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Security situation in Tigray

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List of abbreviations used

ACHPR	African Commission on Human and People’s Rights
ACLED	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project
AI	Amnesty International
AU-MVCM	African Union Monitoring, Verification and Compliance Mission
CITG	Commission of Inquiry on Tigray Genocide
CoHA	Cessation of Hostilities Agreement
CRSV	Conflict-related sexual violence
EEBC	Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission
ENDF	Ethiopian National Defence Force
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICHREE	International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NRC	National Rehabilitation Commission
OJAH	Organization for Justice and Accountability in the Horn of Africa
PHR	Physicians for Human Rights
TDF	Tigray Defence Force
TIRA	Tigray Interim Regional Authority
TPLF	Tigray People’s Liberation Front
UNICEF	United Nations International Children’s Fund
UNMAS	United Nations Mine Action Service
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
WFP	World Food Programme
FFM	fact-finding mission

Introduction

The purpose of this COI Focus is to assess the security situation in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. It is more particularly focused on the period between November 2022 – when the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) ended a two-year conflict in the region – and March 2024.

The research for this COI Focus was concluded on 6 May 2024. Important events in April and May 2024 have been included as far as possible.

The report comprises six chapters. The first briefly explains the history of the conflict, while chapter two describes the situation during the covered period. Chapters three, four and five successively examine the geographical distribution, the types and the targets of the violence. Displacement and the impact of the past conflict and the enduring violence on the daily lives of people in the region are discussed in chapter six.

Cedoca consulted Ethiopian media such as Fana Broadcasting Company (Fana BC), Addis Standard and The Reporter Ethiopia, as well as reports from NGOs and international organizations such as Human Rights Watch (HRW), Amnesty International (AI) and International Crisis Group (ICG). Reports from governmental and intergovernmental sources, such as various UN agencies, were also used. Over the last five years, the information landscape in Ethiopia has become more restricted because of government pressure. The number of distinct media voices and sources has decreased since 2019, and international and national journalists have been arrested, deported, and harassed. Media increasingly reflect the polarized nature of their audiences; and bias in the coverage of events has increased.¹ There is a lack of reporting in some regions, including those with active conflicts where blackouts and access constraints linked to security risks limit coverage.² Given this information landscape, Cedoca conducted a fact-finding mission (FFM) in Ethiopia from 14 to 24 November 2023 to gain a better understanding of the situation in Tigray one year after the signing of the CoHA. The FFM was carried out with the financial support of the European Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). Information collected during meetings with sources in Addis Abeba and Mekelle is included in this report. The identity and contact details of these sources have been anonymized for security reasons and on their request. However, Cedoca provides a description of these sources in the text, the footnotes and the bibliography at the end of this report.

This COI Focus uses data on security incidents from the database of the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), a US non-profit organisation that collects, analyses and maps information on conflicts.³ Experienced researchers collect the data using information from a wide range of local, regional and international news sources and organisations in more than 75 languages.⁴ For Ethiopia, these include BBC News, Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio (ESAT), Deutsche Welle, Reuters, Addis Maleda, Amnesty International and Ethiopian Media Services (EMS). The database is available on the ACLED website. New information is constantly being added (where necessary to update a previously entered incident).⁵ ACLED explains in detail its coding methodology and the continuous monitoring of data.⁶ ACLED registers the type of violence, the actors of violence,

¹ EPO, 08/02/2024, [url](#); CPJ, 16/05/2022, [url](#); The New York Times, 20/05/2021, [url](#); France24, 01/03/2024, [url](#)

² Associated Press, 29/11/2022, [url](#)

³ ACLED, *About ACLED*, s.d., [url](#)

⁴ ACLED, 06/2023, p. 7, [url](#)

⁵ ACLED, 11/2021, [url](#)

⁶ ACLED, *Resource Library*, s.d., [url](#)

whether there is *civilian targeting*, a description of the incidents, their location, and an indicative estimate⁷ of the number of reported casualties. For this research, Cedoca used the data recorded by ACLED in the categories (*event-types*) *battles*, *explosions/remote violence* and *violence against civilians*.⁸ Given the methodology, coding and input of data, Cedoca considers that ACLED figures should only be considered as an estimate and an indication of trends regarding violence in a given period. The ACLED figures used by Cedoca in this COI Focus were retrieved on 22 March 2024.

Multiple sources that Cedoca spoke to in November 2023 expressed their concern about a new war. A representative of an international organization described the security situation in Tigray as “calm but unpredictable”.⁹ As Cedoca was finishing this report in April 2024, clashes were occurring in Southern Tigray zone. At the time of publication, it was yet unclear how this would affect the security situation in the region.

Cedoca continuously monitors the security situation in Ethiopia. In the case of fundamental changes or developments that significantly alter the situation on the ground, Cedoca will update this COI Focus as soon as possible.

This report was reviewed by the Country Information Service of the Finnish Immigration Service. It must be noted that this review contributes to the overall quality of the report but does not necessarily imply formal endorsement of the final report, which is the full responsibility of Cedoca.

⁷ “These figures should therefore be understood as indicative estimates of reported fatalities, rather than definitive fatality counts” (ACLED, 06/2023, p. 37, [url](#)). ACLED does not check the number of reported casualties. If sources report different numbers or a vague estimate, ACLED uses the most conservative estimate. As a result, this method may underestimate the number of casualties (ACLED, 01/2023, pp. 2-3, [url](#))

⁸ ACLED also includes other incidents, specifically under the categories of *riots*, *protests and strategic developments*. These are not included in this research (ACLED, 06/2023, [url](#))

⁹ Representative of an international organization A, conversation, 20/11/2023, Mekelle

1. The conflict (November 2020 – November 2022)

For two years, from the beginning of November 2020 until early November 2022, the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF) and its allies, including the Eritrean Defence Forces (EDF), fought an armed conflict with the Tigray Defence Forces (TDF)¹⁰ in northern Ethiopia¹¹. The conflict went through different phases. It started on 4 November after Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed ordered a three week “law and order operation” against regional forces in Tigray.¹² By December 2020, the federal government controlled the regional capital and the major cities in Tigray, while the TDF fought from the countryside. All communications were cut off and the regional border was sealed.¹³ The federal government set up an interim government in Mekelle. In June 2021, the TDF retook the regional capital Mekelle and the federal government started a siege on Tigray. In the subsequent months, the TDF started an offensive in the neighboring Amhara and Afar regions.¹⁴ In November 2021, as the TDF were approaching the Ethiopian capital Addis Abeba, the federal government declared a nationwide state of emergency. The massive mobilization, long supply lines and the use of drones by the federal forces prompted the TDF to withdraw to the Tigray region in December 2021. The ENDF promised not to advance into Tigray.¹⁵ On 24 March 2022, the Ethiopian government declared a humanitarian truce, in order to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid into Tigray, still under siege at the time.¹⁶ In late August 2022, after months of ceasefire, fighting resumed.¹⁷ On 25 October 2022, African Union (AU) Commission Chairperson, Moussa Faki, announced that peace talks between the parties had commenced in Pretoria, South Africa, leading to the signing on 2 November 2022 of an agreement for a permanent cessation of hostilities. The Agreement included key commitments on human rights including the protection of civilians, and the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of Tigray combatants. The federal government committed to restore basic essential services to Tigray and to provide unhindered humanitarian access.¹⁸

The conflict was characterized by widespread violations of International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law.¹⁹ The International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE) documented mass killings of civilians; arbitrary arrests, detentions and custodial deaths; incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence.²⁰ Violations and crimes were perpetrated by all parties to the conflict, in particular the ENDF, EDF and allied forces.²¹

Across all zones and phases of the Tigray conflict, organizations noted patterns of widespread and systematic rape and sexual violence. Victims attributed these acts primarily to EDF members, although often with complicity of the ENDF, the Amhara Special Forces (ASF), Afar Special Forces

¹⁰ The TDF comprised Tigrayans from all walks of life: university professors, medical doctors, engineers, artists, teachers, farmers, self-employed youth, retired soldiers, active-duty soldiers of ENDF etc. Gebrehiwot M., 08/2023, [url](#)

¹¹ Besides Tigray, the Amhara and Afar regions have been significantly impacted by the two-year-long war. However, as stated in the introduction, his report focusses on the conflict and current situation in the Tigray region.

¹² ICG, 27/11/2020, [url](#)

¹³ The Economist (Gardner T.), 12/12/2022, [url](#)

¹⁴ ICG, 26/10/2021, [url](#)

¹⁵ ICG, 10/12/2021, [url](#); The Economist, 16/12/2021, [url](#)

¹⁶ ICG, *Building on Ethiopia’s Fragile Truce*, 15/04/2022, [url](#)

¹⁷ ICG, [url](#); EPO, 13/12/2022, [url](#)

¹⁸ EHRC, 02/2024, p. 7, [url](#)

¹⁹ UNHRC, 14/09/2023, [url](#)

²⁰ UNHRC, 14/09/2023, pp. 5-7, [url](#)

²¹ UNHRC, 14/09/2023, p. 17, [url](#)

and Fano militia^{22,23} Tallied estimates of survivors of sexual violence who sought care between November 2020 and July 2023, provided by health care providers in seven one stop centers²⁴ in Tigray, exceed 10,000.²⁵ According to the Commission of Inquiry on Tigray Genocide (CITG), the number of sexual violence cases could be over 120,000.²⁶

The area known as Western Tigray by Tigrayans and Welkait-Tegede by Amhara saw some of the worst violence during the war. Rights groups have documented a “campaign of killings, rape, mass detentions, and forcible transfers”.²⁷ HRW and AI found that the ASF, Fano militias and the EDF, with ENDF complicity, were responsible for the ethnic cleansing of Tigrayans from Western Tigray. Amhara authorities subjected the Tigrayan population to abuses, restrictions, arrests and detention in overcrowded camps on the basis of their ethnicity. Some Tigrayans were detained for brief periods and then forcibly expelled from Western Tigray, while others were held for over a year before being forcibly expelled. Thousands of ethnic Amharas have been settled in the area, many of them in the empty former homes of Tigrayans.²⁸

Sources reported looting, pillaging and destruction of civilian property “on an industrial scale”, mostly by the EDF, the ENDF, the ASF and Fano militia.²⁹ From the beginning of the conflict onwards, the Ethiopian government interrupted essential services including telecommunications, banking, and electricity and restricted humanitarian access. After the TDF entered Mekelle at the end of June 2021, the Federal Government cut the region off completely.³⁰ The Allard K. Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic found that Ethiopia, with its allies, violated international law by inflicting starvation on the civilian population of Tigray during the war by extensively looting and destroying food, water and healthcare systems that sustained civilian life in Tigray. Moreover, the Ethiopian government and its allies exacerbated the situation further by laying siege to Tigray.³¹ Only after the CoHA did services resume, though the ICHREE reported that as of September 2023 services had not been fully restored.³²

Outside of Tigray, tens of thousands of Tigrayans were arrested and taken to makeshift prisons and military camps where some were tortured before (eventually) being released.³³

The Tigray region had an estimated pre-war population of 7,070,260.³⁴ The number of people killed in the war is unknown. As of February 2023, ACLED had recorded 9,861 reported fatalities in Tigray,

²² Fano militia are a decentralized movement, consisting of loosely organized armed groups of ethno-nationalist Amhara. The various groups of militants appear to be largely uncoordinated, without a single political leadership and with militants operating under local command structures. They are present throughout the Amhara region, but also in the neighbouring regions such as Tigray, Oromia and Benishangul-Gumuz. Rift Valley Institute & Peace Research Facility (Necho A.), 10/2023, p. 9, [url](#); ICG, 16/11/2023, [url](#); Rift Valley Institute & Peace Research Facility (Necho A.), 02/2024, [url](#)

²³ PHR & OJAH, 08/2023, [url](#); UNHRC, 14/09/2023, p. 6, [url](#)

²⁴ A one stop center is a facility providing comprehensive medical, legal, and psychosocial services to victims of gender-based violence (GBV) in a safe environment.

²⁵ UNHRC, 14/09/2023, p. 11, [url](#)

²⁶ Der Spiegel (Schaap F.), 05/04/2023, [url](#)

²⁷ AP, 07/04/2021, [url](#); HRW & AI, 06/04/2022, [url](#)

²⁸ HRW & AI, 06/04/2022, [url](#); UNHRC, 14/09/2023, pp. 6-7, [url](#); The New Humanitarian (Harter F.), 26/09/2023, [url](#); Tghat (Kebede D.), 30/09/2023, [url](#); Chatham House (Soliman A. & Abate Demissie A.), 04/04/2024, [url](#)

²⁹ Allard K. Lowenstein IHR Clinic - Yale Law School, 06/2023, [url](#); UNHRC, 14/09/2023, pp. 5-7, [url](#)

³⁰ UNHRC, 14/09/2023, pp. 5-7, [url](#)

³¹ Allard K. Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic - Yale Law School, 06/2023, [url](#)

³² UNHRC, 14/09/2023, pp. 5-7, [url](#)

³³ Reuters, 17/06/2022, [url](#)

³⁴ Numbers according to Central Statistics Agency, 2020. Representative of an international organization A, conversation, 20/11/2023, Mekelle

Afar, and Amhara regions from 1 November 2020 to 31 January 2023.³⁵ However, the AU envoy Olusegun Obasanjo noted in an interview with the Financial Times that as many as 600,000 people might have died during the conflict in northern Ethiopia.³⁶ According to a study led by Professor Jan Nyssen of the University of Ghent, estimates of civilian fatalities in the period from November 2020 to November 2022 range from 300,000 to 800,000, including indirect deaths (people dying because of a lack of healthcare, malnutrition, etc.)³⁷:

“Our calculations of the total number of civilian deaths in Tigray, updated up to 31 December 2022, lead to an average estimate of 518k civilian victims in Tigray. The lowest estimate we could realistically make is 311k, and at the upper end a scary 808k. Of these, approx. 10% would be due to massacres, bomb impacts and other killings, 30% due to the total collapse of the healthcare system, and 60% to famine.”³⁸

The ICHREE noted in its final report that men were predominantly killed through direct methods such as incidents of mass killings, while women were mainly killed by indirect methods, including starvation, rape, the looting and destruction of infrastructure and the physical, psychological as well as socio-economic impacts thereof.³⁹

Causalities amongst the EDF, the ENDF, the ASF, the Afar Special Forces, Fano Militia and TDF are not included in the estimate of the aforementioned study led by Professor Nyssen. In an article from September 2023, Tigrayan journalist Dawit Kebede mentioned estimates of fatalities amongst Eritreans combatants ranging from 37,000 to 40,000 deaths.⁴⁰ According to Alex de Waal, executive director of the World Peace Foundation at Tufts University in the United States, the ENDF lost 393,000 soldiers, killed or missing in action.⁴¹ A media outlet reported in July 2023 that the ENDF had already sent death notices to families of over 260,000 soldiers killed in Tigray, while mentioning that the notifications are an ongoing process.⁴² Between 13 and 16 October 2023, Tigrayans took part in three days of mourning for all the lives lost in the war. According to Omna Tigray, families across Tigray were officially informed of the martyrdom of their loved ones in the days and weeks preceding the mourning period.⁴³ Alex de Waal noted that 51,700 TDF soldiers died in the war, a figure reportedly originating from the TDF leadership.⁴⁴

³⁵ EPO, 08/02/2023, [url](#)

³⁶ Omna Tigray, 11/2023, [url](#)

³⁷ More information about the methodology used can be found in Nyssen J. et al, 19/01/2023, [url](#)

³⁸ Nyssen J. et al, 19/01/2023, [url](#)

³⁹ UNHRC, 14/09/2023, [url](#)

⁴⁰ Tghat (Kebede D.), 30/09/2023, [url](#)

⁴¹ Foreign Affairs (de Waal A. & Gebrehiwot M.), 08/04/2024, [url](#); BBC (de Waal A.), 08/11/2023, [url](#); Ethiopia Insight, 30/01/2024, [url](#)

⁴² Gebrehiwot M., 08/2023, [url](#)

⁴³ Omna Tigray

⁴⁴ World Peace Foundation (DeWaal A.), 01/11/2023, [url](#); Ethiopia Insight, 30/01/2024, [url](#)

2. Situation between November 2022 and March 2024

2.1. Violence in the aftermath of the conflict

On 2 November 2022, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the federal government signed the CoHA in Pretoria.⁴⁵ The Pretoria Agreement was followed by an agreement on modalities for implementation signed in Nairobi by military leaders from the Federal Army and Tigrayan forces. A joint committee was established to work out the specific details and procedures necessary to carry out a comprehensive DDR program. Neither the Eritrean troops nor the Amhara and Afar militias took part in the peace negotiations or the Pretoria and Nairobi agreements. Although this last agreement envisaged a withdrawal of non-ENDF and foreign forces from the administrative boundary of Tigray, Eritrean troops and Amhara militia maintained a presence in parts of Tigray as of May 2024.⁴⁶

Multiple sources reported deadly violence right before and during negotiations in the lead up to the CoHA. Examples include the massacre of at least 26 civilians in Semema (near Shire, North Western Tigray) by Eritrean troops on 18 October 2022, the massacre of 65 civilians in Enine (Egela *woreda* [district], Central Tigray) on 21 October 2022 and the massacres in Mariam Shewito, Endabagerima, Gendebta and other villages near Adwa starting on 25 October 2022.⁴⁷

The CoHA significantly reduced hostilities in Tigray and restored federal authority to the region. It did not, however, lead to an outright cessation of human rights violations and atrocity crimes by armed actors, according to the ICHREE. Abuses by the EDF and Amhara forces, neither of whom are parties of the CoHA, have been reported, including extrajudicial killings of civilians, sexual violence, looting of civilian property, as well as kidnappings and mass detentions.⁴⁸ Forced expulsions and arbitrary detentions of Tigrayan civilians have continued in Western Tigray zone after the CoHA.⁴⁹

Several areas in Tigray, notably in the region's western, north-western, north-eastern and southern areas, remain unstable or inaccessible.⁵⁰ Multiple sources have warned that unresolved territorial issues could lead to a resumption of the conflict.⁵¹

Mid-February 2024, Amhara and Tigray militias clashed in disputed areas of Southern Tigray zone. The clashes were short, without casualties, and mainly took place near Korem town as well as in Chercher, Raya Alamata, and Raya Bala *woredas*, areas that have been de facto in control of the Amhara regional government since the beginning of the conflict in November 2020. These confrontations prompted the ENDF to intervene. According to the Ethiopian Peace Observatory (EPO), they were the first armed clashes in this location since the conflict ended in November 2022.⁵² In the last week of March 2024, violent confrontations occurred in different *kebeles* in Raya Alamata *woreda*, reportedly as a reaction by the Tigray forces to the presentation of disputed areas in

⁴⁵ UNHRC, 14/09/2023, p. 2, [url](#)

⁴⁶ Addis Standard (Gebrekristos M.), 31/10/2023, [url](#)

⁴⁷ Tghat (Hadgu Asfiha G.), 30/10/2023, [url](#); CITG, 03/2024, pp. 12-13, [url](#); The Washington Post (Kelly M. & Houreld K.), 07/07/2023, [url](#); The Guardian (Harter F.), 20/04/2023, [url](#)

⁴⁸ UNHCR, 03/10/2023, [url](#); Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 29/02/2024, [url](#)

⁴⁹ AP, 13/04/2023, [url](#); Tghat (Kebede D.), 30/09/2023, [url](#); The New Humanitarian (Harter F.), 26/09/2023, [url](#); UNHRC, 14/09/2023, p. 7, [url](#)

⁵⁰ UNHCR, 03/10/2023, p. 2, [url](#)

⁵¹ The New Humanitarian (Harter F.), 26/09/2023, [url](#); Addis Standard, 13/03/2024, [url](#); Office of the Director of National Intelligence – United States, 05/02/2024, p. 28, [url](#)

⁵² EPO, 21/02/2024, [url](#); EPO, 28/02/2024, [url](#); EPO, 19/03/2024, [url](#)

Amhara's educational maps and curricula.⁵³ At the beginning of April 2024, the federal government issued a statement saying that the ENDF will assume the responsibility of safeguarding the peace and security of the areas adjacent to the Amhara and Tigray territories until the issue of identity and boundaries is resolved via a referendum.⁵⁴

Armed clashes in April 2024 in Alamata Town and Raya Alamata, Zata and Ofla *woredas* resulted in an undetermined number of casualties. Over 50,000 people have been displaced from area to neighboring Kobo *woreda* of North Wello zone and Sekota town of Wag Hamra zone (Amhara region).⁵⁵ The causes of the clashes were a point of contention, with local officials and residents offering divergent narratives.⁵⁶ Sources reported that the Amhara administration had withdrawn from the Southern Tigray zone.⁵⁷ As of 22 April 2024, the security situation in Alamata, Woldiya and Kobo towns was reportedly calm.⁵⁸

2.2. Political developments

Mid-February 2023, the TPLF established a committee to explore the creation of an interim administration. However, a reported lack of consultation and inclusivity frustrated opposition parties and other stakeholders.⁵⁹

On 23 March 2023, one day after the House of Peoples' Representatives removed the terrorist designation of the TPLF, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed appointed Getachew Reda, spokesperson of the TPLF, as the head of the Tigray Interim Regional Authority (TIRA).⁶⁰ At the end of March 2023, the Ministry of Justice announced that the charges against the military and civilian members of the TPLF accused of various criminal offenses had been terminated, adding that this decision was based on the CoHA. Senior TPLF officials were subsequently released.⁶¹

The establishment of the TIRA marked a key step in the implementation of the CoHA and was necessary in order to step up the scale of the humanitarian response, as salaries for civilian servants and medical personnel went unpaid and aid agencies lacked a government partner to work with.⁶² The interim cabinet took over the responsibility of administering the region on 5 April 2023.⁶³ Half of the cabinet positions is held by the TPLF whereas the remaining half is given to non-TPLF members of the TDF, academics, and to the only participating opposition party – Baitona^{64, 65}

The TIRA is involved in a simmering power struggle with the TPLF. The inclusion of other stakeholders in the TIRA, including the TDF and academics, was a compromise which some TPLF leaders saw as

⁵³ Addis Standard, 28/03/2024, [url](#)

⁵⁴ Addis Standard, 05/04/2024, [url](#)

⁵⁵ UNOCHA, 19/04/2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, 22/04/2024, [url](#)

⁵⁶ Addis Standard, 22/04/2024, [url](#); The Ethiopian Observer, 15/04/2024, [url](#); Tsedale Lemma (@TsedaleLemma), 17/04/2024, [url](#)

⁵⁷ Representative of international organization B, telephone conversation, 25/04/2024; Nyssen Jan, Tigray Digest No. 65, 19/04/2024, internal document.

⁵⁸ UNOCHA, 19/04/2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, 22/04/2024, [url](#)

⁵⁹ Democracy in Africa (Tronvoll K. & Taddele Maru M.), 08/03/2023, [url](#); Addis Standard, 04/03/2023, [url](#)

⁶⁰ Ethiopia Insight, 29/03/2023, [url](#); Reuters, 23/03/2023, [url](#)

⁶¹ Addis Standard, 30/03/2023, [url](#); Addis Standard, 30/03/2023, [url](#)

⁶² Reuters, 23/03/2023, [url](#); Al Jazeera, 19/03/2023, [url](#)

⁶³ Addis Standard, 06/04/2023, [url](#)

⁶⁴ Kidane Amen, who claims to be the legal chairman of Baitona, told Addis Standard that the two members of the party appointed in the TIRA were not elected by the party's Central Committee, accusing them of working with the ruling TPLF without the party's due consent. Addis Standard, 06/04/2023, [url](#)

⁶⁵ Ethiopia Insight, 29/03/2023, [url](#); Addis Standard, 06/04/2023, [url](#)

an attempt to diminish the party's influence in Tigray, according to journalist Abel Tesfaye. Getachew stirred further resentment when he voiced his intention to separate party affairs from the government by taking measures such as banning the TPLF from using government funds to pay its personnel. These efforts have been met with resistance, in particular because the party's assets are frozen by the federal government, its legal status was denied by the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE)⁶⁶, and because it is struggling to generate income. This has led to overt challenging of the authority of the TIRA, with reports indicating that some regional government entities are disregarding the administration's orders.⁶⁷ In October and December 2023, the TIRA ousted a number of key officials.⁶⁸

The TIRA also faces resistance from opposition parties in Tigray. According to representatives from opposition parties Cedoca spoke to in Mekelle in November 2023, the TDF initially represented a popular struggle without party affiliation. However, when the TDF entered Mekelle in June 2021, the TPLF took the lead.⁶⁹ Various groups who played their part during the war expected the creation of an inclusive political environment in the war's aftermath.⁷⁰ This did not materialize as many had wished, the opposition demanding to play a more decisive role in the TIRA.⁷¹

Finally, frequent demonstrations in Mekelle are putting pressure on the TIRA to solve issues of pension payments, displacement, and medical care for former TDF soldiers.⁷²

As of April 2024, Tigray's representation in the federal institutions remains unaddressed. Tigray lacks official representation in government institutions. There are some Tigrayans in high posts, such as the minister of Defence, but they are not elected and they are not seen as representatives of the region. The Tigray region is not represented in the national parliament.⁷³

2.3. Implementation of the CoHA

The first Strategic Review on the Implementation of the CoHA was held in March 2024 at the AU premises in Addis Abeba.⁷⁴ Fifteen months after the signing of the CoHA, several key provisions had not been fully implemented. These include: restoring the administrative territory of Tigray in accordance with the constitution and related thereto the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their places of origin; full DDR of TDF combatants and efforts towards transitional justice. Some analysts also point to the limited resumption of humanitarian assistance and constrained efforts towards post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction.⁷⁵ Observers and stakeholders note that the

⁶⁶ On 13 May 2023, the NEBE declined the request for reinstatement of the TPLF as a legal political party. At the beginning of April 2024, the NEBE and the Ministry of Justice again rejected, due to TPLF involvement in violence during the war. This continued denial hinders TPLF participation in civilian politics. Addis Standard, 17/05/2023, [url](#); The Ethiopian Reporter, 03/04/2024, [url](#); Gerrit Kurtz (@GerritKurtz), 03/04/2024, [url](#)

⁶⁷ The Africa Report (Tesfaye A.), 05/10/2023, [url](#); Addis Standard (Beyene M.), 19/12/2023, [url](#)

⁶⁸ Addis Standard (Beyene M.), 19/12/2023, [url](#)

⁶⁹ Representatives of the opposition alliance consisting of the Tigray Independence Party, Baitona and Salsa Woyane, conversation, 21/11/2023, Mekelle

⁷⁰ Addis Standard (Beyene M.), 19/12/2023, [url](#)

⁷¹ The Africa Report (Tesfaye A.), 05/10/2023, [url](#); Representatives of the opposition alliance consisting of the Tigray Independence Party, Baitona and Salsa Woyane, conversation, 21/11/2023, Mekelle; Representative of Salsay Weyane Tigray, messages through social media, 20/04/2024 and 22/04/2024

⁷² EPO, 07/03/2024, [url](#)

⁷³ Law Expert related to Mekelle University, conversation, 21/11/2023, Mekelle and e-mail, 18/04/2024; Observers of Ethiopian Politics, conversation, 23/11/2023, Addis Abeba, and messages through social media, 22/04/2024

⁷⁴ Addis Standard, 14/03/2024, [url](#)

⁷⁵ Gebrehiwot Berhe M., 27/02/2024, [url](#)

inadequate implementation of key provisions contributes to a growing erosion of trust between the federal government and Tigrayan authorities.⁷⁶

2.3.1. Restoring the administrative territory of Tigray

As of April 2024, disputed areas (Welkait, Tselemt, Tsegede and Kafta-Humera in Western Tigray zone as well as Raya-Alamata in Southern Tigray zone)⁷⁷ remained a controversial and unresolved matter.



Map 1: Border Disputes of Tigray⁷⁸

In November 2023, the federal government announced it would hold a referendum to decide the status of the disputed territories in the Tigray region following the return of IDPs. The Minister of Defence stated that the federal forces would retain control over these areas to facilitate their return. Both the TIRA and the Amhara ethno-nationalist organizations opposed the plan.⁷⁹ Multiple sources have warned that the unresolved territorial issues could lead to a resumption of the conflict.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Tsedale Lemma (@TsedaleLemma), 11/03/2024, [url](#); Addis Standard, 14/03/2024, [url](#)

⁷⁷ The historical contestation on these territories goes well beyond this war. Observers of Ethiopian Politics, conversation, 23/11/2023, Addis Abeba; Passport Party, 11/11/2020, [url](#)

⁷⁸ Passport Party, 11/11/2020, [url](#)

⁷⁹ EPO, 21/02/2024, [url](#); Addis Standard, 05/03/2024, [url](#)

⁸⁰ The New Humanitarian (Harter F.), 26/09/2023, [url](#); Addis Standard, 13/03/2024, [url](#)

2.3.2. Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR)

With the Pretoria Agreement, the TDF agreed to be demobilized and reintegrated into civilian life or other security institutions. The Nairobi Agreement specified that TDF demobilization should take place simultaneously with full withdrawal of non-ENDF and foreign forces from the administrative boundary of Tigray and be contingent on the availability of programs and resources to properly rehabilitate the combatants into productive civilian life.⁸¹ On 10 January 2023, the African Union's Monitoring, Verification, and Compliance Mission (AU-MVCM) team, appointed for oversight purposes, confirmed the start of the disarmament process as Tigrayan combatants handed over heavy weapons to the ENDF.⁸² According to a report of the AU-MVCM of May 2023, 85 to 90 % of the heavy weapons disarmament of Tigrayan combatants was completed.⁸³

In December 2022, the federal government created the National Rehabilitation Commission (NRC) to oversee the demobilization and rehabilitation of former combatants. As of October 2023, the NRC had registered 371,971 ex-combatants from eight regional states, with approximately 70 % originating from the Tigray region. However, funding issues have hindered implementation.⁸⁴ Despite a first national consultation in March 2023, the actual process remained elusive in March 2024.⁸⁵ A possible reason for the limited progress is that disarming the TDF is no longer a priority because of a realignment of forces after the CoHA, against the background of conflict in the Amhara region and issues with the Red Sea and Eritrea.⁸⁶

The TIRA informed the NRC that it has a total of 274,000 ex-combatants (242,000 male and 33,319 female) that are being readied for reintegration into civilian life and into the regional police.⁸⁷ In July 2023, some 50,000 former TDF combatants had been demobilized by the TIRA, which provided each one with a three months' stipend worth of food while promising that a reintegration package would follow.⁸⁸ Mid-March 2024, the TIRA announced the demobilization of another 50,000 ex-combatants. Both phases were administered by the interim government without support from the NRC.⁸⁹

As of March 2024, more than 100,000 TDF soldiers are waiting to be demobilized in isolated camp-like facilities, confronted with food scarcity, inadequate medical care, and limited communication access.⁹⁰ Multiple sources Cedoca spoke to in November 2023 mentioned that many were leaving these camps.⁹¹

The reintegration of returning ex-combatants into civilian life poses a challenge as the socio-economic status of the host communities is totally destroyed, argues Mulugeta Gebrehiwot.⁹² The already demobilized combatants are facing difficulties providing for their families due to limited

⁸¹ World Peace Foundation (Gebrehiwot Berhe M.), 02/01/2024, [url](#); XXX

⁸² Addis Standard, 11/01/2023, [url](#)

⁸³ Tsedale Lemma (@TsedaleLemma), 11/03/2024, [url](#)

⁸⁴ Addis Standard (Gebrekristos M.), 31/10/2023, [url](#); The New Humanitarian (Harter F.), 02/11/2023, [url](#)

⁸⁵ Tsedale Lemma (@TsedaleLemma), 11/03/2024, [url](#)

⁸⁶ Observers of Ethiopian Politics, conversation, 23/11/2023, Addis Abeba

⁸⁷ Gebrehiwot M., 08/2023, [url](#); The New Humanitarian (Harter F.), 02/11/2023, [url](#)

⁸⁸ Addis Standard, 27/07/2023, [url](#); Addis Standard, 12/03/2024, [url](#); The New Humanitarian (Harter F.), 02/11/2023, [url](#); World Peace Foundation (Gebrehiwot Berhe M.), 02/01/2024, [url](#)

⁸⁹ Addis Standard, 12/03/2024, [url](#)

⁹⁰ World Peace Foundation (Gebrehiwot Berhe M.), 02/01/2024, [url](#); Axumawian Media Network, 16/02/2024, [url](#); The New Humanitarian (Harter F.), 02/11/2023, [url](#); Ethiopian academic, conversation, 20/11/2023, Mekelle, and messages through social media, 16/04/2024

⁹¹ Medical professional, conversation, 22/11/2023, Mekelle; Tigrayan economist, conversation, 17/11/2023, Addis Abeba

⁹² Gebrehiwot M., 08/2023, [url](#)

resources and a lack of employment prospects.⁹³ According to Addis Standard, inefficient reintegration interventions have caused security challenges with a rise in incidents of robbery, pickpocketing, and group fights.⁹⁴ As the process drags on, observers fear the discontent of former fighters, many still with ready access to small arms, could endanger the fragile peace in Tigray.⁹⁵ As of November 2023, there had been no formal handover of small arms, and young men carrying AK-47s were still a common sight in Tigray.⁹⁶ The TIRA is coming under increasing pressure from its veterans, who have staged protests in Mekelle demanding more support, food and jobs.⁹⁷

2.3.3. Transitional justice

No consensus on transitional justice has been reached between the federal government and the TIRA.⁹⁸ In January 2023, the government published the green paper, a draft document on policy options for transitional justice. This was followed by a series of consultations held across the country starting in March 2023. Experts such as the three experts of the ICHREE have said that the transitional justice process is flawed, and that “Ethiopia has sought to evade international scrutiny through the creation of domestic mechanisms ostensibly to fight impunity”.⁹⁹ According to Alem Abreha, the director of the CITG, Tigray officials proposed two options for approaching transitional justice during discussions with the Ministry of Justice and heads of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC): a completely independent body or a hybrid model.¹⁰⁰ As of April 2024, justice and accountability remain unaddressed.¹⁰¹ At the beginning of April 2024, the EU delegation to the UN urged the government of Ethiopia to establish a policy framework on transitional justice, which it had promised to present by November 2023. The statement said that such a framework should include an international component.¹⁰²

According to reporting by The Economist in July 2023, war crimes may be covered up or forgotten as satellite images suggested burial grounds in Tigray were being burned.¹⁰³ Apart from whether evidence of the crimes will be preserved for independent investigation, the question of who can conduct such independent investigation in Tigray remains. In May 2023, the AU terminated the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry on the Situation in the Tigray Region, leaving the ICHREE as the only international and independent research team until its mandate expired in October 2023.¹⁰⁴

2.3.4. Political dialogue

As of April 2024, there has been little to no progress on the political dialogue, hindering the regions’ access to their full budget and other constitutional rights.¹⁰⁵ On 2 April 2024, the TPLF and the

⁹³ Addis Standard (Gebrekristos M.), 31/10/2023, [url](#); Addis Standard, 12/03/2024, [url](#)

⁹⁴ Addis Standard (Gebrekristos M.), 31/10/2023, [url](#)

⁹⁵ The New Humanitarian (Harter F.), 02/11/2023, [url](#)

⁹⁶ The New Humanitarian (Harter F.), 02/11/2023, [url](#); EPO, 19/03/2024, [url](#); Tigrayan economist, conversation, 17/11/2023, Addis Abeba, and messages through social media, 16/04/2024; Observers of Ethiopian Politics, conversation, 23/11/2023, Addis Abeba

⁹⁷ The New Humanitarian (Harter F.), 02/11/2023, [url](#); Journalist with Tigray TV, conversation, 22/11/2023, Mekelle

⁹⁸ Tsedale Lemma (@TsedaleLemma), 11/03/2024, [url](#)

⁹⁹ JusticeInfo.net (Crawford J.), 19/10/2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰ The Reporter Ethiopia, 23/09/2023, [url](#)

¹⁰¹ Law Expert related to Mekelle University, conversation, 21/11/2023, Mekelle and e-mail, 18/04/2024

¹⁰² EU Delegation to the UN and other international organizations in Geneva, 03/04/2024, [url](#)

¹⁰³ The Economist, 09/07/2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴ ACHPR, 01/06/2023, [url](#); The Guardian, 04/10/2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵ Addis Standard, 29/09/2023, [url](#)

federal government held their first meeting since the signing of the CoHA aimed at addressing the political root causes of the war. According to Borkena, the two sides have reached an agreement to regularly meet to pursue a political dialogue.¹⁰⁶ On 13 April 2024, a second meeting was held in Addis Abeba.¹⁰⁷

At the beginning of May 2024, both parties agreed on the end of June 2024 as the deadline for the full implementation of the CoHA, leaving less than two months to finalize full DDR, the reinstatement of the pre-war borders and the return of nearly one million IDPs. The vice president of the TIRA General Tadesse Worede said that “illegal administrative structures and armed groups in Southern Tigray will be dismantled by the end of May and a similar process will be carried out in western Tigray by the end of the following month”.¹⁰⁸

The Pretoria agreement states that federal governance should be reinstated through enabling “the federal government to control all federal facilities, institutions and the international boundaries of the country”.¹⁰⁹ Multiple sources mentioned the presence of the ENDF and federal police in federal institutions in Tigray, such as the airport.¹¹⁰ According to one source, the ENDF is escorted by the TDF when they travel through the area, as the TDF is responsible for security and policing in the region.¹¹¹ The ENDF is deployed in areas bordering the Amhara and Tigray territories as well as on the border with Eritrea.¹¹² One source mentioned an ENDF presence of only a few hundred soldiers, organized in pockets near Zalemessa, Gernu Sernay, Rama, at the border with Eritrea, as well as a full command at the border with West Tigray zone.¹¹³

3. Geographic distribution

The Tigray region consists of 7 zones and 93 *woredas*¹¹⁴ (see Appendice 1).

As pointed out above, the CoHA required full withdrawal of foreign forces as well as non-ENDF forces from the region, concurrently with the disarmament of Tigrayan forces. However, multiple sources report the presence of Eritrean and Amhara forces, both of whom were not involved and are not part of the CoHA, in parts of Tigray.¹¹⁵ Several areas in Tigray, notably in the region’s northern, western and southern areas, remain unstable or inaccessible as of April 2024. Security issues and the presence of non-ENDF and foreign troops in areas within the Tigray region hinder access and monitoring by UN and AU organisations, as well as other international actors.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁶ Garowe Online, 14/04/2024, [url](#); Borkena, 02/04/2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷ Addis Standard (@addisstandard), 13/04/2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸ Addis Standard, 01/05/2024, [url](#); The Reporter Ethiopia, 04/05/2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹ IGAD, 03/11/2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁰ Ethiopian human rights organization, conversation, 15/11/2023; Tigrayan economist, conversation, 17/11/2023, Addis Abeba, and messages through social media, 16/04/2024

¹¹¹ Tigrayan economist, conversation, 17/11/2023, Addis Abeba

¹¹² Addis Standard, 05/04/2024, [url](#); Addis Standard, 06/04/2024, [url](#); Journalist with Tigray TV, conversation, 22/11/2023, Mekelle

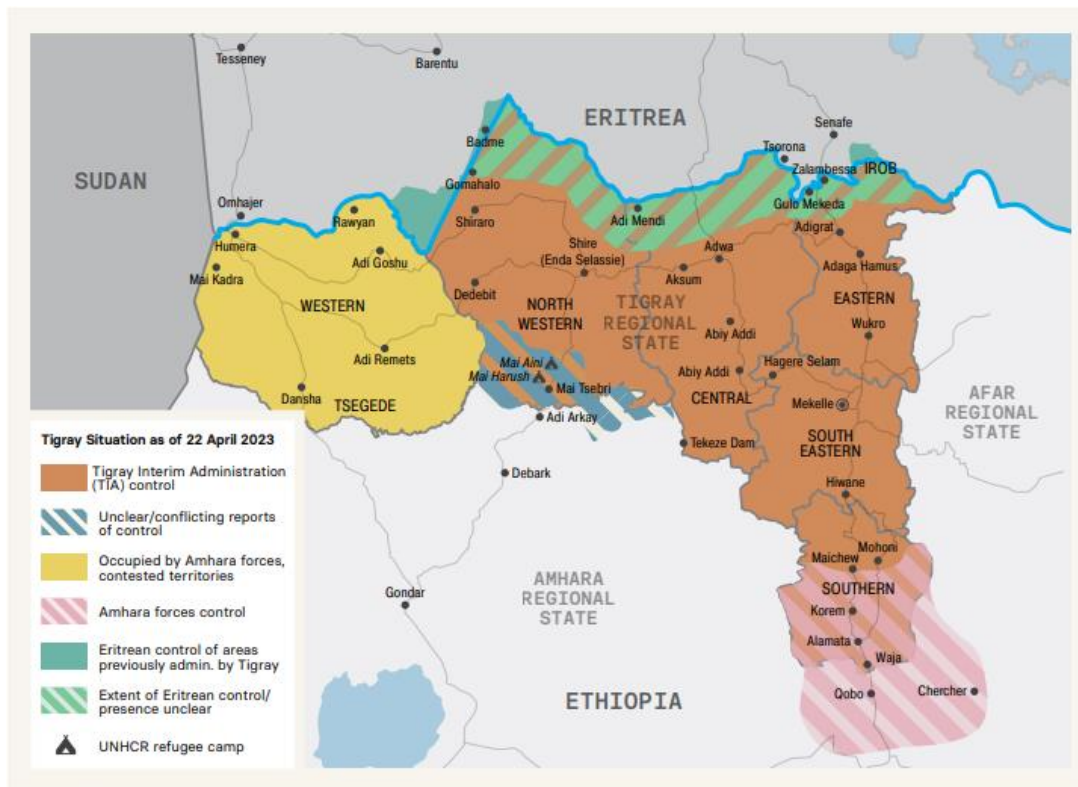
¹¹³ Ethiopian academic, conversation, 20/11/2023, Mekelle, and messages through social media, 16/04/2024

¹¹⁴ The Reporter Ethiopia, 22/04/2023, [url](#); EHRC, 25/11/2023, [url](#); Representative of an international organization A, conversation, 20/11/2023, Mekelle

¹¹⁵ Ethiopia Watch, 07/2023, [url](#); UNHRC, 14/09/2023, [url](#); The Reporter Ethiopia, 22/04/2023, [url](#); The New Humanitarian (Harter F.), 26/09/2023, [url](#); The Guardian, 07/08/2023, [url](#); Irob Anina Civil Society, 09/03/2024, [url](#); The Associated Press, 02/02/2024, [url](#)

¹¹⁶ UNHRC, 14/09/2023, p. 9, [url](#)

The following map, produced by Ethiopia Watch, a civil society organisation monitoring the CoHA, shows the geographical control of different actors in Tigray in April 2023.



Source: Adapted from *Political Geography Now*

Map 2: Tigray Situation as of 22 April 2023¹¹⁷

3.1. Territories occupied by non-ENDF and foreign forces

When war broke out in November 2020, the ASF and Fano militia annexed the area which the Amhara refer to as Welkait, Tselemt, Tsegede, and Kafta-Humera and the Tigrayans call Western Tigray zone and North Western Tigray zone. Amhara forces also seized parts of Southern Tigray zone, another disputed area, which the Amhara refer to as Raya-Alamata.¹¹⁸ Amanuel Assefa, chief cabinet secretariat of TIRA until November 2023, noted in April 2023 that Amhara forces controlled the entire Western Tigray zone, nine *woredas* in North Western Tigray zone, and Raya, Korem, Alamata and other areas of the Southern Tigray zone.¹¹⁹ According to an international organization Cedoca spoke to in Mekelle in November 2023, there is no access from Mekelle to areas further than Sheraro and May Tsberi in North Western Tigray zone. Access to Western Tigray zone is possible from Gondar, but that has become difficult since the conflict started in the Amhara region. Concerning Southern Tigray zone, there was no access beyond Maichew from Mekelle as of November 2023, although it was possible to reach the area via Kombulcha in the Amhara region. The ENDF and Amhara forces

¹¹⁷ Ethiopia Watch, 07/2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁸ The Reporter Ethiopia (Endale A.), 22/04/2023, [url](#); The New Humanitarian (Harter F.), 26/09/2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁹ The Reporter Ethiopia (Endale A.), 22/04/2023, [url](#)

are present in both areas.¹²⁰ Clashes at the end of March and April 2024 have brought along changes in the administration of Zata, Selewa, Raya Azebo, Raya Alamata and Chercher *woredas*. As of 25 April 2024, it remained unclear who exactly administered the region. According to a representative of an international organization “what is certain is that Amhara officials have left since last week”.¹²¹

The conflict between federal forces and Amhara armed groups in Amhara region since April 2023 has negatively influenced the security situation in Western Tigray zone. Mass arrests, detentions and forced expulsions of Tigrayans by Amhara forces reportedly increased in Western Tigray zone following rumours that the ENDF had disarmed the Fano militias.¹²²

According to an Ethiopian human rights organization Cedoca spoke to in November 2023, as the ASF does not exist anymore and the Fano are preoccupied with their insurgency in the neighbouring Amhara region, it is mainly the ENDF and the Amhara militia that are present in Western Tigray zone. There is a presence of the Amhara regional government, although they do not wield much power in the area. The local militias have more power than the ENDF, according to the organization.¹²³ An Ethiopian journalist stressed that “the armed groups are controlling the region”.¹²⁴ According to EPO, the Amhara administrators in Tigray have, in the face of the outbreak of conflict in the Amhara region, maintained a defensive position against potential attacks by the TDF. They remained in alignment with the Amhara regional government, a position criticized by the Fano leadership. Since the dissolution of the ASF in April 2023 and the beginning of the conflict between the federal government and Fano militias, the ENDF has taken control of transport routes and major towns and border zones within the disputed areas, according to EPO. At the same time, local militias in the Western Tigray zone, known as Tekeze Defence Forces, remain fully armed.¹²⁵

From the start of the war, Eritrea claimed areas that were awarded to it by the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC)¹²⁶, but were occupied by Ethiopia. It also took territory it claimed sovereignty over although the EEBC judged it to belong to Ethiopia, such as parts of Irob.¹²⁷ Starting from January 2023, the EDF withdrew from Adwa, Axum and Shire towns and Felafil and Endebagerima areas in the Tigray region, but kept control of several areas along the border.¹²⁸ In May 2023, a mission led by UNOCHA was prohibited from entering a village in Tahtay Adiyabo *woreda* by Eritrean forces. The EDF refused the AU-MVCM access to the Irob *woreda* that same month.¹²⁹ As of January 2024, several parts of border districts were either “fully occupied or patrolled” by the EDF, according to an aid memo seen by The Associated Press. Federal forces are either failing to protect people or completely absent, the memo read.¹³⁰

¹²⁰ Representative of an international organization A, conversation, 20/11/2023, Mekelle; Representative of an international organization B, conversation, 22/11/2023, Mekelle and telephone conversation, 25/04/2024

¹²¹ Representative of international organization B, telephone conversation, 25/04/2024

¹²² Addis Standard, 01/09/2023, [url](#)

¹²³ Representative of an Ethiopian human rights organization B, 15/11/2023, Addis Abeba

¹²⁴ Journalist with Tigrayan background in Addis Abeba, conversation, 15/11/2023, Addis Abeba, and messages through social media, 15/04/2024

¹²⁵ EPO, 19/03/2024, [url](#)

¹²⁶ In 1998 armed conflict broke out between the Ethiopia and Eritrea. In December 2000, the governments of both countries concluded hostilities by signing the Algiers Agreement which provided for the establishment of the EEBC. The Commission was mandated to delimit and demarcate the border between the two countries. Permanent Court of Arbitration, s.d., [url](#)

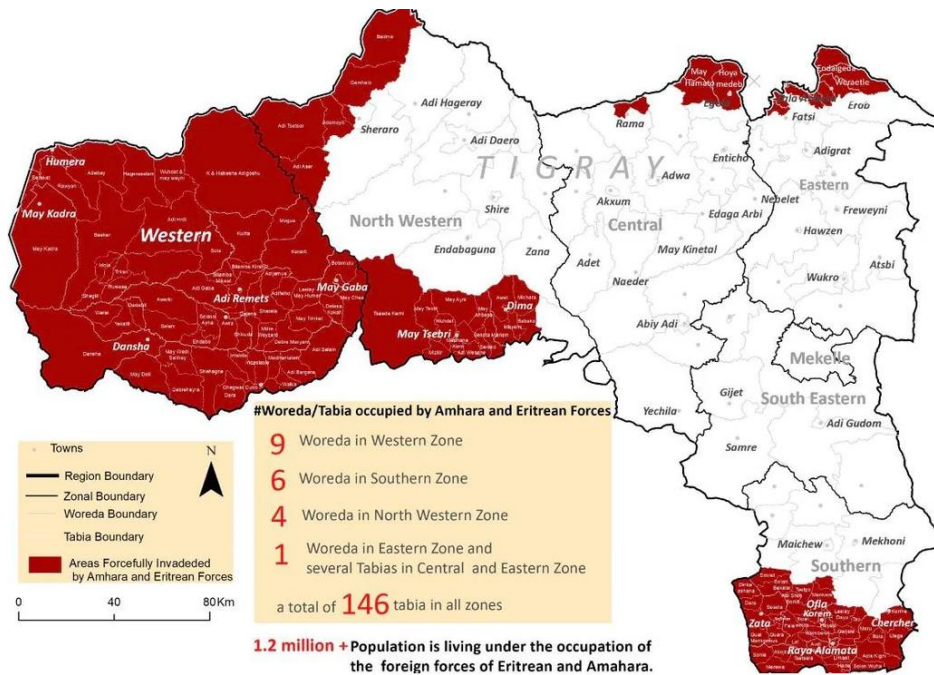
¹²⁷ The Guardian, 07/08/2023, [url](#); Eritrea – Ethiopia Boundary Commission, 13/04/2002, [url](#)

¹²⁸ The Reporter Ethiopia (Endale A.), 22/04/2023, [url](#); The Guardian, 07/08/2023, [url](#)

¹²⁹ UNHRC, 14/09/2023, p. 9, [url](#); Addis Standard, 06/04/2024, [url](#)

¹³⁰ The Associated Press, 02/02/2024, [url](#)

As of March 2024, Eritrea denied any presence on Tigrayan soil, arguing Eritrean soldiers were only present in areas that had been awarded to Eritrea by the EEBC.¹³¹ Irob Anina Civil Society, a nonprofit organisation advocating for the Irob, argued that Eritrean presence goes well beyond these territories.¹³² According to the organization, Eritrean troops are present in “Zalambessa town, Gulemekada *woreda* (sub-districts: Marta, Addis Tesfa, Addis Alem, Shewit Lemlem, and Sebeya) and Irob *woreda* (sub-districts: Endalgeda, Weratle, Agerelekoma and Alitena). In the North Western zone, the EDF occupy parts of several *woredas*, including Tahtay Adiyabo (sub-districts: Rural Badme, Badme Town, Gemhalo, Ademeyti, Adi Tsetser, Lemlem, Shembelina, Mentebteb, Adi Aser), Maekel Adebayo (sub-districts: Adi Awala, Kushet Ayay, May Abay), Seyemti Adiyabo (Adiyabiya Digum sub-district). Lastly, in the Central Zone, they occupy parts of two districts: Egela (sub-districts: Hoya Medeb (specific villages: Kolo Birdo, Sebeo Belesa, Adi Kutu, Ouna Shehaq), Erdi Genanu; Kushet Egri Sebeya, Ziban Sesewe) and Rama (Mereb sub-district) fully or partially” (See Appendice 2).¹³³ During a visit of the AU-MVCM to Zalembeassa in early April 2024, the mayor disclosed that approximately 75 % of the city is under the control of Eritrean forces, while the remaining 25 % remains under the jurisdiction of the ENDF. The EDF further control six kebeles of Gulomekeda *woreda*, and are strategically positioned at the gateway to Zalambessa.¹³⁴



Map 3: Undated Map of Occupied Territories¹³⁵

¹³¹ The Reporter Ethiopia (Tekle A.), 02/03/2024, [url](#)

¹³² UNHRC, 03/10/2023, p. 2, [url](#); Irob Anina Civil Society, 09/03/2024, [url](#)

¹³³ Irob Anina Civil Society, 09/03/2024, [url](#)

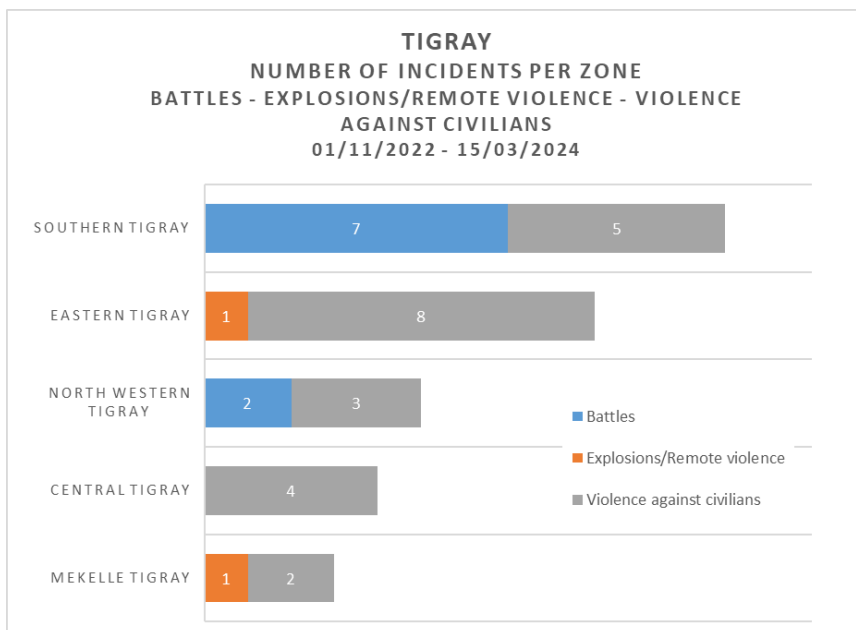
¹³⁴ Addis Standard, 06/04/2024, [url](#)

¹³⁵ Marjam12 [Reddit Profile], 28/11/2023, [url](#)

3.2. Geographic distribution of violence according to ACLED

Several areas in Tigray, notably in the region’s northern, western and southern areas, remain partly or totally inaccessible.¹³⁶ In this context of limited coverage it is possible that incidents go unreported.

For the period from 1 November 2022 to 15 March 2024, ACLED coded 33 incidents in Tigray.¹³⁷ Graph 2 and Map 3 show the geographical distribution of the violent incidents recorded by ACLED.



Graph 1: Tigray. Number of incidents per zone. Graph by Cedoca on the basis of ACLED data for the period 01/11/2022 – 15/03/2024.¹³⁸

ACLED did not register any security incidents in Western Tigray zone. However, as will be discussed below in Chapter 4, multiple sources have reported forced displacement of Tigrayan civilians, which coincides with renewed arrests and increasing pressure on Tigrayans in Western Tigray zone.¹³⁹

The 33 violent incidents recorded by ACLED for the research period have mostly occurred outside of cities and towns. Only 4 out of the 33 registered incidents happened in cities: 3 in Mekelle and 1 in Axum in November 2022 before the retreat of the EDF.¹⁴⁰

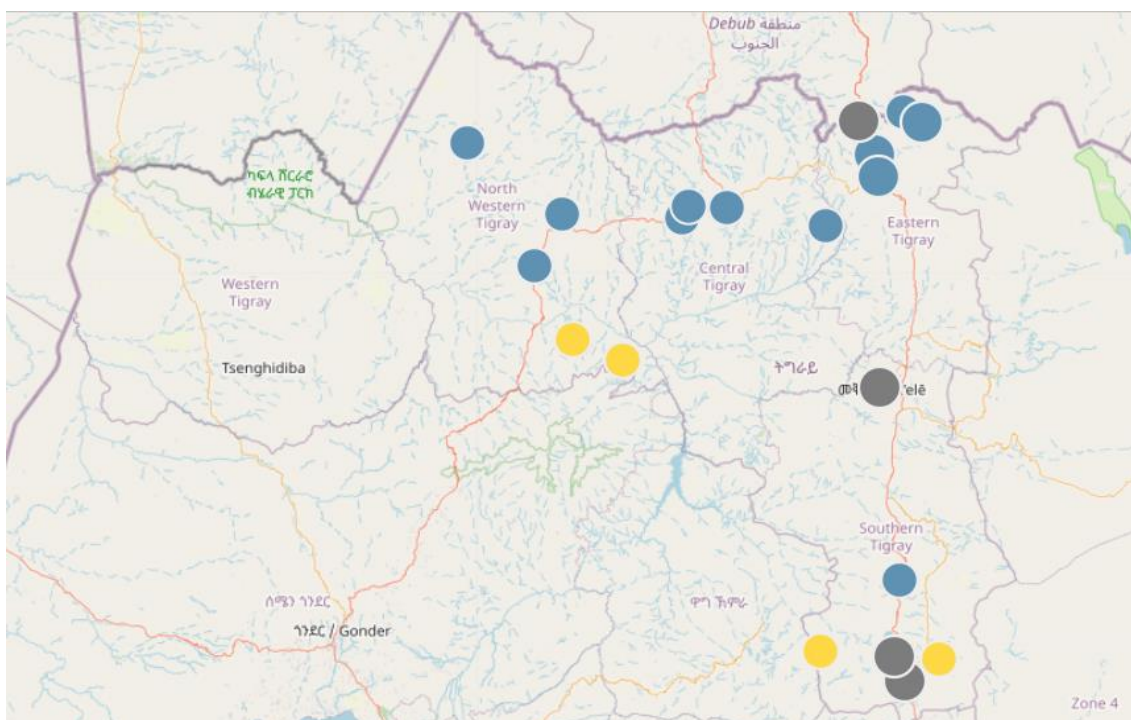
¹³⁶ Associated Press, 29/11/2022, [url](#); UNHRC, 14/09/2023, p. 9, [url](#); Freedom House, 13/03/2024, [url](#)

¹³⁷ ACLED, update accessed via export tool: 15/03/2024, [url](#)

¹³⁸ ACLED, update accessed via export tool: 15/03/2024, [url](#)

¹³⁹ EHRC, 02/2024, [url](#); Addis Standard, 30/01/2024, [url](#); Addis Standard, 20/02/2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰ ACLED, update accessed via export tool: 15/03/2024, [url](#)



Map 4: Geographical location of incidents in Tigray. Map by Cedoca on the basis of ACLED data for the period 01/11/2022 – 15/03/2024.¹⁴¹

4. Typology of the violence (November 2022 – March 2024)

In its report of September 2023, the ICHREE mentioned human rights violations in Tigray were grave and ongoing. The Commission’s investigations documented the continued presence of EDF soldiers responsible for continuing atrocities.¹⁴² Other sources also reported that the EDF continues to commit crimes in occupied territories after the signing of the CoHA, such as sexual violence, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and looting of public properties and livestock.¹⁴³ The ICHREE as well as other sources documented violations by Amhara forces and Fano militia after the CoHA, including rape and other forms of sexual violence and forced expulsion of Tigrayan women, men and children from Western Tigray.¹⁴⁴ The Commission added that the attacks by the EDF and Amhara forces on civilians in Tigray have been “abetted or tolerated by the Federal Government, which has failed in its legal duty to protect its population from violations” by foreign or non-ENDF troops.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Interactive map via ACLED Dashboard, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴² UNHRC, 14/09/2023, p. 2, [url](#)

¹⁴³ UNHRC, 03/10/2023, p. 2, [url](#); Irob Anina Civil Society, 09/03/2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴ UNHRC, 03/10/2023, p. 2, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵ UNHRC, 14/09/2023, p. 2, [url](#)

4.1. Number and nature of incidents documented by ACLED

For the period from 1 November 2022 to 15 March 2024, ACLED coded 33 incidents in Tigray. Of these, ACLED considered 9 events as *battles*, 2 as *explosions/remote violence* and 22 as *violence against civilians*.¹⁴⁶ Most of these incidents happened in in November 2022 (6), the first month after the signing of the CoHA, and February 2024 (10).¹⁴⁷

All nine battles that ACLED registered in this period involved on one side Tigray forces (Tigray State Police, Tigray Ethnic Militia and the TPLF) and on the other Amhara forces (Amhara Ethnic Militia and Fano Militia). Two battles took place on 9 July 2023 between Fano and the TPLF as the latter entered Dima *woreda* in North Western Tigray zone, escorted by the ENDF. Casualties are unknown, ACLED coded none.¹⁴⁸ All seven remaining battles that ACLED registered for this period took place in February 2024 in Southern Tigray. The ENDF intervened to stop the clashes. Casualties are unknown and ACLED coded none.¹⁴⁹

ACLED recorded two incidents of remote violence. In August 2023, a former TDF combatant threw a grenade and reportedly killed four people and wounded twenty others at a bar in Mekelle.¹⁵⁰ In November 2023, a bomb which had probably been planted during the conflict exploded killing seven people in Gulo Mekeda *woreda* (Eastern Tigray zone).¹⁵¹

Two thirds of the violence registered in the period from 1 November 2022 to 15 March 2024 has been categorized by ACLED as violence against civilians and further classified in the categories *attacks* (14), *abduction/forced disappearance* (4) and *sexual violence* (4). ACLED attributed most of these incidents to the EDF (13) and the Tigray State Police (4).¹⁵²

Of the thirteen attacks by Eritrean forces, four occurred in the month after the signing of the CoHA. Examples of incidents involving the EDF include :

- On 17 November 2022, Eritrean forces shot and reportedly killed four civilians in Axum city in Central Tigray zone.¹⁵³
- In June 2023, EDF shot and killed an unknown number of farmers in Gemhalo, a location near Sheraro, in Tahtay Adiyabo *woreda* (North Western Tigray zone) and looted an unspecified number of cattle.¹⁵⁴

Another example is an attack in Mekelle on 22 October 2023, where military men shot and killed a woman who had refused sexual advances, and thereafter threatened her friend.¹⁵⁵

Three of the four abductions were attributed to the EDF and occurred in Eastern Tigray zone. On 22 January 2024, Eritrean soldiers abducted eight Ethiopian herders with their donkeys and camels in Gulo Mekeda *woreda* (Eastern Tigray zone) .¹⁵⁶

¹⁴⁶ ACLED, update accessed via export tool: 15/03/2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷ ACLED, update accessed via export tool: 15/03/2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸ ACLED, update accessed via export tool: 15/03/2024, [url](#)

¹⁴⁹ Addis Standard, 28/03/2024, [url](#); ACLED, update accessed via export tool: 15/03/2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰ Addis Standard, 25/08/2023, [url](#)

¹⁵¹ ACLED, update accessed via export tool: 15/03/2024, [url](#)

¹⁵² ACLED, update accessed via export tool: 15/03/2024, [url](#)

¹⁵³ ACLED, update accessed via export tool: 15/03/2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁴ ACLED, update accessed via export tool: 15/03/2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁵ ACLED, update accessed via export tool: 15/03/2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁶ ACLED, update accessed via export tool: 15/03/2024, [url](#)

ACLED also recorded four incidents of sexual violence, attributed to the EDF (3) and the ENDF (1). In the beginning of November 2022, EDF soldiers gang-raped fifteen women in Kokeb Tsibah village, Ganta Afeshum *woreda* (Eastern Tigray zone) after detaining them in their military camp on suspicion that their relatives were members of the TPLF. ACLED coded three other incidents of rape in December 2022 and January 2023.¹⁵⁷

4.2. Nature of the violence

4.2.1. Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV)

According to multiple sources CRSV has not ceased in Tigray after the signing of the CoHA.¹⁵⁸ The ICHREE documented rape and sexual violence by both EDF and Amhara forces after November 2022.¹⁵⁹ A September 2023 report by AI detailed incidents of rape and sexual slavery committed by Eritrean forces in Tigray. The report showed that months after the signing of the CoHA, EDF soldiers raped, gang-raped, and sexually enslaved Tigrayan women. The organization also noted that one medical center in Eastern Tigray zone received 76 new cases of CRSV in just one week in June 2023.¹⁶⁰ Similarly, an August 2023 report by Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) and the Organization for Justice and Accountability in the Horn of Africa (OJAH) documented the incidence of CRSV in Tigray after the CoHA. Out of 305 medical records reviewed by researchers, 128 incidents occurred after November 2022, in particular in areas where EDF soldiers were present, showing that patterns of sexual violence remained largely unchanged.¹⁶¹

4.2.2. Arrests, forced displacement and eviction

Multiple sources have reported on forced displacement of Tigrayan civilians from Western Tigray zone by Amhara forces after the CoHA.¹⁶² This displacement coincided with renewed arrests and increasing pressure on Tigrayans in Western Tigray zone, especially after the start of the conflict between the federal government and the Fano militia in Amhara.¹⁶³ HRW found that local authorities and Amhara forces held over a thousand Tigrayans in detention in Humera, Rawyan, and Adebai on the basis of their identity before forcibly expelling them in November 2022 and January 2023.¹⁶⁴

Reports in March and April 2023 described ongoing displacement and evictions of thousands of ethnic Tigrayans from Western Tigray zone by Amhara troops and militia.¹⁶⁵ Data from the Tigray Labor and Social Affairs Bureau from March 2024 revealed that close to 60,000 people had arrived in two IDP shelters near Shire over the preceding year, coming from Western Tigray zone as well as areas near the Eritrean border such as Irob, Badme and Zalambessa.¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁷ Addis Standard, 28/03/2024, [url](#); ACLED, update accessed via export tool: 15/03/2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁸ UNHRC, 14/09/2023, p. 10, [url](#); PHR & OJAH, 08/2023, [url](#); Amnesty International, 04/09/2023, [url](#)

¹⁵⁹ The ICHREE report spoke of over 10,000 incidents of rape in Tigray from the beginning of the war in November 2020 to June 2023. UNHRC, 14/09/2023, p. 10, [url](#)

¹⁶⁰ Amnesty International, 04/09/2023, [url](#)

¹⁶¹ PHR & OJAH, 08/2023, [url](#); Omna Tigray, 11/2023, p. 9, [url](#)

¹⁶² HRW, 01/06/2023, [url](#); Tghat (Kebede D.), 30/09/2023, [url](#); EHRC, 02/2024, [url](#); Addis Standard, 30/01/2024, [url](#); The Reporter Ethiopia, 30/03/2024, [url](#)

¹⁶³ EHRC, 02/2024, [url](#); Addis Standard, 30/01/2024, [url](#); Addis Standard, 20/02/2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁴ HRW, 01/06/2023, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵ Davide Tommasin (@davide_tommasin), 13/03/2024, [url](#); The Associated Press, 13/04/2023, [url](#); Addis Standard, 12/04/2023, [url](#); Addis Standard, 30/01/2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁶ The Reporter Ethiopia, 30/03/2024, [url](#)

In September 2023, journalist Dawit Kebede cited reports of arbitrary detentions of over 4,000 Tigrayans in Western Tigray zone as part of an effort to displace the remaining Tigrayans.¹⁶⁷ During a conversation with Cedoca in November 2023, a journalist mentioned that almost all Tigrayans have left Western Tigray zone. Those 1,000 to 1,200 that stayed were mostly from mixed family backgrounds, but they were also subject to detention in August 2023.¹⁶⁸

According to a confidential document seen by journalist Dawit Kebede, an estimated 436,000 ethnic Amhara have been settled in Western Tigray zone in the period from January to July 2023.¹⁶⁹

The EHRC received reports of flyers being distributed in July 2023 in Alamata (Southern Tigray zone) warning ethnic Tigrayans to “urgently leave or face the consequences”.¹⁷⁰

The ICHREE also reported on “instances of forced displacement” from areas under the control of Eritrean forces since November 2022.¹⁷¹ North Western Tigray zone officials informed the EHRC that looting, detention, kidnapping, and killings by Eritrean forces against residents of Tahtay and Central Adiyabo as well as surrounding areas forced some residents into displacement.¹⁷²

4.2.3. Abductions and enforced disappearances

Multiple sources have reported on abductions and looting by Eritrean forces after the CoHA.¹⁷³ In February 2023, Addis Standard reported that ten youngsters were abducted by Eritrean troops from Gure Endagabir, near Axum (Central Tigray zone).¹⁷⁴ The advocacy group Irob Anina noted in August 2023 that there had been 56 disappearances from Irob and the neighboring Golomkeda *woreda* (Eastern Tigray zone) since the ceasefire.¹⁷⁵ Seven months later, in April 2024, the mayor of Zalemessa reported the abduction of 93 individuals in the Gulomkeda and Irob *woredas* since November 2022, with 15 of the abductees originating from Zalemessa town.¹⁷⁶ An aid memo seen by The Associated Press and based on a situation assessment of two districts near the Eritrean border mentioned that Eritrean troops were abducting farmers and stealing livestock, citing incidents on 5 and 6 December 2023 and 22 January 2024.¹⁷⁷

According to the EHRC, isolated incidents of attacks, looting, and enforced disappearances of ethnic Tigrayans by Amhara forces were reported in Alamata and Korem *woredas* (Southern Tigray zone) and in Kafta-Humera, Tsegede, Welkait (Western Tigray zone) in the period between November 2022 and July 2023.¹⁷⁸

¹⁶⁷ Tghat (Kebede D.), 30/09/2023, [url](#)

¹⁶⁸ Journalist with Tigrayan background in Addis Abeba, conversation, 15/11/2023, Addis Abeba

¹⁶⁹ Tghat (Kebede D.), 30/09/2023, [url](#)

¹⁷⁰ EHRC, 02/2024, p. 25, [url](#)

¹⁷¹ EHRC, 02/2024, [url](#)

¹⁷² EHRC, 02/2024, p. 25, [url](#)

¹⁷³ The Guardian, 07/08/2023, [url](#); Addis Standard, 04/09/2023, [url](#); The Associated Press, 02/02/2024, [url](#)

¹⁷⁴ Addis Standard, 04/09/2023, [url](#); Addis Standard, 14/02/2023, [url](#)

¹⁷⁵ The Guardian, 07/08/2023, [url](#); Omna Tigray, 11/2023, p. 9, [url](#); Addis Standard, 04/09/2023, [url](#); Addis Standard, 14/12/2023, [url](#)

¹⁷⁶ Addis Standard, 06/04/2024, [url](#); Tikvah-Ethiopia (@tikvahethiopia), 05/04/2024, [url](#)

¹⁷⁷ The Associated Press, 02/02/2024, [url](#)

¹⁷⁸ EHRC, 02/2024, p. 24, [url](#)

4.2.4. Extrajudicial killings

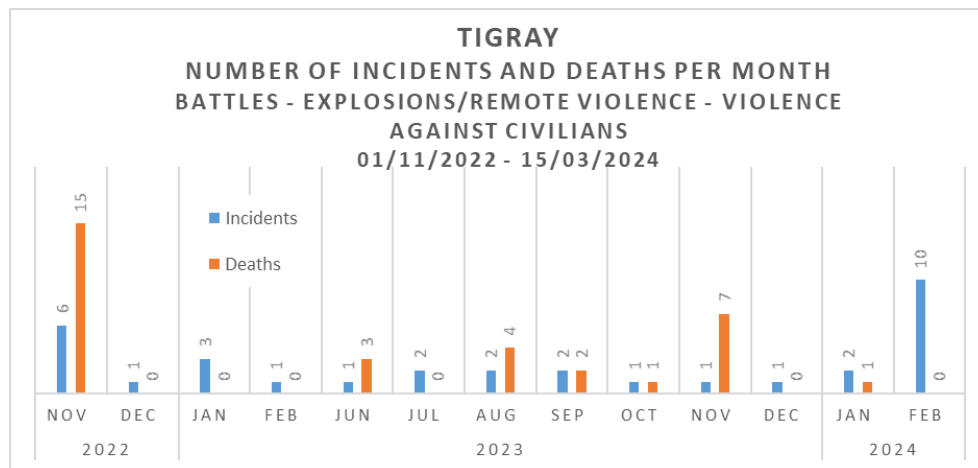
In April 2023, the Associated Press mentioned firsthand accounts of the killing of civilians by Amhara troops and irregular militia in Western Tigray zone.¹⁷⁹ AI disclosed in a September 2023 report that EDF soldiers executed 24 civilians in Kokob Tsibah in Genta Afeshum *woreda* (Eastern Tigray zone) in the three months following the signing of the CoHA.¹⁸⁰

The EHRC confirmed that at least two incidents of extrajudicial killings by Amhara forces against ethnic Tigrayans took place in Mai Tsebri and its surroundings (North Western Tigray zone) in July 2023.¹⁸¹

5. Targets of the violence

5.1. Fatalities documented by ACLED

For the period from 1 November 2022 to 15 March 2024, ACLED registered 33 fatalities in Tigray in 33 events of the type *battles, explosions/remote violence* and *violence against civilians*.¹⁸²



Graph 2: Tigray. Number of incidents and deaths per month. Graph by Cedoca on the basis of ACLED data for the period 01/11/2022 – 15/03/2024.¹⁸³

ACLED records acts of violence in which civilians are "the main or only target", under the *civilian targeting* heading. In addition to all incidents within the *violence against civilians* category, the *civilian targeting* cluster also includes acts of violence registered as *explosions/remote violence*. ACLED defines civilians as unarmed victims of violence. Accordingly, ACLED considers security personnel in plain clothes, i.e. unarmed, to be civilians when they are the target of violence.¹⁸⁴ For the period from 1 November 2022 to 15 March 2024, ACLED coded 24 of the 33 incidents as civilian

¹⁷⁹ Associated Press, 13/04/2023, [url](#)

¹⁸⁰ Amnesty International, 04/09/2023, [url](#)

¹⁸¹ EHRC, 02/2024, p. 29, [url](#)

¹⁸² ACLED, update accessed via export tool: 15/03/2024, [url](#)

¹⁸³ ACLED recorded no incidents or injuries in the months not listed in Graph 1. ACLED, update accessed via export tool: 15/03/2024, [url](#)

¹⁸⁴ ACLED, 06/2023, pp. 22, 23, 29, [url](#)

targeting, with 33 fatalities, meaning that all fatalities registered by ACLED in the research period concerned civilians.¹⁸⁵

5.2. Analysis of targets and victims of violence

The data from ACLED indicates that civilians are the primary target of violence. From the range of consulted sources, it is possible to identify certain profiles that carry a heightened risk of targeting and victimization by violence.

5.2.1. Women

Refugees International points out that “women are bearing the brunt of the crisis, feeling the strain of intersecting crises of hunger, sexual violence and displacement”. Many IDP households are female-headed, with male relatives killed or missing. Some have sheltered with family after being displaced, but many are huddled in crowded schools that are unsanitary and unsafe.¹⁸⁶

The sources consulted show that a high number of women faced sexual violence during the conflict.¹⁸⁷ The precise number of people affected by sexual violence is unknown. This is partly owed to limited monitoring possibilities due to security and other issues, as well as the result of many choosing not to report, due to social stigma or because they are simply unaware of reporting options and available services. Health experts estimate that approximately 43 % of women in Tigray experienced gender-based violence (GBV), of which some 80 % were raped.¹⁸⁸ Regional authorities in Tigray estimate the number of victims of sexual abuse to be 120,000.¹⁸⁹

Sexual violence causes deep physical and emotional scars.¹⁹⁰ Researchers have reported post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, reproductive organ injuries and physical disorders including incontinence, bleeding, uterine prolapse, chronic pelvic pain and fistulas.¹⁹¹

According to the EHRC, stigma and discrimination against survivors of GBV were prevalent within the community, in particular in IDP sites.¹⁹² Multiple sources have reported incidents where husbands have abandoned their wives because they were raped. Survivors reportedly also face stigma and discrimination from their communities because they are blamed for their attack. According to the EHRC this is especially the case in more rural areas¹⁹³ and has resulted in a situation where survivors refrain from reporting their attack and seeking medical treatment.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁵ ACLED, update accessed via export tool: 15/03/2024, [url](#)

¹⁸⁶ Refugees International (Miller S.), 03/2024, [url](#)

¹⁸⁷ Fisseha G., Gebrehiwot T.G., Gebremichael M.W. et al, 22/07/2023, [url](#); Refugees International (Miller S.), 03/2024, [url](#); UNICEF, WFP et al, 01/2024, [url](#); Abraha H.E., Teka H., Legesse A.Y., Ebrahim M.M., Tsadik M., Fisseha G., et al., 2024, [url](#)

¹⁸⁸ Fisseha G., Gebrehiwot T.G., Gebremichael M.W. et al, 22/07/2023, [url](#)

¹⁸⁹ Le Monde (Hochet-Bodin N.), 11/03/2024, [url](#); Der Spiegel (Schaap F.), 05/04/2023, [url](#)

¹⁹⁰ The Reporter Ethiopia, 06/04/2024, [url](#); The Washington Post, 26/11/2023, [url](#)

¹⁹¹ The Washington Post, 26/11/2023, [url](#); UNICEF, WFP et al, 01/2024, p. 60, [url](#); Refugees International (Miller S.), 03/2024, [url](#)

¹⁹² EHRC, 24/02/2024, p. 28, [url](#)

¹⁹³ The Washington Post, 26/11/2023, [url](#); EHRC, 24/02/2024, p. 28, [url](#); Refugees International (Miller S.), 03/2024, [url](#)

¹⁹⁴ EHRC, 24/02/2024, p. 28, [url](#)

Some women find it traumatic to care for babies born from acts of sexual violence. According to Refugees International, these children face discrimination and may be ostracized from their communities.¹⁹⁵

The dismantled health system in Tigray means that there are insufficient health services for victims of GBV, which raises concerns about undiagnosed and untreated physical consequences of CRSV and related sexual and reproductive health concerns. These include HIV, sexually transmitted infections, reproductive harms, unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions.¹⁹⁶ Doctors fear an increase in the number of HIV-positive people.¹⁹⁷

Some victims of CRSV were able to access treatment, but many were not as health facilities remain damaged or entirely non-operational and health professionals cannot reach more isolated *woredas*.¹⁹⁸ Treatment is available for example at Ayder Hospital in Mekelle and at a couple of other health facilities.¹⁹⁹ Hewyet, a civil society initiative operating in Mekelle, Adwa, Axum, Shire and Adigrat, provides psychological and medical assistance to women and girls and has, as of March 2024, reached 4,800 victims of CRSV. However, the organization is faced with funding shortages. Food and shelter are pressing issues, and victims lack the financial means for the necessary medication.²⁰⁰

Beyond the lasting consequences of the CRSV during wartime, new incidents of sexual violence have occurred after November 2022 (see chapter 3.2.1.). This violence mainly targeted women in disputed territories, in particular in areas where EDF soldiers are present.²⁰¹

5.2.2. Tigrayans in areas occupied by Amhara militias and the EDF

Tigrayan civilians in Western Tigray zone and areas in North Western Tigray zone occupied by Amhara forces have been subject to arrests and forced displacement.²⁰² HRW found that local authorities and Amhara forces held over a thousand Tigrayans in detention in the towns of Humera, Rawyan, and Adebai before forcibly expelling them in November 2022 and January 2023.²⁰³ In April 2023, Addis Standard reported on the arrival of at least 40,000 IDPs at Endabaguna, near Shire (North Western Tigray zone) since the beginning of March 2023. The newly arrived IDPs fled from ten *woredas* in Western Tigray zone, reportedly because of renewed persecution of ethnic Tigrayans.²⁰⁴ In June 2023, the Protection Cluster reported new displacement from Mai-Tsebri to Endabaguna.²⁰⁵ The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said in August 2023 that he had received reports that at least 250 Tigrayans had been arrested and detained in Western Tigray zone during a joint operation by the Amhara police, local authorities and local militias. The detained were taken to TIRA-controlled territory, where they were intercepted by the ENDF.²⁰⁶ In September 2023,

¹⁹⁵ The Washington Post, 26/11/2023, [url](#); Refugees International (Miller S.), 03/2024, [url](#)

¹⁹⁶ UNHRC, 14/09/2023, p. 11, [url](#)

¹⁹⁷ Le Monde (Hochet-Bodin N.), 11/03/2024, [url](#); Abraha H.E., Teka H., Legesse A.Y., Ebrahim M.M., Tsadik M., Fisseha G., et al., 2024, [url](#)

¹⁹⁸ EHRC, 24/02/2024, p. 19, [url](#); Refugees International (Miller S.), 03/2024, [url](#)

¹⁹⁹ EHRC, 24/02/2024, p. 19, [url](#); Refugees International (Miller S.), 03/2024, [url](#)

²⁰⁰ The Reporter Ethiopia, 06/04/2024, [url](#)

²⁰¹ PHR & OJAH, 08/2023, [url](#); Omna Tigray, 11/2023, p. 9, [url](#)

²⁰² EHRC, 02/2024, [url](#); Addis Standard, 30/01/2024, [url](#); Addis Standard, 20/02/2024, [url](#)

²⁰³ HRW, 01/06/2023, [url](#)

²⁰⁴ The Associated Press, 13/04/2023, [url](#); Addis Standard, 12/04/2023, [url](#); Addis Standard, 30/01/2024, [url](#)

²⁰⁵ Protection Cluster, 10/06/2023, internal document.

²⁰⁶ UN News, 29/08/2023, [url](#)

1,436 people had been displaced in the course of five days, Addis Standard reported.²⁰⁷ In January 2024, the same platform reported that approximately 7,000 IDPs from Western Tigray zone and areas in North Western Tigray zone sought refuge in Endabaguna in just one month.²⁰⁸ Data from the Tigray Labor and Social Affairs Bureau from March 2024 revealed that close to 60,000 people had arrived in the two IDP shelters near Shire over the preceding year. Some 11,000 of that group had been displaced over the two preceding months, mostly from Tselemti *woreda* (Western Tigray zone). More than 4,000 fled from areas near the Eritrean border such as Irob, Badme and Zalambessa.²⁰⁹

In Southern Tigray zone, which is a more highly populated and less fertile area than Western Tigray zone, similar crimes took place though on a smaller scale, according to a source Cedoca spoke to during its FFM to Ethiopia in November 2023. The Tigrayan population reportedly received Amhara ID cards and the language of instruction at schools had been changed to Amharic.²¹⁰

5.2.3. Minorities: Irob and Kunama

In its September 2023 report, the ICHREE expressed its particular concern about the presence of the EDF in areas populated by the minority Irob and Kunama communities, as it continued to receive reports of violations in these areas.²¹¹

The Irob are a small community of about 30,000 to 50,000 people, depending on the source. They are predominantly Catholic and speak their own language – Saho -, which sets them apart from the the surrounding Tigrinya-speaking and Ethiopian Orthodox majority. They mainly live in the north-eastern pocket of Tigray to which they give their name.²¹² It is a remote border area that has long been claimed by Eritrea. At the start of the war in November 2020, Eritrean troops occupied the four subdistricts within Irob (Endalgeda, Wariatele, Agaraleekoma and Alitena). The interregional borders around Irob were closed, separating families, hindering access to markets and preventing humanitarian assistance from getting in. In April 2024, after three and a half years of occupation, the Irob are in danger of disappearing because of forced assimilation, arrests and disappearances by Eritrean troops, according to The Catholic Herald.²¹³ A video circulating on social media that same month showed Eritrean forces issuing an ultimatum to residents at a locality called Alakalo in Edalgeda subdistrict of the Irob *woreda*, forcing them to adopt Eritrean identity and obliging Irob youth to undertake Eritrean national service.²¹⁴

A journalist working with Tigray TV travelled to Sheraro in 2023 to report on the faith of the Kunama. In Sheraro, he heard stories from the residents of Eritrean forces entering the city and looting as they pleased, on a weekly basis. The journalist added that there is an ENDF camp in Sheraro, making it safer in the city than in the surrounding villages. However, when the Eritrean forces enter the city, there is generally no reaction from the Ethiopian forces, the Kunama villagers told him. The Kunama complained about looting of food and forced disappearances by Eritrean Forces.²¹⁵ The practice by

²⁰⁷ Addis Standard, 01/09/2023, [url](#)

²⁰⁸ Addis Standard, 30/01/2024, [url](#); Addis Standard, 20/02/2024, [url](#)

²⁰⁹ The Reporter Ethiopia, 30/03/2024, [url](#)

²¹⁰ Tigrayan economist, conversation, 17/11/2023, Addis Abeba

²¹¹ UNHRC, 14/09/2023, p. 9, [url](#)

²¹² The New Humanitarian (Wilmot C.), 16/02/2023, [url](#); The Guardian, 07/08/2023, [url](#); The Catholic Herald, 22/04/2024, [url](#); Irob Kaalalo Civil Association, 19/04/2024, internal document.

²¹³ The Catholic Herald, 22/04/2024, [url](#); Irob Kaalalo Civil Association, 19/04/2024, internal document.

²¹⁴ Irob Anina Civil Society (@IrobAnina), 02/04/2024, [url](#); Tigray Television (@Tigray_TV), 03/04/2024, [url](#)

²¹⁵ Journalist with Tigray TV, conversation, 22/11/2023, Mekelle

Eritrean troops of kidnapping Kunama refugees and subsequently returning them to Eritrea was also reported by The New Humanitarian in February 2023.²¹⁶

5.2.4. Deserters and those who refused to fight for the TDF

According to the information obtained by Cedoca – mostly from contacts during the FFM to Ethiopia in November 2023 – the situation of deserters and those who refused to take up arms and fight alongside the TDF during the war is not straightforward.

Whereas up to June 2021 the TDF experienced no difficulties in recruiting fighters, this changed in later stages of the war and in late 2021 compulsory drafting was introduced.²¹⁷ Multiple sources that Cedoca spoke to during its FFM mentioned that in general most Tigrayans preferred to die in battle rather than to wait for a death caused by hardship. Many saw no other option than to fight.²¹⁸ A Tigrayan economist added however that some were forced to join the struggle as the war went on. Refusing to join the TDF could pose problems in wartime.²¹⁹ In some cases, people got arrested because family members did not join.²²⁰

According to a journalist with Tigrayan background contacted in April 2024, those who refused to fight or deserted from the TDF during the war would presently [as of April 2024] generally not face problems in the region. This situation differs from the situation during the war : “Fulfilling the obligations was mandatory due to the gravity of the situation [during the war]. [...] Although there is an unofficial rule that those who deserted the TDF or refused to fight may face difficulty finding employment, this is not strictly enforced. There are rumours that in some areas, deserters and those who refused the fight are not getting food aid”.²²¹ An academic linked to Mekelle University also pointed to the exclusion of deserters from aid.²²²

However, a Tigrayan economist argued that there is no guarantee for the safety of those who did not want to join the TDF during wartime, with the exception of those who served the war in an intellectual capacity or members of the humanitarian community. Nevertheless, he estimated that the risk of arrest and punishment is rather limited because of the lack of bureaucratic capacity in identifying, data gathering and enforcement. “The other factor is that the TPLF isn't keen on [arresting or prosecuting those who refused to fight during the war] since it usually leads to local confrontation and it doesn't see the merit”. However, according to him, the authorities would arrest those who refused to fight during the war as well as deserters in the face of a perceived threat or heightened tensions, “hence the unpredictability of the risk”.²²³

The Tigrayan economist explained that when a TDF soldier leaves his camp on his own accord, without being discharged, this is seen as desertion. Desertion is a long standing taboo in Tigray.

²¹⁶ The New Humanitarian (Wilmot C.), 16/02/2023, [url](#)

²¹⁷ The Economist (Gardner T.), 12/12/2022, [url](#)

²¹⁸ Community leader, conversation, 22/11/2023, Mekelle; Tigrayan economist, conversation, 17/11/2023, Addis Abeba, and messages through social media, 16/04/2024

²¹⁹ Tigrayan economist, conversation, 17/11/2023, Addis Abeba, and messages through social media, 16/04/2024

²²⁰ Tigrayan economist, conversation, 17/11/2023, Addis Abeba, and messages through social media, 16/04/2024; Academic linked to Mekelle University, conversation, 20/11/2023, Mekelle; The Economist (Gardner T.), 12/12/2022, [url](#)

²²¹ Journalist with Tigrayan background in Addis Abeba, messages through social media, 15/04/2024

²²² Academic linked to Mekelle University, conversation, 20/11/2023, Mekelle

²²³ Tigrayan economist, conversation, 17/11/2023, Addis Abeba, and messages through social media, 16/04/2024

According to him, a person who deserted from the TDF will not get a warm welcome within his community.²²⁴ An academic linked to Mekelle University said that people who refused to fight alongside the TDF are usually marginalized.²²⁵

The Tigrayan economist added that he knew a number of people who were arrested and detained after being caught in checkpoint searches. These roadblock searches and round-ups take place sporadically at moments of heightened threat, for example during increased tensions with Eritrea at the end of October 2023, after an increase in desertions or following an increase in crime in Mekelle that was attributed to deserters without income. Those who are arrested during these searches are people without discharge papers as well as soldiers that did not return to their contingent after treatment for battlefield injuries.²²⁶

The Tigrayan economist added that “most [of the people who were arrested] were forcibly returned to their unit, were punished with extra camp work. Some were detained in prison being accused of some crime like losing firearm and stuff”. According to him, most deserters either live in hiding or have left the region.²²⁷

Human Rights First Ethiopia, a local human rights group, called on the TIRA in December 2023 to address the plight of hundreds of individuals of Tigray origin, formerly employed in regional security institutions, but jobless since the war. According to the human rights group, their salaries are withheld, which appears to be connected to their alleged failure to participate in the conflict.²²⁸

5.2.5. Other profiles: employees of the wartime interim government, opposition members and journalists

This chapter draws mostly on information obtained during conversations with various contacts during the FFM to Ethiopia in November 2023.

People who took up office in the interim government that was installed by the federal government in Mekelle in the period from December 2020 to June 2021 are generally regarded with suspicion or as traitors, according to a medical professional Cedoca spoke to in Mekelle. Some were arrested and detained during the war, but others - with good ties or who were deemed honest or useful or acting in the common interest of the Tigrayans,- were not.²²⁹

According to representatives of an Ethiopian human rights organization, people who supported or collaborated with the federal government during the war, as well as people who were not supportive of the war efforts by the TDF, may face intimidation and arrest. The organization stressed during a conversation with Cedoca in November 2023 that the war is “unfinished business and many things are not yet settled”. Without naming any specific cases, the organization mentioned that targeted actions are possible.²³⁰ Another Ethiopian human rights organization mentioned that it received complaints related to detentions of people who opposed the war efforts in Tigray.²³¹

²²⁴ Tigrayan economist, conversation, 17/11/2023, Addis Abeba

²²⁵ Academic linked to Mekelle University, conversation, 20/11/2023, Mekelle

²²⁶ Tigrayan economist, conversation, 17/11/2023, Addis Abeba, and messages through social media, 16/04/2024

²²⁷ Tigrayan economist, conversation, 17/11/2023, Addis Abeba, and messages through social media, 16/04/2024

²²⁸ Addis Standard, 06/12/2023, [url](#)

²²⁹ Medical professional, conversation, 22/11/2023, Mekelle

²³⁰ Representative of an Ethiopian human rights organization A, conversation, 14/11/2023, Addis Abeba

²³¹ Representative of an Ethiopian human rights organization B, 15/11/2023, Addis Abeba

In April 2023, the Justice Bureau of Tigray began releasing prisoners who were arrested during the war on the accusation of violating one of about 30 different prohibitions declared in the region as emergency laws. Prisoners who stand accused of crimes related to murder, sexual violence, serious injuries and damage to properties were not released. The release measures did also not apply to those who are accused of cooperating with the Eritrean government.²³² The EHRC reported that people who had been convicted under the emergency laws for collaboration with the federal government and ENDF received pardons by the TIRA and were subsequently released. These pardons were denied to prisoners convicted for collaboration with Eritrean forces, the report said. According to monitoring by the EHRC, prisoners charged with or convicted under the wartime regional emergency laws faced discrimination such as denial of medical care and communication with family members.²³³

Opposition members Cedoca spoke to in November 2023 highlighted ongoing restrictions on political freedoms in Tigray, referring for example to the violent suppression of the opposition protest in September 2023²³⁴ and harassment of members of opposition parties throughout the region^{235, 236}

A Tigrayan journalist Cedoca spoke to during its FFM said that the most difficult period for reporting was during the first months after the CoHA, because the Ethiopian forces on the ground saw journalists from Tigray TV as supporters of the Tigray forces, and so they hindered the reporting. After four to five months, with the establishment of the TIRA, the situation normalized. The journalist added that reporting in Ethiopia is difficult in general, and that colleagues were detained over publications. However, he also pointed out in November 2023 that “control is not too tight at the moment”, and that he knows how far he can go in his reporting.²³⁷

Yabele, a media platform run by members of the Tigrayan diaspora, has reported on a number of arrests of journalists since the CoHA. The platform claims this has raised concerns about press freedom and the ability of journalists to operate without fear of reprisal in the region. In September 2023, three journalists were detained and beaten by Tigray police for their coverage of the opposition protest. In November 2023, Tigray police arrested former BBC journalist Desta Gebremedhin in Mekelle. He was released a day later after public outcry.²³⁸ Journalist Adhanom Sertse of Tigray Public Media was detained in April 2024 during a student protest in Mekelle that he was covering.²³⁹

6. Impact of the conflict on daily life

According to journalist Maya Misikir, “every facet of life in the region – from jobs, to social services, to security – has been impacted by the scorched-earth war.”²⁴⁰

²³² Addis Standard, 18/04/2023, [url](#)

²³³ EHRC, 24/02/2024, p. 34, [url](#)

²³⁴ Three opposition parties – Tigray Independence Party, Salsay Weyane Tigray and Baitona – announced the formation of a “covenant for radical change”, claiming that the TIRA did not fulfill its post-war promises. They called for peaceful demonstrations on 7 September 2023 in Mekelle. A heavy-handed police response caused numerous injuries and led to hundreds of arrests. The Africa Report (Tsfaye A.), 05/10/2023, [url](#)

²³⁵ Representative of Salsay Weyane Tigray, messages through social media, 20/04/2024 and 22/04/2024

²³⁶ Addis Standard (Beyene M.), 19/12/2023, [url](#); Representatives of the Opposition Alliance consisting of the Tigray Independence Party, Baitona and Salsa Woyane, conversation, 21/11/2023, Mekelle

²³⁷ Journalist with Tigray TV, conversation, 22/11/2023, Mekelle

²³⁸ Yabele, 17/11/2023, [url](#)

²³⁹ Yabele, 05/04/2024, [url](#)

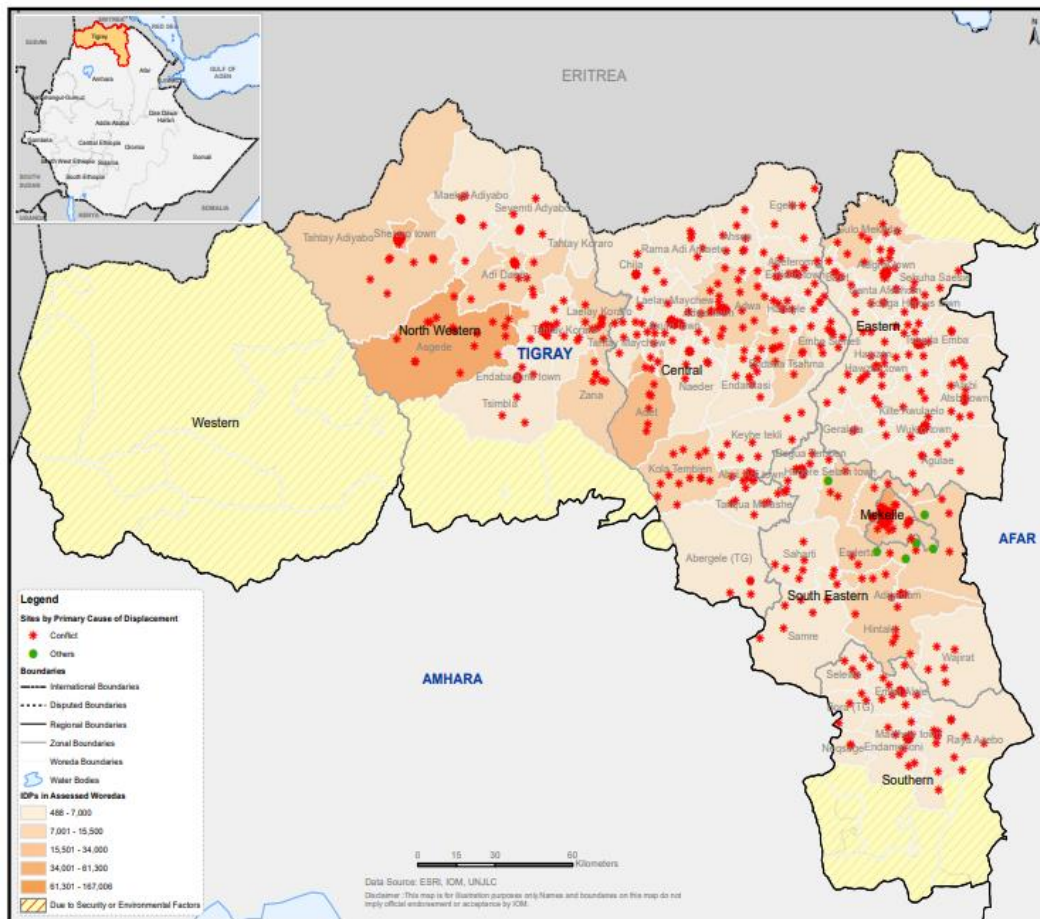
²⁴⁰ The New Humanitarian (Misikir M.), 23/04/2024, [url](#)

6.1. Displacement

6.1.1. IDPs

According to the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) project of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Tigray hosted 949,371 IDPs in September 2023. Inaccessibility due to insecurity in parts of Eastern, Southern and North Western zones likely lessened the regional total, and Western Tigray zone remained totally inaccessible for monitoring.²⁴¹

IOM surveyed 667 sites in Tigray, ranging from informal settlements in urban or peri-urban areas, including schools, to formal settlements or camps. The majority of IDPs were residing with the host community (80 %), followed by collective centers (18 %) and planned camps/sites (2 %).²⁴²



Map 5: Map of Displacement in Tigray (IOM, August – September 2023)²⁴³

²⁴¹ IOM DTM, 20/12/2023, p. 25, [url](#)

²⁴² IOM DTM, 20/12/2023, p. 25, [url](#); Addis Standard, 30/10/2023, [url](#); Representative of an international organization B, conversation, 22/11/2023, Mekelle

²⁴³ IOM DTM, 20/12/2023, p. 25, [url](#)

IDPs in Tigray continue to face a multitude of challenges including hunger, lack of humanitarian aid, overcrowded and unsanitary shelter conditions and lack of medical treatment.²⁴⁴ In January 2023, Addis Standard reported that more than 54,000 IDPs sheltered at an IDP camp in Abiy-Adi (Central Tigray zone) were suffering from severe shortage of food and medicine supplies.²⁴⁵ The Director of the Tigray Health Research Institute reported that approximately 68.3 % of deaths in Tigray were caused by starvation between December 2022 and August 2023, and that most of these deaths occurred at IDP sites.²⁴⁶ Without aid or access to their old farms, displaced population are unable to feed themselves and resort to begging.²⁴⁷ According to local aid workers this would have been a rare sight prior to the conflict, as begging comes with social stigma.²⁴⁸

Thousands of IDPs in the North Western Tigray zone continue to live in schools, thus delaying the resumption of education.²⁴⁹ Refugees International also stresses that the classrooms that serve as shelters are dirty, tattered and crowded, with little privacy and sanitation. Most IDPs lack access to food, hygiene items, clean water, and other basic services.²⁵⁰ In February 2024, UNOCHA reported a notable movement of IDPs who were originally living with host communities towards IDP collective sites. These movements are motivated by registrations for food assistance, and lead to overcrowding in those sites.²⁵¹

Documentation is another hurdle for displaced persons. IDPs who lost their identity documents run the risk of being denied aid and services.²⁵² According to the EHRC, registration of IDPs is conducted in all areas accessible to the TIRA. However, there are still gaps in terms of ensuring that all IDPs are registered and issued with ID cards. For example, the EHRC observed that several IDPs from Southern Tigray zone sheltered at Hayelom Araya Secondary School had not been issued ID cards.²⁵³

The number of IDPs estimated by IOM DTM in August-September 2023 represents a decrease of 72,427 IDPs since April-June 2023. The decrease is due to an increase in both spontaneous and planned returns as well as inaccessibility to certain sites.²⁵⁴ IOM estimates that close to 1.5 million IDPs have returned to their homes since the signing of the Pretoria Agreement in November 2022.²⁵⁵ However, the presence of Amhara militias in Western Tigray zone and areas in North Eastern Tigray zone as well as the Eritrean presence in the northern border area hamper the return of IDPs to their homes.²⁵⁶

In 2022, more than 200,000 IDPs returned to their place of origin in the Tigray region, and over 33,000 were assisted by UNHCR and partners with cash, non-food items (NFI) and transportation. UNHCR reported on the difficulties IDP returnees faced in Genta Afeshum, Gulo Mekeda and Hawzen

²⁴⁴ EHRC, 24/02/2024, p. 14, [url](#); Addis Standard, 30/10/2023, [url](#); Refugees International (Miller S.), 03/2024, [url](#)

²⁴⁵ Addis Standard, 12/04/2023, [url](#)

²⁴⁶ The study is based on a household census conducted by health workers from 15 to 29 August 2023 in nine *woredas* of Tigray and 53 camps for internally displaced people. Tigray in total has 88 *woredas* and 643 displacement sites, so the number of hunger deaths across the region is most probably far higher. Addis Standard, 30/10/2023, [url](#)

²⁴⁷ The New Humanitarian (Harter F.), 26/09/2023, [url](#)

²⁴⁸ Refugees International (Miller S.), 03/2024, [url](#)

²⁴⁹ UNOCHA, 01/03/2024, [url](#)

²⁵⁰ Refugees International (Miller S.), 03/2024, [url](#)

²⁵¹ UNOCHA, 01/03/2024, [url](#)

²⁵² Academic linked to Mekelle University, conversation, 20/11/2023, Mekelle

²⁵³ EHRC, 24/02/2024, p. 14, [url](#)

²⁵⁴ IOM DTM, 20/12/2023, p. 25, [url](#)

²⁵⁵ IOM DTM, 20/12/2023, p. 41, [url](#); Addis Standard, 30/10/2023, [url](#)

²⁵⁶ Addis Standard, 30/10/2023, [url](#); Refugees International (Miller S.), 03/2024, [url](#)

woredas in the North Eastern Zone of Tigray in February 2023. Regarding Kokob Tsibah (Genta Afeshum) the report stated: “All livestock, crops, grain stores and equipment has been looted or destroyed. No functioning school, health clinic, market or *woreda* administration office. No police or security. 3 armed EDF soldiers were seen walking through the village on 13 February 2023.”²⁵⁷ According to a June 2023 report by the Protection Cluster, returned IDPs, especially in the East, were yet to be issued ID cards. Legal documentation is critical for the sustainability of return.²⁵⁸

In addition to the war-related displacement, new displacement has occurred after November 2022, especially from the occupied areas in the Western Tigray zone and the *kebeles* on the border with Eritrea where Eritrean soldiers are in charge.²⁵⁹ In March and April 2023, at least 47,000 IDPs fled Western Tigray zone and arrived at Endabaguna, near Shire (North Western Tigray zone) due to renewed arrests and pressures on ethnic Tigrayans. Getu, the interim administrator of Endabaguna, said these newly arriving IDPs were not getting humanitarian aid such as food and medicine.²⁶⁰ Data from the Tigray Labor and Social Affairs Bureau from March 2024 revealed that in total close to 60,000 people had arrived in the two IDP shelters near Shire over the preceding year, coming from Western Tigray zone and areas near the Eritrean border such as Irob, Badme and Zalambessa.²⁶¹

After armed clashes in April 2024 in Alamata town, Raya Alamata, Zata and Ofla *woredas*, UNOCHA reported on the displacement of over 50,000 people from the area to neighboring Kobo *woreda* of (North Wello zone) and Sekota town (Wag Hamra zone) in the neighboring Amhara region. The humanitarian situation is dire, with thousands of IDPs in need of humanitarian support to survive.²⁶²

6.1.2. Refugees

From the beginning of the war in November 2020, UNHCR recorded an influx of Ethiopian refugees at the border entry points in East Sudan. More than 40,000 Tigrayans crossed the border with Sudan in the first month of the war. The influx decreased sharply in December 2022 and January 2023 and virtually stopped in the months thereafter, because the presence of troops hindered people from reaching and crossing the border. From March 2021 onwards, refugees started entering Sudan via Blue Nile State in larger numbers. As of February 2024, UNHCR has registered 62,585 Ethiopian refugees in Sudan. 75 % of these Ethiopian refugees are Tigrayans.²⁶³

Sudan, UNHCR and partner organizations set up a new refugee camp in Gedaref at the end of 2020 - Um Rakuba²⁶⁴ - , and a refugee settlement in January 2021 - Tunaydbah²⁶⁵. The refugees from Tigray are mainly accommodated at these two sites. As of end September 2023, Um Rakuba accommodated 17,477 refugees, all of whom were biometrically registered and provided with assistance. The majority of the refugees in Um Rakuba camp are from Tigray (98 %). Most originate from Humera (76 %), followed by May Kadra (7 %) and Kafta Humera (6 %).²⁶⁶ Tigrayans also formed the majority (95 %) of the 23,642 refugees in Tunaydbah (as of September 2023). Most originate from Humera (35 %), followed by Kafta Humera (27 %), May Kadra (16 %), Tsegede (5

²⁵⁷ UNHCR, 02/2023, [url](#)

²⁵⁸ Protection Cluster, 10/06/2023, internal document.

²⁵⁹ UNOCHA,

²⁶⁰ Addis Standard, 12/04/2023, [url](#)

²⁶¹ The Reporter Ethiopia, 30/03/2024, [url](#)

²⁶² UNOCHA, 19/04/2024, [url](#); UNOCHA, 22/04/2024, [url](#)

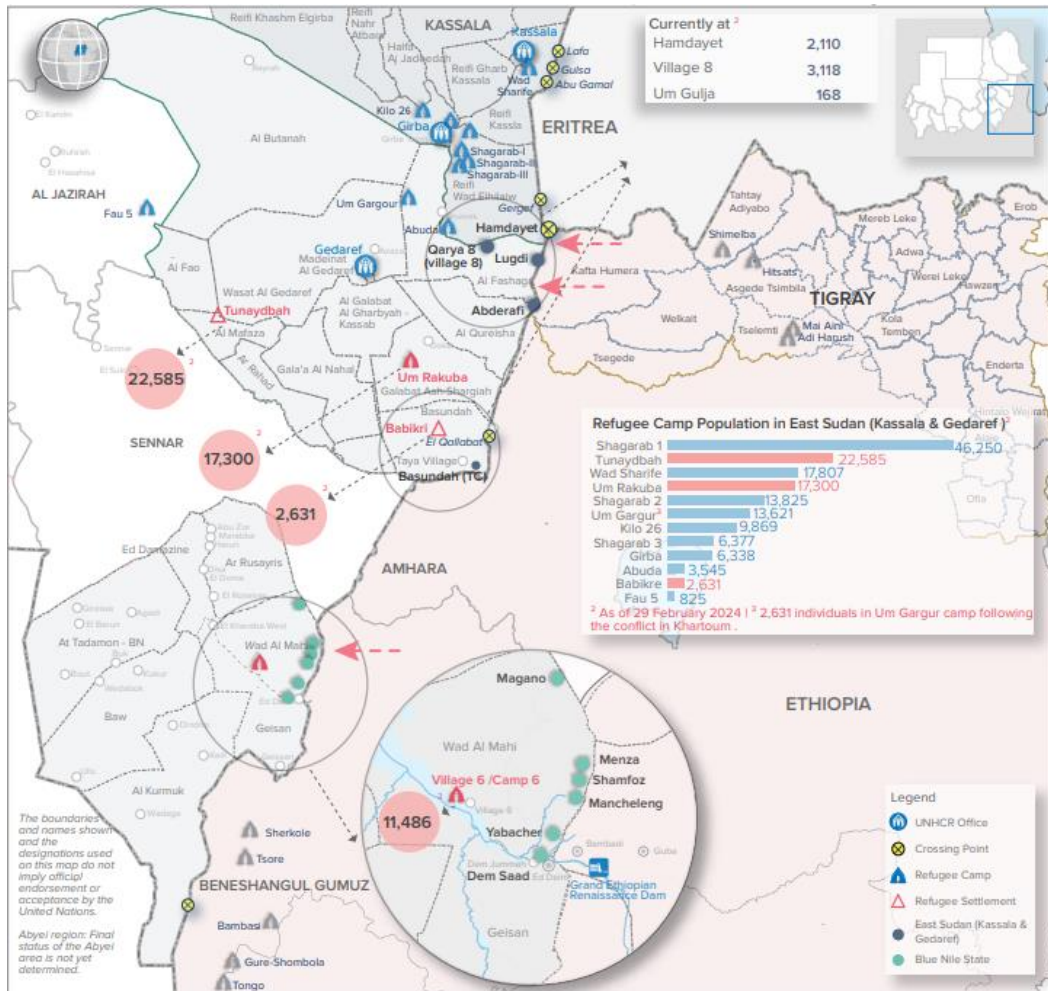
²⁶³ UNHCR, 21/03/2024, [url](#)

²⁶⁴ A Settlement Overview Map can be found here: UNHCR, 14/04/2022, [url](#)

²⁶⁵ A Settlement Overview Map can be found here: UNHCR, 14/04/2022, [url](#)

²⁶⁶ UNHCR, 09/10/2023, [url](#)

%) and Adwa (2 %).²⁶⁷ There are other camps hosting Tigrayan refugees, such as Camp 6 in Blue Nile State (317 Tigrayans or 3 % of the total camp population)²⁶⁸, Um Gargour camp in Gedaref (752 Tigrayans or 37 %)²⁶⁹ and the Babikre settlement, also in Gedaref (26 Tigrayans or 1 %)²⁷⁰.



Map 6: Refugee camps and settlements in Kassala, Gedaref and Blue Nile States (as of 29 February 2024)²⁷¹

Journalist Fred Harter reported that traffickers are kidnapping refugees in Tunaydbah and Um Rakuba, taking them to Libya and torturing them for ransom.²⁷²

²⁶⁷ UNHCR, 09/10/2023, [url](#)

²⁶⁸ UNHCR, 09/10/2023, [url](#)

²⁶⁹ UNHCR, 09/10/2023, [url](#)

²⁷⁰ UNHCR, 09/10/2023, [url](#)

²⁷¹ UNHCR, 21/03/2024, [url](#)

²⁷² The Guardian (Harter F.), 15/05/2023, [url](#)

6.2. Access to public services, health services and education

Since the signing of the CoHA, public services including telecommunication, electricity and banking, have partially resumed in Tigray's major towns.²⁷³ As of November 2023, the electricity, mobile and internet network remained unreliable and intermittent.²⁷⁴ In certain areas, such as Irob (Eastern Tigray zone), banking and other services remained cut off as of December 2023.²⁷⁵ In February 2024, Addis Standard reported that the town of Zalemessa (Eastern Tigray zone) still lacked essential public services such as electricity, water, healthcare, and education.²⁷⁶

In June 2023, courts and relevant institutions had not yet resumed in Tigray according to a report of the Protection Cluster.²⁷⁷ However, a source told Cedoca in November 2023 that the TIRA had resumed police and court structures in all *woreda's*.²⁷⁸ The EHRC pointed out that regional courts, justice bureaus, police and prison administrations faced challenges in protecting human rights and upholding the rule of law.²⁷⁹

To compensate for the lack of trained police officers, former TDF combatants were recruited into the police force.²⁸⁰ The integration of former combatants into the regular police and prisons services – without adequate training on law, ethics and code of conduct – poses a threat to the protection of arrested persons and detainees, with cases of torture and ill-treatment being reported.²⁸¹ Moreover, most police stations lack basic equipment and supplies to resume full functionality.²⁸² With its infrastructure demolished and equipment looted, the police, the justice and the prison institutions lack tables, chairs, vehicles, as well as office and communication materials.²⁸³ One source mentioned that the regional police force only started receiving their uniforms in October 2023.²⁸⁴ According to multiple sources, the inefficient reintegration of former TDF soldiers has given rise to security challenges with an increase in incidents such as of robbery, pickpocketing and fights.²⁸⁵

Regarding courts and judicial services, the EHRC reported on the basis of its visit to the region in July 2023 that damage to facilities, the inability to provide complete justice services and the non-payment of wages during the war had a negative impact on overall motivation.²⁸⁶ According to one source "the justice system in Tigray has been dismantled. There are attempts to restart the courts, but there are no computers, no files or documents, no judges [...] They are too few to handle the

²⁷³ Allard K. Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic, 06/2023, [url](#); EHRC, 02/2024, p. 7, [url](#)

²⁷⁴ Representative of an international organization A, conversation, 20/11/2023, Mekelle

²⁷⁵ Addis Standard, 24/10/2023, [url](#); Addis Standard, 14/12/2023, [url](#)

²⁷⁶ Addis Standard, 21/02/2024, [url](#)

²⁷⁷ Protection Cluster, 10/06/2023, internal document.

²⁷⁸ Representative of an Ethiopian human rights organization B, 15/11/2023, Addis Abeba

²⁷⁹ The EHRC monitored Central Zone (Axum, Adwa, Inticho and Rama), NorthWestern Zone (Shire, Sheraro, Addi-Hageray), Southern Zone (Maichew, Endamehoni, Selawa-Bora, Mehoni (Raya-Azebo), Addi Shihu, Ambalaje), SouthEastern zone (Hintalo, Addi Gudom and Seharti-Gijet) and Mekelle special zone from July 12 to 30 July 2023. EHRC, 02/2024, p. 5, [url](#); Representative of an international organization A, conversation, 20/11/2023, Mekelle

²⁸⁰ EHRC, 02/2024, p. 31, [url](#)

²⁸¹ EHRC, 02/2024, pp. 5, 31-35, [url](#); Representative of an international organization A, conversation, 20/11/2023, Mekelle; Law Expert related to Mekelle University, conversation, 21/11/2023, Mekelle and e-mail, 18/04/2024; Academic linked to Mekelle University, conversation, 20/11/2023, Mekelle

²⁸² EHRC, 02/2024, p. 31, [url](#)

²⁸³ EHRC, 02/2024, [url](#); Representative of an international organization A, conversation, 20/11/2023, Mekelle

²⁸⁴ Law Expert related to Mekelle University, conversation, 21/11/2023, Mekelle and e-mail, 18/04/2024

²⁸⁵ Addis Standard (Gebrekristos M.), 31/10/2023, [url](#); Representative of an international organization A, conversation, 20/11/2023, Mekelle; Ethiopian academic, conversation, 20/11/2023, Mekelle, and messages through social media, 16/04/2024

²⁸⁶ EHRC, 25/11/2023, [url](#)

cases, they do not even have the capacity to handle the cases of crimes conducted by the police”.²⁸⁷ Another source mentioned that “there is a semblance of resuming services, there are severe limitations. There is a complete delinking with the federal level. Documents and file records got lost or destroyed”.²⁸⁸ Hadush Tesfa, the head of the Tigray Justice Bureau, said the justice system lacked institutional and human capacity and material supply, posing challenges in protecting human rights and upholding the rule of law.²⁸⁹ In Seharti-Gijet *woreda* Police Station (South Eastern zone), the EHRC found a detainee who had been arrested in May 2021 for “collaborating with the enemy” under a wartime state of emergency command post regulation and was still in detention as of July 2023. While most police stations did maintain records of each person in their custody, this was not the case for all police detention centers, the EHRC found.²⁹⁰

According to the Directorate-General of the Tigray Statistics and Vital Events Registration Agency, 85% of the vital registration system/offices have been damaged or looted during the war, with field vehicles, office equipment, furniture, computers, and printers either looted or destroyed.²⁹¹

Office and human resource related performance before,
during and after the war

Functional offices			
	Before the war	During the war	After the war
Woreda Coordination offices	93	40	75
Kebele Registration offices	813	296	636

Figure 1: Functional *woreda* and *kebele* offices²⁹²

However, birth and other vital events registration services have been reinstated in 76 *woredas* and 636 *kebeles*. The same source added : “Vital event certificates are being issued in the functioning *kebeles*, but ID cards are not yet being issued due to logistical issues.²⁹³ During the war many documents at *kebeles* and *woredas* were destroyed leaving us without backup.”²⁹⁴

²⁸⁷ Academic linked to Mekelle University, conversation, 20/11/2023, Mekelle

²⁸⁸ Law Expert linked to Mekelle University, conversation, 21/11/2023, Mekelle and e-mail, 18/04/2024

²⁸⁹ EHRC, 25/11/2023, [url](#)

²⁹⁰ EHRC, 02/2024, p. 31, [url](#)

²⁹¹ Representative of the Directorate-General of the Tigray Statistics and Vital Events Registration Agency, e-mail, 18/04/2024

²⁹² Representative of the Directorate-General of the Tigray Statistics and Vital Events Registration Agency, e-mail, 18/04/2024

²⁹³ When Cedoca visited Mekelle in November 2023, vital registration was possible but the TIRA was not issuing ID cards (the so-called *kebele* cards). The TIRA wanted to start issuing digital ID cards, and decided to stop issuing paper ID cards and wait for the issuance of digital ones. The office responsible for the digital ID card experienced many challenges due to the war, such as data losses and destruction of materials, leading to delays in the issuance of ID cards. Official of the TIRA, conversation, 21/11/2023, Mekelle; Representative of the Directorate-General of the Tigray Statistics and Vital Events Registration Agency, e-mail, 18/04/2024

²⁹⁴ Representative of the Directorate-General of the Tigray Statistics and Vital Events Registration Agency, e-mail, 18/04/2024

The availability and access to medical care has dwindled due to the war. Before the war started, Tigray had a healthcare system comprising 1,011 public health facilities (741 health posts, 230 health centers, 24 primary hospitals, 14 general hospitals and 2 referral hospitals), more than 25,000 health workforces and 310 ambulances. As a result of the war, 514 health posts (81 %), 153 health centers (74 %), 16 primary hospitals (80 %) and 12 hospitals (86 %) were damaged, vandalized and looted either fully or partially.²⁹⁵ According to the TIRA, medical equipment has been lost in 71 % of Tigray's health facilities, with about 30 % of it having been destroyed or plundered during the conflict.²⁹⁶ The 2023 Health Resources and Resource Availability Monitoring system (HeRAMS) assessment by the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that 736 of the 825 health service delivery units (86 %) in Tigray have endured varying degrees of structural damage. The report emphasized the complete destruction of 28 health facilities in Tigray, leaving the equipment in an additional 232 facilities completely unusable. According to the report, 92 % of the total of 825 health facilities in Tigray remain only partially functional, primarily due to a lack of medical supplies, equipment, and financing. The primary causes of destruction to buildings and medical equipment were attacks, conflict, looting and a lack of maintenance.²⁹⁷ Beyond the damage to health facilities, damage to local electric and water infrastructure presented a challenge in service delivery across the region.²⁹⁸ During the period October – December 2023, health cluster partners rehabilitated 45 out of 764 damaged health facilities. In addition, 22 health service delivery units had damaged equipment replaced or repaired.²⁹⁹ Despite these developments, the regional health system continues to suffer from damaged facilities and looted equipment that were yet to be rebuilt, repaired, and replaced in most locations.³⁰⁰

The shortage of medicine in health centers and the lack of adequate health professionals are other major concerns.³⁰¹ There have been improvements in medicine supply since the CoHA, and monthly salaries of health care professionals are being paid since December 2022.³⁰² However, confronted with budget constraints, hospitals are forced to charge service fees, making access to medical care harder for the poorest.³⁰³ The risk of communicable disease outbreaks remained high due to conflict-related disruption of preventive measures such as vaccination campaigns.³⁰⁴ Since the onset of the conflict, the maternal mortality rate in the region has increased fivefold, according to a study by the Regional Health Bureau.³⁰⁵

The war, which followed a disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, also had a devastating effect on education in the region. Destroyed school infrastructures, a shortage of teachers, the lack of materials and financial resources as well as security problems (in the occupied and disputed territories) hinder the resumption of education.³⁰⁶ According to the EHRC, education in the region resumed in May 2023.³⁰⁷ However, information obtained from the Regional Education Bureau pointed out that nearly 400 schools in the Western, Southern, and North Western Tigray zones remained

²⁹⁵ UNICEF, WFP et al, 01/2024, p. 8, [url](#)

²⁹⁶ Ethiopia Insight, 30/01/2024, [url](#); Addis Standard, 05/10/2023, [url](#)

²⁹⁷ WHO, 04/09/2023, [url](#)

²⁹⁸ EHRC, 24/02/2024, p. 19, [url](#)

²⁹⁹ Health Cluster, WHO, 02/01/2024, [url](#)

³⁰⁰ EHRC, 24/02/2024, p. 18, [url](#)

³⁰¹ EHRC, 24/02/2024, pp. 18-19, [url](#)

³⁰² EHRC, 24/02/2024, p. 18, [url](#)

³⁰³ For example, the Ayder Referrral Hospital in Mekelle reportedly only received a third of the pre-war budget for medicine from the federal authorities. World Peace Foundation (Gebrehiwot M.), 17/08/2023, [url](#)

³⁰⁴ Health Cluster, WHO, 02/01/2024, [url](#)

³⁰⁵ CARE, 15/04/2024, [url](#)

³⁰⁶ Wilson Center, 18/04/2023, [url](#); UNICEF, WFP et al, 01/2024, pp. 57-58, [url](#)

³⁰⁷ EHRC, 24/02/2024, pp. 21-23, [url](#)

inaccessible for the TIRA. Education reportedly resumed in parts of Southern Tigray zone under the control of Amhara forces in December 2022. There is no information on the resumption of education in Western Tigray zone or Irob *woreda*.³⁰⁸

In 2021, the Tigray Education Bureau conducted a preliminary assessment, excluding schools in areas occupied by Eritrean and Amhara forces. The study's findings indicated that 88 % of classrooms were severely damaged.³⁰⁹ Extensive damage to school infrastructure and the lack of adequate educational supplies have hindered the full and effective resumption of education in the area under control of the TIRA. A scientific study on the effect of the war on education in the Eastern Tigray zone found that the destruction of schools resulted in 50 % of the students being unable to attend their school. The average walking distance to elementary and secondary schools increased from 2.2 km to 4.84 km and 6.3 km to 18.22 km respectively.³¹⁰

No	Zones	No of Weredas	Weredas out of the interim gov. admin.	%	No of schools			No of Closed Schools	%	No of Schools occupied by IDPs	%
					1-8	9-12	Total				
1	Central	22	0	0	594	70	664	12	2	15	2.3
2	Eastern	18	1	6	401	52	453	46	10	8	1.8
3	Mekelle	7	0	0	81	28	109	0	0	24	22
4	Northern West	15	3	20	358	39	397	90	23	38	9.6
5	South Eastern	8	0	0	257	23	280	0	0	15	5.4
6	Southern	14	5	36	331	36	367	182	50	5	1.4
7	Western	9	9	100	199	23	222	222	100		
	Total	93	18	19	2221	271	2492	552	22	105	4.2

Table 1: Number of closed and IDP-occupied schools per zone (Tigray Regional Education Bureau, 2023)³¹¹

Security concerns, particularly in locations close to areas under the control of Eritrean forces, prevented children from going to school.³¹² A further complicating factor is that most of the IDPs sheltering in school have been displaced from western and southern parts of Tigray that are occupied by Amhara militias.³¹³ Finally, 36 districts are severely impacted by drought, affecting 625 schools. Some 220,000 students in these districts are at risk to discontinue their education due to drought-related hunger.³¹⁴ Additionally, the Tigray Education Bureau revealed that out of an anticipated enrollment of over 2.4 million students, 60 % have not been able to register due to displacement and hunger.³¹⁵

Tigray's economy and services have endured heavy blows in the two-year war, through destruction and looting of factories and business, which has resulted in a severe loss of jobs.³¹⁶ According to a

³⁰⁸ EHRC, 24/02/2024, pp. 21-23, [url](#)

³⁰⁹ Tigray Education Bureau, 05/2022, [url](#); Addis Standard (Gebrekristos M.), 31/10/2023, [url](#)

³¹⁰ Belay F., Berhane D., et al, 10/2023, [url](#)

³¹¹ UNICEF, WFP et al, 01/2024, p. 50, [url](#)

³¹² EHRC, 24/02/2024, pp. 21-23, [url](#)

³¹³ Wilson Center, 18/04/2023, [url](#)

³¹⁴ Addis Standard, 09/01/2024, [url](#); Addis Standard (Kebede D.), 13/01/2024, [url](#); Addis Standard, 01/03/2024, [url](#)

³¹⁵ Addis Standard, 01/03/2024, [url](#)

³¹⁶ BBC (de Waal A.), 08/11/2023, [url](#); Ethiopian academic, conversation, 20/11/2023, Mekelle, and messages through social media, 16/04/2024; Representative of an international organization A, conversation, 20/11/2023, Mekelle

written statement by Elizka Relief Foundation³¹⁷, “almost all the factories in central and eastern Tigray were destroyed and rendered useless” within several months.³¹⁸ The Messebo cement factory in Mekelle is again operational, being one of the factories that was least damaged during the war.³¹⁹ Other factories, such as Moha Soft Drinks, did not yet resume operations because of significant damages.³²⁰

6.3. Humanitarian situation and access

The widespread destruction caused by war, a one--and-a--half-year siege, a severe drought and a nearly seven-month pause in food aid have resulted in widespread hunger.³²¹ On 30 December 2023, the president of the TIRA, Getachew Reda, said 91 % of the population was exposed to the risk of starvation and death due to ongoing drought and the pervasive impact of the conflict.³²² This situation, coupled with the fact that half of the arable land belonging to Tigray before the war is under occupation³²³, drove the TIRA to declare a state of famine. Prime minister Abiy Ahmed does not recognize this situation, and declared in February 2024 that no one has died from famine in Ethiopia.³²⁴

The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) projected in March 2024 that large parts of Tigray will be in Emergency (IPC phase 4³²⁵) in the first half of 2024. Levels of acute food insecurity are most severe in the conflict- and drought-affected north.³²⁶

³¹⁷ Elizka Relief Foundation is a non-governmental organization legally registered and based in Ghana with a thematic scope of capacity building and human empowerment, with a special consultative status to the UNHRC.

³¹⁸ UNHRC, 30/08/2022, p. 3, [url](#)

³¹⁹ Ethiopia Insight, 30/01/2024, [url](#)

³²⁰ Addis Standard, 16/01/2024, [url](#)

³²¹ Refugees International (Miller S.), 03/2024, [url](#); Le Monde, 11/03/2024, [url](#)

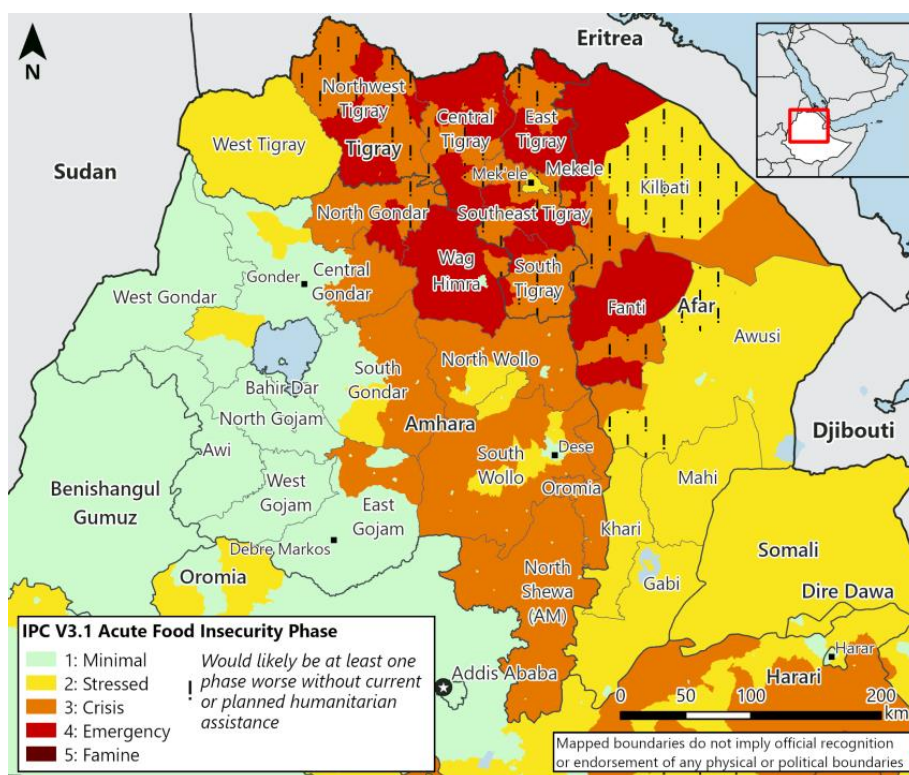
³²² Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 29/02/2024, [url](#); Le Monde (Hochet-Bodin N.), 06/03/2024, [url](#)

³²³ The Tigray Regional Agriculture Bureau announced that 52 % of the region's agricultural land was occupied by the Amhara and Eritrean army forces and that it was unable to produce as much as planned. The Reporter Ethiopia, 11/02/2024, [url](#)

³²⁴ According to Le Monde, the image of a country with deaths from hunger would be contrary to that of a major wheat exporting nation and the future grain basket of Africa that Abiy Ahmed strives to promote. Le Monde (Hochet-Bodin N.), 06/03/2024, [url](#); Le Monde, 11/03/2024, [url](#)

³²⁵ Phase 4 is the second most serious food insecurity code, before famine (IPC phase 5). In phase 4 there is acute malnutrition and excess mortality and people have to fall back on emergency strategies to deal with food shortages.

³²⁶ FEWS NET, 03/2024, [url](#)



Map 7: Projected acute food security outcomes in northern Ethiopia, June to September 2024³²⁷

Many poor households, mainly in the eastern and southern zones of Tigray and those situated along the Tekeze River in both Amhara and Tigray regions, have already exhausted their food stocks from the 2023 harvest. In areas of eastern Tigray and northeastern Amhara where the drought was most severe, there is no crop residue or pasture available for livestock consumption. According to FEWS NET, “Emergency (IPC Phase 4)” outcomes are likely in these areas in the period from June to September 2024. In the rest of Tigray and northeastern Amhara, where the *meher* harvest was below-average but did not fail, “Crisis! (IPC Phase 3!)” outcomes are expected. FEWS NET thus predicted high levels of acute malnutrition, but humanitarian food assistance and social support could reduce hunger-related mortality. Households will remain heavily reliant on humanitarian food assistance and social support for food until the next *meher* harvest in September/October 2024, the Network said. Coping strategies will likely include begging, migration in search of food, and earning income through illegal means to access food.³²⁸

According to Addis Standard, the devastating impact of the war on Tigray’s agricultural output and food security cannot be overstated. The conflict has eroded livelihoods.³²⁹ According to a study³³⁰ published in August 2023, 81 % of smallholder households lost their crops, followed by livestock (75 %), and farm tools (48 %). As a result, more than 5.2 million people are now in dire need of

³²⁷ FEWS NET, 03/2024, [url](#)

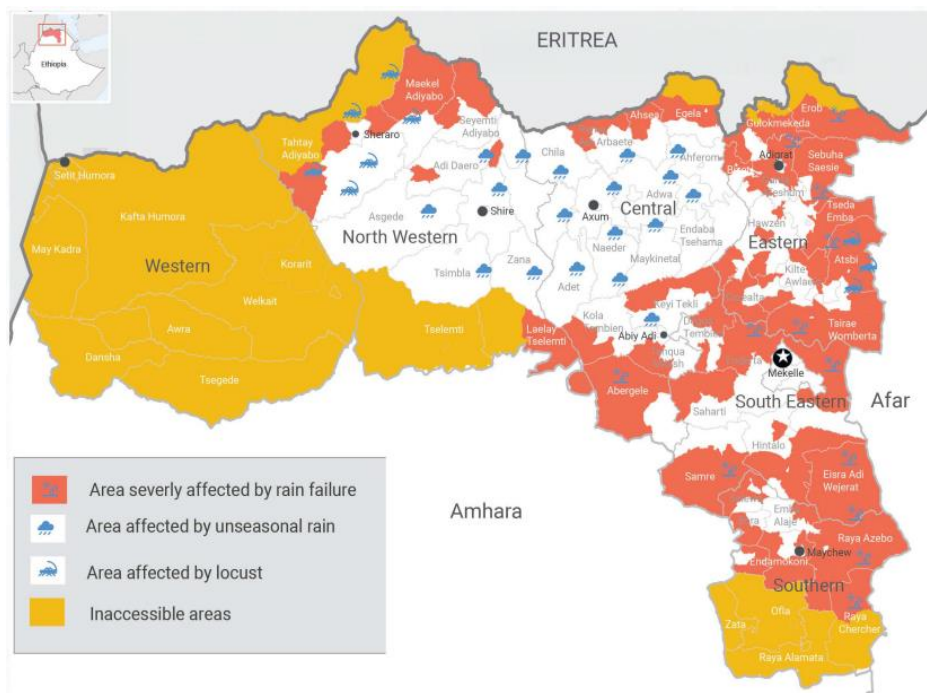
³²⁸ FEWS NET, 03/2024, [url](#)

³²⁹ Addis Standard, 10/10/2023, [url](#); FEWS NET, 03/2024, [url](#)

³³⁰ The study is based on a survey of 4376 households. A map with the locations of the study districts is found on page 3 of the report. Districts in all zones, except for Western Tigray, were included in the report. Manaye Demissie A. et al, 08/2023, [url](#)

immediate humanitarian assistance.³³¹ Large areas of forests were destroyed in the conflict, which will prolong the adverse effects of the war.³³²

The situation is compounded by significantly below-average rainfall leading to failed *meher* crop production in 2023 due to El Niño-related drought.³³³ UNOCHA indicated in January 2024 that only half of Tigray’s farmland was planted in 2023 due to drought and inaccessibility problems, with only 37 % of production harvested during the *meher* season.³³⁴ Prior to the war, subsistence agriculture engaged over 80 % of the rural population in Tigray, with crop production playing a crucial role in ensuring food, feed, and nutritional security.³³⁵ Most of it consists of rain-fed agriculture, which means that droughts can greatly impact millions.³³⁶ Below normal and unseasonal rainfall resulted in a poor harvest. Reports indicated that the drought has affected approximately 20 % of Tigray’s agricultural land, covering 27 *woredas*.³³⁷



Map 8: Tigray region with severely affected *woredas* by the major hazards³³⁸

Farming is hindered in some regions by the occurrence of unexploded ordnance (UXO’s).³³⁹ In June 2023, Addis Standard wrote that farmers in Kola Tembien (Central Tigray zone) were unable to farm because of landmines and explosives planted in the area during the war.³⁴⁰

³³¹ Manaye Demissie A. et al, 08/2023, [url](#)

³³² The Reporter Ethiopia (Endale A.), 08/07/2023, [url](#)

³³³ FEWS NET, 03/2024, [url](#)

³³⁴ UNOCHA, 10/01/2024, [url](#)

³³⁵ Addis Standard, 10/10/2023, [url](#)

³³⁶ World Bank, 06/2013, [url](#)

³³⁷ Addis Standard (Beyene M.), 19/12/2023, [url](#)

³³⁸ UNOCHA, FAO et al, 01/2024, [url](#)

³³⁹ Representative of an international organization A, conversation, 20/11/2023, Mekele

³⁴⁰ Addis Standard, 27/06/2023, [url](#)

The lingering impacts of conflict and failed harvests are also limiting labour activities. Movement restrictions due to insecurity are impeding migratory labour. Before the war, many workers used to migrate seasonally for employment in the surplus-producing areas of Western Tigray zone.³⁴¹

Finally, the pause in food aid has significantly worsened the food security situation in Tigray. After discovering that food aid was being diverted, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Food Programme (WFP) announced the suspension of food assistance in Tigray at the end of March 2023.³⁴² Two months later, in June 2023, the suspension was extended to the whole country after indications of a widespread and coordinated campaign to divert food assistance.³⁴³ The consequences were catastrophic for the nearly one-sixth of Ethiopians who rely on food aid. The timing of the aid suspension coincided with the outset of the traditional lean season, and just as food distributions in Tigray had finally reached almost 90 % of the WFP objective for the first time since the beginning of the war.³⁴⁴ Food assistance resumed from December 2023 onwards in some regions, with a reduced target of food assistance for 3.2 million people³⁴⁵ (Western Tigray zone excluded). However, hunger rates outpaced the slow scale-up. Aid groups indicated that only 14 % of those targeted for food aid in January 2024 had received it by the 21st of that month, with child malnutrition rates around 26.5 %.³⁴⁶ In March 2024, UNOCHA reported that an estimated 2.9 million people (86 % of the case load targeted for that period) received food assistance in January 2024. However, the UN organizations stressed that because of limited resources and logistical challenges, the aid response is not commensurate with the need.³⁴⁷

IDPs, local authorities and other sources have reported deaths from starvation, although not always with clear reference to time and place. It is not possible to cross-check the statements on starvation deaths.³⁴⁸ Cedoca is thus unable to determine how many people have died of malnutrition or starvation in Tigray in the research period from November 2022 to March 2024. A joint study conducted by the Tigray Health Bureau, Tigray Health Research Institute and Mekelle University found that at least 1,329 people had died from hunger in only nine districts in the region over the period of nine months leading up to August 2023.³⁴⁹ According to the head of the Tigray office of the Disaster Risk Management Commission, Gebrehiwet Gebrezgabher, some 1,400 hunger-related deaths were recorded in Tigray between April and August 2023 alone in the Eastern, Southeastern, and North Western zones of Tigray.³⁵⁰ In August 2023, local authorities in Adigrat reported more than 570 starvation-related deaths since May 2023.³⁵¹ The deputy head of the Tigray Region Agriculture Bureau, Alembarhan Harifyo, told The Reporter in October 2023, that 2,800 people died in the drought that occurred in the previous three months in 27 districts and 107 *kebeles* in the Tigray region.³⁵² According to the Tigrayan authorities, 816 people died from hunger in the months

³⁴¹ FEWS NET, 03/2024, [url](#)

³⁴² UNHRC, 14/09/2023, p. 10, [url](#); Le Monde, 11/03/2024, [url](#)

³⁴³ UNHRC, 14/09/2023, p. 10, [url](#)

³⁴⁴ Tghat (Burbridge D.), 17/09/2023, [url](#)

³⁴⁵ The previous caseload of 5.2 million. Tghat (Burbridge D.), 30/01/2024, [url](#)

³⁴⁶ Tghat (Burbridge D.), 30/01/2024, [url](#); Refugees International (Miller S.), 03/2024, [url](#)

³⁴⁷ UNOCHA, 25/03/2024, [url](#)

³⁴⁸ Representative of an international organization B, telephone conversation, 25/04/2024,

³⁴⁹ The study is based on a household census conducted by health workers from 15 to 29 August 2023 in nine *woredas* of Tigray and 53 camps for internally displaced people. Tigray in total has 88 *woredas* and 643 displacement sites, so the number of hunger deaths across the region is most probably far higher. Addis Standard, 30/10/2023, [url](#); DW, 12/12/2023, [url](#)

³⁵⁰ BBC (Gebre G. & Juma M.), 18/08/2023, [url](#); UNHRC, 14/09/2023, p. 10, [url](#)

³⁵¹ Tigray Television (@Tigray_TV), 18/08/2023, [url](#)

³⁵² The Reporter Ethiopia, 22/10/2023, [url](#)

of November and December 2023.³⁵³ The Bureau of Social affairs of Irob reported 59 deaths due to starvation without stating a specific timeframe.³⁵⁴ According to the district administration of Atsbi, 111 people died from starvation between October – December 2023. In another nearby district called Abergele, local officials said 76 died in the same period.³⁵⁵ In December 2023, Gebrehiwot Gebregzabher revealed that within a one-month period, an estimated 400 individuals perished due to starvation, with the majority of these deaths occurring in four districts.³⁵⁶ By March 2024, Gebrehiwot Gebregzabher stated 2,694 deaths were linked to famine in Tigray, including 1,390 who died directly from starvation.³⁵⁷

Following the signing of the CoHA, significant improvement in overall security in areas under the control of the TIRA has contributed to improved humanitarian access.³⁵⁸ However, sources have noted that the scale-up of humanitarian assistance has been limited due to inadequate support from the federal government, the presence of non-ENDF and foreign forces, and the suspension of humanitarian aid by some international donors.³⁵⁹

There are three land corridors to Tigray. However, the Gondar-Shire and Kombolcha-Mekelle corridors continue to encounter unpredictable security risks and are only partially accessible, as shown in the National Access Map by UNOCHA below. In July 2023, humanitarian partners reported that the large majority of humanitarian cargo is channeled through Semera (98.1 %), while the Kombolcha corridor (1.6 %) and the Gondar corridor (0.3 %) were used only for a marginal part of aid transport.³⁶⁰



Map 9: Fragment from the UNOCHA Ethiopia National Access Map (as of 31 January 2024)³⁶¹

Large areas of the regions to the north, west and south of Tigray remain inaccessible for humanitarian partners.³⁶² Throughout 2023 and in 2024, humanitarian organizations continued to face challenges in accessing some *kebeles* in Irob, Zalemessa, Gulomekeda (Eastern Tigray zone),

³⁵³ Le Monde (Hochet-Bodin N.), 02/01/2024, [url](#)

³⁵⁴ Tigray Television (@Tigray_TV), 25/11/2023, [url](#)

³⁵⁵ DW, 12/12/2023, [url](#); Addis Standard, 29/11/2023, [url](#)

³⁵⁶ Addis Standard (Beyene M.), 19/12/2023, [url](#); XXX

³⁵⁷ Le Monde (Hochet-Bodin N.), 06/03/2024, [url](#)

³⁵⁸ EHRC, 02/2024, p. 12, [url](#)

³⁵⁹ EHRC, 02/2024, p. 11, [url](#); Refugees International (Miller S.), 03/2024, [url](#)

³⁶⁰ Logistics Cluster & WFP, 24/08/2023, [url](#)

³⁶¹ UNOCHA, 02/02/2024, [url](#)

³⁶² EHRC, 02/2024, p. 11, [url](#)

Egela (Central Tigray zone), Dima and Tahtay Adiyabo (North Western Tigray zone) due to the presence of armed actors in contested areas, as is also visible on the Access Map by UNOCHA (see Map 8).³⁶³

As of April 2024, there is no access for humanitarian organization to the area west of the Tekeze river (Western Tigray zone and parts of North Western Tigray zone occupied by Amhara forces) from Mekelle. A representative of an international organization explained that this region is labelled as “partially accessible” on the Access Map by UNOCHA (see Map 8) because there is some access from the neighboring Amhara region. The source added that humanitarian access is not only a security issue, but also an issue linked to (the lack of) public services and administration. “There are no clear counterparts in these areas for humanitarian organizations.”³⁶⁴

6.4. Freedom of movement

6.4.1. Mobility between Tigray and the rest of the country

Ethiopian Airlines resumed flights between Mekelle and Addis Abeba on 28 December 2022. However, the resumption was followed by reports that the airline was preventing Tigrayans aged 15 to 60 from buying tickets for flights from Mekelle to Addis Abeba. It was also rumoured that the company had increased ticket prices as a form of collective sanction.³⁶⁵ However, when Cedoca visited Mekelle in November 2023, none of these restrictions were in place.

In April 2023, public transportation connecting Tigray with the Ethiopian capital restarted, although only the 1083-kilometer route via the Afar region was open at the time. Public transport on the shorter route via the Amhara region, which had been closed off following rising tensions between the Amhara and Tigray regions before the start of the war in November 2020, had not resumed.³⁶⁶ The only available land road to Tigray, via the Afar region, is convenient for goods but long, hot and unsafe for public transportation, one source reported.³⁶⁷

After the first strategic review on the Implementation of the CoHA in March 2024, the TPLF underscored that the complete reopening of all roads and an effective cessation of the siege had not yet materialized.³⁶⁸

6.4.2. Mobility within the Tigray region

Multiple sources that Cedoca spoke to in November 2023 and April 2024 mentioned that there were no travel restrictions in the non-occupied areas of the region.³⁶⁹ However, security concerns limit the mobility of civilians throughout the region, particularly at night.³⁷⁰

³⁶³ UNOCHA, 02/02/2024, [url](#); Tghat, 06/08/2023, [url](#)

³⁶⁴ Representative of an international organization B, telephone conversation, 25/04/2024

³⁶⁵ The Guardian, 31/05/2023, [url](#)

³⁶⁶ Addis Standard, 24/04/2023, [url](#)

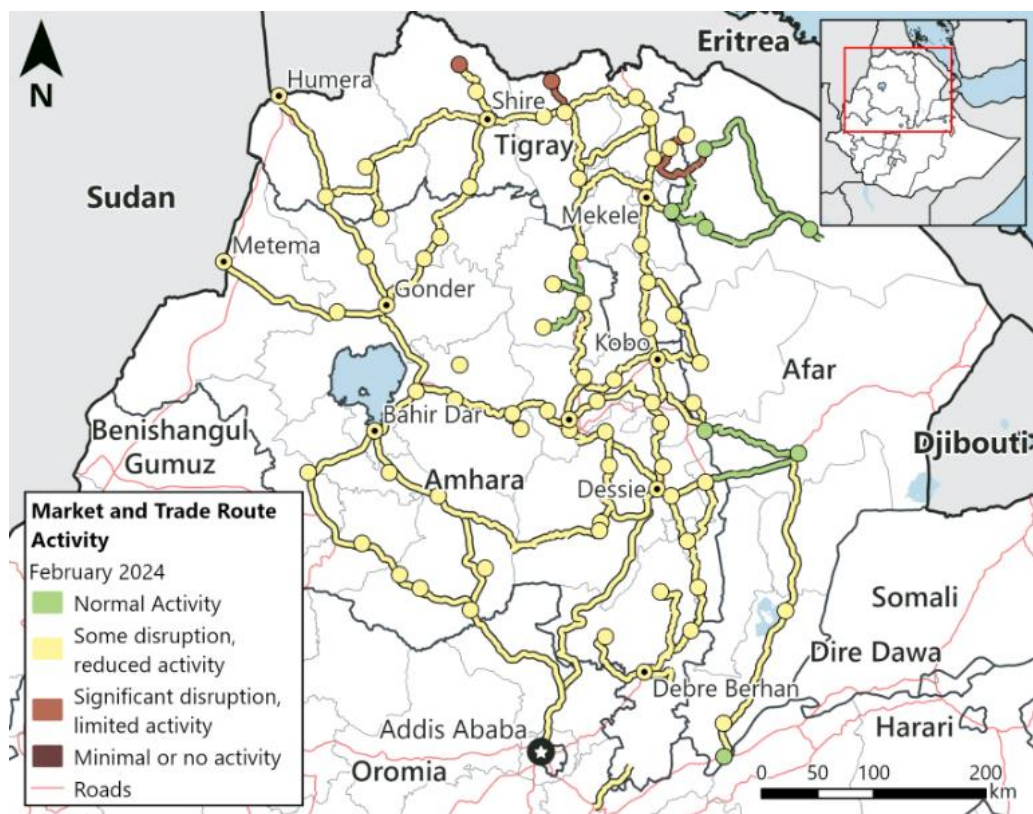
³⁶⁷ Tghat (Kahsay T.), 02/08/2023, [url](#)

³⁶⁸ Addis Standard, 14/03/2024, [url](#)

³⁶⁹ Ethiopian human rights organization, conversation, 15/11/2023; Representative of an international organization A, conversation, 20/11/2023, Mekelle; Journalist with Tigray TV, conversation, 22/11/2023, Mekelle; Representative of an international organization B, conversation, 22/11/2023, Mekelle and telephone conversation, 25/04/2024

³⁷⁰ Addis Standard (Gebrekristos M.), 31/10/2023, [url](#)

In the areas occupied by Amhara or Eritrean forces, residents face constraints when moving to other districts, including accessing markets.³⁷¹ Addis Standard reported in September 2023 that the main road connecting the Irob *woreda* to Adigrat was completely blocked by Eritrean forces. The lack of mobility and intimidation prevented the Irob people from receiving humanitarian and medical aid.³⁷² A representative of an international organization present in Tigray stated that Eritrean troops are manning check posts in the areas towards the border with Eritrea and people can be subject to abuses. The same source added that there is no public transport connecting Mekelle to places west of the Tekeze river.³⁷³ In May Tsberi (North Western Tigray zone), there is no public transport but passage may be possible via local informal transport with motorcycles.³⁷⁴ The EHRC found in July 2023 that 75 residents of Korem *woreda* (Southern Tigray zone) were reportedly arrested by authorities for travelling into TIRA-controlled Maichew town to procure fertilizers and seeds.³⁷⁵ At the time research for this report was concluded, the situation in the southern parts of Southern Tigray zone remained unclear.³⁷⁶



Map 10: Market and trade functioning map in northern Ethiopia for mid-February 2024³⁷⁷

³⁷¹ Addis Standard, 14/12/2023, [url](#)

³⁷² Addis Standard, 04/09/2023, [url](#)

³⁷³ Representative of an international organization B, telephone conversation, 25/04/2024

³⁷⁴ Representative of an international organization A, conversation, 20/11/2023, Mekelle

³⁷⁵ EHRC, 24/02/2024, pp. 24-25, [url](#)

³⁷⁶ Representative of an international organization B, telephone conversation, 25/04/2024

³⁷⁷ FEWS NET, 03/2024, [url](#)

Abandoned arms and ammunition and the presence of explosive remnants of war (ERW) and UXO are also hindering civilian mobility throughout the region.³⁷⁸ UXO contamination poses an immediate threat to the life and livelihoods of civilians. The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) has reported 1,187 casualties in Northern Ethiopia since the beginning of the conflict, of which 625 in Tigray, 300 in Afar and 262 in Amhara. UNMAS adds that many other accidents go unreported. Initial analysis shows that the majority of casualties are children (57 %).³⁷⁹ A Protection Monitoring and Solutions Report by UNHCR³⁸⁰ found more than 40 % of respondents were aware of incidents related to UXO in the period from February to April 2023. This was most prevalent in Adigrat (83 %), Zana (60 %), and Hawzen (56 %).³⁸¹ In June 2023, Addis Standard wrote that farmers in Kola Tembien (Central Tigray zone) were unable to farm because of landmines and explosives planted in the area during the war.³⁸² A UN organization with presence in the region mentioned the presence of UXO on the roads around Shire, Adi Daero, and Adi Hageray (all in North Western Tigray zone).³⁸³

³⁷⁸ ICRC, 05/10/2023, [url](#)

³⁷⁹ UNMAS, s.d., [url](#)

³⁸⁰ The report is based on a study encompassing 501 key informant interviews, 21 focus groups discussions, and direct observations in 13 *woredas* across the Northwestern, Southern, and Eastern zones. The report mentions in a footnote that the data was collected prior to the suspension of food assistance, thus reflecting conditions in Tigray from February through April, 2023.

³⁸¹ UNHCR, 20/10/2023, [url](#)

³⁸² Addis Standard, 27/06/2023, [url](#)

³⁸³ Representative of an international organization A, conversation, 20/11/2023, Mekelle

Summary

From November 2020 until November 2022, the Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) and its allies fought an armed conflict with the Tigray Defence Force (TDF) in northern Ethiopia. The conflict was characterized by widespread violations by all parties to the conflict. On 2 November 2022, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the federal government signed the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA). Neither the Eritrean troops nor the Amhara militias were part of the CoHA.

The CoHA significantly reduced hostilities in Tigray and restored federal authority, but it did not lead to an outright cessation of human rights violations and atrocity crimes by armed actors. Several areas in Tigray, notably in the region's western, north-western, north-eastern and southern areas, remain unstable or inaccessible. In this context it is possible that incidents go unreported. For the period from 1 November 2022 to 15 March 2023, ACLED coded 33 incidents in Tigray, with 33 civilian casualties. ACLED did not register any incidents in Western Tigray zone. Other sources have reported on arrests, intimidation and forced displacement in this zone.

Sexual violence has not ceased after the signing of the CoHA. Forced displacement of Tigrayan civilians from Western Tigray zone by Amhara forces has been reported, as well as instances of forced displacement from areas under the control of Eritrean forces. Sources mentioned abductions and looting by the Eritrean Defence Force (EDF) and, to a lesser extent, by Amhara forces. Finally, there have been reports of a number of extrajudicial killings by EDF and Amhara forces. Civilians are the primary target of these violent incidents, in particular civilians in occupied territories, minorities such as the Irob and the Kunama, and women, especially amongst the displaced.

The CoHA required full withdrawal of foreign and non-ENDF forces from the region, concurrently with the disarmament of Tigrayan forces. However, multiple sources reported the presence of Eritrean and Amhara forces in parts of Tigray. Until April 2024, Amhara forces were controlling the entire Western Tigray zone, nine *woredas* in North Western Tigray zone, as well as Raya, Korem, Alamata in the Southern Tigray zone. As of May 2024, Eritrean forces are present in a number of *woredas* in Northwestern, Central and Eastern Tigray zone.

Sources warn that the flawed implementation of the CoHA could lead to a resumption of conflict. In February and March 2024, Amhara and Tigray militias clashed in Southern Tigray zone. Armed clashes in April 2024 in Alamata Town, and Raya Alamata, Zata and Ofla *woredas* resulted in an undetermined number of casualties and the displacement of over 50,000 people.

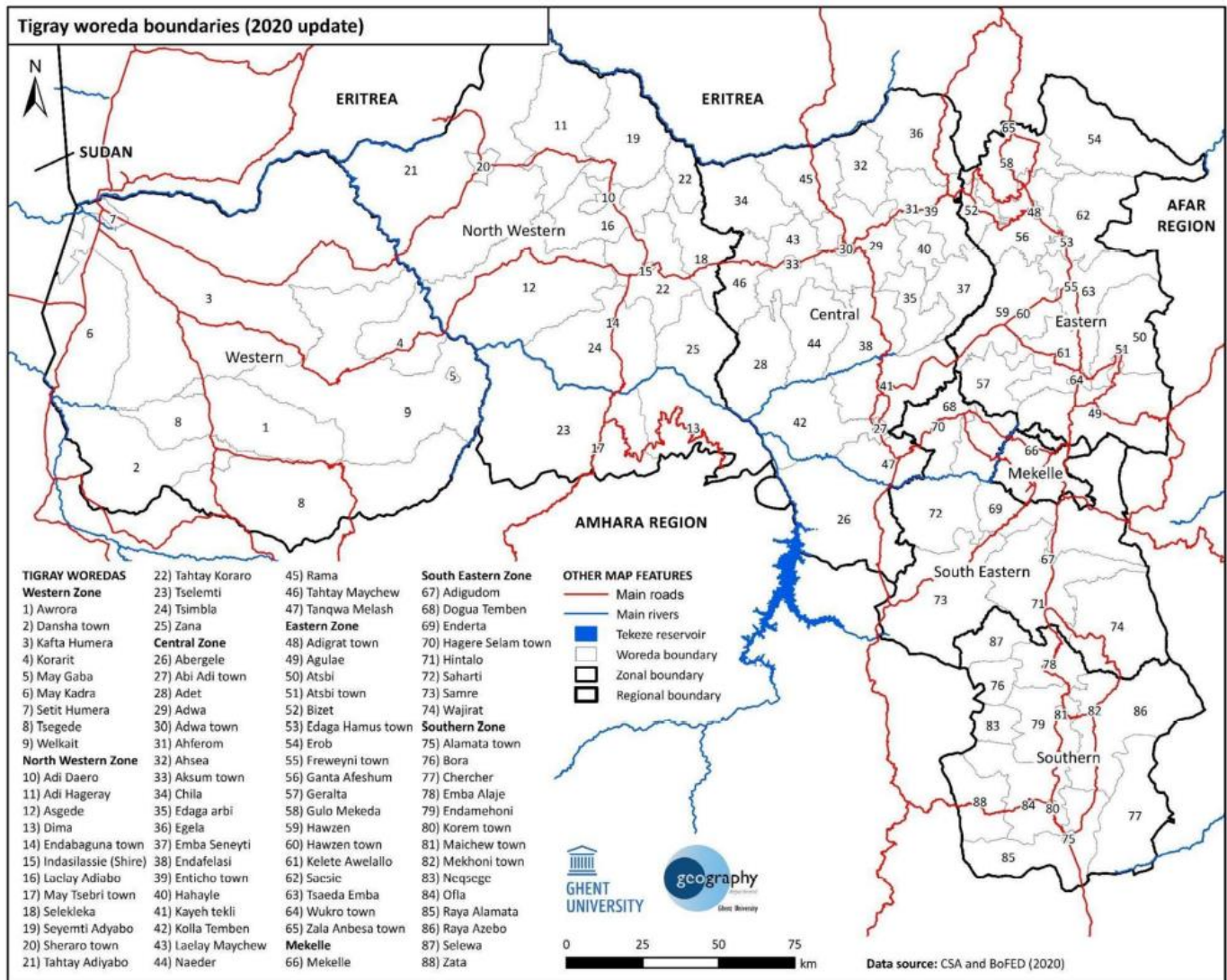
The Impact of the conflict on the daily life of civilians in the region is pervasive. Tigray hosts approximately one million IDPs. They continue to face challenges including hunger, lack of humanitarian aid, overcrowded and unsanitary shelter conditions, and lack of medical treatment. The occupation of parts of Tigray by armed militias hamper the return of IDPs to their homes.

Since the signing of the CoHA, public services including telecommunication, electricity and banking, have partially resumed. In November 2023, regional courts, justice bureaus, police and prison administrations were operational but faced multiple challenges. Vital events registration services have been reinstated, but no ID cards are being issued or renewed as of April 2024. The availability and access to medical care has dwindled. The war also had a devastating effect on education in the region. Widespread destructions, a one-and-a-half-year siege, a crippling drought and a nearly seven-month pause in food aid have resulted in widespread hunger. Despite improved humanitarian access since the CoHA, the scale of humanitarian aid has not met the needs, while large areas of the regions in the north, west and south of Tigray remain inaccessible for humanitarian partners.

It is possible to travel between the capital Addis Abeba and Tigray by plane and by public transport. There are no travel restrictions in the non-occupied territories of Tigray. However, freedom of movement is curtailed where Eritrean troops and Amhara militia are present. The presence of explosive remnants of war also hinders the mobility of civilians in the region.

Appendices

Appendix 1 : Map with administrative boundaries at *woreda* (district) level, as implemented in January 2020³⁸⁴



³⁸⁴ Annys S., VAnden Bempt T., Negash E., De Sloover L., Nyssen J., 12/2021, p. 17, [url](#)

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