



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
16 February 2022

English only

---

## Human Rights Council

Forty-ninth session

28 February–1 April 2022

Agenda item 2

**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner  
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the  
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

### **Written statement\* submitted by Elizka Relief Foundation, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[7 February 2022]

---

\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.



## **The Human Rights Situation in the Tigray Region**

Violations of basic human rights have recently increased in Ethiopia, particularly after the Ethiopian Federal Parliament approved the state of emergency proclamation on November 4, 2021, imposing, therefore, a range of restrictions on human rights. Under the emergency declaration, thousands of persons were arbitrarily detained on claimed terrorism-related charges. The declaration also allowed the Ethiopian government to suspend and revoke the licenses of NGOs and the media for their alleged links to terrorism, which prompted the Human Rights Council to hold an extraordinary session to discuss the grave human rights situation in Ethiopia on December 17, 2021. The session concluded with the establishment of an international expert committee to investigate alleged human rights violations in Ethiopia. The continuation of the war in Ethiopia leads the country, which is the second-largest African country in terms of population, to an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe, with about 5 million persons in Tigray, that is more than 80% of the region's population, in need of urgent humanitarian assistance, including 400,000 who are a step away from starvation, in light of Ethiopia's restriction of humanitarian aid to enter the region and in light of the challenges facing workers in humanitarian relief organizations, which were forced to suspend their work in January 2022.

### **Violation of the right to a safe life for civilians**

The Ethiopian federal government, led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, has continued their violent acts against civilians in the Tigray region. These practices includes extrajudicial killings in contravention of Ethiopia's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The National Defense Forces of Ethiopia, along with its allied Eritrean forces, killed more than 11,516 civilians in the Tigray region from November 2020 to October 2021<sup>1</sup>. As an example of the indiscriminate bombing crimes carried out by the Ethiopian army against civilians on December 17, 2021, the town of "Alamata" in the south of Tigray was subjected to an aerial bombardment on a popular market, which resulted in the killing of up to 27 civilians<sup>2</sup>. In a similar context, in December 2021, the regional forces of the Ethiopian government killed about 250 civilians in a mass massacre of in the Afar region<sup>3</sup>. None of those responsible for these crimes was held accountable, and the Ethiopian government did not open any investigations into the continuous bombing of civilians in Tigray, which reinforced these violations in light of complete impunity.

In a related context, and under the state of emergency declared by the Ethiopian Cabinet on November 2, 2021, thousands of civilians were arrested collectively in the day after the Ethiopian Parliament ratified the state of emergency on November 4, 2021, and Elizka has undertaken several reports confirming the continued detention of between 5 and 7 thousand simply for their sympathy with the Tigray Liberation Front on alleged terrorism charges and are still incommunicado in conditions amounting to enforced disappearance. The state of emergency has allowed law enforcement forces in Ethiopia to arrest anyone without an arrest warrant as long as they suspect they are belonging to a terrorist group, which is a loose concept variously interpreted and used by the Ethiopian government to prosecute the opposition of the Ethiopian Prime Minister<sup>4</sup>.

### **Devastating effects of war on children**

The civil war in Tigray had a severe impact on children, who, according to non-governmental statistics, constitute about 44% of the population of the region<sup>5</sup>.

Children were killed, separated from their families, and their schools were closed. Ensuring the rights of children is the responsibility of the Ethiopian government. Being party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and also being a party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, Ethiopia is obligated to take measures to prevent the recruitment of children, which the Ethiopian government has not prevented in practice. The Ethiopian National Defense Forces have violated the right of

children to life, and from November 4, 2021, until the end of December 2021, more than 300 children were killed in repeated and indiscriminate shelling of the Ethiopian forces, including 100 children who were killed in the bombing of a school and a health facility housing a number of displaced families in Afar region in August 2021, which contradicts the protection granted to children under international humanitarian law 6.

Also, because of the ruthless war, nearly 6,000 children in the region were separated from their parents, according to the United Nations Children's Fund 7. They lack the minimum standards of protection and are unable to obtain basic necessities of life such as food and clean water 8. Children are particularly vulnerable to sexual and physical abuse and neglect. In a related context, the ongoing conflict between the Ethiopian army and the Tigray People's Liberation Front forced more than 1.4 million children out of the educational process 9. and 1.9 million children in three regions, namely, Tigray, Afar, and Amhara, did not have access to education due to the current ongoing conflict. In the Amhara region, for example, about 4,107 schools, or 42% of the educational process, were shut down due to the damage caused to these facilities as a result of the continuous bombardment of the Ethiopian army 10.

### **Undermining the role of aid workers in Tigray**

Aid workers in Ethiopia were not spared from the abuses in the Tigray region. In November 2021, the Ethiopian federal government arrested 16 staff members of the United Nations agencies and aid workers in Ethiopia, all of whom hold Ethiopian citizenship 11.

Moreover, in September 2021, the Ethiopian government expelled seven senior United Nations staff members for allegedly interfering in the internal affairs of Ethiopia, including the head of the United Nations Children's Fund in Ethiopia, the Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and five staff members of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 12.

The serious violations committed by the Ethiopian federal government included the killing of 23 aid workers in violation of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, the rules of customary international humanitarian law, and the statute of the International Criminal Court, which defines deliberate attacks on this personnel as a war crime in international and non-international armed conflicts 13. As a result of these grave violations, relief organizations suspended their work in the northwestern region of the Tigray in January 2022 due to drone attacks that killed 56 civilians in the region.

In light of the above, Elizka recommends the following:

- The need for the Human Rights Council to urge all parties to the civil war in Ethiopia to cease all hostilities and enter into unconditional negotiations sponsored by the African Union to avoid further loss of life and stop shedding of blood;
- Ethiopia must cancel the state of emergency ratified by Parliament on November 4, 2021, and release all detainees held under this declaration;
- Ethiopia must ensure the full protection of aid workers, humanitarian organizations, and UN staff in Ethiopia so that they can carry out their relief missions to the fullest;
- Ethiopia must ensure the protection of children in particular in compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law standards.

---

1(<https://bit.ly/3r3I2PS>)

2(Ibid)

3(Ibid)

4(<https://bit.ly/3zLkOBZ>)

5(<https://bit.ly/3GiFBPA>)

6(<https://bit.ly/3nezYL1>)

7(<https://uni.cf/3FmEkGc>)

- 8(<https://bit.ly/3GfCh7S>)
- 9(<https://uni.cf/3fdC21q>)
- 10(<https://bit.ly/3zNYUhx>)
- 11(<https://bit.ly/3FfccVj>)
- 12(<https://bit.ly/3zIZaOC>)
- 13(<https://bit.ly/3Gg4AD7>)