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TIGRAY EXTERNAL AFFAIRS OFFICE

WEEKLY BRIEFING NO. 10

OCTOBER 12, 2021

BRINGING TIGRAY CLOSER TO THE WORLD



1. OVERVIEW OF THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN TIGRAY

1.1. Still Dangerously Low Humanitarian Supplies

The humanitarian situation in Tigray remains dire. It has been 341 days since the start of the genocidal war on Tigray, and 114 days since the Abiy Ahmed government imposed a brutal siege on the region. Millions of Tigrayans are subject to man-made famine, as the Abiy Ahmed government remains committed to its policy of weaponizing starvation.

100 trucks per day carrying food, non-food items and fuel must enter Tigray in order to meet humanitarian needs. However, the Ethiopian government continues its deliberate policy of obstructing humanitarian operations by erecting time-wasting checkpoints/scanners, blocking fuel tracks, harassing drivers, ethnic-profiling Tigrayan drivers, and otherwise creating unnavigable bureaucratic bottlenecks in the only access route to Tigray (Semera - Abala - Mekelle). As a result of the blockade, the number of trucks entering Tigray is far fewer than what is needed to meet needs on the ground. Between September 29 and October 4, only 80 trucks arrived in Mekelle.

Humanitarian partners now need 282 trucks to arrive in Tigray daily to meet increasing needs while still making up for lost ground due to the Ethiopian government's obstruction. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), since July 12, only about 12 percent of the trucks needed have arrived in Tigray.



1.2 Critical Shortage of Life-saving Medical Supplies

While the blockade of Tigray has created severe scarcity on all categories of basic necessities, it has had a particularly deleterious impact on the already overtaxed healthcare system in Tigray.



Hospitals and other healthcare facilities are dangerously low on some life-saving medicines and equipment, while they have run out of numerous life-saving medicines, potentially condemning thousands of people to otherwise preventable deaths. Ayder Comprehensive Specialized Referral Hospital, the region's flagship hospital located in Mekelle city, has run out of virtually all life-saving medicines. Because of this critical shortage of medical supplies, doctors at the Hospital have resorted to the administration of expired medicines by checking toxicity levels and making case-by-case judgment calls as to whether providing patients with expired medicines might be better than exposing them to a certain death through inaction. While these valiant medical professionals are doing their level best to save lives, the healthcare crisis is beyond their capacity to handle.



At Ayder Referral Hospital alone, there are 1000 people with heart diseases that require regular medical checkups, while there are about 450 people with hypertension who require routine checkups. There are also 3900 people suffering from diabetics (3500 adults and 400 children), who require regular checkups. Sadly, owing to the critical shortage of medical supplies, these patients are essentially condemned to otherwise preventable deaths. Just recently, 15 people with chronic Hepatitis B died because they could not get the medication they needed. Furthermore, Ayder cannot fix its broken oxygen plant because spare parts are not available in Tigray and must be brought from elsewhere. Obstruction by the federal government means that the Hospital cannot accomplish this simple task.

The problem facing Ayder Hospital is the tip of the iceberg as far as the healthcare crisis in Tigray is concerned. But the crisis at Ayder Hospital establishes a baseline by which to measure the magnitude of the crisis throughout the rest of Tigray. Because of telecommunications blackout, severe shortage of cash, and the paucity of fuel, the ability of the government and humanitarian partners to reach and serve most parts of Tigray is severely circumscribed. Even so, evidence of the devastating impact of the shortage of medicines abounds. For instance, according to a report by OCHA, in Selawa Wereda located in the Southern Zone of Tigray, five women died of postpartum bleeding because they lacked access to critical medical care. Such fatality figures provide a snapshot of the overall crisis, as actual figures are far greater than reported.

The humanitarian situation is getting worse by the day, as the siege has severely constrained the ability of humanitarian partners to provide healthcare coverage across Tigray. According to UN-OCHA, humanitarian partners are now serving 13 health facilities and 39 internally displaced people (IDPs) sites in 10 Weredas compared to 125 health





1.3 Continued Suspension of Basic Services

The suspension of banking, telecommunications, air transport, and entry of commercial supplies continues to wreak havoc on humanitarian operations, causing large-scale socioeconomic crisis throughout Tigray. According to the OCHA, humanitarian partners need about \$6 million a week either through access to a functioning banking sector or government approval to transport cash from Addis Ababa on rare UN humanitarian flights. In practice, since July 12, the Ethiopian government has cleared only a total of \$4 million to be transported into Tigray. Consequently, extreme cash shortage has placed severe constraints on the ability of humanitarian partners to provide services commensurate with needs on the ground, as they have been forced to scale back responses across the board.

The brutal siege on Tigray has also created an increasingly dire economic situation throughout Tigray. Commercial supplies from the rest of Ethiopia or abroad are denied entry into Tigray. The resulting shortage of basic commodities has led to skyrocketing prices that are unaffordable for the vast majority of Tigrayans. For instance, the price of standard cooking oil has increased by over 300 percent since June. The prices of other commodities have increased by as much as 600 percent. This bleak situation has been exacerbated by the fact that civil servants, including federal university employees have not received their salaries since June.

2. RECAP OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

2.1. UN Security Council Emergency Meeting

On October 6, 2021, the UN Security Council (UNSC) held an emergency meeting on the crisis in Ethiopia. Secretary General Antonio Guterres briefed the Council regarding the humanitarian crisis in Tigray and, relatedly, the expulsion by the federal government of 7 high-level UN officials. U.S. Ambassador to the UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, excoriated the Ethiopian government for its procedurally and substantively wrong and unprecedented expulsion of UN officials, arguing that the latest action “follows a pattern of escalating obstruction.” She urged the UNSC to take the matter seriously for this outrageous act threatens the Council’s credibility.

The Ethiopian Ambassador to the UN, Taye Atske Selassie, repeated his government’s outlandish allegations against the expelled UN officials, claiming that they had been engaged in illegal activities, including covertly supporting Tigrayan forces. The Secretary General publicly challenged the Ethiopian Ambassador’s allegations against these officials by demanding to see any supporting evidence. Although the Ethiopian Ambassador’s performance is embarrassing by any standard, especially given the public nature of the Secretary General’s rebuke, it is par for the course that his government utters countless falsehoods with regard to the crisis in Tigray. He simply followed the script the world has come to expect from his government. The government of Tigray has issued a statement of concern on the expulsion of the UN Officials and highlighted its impact on the deteriorating humanitarian situation





2.2. Joint Motion for a Resolution by the European Parliament

On October 6, 2021, the European Parliament passed a Resolution. Among other things, it called for unfettered humanitarian aid, cessation of hostilities, the withdrawal of Amhara forces from Tigray and Eritrean forces from Ethiopia, a negotiated ceasefire, and independent investigations into atrocities committed in Tigray and elsewhere. Furthermore, the Resolution suggested the imposition of punitive sanctions on all warring parties if conditions do not improve by the end of October.

In a statement issued on October 10, 2021, the Government of Tigray expressed its gratitude to the European community for its consistent and principled position on the genocidal war on Tigray. It also expressed its appreciation for the European Parliament's call for the withdrawal of invading forces from Tigray, and its highlighting of the plight of Tigrayans being subject to untold atrocities, including arbitrary arrests, suspension and revocation of business licenses, forced disappearances, and murder throughout Ethiopia solely on account of their identity. Furthermore, it welcomed the European Parliament's call for independent investigations.

However, the Government of Tigray objects to the indiscriminate imposition of sanctions on victims and aggressors alike. The people of Tigray are merely exercising their legitimate right of self-defense against forces hell bent on depriving them of their right to live as a people. For this reason, the sanctions must be directed at the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments as well as the regional Amhara authorities, as the international community has ample evidence of their atrocities against the people of Tigray.

Despite the aforementioned misgivings, the Government of Tigray appreciates all international efforts at removing the brutal siege, facilitating unobstructed humanitarian aid delivery, bringing about a negotiated ceasefire, ensuring the withdrawal of all invading forces from Tigray, and initiating independent investigations into all atrocities committed in the course of the brutal war on Tigray, and holding perpetrators accountable for their crimes.

