



**MUNDP 2024**  
COMMITMENT TO DEVELOPMENT

# RESEARCH REPORT

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL  
(UNSC)

THE SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA

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## Basic Overview of the Issue

The Ethiopian Civil Conflict has been ongoing since 2018 as one of the deadliest conflicts of the modern era. Meles Zenawi, the leader of the ethnic federalist Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), ascended to power after the end of Ethiopia's internal conflicts around the 1990s and brought a totalitarian regime that heavily persecuted the many minorities of Ethiopia. While his first years in power were comparatively free of scandal and human rights violations, and improved the economy and the social situation of the country, especially his third term was riddled with election fraud, ethnic violence, restrictions on opposition parties, and the cementing of a Tigrayan ethnocratic hegemony.

After the Tigrayan-led EPRDF fell from power in 2018, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, recipient of the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize, came to power. His efforts succeeded in bringing together multi-ethnic parties together, however, he has excluded Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the party that led the EPRDF coalition, from this political tent. His first years in charge were marked with liberalisation, seeing many opposition politicians freed from jails and such, however; ethnic violence was ever present and marginalisation only continued. His efforts in freeing the media also resulted in the growth of regional media, most of which supported ethnic nationalism; thus, leading to the popularisation of otherwise fringe ideologies.

Starting in 2018, Ethiopia found itself in a state of constant civil conflict riddled with border clashes with neighbouring nations, fighting between many ethnic groups and clans, coup d'état attempts, all-out war, and war crimes. Although ethnic discrimination and clashes have been ingrained in the history of Abyssinia, they were never seen in such ferocity until this day.

In addition to these problems, the country is also facing, especially in the north, a man-made drought which is forcing internal migration within the country, and thus overburdening both the economy and the infrastructure of big cities.



## Explanation of Important Terms

### *Internally Displaced Person*

An internally displaced person (IDP), according to the UNHCR, is “someone who is forced to leave their home but who remains within their country's borders.” The crisis in Ethiopia resulted in almost 5.6 million IDPs as of March 2022, according to the UNHCR.

### *Ethnic Conflict*

Encyclopædia Britannica defines ethnic conflict as “a form of conflict in which the objectives of at least one party are defined in ethnic terms, and the conflict, its antecedents, and possible solutions are perceived along ethnic lines.” Examples other than the one in Ethiopia between Tigrayans and many other ethnic groups were seen in the breakup of Yugoslavia, Iraq, and in Rwanda.

### *Totalitarian Regime*

Used first by Benito Mussolini (“totalitario”) to define his system of government, Encyclopædia Britannica states that today, the term refers to states in which the private lives of individuals are under severe scrutiny by the government.

### *Internal Migration*

The term refers to migration that takes place within a country's own borders, such as citizens moving from one city to another for better opportunities.

### *Extrajudicial Killing*

Extrajudicial killing refers to the application of capital punishment without respect to the due process of law. In simpler terms, it is the killing of a person by an authority (such as the state) without any legal proceedings.

## Detailed Background of the Issue

### History of the Country and the Roots of the Crisis

Ethiopia is unique among its fellow African countries, as it has never really been colonised by a European power, making it the oldest independent country in all of Africa. Its cultural heritage is also unique, as the birthplace of the Coptic Church, one of the oldest Orthodox denominations, Ethiopia has been in a power struggle over the Gulf of Aden with the Muslims of the Arabian peninsula and Egypt. In antiquity, most of the region was ruled by



the Christian Kingdom of Axum uniting many ethnicities under the banner of religion. Aksumites, although being composed of many ethnic groups such as the Tigray, Amhara and Agaws, were the first people to call themselves Ethiopian, a term that transcended the rigid perimeters of race. From this alone, it should be understood that the conflict in Ethiopia will be based on ethnic tensions between competing groups.

Ethiopia came into formal international relations with Europe during the Crusades, in which they supported their fellow Christians to take back the Holy City - Jerusalem. Afterwards they made a plan with fellow European Christians to conquer the Muslim Egypt and although it didn't lead to an invasion, the talks brought Ethiopia into the European sphere of influence, and especially increasing the influence of the Portuguese during the Age of Exploration.

In 1270, the dynasty that would rule Ethiopia until the 1974 change of regime came to power - the Solomonic Dynasty. Like previous Ethiopian rulers, their legitimacy also came from the traditions of the Coptic faith, rather than any of the races that inhabited the region. Indeed, the Solomonic Dynasty did not have any capitals, moving its capital from the Tigrayan lands to Amharan lands (two of the leading tribes) intermittently.

The dynasty's aim to gain legitimacy through religion is also evident in its name Solomonic (referring to the Abrahamic figure Solomon, revered in Islam, Christianity, and Judaism). However, there is no real proof that they were the descendants of Solomon.

Oromo people, today the country's largest race by population, came into Ethiopia from Northern Kenya during the 16th and 17th centuries to escape the invasion of foreign powers. The group of Oromos that came into Ethiopia, called Boorana, differed from the subjects of the Solomonic Dynasty as they mostly were Sunni Muslims. These migrations severely hurt the Solomonic Dynasty as they were unable to establish control over this new race by religious means.

These religious and ethnic differences came into their most pronounced era with the proclamation of the Sultanate of Aussa of the Sunni Muslim Afar people, who today make up around 2% of the population. Called Zemene Mesafint (Era of the Princes), the four forthcoming tribes of Ethiopia (Tigray, Amhara, Agaw, and Omoro) fought for control over territory, with the Emperor being no more than a prisoner in his own capital. The warring tribes era lasted for almost a century, severely damaging Ethiopia and cementing today's



racial conflicts. Zemene Mesafint, however, also had the unexpected effect of protecting Ethiopia from falling into a European power's sphere of influence, as it made the country isolated especially from foreign Christians until the end of the 19th century.

Although Ethiopia persisted through the Scramble for Africa, to say that it was peaceful would be simply wrong. During the reign of Menelik II, genocides against the Oromo and Dizi people took place and slavery was widespread. Haile Selassie --who took the throne not long after Menelik II--, on the other hand, pursued modernization, getting the help of European powers in establishing schools and railroads.

His efforts came to a halt when Mussolini invaded Ethiopia in 1936. It would be untrue to say that Italy had complete control over Ethiopia for a brief period, however, they forced the Emperor to create a government in exile in London. He returned to Ethiopia in 1942 and got independence in 1944, however, his centralization efforts and the war he led in Eritrea resulted in a Soviet-backed coup that resulted in the toppling of the 700-year-old Solomonic Dynasty.

As previously stated, the era after the fall of the monarchy was rather similar to the Zemene Mesafint, as they both had warring tribes, now with heavy weapons and external support, fighting for control over the country without shying away from the use of force.

It must be understood from the country's history that the loss of a unifying factor and the influx of new racial groups have undermined the stability of the country. As such, it is logical to assume that the solution to the conflict may come from the promotion of an "Ethiopian" identity.

## Human Rights Violations

In 2014 --following the biggest drought of modern history-- the TPLF's plan to divide the Oromo lands, Amhara's support for their Oromo counterparts, land seizures, detention of opposition members, and disregard for the rural population started the biggest protest in Ethiopia to date, lasting until 2016. These protests highlighted not only the minoritarian (Tigrays only make 6% of the population) nature of the Ethiopian government, but also the dire human rights situation in Ethiopia. In the said protests, 100 civilians were killed by direct gunfire. Although the UN demanded that an investigation be carried out, the TPLF-led coalition refused to comply. The EPRDF did not last long afterwards as Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed came to power. In his tenure, more than 13,000 opposition politicians, prisoners of



conscience, and journalists were released from prison. However, this did not put an end to the human rights abuses in Ethiopia, which came to prominence once again during the Tigray War.

Also happening concurrently with the Oromo Protests, Gedeo-Oromo clashes and Oromo-Somali clashes have totalled over 1.8 million people displaced. Other than ethnic violence, there are many other institutionalised acts of human rights violations, such as the prevalence of marriages by abduction, election fraud pre-2018, prevalence of female genital mutilation, ableism, land abduction especially from indigenous people, mass detentions and extrajudicial killings by both state forces and TPLF, and the outlawing of homosexuality. Furthermore, the Covid pandemic is predicted to shave off 2.9 percentage points of Ethiopia's economic growth, according to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

## Tigray War

After losing the elections, TPLF started to arm itself, and in 2020 started an all-out war against the Federal Republic in the Tigray Region. Eritrea has also been involved alongside Ethiopia in this conflict. The international community also noted that several nations, such as Türkiye, Russia, Iran, China, and the United Arab Emirates have supported Ethiopia with arms. While the TPLF initiated the war against the popular Abiy Ahmed, his government quickly responded with ethnic profiling and expelling Tigrayans from public offices. Although the war has settled after the TPLF made peace with Abiy Ahmed, the effects of the war are still felt by the populace. And, allegedly, deliberate famine was orchestrated by Ethiopia and Eritrea in Northern Ethiopia where Tigrays live in order to force a cessation of hostilities. Tigray forces have been accused of pillaging villages and hospitals and looting personal belongings. Amnesty International stated the indiscriminate shelling of Tigray provinces by Eritrea and Ethiopia may amount to crimes against humanity. War rape and sexual violence were used by all parties to the conflict. The New York Times has uncovered that internal discussions between American officials stated that an ethnic cleansing may be underway in Tigray. Tigray Defense Force (TDF) has also committed massacres in the extrajudicial killing of villagers in minority villages in Tigray. Furthermore, as previously stated, the war limited the amount of aid and sustenance that could be provided to North Ethiopia, which contains some of the poorest regions of the country, and caused a famine in which thousands of



people have perished.

## Recent Developments (2021- )

Although the conflict is now widely stated to be a frozen conflict (as a cessation of hostilities is signed between the federal government and Tigrayan forces), it is hard to say that human rights violations have all stopped. According to Reliefweb, a UN service, 20 million people, nearly three-quarters of them being women and children, were in need of help in the past year. Furthermore, access to communication has been severely limited by government authorities throughout the country, especially in the Tigrayan-populated North. Depicting a shift from Abiy Ahmed's liberalising reforms, independent journalists have started to be harassed and taken into custody. Human Rights Watch further notes that the government reports on the hostilities that claim that the government is doing all that is in its power to achieve a cessation of hostilities are "inadequate, lack[ing] transparency, and independent oversight." The Tigray region still suffers from the effects of the man-made drought, and the number of displaced persons is only increasing. Reuters notes that a unilateral humanitarian truce was set in place in March to attend to the needs of the Tigray region, but independent overseers have claimed that the amount of aid was inadequate. In the Afar region of Ethiopia which borders both the Tigray region and Eritrea, conflicts between the native Afars and the Tigrays are brewing, with the United Nations reports indicating looting and shellings taking place by Tigray forces. In return, Human Rights Watch reports that Afars have taken around 9,000 Tigrays as prisoners and hosted them in inadequate situations that resulted in some of them dying.

Outside of the blatant direct humanitarian results, the continuation of hostilities is also resulting in the decrease of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into the country and damaging its international status as one of the most reliable democratic partners in East Africa. Both of which will have long-term effects that will echo into the future.

## Major Parties Involved

### *Ethiopia*

As one of the most important civilizations of Africa, Ethiopia --then known as Abyssinia-- was the sole African country to battle European influence on its territory during



the Scramble for Africa. Still, it would be naively optimistic to assume that Ethiopia wouldn't inherit the hardships of the colonial era. In the postwar era, Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie attempted many centralization reforms, however, the country was still semi-feudal, with frequent clashes between various factions. In 1960, while the emperor was in Brazil for a state visit, a coup d'état had failed, and although it had failed, the public started to question the legitimacy of an emperor for the first time in Ethiopian history. A successful coup, in 1974, turned Ethiopia into a Marxist-Leninist dictatorship. After the fall of communism (i.e. loss of the monetary support of the Soviet Union), Ethiopia has been in a state of constant political turmoil. Today, the country and her army fail to establish control over vast regions of the country, and the country is riddled with infighting. On top of all this, frequent droughts and famines ravage the most impoverished regions of the country. Furthermore, in the context of this crisis, Ethiopia's federal status holds special importance. As federal borders are drawn in the context of racial, tribal, and religious groups in the country, tensions between bordering states are always high. In addition to internal conflict, southern states are unable to defend their border with Somalia against attacks by Al-Shabaab. One should also note that Ethiopia is a very young republic that lacks some of the fundamental building blocks of democracies, such as freedom of expression, in its current form, which also serves to fuel the conflict.

## Eritrea

Abiy Ahmed started reconciliation with Eritrea, following the hostile relations between the Tigrayan government and Eritrea. As the country with the second least freedom of the press (the first belongs to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea), Eritrea is a totalitarian regime that limits individual freedom and uses the war on its doorstep as a political tool to exert influence over the region. Eritrean soldiers have entered the Tigray region to 'help' Ethiopia establish control, however, the move has been characterised by independent observers as a third party aiming to exert influence over the region, nonetheless, Eritrea has become a useful ally for Abiy Ahmed. The United States State Department has condemned the Eritrean actions, stating that they "condemn the escalating involvement of Eritrean troops in northern Ethiopia." Eritrea was not included in the 2022 peace talks between the TPLF and Ethiopia, which made observers wonder whether they would abide by the cessation of hostilities.





### *United Front of Ethiopian Federalist and Confederalist Forces (UFEFCF):*

UFEFCF was a coalition of rebel groups led by Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Oromo Liberation Army. The coalition was created during the Tigray War. Although it includes many other groups, independent observers such as the Royal United Services Institute have stated that other groups exist solely to give a facade of unity, as most of the other groups are the satellites of the TPLF. After the cessation of hostilities in the Tigray War, TPLF left the coalition.

### *Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF):*

Designated as a terrorist group by the federal government, TPLF is an ethno-nationalist group that led a rebellion against the Deng regime during the Cold War era, and ultimately succeeded. After their fall from power in 2018, they took up arms in the northern states and led an armed insurgency against the federal regime. They have signed an agreement to disarm in January 2023.

### *Oromo Liberation Army (OLA):*

An old part of the political party of the Oromo people, OLA refused to disarm after the cessation of hostilities and is now considered a terrorist organisation. Their stated aim is the “freedom of the Oromo people from political exclusion, economic exploitation, and socio-cultural marginalisation.”

### *Al-Shabaab:*

Allegiant to Al-Qaeda, Somali-based Al-Shabaab has started to exploit the internal turmoil in Ethiopia to launch attacks over the border. Before the Tigray War, Ethiopia had managed to ensure the security of its border with Somalia by situating its own soldiers within Somali territory, however; the war forced the military to focus on the north, leaving the Somali border less attended. This resulted in an increase in Al-Shabaab activity, especially putting civilians at increased risk. The Somali and the Ethiopian governments are now working together to counter Al-Shabaab in the Ethiopian province of the Somali Regional State and in Somalia itself.

### *United Nations (UN):*

The United Nations has been monitoring the human rights situation in Ethiopia, a charter member of the UN, extensively since the Eritrean-Ethiopian War. It is needless to say



that the human rights situation is not at its best in Ethiopia, with the UN stating that the people of Ethiopia are “mired...in the intractable and deadly consequences” of the conflict. Furthermore, “in their first, extensive report to the Human Rights Council in Geneva, the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia said that they believed that crimes against humanity had also been committed in the on-off war that erupted in the northern region in November 2020.” The UN currently aims to establish good governance in the region and help the federal Ethiopian government to stop the civil conflict.

### Chronology of Important Events

Date	Description of Event
<b>March 1, 1896</b>	Italians are defeated in the first Italian-Ethiopian War by Menelik II, formal recognition of Ethiopian independence by a European power.
<b>April 2, 1930</b>	Haile Selassie ascends to the throne, he will be the last Ethiopian emperor of the Solomonic Dynasty
<b>July 16, 1931</b>	First written constitution of Ethiopia is prepared upon the request of Haile Selassie as part of his modernization aims
<b>May 9, 1936</b>	Italians annex Ethiopia, Emperor Selassie creates a government-in-exile in London, beginning of guerilla warfare against Italians



<b>May 5, 1941</b>	Almost five years after the invasion of Ethiopia, the Emperor returns to Addis Ababa.
<b>1961</b>	War of Eritrean Independence begins, it will last for thirty years
<b>1974</b>	With the support of the Soviet Union, long time US ally Selassie is ousted from the throne and a Marxist-Leninist government is put in place
<b>September 12, 1974</b>	The Deng comes to power, a communist military junta
<b>May 1995</b>	First multiparty elections, Tigray-led EPRDF comes to power, attacks against minorities and modernization efforts continue
<b>August 5, 2016</b>	Oromo Protests reach their peak, civilians are targeted by the state police
<b>November 4, 2020</b>	The Tigray War begins
<b>November 2, 2021</b>	Ethiopia goes into a state of emergency, giving the government the power to “arrest and detain critics, impose curfews and restrict



	the news media”
<b>March 24, 2022</b>	TPLF and Ethiopian soldiers agree to an ceasefire to allow humanitarian aid into Tigray
<b>November 2, 2022</b>	Exactly a year after the declaration of the state of emergency as a result of an offensive in the northern regions of the country, the two sides (TPLF and the Federal Government) agree to a ceasefire.
<b>April 23, 2023</b>	OLO and the Ethiopian government engages in talks to end the Oromo insurgency, no agreement is made
<b>November 13, 2023</b>	OLO and the Ethiopian government engages in talks to end the Oromo insurgency for the second time, but no commitments are made

## Relevant International Documents

- Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPPCG), 9 December 1948
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), 21 December 1965



- Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Protocols I and II of the Geneva Conventions (a special emphasis should be given to Common Article 3)

## Past Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The United Nations has not adopted any previous resolutions regarding the situation in Ethiopia as the conflict is limited within the country and, at least currently, rather settled. The Human Rights Council has adopted many resolutions calling for the cessation of hostilities, however, neither the Security Council nor the General Assembly has taken this issue up for debate. The Tigray War was stopped by the help of the middlemen which were the African Union and the United States of America. However, with respect to Eritrea, the United Nations has continually requested its forces be withdrawn from Northern Ethiopia, as they are suspected of carrying out extrajudicial executions against Tigray villagers. Eritrea is yet to comply with these requests. Similarly, the Amhara Region, which was having its own war against the Tigray, was not negotiating in the peace talks, and they were not a part of the final agreement either. A shortcoming of the peace agreement signed, therefore, is the lack of cooperation from the other parties to the conflict, which may prove lethal afterwards.

## Solution Alternatives

Ethiopia needs dire investments and humanitarian aid in order to alleviate the suffering of its people, delegates may wish to utilise UN agencies such as Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in order to establish humanitarian missions. The Security Council is yet to decide upon the necessity of boots on the ground, however delegates may wish to discover the establishment of a peacekeeping force especially under Chapter VI of the UN Charter. For multiracial states, the most prominent previous solution that was brought by the Security Council was the Annan Plan for Cyprus, and delegates may wish to discover whether a similar plan could be implemented for Ethiopia.

Furthermore, the UN must start to combat human rights abuses in the region by its specialised agencies. Issues such as female genital mutilation and ethnic discrimination have been on the General Assembly's agenda for many years, and as a signatory to the



International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Ethiopia must take the necessary steps to ensure the safety of its Tigray citizens. Ethiopia is not a party to the Rome Statute, however war criminals in Ethiopia should be prosecuted by UN sanctioned courts, as they previously did in the former Yugoslavia.

Border security is also vital, as Eritrea continues to send in its soldiers into Tigrayan territory and Al-Shabaab terrorists cross the border to Somalia daily. As a member state, Eritrea has to respect other members' sovereignty, and therefore the Security Council may call for the immediate removal of Eritrean soldiers with the threat of political and economic consequences such as an embargo. As for Somalia, Ethiopian forces must be helped to reestablish their jurisdiction over the border checkpoints in order to contain Al-Shabaab. UN Peacekeepers, generally, do not have the mandate to combat non-state actors, and therefore an international coalition, similar to the ones deployed in Kuwait and in Kosovo, may be called to act against Al-Shabaab.

These solutions still leave the most important issue left unresolved, the future of Ethiopia. Statebuilding and soft peacekeeping must be encouraged in the region, and the United Nations should act as a mediator between the many tribes of the region in order to ensure the peace that is built is one to last. This can be done through the sending of civilian expert advisors to help the Ethiopian government. Also, the internal migration problem should be addressed by ensuring the fast return of property and land to its owners, and, if a return is impossible, the victims must be compensated.

Furthermore, the peace deal that has been signed to end the Tigray War failed to bring Eritrea and the Amhara to the table. The delegates must use diplomatic means to ensure their full cooperation with the peace agreement in place. UN advisors who are monitoring the ceasefire should be allowed to conduct their missions with ease and given the necessary help by the respective governments.

## Useful Links

- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights website for the crisis in Ethiopia:  
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/ethiopia>
- British Broadcasting Corporation's country profile on Ethiopia:  
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13349398>



- Amnesty International's website on the situation in Ethiopia:  
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/africa/east-africa-the-horn-and-great-lakes/ethiopia/>
- UNHCR's website for the refugee crisis in Ethiopia:  
<https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/ethiopia/>
- Official website of the UN Mission in Ethiopia: <https://ethiopia.un.org/en>

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