

Forum: United Nations Security Council

Issue: The Situation in Ethiopia

Chair: Hector Liu (President)

Introduction

The Situation in Ethiopia or often referred to as the “Tigray Conflict” is an ongoing crisis between the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), and forces led by Ethiopian Prime Minister (PM) Abiy Ahmed and (allegedly) aided by the President of Eritrea, Isaias Afwerki. Amid decades of social issues within Ethiopia, the tension between the TPLF and PM Abiy Ahmed escalated on November 4th, 2020, when soldiers from the TPLF came into conflict with the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) Northern Command Headquarters in Mekelle (regional capital of Tigray). Thus, sparking PM Ahmed and the Federal Government into engaging with military action. The morning thereafter, statements were released by spokespeople representing both parties, including PM Ahmed who called for immediate military response and senior members of the TPLF, who denied the attack. Following the media reports, the Ethiopian Government shut down the internet, closing all telecommunications and restricting information since PM Ahmed ordered the military response. The Ethiopian National Defense Forces (with alleged help from the Eritrean military), officially took Mekelle, the capital of the Tigray region, on November 28th, 2020 (following a tweet from PM Ahmed announcing the victory). However, though fighting within urban city centers of Ethiopia has thus ended, it has been claimed there is still ongoing fighting between the government and Tigrayan forces in the countryside (not verified information, seeing as journalists and media have been restrained from entering the region).

With the armed conflict coming towards a short-term end however, the focus now shifts to the nearly 60,000 (and rising) number of Ethiopian refugees who have crossed the border into Sudan, with agencies, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Ethiopian Red Cross and UNICEF, aiding and providing support for escaped refugees. After detailed (personal) accounts on the unsanitary conditions of Sudanese refugees sites, fears of COVID-19 further jeopardizing the safety of war-torn refugees are now under intense management, with preventative measures such as isolation facilities being introduced by UN Agencies. Furthermore, a report released UNICEF warned that up to 2.3 million minors are still restrained from heavily needed resources, despite promises from the Federal Government and PM Ahmed allowing more humanitarian agencies to step in. However, perhaps more

danger comes in the fact that the flow of information is almost completely cut off throughout the conflict, especially surrounding how many Ethiopians were affected by the fighting. News and information have only recently come to light through eye-witness accounts of the refugees resettling in Sudan, where the government has not put a restriction to international media. No data and statistics have been revealed to international media (as of January 10th, 2021), and all witness accounts remain still unverified. Despite PM Ahmed claiming that Ethiopian Forces have not killed any civilians on their offensive, civilian reports have said otherwise, claiming that hundreds, perhaps thousands of innocent lives have been lost to Ethiopian Forces, in addition to Tigrayan fighters, who have (allegedly) been engaged in massacres of specific ethnicities against their cause.

Thus, the issues facing Ethiopia's "civil war" are harrowing, and shrouded nearly in complete mystery, further intensifying the humanitarian and security problems that face both Ethiopian and her citizens.

Definition of Key Terms

Ethiopian's People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)

The Ethiopian's People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), was a political party, a coalition of four major parties, the Tigray's People's Liberation Front, the Oromo Democratic Party (ODP), the Amhara Democratic Party (ADP) and the Southern Ethiopian's People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM). The coalition ruled Ethiopia after the downfall of its military regime in 1991, until the creation of the Prosperity Party in 2019 by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.

Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF)

The Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) is a political party in Ethiopia, established in 1975 at a time of African and Middle Eastern peril, and held marxist - leninist views, though during their rise to power, were subtle and downplayed their actions. The TPLF held primary power in the EPRDF until 2018, when Mr. Abiy Ahmed was sworn in as Prime Minister of Ethiopia. Notably, the TPLF refused to join the new Ethiopian Prosperity Party, which united most Ethiopian parties. The TPLF is also at the center of the current Tigrayan crisis.

Ethiopian Prosperity Party (EPP)

The "Prosperity Party" is a political party that was established by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on December 1st, 2019, and is recognized as a successor to the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Front (EDRDF). The Party was formed under the merging of three former EPRDF member states, that being of the Amhara Democratic Party (ADP), the Oromo Democratic Party (ODP), and the Southern Ethiopian's People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM). The TPLF's denial to join the new party (due to the party

replacing the old EDRDF led by the TPLF) is a key attribute to the cause and context of the current issue in Tigray.

The Derg (Socialist Ethiopia)

The Derg refers to socialist Ethiopia under the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), ruled by Mengistu Haile Mariam from 1974 to 1991. The EPRDF would be established following the overthrow of the EPRP in 1991.

Mengistu Haile Mariam

Mengistu Haile Mariam was a former Ethiopian army officer and Head of State (1974-91), who contributed in overthrowing Ethiopian monarchy, and turning Ethiopia into a communist state for decades to come. Mengistu's practices were highlighted by extreme violence and repression of rebellious groups. In 2008, Mengistu was found guilty of genocide and sentenced to death in absentia shortly after.

Amhara Democratic Party (ADP)

The Amhara Democratic Party was the governing party in Ethiopia's Amhara Region, in northwest Ethiopia. Amhara people are classified in the Semitic Group (branch of language), and make up 26.2% of Ethiopia's Ethnic Composition (2012). The party dissolved in 2019 its merger into the Ethiopian Prosperity Party (EDP). Previously, the ADP was also called the Ethiopian's People's Democratic Movement (EPDM) before a title change was inducted in 2018.

Oromo Democratic Party (OPDP)

The Oromo Democratic Party (OPDP), was the governing party in Ethiopia's Oromia Region, and was also Ethiopia's Oromo Peoples Democratic Organization (OPDO) prior to a title change in September 2018. Crucially, current Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Abiy Ahmed, was elected chair of the ODP on March 27th, 6 days prior to being sworn in as the Prime Minister of Ethiopia. The Oromo peoples are the largest ethnicity in Ethiopia, making up 35.2 % of the population (2012).

Southern Ethiopian's People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM)

The Southern Ethiopian's People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM) originally known as the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Front, was a political party in Ethiopia, before being dissolved in 2019 after the creation of PM Ahmed's Prosperity Party.

People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (PDRE)

The People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was the Marxist - Leninist regime which ruled Ethiopia from 1987 to 1991. The state was established upon the adoption of the 1987 Constitution, three weeks after approval in the national referendum, which officially replaced the Derg, socialist Ethiopia.

Marxism-Leninism

Marxism-Leninism was the official political ideology and government structure of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Marxism-Leninism focuses on a core belief that a revolution staged by members of a proletarian class needed the guidance of a professional revolutionary group for a violent overthrow of capitalism. Following the overthrow, a proletariat dictatorship would be established. Marxist-Leninist ideas strongly inspired the emerging TPLF leaders in the early 80s, where they likely adapted these ideas from the Ethiopian government, strongly backed by the Soviet Union. These practices, although seemingly like socialism, was dubbed a communist society that would slowly escalate into the highest, most efficient state of communism.

“Kililoch”

The phrase “Kililoch” refers to regional states in Ethiopia, which is subdivided into 10 states, roughly segmented by each state's ethno-linguistic differences. These federal states were put into motion by the TPLF following their constitution and takeover of the Ethiopian government in the early 90s.

Demarcation

Demarcation is the act of marking the limits/making the boundaries of something. In this particular case, border demarcation refers to the geopolitical border between Eritrea and Ethiopia, a contributing factor to the previously unstable and controversial conflicts between the two governments.

Background Information

Ethiopian Politics and Government

Aforementioned above, Ethiopia (prior to the introduction of PM Ahmed and his Prosperity Party, was subdivided into ethno-linguistic Kililochs, with each regional state being headed by a President, and the cities within being led by a chairman, both of whom are elected by the state council. There is universal suffrage for all Ethiopian citizens above the age of 18, and certain seats in the House of the Federation are created specifically to represent minorities.

The Ethiopian's People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)

The EPRDF was the government formed (and mostly led) by a union of the Tigray's People's Liberation Front and the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM).

Shortly thereafter, the Oromo Peoples Democratic Organization (OPDO) also joined the union, and the EPRDF would come to overthrow and assume control of Ethiopia in 1991. The EPRDF would have support and funding from the United States Government, who had hoped for Ethiopia to become a region free from the once autocratic regime, and take on a more democratic approach to governing and politics. To an extent, this can be seen in the 1994 creation of the Ethiopia Constitution, where the first multi-party elections were held in the Elections for a Constituent Assembly. The EPRDF was dissolved by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on December 1st, 2019, upon the creation of the new Prosperity Party. All former members of the EPRDF, in addition to members of the numerous other states in Ethiopia, joined the union, with the major exception being the TPLF.

The Derg (Socialist Ethiopia)

The Derg came to be formed from a collection of competing Marxist parties in the early 1970s, with a particular group and held strong beliefs in guerilla warfare and civilian rule.. Following a conflict in 1977, Mengistu Haile Mariam, an army soldier who then had risen to the ranks of lieutenant colonel, assumed total control and took power as chairman and the head of state. During his regime and time as the head of state, many of Mengistu's violent campaigns, such as the Red Terror, crushed armed opponents among the EPRP and other resistance groups, but also civilians. Millions of people were killed (unconfirmed numbers), tortured and imprisoned. However, by late 1987, Mengistu faced armed resistance in the northern regions of Tigray (and Eritrea), due to a series of droughts and famines, leading to the destruction of Ethiopia's agricultural economy. Furthermore, Mengistu, previously supported by the Society Union (weaponry), the withdrawal of Soviet support further weakened Mengistu's power, and in May 1991 (after the EPRDF captured Addis Ababa) he resigned from the position and fled to Zimbabwe. Mengistu was charged of killing nearly 2000 people, and eventually, found guilty of genocide, and sentenced to death in absentia. Since then, Mengistu has taken refuge and asylum in Zimbabwe, however, stripped off all political power and influence.

The Formation and History of Tigray's People's Liberation Front (TPLF)

The Tigray's People's Liberation Front was formed in 1975, in the Ethiopian region of Tigray, and although in times of war and revolution, dozens of radical young men from this mountainous area were calling for reform, demanding liberation and freedom. These young men were guided by Marxist- Leninism ideals, along with strong notions of nationalism, all of whom shared a unilateral resentment against the power and authoritarianism ways of the Ethiopian government. Throughout the late 70s and early 80s, the TPLF party started mobilizing, gaining thousands of supporters and fighters. To a certain extent, leaders of the TPLF downplayed their ideals in support for marxism, which would have gone against conversative, traditional views held

by many devout members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, who were initial supporters of their cause. Instead, the TPLF put the spotlight on the reign of the Ethiopian government, which at the time, was stuck in a peril of civil wars within Ethiopia and with other African nations. The TPLF would reveal the socialist policies of the government, and eventually, by the late 80s, turn the tide against the central government and become the largest coalition of Ethiopian rebel groups (after their alliance with rebels from the Eritrean People's Liberation Front). On May 28th, 1991, TPLF troops (now joined with other rebel Ethiopian forces to form the EPRDF) stormed the presidential palace in Addis Ababa, and shortly thereafter, then Ethiopian President Mengistu Haile Mariam surrendered and turned over the capital city. After the TPLF's success takeover, rapid progress was made surrounding the weakened infrastructure and economic downfall due to decades of instability. To an extent, the TPLF's regime brought Ethiopia to a period of peace, to stunning economic success and massive developments in improving the war torn Ethiopia's infrastructure. However, the TPLF was also responsible for introducing divided, ethnicity-based federal states, split and categorized into roughly 10 different parts of Ethiopia, each belonging to a different ethnicity.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and his Prosperity Party

Despite the Prosperity Party being a successor to the EPRDF, which held power over Ethiopia since 1991, controversy ensued about the creation of the new party, due to the particular mergers it introduced. The Prosperity Party was formed under the merging of three former EPRDF member states, that being of the Amhara Democratic Party (ADP), the Oromo Democratic Party (ODP), and the Southern Ethiopian's People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM). Following the recognition of the party, the Afar National Democratic Party (ANDP), the Benishangul-Gumuz People's Democratic Unity Front (BGPDUF), the Ethiopian Somali People's Democratic Party (ESPDP), the Gambella People's Democratic Movement (GPDM) and the Harari National League (HNL) were also included. The prime minister's creation of the Prosperity Party is an important benchmark, as it was the first time Ethiopian states were united since the downfall of the old Ethiopian regime in 1991.

Lead Up And Primary Cause to the Issue in Tigray

Tigray 2020 Regional Elections

On September 8th, Tigray People's Liberation Front (government in control over the Ethiopian region of Tigray) held regional elections that were prohibited and postponed by

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed due to concerns about Covid-19. Ethiopia had been expected to hold both national and regional elections on August 29th, but was prolonged indefinitely by the Federal Government.. However, the TPLF decided to hold the election regardless, and according to election organisers, the TPLF won over 98.5% of the 190 seats in the Tigray Regional Council. This election faced serious backlash from PM Ahmed and the Ethiopian Government (now the Prosperity Party), for publicly defying the authority of the Ethiopian government, and as a result, was deemed void and illegitimate, though the Federal Government did not choose to respond with force. The TPLF politicians also claimed that the prolonging of the vote was to extend Prime Minister Abiy's own rule (denied by the Ethiopian Government). This vote led to already increasing tension between the newly established Prosperity Party and the TPLF, whose members have already shared a history of conflict.



Tigray's People's Liberation Front (TPLF) Logo

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Tigray

Tigray is a region in Northern Ethiopia, and is historically important due to the local ruling party, TPLF's protracted rebellion against the militaristic Ethiopian government in 1975- a conflict that dragged on until 1991, when the Ethiopian national government was overthrown. The victory saw the replacement of the original Ethiopian government dominated by Amharans (See Key Terms), by Tigray leaders. Furthermore, conflict between neighboring countries Eritrea and Ethiopia regarding borders has caused tensions and fighting between Tigray, the region in which there was a compromise of land between both countries.

Ethiopia

Ethiopia is a country located in East Africa, in a region known as “The Horn of Africa”; its capital, Addis Ababa being located in the geographical center of the country. Undoubtedly, Ethiopia’s prominence and participation in global politics has since increased after World War 2, and houses both the Organization for African Unity and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in their Capital City. Pertaining to this particular situation, Ethiopia, and her government, headed by PM Ahmed, are responsible for the conflicts that have arisen. Thus far, the military fighting has remained local, despite roping in neighboring countries such as Sudan into the conflict through escaping Ethiopian refugees (with numbers approaching 50,000) , and claims from the TPLF (in addition to local Ethiopian eyewitnesses) of Eritrean military support in the matter. However, access to media and news has been heavily restricted by the Ethiopian government, following the ongoing Internet and Communications shutdown by the Ethiopian government on November 5th. Though, videos have surfaced that show the broadcasting of residents of Shire (town in Tigray), claiming and protesting of people being slaughtered “like chicken”, and the looting of government institutions such as banks, and the destruction of government assets (note that these are personal eyewitness accounts). To this extent, it is assured that the fighting due to the issue of Tigray has been confined to within the walls of Ethiopia, with the confirmed inclusion of neighbor Sudan due to the refugee crisis, and the alleged participation of Eritrean military forces (which has been denied by PM Ahmed).

Eritrea

Only since 2018 has the relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea, two neighboring countries on the tip of Africa, been at relative peace, after two decades of deadly fighting. On May 6th, 1988, the Eritrea-Ethiopia war began, over a dispute in a border town called Badme. The conflict would drag on for a dozen years before the Algiers Agreement was signed on December 12th, 2000, where both governments agreed to end hostilities and militia force permanently, and to release prisoners of war and detained persons, in addition to providing humane treatment to opposition. However, despite the peace agreement being signed, the town of Badme was eventually awarded to Eritrea, which was not accepted by Ethiopia. As a result, skirmishes between respective militaries from each government or rebel groups were occurring up until late 2018; the conflict left tens of thousands dead and indefinitely affecting both Eritrean and Ethiopian economies, not to mention the massive displacement of communities and population. On September 16th, 2018 however, the Agreement on Peace, Friendship and Comprehensive Cooperation Between the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the State of Eritrea was signed by both Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, and Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki, formally ending the conflict between the two parties, promising cooperation and friendship (an addition onto the Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship signed prior in July).

Since, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed received a Nobel Peace Prize in 2019 for resolving the border conflict with Eritrea, and many positive steps have been taken towards the development of the two

countries's affairs. Embassies were reopened in both countries, in addition to infrastructure and transportation (the rebuilding of roads, railways, use of ports). However, tensions are now again arising, due to the Tigray conflict, and the TPLF's alleged claims of Eritrean military support in the matter. It is important to understand the history of the TPLF government with Eritrea. In the Eritrea-Ethiopia war, the TPLF was (essentially) the Ethiopian government (EPRDF) , thus, being at complete odds with the Eritrean government - being a key protagonist in the issue. Therefore, it would not be unreasonable to assume bias, between both Eritrea and the TPLF, have been in opposition for decades.



African Geographic Map (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Badme)

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
May 6th, 1988	Fighting breaks out between Eritrea and Ethiopia troops over the town of Badme, starting the Eritrea-Ethiopian War
May 28th, 1991	The EPRDF led by TPLF troops successfully capture Addis Ababa, Capital of Ethiopia (President surrenders shortly thereafter)
June 5th, 1994	The Ethiopian Constitution is drawn up and the first multi-party elections were held
December 12th, 2000	The Algiers Agreement is signed between Eritrea and Ethiopia in Algeria

April 2nd, 2018	Chairman of the ODP Party, Abey Ahmed, is sworn in as the Prime Minister of Ethiopia
July 9th, 2018	Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki sign a Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship
December 1st, 2019	Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's Prosperity Party is established (forming the coalition between prior members of the EPRDF except the TPLF)
September 9th, 2020	Tigray holds parliamentary elections against the order for a postponed election by PM Ahmed due to Covid-19 (Considered an illegal election)
November 4th, 2020	Confirmed reports of TPLF Forces attacking the ENDF bases in Mekelle resulting PM Abiy Ahmed releasing statements pressing a military response
November 5th, 2020	PM Abiy Ahmed and the Ethiopian Government shuts down all Communications and Internet going in and out of Ethiopia
November 9th, 2020	The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) claims that groups of Tigrayan youths (with the aid of local officials and military) carried out a 600-person massacre (targeting specific ethnicities) in Mai- Kadra
November 28th 2020	Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) takes control of Mekelle, Capital of Tigray Region

Relevant UN Resolutions and Treaties

Possible Solutions

Urging Ethiopian Authorities and Government to allow for humanitarian aid to reach civilians and refugees. UN Agencies (such as UNHCR, UNICEF) have claimed that the Ethiopian government, despite a deal signed back in December 2020 to allow for unresisted humanitarian supplies to reach Tigray, have not honored the agreement and allowed for assistance to refugees. This has led to a peril situation, where war-torn civilians are lacking water, food, and basic health services. Especially in times like these, with COVID-19, assistance to refugees needs to be an immediate action, and urged by the international community upon the Ethiopian government. Without pressure, this could lead to a humanitarian crisis worsening the situation in Tigray.

Urging Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and the Ethiopian Government to reopen internet and communications, and allow for UN Agencies to access information within the country. Ethiopia and Tigray regions have been in an internet shutdown for months now, following the initial TPLF attacks, and no confirmed reports/statistics have left the country since. UN Teams have claimed to be shot at when approaching refugee camps, and international media denied entry into Ethiopia. The only information received has been through eyewitness accounts of refugees in Syria, which are unverified. Thus, allowing for UN Agencies (at the very least) to access factual information and an insight into the situation currently in Ethiopia would be massively beneficial to resolving the humanitarian crisis on hand.

Urging the Ethiopian government to install extra security measures in response to armed groups affecting refugees. The UNHCR, back in November when the conflict first arose, was allowed on a one-time trip by the Ethiopian Government to various refugee camps set up in Ethiopia, and neighboring borders. Though there has yet to be verified results and statistics, thousands of refugees have claimed threats and harassment by arm groups, in addition to armed gangs stealing and looting resources from these gangs. However, since early last year, accounts have gotten more severe, with reports of murder and fatal accidents on these refugee's escapes. Thus, a solution to address the safety hazards could be to urge the Ethiopian government to either provide its own national security to accompany refugees, or to encourage them to collaborate with international private security companies, as to not invade Ethiopian sovereignty if a collaboration with a foreign government was drawn.

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