ETHIOPIA

THE CIVIL WAR IN ETHIOPIA BEGAN IN 2020 AFTER MONTHS OF TENSION
between Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed’s government and the ethnic
Tigrayan political party, the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF).
The conflict turned violent in November 2020 when the TPLF attacked a
government military base. In response, the government ordered a military
operation into Tigray to allegedly prevent further instability in the region.
To help fight the TPLF, Ahmed secretly invited Eritrean national forces
into Ethiopia.

Up to 600,000 people are estimated to have been killed in the conflict
or died as a result of the man-made famine in Tigray, and more than
two million have been displaced. According to the United Nations, all
parties to the conflict have committed “serious abuses and violations
of human rights, humanitarian, and refugee law,” many of which “may
amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes.” Ethiopian and
Eritrean federal forces have reportedly killed the largest numbers of
civilians in Tigray. These forces have committed massacres, sexual and
gender-based violence, extrajudicial killings, indiscriminate shelling,
and large-scale forced displacement. The Ethiopian government blocked
access to food, basic supplies, and healthcare in the Tigray region, causing
thousands of deaths. Tigrayan forces and other armed groups also have
committed mass atrocities during the conflict.

A Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, mediated by the African Union, was
signed on November 2, 2022, between the Government of Ethiopia and
Tigray People’s Liberation Front. The peace agreement delivers a roadmap
to end the civil war and has led to a significant decrease in violence by
the Ethiopian National Defense Forces and Tigrayan Defense Forces.
However, civilians continue to suffer egregious human rights violations
perpetrated by Eritrean and regional militia forces. The unraveling of past
agreements and the worsening situation in Ethiopia’s Oromia region mean
civilians may still face a serious risk of mass atrocities.
The Museum’s Simon-Skjodt Center is deeply concerned about the risk of future mass atrocities, the continued targeting of minority ethnic groups, and the lack of accountability for past crimes.

**Governments around the world should:**

- Press parties to the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement to implement all provisions of the peace deal, including advancing accountability efforts for mass atrocities. They should remain vigilant to mass atrocity risks facing civilians despite the peace agreement.
- Ensure all armed groups, including Eritrean forces and regional militias, stop committing mass atrocities and bring to justice members of their forces who have committed violations.
- Publicize determinations as to whether war crimes, crimes against humanity, and/or genocide have been committed in Ethiopia.
- Maintain arms embargoes to prevent weapons from flowing to all sides in the conflict.
- Continue pressing for greater humanitarian access and aid to populations in need of assistance.

**LEARN MORE AT** [ushmm.org/ethiopia](http://ushmm.org/ethiopia)

Signature image: A woman stands in line to receive food donations at a school turned into a temporary shelter for people displaced by conflict in the Tigray region, Ethiopia, March 15, 2021. Baz Ratner/Reuters