



Whitney High School Model United Nations

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WHSMUN XX CONFERENCE

January 29, 2022



Advanced Security Council (SC)

The Ethiopian / Tigray War



Background

The Ethiopian Tigray conflict is an issue that is riddled with years of power struggles and political insurrection. And the rise of Abiy Ahmed, who was once awarded the Nobel Prize for regional peacemaking, to the position of prime minister, would be at the center of the conflict. At the beginning of Ahmed's term, he sent a decree which fundamentally changed the structure of the Ethiopian government, combining the already existing four-party Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Front who had been in power for 27 years, into one party.

During the EPRF's rule, prior to Ahmed's rule, autonomy was granted to regions such as Tigray, with the notable ruling party being The People's Liberation Front (TPLF). Without control of their own regional government, the region of Tigray quietly retreated to the mountains, disapproving of Ahmed's reforms. However, in September of 2020, the conflict heightened with the Tigray people holding their own regional elections in lieu of the elections that Ahmed had postponed. Declaring this as an act of defiance, Ahmed removed the TPLF's funding, thereby stripping the region of its power, while simultaneously dismissing the vote. Two months later, on November 4th, 2020, Ahmed escalated the situation further, delegating blame to the Tigray people when federal army bases were attacked. Ahmed then ordered a military attack on the Tigray people, enlisting the help of the national soldiers as well as the Eritrean army. In an attack that yielded countless casualties, Ahmed declared victory, and installed a government that was subservient to the central government.

Since then, the injustices being committed in Tigray has become nothing short of an international issue. When questioned about the severity of the conflict, Prime Minister Ahmed vehemently denied both Eritrean involvements as well as the jeopardization of Tigray civilians. However, since the incident in November, these injustices have become virtually ubiquitous, even obstructing citizens' fundamental rights to seemingly "calm" insurrection. Censorship has become rampant with Ahmed limiting access to journalists, preventing coverage of the issue, as well as enforcing a statewide blackout.

Since June, the Ethiopian government has ordered a ceasefire, but the revolutionary TPLF group has rejected all possibilities of a truce, taking control of the Tigray capital, Mekelle. In what is presumed a shootout between the two groups, the fighting has expanded to the neighboring

regions of Amhara and Afar.

UNITED NATIONS INVOLVEMENT

The situation has spiraled out of control since November 2020 when central government troops clashed with forces loyal to the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). Ever since, the neighboring regions of Amhara and Afar have also been swept up in the deadly violence and terrible rights abuses. There has yet to be any form of intervention by the international community subsequent to the assertive comments by Primer Minister Abiy Ahmed who, on November 25th, 2020, shut down the idea of any international intervention claiming that one must adhere to the 'Principle of Non-Intervention in Internal Affairs' as stated in Article 2(7) of the charter of the United Nations until an official request for assistance is submitted. This statement was released alongside military action taken in response to the 'act of treason committed by the TPLF where they attempted to take control of the military depot of the Northern Command. In response, the UN's stance was established by a joint investigation by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and the UN Human Rights Office which found that there were reasonable grounds to believe that all parties to the conflict in Tigray have, to varying degrees, committed violations of international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law, some of which may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. A public statement by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, advocated that all parties involved in the escalating conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray must stop fighting immediately, or else risk pushing the region's catastrophic humanitarian situation "over the edge"

The UN has stated that the life of civilians in Ethiopia's embattled Tigray region has become "extremely alarming and continues to deteriorate rapidly" as hunger grows and fighting remains an obstacle to aid reaching millions of people. In addition, the UN's top emergency relief official, Martin Griffiths, said that millions of people in northern Ethiopia are now "living on a knife-edge, as the humanitarian crisis is growing deeper and wider."

The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator added that needs are rising across the country, and that the funds would help aid organizations reach some of the most vulnerable. Due to the civil turmoil and a lack of supplies, the UN's attempts to send assistance have become futile in many instances. For example, the United Nations Office for the Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) reported that 364 aid trucks have been waiting for authorization to access Tigray since 18 October and that it's estimated that 80 percent of the essential medication is no longer available in Tigray.

Recently, US\$40 million, \$25 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), and \$15 million from the country-based Ethiopia Humanitarian Fund (EHF) have been allocated to help scale up emergency operations in Ethiopia's conflict-affected northern regions and support an early response to the drought in southern Ethiopia. This injection of cash will help relieve agencies provide drinking water, including to prevent waterborne diseases and mitigate the risk of cholera outbreaks and help pastoral communities preserve their livestock. Yet the country still faces a funding gap of \$1.3 billion, including \$350 million for the response in Tigray.

Bloc Positions

Western Bloc:

Western Nations align closely with the UN. They desire an immediate ceasefire in Ethiopia and also want to provide humanitarian aid to the region. Canadian Foreign Minister François-Philippe Champagne calls all parties to show restraint. Champagne also called for a peaceful solution and protection of civilians. Norway has said it was "deeply concerned by reports of the use of SGBV in Tigray. They join UN Special Rapporteur Pramilla Patten in calling on all parties to commit to a zero-tolerance policy for SGBV. Obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law must be respected." The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated in response to the massacre in the Church of Our Lady Mary of Zion, "We strongly condemn the perpetrators of this barbaric crime committed in a place of worship. We expect the Ethiopian authorities to immediately take all possible measures to clarify its circumstances and punish the perpetrators." Poland also called on the parties to the conflict to refrain from violence and respect human rights, to ensure the safety of the civilian population, and to properly protect the places of worship and freedom of religion. They appeal for an unimpeded access for humanitarian deliveries to the Tigray province

African Bloc

Many African nations find the conflict incredibly gruesome and taxing for the Ethiopian people. They also want a ceasefire in the conflict. Djiboutian President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh expressed strong support for Abiy, saying that he had chosen to "restore law and order at the federal level, and punish those seeking to break up the country" and dismissed the prospect of negotiations, saying that the TPLF had "structured itself so as to bring the central government to its knees" and that talks could "only lead to the partition of Ethiopia", setting a precedent for secession by other groups in the region. Kenya, expressed political support for the Ethiopian national government.

Asian Bloc

Many Asian nations like China and India believe in a hands-off approach, allowing the Ethiopian government to resolve the conflict by themselves. Japan, however, believes in sending humanitarian aid. At the UN Security Council meeting, Russia, India, and China have objected to interfering in Ethiopia's internal affairs. Minister of Foreign Affairs (Turkey) Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu stated that the Turkish government "understood" the federal Ethiopian government's decision and "expressed his confidence that the operation would end soon and not compromise the safety of civilians.

Questions to Consider

1. How do the communications blackouts and repression of Tigray citizens' rights present an international issue, especially related to the UN?
2. How will the offensive and counter-offensives in war play a role in how best to intervene if at all during this conflict?

3. In what way can humanitarian aid be safely to those impoverished without being rerouted to another source?
4. How should spillover events from war be dealt with? Should other nations retaliate, or should they be sanctioned to stay uninvolved?
5. How should war crimes be dealt with during this conflict?
6. How can online social networks be used to start social movements within Ethiopia? 7. Is the best solution intervention, aid, or a mix of both in ending the warfare?

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