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Tigray External Affairs Office

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Statement on the UN’s Explanation for the Suspension of Humanitarian Aid Delivery into Tigray

The United Nations has repeatedly blamed the Ethiopian federal government for obstructing humanitarian aid delivery into Tigray. Indeed, the UN Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Martin Griffiths, had as far back as late September publicly noted that a “de facto humanitarian blockade” on Tigray was hampering humanitarian deliveries, strongly demanding to “get those trucks moving.”

Yet, the United Nations has lately sought to attribute the suspension of aid delivery into Tigray via the only viable route (Semera-Abala-Mekelle) to “conflict” in the area. During its briefing on February 10, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) explained the suspension of aid delivery into Tigray in terms of ongoing conflict in Abala and surrounding areas. This explanation is wrong on many levels.

To begin with, there is no ongoing fighting at the moment. Second, insofar as there was fighting between Tigrayan forces and Afar Forces and irregulars in the area, including Eritrean mercenaries, that had been crossing over into Tigrayan territories, it was one that was imposed on us as these forces had been launching cross-border attacks inside Tigray. Following repeated provocations, our forces took limited defensive measures to degrade their capabilities and ensure the security of our people. Tigrayan forces have not advanced past Erebti. No aid trucks have ever been prevented from passing through into Tigray by Tigray forces. In fact, the authorities continue to deny clearance for the movements of trucks transiting to Tigray. More importantly, the obstruction of humanitarian aid to Tigray did not start following this latest round of brief fighting. It has been going on for over six months, making the latest claim nothing more than a convenient justification for the Ethiopian government’s persistent obstructions of humanitarian operations.

Leaving aside the fact that there is no fighting in the area at the moment, the only way conflict could be considered a valid explanation is if the de facto humanitarian blockade had been lifted prior to the outbreak of the conflict being referred to. However, the aggressive enforcement of the blockade on Tigray has continued unabated.

OCHA itself has repeatedly stated that no humanitarian supplies have been delivered to Tigray by road since mid-December, when there were no active hostilities in the area. Furthermore, no humanitarian workers have also been cleared to travel by road from Semera to Mekelle since October 28, 2021, clearly establishing the Abiy regime's obstructive intent. Since July, no fuel tankers, except for 2 WFP tankers, have been allowed into Tigray. No medical supplies have also been allowed into Tigray by road over the past 6 months. According to OCHA's own reports, only less than 10 percent of the required supplies have entered Tigray since July.

In the context of OCHA's own set of facts, it does not make much sense to attribute the suspension of humanitarian aid delivery into Tigray to fighting that lasted a matter of days. The Government of Tigray is committed to extending the necessary cooperation to facilitate humanitarian operations. However, unless promptly corrected, the latest misattribution of culpability for the persistent obstruction of humanitarian operations in Tigray will allow the Abiy regime to continue siege-starving the people of Tigray while disavowing responsibility for it. Only this time, the regime's baseless disavowal would have international imprimatur.

