



Humanitarian Situation Update on Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) Genocidal War waged on the Amhara People: July 27th, 2021

Background on the Conflict in Northern Ethiopia

The Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) initiated a conflict in Ethiopia’s northernmost region of Tigray when it attacked the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) Northern Command and neighboring Amhara Region on November 3, 2021. In the following days, weeks and months, a coalition of forces including the ENDF, Amhara Special Forces, and Eritrean Defense Forces launched a counteroffensive against TPLF from various fronts and controlled most parts of Tigray until the Ethiopian government announced a unilateral ceasefire on June 28, 2021, to comply with incessant demands from the international community and ameliorate the worsening humanitarian situation in Tigray. The federal government’s unilateral decision was accompanied by a full withdrawal of federal troops from the regional capital of Mekelle as well as other parts of the Tigray region to let farmers in the region can engage in agricultural activities peacefully.

However, TPLF rejected the ceasefire and utilized the federal government’s sudden decision

to leave Tigray as an opportunity to bring the war to the neighboring Amhara and Afar regions, a plan they attempted early in the conflict but failed to implement. Over the last two weeks, TPLF mounted an attack to reoccupy the areas of Raya and Welkait (also spelled Wolkait) areas where ethnic Amhara civilians were prosecuted for decades by TPLF for their resistance to imposition of Tigrayan identity and annexation to Tigray region in defiance of these territories being formerly administered by historic majority Amhara provinces of Gondar and Wollo. The areas collectively known as “Welkait” includes Welkait, Tegede, Telemt and Setit Humera however some of these areas were renamed during the occupation by TPLF and incorporation by the Tigray regional state (e.g. “Telemt” was renamed to “Tselemt” or “Tselemti”) and contemporary media refers to this area as “West Tigray”. The areas collectively known as “Raya” includes Raya Azebo, Alamata, Ofla and Ende Mehoni and contemporary sources refer to this area as Southern or South Eastern Tigray. As a result of the recent conflict, these areas were liberated from TPLF occupation however there are active conflicts to control some of these areas. While often inaccurately presented by various media outlets as a mere “territorial dispute”, the administrative dispute over Welkait and Raya is about the rights and protection of its predominantly ethnic Amhara inhabitants. Following the Mai-Kadra massacre where pro-TPLF forces killed more than 1,500 ethnic Amhara civilians on November 11, 2020, most Amharas believe that letting TPLF reoccupy these areas again is tantamount to forsaking millions of Amharas to TPLF’s genocidal acts. Thus, the Amhara regional government, security forces, and the common people are prepared to mobilize in preparation for self-defense, making Raya and Welkait centers of the fight and potentially turning the war into an inter-regional and inter-ethnic war.

Meanwhile, external observers have struggled to condemn atrocities committed by the TPLF forces leading many to believe there is a double standard in reporting war crimes including TPLF’s deployment of child soldiers. Lack of nuanced perspectives on the situation in Ethiopia have led many actors to fall into partisan stands that exacerbate inter-communal tensions and the conflict at large. For instance, some governments and institutions have been

accused of advancing a pro-TPLF agenda masked under ostensible principles of respect for the current constitution of Ethiopia (e.g. administrative land boundaries), a constitution that many believe formalized ethnic apartheid in Ethiopia and that was imposed onto Ethiopians by TPLF and its allies without a representative process.

Administrative Area Conventions

Throughout this report references will be made to various regions and subregions in Ethiopia along with the local administrative subunit system. The country is divided into regions loosely based on ethnicity (with many disputed boundary demarcations) at the top level and each region is generally divided into zones, which are further divided into woredas (districts) and those are divided into kebeles (precincts/wards) at the smallest level. In addition, some woredas are named after their major town/city (e.g. “Raya Kobo” and “Addi Arkay”). Prior to this system, administrative boundaries followed the taklai ghizat or provincial (kifle hager) system where the nation was divided into awrajjas (counties/sub-provinces), and then on to woredas. Some zones utilize Amharic terms for polar directions including “semien” or north, “dehub” or south, “mirab” for west and “misraq” for east. Lastly, some regional namings may have multiple spellings when translated from the Amharic alphabet to the Roman/Latin alphabet.

Highlights on the Humanitarian Situation by Area

Raya Front

Atrocities and sexual violence perpetrated against civilians in Raya

- Amhara Association of America (AAA)’s latest investigation reveals that Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) militias have been undertaking a house-to-house operation of murdering ethnic Amhara residents in Raya Kobo Woreda located in Semien Wollo Zone, Amhara Region. According to at least five AAA sources,

witnesses confirmed that TPLF militias are committing extrajudicial killings in Raya Kobo Woreda since at least July 23, 2021. AAA managed to confirm at least 11 Amhara civilians were killed in deliberate, targeted attacks by the TPLF militia.

- On July 23, 2021 around 10 am local time, a group of TPLF militias conducted houses-to-house operations where they killed an armed civilian. One survivor of a shooting said that he was in his home when

“the militias saw [him] and, began shooting at him”

but he survived by hiding in the neighborhood. Minutes later after the first incident, this survivor watched helplessly as TPLF militias fired and killed a woman named Ergo Desalegne and within an hour killed another woman he identified as “Gebata”.

- Multiple internally dispersed persons (IDPs) in Mersa town (located in Habru Woreda, Semien Wollo Zone, Amhara Region) witnessed the killing of four Amhara civilians in Aradom Kebele (also known as Kebele 8) of Raya Kobo Woreda. The victims of TPLF’s execution-style killing in Aradom Kebele included Ayele Shumet, Priest Abate Lemma, Nigus Teshale and Moges Kebede. Victims included the elderly or civilians who could visibly be distinguished as non-combatants such as Priest Abate Lemma who was 80 years old. Priest Abate’s murder demonstrates the TPLF’s intention to indiscriminately kill civilians solely based on their ethnic Amhara identity.
- Mesfin Mekonnen, a 40 year old resident of Kobo town (located in Raya Kobo Woreda), was killed by TPLF militias while he was attempting to transport his family out of the town.



Figure 1: Mesfin Mekonnen, aged 40, was one of the civilians killed by TPLF militias in Kobo town, Raya Kobo Woreda, Semien Wollo Zone, Amhara Region

- In addition to those killed they knew two Amharas who survived TPLF's attacks in Ambule Kebele; these are Sisay Welde and Jalo Tebeje. According to multiple witnesses' accounts, the victims, Sisay Welde and Jalo Tebeje, were shot by TPLF militias in their homes on July 22nd and 23rd, 2021 respectively, according to a relative. AAA was also able to confirm that Sisay Welde who was blind for over 20 years was shot in his right hand.
- AAA is gathering evidence for more extra-judicial killings of undetermined casualties targeting Amhara youth by TPLF militias reported in villages of Degago, Addis Amba and Ambule.
- A focal person for IDPs sheltered in Woldia University, Mersa Campus, reiterated that gross human rights violations and abuses were committed by TPLF militias against ethnic Amhara civilians, including heinous acts of sexual violence. Several IDPs recounted stories of how TPLF militias perpetrated sexual violence against residents in

the area known as Segno Gebeya (Monday market) of Kobo town.

Status of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

- Close to a million people were estimated to be displaced due to insecurities as a result of an incursion TPLF attempted incursion into Amhara Region on the Raya, Telemt and Wag Hemra fronts. The majority of IDPs hailed from Raya Kobo Woreda where government sources estimated the total number of IDPs in the hundreds of thousands.
- Woldia, Mersa and Dessie town are hosting IDPs from Kobo town as some IDPs had relatives in these towns. Rough estimates indicate at least 15,000 IDPs arrived in Dessie town alone from Raya Kobo Woreda while Woldia and Mersa towns of the Semien Wollo Zone of Amhara Region are also hosting large numbers of IDPs from surrounding areas.
- Thousands of IDPs that have arrived in Woldia from Raya Kobo Woreda are currently sheltered in temporary IDP sites: Etege Taytu Betul Elementary School, Woldia High School and Woldia Teacher's College.
- However, those temporary IDP sites are not enough for all people and IDPs are currently seeking shelter within unfinished buildings and on the street without adequate shelter. On July 25th, 2021, an estimated 800 IDPs from Raya Kobo Woreda were residing in Mersa town. Of these, only 300 IDPs found shelter in Woldia University Mersa Campus, while the remaining 500 IDPs took shelter within the host community. The lack of proper shelter, adequate food and medicine has put these IDPs at great risk of imminent starvation and illness.
- No humanitarian assistance has been provided to IDPs thus far and they are at a risk of starvation. Most IDPs escaped without adequate food and clothing supplies fearing attacks from TPLF. One IDP who fled to Woldia from Raya Kobo Woreda with his wife, aunt and cousin stated that they

“fled with only the clothes on their backs after witnessing indiscriminate attacks by the TPLF militias.”

An official from Habru Woreda administration, expressed his concern that the IDPs may face difficulty during this rainy season if immediate measures are not taken in time, stating further that

“shelter options in the town are very limited and the majority of IDPs are under substandard shelter conditions including unfinished buildings.”

When asked about availability of humanitarian assistance and resources for IDPs, he said

“so far, many IDPs and the host community have endured the situation with almost no assistance from government and philanthropic organizations.” The official added, “As the number of IDPs increase so do their humanitarian needs, as do the needs of the host community, relevant government organs and philanthropic organizations should take steps to address the unfolding humanitarian crisis, with the priorities being shelter, clean water, food and healthcare”.

Telemt Front

- Though there is military deployment near Zarima town (Addi Arkay Woreda, Semien Gondar Zone, Amhara Region), there was no active fighting on July 27th in the towns of Addi Arkay and Zarima (located in Addi Arkay Woreda). However, people are still being actively displaced from Zarima to Debark town and Gondar city also located in the Semien Gondar Zone, Amhara Region. According to an AAA source, most of the residents of Zarima town, estimated to be between 10,000 - 12,000, have left the town fearing imminent attacks from TPLF fighters.

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- AAA is collecting more information about reports of TPLF forces killing youth in Addi Arkay Woreda. Sources say TPLF's attack also targeted Muslims living in the town.
 - TPLF also attacked monasteries and churches around Addi Arkay Woreda and attempted to loot properties of the residents. Sources told AAA TPLF militias tried to take the "Tabot" (a traditional replica of the Ark of the Covenant used in religious processions in the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian faith) of Kidane Mehret Church in Addi Arkay and looted Woldiba monastery. The attack on the church has led to confrontations between the invading TPLF forces and the local civilian population comprised of farmers.

About Amhara Association of America (AAA)

The Amhara Association of America (AAA) is a non-profit civic organization located in Charlotte, North Carolina that investigates and documents human rights atrocities and repression against Amharas in Ethiopia. AAA seeks to inform U.S. policymakers, international human rights organizations, media, and all Ethiopian stakeholders to pressure Ethiopian leaders to change laws, policies, and practices in Ethiopia so perpetrators are held accountable and victims receive justice. AAA also collaborates with Amhara organizations in the U.S., supports independent Amhara organizations in Ethiopia, and provides humanitarian aid for Amharas impacted due to targeted ethnic attacks. AAA's funding comes directly from members and supporters; the organization is not affiliated with any Ethiopian or American political or governmental entities.

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