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TIGRAY EXTERNAL AFFAIRS OFFICE



**WEEKLY BRIEFING NO. 14**

NOVEMBER 02, 2021

BRINGING TIGRAY CLOSER TO THE WORLD



## 1. OVERVIEW OF THE HUMANITARIAN LANDSCAPE

### 1.1. Obstruction on Steroids: The Delivery of Humanitarian Aid Comes to a Grinding Stop

A government with an ounce of humanity, and a minimal concern for the welfare of its citizens would, even in the midst of violent hostilities, facilitate the delivery of humanitarian supplies. Explicit and implicit understandings among the warring factions would, in turn, play a key role in ensuring smooth humanitarian operations by, for instance, the negative act of refraining from firing on aid convoys and the positive act of creating conducive conditions for the movement of humanitarian aid convoys. Alas, the Abiy Ahmed government, contrary to its incessant propaganda about how it is trying to free the people of Tigray from the clutches of reactionary forces bent on subjugating it, has waged a genocidal campaign against Tigrayans. Indeed, it has been almost a full year since the commencement of the genocidal campaign against the people of Tigray, and 127 days since the imposition of a vicious siege on the people of Tigray.

It is a well-documented fact of the genocidal war on Tigray that the Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Amhara forces have committed unspeakable atrocities against Tigray and its people. Since the beginning of this genocidal war, they have, among other things, systematically raped women and girls, destroyed socio-economic institutions, murdered innocent civilians, and vandalized basic service-providing infrastructures. In fact, the US State Department had in no uncertain terms called what these invading and occupying forces have been doing in Western Tigray a clear act of ethnic cleansing for they have systematically killed, maimed and displaced hundreds of thousands of innocent Tigrayans. Tragically, the international response to these unconscionable crimes has been bafflingly inadequate.

These horrifying crimes alone would shock the collective conscience of civilized human beings. But they are now being eclipsed by a more heinous, deadlier, and quieter killer: weaponized starvation. The Abiy Ahmed government has weaponized starvation to achieve that which has eluded it on the battlefield—bringing the people of Tigray to their knees, if possible—and eliminate them, if subjugation is not achieved.

Aid agencies estimate that 100 trucks carrying food, non-food items, and fuel must enter Tigray in order to meet burgeoning needs and avert humanitarian calamity. However, as though freeing itself from the responsibility of having to care for Tigrayans were not enough, the Abiy government actively obstructs the delivery of humanitarian supplies to Tigray via the only route into Tigray (Semera-Abala-Mekelle).





On account of persistent obstructions, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) notes that, since July 12, only 15 percent of the trucks needed have entered Tigray. As a result, the 100 trucks a day estimate was revised upwards to 282 so as to meet needs while still making up for lost ground. However, the Abiy government's obstruction has reached its climax, as no humanitarian trucks have entered Tigray since October 18, 2021. According to OCHA, "All convoy movements are on hold in Semera, pending authorization from the authorities." The requirement of authorization, of course, is a façade. The reason aid trucks are stranded in Semera is not incidental; rather, it is a deliberate part of the Abiy Ahmed government's multipronged strategy of implementing its genocidal blueprint. Given the clear pattern of obstructive and transgressive behaviors by the Abiy government, such bureaucratic bottlenecks simply represent another cudgel with which to bludgeon the people of Tigray into submission and/or out of existence.

The obstruction of aid by the Abiy government has created a humanitarian nightmare the likes of which has not been seen for decades, with some comparing the number of people expected to starve to death to those of Somalia in 2011, unless the international community beefs up its response.

## 1.2 Impact of the blocked on children and women

The impact on children, and pregnant and lactating women is particularly distressing. According to OCHA, 23,172 children under five, including 12,567 girls, were screened for malnutrition between October 19 and 25. While 244 children were diagnosed with severe acute malnutrition (SAM), this finding is likely an underestimate of the actual incidence of malnutrition among children in this group. A key explanation lies in the number of children screened. The 23,172 figure is considerably less than the 63,000 children who were screened a week earlier. Furthermore, 3,176 children (13.4%) were diagnosed with moderate acute malnutrition (MAM), compared to 10.7 % a week earlier.

Malnutrition among pregnant and lactating women remains alarmingly high. Of the 6,847 pregnant and lactating women screened for malnutrition, 3537 (51.7%) were diagnosed with acute malnutrition. While this figure does at first seem to be a slight improvement from the 61.5 % a week earlier, the reality is that it is not. The reduced sample size—down from 13,511 a week earlier—explains this apparent reduction. Since the genocidal siege on Tigray has generated severe cash and fuel scarcity, nutrition partners have scaled back operations, and, in some cases, outright suspended activities. To reinforce this point, 2,796 pregnant and lactating women were treated for malnutrition across the region, down from 6,350. This reduction may be interpreted as *prima facie* evidence of the problem of malnutrition among pregnant and lactating women declining. Unfortunately, this apparent decline is more indicative of the dwindling capacity of nutrition partners to reach more of these women than of improved nutrition status among this category of women.

