April 18, 2022, pictures of long queue of Ethiopians at the gates of the [Russian Embassy in Addis Ababa](#) were circulating on Social Media and international media outlets. BBC reported that dozens of young Ethiopian men continue to gather at the Russian embassy Addis Ababa, on Tuesday following rumours of soldiers being recruited to fight in the war in Ukraine. But the embassy’s spokeswoman, Maria Chernukhina, said no recruitment was being carried out in Ethiopia.

Highlighted Issues

During this reporting time, various conversations including the joint report by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (HRW) entitled as “We will erase you from this land: ethnic cleansing in north Ethiopia’s western Tigray zone”, ongoing conflicts in Oromo Special zone in North Showa zones of Amhara region, and an ambush against a vehicle carrying about 100 members of Oromia and federal security forces on the Amhara-Oromia border were selected to be highlighted issues based on the extent of the interaction they received on social media.

“We will erase you from this land: ethnic cleansing in north Ethiopia’s western Tigray zone released by AMNESTY International and Human Rights Watch

On April 6, [Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International](#) released a joint report on Crimes against Humanity and ethnic cleansing reportedly committed in the western Tigray zone since November 2020. The report entitled as “We will erase you from this land: Crimes against Humanity and ethnic cleansing in Ethiopia’s western Tigray zone” pointed out that Amhara regional forces and forces aligned with the Ethiopian government in the Western Tigray Zone committed the war crimes of murder, torture, rape, deportation, and forcible transfer, and enforced disappearance against ethnic Tigrayans. The report also stated that “such violations committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack on a civilian population in furtherance of a state or organizational policy constitute crimes against humanity. These widespread and systematic attacks against the Tigrayan civilian population amount to crimes against humanity, as well as war crimes”.

The report mentioned that Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch researchers reportedly interviewed more than 400 people, including in-person interviews of Tigrayan refugees in Sudan, and remote interviews of Tigrayan and Amhara residents of Western Tigray and the Amhara region who suffered or witnessed abuses and consulted medical and forensic reports, court documents, satellite imagery, and photographic and video evidence that corroborated accounts of grave abuses.

According to the report, Tigrayan militias and local residents also carried out acts that may amount war crimes against Amhara residents and visiting laborers in the Mai-Kadra town of Western Tigray.

“The Ethiopian government needs to call on security forces and militia to end these atrocities, allow humanitarian agencies access, including detention facilities, and support credible justice efforts to ensure those responsible for grave crimes are held accountable.” Joint Report by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (HRW)

Tigray External Affairs Office [released a statement](#) saying that “The Government of Tigray has been consistent in its insistence on an independent investigation to be conducted by an impartial international entity as the only viable mechanism for getting to the bottom of all atrocities committed during the war on Tigray”.

“The government of Tigray is grateful to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (HRW) for highlighting a litany of atrocities that ethnic Amhara forces, with the full backing of the Ethiopian and Eritrean armies, committed and continue to commit against Tigrayans in Western Tigray. The findings of their joint investigation”

Tigray external Affairs Office

On April 10 The Amhara Regional Government released a statement, [saying](#) that the report was biased and lacks credibility it is aimed at breaking the union between the government security forces and “genuine Fano”, as well as to deny justice to the people of Amhara who have suffered genocide, and war crimes. The Ethiopian government also [issued a statement](#) on April 7, saying that the report is blaming one group and does not serve the cause of human rights and peace.



Figure 1: Statement from [U.S. Embassy at Addis Ababa](#)

Clashes in the Ephrata and Gidim woredas in Northern Shewa Zone of the Amhara Region

On April 18, the Shewa Robit city mayor Office [called](#) on residents of Shewa Robit town not to abandon and evacuate the city. It called on residents to work with the youth groups and the security structure in the region and stand on guard of the city. Douche Welle Amharic [reported](#) two farmers have been killed and several others injured in clashes between militants and militants in the northern Shoa zone of Ephrata and Gidim woredas of the Amhara region, as well as in the Kewat and Shewa Robit areas. The North Shewa Zone Administration confirmed that villages in Molale have been burnt down.

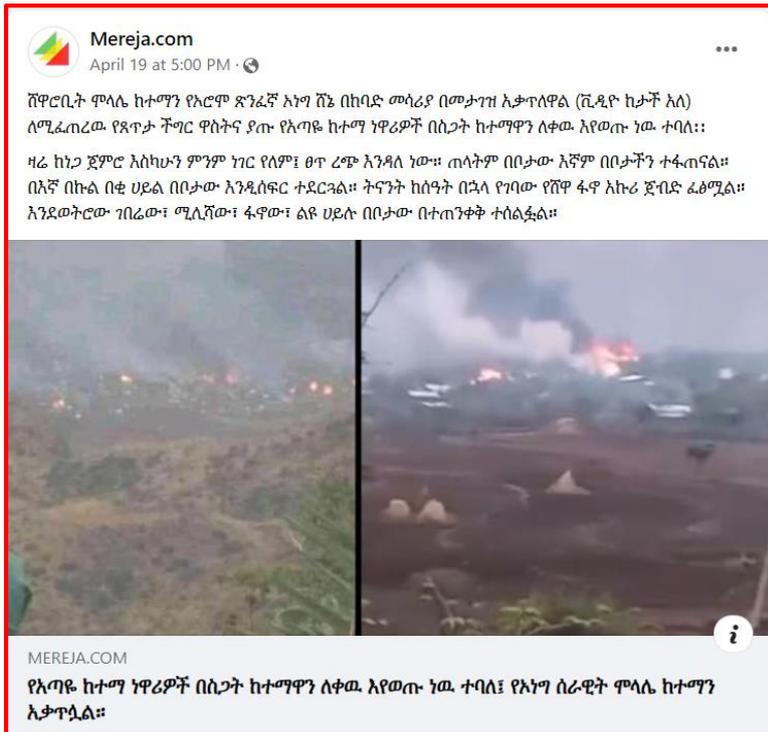


Figure 2: A Facebook post from Mereja.com claims that

On April 21, the Amhara Regional Government **said** the recent clashes in some areas of North Shewa and special Oromo Administration of the state are aimed at causing clashes between people. The conflict was reported to have calmed down due to the “joint efforts of the security forces and the community”.

On another note, East Shewa Zone of the Oromia region reported that armed assailants ambushed a vehicle carrying about 100 members of Oromia special forces and militia and **killed** scores of them while injuring others. The attack reportedly took place on March 29 in the village of Awra Godana in Amorabet Kebele, bordering the Oromia region. Oromia regional state released a statement on April 4 expressing its great grief over “extremist groups’ attack” on traveling militia and federal police in the area of Korke /Awra Godana in Fentale Woreda. The statement **labelled** the ‘attack’ an ‘Amhara extremist groups attack on Oromia region”.

“We will fight and destroy Shane, in the same manner we will destroy Amhara extremists”

the statement of Oromia Regional State

The government opposition party National Movement of Amhara (NAMA) respond to Oromia regional statement saying the statement indicates an irresponsible attempt by the ruling party to turn its internal differences into a people-to-people conflict.

Contexts and Developments

A voice recording of an alleged speech from [General Tsadkan Gebretensae](#), a top military leader in Tigray has been widely circulating across social media platforms. In the recording, Gen. Tsdkan reportedly claimed that top Tigrayan military leaders met with top Ethiopian military leaders, including with Field Marshall Birhanu Jula, chief of staff to the Ethiopian defense forces, in Seashells for a talk. To the contrary, Field Marshall Birhanu Jula [denied](#) the existence of such talks.

World Food Program (WFP) [announced](#) that 47 trucks with food, nutrition & other life-saving supplies and 3 fuel tankers are delivered to Mekelle, Tigray region on April 14 2022. On another note, the Tigray Government [announced](#) the withdrawal of their forces from Erebti. Getachew Reda, an advisor to the President of Tigray, [tweeted](#) on April 20 said that the presence of Tigrayan forces in Afar has essentially been about “neutralizing a clear and present security threat and in principle”, and that they are committed to further withdrawal of Tigrayan forces from Afar. Reuters [reported](#) on April 22, that patients were sent home from Tigray’s largest health center, Ayder Referral Hospital, after the hospital ran out of food .



Figure 3: A [Tweet](#) from the World Food Program

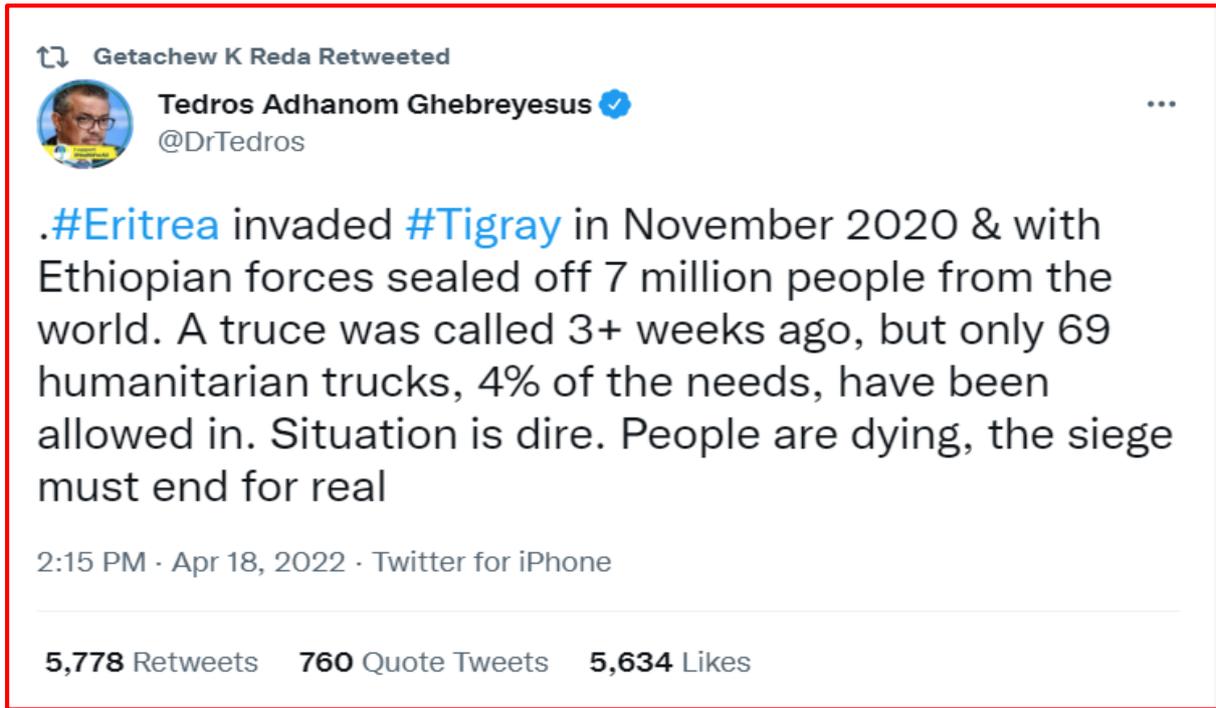


Figure 4: A [tweet](#) from WHO Director Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus

Tigray External Affairs Office [announced](#) on April 20 that Tigray President, Debretsion Gebremichael sent an open letter to Secretary General of the United Nations.

“It should be clear that our preference is to bring this tragic conflict to an end through peaceful means. There has been enough death and destruction. However, absent a credible process to bring about peace, we cannot continue to watch our citizens perish from hunger and easily preventable diseases. Accordingly, if peaceful options are no longer viable, we will be forced to resort to other means to break the devastating blockade that has made Tigray hell on earth.”

Statement from President Debretsion Gebremichael

Oromia Prosperity Party [reported](#) that the draft bill HR 6600 was “terminated” by the US congress. A fact-checking page, Ethiopia check, [said](#) that there is no clear information on whether the HR6600 or S3199 have been terminated or delayed. Similarly the African report [said](#) US congress reportedly paused the passing of the bills.



Figure 5: A facebook post from [Ethiopia Check](#)

On another development, Colonel Girma Ayele, coordinator of the Ethiopian defense force (ENDF) southern command [announced](#) that the army has launched a decisive campaign against the Oromo liberation army (OLA). At the same time, a statement from the federal government communication service office and Oromia regional government [indicated](#) that the government’s has launched offensives. On the other end, Spokesperson of OLA, Odaa Tarbii, [tweeted](#) that heavy fights were ongoing in Dagam (north Shewa), Siburu (East Walaga), and Gulliso (West Walaga). [Oromo Federalist Congress \(OFC\)](#) issued a statement on April 11 regarding the government’s renewed offensive against OLA, the “attacks by forces from Amhara region supported by the regional government taking place in Oromia region”, and inflation topics. At the same time, the party urged the government to retract from its campaign to ‘eliminate Shane’ and repeat the patterns for peace similar to the ones started in the northern conflict for the disputes within Oromia. OFC also stated “armed forces originating from the Amhara region” crossed the border and carried out attacks in East

Wollega, Horro Guduru Wollega, North Shewa, and West Shewa zones of the Oromia region. Whereas the [National Movement of Amhara \(NAMA\)](#) responds to the OFC’s statement saying OFC is trying to externalize the internal conflicts of the Oromia region to the Amhara region.

On April 23, OLA spokesperson, Odda Tarbii [tweeted](#) that the Ethiopian government launched drone strikes in Dogoma district, West Shewa.

“On April 21st, the Abiy regime launched drone strikes in Dogoma district (West Shewa) destroying 3 buildings. Nearly the entire civilian population has escaped into rural areas out of fear.”

Odda Tarbii, OLA spokesperson

Viral Issues

The following viral issues were identified by a general assessment of social media and the reactions these subjects have elicited in the context of Ethiopia's present sociopolitical and security situations in Ethiopian social media circles. The most widely circulated viral topics in this reporting period were issues related to the conflict in Jinka Town, clashes in the Sidama, and Oromia regions, and the abduction prison commander in Benshangul Gumuz regional state by armed groups.

1. Instability in South Omo Zone, Jinka

In the South Omo Zone, reports convey that people have died, properties are damaged, shops are burnt, and residential quarter and local government offices in cities and towns including in the Zonal capital Jinka are damaged. The conflict reportedly started in the city of Jinka, the capital of South Omo Zone in Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR) on April 9. According to different reports, the cause of the unrest was related to the question of the Ari community, in the South Omo zone that has been pushing for increased self-administration in a form of a separate zonal status for the Ari district and grievances that their question has not been resolved. Balderas for True democracy party said Prosperity party (PP) leaders were behind the conflict, the party also said civilians were attacked based on their identity.



Figure 6: A Facebook post from [Balderas for True democracy party](#)

On April 11, the regional police commission commissioner [announced](#) that more than 133 individuals, including four local police officers, were arrested in connection with the unrest. Moreover, “social media influencers who call themselves as community representatives” and people from the local administration structure are detained.

2. Gonder university research on the mass graves of ethnic Amharas in Wolkayit

On April 3, 2021, Amhara Media Corporation reported that a research team from the University of Gondar uncovered decades-old secretive mass graves of sites in Wolkait, Tegede and Tselemti areas of Western Tigray. The report mentions that “jails used by TPLF for years had been discovered and they used to kill and imprison large numbers of ethnic Amharas in the cells”. In response to this, Getachew Reda [said](#) it was a poorly written drama by the authorities of Amhara regional state to hide genocide committed against Tigrayans in western Tigray.



Figure 7: A Facebook page from [Amhara Media Corporation](#)



Figure 8: A [tweet](#) from a pro-Tigray social media activist

3. Conflict in the borders of Oromia and Sidama regions

On April 5, 2021, Ethiopia Insider [citing](#) Alemayehu Timothyos, Head of the Sidama Regional Peace and Security Bureau, that five people were killed and 15 people were injured due to a conflict in Halela and Sucha kebeles in Chiri district in Sidama region and Shambel and Wero kebeles in west Arsi zone of Oromia region. Ethiopia Insider added that the cause of the conflict was the killing of a well-known local elder by an unidentified armed group in Halela kebele.

4. The Abduction of Prison Commanders in the Benshangul Gumuz Regional State

According to Ethiopian Insider, three security forces including a representative of the Kamashi zone, Benshangul gumuz were [abducted](#) while they were travelling from Asossa town to Kamashi zone by armed groups. The Benshangul Gumuz region police commission accused “OLF-Shane” for the abductions of the prison officials. The regional police commission [told](#) BBC News Amharic that efforts are underway to release the hostages and the region is currently in talks with the Oromia Regional State and that the region's elders and religious leaders are working to release the individuals.

5. Ethiopians at the entrance on the Embassy of Russia

On April 18, 2022, pictures of long queue of Ethiopians at the gates of the [Russian Embassy in Addis Ababa](#) were circulating on Social Media and international media outlets. BBC reported that dozens of young Ethiopian men continue to gather at the Russian embassy Addis Ababa, on Tuesday following rumours of soldiers being recruited to fight in the war in Ukraine. But the embassy’s spokeswoman, Maria Chernukhina, said no recruitment was being carried out in Ethiopia. She said the crowd was showing solidarity with Russia. "We have a lot of visitors to the embassy in order to express support for Russia," she told the BBC. On the other hand, Embassy of Ukraine in Ethiopia [said](#) “this is a tragic happening. If an Ethiopian die in this war, it will be a tragedy for both Ukraine and Ethiopia.”



Figure 9: A screenshot taken from the [BBC](https://www.bbc.com)

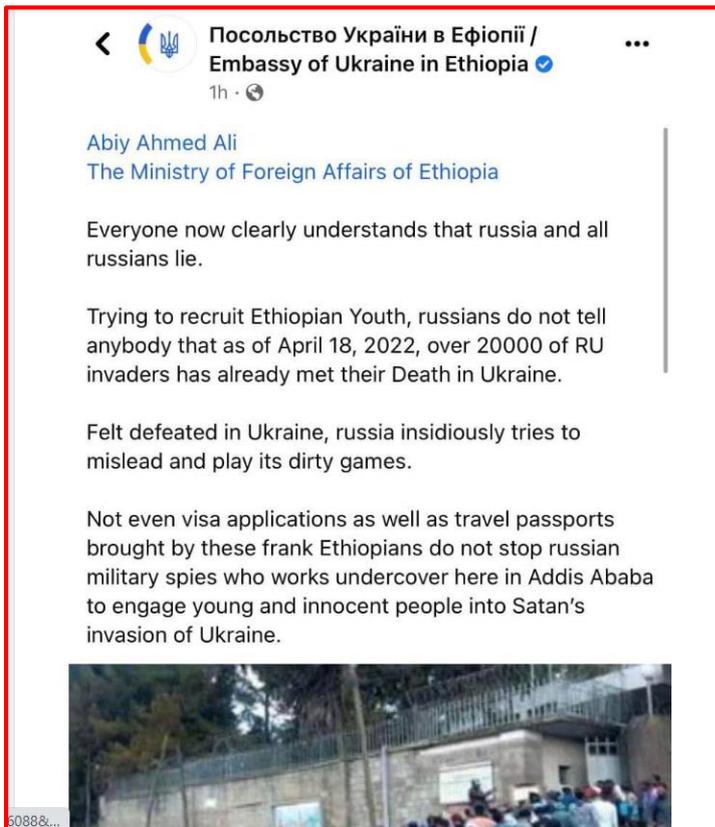


Figure 10: A [tweet](https://twitter.com) from Ukrainian Embassy in Ethiopia

Acknowledgement

This report was produced as part of the CARD Social Media Monitoring Project.