

CALL IT A GENOCIDE

THE TIGRAY GENOCIDE

Today, in 2021, there is a full scale genocide happening in our global “backyard.” Hundreds of thousands have been killed, thousands have been raped, and millions are on the verge of dying due to a man-made famine. Yet, for 10 months, the international community has been unwilling to take measurable action to help end these crimes against humanity. Moreover, the United Nations and its member states have been hesitant to take the step of labelling these crimes what they are - *genocide*.

The people of Tigray, the northernmost region in the Ethiopian highlands, have been living in the midst of a genocide for over 300 days. On November 4, 2020, Ethiopia’s Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed Ali, masked the arrests and assassinations of opposition party leaders in Tigray as a “law and order operation”.. This “operation” quickly turned into a full blown genocide, with, as the UN referred to, the [“worst cascade of human rights setbacks in our lifetimes.”](#) Immediately after Ahmed's war proclamation, Tigrayans faced an onslaught of attacks from both the federal Ethiopian forces and the neighboring Eritrean forces. Their intent? To [wipe out Tigrayans for 100 years](#).

Rather than label these crimes a genocide, the international community has been relatively tepid about calling the atrocities in Tigray exactly what they are. Instead, it's been referred to as a: *conflict, civil war, crisis, insurgency*, etc. What is currently happening in Tigray is a campaign with the explicit intent to decimate an entire people based on their ethnicity. This report will provide evidence to make the case for calling what has been happening in Tigray by its name: genocide.

THE TRIPARTITE ALLIANCE

The current war on Tigray is the result of three years of meticulous planning by Abiy Ahmed Ali and his subordinates in the Amhara expansionist camp, in conjunction with the government of Eritrea headed by dictator-for-life Isaias Afewerki. This evil [tripartite](#) alliance organized a complete genocide against the people of Tigray under the guise of a ‘peace deal’ in 2018. It is now widely believed [Abiy Ahmed Ali](#) furiously petitioned to receive the nobel peace prize to ensure a cover for his planned attack on Tigray.

GENOCIDE: THE DEFINITION



The [UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide](#) defines genocide as “any of the following acts committed to destroy in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group”:

1. Killing members of the group;
2. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
3. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
4. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; or
5. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Neighboring Eritrean and Ethiopian Defense Forces have shown genocidal intent in the first four out of the five violations outlined in the U.N. Convention. What differentiates genocide from other crimes against humanity is the proof of intent. The intent in the Tigray Genocide is made clear when [Ethiopia Vowed to Wipe Out Tigrayan People 'for 100 Years.'](#) as told directly to the EU special envoy to Ethiopia, [Pekka Haavisto](#). This intent is also [clearly visible in the graffiti and writing](#) left behind throughout Tigray, in areas that were occupied as military housing by Ethiopian and Eritrean forces.

By labeling this genocide accordingly, the international community will be positioned to prevent further atrocities from happening, and hold perpetrators responsible for their crimes. Millions are currently at risk of dying from a man made famine in Tigray, thus the urgency regarding labeling the conflict a genocide is of extreme importance.

10 Stages of Genocide

Genocide Watch categorizes genocide in 10, often escalating, stages ranging from *Classification* to *Denial*. All 10 stages of genocide have occurred, and continue to occur, independently and simultaneously over the past 10 months of the Tigray Genocide. All of these atrocities were perpetrated against Tigrayans by ENDF (Ethiopia’s Federal Army), EDF (Eritrea’s Federal Army), Amhara *Fano* (vigilante youth group), and Amahra local militias on the orders and request of the Ethiopian federal government.

STAGE 1

CLASSIFICATION (TIGRIGNA SPEAKERS/"ትግርኛ ተናጋሪዎች")

In Rwanda, before their infamous genocide, a [report issued by the chief of staff of the Rwandan Armed Forces](#) defined the principal enemy as:

“the Tutsi inside or outside the country, extremist and nostalgic for power, who have NEVER recognized and will NEVER recognize the realities of the 1959 social revolution and who wish to reconquer power by all means necessary, including arms.”

The report continued:

“Tutsi was used as an equivalent to “enemy” and it said that Tutsi were unified behind a single ideology: Tutsi hegemony.”



This line of reasoning is what Abiy Ahmed and accomplices have used since 2018 when referring to Tigrayans. If one were to replace 1959 with 2018, and “Tutsi” with “Tigrinya speakers”, “Woyane” or “Junta”, it becomes very easy to see the stark parallels between the Rwanda and Tigray Genocides. The following is only a brief series of events that are incontrovertible markers for this first stage of a genocide.

- The Ethiopian government [produced and issued](#) a series of [documentaries](#) with the aim to target and solely blame one ethnic group, Tigrayans, for all the ills that occurred over roughly the last three decades. In these documentaries all Tigrayans who were referred to as “Tigrinya speakers”¹ were highlighted as the perpetrators of [manufactured human rights violations](#) and inhumane treatment.
- It was evident that the term “Tigrinya speakers” was coined to deliberately alienate Tigrayans. This classification was repeatedly used by official [press releases from the Ethiopian National Defense Forces](#) (ENDF).
- Abiy Ahmed, in his parliamentary speech of November 30, [የካቲት 16 ቀን 2013... - FDRE Defense Force - የኢ.ፌ.ዴ.ሪ መከላከያ ሠራዊት](#) 2020, falsely reported that [80% of the ENDF headquarters](#) staff and 100% of commanders and their deputies at all the command posts in Ethiopia were Tigrayans. He also claimed that all the mechanized divisions were 100% led by Tigrayans and that 80% of division leaders in the infantry were also Tigrayans. The government pushed a dangerous narrative that a mere 5% of the Ethiopian population was controlling 95% of Ethiopia with the intent to further isolate Tigrayans from other Ethiopians and Ethiopia as a whole.
- Additionally, Tigrayans were also depicted as corrupt and untrustworthy leeches that [suck Ethiopia dry](#) in the name of industry.
- Daniel Kibret one of p.m. Abiy Ahmed Ali’s closest advisors gave a speech, [in which he said of Tigrayans](#) *“They should be erased and disappeared from historical records. A person who wants to study them should find nothing about them. Maybe he can find out about them by digging in the ground,”*

STAGE 2

SYMBOLIZATION

- Since his ascension to power, Abiy Ahmed has made numerous public statements demonizing the people of Tigray and their legally elected officials, political party, and regional government, which amounts to hate speech.
- Abiy Ahmed and his supporters continually refer to Tigrayans as the “[outsiders/ tseguere lewitt](#)”; this othering is continuously used by [officials](#), media personalities, and echoed by the general public.
- There has been, and continues to be, an ongoing concerted media campaign [alienating and blaming the Tigray People’s Liberation Front](#) (TPLF) as the solitary source of all social and political problems in the “[27 years of darkness](#),” as was [described](#) by Abiy Ahmed to his supporters in the [diaspora](#). The truth of the matter is that the TPLF was

¹ Tigrigna speakers are called ትግርኛ ተናጋሪዎች, pronounced *Tigrigna tenagariwoch*.



only one of the four parties that comprised the EPRDF party that ruled Ethiopia for 27 years since 1991.

- Abiy also tried to [discredit](#) the renowned and widely respected ex general Hayelom Araya (who is Tigrayan), by mocking his assassination.

STAGE 3

DISCRIMINATION

- [Ethnic profiling](#) of Tigrayans began shortly after Abiy came to power and [further intensified at the start](#) of the genocidal campaign in Tigray. It had escalated to such a degree that Tigrayans living throughout Ethiopia were targeted, harassed and arrested for speaking their language — Tigrinya.
- The ethnic profiling, purging, [discrimination, and abuse of Tigrayans](#) was widely reported from the onset of the war in November. This seemingly state-sponsored campaign was executed in all governmental organizations such as Ethio Telecom, [Ethiopian Airlines](#), even going so far as [the military and the police](#).
- This ethnic profiling also continued in Ethiopian missions and embassies where exclusively [ethnic Tigrayans were recalled to Addis](#) and some were imprisoned upon their return.
- Ethiopia has disarmed, jailed, tortured, and in some cases executed [African Union Peacekeeping forces](#) of Tigrayan origin. An internal United Nations document shows concern that [Tigrayan troops are facing torture and execution](#).
- Ethiopia also used its influence to summarily dismiss Tigrayans hired by the [African Union head office](#); the African Union has been complacent in this genocide, even going as far as firing Tigrayan employees based on their ethnicity as demanded by Ethiopia.
- Ethiopia has also used [ethnic profiling to target Tigrayans in airports by banning them from outgoing flights and harassing them on their incoming flights](#).
- Tigrayan owned businesses outside of Tigray have been [closed en masse](#).
- Tigrayans have been kicked out of their homes and [“forcibly disappeared”](#).
- Ethiopia has gone as far as [arresting children younger than 3 years old](#) for being Tigrayan.

STAGE 4

DEHUMANIZATION

- Since Abiy Ahmed came to power, the terminology used to refer to Tigrayans and their legally elected party members include the ubiquitous [“daylight hyena/ye’qen jib”](#), [termites](#) (according to Abiy’s devout followers), and [“weeds” that need to be crushed](#). The ENDF has gone so far as depicting TPLF as the [devil’s reincarnation](#) on its official pages.
- These dehumanizing terms are not just limited to government officials; they are also used publicly by [influential individuals, media personalities, and activists](#).
- In trying to mobilize the Ethiopian people to wage war on Tigray, General Bacha Debele of the ENDF depicted the people of Tigray [as inhuman savages and animals](#) in a live interview that was simulcast on all TV channels in Ethiopia.



- State-sanctioned propaganda “documentaries” repeatedly portrayed TPLF as a barbaric and bloodthirsty entity with titles such as [“The Junta’s blood-soaked hands “የጁንታው የደም እጅቶ”](#) which was, again, simulcast on all national television channels.
- This dehumanization also has a striking similarity to the 1994 Rwandan Genocide; so much so that the long time Horn of Africa observer Rene Lefort noted [“Only one very slight difference: these ‘termites’ were called ‘cockroaches’ in Rwanda.”](#) The tragic irony is that the UN, EU, US, and the international community at large were commemorating *Kwibuka 27*, the anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide, while either turning a blind eye to or only paying lip service to the ongoing genocide in neighboring Tigray.

STAGE 5

ORGANIZATION

- Borders between Ethiopia and Eritrea were opened briefly in 2018, and were [closed soon after](#) because they proved too popular. The Eritrean government, it seemed, was displeased that Tigrayans and Eritreans were both elated by the opportunity to reconnect, and too many Eritreans used this opportunity to flee their government’s tyrannical rule.
- Federal roads and thoroughfares to Tigray through the Amhara Regional State were [closed three years](#) ago by local youth and militia forces, with the tacit support of both the Federal and Amhara Regional State governments.
- Telecommunication was [immediately shut down, including internet, phone service and banking](#). Thus allowing Ethiopia’s genocidal intent to take place in the dark.

STAGE 6

POLARIZATION

- State-owned media such as Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation, Ethiopian Press Agency, and the governing Prosperity Party affiliated outlets like Fana and Walta have repeatedly produced and broadcasted polarizing content in the form of news, documentaries, and misinformation.
- The most prominent from these polarizing media is the notorious US-EU-based ESAT TV that is known to have rallied for a genocidal campaign against the people of Tigray by calling on the [“95% \[Ethiopians\] to rise up and eliminate the 5% \[Tigrayans\].”](#) The prime minister did not shy away from [praising ESAT TV in the national parliament for its news coverage and analyses](#).
- This call to exterminate the 5% is also a [recurring call among Amhara militants](#). Media outlets have further broadcast and amplified this message in large government sponsored gatherings such as [this one in Gonder](#).
- ESAT TV, the primary media outlet for the Amhara expansionist and “unitarists” camp in the diaspora [also explicitly called for ‘drying the sea \[the Tigray people\] in order to catch the fish \[the TPLF\]](#).



- International media further aided the narrative by adding ‘*Ethiopia is governed by a minority group that composes just 5-7% of the population.*’ On its own, this is an innocuous enough statement, but as the final fact of any news article without providing any nuance or context, it frames millions of Tigrayan lives as irrelevant or disposable.
- This dangerous narrative was also pushed by [western pseudo-analysts such as Bronwyn Burton](#), who affirm that the west should not worry about Tigray, because they are a minority.

STAGE 7

PREPARATION

- Abiy’s preparation for total war was accented by dismantling the EPRDF coalition AND restructuring the country’s politics. Six months before what would end up looking like a scorched earth campaign on Tigray, Abiy Ahmed made his threats very clear if Tigray defied the indefinite postponement and proceeded with its constitutional regional elections as scheduled: “[Young people need not die, mothers need not cry or homes need not be destroyed or people displaced.](#)”
- Additionally, [Abiy purged his military’s top brass of all Tigrayans in order to prepare for his war against Tigray.](#) He further [reconfigured the national army by pulling resources away from the Northern Command](#), which was based in Tigray.
- General Se’are Mekonnen, Chief of Staff of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF), who was an ethnic Tigrayan and the former head of the Northern Command was [assassinated](#) one year before the start of the war on Tigray.
- Eritrea’s Isayas Afeworki made multiple official trips to Ethiopia to conspire with Abiy Ahmed and plan their assault on Tigray. His visits included very public and disconcerting tours of several military and security installments.
- The [air force was prepared](#) to wage total war on Tigray and a visit arranged to “deceive the enemy” as the Prime Minister would admit later in his parliamentary speech.
- In October 2020, Isaias Afeworki and his mentee, Abiy Ahmed, moved their respective armies to the borders of Tigray from all directions.
- On November 2, 2020 dictator Isayas Afeworki’s government issued a provocative “[Game Over](#)” message through a press release issued on shabebiat.com. This statement [prompted the EU](#) to issue a statement calling for Ethiopia’s neighbors to reduce tension, eliminate inflammatory language and abstain from provocative military deployments.
- Abere Ademu, Chief Commissioner of the Amhara Regional State Police Commission, testified on television that [Amhara forces](#) retrieved members of ENDF’s steel-clad mechanized forces stationed near Humera and commanded them to return back “to face the enemy,” referring to the Tigray Defense Forces.
- An ENDF military general [corroborates the statement](#) issued by the Amhara Regional State Police Commissioner, in a subsequent interview.
- A large number of Ethiopian elite units had slowly [trickled into Eritrea as part of a security pact between Abiy Ahmed and Eritrean dictator Isaias Afwerki](#), hidden from public view at an ad hoc base in Gherghera, on the outskirts of Asmara.



- On November 3, 2020, Eritrean troops [crossed over Tigray Regional State borders](#).

STAGE 8

PERSECUTION

- Throughout 2020, as a build up to the [total genocidal war](#) on Tigray, the Federal Government suspended the fiscal budget to the Tigray Regional State Government.
- The Ministry of Agriculture, on orders from the Ethiopian federal government, denied Tigray support for the emergency response to desert locust infestations that had blanketed many countries in the Horn of Africa.
- The federal Ministry of Health denied the issuance of COVID-19 masks to elementary and high school aged students in Tigray.
- Tigray was, in addition, excluded from all federal government related communiques and circulations.

STAGE 9

EXTERMINATION

Together with the Amhara Regional State special forces and militia, the Amhara Fano (vigilante youth group), ENDF (Ethiopia's federal army) EDF (Eritrea's Federal army) have executed their mission to:

- [Kill Tigrayan youth](#) and [children](#) above [the age of 4](#), to prevent them from fighting back and also because they believe they are "poisoned by 'woyane thinking'" as can be verified by many Tigrayan witnesses all over Tigray. The level of hate preached by organized government media dehumanization campaigns also led to [killings for pleasure](#) by [ENDF soldiers](#), including more than [150,000 civilians estimated killed](#) as of April. There are more than [256 recorded massacres](#) as of August, 2021 with 3074 well-documented deaths that indicate 92% of the dead are men, which is in line with an oft-stated intention to "eradicate Tigray fighters, as well as the future generation of fighters". Given the complete media and communications blackout, the number of massacres likely far outweigh what has been recorded thus far.
- [Systematically cleanse the bloodline](#) and humiliate/disempower the Tigrayan community through weaponized rape of [tens of thousands of women](#) and [sexual slavery](#)
- Commit "[Cultural Genocide](#)" by looting and destroying Tigray's historical, cultural and religious assets, artifacts and places of worship to deprive Tigrayans of their heritage and cultural pride
- Force all educated Tigrayans "[to flee](#)" or "[be squashed](#)" [mercilessly](#), immediately causing brain drain.
- [Destroy](#) the economic viability of Tigray by [obliterating](#) all of its factories and universities.
- [Systematically destroy](#) all the [health facilities in Tigray](#).
- Commit [weaponize starvation](#) leading to a man-made famine that is already [killing Tigrayans](#) in droves and [killing up to one person per minute due to starvation](#).
- Put the entire region of [Tigray under siege](#), effectively holding Tigray's residents hostage, including [blocking aid](#) and cutting off communication.



- [Kill humanitarian aid workers.](#)
- Forcibly redraw the border Tigray stripping more than one third of its territory to [Amhara in the West and South](#), and to [Eritrea in the North](#), and render it incapacitated.
- [Ethnically cleanse](#) Tigrayans in the [occupied Western](#), Southern, and Northern regions of Tigray.

STAGE 10

DENIAL

- The Ethiopian Government repeatedly denied the involvement of Eritrean forces in the war on Tigray for five months though there was overwhelming evidence, including statements confirming their presence issued by the US Government².
- In spite of Abiy Ahmed indicating that Eritrea will withdraw its troops from Tigray on March 26, 2021, there has been increased movement of Eritreans soldiers across the border and into Tigrayan towns such as Adigrat and Adwa.
- The [Eritrean Government, which had initially remained silent on their withdrawal of their soldiers](#) until April 16, 2021, when the Eritrean Ambassador to the UN [finally issued a statement indicating that they will in fact withdraw their troops.](#)
- After effectively putting the entire region of Tigray and its 7.5+ million residents under a siege, with no access to food or humanitarian aid, Abiy Ahmed Ali declared that [there was no hunger in Tigray.](#)
- Reports that [hundreds of Tigrayans are dying](#) of starvation daily, with an expected one million on the [brink of death by starvation](#), have been released and yet [Abiy Ahmed's government continues to deny](#) the [urgency](#) and downplay its involvement in orchestrating the man-made famine.

The last denial stage of Tigray Genocide was also well noted by the EU special envoy and foreign minister of Finland Pekka Haavisto who rightfully stated that “[Ethiopia is in denial over Tigray](#)”.

IN CONCLUSION

The aforementioned examples provide evidence of genocide occurring in the Tigray region of Ethiopia as committed by the Ethiopian, Amhara and Eritrean forces. This conflict must be labelled a genocide as it [meets](#) both “the specific intent to destroy” the Tigrayan ethnicity, as well as the repeated examples of the 10 stages of genocide that have occurred both independently and simultaneously. Professor Kjetil Trenvoll, Horn of Africa Researcher and Foreign Policy contributor, calls the situation in Tigray a “[Genocidal campaign](#)”, emphasizing, “As a professor of Human Rights, one should be very careful to use the term genocide, the most serious international crime existing. I have never ever before entertained such a classification in

² Abiy Ahmed, on March 24, 2021 finally admitted to Eritrean presence and engagement in the war on Tigray after continued pressure from the [US](#) Government and the [EU](#), and Senator Chris Coons’ strong message [during his visit](#) to Addis Ababa.



my 30 years of research in Ethiopia on conflicts and wars." Dr Mukesh Kapila, the former top UN official who raised the alarm about the ongoing genocide in Darfur in 2003 writes there are acts of genocides as per definitions in the Genocide Convention and the Statute of the International Criminal Court and says the situation is clear, "The fact that these genocidal acts are taking place in repeated places – points towards an organization, it points towards a strategy. That is why I think of what is going on in Tigray as a set of genocidal acts, which taken together point towards an overall genocide,"

Congressman Michael McCaul of Texas also called for labeling the weaponized mass starvation, weaponized rape, and atrocities in Tigray as a genocide during a [House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing](#). Similarly, the House Committee on Foreign Affairs also posited "[destroying the reproductive health of Tigrayans](#)" [calls into question whether conditions amount to a genocide under the 1948 Genocide Convention](#). CNN's investigations indicate that the ethnic profiling, detention and killing of Tigrayans bears the hallmarks of genocide as defined by international law.

While the UN, EU, US and many others took part in the commemoration, they were also actively breaking their promise of "Never Again" by choosing not to act in stopping the ongoing genocide in Tigray.

In the words of an unnamed [Catholic nun](#) helping the victims of Tigray genocide: "One day I fear an ashamed world will apologize to the people of Tigray for not doing more. The communication blackout in the region and the distraction of a global pandemic will not stand up as adequate excuses. We know too much already."

It is imperative the international community officially label the atrocities in Tigray a genocide. By designating this conflict a genocide, the international community has the ability to save millions of Tigrayans at risk of death. We must act now before it's too late.

(By [Tigray Action Committee](#), in partnership with Leake Zegeye of CommX Media)

