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After One Year of Tigray's War.. Will the Violations Stop!

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Preamble

Since its outbreak on November 4, 2020, the facts and implications of the civil war in Tigray reveals flagrant human rights violations and retaliatory war crimes in line with Ethiopia's human rights records and in contradiction with its international, regional, and local human rights obligations to the extent that the Tigray region has become a center of all human rights violations at all political, civil, economic, social, and cultural levels.

Speaking of international efforts to resolve the Tigray crisis, the United Nations Human Rights Council held a special session in Geneva on December 17 on the civil war in Ethiopia, at the urgent request of the European Union.

In this context, this study highlights the human rights situation in Tigray; seeks to monitor, analyze, and evaluate the trends of the development of the war in Tigray and its human rights, life, and humanitarian repercussions in the Tigray region after one year of war by focusing on violations of the right to life and gender-based violence, asylum, displacement, forced displacement, opinion, expression, and housing, and concludes with presenting a set of recommendations about them.

First: Violations of the right to life

The escalation of the war in Tigray intersected with Ethiopia's human rights obligations to fulfill, respect, and protect human rights, particularly the right to life. violations committed by all actors parties to the war, including the Ethiopian National Defense Forces, the Eritrean Defense Forces, and the Tigray Liberation Front forces, have dramatically escalated, particularly arbitrary and reprisal killings, human massacres, and summary and extrajudicial executions.

More than 2,000 civilians were killed in 150 human massacres in Tigray during the period from November 2020 to April 2021 by 90% of the youth. Among those massacres, the "Mai Kadra" massacre, where 6.00 civilians were killed by Tigray forces on 9 and 10 November 2020 according to the reports of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission¹, and the "Aksum" massacre, where 8.00 civilians were killed by the Eritrean forces during the period from 9: 27 November 2020, and the "Hamira" massacre, in which 250 civilians were killed in March 2021.

¹ The Guardian, possible war crimes on all sides in Ethiopian conflict says report, 3 November 2021, <https://bit.ly/3CvywVr>

Not to mention the retaliatory murders, which killed: 15 civilians in "Hamira" between 9:11 November 2020 due to clashes between the Eritrean Defense Forces and the National Defense Forces against the Tigray forces, 29 civilians in "Mekli" on November 28, 2020, as a result of an attack by the National Defense Forces, 200 civilians who were buried in mass graves inside the "Abune Aregawi" church on November 10, 2020, 72 civilians in Bora, Amiduha, and Bora in the north, and Mai Weliham in southern Tigray during the period 8:9 January 2021 by the Ethiopian Defense Forces,² 120 civilians in Amhara village by the "Samaritan" forces of the Tigray Liberation Front on September 9, 2021.³

Humanitarian workers were not spared from violations of the right to life. About 23 humanitarian aid workers were killed between November 2020 and September 30, 2021. In addition to violence, security incidents and security threats, 72 UN drivers contracted to deliver humanitarian aid in northern Ethiopia were arrested.⁴

Second: Violations of gender-based violence

The severe changes witnessed by Ethiopia, particularly its military and security developments in the Tigray region, imposed a tragic situation for women and have undermined their rights at all levels due to violations of sexual and physical violence, and the loss of reproductive and nutritional health requirements for women and girls in particular.

Sexual rape cases in Tigray escalated from 5.16 to 10,000 cases during the period from January: August 2021, and the needs of 26,000 women in the age group 15: 49 years increased. About 820 cases during the period from November 2020: April 2021 according to the statistics of the public health official in the temporary government of Tigray, and 1/3 of the conflict survivors were subjected to sexual violence during the period from November 2020: March 2021 according to the estimates of one of the working human rights organizations,⁵ and an increase from 518: 829 during the period 1: 21, April 2021 according to the reports of five hospitals in Tigray,⁶ or what it was monitored by individual hospital reports with 300 cases in

² The Guardian, possible war crimes on all sides in Ethiopian conflict says report, 3 November 2021, <https://bit.ly/3CvywVr>

³ Reuters, tigray forces killed 120 civilians in a village in Amhara -Ethiopia officials, 9 September 2021, <https://bit.ly/3oO5yiE>

⁴ BBC, Ethiopia conflict: Tigray aid lorry drivers arrested, UN says, 10 November 2021, <https://bit.ly/3cwEeQk>

⁵ Sexual violence and the war in Tigray, 16 June 2021, <https://bit.ly/3cxmIkD>

⁶ The Jazeera, A Tigrayan womb should never give birth rape in Tigray 2021, access date 21 April 2021, <https://bit.ly/3oMImIR>

Ayder referral hospital in Mikeli in the first week of April 2021, and 376 cases of rape in Adigrat hospital during the period November 2020: June 2021.

Third: Violations of the right to asylum

Ethiopia is one of the largest African countries receiving and hosting refugees, with about 847,000 refugees from 19 countries, the majority of whom are from South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, and Sudan. They are placed in 24 main camps. However, the refugee situation in Ethiopia is critically inflamed due to the political, military, economic, and security pressures in the Ethiopia.

Access to adequate shelter remains below the level. Only 46% of refugee families have access to these shelters. As to the right to health, only 3,720 refugees are vaccinated against Covid-19 and the preventive measures are poorly implemented. The right to food is met by 84% of the minimum standard ration of 2,100 calories per person per day.⁷ The right to education is obtained by 164,631 refugee students, with 48,841, 105,101, 10,689 in primary, preparatory, and secondary schools without meeting the minimum preventive guidelines and 60% of the camps does not have schools.

The effects of the civil war in Tigray and its direct violations are evident at the level of Eritrean refugees estimated at 22% of the refugees inside Ethiopia, and the number of about 100,000 Eritrean refugees in 4 refugee camps are Mai-aini, Harush valley, Shimelba, and Hitsats, they include 39% of the children and 25 of the unaccompanied children by the lack of protection and targeting by the conflicting parties, especially the Eritrean forces, through killing, arrest, detention, arbitrary and forcible rape, and the closure of camps, as happened in Hitsats and Shimelba camps in February 2021.

In the context of monitoring violations in Hitsats camp, it can be noted that the Eritrean forces targeted the camp on November 19, 2020, killing 9 refugees and injuring 17 before their departure in December 2020, and their return on January 04, 2021, and burning and destroying the humanitarian infrastructure of the camp on January 5: 8, 2021. 20 Eritrean refugees were detained on November 17, 2020, 31 persons were killed in the period 19:23, 2021, and 20: 30 Eritrean refugees were arrested, including 2 women, for 2 days before they were taken to an unknown location on November 26, 2020. 4 Eritrean refugee women were raped on December 16, 2020,

⁷ Relief web, UNHCR, Ethiopia facts sheet June 2021, <https://bit.ly/3CzGgRt>

and the Mai Aini Adi and Harush camps in Tigray were targeted and attacked on June 27, 2021. These camps host 20,000 Eritrean refugees,⁸ which led to the displacement of about 20,000 Eritrean refugees, of whom 7,643 are missing as of August 2021.⁹

Fourth: violations of the right to housing and destruction of infrastructure

The civil war in Tigray and its military operations have led to violations of the right to housing. The areas, civilian housing facilities, and schools were caught under military operations, clashes, and fires, leading to the internal displacement of 2 million persons, and the displacement of 80,000 and tens of thousands to eastern Sudan and Eritrea¹⁰

From December 2020 to March 2021, about 70% of the health facilities were destroyed in Tigray, as 1 out of 5 facilities was used as military bases. On November 3, 2020, TSF forces used the Danish Health Center to launch an attack on the mechanized division of the National Defense Force¹¹. In November 2021, only 10% of health facilities were operating, and 80% of essential medicines were lost¹².

On 13:14 November 2020, the Ethiopian Defense Forces used civilian airports, especially the airports of "Gon Dar" and Bahir Dar" for military and offensive purposes. On 31 December 2020, they used civilian educational schools, "Samri" Technical School as a camp. From 3 December 2020 to 13 April 2021, the NDF used Atse Yohannes Middle School in Mikkel as a camp twice; and the Tigray High Courts in Mikli as detention centers.

Fifth: violations of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

The Tigray war led to grave violations of the rights to freedom of opinion and expression in Ethiopia. In November 2020, the Ethiopian government imposed a state of emergency, restricting the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

In addition, the Internet infrastructure in Ethiopia is very poor. Its spread is estimated by 20.6% in favor of 23.9 million users and it is restricted in rural areas; where 80% of Ethiopia's population lives; according to January 2021 statistics, the

⁸ UNHCR, Eritrean refugees in Tigray caught up in conflict, 27 July 2021, <https://bit.ly/3cvwuCom>.

⁹ Gov – track, S Res. 97 a resolution calling on the government of Ethiopia, the Tigray people's liberation front, 9 march 2021, <https://bit.ly/3HCcxni>

¹⁰ USAID, on one year of conflict in northern Ethiopia, 4 November, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3CzefCk>.

¹¹ DWB, people left with few healthcare options in Tigray as facilities were looted and destroyed, 15 march 2021, <https://bit.ly/30F6DRX>.

¹² CDP, Ethiopia Tigray crisis 11 November, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3HDAOJG>.

legal restrictions under the amended Anti-Terrorism Law of 2020, the Media Regulation Law issued in April 2021, and power outages because of armed clashes¹³

Among the most prominent violations, communications and the internet were cut off on November 4, 2020, before attempts to restore it after the ceasefire decision in June 2021 by about 50%. But it was quickly disabled again in July 2021¹⁴. As well as blocking social media sites; Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp for hours on May 17, 2021¹⁵.

There are also arbitrary detentions of journalists and reporters. The detention of Reuters journalist Julia Paravicini in November 2020, the detention of 7 Addis Standard-Ethiopian News Agency journalists on December 1, 2020, and the killing of Daweti Kebede in Meikle from Tigray TV on January 19, 2021, The raid and intimidation of journalists, Lucy Casa, journalist and writer on human rights violations in Tigray - by armed men February 2021, the arrest of Jeremiah Gebreu, a journalist at the BBC, journalist Tamirat Yamani and translators Wow Le Kalou and Fitsum Burhan, the translators of the Financial Times and Agence France-Presse and their detention for two days¹⁶, and journalist Simon Marks of the New York Times in March 2021¹⁷.

Sixth: Violations of the Right to Food

The right to food was violated in the Tigray region following the outbreak and civil armed conflicts continuation. Armed confrontations led to an increase in the displaced persons and internally displaced persons, their humanitarian and food needs, impeded access to humanitarian and food assistance.

With regard to monitoring violations of the right to food, the humanitarian needs in the Tigray region were estimated at 5.2 million out of 5.8, equivalent to 91% of the Tigray region population¹⁸. In addition to impeding the arrival of food supplies and limiting opportunities for humanitarian response. Although the United Nations indicated that 100 trucks of humanitarian and food aid must arrive daily in the Tigray region; but 500 trucks passed from mid-July until September 2021¹⁹, and only 300

¹³ Dater portal, Ethiopia digital 2021, 11 February 2021, <https://bit.ly/3oKKKso>.

¹⁴ Relief web, Ethiopian Tigray region humanitarian updates situation report 9 July 2021, <https://bit.ly/3DlzpPe>.

¹⁵ African news, Ethiopia Tigray region hit by power black out, access date 21 November, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3x8aBy4>.

¹⁶ France 24, civilians in Ethiopia Tigray speak out of horror as black out lifts, 14 December 2021, <https://bit.ly/3qXXZs7>.

¹⁷ VOA, Tigray war exposes limits to Abiy promise of press freedom, 16 June 2021, <https://bit.ly/3x7evHo>.

¹⁸ OCHA, Ethiopia northern Ethiopia humanitarian update, 18 November 2021, <https://bit.ly/3FuNOQ3>.

¹⁹ BBC, Tigray crisis: "150 people died of starvation" in the Ethiopian region as the Humanitarian worsens, 7 September, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3DAcdN3>.

trucks passed during the period from 18 October 2021 until 20 November 2021 **under waiting for the authorities' permission through the main road** "Simera, Abala, and Mikkeli. Only 1,114 trucks, representing 15% of the required aid supplies, passed from mid-July to November 2021²⁰.

As to the arrival of food aid, 10,000 people received food assistance, 1.2% of the 870,000 who need food assistance²¹. It is causing the deaths of 200 children under the age of 5 from starvation in 14 hospitals in the northern Tigray region of Ethiopia in the period June-October 2021. Thirty-three thousand children may die from malnutrition, and 140,000 children suffer from severe Similar to the famine in June 2021²².

It caused an increase in malnutrition rates by 9%: 29% and 1.3%: 7.1% in acute malnutrition rates among children under five before the outbreak of the war in November 2020 to July 2021²³. The United Nations has monitored more than 100,000 children suffering from acute and severe malnutrition, and 47% of pregnant and lactating women²⁴

Seventh: violations of displacement and forced displacement:

Civil war effects in Tigray have led to an increase in the rates of IDPs, fleeing, and displaced persons inside and outside Ethiopia. In August 2021, the **influx of internally displaced people into Ethiopia escalated** to 1.7 million, with 92,000 displaced from Mekele, 772,343 displaced from the Shire, 329,112 from central Tigray, 185,690 displaced from East Tigray, 267,304 displaced from North Tigray, 63,898 displaced from South Tigray. Of these, 720.00 are children, and 6,000 are unaccompanied, unsupported, and separated children. To bring the number of displaced people in Ethiopia to 2.1 million in November 2021²⁵, with 80,000 and tens of thousands to eastern Sudan and Eritrea, according to August 2021 statistics²⁶.

The humanitarian needs of IDPs in Tigray have dramatically escalated. It estimated at 5.2, 2.3, 1.5, 0.5, 0.5, and 0.4 million of emergency food and health needs, cholera vaccination for the second dose, water, prevention, and psychological support.

²⁰ BBC News, Ethiopia Tigray crisis: what is stopping aid getting in?, <https://bit.ly/3FwiWOV>.

²¹ OCHA, Ethiopia : Tigray humanitarian operational capacity, 11 November 2021, <https://bit.ly/3x32gvD>.

²² UNICEF, At least 33.000 children in parts of Tigray , Ethiopia at imminent risk of death as conflict in the famine threatens, 14 June 2021, <https://bit.ly/3x5glby>.

²³ The Guardian, scores of children killed by starvation in Tigray, says health official, 15 July 2021, <https://bit.ly/3r3SR5M>.

²⁴ UN, 100.000 children in Tigray at risk of death from malnutrition: UNICEF, 30 July 2021, <https://bit.ly/3qQuvN0>.

²⁵ Relief web, ACAPS thematic report: Ethiopia northern crisis: the humanitarian situation one year into the conflict , 3, November 2021, <https://bit.ly/3DEJpES>.

²⁶ Relief web, UNHCR regional update 21: Ethiopia situations 6 September 2021, <https://bit.ly/3cu0WZg>.

Besides 43,000 human dignity needs,²⁷ 900,000 are in a famine-like state; November 2021 statistics²⁸.

In June 2021, the limits of the humanitarian response to the displaced also stopped when providing 2% of educational opportunities for displaced students out of 720,000; only less than 10% of the required humanitarian shipments were able²⁹. 2.2% of the cash and 28% of fuel have been able to reach Tigray since July: September 2021. Only 25%: 50% of the regular grain production was saved.³⁰

Recommendations

Having monitored and analyzed the effects of the Tigray war and its human rights implications for more than a year at all levels, Maat can present many recommendations to the Ethiopian government and international and regional parties concerned with human rights violations in this war-torn country. It aims to identify responsibilities and prevent the humanitarian situation from worsening as much as possible.

First: Maat for Peace reiterates its recommendations to the Ethiopian government to contain the crisis with the conflicting parties in the Tigray war and the international and African community to give priority to humanitarian, peace considerations and response to calls for a ceasefire, silencing guns and achieving peace, as well as initiating a comprehensive national dialogue that leads to a permanent solution to internal conflict.

Second: Maat denounces the Ethiopian government's continued obstruction of humanitarian aid access to the troubled region. And it calls for the speedy removal of challenges, to and from the region, with the international humanitarian response, facilitating work procedures and cooperation with its workers.

Third: The Ethiopian government should activate its human rights obligations to fulfill, respect, and protect, especially for the benefit of Eritrean refugees, regarding their right to protection, humanitarian response, non-refoulment, prevention of

²⁷ OCHA, Ethiopia northern Ethiopia humanitarian update, 18 November 2021, <https://bit.ly/3FuNOQ3>.

²⁸ USAID, on one year of conflict in northern Ethiopia, 4 November, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3CzefCk>.

²⁹ Al Ain, international organization worn out thousands of children without families in Tigray 2021, 1 June 2021, <https://bit.ly/3qSVdo3>.

³⁰ Relief Web, Ethiopia :Tigray region humanitarian update situation report 2 Sep 2021, <https://bit.ly/3CzOd1l>.

human rights violations by the conflicting parties, especially by Eritrean forces, and providing their humanitarian needs.

Fourth: Maat calls on all governments to support the Human Rights Council's decision to establish an international committee composed of three human rights experts on abuses and practices committed a year ago in Ethiopia to study the human rights situation in Ethiopia.

Fifth: The African Union should activate its initiative to silence the guns in the Ethiopian reality, activate its mechanisms to achieve African peace and security and transitional justice in Ethiopia.