

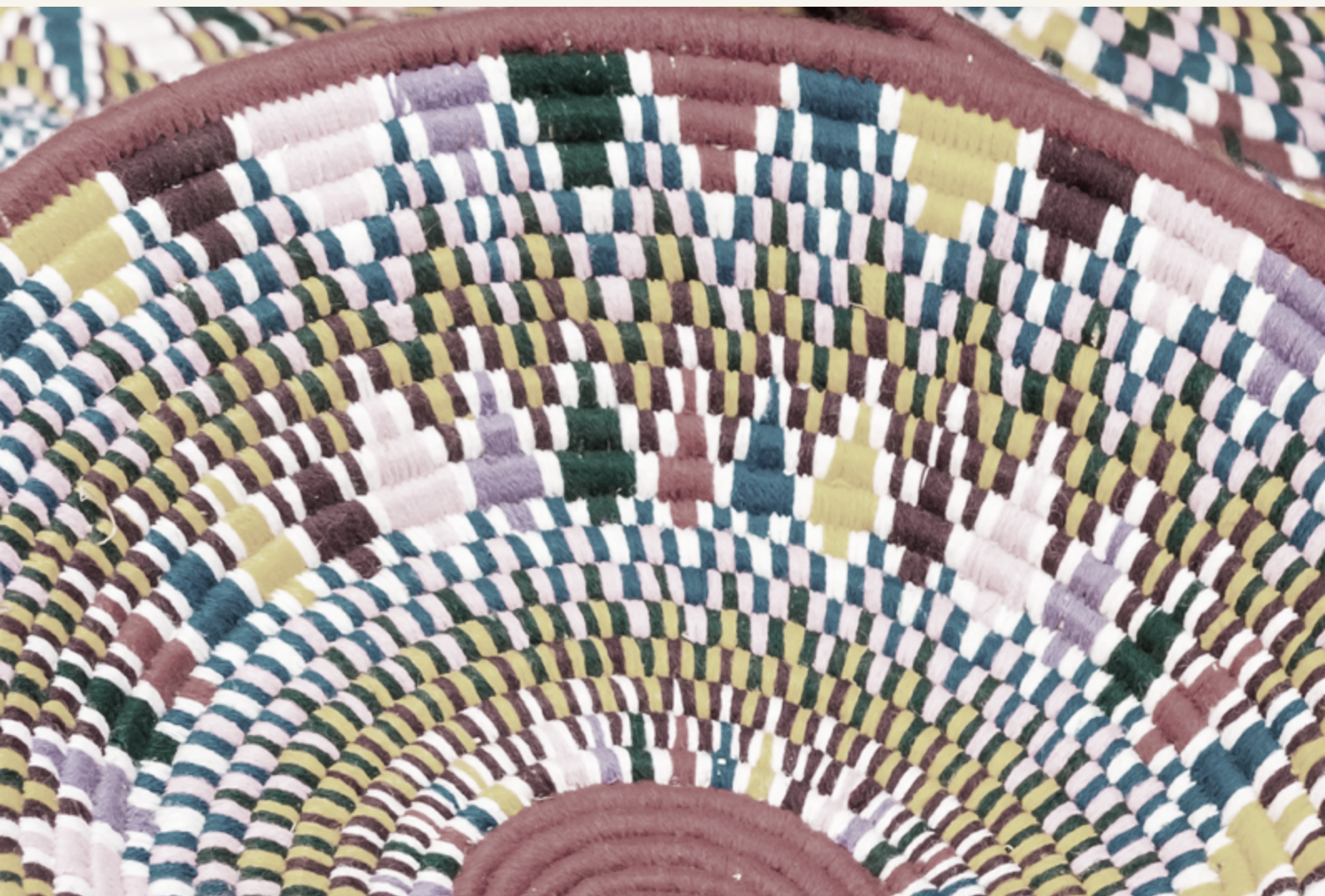


ETHIOPIA WATCH

Civil Society Monitor of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement

JULY 2023

~~ATROCITIES~~ WATCH AFRICA



Contents

Introduction	4
Executive Summary	5
Monitoring of Six Commitments Under the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement ...	6
Humanitarian Access and Aid Provision	6
Quantity and quality of reach (reports of aid received)	6
Constraints (physical, bureaucratic and misappropriation of aid)	7
Protection of Civilians	8
Instances of violence, killing and maiming	8
Crimes against civilians by Eritrean forces in Ethiopia	8
Forced disappearances	9
Child recruitment and use	9
Sexual and gender-based violence and condemnation by the parties	9
Internally Displaced Persons	10
Ongoing displacement	10
Number of IDPs returning	10
Durable solutions; dignified, informed, safe, & voluntary return	10
Addressing safety concerns; UXOs and mines	11
Evidence of forced return	11
Presence of Militaries	12
Review of the DDR processes implemented	12
Eritrean forces present in Tigray	12
Armed conflicts and political hostilities	14
Resumption of Services	15
Reconstruction and reinstatement of infrastructure	15
Payment of public servants' salaries	16
Access to healthcare and essential medicines	16
Education	16
AU Monitoring, Verification and Compliance	18
Impacts of the CoHA on Regional Dynamics in Amhara and Afar, and Beyond	19
Violence in Amhara and Afar	19
Humanitarian assessment of Afar and Amhara	19
Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR)	20
Implications for the rest of Ethiopia	21
Conclusion and Recommendations	22

Acronyms & Definitions

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project	IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
AP	Agence Presse	IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
AU	African Union	IHL	International Humanitarian Law
AU-MVCM	African Union Monitoring, Verification, and Compliance Mission	MIRA	Multi Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment
CoHA	Cessation of Hostilities Agreement	OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
CPJ	Committee to Protect Journalists	OLA	Oromo Liberation Army
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations	THMAU	Tigray Humanitarian Mine Action Unit
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration	TIA	Tigray Interim Administration
EDF	Eritrean Defence Force	TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Front
ENDF	Ethiopian National Defence Force	UNHAS	United Nations Humanitarian Air Service
ERW	Explosive Remnants of War	UNHCR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees
EU	European Union	UXOs	Unexploded Explosive Ordnances
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia	WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
HRW	Human Rights Watch	WFP	World Food Program
ICHREE	International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia		

DISCLAIMER The factual information included in the following report is based on publicly available information determined to be an accurate representation of the situation in Ethiopia. Seeking to compile a balanced view, the report has additionally drawn on a range of local, national and international sources who shared their insights on the condition of anonymity. The report reveals profound gaps in public knowledge of the implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA). Such gaps point to the necessity of enhancing and improving the monitoring of the agreement, which is a key aim in producing this report.

For the purposes of this research, Tigray is defined by its 2020 pre-conflict borders. The report refers accordingly to Western Tigray and Southern Tigray, whilst noting that these are contested territories claimed by both Amhara and Tigray regions. At the time of writing Western Tigray and parts of Southern Tigray* are under Amhara control.

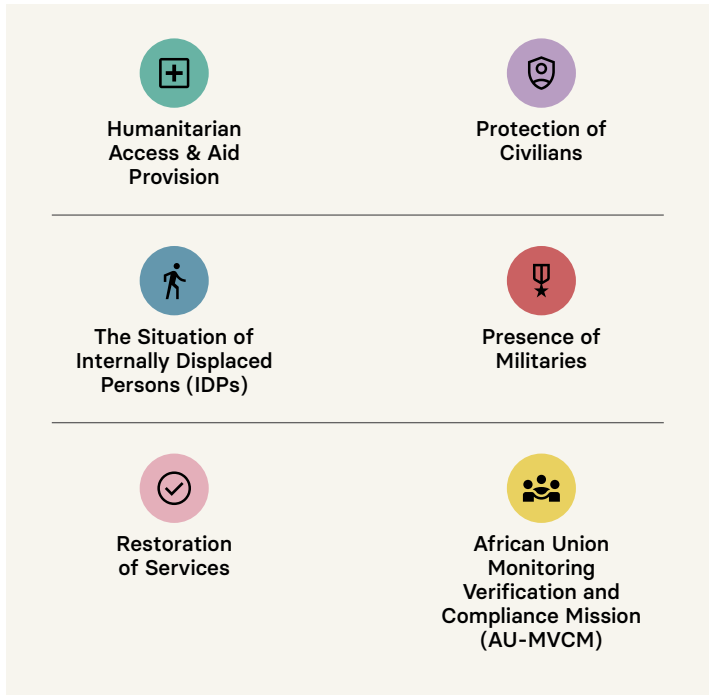
**Northern Ethiopia is defined as Tigray, Amhara, and Afar, as the latter two regions have also been impacted by this conflict.

Introduction

The signing of a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) between the Federal Government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in Pretoria on 2 November 2022 marked a turning point in a bloody two-year civil war which has cost hundreds of thousands of civilian lives and led to widespread violations, including rape and denial of humanitarian aid.

This report aims to provide a monitoring overview of the implementation of the 'Agreement for the Lasting Peace and Permanent Cessation of Hostilities' from the perspective of the protection of civilians [[see for reference: CoHA](#)].

It monitors six elements of the agreement:



In order to capture the trends and evolution, the report contains a baseline scenario for pre-November 2022.

Given the impediments to accessing Tigray for monitoring, including ongoing restrictions for journalists and investigators, the report's findings are drawn from a review of official and publicly available sources, as well as from key informant interviews. A number of civil society organisations have contributed to this report, making it one of the few, if not the only, independent monitoring exercises relating to the CoHA to-date.

Whilst the data-set presented in this report largely focuses on the situation in the region subject to the CoHA, Tigray, which saw intensive and brutal conflict from November 2020, the analysis also reflects on the perilous situation of civilians in other neighbouring regions currently enduring active conflict.

The recommendations aim to situate the conflict in Tigray in the wider Ethiopian context, keeping sight of the bigger picture of what is needed to protect all citizens of Africa's second most populous country wherever they are from or whichever region they live in.

Noting the absence of women in the official delegations of the parties to the peace talks, despite the immense suffering of women and young people in this war, it is hoped that the CoHA and future peace agreements in Ethiopia will be opened up to monitoring by civil society and more inclusive of a wider set of actors in both their development and implementation. •

Executive Summary


The near-unanimous view of interviewees, as well as the data derived from public sources, is that **the situation of security, humanitarian access and protection of civilians has vastly improved since the signing of the agreement on 2 November 2022, however many gaps threaten a fragile peace.**


The overall improved situation is marred by a number of significant gaps impacting the protection of civilians, some of which derive from the limited scope of the agreement itself, others from failures in its implementation. In Tigray, active conflict involving the killing and maiming of civilians has largely ceased, though insecurity remains in areas occupied by “outside forces” (notably in regions bordering Eritrea, where Eritrean forces are present, and in Amhara controlled Western Tigray*). Hundreds of thousands of IDPs who have little prospect of returning to their homes are in urgent need of greater support and security, including the provision of legal status. Basic services, notably for health and education, are still barely functioning and require investment. Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR) processes – despite success in turning over weaponry – are limited in scope and are not adequately linked to the mental health and psychosocial services required for rehabilitation, so that the population can begin to recover. And crucially, communities disproportionately affected by the war – including women and young people – stand to be further disenfranchised because they are cut off from the peace process.


Large areas of Tigray (defined in this monitoring by its pre-war boundaries) remain off limits to independent Civil Society Organizations’ (CSO) monitors and journalists, which means that the protection concerns and fate of civilians in those regions cannot be fully assessed. Some geographical zones are particularly difficult to gather data on in real time, including the contested region of Western Tigray*, as well as southern areas bordering Amhara, and northern regions bordering Eritrea. Even the AU monitoring team has been prevented from accessing certain areas.


The fact that parties to the conflict in Northern Ethiopia are not signatories to the agreement, notably Amhara and Afar regional forces previously allied to the Federal Government, as well as Eritrean forces, is another limitation of the agreement and a threat to lasting peace. This limitation of the CoHA is indicated by ongoing hostilities and atrocities affecting civilians in neighbouring regions of Amhara and Afar since the signing of the CoHA.


KEY GAPS


 Western Tigray* and southern areas of Tigray remain off-limits to independent monitors. Reports of abuse against civilians continues since the CoHA.

 IDPs lack durable solutions and there is a lack of understanding of pressures upon them, including the fact they do not have legal status.

 Eritrean troops remain present in parts of Tigray, negatively impacting the protection of civilians.

 The AU-MVCM has not been mandated or empowered to report publicly on violations of the CoHA and does not have adequate staffing or resources.

 Politically contested lands (Western* and Southern Tigray*) remain outside the scope of the agreement yet are key to lasting peace.

 Conflicts in neighbouring regions of Amhara and Afar demonstrate that there is a need to include more conflict parties in peace agreements.

As a result, the peace guaranteed by the CoHA is fragile, and will likely remain so, until a more inclusive peace process is advanced. Other conflict parties must be brought in and held to commitments, including but not limited to Amhara, Afar and the Eritrean government and forces. It should also include authorities from other Ethiopian regions currently witnessing armed conflict, inter alia, the Oromo authorities and Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and also authorities from the Benishangul-Gumuz and Somali regions. The commitment of a wider range of parties is essential to achieving a long-lasting peaceful settlement across the country and an end to patterns of abuses against civilians in numerous regions being carried out with seeming impunity. For real stability, wider Ethiopian society and civil society, including women and youth, must also play a role and have a stake in its success.

Greater resourcing of AU efforts is vital. Securing the success of the agreement will require ongoing monitoring of the CoHA by the AU, as well as the Guarantors (UN, US and IGAD) and the wider international community. They must call for unfettered access for civil society monitors to all parts of Tigray to play a constructive role in supporting the signatories to the CoHA to fulfil their commitments.

As a single agreement, the CoHA is a positive start for peace and reconciliation in Ethiopia. Despite its successes in silencing the guns, the CoHA represents the floor, rather than the ceiling of what can be achieved for Ethiopians. The bar must be set much higher, and the scope of future agreements enlarged, if lasting peace is to be achieved. •

Section 1: Monitoring of Six Commitments Under The Cessation of Hostilities Agreement

Humanitarian Access and Aid Provision

Article 5 – Humanitarian Access

- 1) The Government of FDRE shall expediate the provision of humanitarian aid in collaboration with humanitarian agencies taking into account the specific needs of vulnerable groups including women, children and the elderly; The parties shall cooperate to this effect;
- 4) The parties shall ensure that humanitarian aid is used only for humanitarian purposes.

According to the Protection Cluster, access to Hitsats Camp was granted as of 28 December and partners conducted their first visits on 29 December. The situation was reported to be dire due to a critical shortage of food, health services and non-food items [[Protection Cluster – 30 Dec. 2022](#)]. Subsequent reports show that greater access was possible over the months following the agreement, especially after the withdrawal of Eritrean forces from a large number of the cities they occupied in North-Western Tigray [[Protection Cluster – 21 to 31 Jan. 2023](#)]. That there is better access on the ground for humanitarian assistance in terms of trucking and logistics was confirmed by a range of sources in May 2023. It was flagged that UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) flights are often carrying mainly larger amounts of cash, and that other supplies and bulk was being transported by land routes.

Nevertheless, the continued presence of Eritrean troops in some areas in Northern Tigray since the signing of the CoHA has hindered humanitarian access [[OCHA – 29 May 2023](#)]. ▶



Source: BBC, January 2023

BASELINE

5.4m

Tigrayans (89% of population) in need of food assistance by October 2022 [[OCHA](#)].

400,000

Tigrayans in 'famine-like' conditions [[UN Secretary-General June 2021](#)].

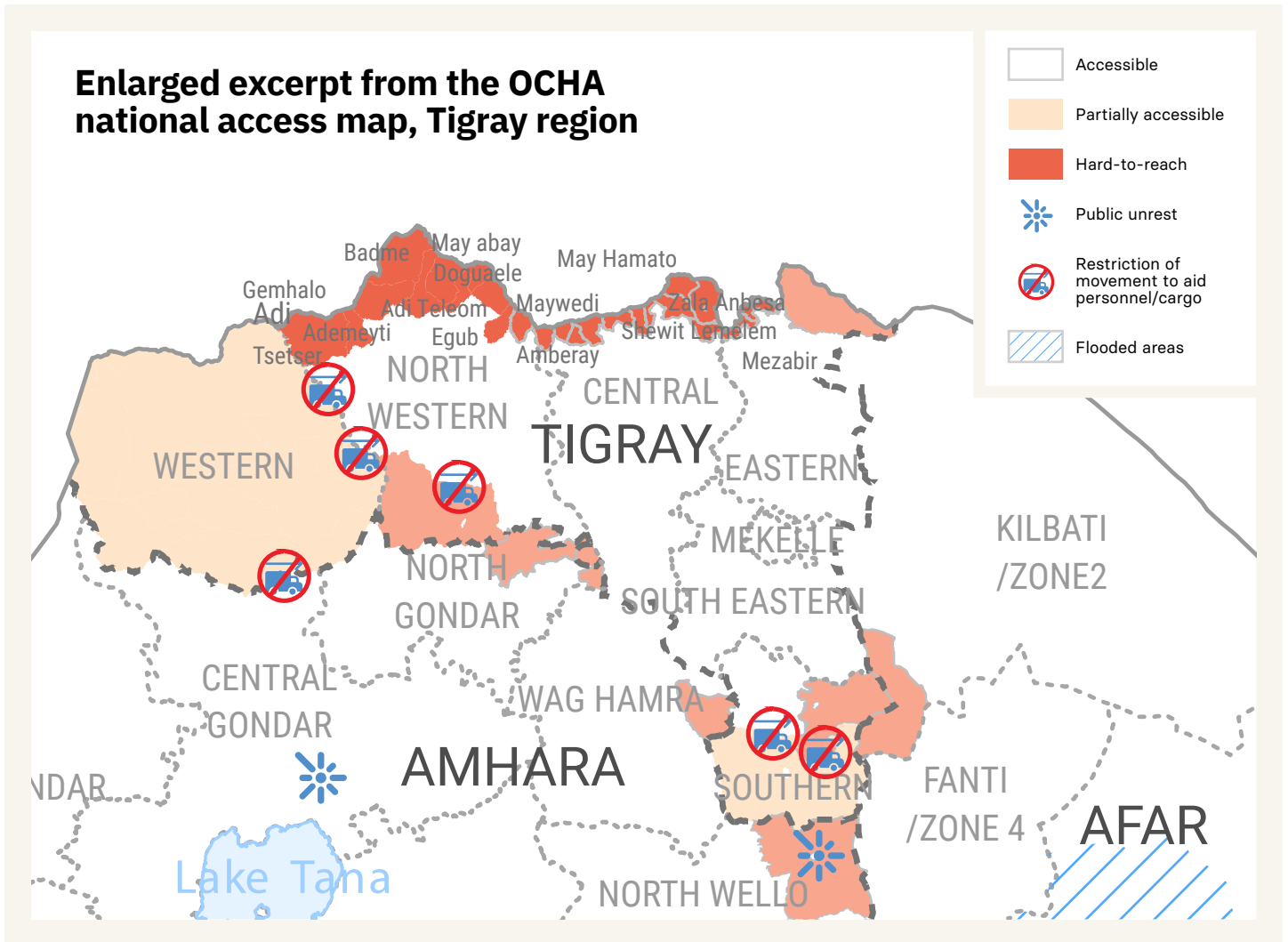
29%

of children under the age of five and every second pregnant and breastfeeding woman is malnourished [[WFP Oct 2022](#)].

Quantity and quality of reach (reports of aid received)

The data shows an improvement in humanitarian access and reach since the signing of the CoHA, a point underscored by a number of interviewees. After the signing of the CoHA, aid gradually commenced with the opening of four corridors operating for humanitarian access by road. These corridors include Sheraro-Shire-Aksum-Adwa corridor, the Gondar-Humera-Mai Tsebri-Shire corridor from Amhara, Kombolcha-Alamata-Mekelle corridor from Amhara, and Samera-Abela-Mekelle corridor from Afar. Between 15 and 30 November 2022 OCHA reported that 20 humanitarian partners delivered 19,987MT of food and 3,020MT of non-food supplies to Tigray; the Government of Ethiopia delivered 13,686MT of food [[OCHA](#)].

Enlarged excerpt from the OCHA national access map, Tigray region



Source: OCHA, April 2023

Constraints (physical, bureaucratic and misappropriation of aid)

Despite an overall more positive picture since the CoHA, constraints on cash liquidity and bureaucratic obstacles continue to hinder access. In addition, recent conditions on the ground point to specific and considerable challenges which are impacting an already bleak humanitarian picture, in particular in regard to food and medicines supply:

As of June 2023, reports indicate two out of four corridors have limited access, particularly the routes via Amhara: Gondar – Humera-Mai Tsebri (as a result of the disputed territories), as well as the corridor of Sheraro-Shire-Aksum-Adwa. The picture has been further exacerbated in June 2023, to the extent that only the corridor through Afar is reliable. On 20 April 2023, responding to incidents of theft of food, the World Food Program (WFP) announced it was suspending food aid to Tigray [AP]. In June 2023 USAID, followed by

WFP, further suspended aid to Ethiopia across the country as a result of a "coordinated and criminal scheme" of organised food theft to benefit ex-federal army combatants, among others [Washington Post – 8 June 2023]. The committee established by the Tigrayan Interim Administration (TIA) to investigate the diversion of humanitarian aid revealed that Federal Government entities and Eritrean forces have been involved as well as Tigrayan authorities and entities, with 186 suspects identified and seven detained by 15 June 2023 [Addis Standard]. The WFP stated on 19 June that it hoped to resume some Ethiopia food aid distribution by July [Reuters]. The theft of food violates the commitment by both parties to the agreement, namely the TPLF and the Federal Government, under Article 5 which commits to ensure aid is used for humanitarian purposes only. •

BASELINE

By April 2022 the UN referred to the situation in Tigray as a **de facto humanitarian aid blockade** [Amnesty International; Global News Net].

Between 22 August and November 2022 **no humanitarian supplies entered Tigray** via road or via UNHAS cargo flights [OCHA].



Protection of Civilians

Article 4 – Protection of Civilians

1) The Parties shall protect the human rights of the civilian population and commit to upholding applicable international humanitarian law instruments to which Ethiopia is a party.

Instances of violence, killing and maiming

There were reports of several security incidents in Tigray after the signing of the CoHA on 2 November 2022. Around 14 December 2022, an unidentified armed group allegedly looted public and civilian properties in Mekelle and other unspecified areas in the region, where the Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) had not yet reached. The Federal Government stated, ‘the organized robberies were escorted by armed patrols, exploiting the transitional situation’, and promised to hold the actors accountable [ACLED]. Instances were reported of the killing of civilians by Eritrean troops [AP – 2 Dec 2023].

There were no reports of the killing of civilians by forces of the parties to the CoHA (namely the TPLF and ENDF) since the agreement was signed, with the caveat that large swathes of territory, notably areas of Western Tigray* (contested areas under the control of Amhara forces), are not accessible by monitors and are controlled by actors who are not parties to the agreement. This is not to say that there have been no atrocities committed – reports suggest that there are atrocity crimes against civilians ongoing in Western Tigray*, including ethnic cleansing and forced displacement*, and along the borders with

Eritrea, where killings, sexual violence and forced disappearances have been reported. [AP] Reports in April 2023 outline ongoing displacement and ‘evictions’ of thousands of ethnic Tigrayans from Western Tigray* as well as firsthand accounts of the killing of civilians by Amhara troops and irregular militia [AP – April 2023].

Crimes against civilians by Eritrean forces in Ethiopia

There have been multiple reports of crimes by Eritrean forces since the signing of the CoHA, including the killing of civilians. On 17 November 2022, Eritrean forces shot and killed four civilian youths in Aksum, Central Tigray [ACLED]. On 19 November 2022, Tigray TV claimed 63 civilians were killed by Eritrean forces including 10 children [Addis Standard]. On 27 November 2022, Tigray TV reported that Irob continued to be shelled by Eritrean forces [Tigray TV]. The Associated Press also reported on the same day that “allies of Ethiopia’s federal military” were looting property and carrying out mass detentions in Tigray [AP]. In the week of 30 November 2022, Eritrean forces looted shops and vehicles. They killed an unspecified number of people in areas under their control in Northwest and Eastern zones of Tigray region [ACLED]. On 17 February 2023, Eritrean forces opened gun fire at two humanitarian aid trucks of Care Ethiopia carrying food aid from Adigrat to Downhan in Tabiya Agere Lekoma (Eastern Tigray) [ACLED].

Sexual assaults by Eritrean forces have persisted despite the peace deal, as evidenced in an article published on 15 February 2023 [BBC]. A report from 16 February 2023 quoted a priest who has helped women survivors of rape access local doctors stating that women were still fleeing Irob, Western Tigray*, and that survivors have walked for days to avoid Eritrean roadblocks en route to Dawhan, Irob’s capital [The New Humanitarian]. ▶

BASELINE

600,000 people are estimated to have died as a result of the conflict in Tigray [Olusegun Obasanjo, AU Envoy].

1.2m people have been displaced from Western Tigray* since the start of the conflict and between 25 November and 1 December 2021, over 10,000 Tigrayans were newly displaced from Western Tigray* [Amnesty – Dec 2021].

2,204 sexual violence survivors reported sexual violence to health facilities across the Tigray region, from November 2020 to June 2021. [OHCHR – Dec 2021]. Rape, gang rape and enslavement, were widespread and used as a weapon of war by all parties to the conflict: ENDF, TPLF, Amhara and Eritrean forces [France24, Amnesty International].

Forced disappearances

Reports of forced disappearances also persist since the CoHA was signed and correlate with the lingering presence of Eritrean troops. It was reported that between 27 February and 11 March 2023 armed groups kidnapped 66 civilians from Irob (North-eastern Tigray on the border with Eritrea). Similar incidents of kidnapping were reported in Gulomakeda (North-eastern Tigray) [[Protection Cluster – 12 Mar. 2023](#)]. On 17 January 2023, ten youngsters were abducted by Eritrean forces near Aksum. Their whereabouts were unknown to their families nearly a month later [[Addis Standard – 14 Feb. 2023](#)].

Child recruitment and use

There is very little data available on rehabilitating children who may have been recruited or used by armed forces and armed groups, a fact confirmed by local sources in May 2023. There is also little data available on programming specifically addressing population needs (such as health, psychosocial support, and reintegration).

Sexual and gender-based violence and condemnation by the parties

Article 4 – Protection of Civilians

2) The Parties in particular, condemn any act of sexual and gender-based violence, any act of violence against children, girls, women and the elderly, including recruitment and conscription of child soldiers, and support family reunification.

It is difficult to fully assess the extent to which the CoHA has reduced the high level of sexual violence experienced during the conflict, notably rape and gang rape perpetrated by all parties and used in a widespread and

seemingly orchestrated way, as a weapon of war [[France24 - abuses by TPLF](#), [Amnesty International – abuses by ENDF](#)]. There have been continued reports of sexual and gender-based violence since the agreement. In November and December 2022 after the peace deal was signed, up until 16 February 2023, 852 cases of sexual and gender-based violence were reported in centres set up to help survivors.

Human rights workers and aid organisations operating in Tigray have also continued to document cases of sexual violence since the peace agreement [[BBC – 15 Feb 2023](#)]. A local source noted that there are cases of rape, as well as isolated cases of child sexual exploitation, particularly in IDP camps in which children are being sold into marriage as a negative coping mechanism. This is not yet widespread but could become a concern if IDPs' legal status remains uncertain. Those without legal entitlement to any support are living at the mercy of the individuals and communities that are helping them as they cannot otherwise access services or sources of revenue (education, health, housing, welfare, jobs).

Whilst there is a specific commitment under Article 4 of the CoHA to condemn any act of sexual and gender-based violence, there has been little or no public condemnation by the parties of sexual violence by their own troops, neither of incidents arising since the CoHA was signed nor of incidents during the conflict. Tigrayan authorities have condemned violations by Eritrean forces but have not admitted wrongdoing by the TPLF. There have been no Federal Government statements issued condemning crimes against civilians, including sexual violence against Tigrayans and Eritrean IDPs by Eritrean troops. Furthermore, the Federal Government dismissed this commitment in its response to the US State Department's report that atrocities were committed by all parties [[Addis Standard](#)]. As such, advocacy groups have been calling for parties to the agreement to condemn instances of violence. •

BASELINE

26,000 women and girls in Tigray are estimated to have sought medical assistance as a result of sexual violence including rape and gang rape [[Centre For Women's Justice](#)].

Amhara interim authorities and security forces in Western Tigray* rounded up thousands of Tigrayans, and loaded them at gunpoint onto trucks, or put them on trucks directly from detention facilities where they were unlawfully detained, as part of a campaign of 'ethnic cleansing' [[Amnesty International-HRW – April 2022](#)].

Ethiopian government sources accused TPLF of widespread use of child soldiers [[OWP](#)].



Internally Displaced Persons

Article 5 – Humanitarian Access

3) The Government of FDRE undertakes to facilitate the return and reintegration of internally displaced persons and refugees, whenever the security situation permits.

Ongoing displacement

The precise number of IDPs as a result of the conflict in Tigray is currently unknown. It was estimated as of September 2021 that 1.8 million people had been forced from their homes [IOM – 14 April 2022]. There have been reports of ongoing and secondary displacement which indicates that the CoHA has not succeeded in ceasing all hostilities so as to provide civilians with the needed security to stay in their areas. Around 15 March 2023, tens of thousands of civilians, mostly ethnic Tigrayans, fled their homes and were displaced from Mai Tsebri and the surrounding areas, due to threats of attacks by Amhara forces. They are now located at Endabaguna IDP Camp (North-western Tigray) [ACLED]. By 12 April 2023, at least 47,000 new IDPs who fled ten woredas (districts in Ethiopia) in Western Tigray* arrived at Endabaguna [Addis Standard]. In addition, Amhara forces forcibly displaced Tigrayans, ‘evicting them’ from Western Tigray* in cases reported in November 2022 and again in January 2023, after the signing of the CoHA [Reuters – Dec. 2022; HRW – June 2023].

Number of IDPs returning

The limited or lack of humanitarian assistance received by IDPs has led to increased

spontaneous returns from Adigrat (Eastern Tigray), Abi-Addi (Central Tigray), and Mekelle IDP sites [Protection Cluster – 12 Mar 2023]. In Mekelle operating areas, UNHCR along with government authorities and partners have facilitated voluntary returns of IDPs to their place of origin with most returning to the North-western zone. By April 2023, UNHCR facilitated the returns of 22,162 IDPs from Aksum (Central Tigray), Abi-Addi, Adigrat, and Mekelle to their place of origin by providing them with emergency cash, cash for transportation and core relief items [UNHCR]. As of April 2023, 9,629 IDPs were returned to Tigray from other regions to which they had fled with assistance from UNHCR [UNHCR – 9 May 2023]. Several local sources (May 2023) confirmed that returns are happening with the exception of Western Tigray* where it is widely considered not to be safe for IDPs to return due to the contested status of the territory and ongoing protection risks. As of 15 May 2023, the return of around 19,000 people from IDP sites in Adigrat and Abi-Addi to their places of origin has been supported by humanitarians [Disaster Philanthropy].

Durable solutions; dignified, informed, safe, & voluntary return

IDPs’ legal status is not granted in Ethiopia, meaning they have no right to work or access to jobs and services and, if they cannot return, are effectively denied durable solutions. Between 7 and 15 November 2022, the Protection Cluster in Shire (North-western Tigray) participated in a Multi Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MiRA) mission in Adwa and Aksum locations: across several sites, it revealed heavy military presence causing security concerns, harassment of IDPs by various forces, kidnappings, and that people are in dire need of life-saving supplies and services, mainly food, health, emergency shelter/Non-Food Items, and WASH [Protection Cluster – 15/11/2022]. The large number of IDPs and proliferation of temporary IDP ►

BASELINE

1.8m

IDPs were identified in 581 IDP sites in Tigray (August 2021) [IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix].

2.8m

IDPs, in Amhara, Afar and Tigray regions, returned to their place of origin in the first quarter of 2022, seeking durable solutions [UNHCR – May 2022].

71,000

Ethiopian refugees and asylum-seekers (the majority of whom arrived in 2020) were registered in Sudan in 2022 [UNHCR].

sites raises protection concerns as well as concerns about durable solutions – namely the possibility of return, resettlement, and permanent status. In some cases, IDPs get more support than the host communities who are often marginalised themselves. Multiple sources raised concerns about possible tensions arising from this and the need to pay attention to conflict sensitivities.

Addressing safety concerns; UXOs and mines

Several sources interviewed for this report noted the widespread presence of Unexploded Explosive Ordnances (UXOs) and mines. The number of bombs in schools is alarming. From 21 to 31 January, 98 victims of landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) were identified and registered in Mekelle, of which 82 were injured and 14 dead, 92% of the reported victims being children. Five mine incident victims received medical support, and 89 victims were provided with psychosocial support [[Protection Cluster – 31 Jan 2023](#)]. As of 12 February 2023, Tigray Humanitarian Mine Action Unit (THMAU), together with Imagine 1 Day (I1D), had cleared 65 schools in 11 districts of Central, South-East, and South zones. ERWs found in Kola Temben school were cleared. UXOs found in Wejerat school compound were marked and fenced [[Protection Cluster – 12 Feb 2023](#)].

There have been mine risk education efforts by partners of the UN Protection Cluster. Between 8 and 15 December 2022, 14,425 people including 4,590 children were reached with awareness messages on mine risk education in seven Woredas [[Protection Cluster – 15 Dec 2023](#)]. Between 6 and 12 February 2023, 2,196 individuals received explosive ordnance risk education in Mekelle areas [[Protection Cluster – 12 Feb 2023](#)]. Nevertheless, efforts to address such concerns since the CoHA was signed are not proportionate to the needs.

Evidence of forced return

There are no official reports of incidences of forced IDP return, though the ability to monitor this was constrained by the sensitivity of the issue and the lack of access to vulnerable populations. Several interviewees viewed this as a key issue linked to the importance of political settlement for disputed territories. •



Presence of Militaries

Review of the DDR processes implemented

Article 6 – Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR)

The Parties:

b) Shall design and implement a comprehensive DDR program for TPLF Combatants consistent with the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia;

e) Agree to undertake the disarmament of the heavy armaments of the TPLF combatants as a matter of priority based on a detailed schedule to be agreed upon between the senior commanders of the Parties. The disarmament activities in the schedule should be completed within ten days from the conclusion of the meeting of the senior commanders. The ten-day period could be extended based on the recommendation of the senior commanders, to be endorsed by the Parties.

The parties appear to have followed the DDR process set out by the CoHA, including the relinquishing of heavy and medium weapons and withdrawal from frontlines. On 2 December 2022, TPLF Commanders announced its fighters had started withdrawing from various frontlines (such as from Maykenetal, Zalambessa, Nebelet, Chercher, Kukufto, Hgumbirda, Beri Teklay and Abergele fronts)

[ACLED]. By 4 December 2022, Tigray forces said they had withdrawn 65% of fighters from frontlines [Reuters]. On 29 December 2022, TPLF disarmed its heavy weapons to members of ENDF in Agula (Eastern Tigray) and on 10 January 2023, TPLF handed over the first round of heavy weaponry to ENDF in the presence of AU-MVCM in Agula [ACLED]. On 17 January 2023, ENDF peacefully entered Adigrat town and took over its military base [ACLED], and on 6 February 2023, ENDF peacefully transferred North-western Tigray zone and Central Tigray zone to TPLF [ACLED]. On 19 April 2023, TPLF disarmed 'medium' weapons and submitted them to members of ENDF in Dengolat (South-Eastern Tigray) [ACLED]. By 20 May 2023, according to the AU-MVCM, 85% of TPLF heavy weapons have been surrendered [The Reporter].

Evidence of activity relating to rehabilitation of former armed forces and irregular recruits so that they can return and reintegrate into their communities (the 'R' in DDR) is harder to identify. At the same time the CoHA does not outline a comprehensive DDR process and is focused on weapons only.

Eritrean forces present in Tigray

Article 2 – Principles Underpinning the Permanent Cessation of Hostilities

The parties shall be guided by the following principles:

a) Respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and unity of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE).

BASELINE

In November 2020, Eritrean forces massacred an estimated two hundred civilians including 12 children in the town of Axum, Tigray [HRW].

At least 767 people were killed in inter-communal violence in Mai Kadra in Western Tigray* between November 2020 and January 2021 according to two lists of victims [Reuters].

Eritrean soldiers allegedly massacred at least 300 people, the youngest victim two years old, the oldest 92 years old, in villages near Adwa in the East of Tigray from 25-31 October, days before the CoHA was signed [Deutsche Welle].



Source: Adapted from [Political Geography Now](#)

Article 8 – International Boundaries and Federal Facilities

- 1) The ENDF shall be deployed along the international boundaries of Ethiopia;
- 2) The ENDF shall safeguard the sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of the country from foreign incursion and ensure that there will be no provocation or incursion from either side of the border.

On 30 December 2022, Eritrean Defence Forces started to ‘leave the Tigray region’ and move heavy weaponry and troops to Ethiopia-Eritrean border areas from Aksum town, Central Tigray, and Shire [ACLED]. Despite reports of a

withdrawal, a number of local sources confirmed the presence of Eritrean forces in the north of the region, leading to insecurity for civilians and difficulties of humanitarian agencies to access communities.

The ‘Declaration of executive plan of the Pretoria peace agreement’, a set of operational modalities signed by military commanders of the parties shortly following the CoHA, states that the ‘disarmament of heavy weapons will be done concurrently with the withdrawal of foreign and non-ENDF forces from the region’ [Addis Standard]. Understanding non-ENDF to mean Eritrean as well as Amhara forces, there is currently no official report from the Federal Government on the status of their withdrawal. By contrast, Tigrayan figures have not been silent on the continued presence of and attacks by Eritrean forces in Tigray [Addis Standard]. On 24 March 2023, Getachew Reda (Tigray leader) said in a press briefing that Western Tigray*, Southern Tigray* (contested territories) and North-western Tigray are still under the ▶

occupation of the Eritrean and Amhara forces. He emphasized that this is the responsibility of the Federal Government to resolve [Addis Standard]. Amanuel Assefa, chief cabinet secretariat of the TIA, stated in April 2023 that the areas under Eritrean control are: Irob, Gulomekeda, six kebeles (districts) in parts of North-western Tigray such as Tahtay Adiyabo woreda, Badme and its area, Adi Tsetser, Gemhalo, Adimeti, and other kebeles in the North [The Reporter].

On 11 May 2023 Eritrean forces denied AU-MVCM entry to the district of Irob at a checkpoint in Sobeya, Eastern Tigray [Addis Standard; Tigrai TV]. On 25 May 2023, a mission led by the UN-OCHA deputy head of Ethiopia comprised of UN-OCHA, UNDSS, WHO, and other INGOs was prohibited from entering Gemhalo village in Tahtay Adiyabo woreda by Eritrean forces [CNN].

Armed conflicts and political hostilities

Article 3 – The Permanent Cessation of Hostilities

2) This Permanent Cessation of all forms of hostilities shall include, among others; the cessation of overt and covert acts of violence; laying of mines; sabotage; airstrikes; direct or indirect acts of violence; and subversion or use of proxies to destabilize the other party or collusion with any external force hostile to either party.

Although on a smaller scale, there have been multiple incidents of armed hostilities since the signing of the CoHA involving Amhara forces which were not directly party to the agreement. Around 15 March 2023, tens of thousands of ethnic Tigrayan Civilians fled their homes and were displaced from Mai Tsebri and the surrounding areas due to threats of attacks by Amhara forces. Around 24 March 2023, the TPLF started to amass its militants around Korem (Southern Tigray) and other areas under the control of the Amhara regional forces in Southern Tigray [ACLEDD].

Amanuel Assefa, chief cabinet secretariat of the TIA, claimed in a statement on 22 April 2023 that Amhara forces still control the entire Western Tigray* zone; nine woredas in of North-western Tigray zone; Raya, Korem, Alamata, and other areas of the Southern Tigray zone; Tselemt and Asgede woredas; Mai Tsebri, Lailay Tselemti, and Tahtay Tselemti [The Reporter]. Insecurity and protection risks continue: In June 2023, Human Rights Watch expressed concern that the Amharan authorities have continued an “ethnic cleansing campaign” against Tigrayans involving the arbitrary and prolonged detention of over 1,000 Tigrayans in the towns of Humera, Rawyan and Adebai (in official and informal detention sites), where they witnessed and experienced killings, torture and other forms of ill-treatment, and enforced disappearances, before their forcible expulsions in November 2022 and January 2023, despite the November 2022 CoHA [HRW – 1 June 2023]. •



Resumption of Services

Resumption of Services

Article 7 – Confidence-building measures

- 2) The Government of the FDRE shall:
- b) Expediate and coordinate the restoration of essential services in the Tigray region within agreed timeframes.

Article 3 – Permanent Cessation of Hostilities

- 4) The Permanent Cessation of Hostilities shall pave the way for the restoration of the constitutional order in the Tigray Region and political dialogue between the Parties;
- 5) The Parties agree to restore the presence of federal authority in Mekelle in order to create a conducive environment for the resumption of public services in the region as well as to ensure the safety of the inhabitants of the city. To this effect, the Parties agree that the ENDF and other relevant Federal Institutions shall have an expeditious, smooth, peaceful and coordinated entry into Mekelle, which shall be facilitated through the open communication channel to be established between the senior commanders of the Parties as per Article 6 (c) of this Agreement.

There has been progressive restoration of public services since the signing of the CoHA, although important gaps and structural deficiencies remain, particularly to basic social services - specifically education and health.

Reconstruction and reinstatement of infrastructure

Economic infrastructure began to be restored soon after the signing of the CoHA; some banks started resuming operations as early as 12 November 2022 [[All Africa](#); see also [Reuters](#)]. Nevertheless limitations and restrictions on withdrawals remained in place for several months.

As of 21 December 2022, customers were able to receive remittances and deposit their money. However, people still could not access their previous savings [[Addis Standard – Dec. 2022](#)]. On 4 February 2023, the National Bank of Ethiopia sent 5 billion Ethiopian birr (90 million USD) to Mekelle to ease the severe cash shortage in the region. However, widespread cash hoarding, mistrust in banks, and the preference for cash transactions have hindered the effectiveness of this effort. As a result, residents in Tigray continue to face difficulties in accessing banking services and completing transactions smoothly. As of 14 March 2023, limits on cash withdrawals remain, with banks only allowing 5000 birr to be withdrawn in a week due to cash shortages [[Addis Standard](#)]. Local sources confirmed this in May, stating that banks are open, and cash available, but with limits on daily cash withdrawals (equivalent to 40 USD limit per day). The depositor cannot withdraw every day, so obtaining a larger amount could take up to two to three weeks. This, in addition to high prices and dire economic conditions, is limiting people's purchasing power even for basic needs. It is also affecting trade. Despite the opening of borders, traders from other regions who bring commodities to Tigray would only accept ▶

BASELINE

Since 23 June 2021, commercial flights to Afar and Tigray suspended [[ACAPS](#)].

Authorities sporadically cut internet and tele-communication services in conflict-affected areas, with internet and other forms of communications cut in Tigray completely from June 2021 [[HRW](#)].

The Federal Government suspended banking services in Tigray on 4 November 2020 [[ICHREE Report](#)].

cash and not bank transfers. This is due to mistrust in banks, and fears that banks might be shut down again [[Addis Standard](#)].

As of 28 December 2022, Ethiopian Airlines passenger flights resumed operations between Addis Ababa and Mekelle, and Mekelle mobile network resumed services [[Ethiopian Airlines](#); [Ethio Telecom](#)]. However, to date there are allegations that flights are restricted for Tigrayans aged from 16 to 60 years old travelling to Addis Ababa, whilst there is freedom of movement for other Ethiopians to travel from Addis Ababa to Mekelle [[The Guardian – May 2023](#); [Tufts – May 2023](#)]. On 29 December 2022, Federal Police Forces arrived in Mekele to oversee public services such as airports, power stations, communication, and banking services run by the Federal Government, and to deliver ‘their constitutional duties’ [[ACLED](#)].

Payment of public servants’ salaries

In January 2023, the central government announced it had gradually started paying the salaries of Tigray’s 30,000 federal civil servants again, but without covering their 17 months of arrears. The 131,000 people employed by Tigray’s regional government had to wait a little longer, but their salaries started coming in mid-April [[The New Humanitarian](#)]. A local source reported that as of May 2023, there was no backpay in the budget given by Federal Government to the Tigray Interim Administration. It is unclear if the latter has the budget to pay civil servants on a regular basis going forward.

Access to healthcare and essential medicines

The health system is struggling to meet needs. In a statement to the UN Human Rights Council in March, a group of 22 health workers’ organisations in Tigray denounced the state of healthcare facilities in the region which are unable to provide treatment and care for patients, including those with chronic conditions like tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, cancer, diabetes, and kidney disease. In addition, they raised concerns about the rupture to the childhood vaccination programme, with hundreds of thousands of children unvaccinated for preventable diseases, amid outbreaks of

previously well-contained childhood diseases such as measles, pertussis, meningitis, and polio. As of March 2023, the health workers had not received salaries for two years (Physicians for Human Rights and Tigray Health Professionals – Mar 2023).

Access to medical and healthcare supplies remains limited with a significant shortage in supplies. This has resulted in an increase in death among newborns and children due to malnutrition. As of June 2023, there were reports of 32 newborn deaths in Seharti Samre district of the Tigray region [[Addis Standard](#)].

Education

The education system has been recovering slowly in the last few months, but many children are still out of school (some for three years since schools closed because of COVID, prior to the outbreak of the conflict). By 13 April 2023, about 2.3 million children remained out of school in northern Ethiopia [[Save the Children](#)]. The Educational Bureau of Tigray announced that students have started getting back to schools since 1 May 2023 in different parts of the region. In the capital Mekelle, all private schools have already started teaching learning activities [[Addis Standard](#)].

Many structural challenges remain, in part because the CoHA contains no settlement for politically contested regions which have generated IDPs, many of whom have taken refuge in school buildings. Only 58 public schools have begun teaching as the remaining 21 schools are still hosting IDPs. The presence and fate of IDPs housed in schools adds a layer of complexity to efforts by authorities to reopen schools, as without durable solutions, IDPs, including children, would be evicted.

The Educational Bureau of Tigray stated in May that nearly 400 schools in Western, Southern and North-eastern parts of the region remained closed as the areas are still under the occupation of Eritrean and Amhara forces. In Southern Tigray*, classes resumed in 174 schools of the total 368 schools, whereas the remaining 182 schools located in Amhara-occupied areas like Alamata, Korem and the environs remain closed. The Head of the Bureau clarified that all 199 schools ▶

BASELINE

400,000

Tigrayan households had their financial assets frozen by the government. [[World Peace Foundation – April 2021](#)].

130,000

civil servants who sustain the livelihoods of more than half a million people in Tigray were not paid for over 18 months since June 2021 [[Tghat](#); [All Africa](#)].

80%

of the health care facilities in Tigray partially or completely non-functional, after deliberate targeting by invading forces. [[MSF March 2021](#)].

in Western Tigray*, and some schools in Irob district, have ceased to open due to the presence of non-ENDF forces [[Addis Standard](#)].

According to local sources, back-to-school campaigns have tended to be superficial, having not addressed the fundamental barriers to children returning to school. Unaddressed issues include demining, damage to school infrastructure, families not being able to afford school materials, absence of a school feeding system, the psychological state of teachers and students, and the lack of mental health and psychosocial support services for teachers, especially if teachers are ex-combatants. •

BASELINE

2.3m

children out of school including 1.8 million girls, 60% are without education for a third year in a row [[OCHA](#)].

85%

of schools are partially or severely damaged [[AfricaNews](#)].



AU Monitoring, Verification & Compliance

Article 11 – Monitoring, Verification and Compliance

Article 11 of the CoHA establishes an AU Monitoring Verification and Compliance Mechanism (AU-MVCM) and contains a detailed description of the composition and ways of working. Its key focus areas include i) permanent cessation of hostilities; ii) disarmament; iii) protection of civilians (PoC); iv) delivery of humanitarian assistance; v) monitoring and verification; and vi) responsible use of media.

The mechanism is explicitly mandated by the CoHA to intervene immediately in a reported violation of the cessation of hostilities, and to scale up to the African Union's High-Level Panel if not resolved by the parties within 24 hours. Because of the confidentiality of the AU-MVCM mandate, it is hard to monitor if and when this has happened. It is similarly difficult to ascertain whether and if the mechanism has intervened in response to civilian harm.

The AU-MVCM mission is supported by ten monitors from Kenya, South Africa and Nigeria, comprising seven military observers and three civilian experts in political and humanitarian affairs. It is unclear if the monitors deployed include women [[Protection Cluster – 30 Dec 2022 to 10 Jan 2023](#)].

A recent interview with an international embassy supporting the CoHA indicates that there is a proposal for an increase in the number of monitors by including two additional CSO observers in the existing ten monitors that are currently allocated. Ethiopian monitors will also be embedded in the mission team. There is no information as to whether it is also a priority to boost the gender representativeness of the monitoring team.

Publicly available information and reporting about the AU-MVCM activities are currently scarce, but what is on record indicates a consistent approach to engage the parties to the CoHA, and a largely successful focus on DDR processes, including the relinquishing of heavy and medium weapons by the TPLF as required by the CoHA. On 2 January 2023, AU-MVCM met the Mekelle UN Team to brief on the mission's mandate and discuss ways of information sharing with humanitarian partners. On 10 January 2023, AU-MVCM was present for the handover of the first round of heavy weaponry by the TPLF to the ENDF in Agula, Eastern Tigray, which confirmed launch of the disarmament process [[ACLEDD](#); [Addis Standard](#); see also [Addis Standard](#) and [May 19 Press Conference](#)].

The mandate of the AU-MVCM gives no obligation for it to be transparent in terms of reporting on its findings. Reporting is done privately to the parties and the African Union Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department. Its link to the national Transitional Justice Policy is also unclear. Accordingly, research and interviews have given very little information about the AU-MVCM and how it works.

While the mission has sought to gain access to hard-to-reach areas, it was reported that on May 11 the AU-MVCM was denied entry to the district of Irob by Eritrean forces at a checkpoint in Sobeya, Eastern Tigray [[Tigray TV](#); [Addis Standard](#)].

On 7 June 2023 the Mandate of the AU-MVCM was extended for a further 6 months until the end of the year [[Addis Standard](#)]. Given the above factors and its limited resources, it seems unlikely that the AU-MVCM will be able to fully implement its mandate to monitor and verify the CoHA implementation, although its team is clearly making efforts to do so. •

BASELINE

The Federal Government has severely restricted information since the outbreak of the conflict. A communications blackout was imposed; journalists were arrested or forced to flee; or prevented from travelling to Tigray [[AI Jazeera](#); [Amnesty International](#); [CPJ](#)].

The ICHREE, established by the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) investigated allegations of violations and abuses, reporting in Sept 2022 on civilian killings, sexual violence and starvation as a weapon of war, noting it amounted in some cases to war crimes and crimes against humanity. [[ICHREE report](#)].

A joint OHCHR and Ethiopian Human Rights Commission investigation conducted numerous Tigray field visits, reporting that serious human rights violations had been and continue to be committed by all parties [[OHCHR and Ethiopian Human Rights Commission](#)].

Section 2: Impacts & Conclusion

Impacts of the CoHA on Regional Dynamics in Amhara and Afar, and Beyond

As the conflict in Tigray spread to neighbouring regions during the height of the war, the regions of Afar and Amhara were also significantly implicated in both the conflict dynamic and subject to humanitarian impacts.

Although the Afar and Amhara regional leadership were not formal signatories to the CoHA, as key parties to the conflict their stake in the CoHA and its implementation for durable peace in the country is an important factor that is not considered under the CoHA.

In addition to serious concerns about humanitarian impacts and the protection of civilians, there is also a risk that dynamics in these regions could undermine the CoHA process. Active armed conflict continues, particularly in the Amhara region, between armed groups and Ethiopian federal forces over issues and grievances not necessarily linked to the conflict in Tigray, but which could hinder progress made by the CoHA.

Violence in Amhara and Afar

It is clear that hostilities in Afar and Amhara did not cease following the CoHA in neighbouring Tigray. Just ten days after the signing of the agreement, on 12 November 2022, the Shebela Bakulti kebele administrator and 'his associates' shot and killed three civilians when they tried to stop the administrator from taking over the ownership of land in Shebela Bakulti kebele in Semen Achefer woreda in West Gojam zone, Amhara [ACLED]. Clashes between Amhara and Oromia forces continued on 13 November and 18 December 2022, resulting in various casualties [ACLED].

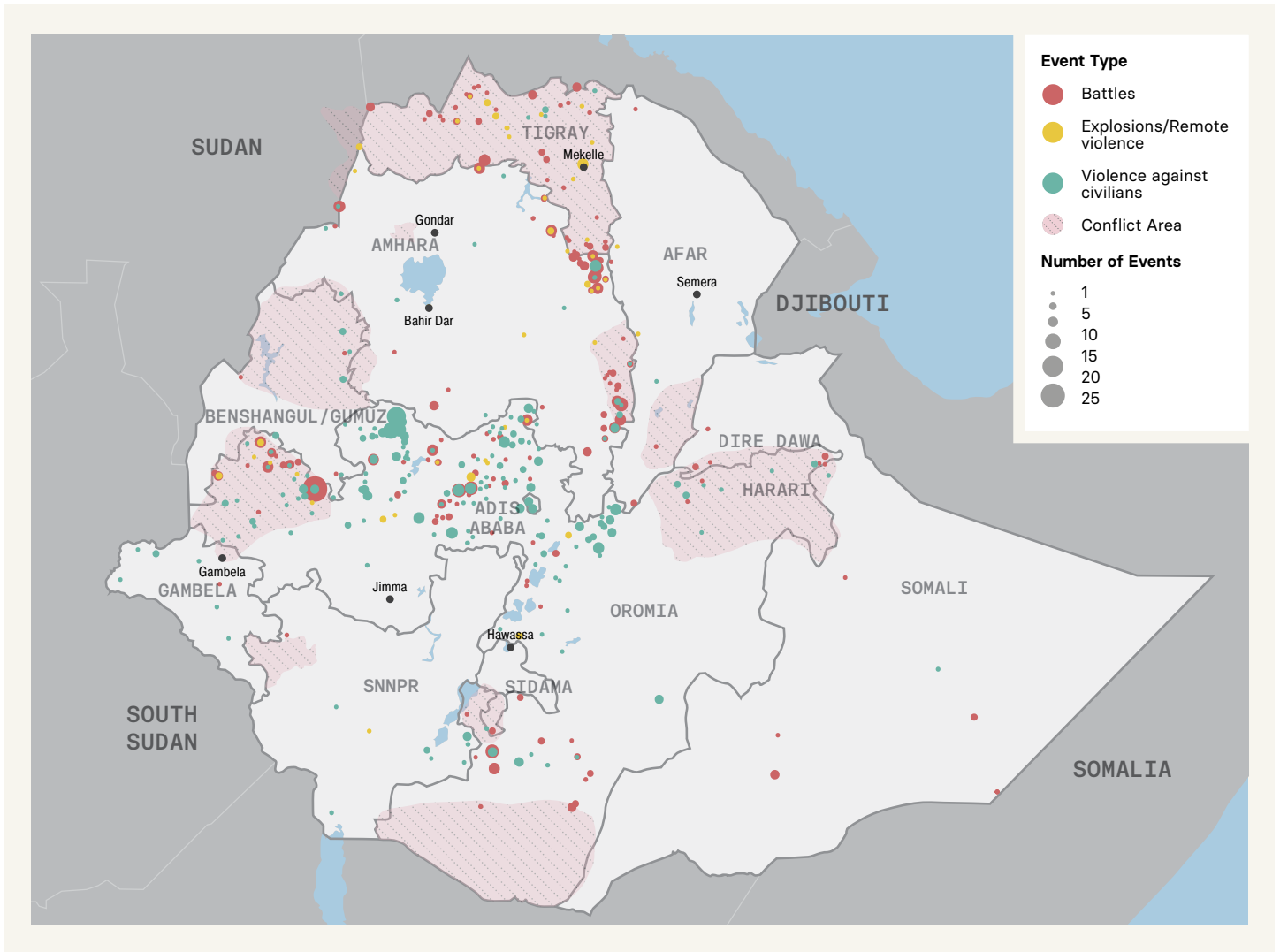
More recently, the Federal Government announced the dissolving of regional special forces throughout the country in April 2023, which resulted in protests across the Amhara region against the decision, and violent

clashes between the ENDF and members of Fano (an Amhara youth militia), resulting in many casualties amongst both civilians and militants [Addis Standard]. There were instances of property destruction on 10 and 14 February 2023 by Amhara regional special forces and Fano militia men on civilian houses, health centres, and mosques [ACLED]. Clashes continued until 13 April 2023, when the ENDF and East Amhara Fano Militia's administration peacefully agreed to cease armed confrontation as a result of mediation by religious leaders and elders [ACLED; see also Crisis24 and Ethiopia Peace Observatory – April 2023]. Events also led to widespread arrests in Amhara and in Addis including of journalists reporting on the events [CPJ].

Meanwhile in the Afar region, on 24 December 2022, OLF-Shane and Afar ethnic militias clashed after members of OLF-Shane shot at two Afar youths around Awash national park, on the border of Afar and Oromia regions [ACLED]. Armed conflict in the Afar region has significantly decreased since the signing of the CoHA, however there is very limited coverage of the region and limited monitoring so as to assess impacts on civilians.

Humanitarian assessment of Afar and Amhara

The humanitarian conditions in Afar and Amhara regions receive far less coverage than the situation in Tigray, and yet the situation remains dire. IDP figures vary between agencies and are also in flux due to the evolving situation. From 25 November 2022 until 9 January 2023, the IOM reported that there were more than 388,000 IDPs in Amhara and 90,000 IDPs in Afar [IOM – 7 June 2023]. A large number of IDPs in Amhara region are displaced from Oromia region. In 2023 UNICEF field offices estimated 732,000 IDPs in Amhara, and 225,000 IDPs in Afar based on a worse-case scenario [UNICEF].



Source: Adapted from [ACLED](#) map

By 20 March 2023, 1.77 million people in Amhara Region (out of the targeted 2.55 million) had received food assistance since mid-November 2022. In Afar Region, nearly 596,700 people (out of the targeted 664,339 people) had received food assistance since November 2022 [OCHA]. By 11 April 2023, over 50% of the targeted 663,600 people in Afar had received food assistance, while close to 39,000 people out of the targeted 1.48 million people in Amhara had benefited from food aid [OCHA].

OCHA clusters have continued their work in Afar and Amhara with no access barriers, except in some areas bordering other regions [OCHA – 20 April 2023].

Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR)

Although parties to the conflict in Afar and Amhara have not yet been formally included in the DDR process of the CoHA, there are parallel initiatives undertaken by the Federal Government since the signing of the

agreement to ensure they take on a form of DDR across the country. Since April 2023, the Federal Government has aimed to dissolve all special forces operating during the two-year war and reintegrate them into the national armed forces or the federal or regional police [Reuters].

On 22 December 2022, more than 300 members of the Qemant Committee Militia, a minority group in Amhara, surrendered peacefully after the traditional and religious leaders facilitated a talk with the government. They then participated in reintegration training provided by the government. In another similar instance, on 7 May 2023, more than 80 armed people in West Gondar, Amhara, returned to civilian life following the call from the government and traditional peace resolution method [ACLED].

However, there has been resistance in Amhara region, with local media reporting clashes between national and regional forces brought about by a refusal among Amhara's special forces units to surrender weapons [Reuters]. ▶

On 28 March 2023, ENDF entered Nirak town and took control of Abergele woreda, Wag Hamra, Amhara. The woreda had been under the control of TPLF forces since the start of the conflict in Northern Ethiopia. On 23 March 2023, the Commissioner of the National Rehabilitation Commission (NRC) said they had conducted a consultative forum on DDR with officials from Amhara. The NRC is in the process of developing a National Demobilisation and Reintegration Program (NDRP) for ex-combatants [[Addis Standard](#)].

There is little to no publicly available information about the dissolving of special forces in Afar. A local source stated that the DDR process in Afar is “abysmal” with no coverage, leading to Afar being forgotten altogether.

Implications for the rest of Ethiopia

Beyond Tigray there are similar struggles and continued armed conflicts across the country. A particular hotspot is the Oromia region, with ongoing and persistent aggression between the Federal Government and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA). It began in late 2018 and morphed into a deadly but underreported insurgency since April 2019. The conflict has since continued to expand and escalate simultaneously with the Tigray conflict, but with less profile, and has continued to take the lives of many civilians causing a significant disruption to the social and economic life of Ethiopia’s biggest and most populous region. The humanitarian situation in parts of Oromia is severe, due to drought and conflict, whilst insecurity and difficulties of access have impeded aid efforts [[OCHA - Oct. 2022](#)]. In December 2022 alone the region witnessed 58 conflict events and 246 reported fatalities, and has the highest number of reported events and fatalities due to political violence [[OCHA – June 2023](#)]. Attacks against civilians have taken place with reports of drone strikes in Western Oromia [[Newlines Magazine – Dec. 2022](#)].

Talks between the Federal Government and the OLA began in Zanzibar on 25 April 2023, indicating an interest in settling the conflict. However, as of June 2023, they had failed to produce a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement similar to that with the TPLF [[Reuters](#)]. Both parties have continued to resort to armed conflict, with the OLA accusing the government of launching an offensive attack [[Reuters](#); [the Africa Report](#)]. There is no clear indication of any upcoming negotiations [[Addis Standard](#)].

In addition, there are periodic intra-regional conflicts between Amhara nationalist militia (also known as Fano) and OLA forces, resulting in violence in both regions. A recent report cites the killing of eight individuals in an attack committed by Amhara forces in Eastern Wellega [[Addis Standard](#)]. Similar incidents of OLA forces carrying out attacks on Amhara civilians in Oromia, as well as civilians in Amhara, have also been reported [[HRW](#); [Addis Standard](#)].

The exclusion of a number of relevant regional conflict actors from the CoHA process is a challenge to its legitimacy and is fostering further tensions across the country. A more comprehensive peace deal is needed for Ethiopia. The CoHA between the Federal Government and the TPLF can serve as an example for ongoing and further negotiations, and can be built on, both in terms of its positive aspects and learning from its shortcomings.

The Federal Government can learn from the shortcomings of the CoHA that negotiations should be as inclusive as possible, and that a CoHA should include a roadmap for discussion of politically divisive issues so that civilians do not continue to pay the price for a fragile peace. •

Conclusion and Recommendations

This monitoring has found that the situation for civilians in Tigray is much improved under the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, though important gaps threaten its fragile peace. The flow of humanitarian aid has gradually resumed, albeit with patchy access routes for supplies now set to be put under further pressure by the recent food aid scandal. Freedom of movement has been somewhat restored, and the TPLF has turned over heavy and medium weapons. There have been no reports of targeted or indiscriminate killing of civilians by the TPLF and ENDF in Tigray, and a number of services, from telecommunications to banking, have resumed.

Yet, this monitoring has uncovered concerns about the fragility of the peace process, particularly given the exclusion of a range of conflict parties, and a largely held assessment that women, youth and civil society have not had their voices and priorities heard. Additionally, concerns remain about the ongoing lack of access to basic services such as health and education, and the lack of durable solutions for civilians caught up in this war, many of whom are now IDPs languishing in informal camps with little or no prospect of going home as long as their home territory is subject to dispute. Insecurity persists for women and children in particular, who may be vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence by armed forces still in the territory, or else through being exploited in overcrowded and ill-governed camps.

The reliance of this monitoring report on publicly available data and key informant interviews, as well as the lack of access to monitors on the ground, limit our ability to state categorically that the CoHA is succeeding in protecting civilians. Furthermore, this research has uncovered a widely held concern that the lack of monitoring, reporting, and transparency on the situation in Tigray risks leading international observers to a complacent narrative that the situation is resolved, and that the world should move on. Nevertheless six hundred thousand civilians paid for this conflict with their lives. Many more will take time to recover from their trauma.

It is dangerous to claim Ethiopia is now at peace.

Any narrative that characterises the situation in Tigray as resolved, or which focuses on the lack of bullets fired between the parties, misses the larger picture of the seismic impact on civilians. Many civilians,

including thousands of women, remain traumatised by the brutalities they witnessed and experienced, or may continue to experience, at the hands of armed forces and armed groups.

The fact that there is very limited access to Western* and Northern Tigray by monitors, and that journalists are prevented from entering the region, should be a concern to Ethiopians, their African peers as well as the international community. The lack of data on some of the issues investigated tells this story. Large data gaps on the situation of IDP returns and reintegration, and regarding sexual violence, prompt deep unease about violence that could be hidden and still occurring. **There is therefore a need for robust ongoing monitoring, including greater political and financial support for African Union-led efforts such as the AU-MVCM.**

Approaching eight months since this agreement was signed, the pan-African and international community should not be afraid to continue to raise concerns about the situation in Tigray, even if condemnation acknowledges that fighting has not completely ceased, that violations continue, and therefore that the CoHA is falling short. **The truce reached through the CoHA was a momentous moment in Ethiopia's civil war, but it is only a starting point.** It is the floor, rather than the ceiling, of what can be achieved in Ethiopia, by and for all Ethiopians. Future agreements can and should be more inclusive of multiple parties, and there must be a process or roadmap in place to discuss the political disputes (over territory and governance) without whose resolution these conflicts will continue. All Ethiopians deserve to live in peace and security, regardless of the region they are born in or their ethnic background.

What follows are some recommendations to the parties and the international community on addressing some of the issues. ►

Recommendations:

Humanitarian Access

International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the principles of humanitarian response (humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence) are fundamental and cannot be limited or defined by conflict parties. They are binding on all parties, not only those two parties (the TPLF and the Federal Government) who signed the CoHA:

- All parties to the conflict should provide unfettered humanitarian access to affected populations according to customary IHL.
- The Federal Government and the TPLF should abide by their commitment under the CoHA not to divert food aid and assistance and should both urgently investigate persistent reports of such diversion and hold perpetrators to account.

Protection of Civilians

The ongoing presence of troops in the Tigray region, including Eritrean forces and Amharan special forces, is a particular source of insecurity for civilians and crimes against them:

- The Federal Government should publicly and unequivocally condemn the ongoing presence of forces who continue to target civilians and civilian facilities in all parts of Tigray, and the Federal Government should specifically call for Eritrean forces on Ethiopian territory to leave.
- Parties to the CoHA have a commitment under article 4 to speak out and condemn atrocities committed against women and children; it must be done more forcefully and publicly, and the parties should ensure perpetrators within their military forces are brought to account.
- The International Community, notably the US and the EU, should spell out detailed human rights and transitional justice benchmarks linked to the normalisation of relations.

IDPs

- The Federal Government should urgently introduce a policy framework for IDPs across Ethiopia and grant them legal status as part of country-wide national reconciliation measures.

- The Federal Government and the TIA should ensure that any IDP returns are safe, voluntary, dignified, and based on the full information being given to IDPs about the conditions of return, noting that the situation in Western Tigray* does not currently meet the conditions for safe return.

DDR

Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration processes in which weapons have been relinquished have provided one of the quantifiable successes of the agreement. Yet there are concerns that the DDR process is not comprehensive with missing elements in terms of strategy, implementation, and funding – notably the holistic approach to mental health and psychosocial support for former victims and combatants:

- The Federal Government and the TIA should expand the DDR process to include mental health and psychosocial support for former combatants and victims, including addressing issues that prevent students from returning back to school.
- DDR processes which address all aspects of reintegration should be introduced sensitively across all regions of Ethiopia in the framework of comprehensive peace agreement(s).

Resumption of Services

Basic services, notably health and education, have not been adequately restored, and there remains uncertainty that budget will stretch to pay civil servant salaries consistently:

- The Federal Government and regional authorities should ease banking restrictions so that banks have adequate liquidity to support CSO activities and the wider business community and end de-facto restrictions on Tigrayans flying out of Tigray on commercial airlines.
- The Federal Government and regional authorities should invest in school feeding mechanisms, recognising that they will enable students to go back to school in a context where farmers and families have difficulty feeding their children.
- The Federal Government, the TIA, and the international community should ensure unrestricted and constant flow of medical supplies, medications, vaccinations, food assistance, and humanitarian support into Tigray. ►

- The Federal Government and regional authorities should ensure that survivors of human rights violations, including survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and all children, have access to all necessary survivor-centred health care through the provision of resources to rehabilitate the health care system.
- The international donor community, notably the US and EU, should ensure support to health and education whilst ensuring that assistance takes into account the rights-based approach to development in the programmes.

AU-MVCM

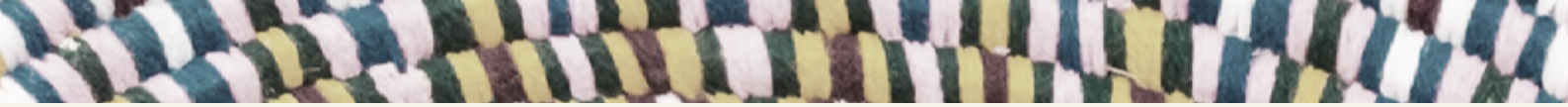
The AU-MVCM is working with few resources and a limited mandate, which means that much of its work is behind the scenes and not credited. At the same time, its efforts to gain access to areas held by forces not party to the CoHA deserve recognition and political support from the AU:

- The AU-led peace deal must be fully implemented and resourced, extended to include belligerents throughout Ethiopia, and expanded to include the full participation of young people, women and girls in the peace process.
- The International Community and the AU need to cooperate to scale up AU capacity and resources for the AU mission, including by appointing civilian experts in human rights and gender.
- The AU should strive to include non-signatory parties to the CoHA in its monitoring and mediation efforts - notably other active political and/or insurgent groups.
- The belligerent parties who are not signatories of the CoHA, such as the Eritrean forces, should allow the AU-MVCM access to territories under their control; and the AU should condemn at the highest level any efforts to stymie the AU MVCM's work.
- The AU should provide for greater transparency in reporting by the AU-MVCM on the situation and the challenges faced in its work, and explore opportunities to include CSOs to support efforts in monitoring the CoHA.
- The AU should consider expanding the mandate of the AU-MVCM to speak out publicly about non-compliance.

CoHA Implementation and Future Agreements

The fragile nature of the CoHA and ongoing conflict in neighbouring regions speaks to the need for a comprehensive peace agreement involving all parties to conflict coming to the table with inclusive regional representation to ensure long-lasting peace:

- The AU should act transparently in communicating progress and challenges in a timely and clear manner to enable guarantors and other stakeholders, including civil society, to play a constructive role supporting the signatories to the CoHA to fulfil their commitments.
- The signatories to this CoHA and future similar agreements should include youth and women throughout the peacebuilding process – notably as part of official delegations to peace talks; as well as by mobilizing and activating the AU's Women, Peace and Security and Youth, Peace and Security initiatives; and by engaging the AU Youth Peace Ambassadors.
- The AU should build upon the CoHA to pursue and achieve a more comprehensive peace settlement with a wider set of conflict actors, designed with and backed by the wider Ethiopian society.
- The AU-MVCM and the international community should continue to monitor the CoHA, and insist that as a single agreement, it is only the start of peace and reconciliation in Ethiopia: the bar must be set much higher and the scope of future agreements enlarged if lasting peace is to be achieved.
- The guarantors of the Agreement, namely the UN, US, IGAD, alongside members of the international community, including the EU, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa, should call for and provide resources to support a meaningful Transitional Justice process which takes the time to include all stakeholders, notably women as well as Tigrayans, recognising that such a process could take years, rather than months, and should not be rushed.
- The international community, namely the guarantors (UN, US and IGAD), together with EU and AU should urge the Federal Government to ensure that independent human rights monitors have unfettered access to conflict-affected areas to investigate and document cases of crimes against civilians and monitor the provision of humanitarian assistance and withdrawal of forces in line with the principles of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. •



© Atrocities Watch Africa. July 2023

~~ATROCITIES~~ WATCH AFRICA

