



Official Correspondence GSTS-O.C-2022-386

The Global Society of Tigray Scholars
and Professionals (GSTS)¹

Classification: OPEN

27th September 2022

For Immediate Release

Re: Demand for Immediate Action to Stop the Intensifying Humanitarian Crisis in Tigray

The Global Society of Tigray Scholars and Professionals (GSTS) would like to bring to your attention the catastrophic humanitarian implication of the new military offensive declared and launched by the allied Ethiopian, Amhara regional, and Eritrean forces, as of the 26th of August 2022. The renewed offensive by the allied forces tightens the brutal siege and humanitarian blockade that has been imposed on the people of Tigray for over 15 months.

We respectfully call for the following actions to be urgently implemented to avert an expanding devastating human-made famine and daily loss of thousands of civilian lives in Tigray.

1. As per UNSC Resolution S/RES/2417 (2018) ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid to the people of Tigray without any preconditions including cessation of hostilities;
2. Take measures to end the inhumane siege and humanitarian blockade or establish protected alternative routes including airdrop for unfettered humanitarian access to Tigray and, thus the delivery of food, medical, and agricultural supplies;
3. Increase humanitarian aid earmarked to Tigray commensurate with the increasing humanitarian crises in Tigray;
4. Urgently take concrete measures that force the Ethiopia government to abide by international humanitarian laws and ensure the resumption of all essential services including telecommunications, internet, electricity, banking, and financial services, fuel, civilian transport (land and air), trade, and other public services;
5. In keeping with UN Human Right Council resolution, A/HRC/RES/ 47/13, take concrete measures to enact an immediate, unconditional, and verifiable withdrawal of all Eritrean, and Amhara regional forces from all territories of Tigray, and;
6. For the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU) and all international partners to exert all necessary pressure on the Ethiopian government to stop partnering with the Eritrean government to exterminate its own people and instead accept calls for mutually agreed cessation of hostilities and negotiated peace.

¹GSTS is a 501(C) and 33/2011 legally registered non-partisan, not-for-profit network knowledge network operating all over the world. With over 5,000 members, (approximately 1/5 of whom are PhD holders), GSTS is the largest and most active academic and professional association in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. Since the onset of the war on Tigray on 4th November 2020, GSTS has been engaged in research-based fact finding; data collection and documentation, legal analysis and interpretation, and humanitarian advocacy surrounding human rights violations, amounting to war of aggression, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide perpetrated against the Tigrayan people.

The already dire humanitarian catastrophe in Tigray has now worsened dramatically with recent estimates by the World Food Program revealing that 89% of households on average in Tigray and 90-98 percent in some areas of Tigray are severely food insecure. Many clusters have far exceeded, some even doubled the 30% marker for acute malnutrition on the Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) scale.

This renewed massive and coordinated military offensive came at a time when food stocks are at their lowest. It is important to take in account that in Tigray, much of the 2020 harvest was pillaged, destroyed, or left uncollected. In 2021, after their farm assets were burnt or looted, farmers were prevented from cultivating their land. This year (2022), despite encouraging efforts by FAO, yet again the Ethiopian government deliberately restricted and delayed the delivery of improved agricultural inputs (selected seeds, fertilizer, pesticides, and herbicides) and farming equipment. This all-out war on Tigray has now disrupted millions of rural households even from producing crops with limited agriculture inputs. This is on top of the hundreds of thousands of farmers from western and north-western Tigray, who are in an ongoing large-scale ethnic cleansing, accompanied by mass atrocities, have been evicted from their land, many suffering in refugee camps waiting for emergency food aid and medical supplies.

The cumulative impacts are multiple and catastrophic. Among the reported half a million persons who have perished due to the genocidal, as of March 2022, researchers estimate that 150,000 Tigrayans were starved to death by the siege and blockade, and earlier extensive pillaging, looting, burning of assets, and a variety of other objects indispensable for life and farming and other livelihood activities. The study also indicates close to 200,000 have died from preventable diseases due to lack of medicine. As early as May 2021, USAID Administrator Samantha Power noted that early warning systems detected the highest category food emergency (category 5) in Tigray.

The most vulnerable part of the Tigrayan population who are perishing from this weaponized starvation are children, women, including pregnant and lactating mothers, and tens of thousands of survivors of gruesome conflict-related sexual violence and rape, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and millions of Tigrayans in IDP camps.

Under these circumstances, there are significant precedents and mechanisms already in place that establish that the international community should not wait for the cessation of hostilities to reach millions of innocent people trapped in the region. It is also imperative that the international community takes heed of the findings of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE) which once again established that the Ethiopian government has deliberately weaponized access to aid and other basic goods and services necessary for survival.

Waiting for permission from the Ethiopian government to deliver aid to Tigray at this time is a heinous miscarriage of the responsibility to protect vulnerable civilians. Moreover, GSTS would like to strongly aver that international humanitarian organizations that point to their inability to conduct proper studies of mortality to indefinitely delay declaring famine in Tigray are aiding in the heinous weaponization of starvation and will not escape the condemnation of history. The international community and responsible western governments should remain true to their vow to “never again” allow such an atrocity pronounced after the Rwandan genocide.

GSTS stands ready to offer any support in all ways possible to efforts by the international community to end the humanitarian crisis in Tigray and realize a sustainable peace process.