

“TODAY OR TOMORROW, THEY SHOULD BE BROUGHT BEFORE JUSTICE”

RAPE, SEXUAL SLAVERY, EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS, AND PILLAGE BY ERITREAN FORCES IN TIGRAY

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Amnesty International is a movement of 10 million people which mobilizes the humanity in everyone and campaigns for change so we can all enjoy our human rights. Our vision is of a world where those in power keep their promises, respect international law and are held to account. We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion and are funded mainly by our membership and individual donations. We believe that acting in solidarity and compassion with people everywhere can change our societies for the better.

© Amnesty International 2023
Except where otherwise noted, content in this document is licensed under a Creative Commons (attribution, non-commercial, no derivatives, international 4.0) license.
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode
For more information, please visit the permissions page on our website: www.amnesty.org
Where material is attributed to a copyright owner other than Amnesty International this material is not subject to the Creative Commons license.
First published in 2023
by Amnesty International Ltd
Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street
London WC1X 0DW, UK

Index: AFR 25/7152/2023
Original language: English

amnesty.org

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 6

METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE 9

BACKGROUND 11

TIMELINE 13

RAPE AGAINST WOMEN IN KOKOB TSIBAH 14

SEXUAL SLAVERY INSIDE EDF'S MILITARY CAMP 17

SEXUAL SLAVERY AND RAPE IN RESIDENTIAL HOUSES 20

GANG RAPE 21

IMPACTS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE 22

EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS OF CIVILIANS 25

EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS IN KOBOB TSIBAH DISTRICT 25

EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS IN MARIAM SHEWITO DISTRICT 28

PILLAGE OF CIVILIAN PROPERTIES 30

VIOLATIONS OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LAW 32

RAPE AND SEXUAL SLAVERY AS WAR CRIMES AND POSSIBLY CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY 33

SEXUAL SLAVERY AS TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS 34

MURDER AS A WAR CRIME AND POSSIBLY A CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY 35

PILLAGE AS A WAR CRIME 35

PROSPECTS FOR JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY 37

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS 40

RECOMMENDATIONS 41

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

GLOSSARY

WORD	DESCRIPTION
ACHPR	African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
AP II	Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions
ASF	Amhara Special Forces
AU	African Union
CAT	Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CoHA	Cessation of Hostilities Agreement
CoI	Commission of Inquiry on the Situation in the Tigray Region of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EDF	Eritrean Defense Forces
ENDF	Ethiopian National Defense Forces
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
HRC	Human Rights Council
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
ICHREE	International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia
IHL	International Human Rights Law
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
OPDO	Oromo People's Democratic Organization
PFDJ	People's Front for Democracy and Justice

WORD	DESCRIPTION
STDs	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Front
UN HRC	United Nations Human Rights Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

> **“They told me, ‘Whether you shout or not, no one is going to come and rescue you.’ And then they raped me for around three months since then. They were taking turns on me, just like a doorkeeper.”**
>
> 37-year-old Bezawit, woman who was held captive by the EDF in her house for nearly three months.

When Ethiopia’s federal government and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) signed the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) on 2 November 2022, there was hope it would end the crimes under international law and other human rights abuses that had characterized the conflict in northern Ethiopia. Yet, Amnesty International has found that crimes under international law took place during the final days of the negotiations for the CoHA, between 25 October and 1 November 2022, with Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF) extrajudicially executing civilians in Mariam Shewito, a district in the Tigray region. We have also found that for nearly three months after the signing of the CoHA, EDF soldiers raped and sexually enslaved women, and extrajudicially executed civilians, largely men, in Tigray’s Kokob Tsibah district. These serious violations constitute war crimes and may also amount to crimes against humanity.

The conflict in northern Ethiopia, including the Tigray region, is a non-international armed conflict.[1] As such, fighting between the parties in this conflict is governed by international humanitarian law which, among other things, seeks to protect civilians and fighters who have ceased to take part in hostilities.

The report is based on 49 interviews conducted remotely by Amnesty International between 13 May and 15 July 2023. Amnesty International interviewed victims and survivors of violations, their family members, and witnesses. Such testimonies were corroborated using information from social workers, medical experts who treated victims and survivors, local government officials, and civil society organizations. On 17 August 2023, Amnesty International shared its preliminary findings with the Eritrean and Ethiopian governments. At the time of writing, the organization had not received a response.

The day before the CoHA was signed, fighting between Tigrayan forces and the ENDF – allied with the EDF - broke out in parts of Tigray’s Eastern Zone, including in Kokob Tsibah district. Residents recalled that active fighting ended on the evening of 3 November 2022, and the district remained under the EDF’s control until 19 January 2023. The ENDF were present in the district when some of these violations occurred, but after capturing the city, residents reported that they left and proceeded towards Adigrat. Similarly in Mariam Shewito, the EDF went into residential areas and committed extrajudicial executions from 25 October – 1 November 2022, before leaving the area on 1 November. According to media reports of dynamics in the

[1] This determination is strictly limited to the armed conflict that broke out between the Tigrayan forces and the federal government and its allied forces in 2020. The non-international armed conflict covered in this report is distinct from the ongoing security crisis in the Amhara region, which has escalated significantly since 3 August 2023.

wider area, this followed Eritrean losses in fighting with the Tigrayan forces and appeared to be carried out in retaliation.[2]

Between 1 November 2022 and 19 January 2023, members of the EDF in Kokob Tsibah district held at least 15 women captive for nearly three months at their military camp. While held, these women were repeatedly subjected to rape by EDF members in a situation amounting to sexual slavery. They were also subjected to physical and psychological abuse and deprivation of food, water, and medical services. The EDF in Kokob Tsibah district also perpetrated gang rape and rape against women held captive in their own houses, a situation that also amounts to sexual slavery. According to survivors, a social worker, and local officials, the EDF targeted the women on suspicion that their husbands, sons, or male relatives were in the Tigrayan forces.

Taken together with previous documentation by Amnesty International, these cases of rape and sexual slavery could be considered as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against the civilian population, potentially amounting to crimes against humanity.

The survivors of rape and sexual slavery interviewed by Amnesty International continue to experience physical and psychological harm and stigma. None of those interviewed received comprehensive medical care, including emergency care, and the majority only obtained medical support after the EDF withdrew from Kokob Tsibah on 19 January 2023.

During the same general time period, EDF soldiers stationed in the Mariam Shewito and Kokob Tsibah districts carried out extrajudicial executions of civilians, largely men, while conducting house-to-house searches of houses and residences, allegedly in pursuit of members of the Tigrayan forces and their supporters. Amnesty International interviewed witnesses, survivors, and family members of victims, who testified about the extrajudicial execution of at least 20 civilians, primarily men, by the EDF in Mariam Shewito district between 25 October and 1 November 2022. In addition, a social worker who documented extrajudicial executions in the district provided a list of more than 100 names of people who they said had been extrajudicially executed within this period, although Amnesty International was not able to independently corroborate all these cases. Finally, interviews with survivors, witnesses, and family members, as well as a list provided by a local authority, has led Amnesty International to conclude that EDF soldiers also executed 24 civilians in Kokob Tsibah district between November 2022 and January 2023.

In all the cases documented in the report, multiple interviewees corroborated claims that victims of extrajudicial executions were civilians. In the context of the armed conflict in Tigray, extrajudicial executions of civilians amount to the war crime of murder. To the extent that the extrajudicial executions committed by the EDF against Tigrayan civilians are part of a widespread and systematic attack directed against the Tigrayan population, as previously documented by Amnesty International, they may amount to the crime against humanity of murder.

Most of the 49 survivors, witnesses, and family members of victims interviewed in both districts said the EDF also pillaged their properties and livestock, negatively impacting their livelihood. Many now depend on family members for shelter and food, while some say they are now sustaining themselves through begging.

Survivors and witnesses identified perpetrators as EDF through their uniforms, the Tigrigna dialect they used, the questions they asked, and the slurs they used against people from the local population.

Since the outbreak of armed conflict in the Tigray region in November 2020, Amnesty International has documented crimes under international law and other human rights abuses by all parties to the conflict, including the EDF. Eritrea is responsible for rape and sexual slavery, extrajudicial executions and pillage committed by members of its armed forces, and it must accordingly investigate and, where enough evidence exists, prosecute such crimes in line with international fair trial standards and without application of the death penalty. Notwithstanding Eritrea's responsibility, Ethiopia is also bound under international human rights law to protect Tigrayans from human rights abuses committed by the EDF, and to take actions to redress rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated in the context of the armed conflict. This includes ensuring effective investigations and prosecutions are carried out and providing adequate remedies and reparations to victims and survivors, including medical and psychosocial support.

[2] The Washington Post, "Hundreds massacred in Ethiopia even as peace deal was being reached", 28 February 2023, washingtonpost.com/world/2023/02/28/ethiopia-massacre-tigray-eritrea/ ; The Guardian, "'They just left the corpses lying there': survivors speak about the horrors of a massacre in northern Tigray", 20 April 2023, theguardian.com/global-development/2023/apr/20/the-hyenas-had-eaten-the-rest-survivors-speak-about-the-horrors-of-massacres-in-northern-tigray ; Deutsche Welle, "In Tigray, evidence of a massacre by Eritrean soldiers", 13 March 2023, dw.com/en/ethiopia-evidence-of-a-massacre-by-eritrean-soldiers-in-tigray/a-64969922

The Ethiopian government's persistent resistance to investigations by regional and international human rights mechanisms constitutes a challenge to achieving accountability for crimes under international law and other human rights abuses committed by the EDF, and to ensuring justice for victims and survivors. While the CoHA envisages a national Transitional Justice Policy Framework, the Ethiopian government has been a party to the conflict and implicated in crimes under international law and other human rights abuses. Domestic justice mechanisms, at present, cannot meet standards of fair process, independence, and impartiality as required under international human rights law. Further, the sole focus on local actors excludes justice, truth, and reparations for crimes by Eritrean forces.

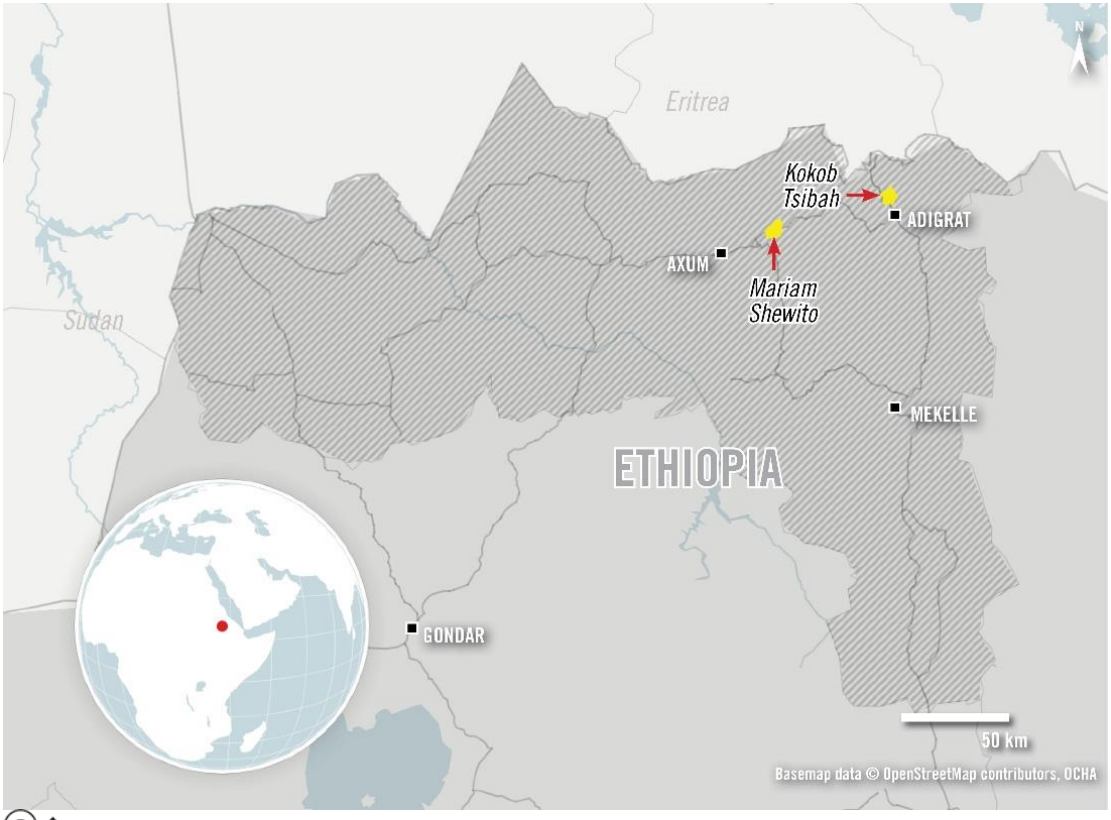
In June 2023, after nearly two years of sustained pressure and a smear campaign by the Ethiopian government, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights prematurely terminated the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry on the Situation in the Tigray Region of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia (CoI), which had been established in May 2021. The mandate of the sole remaining international mechanism – the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE) established by the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) in December 2021 – will expire if it is not renewed at the 54th session of the UN HRC, which will begin on 11 September 2023. Established to investigate alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law, humanitarian law, and refugee law in Ethiopia since 4 November 2020 by all parties to the conflict, the ICHREE is critical to preserve evidence and support future accountability efforts.

Amidst continued crimes under international law and other human rights abuses, and bleak prospects for domestic accountability, Amnesty International is calling for:

- ICHREE's mandate to be renewed and fully supported.
- The African Commission to reinstate the mandate of the CoI and ensure it concludes with a report of its findings and recommendations.
- Ethiopia's partners to do more to encourage the Ethiopian government to accept an internationally mandated investigation and accountability mechanism which ensures justice for all victims.
- The African Union (AU)'s Monitoring, Verification and Compliance Mission to report on its monitoring of the implementation of principles underpinning the CoHA, including respect for human rights.

METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

This report presents the findings of an Amnesty International investigation conducted between 13 May and 15 July 2023 documenting crimes under international law and other human rights abuses including rape, sexual slavery, extrajudicial executions, and pillage by the EDF, in Ethiopia's Tigray Region between October 2022 and January 2023. The research covers specific incidents and trends in Kokob Tsibah and Mariam Shewito districts, in the Eastern and Central Zones of Tigray region.



The overview map above shows the location of Mariam Shewito and Kokob Tsibah districts within the Tigray Region in Ethiopia.

Kokob Tsibah is in Genta Afeshum woreda[3] in the Eastern Zone of Tigray region, 161 km (about 100.04 mi) from the regional capital, Mekelle, and is near the Ethiopia-Eritrean border. The violations in Kokob Tsibah

[3] *Woreda* is a local administrative structure in Tigray region that consists of *kebeles* (lower districts) and sub-districts.

began a day before the signing of the CoHA between the Ethiopian government and the TPLF on 2 November 2022 in Pretoria, South Africa.[4] Acts of sexual violence perpetrated by the EDF against women continued for about three months until 19 January 2023.

Mariam Shewito is a district located in Tigray's Central zone, near the historic city of Adwa[5], and 213 km (about 132.35 mi) from the regional capital, Mekelle. Violations documented in Mariam Shewito occurred between 25 October 2022 and 1 November 2022, while negotiations between the Ethiopian government and the TPLF were underway in Pretoria, South Africa.

The report is based on 49 interviews conducted remotely, via telephone, by Amnesty International, between 13 May and 15 July 2023. The interviews were conducted in line with the Murad Code of Conduct.[6] In Kokob Tsibah, Amnesty International interviewed 11 survivors of sexual violence and 17 witnesses of extrajudicial executions. In Mariam Shewito, Amnesty International researchers interviewed 21 witnesses concerning extrajudicial executions of civilians. Testimonies of survivors and witnesses were corroborated using information from social workers, medical experts who treated victims and survivors, local interim government officials, and civil society organizations representatives. Interviews were conducted in Tigrigna (with interpretation) or in Amharic. Amnesty International's Evidence Lab also analyzed satellite imagery of the Kokob Tsibah area to corroborate details of attacks. Additional documentary evidence, such as photos and reports by humanitarian agencies, were also used to further verify testimonies of survivors and witnesses.

Interviews with survivors of sexual violence were carried out in a way that ensured protection of their privacy and security. Interviewees' names and other identifying information were removed, and pseudonyms utilized throughout this report. In a few instances, the specific locations of the interviews are withheld for security reasons. Amnesty International also referred survivors to medical and/or psychological support services, as appropriate. Survivors provided informed consent for public use of their testimonies.

In addition to interviewing survivors and witnesses about incidents they had experienced or witnessed, Amnesty International also asked interviewees about what justice looks like to them and their recommendations to duty bearers, including the Tigray Region Interim administration, [7] the Ethiopian government and the international community are summarized as part of this research.

The current report focuses only on rape and sexual slavery in Kokob Tsibah, and cases of extrajudicial executions and pillage perpetrated by members of the EDF in both Kokob Tsibah and Mariam Shewito districts. As such, it does not address crimes under international law and other human rights abuses in other areas of the Tigray region which were, or still are, under the control of the EDF at the time of writing.

On 17 August 2023, Amnesty International shared preliminary research findings with the Attorney General of the Ethiopian federal government, the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopian foreign government and the Minister of Information of the Eritrean government. Amnesty International requested comments on the findings but had not received a response at the time of writing.

[4] BBC News, "Ethiopia's Tigray Conflict: Truce agreed", 2 November 2022, bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-63490546

[5] OMNA Tigray, "The Historical Significance of Adwa", omnatigray.org/slide-deck/the-historical-significance-of-adwa/

[6] "Global Code of Conduct for Gathering and Using Information about Systematic and Conflict-Related Sexual Violence" (known as Murad Code), 13 April 2022, muradcode.com/murad-code

[7] The Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed established an interim administration for Tigray region after the signing of the CoHA, For more on this see Reuters, "Ethiopia Established Tigray Interim Administration as part of peace plan", 23 March 2023, reuters.com/world/africa/ethiopia-says-tigray-interim-administration-set-up-part-peace-plan-2023-03-23/

BACKGROUND

The TPLF[8] was one of four major political parties that formed the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a coalition that ruled Ethiopia from 1991 to 2018. The EPRDF was known for its brutal crackdown against independent media,[9] local and international NGOs (non-governmental organizations), human rights groups,[10] members of opposition political parties and significantly restricting civic space. Beginning 2015, the TPLF-dominated EPRDF faced internal power struggles, coupled with popular protests in Oromia and later Amhara regions.[11] This culminated with EPRDF's election of Abiy Ahmed,[12] as its chairperson in March 2018. Subsequently, Abiy Ahmed, a member of the then Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) – the Oromia section of the EPRDF – was confirmed Prime Minister of Ethiopia by the House of Representatives.

Tensions between the TPLF and the Eritrean government date back to 1998-2000, when Ethiopia and Eritrea engaged in a conflict over disputed territories along their borders. Once comrades, the border conflict[13] turned the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and TPLF into sworn enemies. TPLF and some sections of the EPRDF had previously fought alongside the EPLF, against the military junta Derg. [14] The Derg regime had ruled Ethiopia from 1974 to 1991 and was overthrown in May 1991, after 17 years of fighting; two years later, Eritrea seceded from Ethiopia. In Eritrea, the EPLF formed the ruling People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), while the TPLF-led EPRDF took power in Ethiopia. After the signing of a Peace Agreement in Algeria on 12 December 2000, the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea ceased. However, the two countries remained in a "no-peace/no-war" situation until another peace agreement was signed between Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Eritrea's president, Isaias Afewerki[15] in 2018.

The efforts to end the war earned Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed a Nobel peace prize[16] in 2019. The signing of the agreement turned out to be a harbinger of an impending dispute between the leadership of Tigray region (the TPLF), and the Ethiopian federal government. The TPLF, which retreated to Tigray region after Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's ascension, expressed discontent over the process that led to the peace agreement, stating that the agreement excluded the region which borders Eritrea. [17]

After one year in office, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed dissolved the EPRDF and constituted the Prosperity Party[18] in December 2019. The TPLF opted out of the new party, labelling the initiative "illegal." [19]

---

[8] Deutsche Welle, "Who are the Tigray fighters?", 6 November 2021, dw.com/en/who-are-the-tigray-fighters-and-why-is-ethiopia-at-war-with-them/a-59736874

[9] Human Rights Watch, *"Journalism Is Not a Crime": Violations of Media Freedoms in Ethiopia*, 15 January 2015, hrw.org/report/2015/01/21/journalism-not-crime/violations-media-freedoms-ethiopia

[10] Amnesty International, *Ethiopia: Release prisoners of conscience immediately and unconditionally* (Index: AFR 25/004/2014), 21 July 2014, amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/004/2014/en/

[11] Amnesty International, "Ethiopia: Ethnic Oromos arrested, tortured and killed by the state in relentless repression of dissent" 28 October 2014, amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2014/10/ethiopia-ethnic-oromos-arrested-tortured-and-killed-state-relentless-repres/

[12] BBC News, "Ethiopia election: Abiy Ahmed wins with huge majority", 11 July 2021, bbc.com/news/world-africa-57791868

[13] BBC News, "Remembering Eritrea-Ethiopia border war: Africa's unfinished conflict", 6 May 2018, bbc.com/news/world-africa-44004212

[14] Word Press, The Derg Regime: 1974-1991, adventuresinthehorn.wordpress.com/ethiopia/the-derg-regime-1974-1991/

[15] Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, London, UK, "Ethiopia and Eritrea sign peace agreement in Saudi Arabia", 17 September 2018, ethioembassy.org.uk/ethiopia-and-eritrea-sign-peace-agreement-in-saudi-arabia/

[16] The Nobel Prize, nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2019/abiy/facts/

[17] Addis Standard, "News: TPLF says Ethiopia's recent Eritrea, economy related decisions have "fundamental flaws"; calls for emergency meeting of the ruling EPRDF executive, council committee", 13 June 2018.

[18] BBC News, "Ethiopia's Abiy Ahmed gets a new ruling party", 22 November 2019, bbc.com/news/world-africa-50515636

[19] Addis Standard, "News: TPLF cites legal, procedural shortfalls to decline merger", 21 November 2019, addisstandard.com/news-tplf-cites-legal-procedural-shortfalls-to-decline-merger/

Amidst escalating tensions between the Tigray region and the Ethiopian federal government, another point of contention emerged when the federal government decided to postpone the 2020 national election, citing concerns that related to the Covid-19 pandemic.[20] The Tigray region, under the leadership of the TPLF, disregarded the federal government's decision and went on to hold elections for the regional council in September 2020[21] which the party won by a landslide.[22]

A month later, the House of Federation (the upper house of Ethiopia's legislature) suspended budget[23] subsidies allocated to the Tigray region, stating that the regional election was unconstitutional, and the regional government illegitimate. This move severed the ties between the Tigray region and the federal government, setting the stage for the ensuing armed conflict.

The armed conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region, which later extended into neighbouring Amhara and Afar regions, began on 4 November 2020 when Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed launched a "law enforcement operation" against TPLF-led security forces in the Tigray region, following an attack on the Ethiopian National Defense Force's Northern Command based there.[24]

Since the onset of the armed conflict, Ethiopian government forces have been supported by the neighbouring Amhara Region Special Police Force (ASF), local militias from the Amhara region, and the EDF.

Throughout the conflict Amnesty International has documented crimes under international law, and other human rights abuses perpetrated by all parties to the conflict, which amount to war crimes and may amount to crimes against humanity.

On 12 November 2020, Amnesty International published a research report showing that scores of civilians had been killed in Mai-Kadra town, in Western Tigray.[25] In a subsequent report, Amnesty International documented that between 19 and 29 November 2020, Eritrean troops operating in Axum, Tigray, conducted mass executions of civilians, looted properties, and indiscriminately targeted civilians; concluding that such acts may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.[26] On 12 February 2022, Amnesty International published its findings of summary killings, looting and rape by Tigrayan forces in Amhara region.[27] On 6 April 2022, Amnesty International, in a joint report with Human Rights Watch, documented that, officials from neighbouring Amhara region had committed crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing against Tigrayans in the Western Tigray region.[28] The organization also documented systemic and widespread sexual violence against women and girls in the Tigray region, including sexual slavery, by the, EDF, ENDF, ASF and militias fighting alongside the federal government.[29]

A report by the ICHREE found reasonable grounds to believe that denial and obstruction of humanitarian access to Tigray Region by the federal government and allied regional state governments was designed to deprive the Tigrayan population of objects indispensable for survival, including food and healthcare.[30] This violated the prohibition of starvation of the civilian population as a method of combat,[31] as well as the obligation of the parties to the conflict to allow and facilitate delivery of impartial humanitarian relief for civilians. In May 2022, a communication issued by the UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, also indicated that they had received information regarding women and girls

---

[20] Reuters, "Ethiopia postpones August election due to coronavirus", 31 March 2020, reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-election-idUSKBN21I2QU

[21] Reuters, "Ethiopia's Tigray holds regional election in defiance of federal government", 9 September 2020, reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-politics-idUSKBN25Z35S https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-politics-idUSKBN25Z35S

[22] Addis Standard, "News: TPLF wins regional election by landslide", 11 September 2020, addisstandard.com/news-tplf-wins-regional-election-by-landslide/

[23] Geeska Afrika, "Ethiopia: Federal government freezes budget to Tigray region", 7 October 2020, geeskaafrika.com/federal-government-freezes-budget-to-tigray-region/

[24] CNN, "Ethiopia's Nobel laureate leader vows 'military confrontation' with restive region", 4 November 2020, edition.cnn.com/2020/11/04/africa/ethiopia-military-tigray-region-intl/index.html

[25] Amnesty International, "Ethiopia: Investigation Reveals Evidence that Scores of Civilians were Killed in Massacre in Tigray State", 12 November 2020, amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/11/ethiopia-investigation-reveals-evidence-that-scores-of-civilians-were-killed-in-massacre-in-tigray-state/

[26] Amnesty International, *Ethiopia: The Massacre in Axum* (Index: AFR 25/3730/2021), 26 February 2021, amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/3730/2021/en/

[27] Amnesty International, *Summary killings, rape and looting by Tigrayan forces in Amhara*, (Index: AFR 25/5218/2022),16 February 2022, amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/5218/2022/en/

[28] Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, *Ethiopia: "We will erase you from this land": Crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing in Ethiopia's Western Tigray Zone*, (Index: AFR 25/5444/2022), 6 April 2022, amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/5444/2022/en/

[29] Amnesty International, *Ethiopia: "I don't know if they realized I was a person": Rape and sexual violence in the conflict in Tigray* (Index: AFR 25/4569/2021), 11 August 2021, amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/4569/2021/en/

[30] UN International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, 19 September 2022, A/HRC/51/46, para. 96.

[31] Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), Article 14; ICRC *Customary IHL Study*, Rule 53.

being subjected to various forms of exploitation, including sexual slavery, within the context of the armed conflict in the northern part of Ethiopia. [32]

Various subsequent reports also found that the EDF perpetrated crimes under international law, and other human rights abuses in the Tigray region; these include rape, gang rape, sexual slavery, and other forms of sexual violence and atrocities against Tigrayan women and girls. [33]

On 2 November 2022, the Ethiopian federal government and the TPLF signed the CoHA. Among other things, the CoHA envisages the withdrawal of foreign armed forces from Tigray Regional State. Following the CoHA, EDF withdrew from most of the areas that it occupied in Tigray. However, part of the region along the northern border with Eritrea is still under its control. [34]

TIMELINE

- 4 November 2020 - Armed conflict between the TPLF and the Ethiopian federal government breaks out.
- 28 June 2021 - Declaration of the humanitarian truce by the Ethiopian federal government
- 24 March 2022 – The federal government declares a second humanitarian truce.
- 25 October 2022 – Battle in Mariam Shewito begins.
- 1 November 2022 – The EDF withdraws from Mariam Shewito.
- 1 November 2022 – Battle breaks out in Kokob Tsibah.
- 2 November 2022 – Permanent CoHA is signed between the TPLF and the federal government of Ethiopia.
- 3 November 2022 - Battle in Kokob Tsibah ends at around 8pm.
- 19 January 2023 - EDF withdraws from Kokob Tsibah.

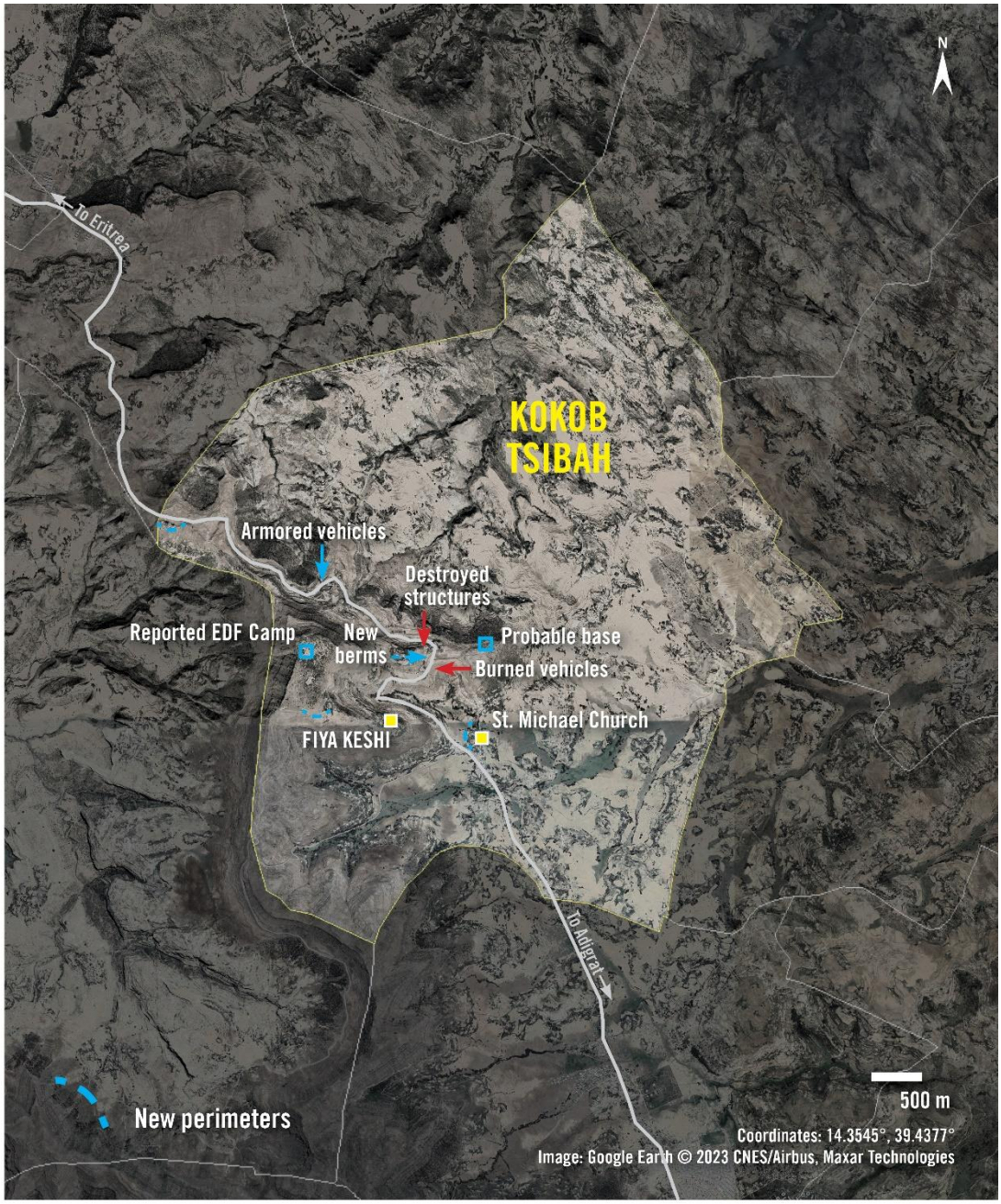
[32] Joint communication of UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and six other mandate holders, Letter, 11 May 2022, Ref.: AL ERI 2/2022.
[33] The Telegraph, "We're here to make you HIV positive": Hundreds of women rush to Tigray hospitals as soldiers use rape as weapon of war", 27 March 2021, telegraph.co.uk/global-health/women-and-girls/make-hiv-positive-hundreds-women-rush-tigray-hospitals-soldiers/
[34] Reuters, "Eritrean troops still on Ethiopian soil, U.S. says", 29 January 2023, reuters.com/world/africa/eritrea-troops-still-ethiopian-soil-us-2023-01 28/#:~:text=A%20senior%20Ethiopia%20military%20officer%20briefing%20foreign%20officials,acronym%20for%20the%20Federal%20Democratic%20Republic%20of%20Ethiopia

RAPE AGAINST WOMEN IN KOKOB TSIBAH

The day before representatives of the TPLF and the federal government of Ethiopia signed the CoHA, fighting broke out – in parts of Tigray's Eastern Zone, including in the Kokob Tsibah district – between Tigrayan forces and the ENDF (allied with the EDF). According to Kokob Tsibah residents and a local administration official, fighting in Kokob Tsibah went on for at least 24 hours after the signing of the CoHA.[35] Residents recall that active fighting ended on the evening of 3 November 2022. The district remained under the EDF's control until 19 January 2023. [36]

[35] Interviews by voice calls with three witnesses of extrajudicial execution, Kokob Tsibah, 20 May 2023; Interviews by voice calls with two witnesses of extrajudicial execution, Kokob Tsibah, 21 May 2023; Interview by voice call with a witness of extrajudicial execution, Kokob Tsibah, 22 May 2023; Interview by voice call with a social worker, 24 June 2023; Interview by voice call with a former interim government official, 7 June 2023; Interview by voice call with a resident of the district, 10 August 2023.
[36] Interviews by voice calls with two survivors from Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023.

Kokob Tsibah District: Satellite imagery over Kokob Tsibah was reviewed between 2 November 2022 to 23 January 2023. During that time, armored vehicles, new earthen berms, some damaged or destroyed structures and vehicles, and new perimeters were visible. A large number of new temporary structures appear to have been erected all along the main road and the edges of the plateaus. The overview map shows some of the key locations discussed in the report.





Kokob Tsibah District: Satellite imagery shows many new structures - highlighted with blue boxes - have appeared between 28 March 2022 and 4 December 2022. Armored vehicles are visible along the main road.



Satellite imagery shows that many new structures - highlighted with blue boxes - have appeared between 28 March 2022 and 4 December 2022. New machine-built earthen berms are also visible. Red arrows show burn scars on the road from destroyed vehicles and red circles highlight three structures that appear damaged or destroyed. The vehicles were destroyed between 2-3 November 2022, according to satellite imagery (not shown).

This was not the first time that Kokob Tsibah fell under the EDF's control. Previously, it had been held by the EDF for seven months from 21 November 2020 to 28 June 2021, according to a social worker. During this time, nearby towns had also been under EDF's control, and the social worker said that made it extremely difficult for survivors to get medical support at the nearest available heath centers.[37] The social worker told Amnesty International that, during this earlier period, around 120 women had reported to their organization that they had been subjected to sexual violence by members of the EDF.

[37] Interview by voice call with a social worker, 24 June 2023.

More than 40 women in Kokob Tsibah district reported to the same civil society organization that they had been subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence in the context of the conflict after the signing of the CoHA on 2 November 2022. The social worker told Amnesty International that they had recorded a total of 160 cases of sexual violence in the context of the conflict, between November 2020 and January 2023[38]

Survivors experienced rape and sexual slavery in various settings, including inside an EDF military camp and in civilian residences, including in their own homes.[39]

Survivors of sexual violence and witnesses to killings, identified perpetrators through their uniforms, the Tigrinya dialect, and the type of questions they asked. [40] Kokob Tsibah and Mariam Shewito are near the Eritrean border, and survivors say they are familiar with the Eritrean dialect.[41] According to survivors, EDF soldiers frequently asked them, "Weren't you chanting that Tigray will win?"[42] and used the popular slur *"Agame"*[43] against them.[44]

A medical expert who provided services for survivors said their centre has handled 2250 cases of conflict-related sexual violence from parts of Eastern Tigray Zone, including Kokob Tsibah – between November 2020, when conflict broke out, and June 2023. The medical expert also added that, in June 2023, they received 76 new cases of conflict-related sexual violence in just one week. Survivors of rape and other forms of sexual violence from Irob and Gulomakeda districts are reporting to the health centre. The expert added that patients from Kokob Tsibah district came with physical and psychological harm. [45]

SEXUAL SLAVERY INSIDE EDF'S MILITARY CAMP

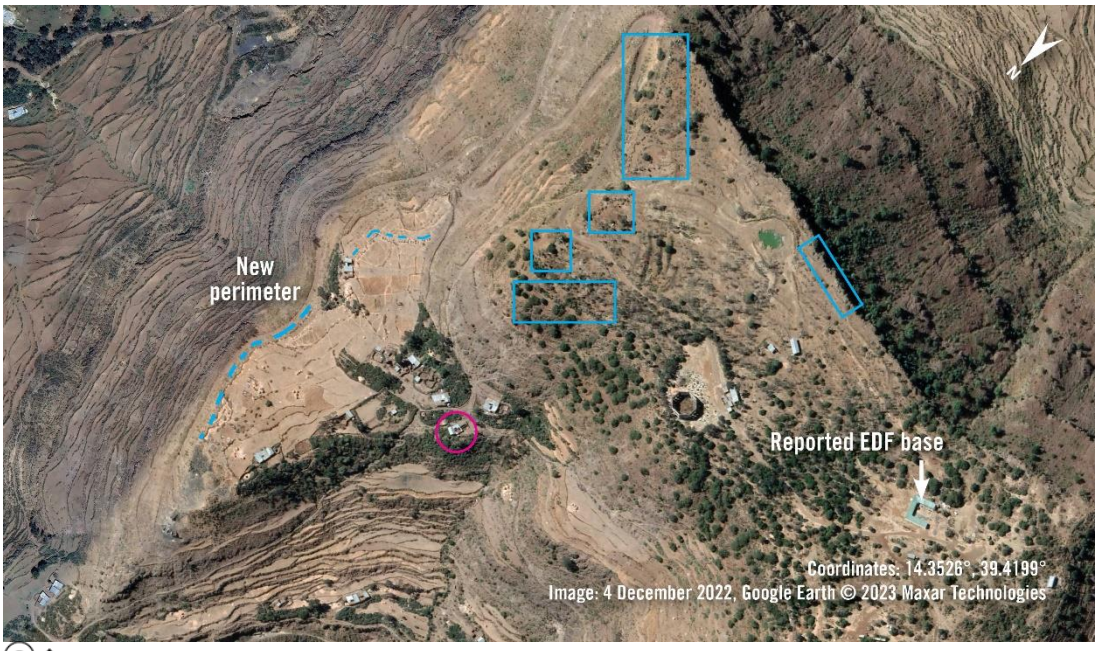
> **"They [EDF soldiers] took turns on me, for the entire three months".**
>
> A mother of three who was kept in EDF camp for nearly three months

Amnesty International interviewed four survivors of sexual violence who had been detained by the EDF and subjected to rape for up to three months at an EDF camp in Kokob Tsibah.[46] Located at the top of a hill close to St Georgi's Monastery, a resident said that the facility had been used as a military base by the ENDF during the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict.[47]

Two survivors recounted that they were among 15 women held and subjected to rape by the EDF from 1 November 2022 to 19 January 2023,[48] while two others said they were held inside the EDF camp alongside other women.[49] A social worker working closely with the survivors confirmed that they had documented the cases of 15 women held inside the EDF camp for nearly three months.[50] According to their testimonies and

[38] Interview by voice call with a social worker, 24 June 2023.
[39] Interviews by voice calls with two survivors, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023.
[40] Interviews by voice calls with 49 residents, Kokob Tsibah and Mariam Shewito, 13 to 23 March 2023.
[41] Interviews by voice calls with two survivors, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023.
[42] Interview by voice call with a witness, Kokob Tsibah, 23 May 2023.
[43] *Agame* is the name of a district in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia, and the word could also refer to people from this specific district. However, the term is widely used to refer to Tigrayans with derogative connotations.
[44] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023.
[45] Interview by voice call with a health worker, Adigrat, 5 July 2023; For more information on the two locations and EDF presence, see Africans for the Horn, *Ethiopia Watch – Civil Society Monitor of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement*, 9 July 2023, p. 13, africansforthehorn.org/ethiopia-watch-cso-monitor/
[46] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023; Interviews by voice calls with three survivors from Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023.
[47] BBC, "Remembering Eritrea-Ethiopia border war: Africa's unfinished conflict", 6 May 2018, bbc.com/news/world-africa-44004212; Interview by voice call, Kokob Tsibah,10 August 2023.
[48] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023; Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023.
[49] Interviews by voice calls with two survivors, Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023.
[50] Interview by voice call with a social worker, 24 June 2023.

an interview with a social worker, the women were targeted on suspicion of having relatives or partners in the Tigrayan forces.[51]



Kokob Tsibah District: Satellite imagery shows that many new structures - highlighted with blue boxes - have appeared between 28 March 2022 and 4 December 2022 close to the reported EDF military base. New perimeters are also visible. One damaged structure is visible - highlighted with a red circle.

Three of the four women interviewed for this research were held in the EDF camp for the entire time – about three months[52] – while one of the survivors escaped after two weeks, only to be subsequently apprehended and held captive in her home.[53] The women who were held captive inside the military camp said they were subjected to rape, deprived of food and medical services, and experienced other physical and psychological harm. They also experienced intrusive interrogative questions, offensive slurs, and other mistreatment at the hands of the EDF. [54]

"I had a good life," said Fanta, as almost all survivors of sexual violence interviewed for this research described their life before the conflict. After she and her husband got divorced, Fanta took on the responsibility of raising their three children as a single mother.

Fanta was among the 15 women who survived sexual violence after being held inside the EDF military camp for close to three months. On the day the EDF captured Kokob Tsibah, on 1 November 2022, they asked Fanta of the whereabouts of her husband; Fanta answered that that they were divorced.

She told Amnesty International that five EDF soldiers' gang-raped her for three consecutive days – 1 to 3 November 2022. She was kept in a house where the EDF militants stayed before they moved her to the military camp. "During the three months that we were held by the EDF, people were already mourning for us thinking that we were dead" Fanta said. She told Amnesty International that multiple EDF soldiers repeatedly subjected the women to rape while they were held in the camp.

She recalled:

> **"They kept taking turns raping me for the entire three months. I have never seen anything like this in my entire life. They never left me for the entire three months. When one of them leaves, the other will come. Is there anything that EDF did not do? We were locked [inside the camp] since the day they [EDF] took us to the camp. We could not go out and get medical support. We could not visit our family. There**

[51] Interviews by voice calls with survivors from Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023, 19 May 2023; Interviews by voice calls with two survivors from Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023, 19 May 2023; Interview by voice call with a social worker, 24 June 2023.
[52] Interviews by voice calls with three survivors from Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023, 19 May 2023, 19 May 2023.
[53] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023.
[54] Interviews by voice calls with three survivors from Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023, 18 May 2023, 18 May 2023.

were many women detained with me. They asked us, "Why did you stay in the city?" We told them, "We did not expect you to capture the town."[55]

According to the testimonies of two survivors[56] and a social worker[57] based in Kokob Tsibah, the EDF held the women in the camp and in their houses on suspicion that their spouses, sons, or relatives were in the Tigrayan forces. A survivor interviewed by Amnesty International narrated that she was interrogated by the EDF about not fleeing the district.[58] Another survivor said that once the EDF captured the district, they banned the remaining population in district from leaving. [59]

Tedbab was also held in the same camp. She was held there for two weeks before she managed to escape on 17 November 2022. She said she was unable to flee the district the day the EDF took control as she was looking after her 80-year-old mother.

Tedbab told Amnesty International that four EDF soldiers came to her home and took her to their camp. Initially, she was raped by four EDF soldiers. She added that the soldiers who raped her also insulted her. She explained:

"When they took me from my house, they beat me. They were saying "You do not have a government. You were ranting 'Tigray will win." They had no sense of sympathy. After they took me to their camp, they raped me. All four of them were EDF members."[60]

The case of Tedbab and other women who were subjected to rape in revenge for suspicion of having partners or relatives join the Tigrayan forces, is not an isolated incident. Throughout the conflict, Amnesty International has documented numerous cases where women have been targeted for rape and other forms of sexual violence on suspicion of being affiliated with members of the TPLF or Tigrayan forces. [61]

Two weeks into her captivity, Tedbab escaped from the camp while the EDF soldiers were in a meeting. Yet, she explained that the soldiers found where she was hiding. She said they kept coming there and raping her for about three months until the EDF withdrew from the district.[62]

In addition to experiencing sexual violence, the women held in the military camp experienced other deprivations of their human rights, including denial of food. A health expert, providing medical support to survivors, told Amnesty International that all women detained in the EDF camp lost significant weight.[63] Survivors said that they were deprived of food and water while being held there. Fanta recalled:

"They would give us a piece of bread or a biscuit, with a bottle of water a day, some days they dint provide us with anything to eat or drink." [64]

A social worker who works with the survivors told Amnesty International about the dire detention conditions inside the camp. She added that she found the survivors in a bad physical condition, and she later found out about the detention conditions from the survivors.

One survivor who was held in the EDF camp said that women were prohibited from talking to each other. She recounted receiving threats and warnings if she was caught talking to other women who had also been held captive.

"All we did was stare at each other and pray. Sometimes they will put us in groups of five, in separate rooms." [65]

A health worker working with the survivors said that those detained in the camp, and interviewed for this research, experienced oral and anal rape in addition to vaginal rape. "However, often, survivors do not disclose details of the abuse due to fear of further stigma," said the medical expert.

---

[55] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023.
[56] Interviews by voice calls with two survivors, Kokob Tsibah,18, 19 May 2023.
[57] Interview by voice call with a social worker, 24 June 2023.
[58] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023.
[59] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023.
[60] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023.
[61] Amnesty International, *Ethiopia: "I don't know if they realized I was a person": Rape and sexual violence in the conflict in Tigray* (previously cited).
[62] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023.
[63] Interview by voice call with a health worker, Adigrat, 5 July 2023.
[64] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023.
[65] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023 (previously cited).

> **"They usually cry when they discuss this. They are frightened when they talk about their experience, and it took me three or more follow-ups for them to disclose this." [66]**

33-year-old Martha, who is a mother of five and had a small business, said she was concerned about her survival if she had remained in the camp for much longer.

> **"We did not know that they had left the city until the ENDF soldiers came and let us go on 19 January 2023. We were rescued at the last minute. If we stayed there any longer, we might not have made it alive." [67]**

Later that day, her family rushed her to a nearby town to get medical help. She told Amnesty International that many other women who survived sexual violence have not received adequate medical support.

> **"Yes, there were other women as well. We were around 15. All of them are still alive. There are more than 160 women who suffered the same thing. They did not get this chance to speak like us today. Some of them will collapse and lose consciousness when they come to the hospital."[68]**

A social worker told Amnesty International that Martha had initially been in a bad psychological state and had even refused medical support. However, following support from her family, she went to a medical centre.[69] A medical expert confirmed that Martha had experienced suicidal thoughts after her ordeal and that she is now undergoing treatment. [70]

SEXUAL SLAVERY AND RAPE IN RESIDENTIAL HOUSES

Women were also subjected to sexual violence while held captive inside their homes or at houses where EDF soldiers were staying. Perpetrators prohibited survivors from leaving their own homes or houses in which they were held at. Three survivors said they had been kept under these restrictions until the EDF withdrew from the district on 19 January 2023. They described repeated instances of rape by multiple EDF soldiers.[71]

Bezawit, a 37-year-old mother of two, and a farmer, recalled being held captive in her house for about three months and being subjected to multiple incidents of rape. Once the EDF entered Kokob Tsibah district, three EDF soldiers came to her house on 2 November 2022 and took her to a nearby forest. Bezawit said all three EDF soldiers raped her on that first day.[72]

> **"They told me, "Whether you shout or not, no one is going to come and rescue you." And then they raped me for around three months since then. They were taking turns on me, just like a doorkeeper." [73]**

Bezawit said the soldiers often accompanied her when she needed to use the toilet. Whenever she asked for permission to leave the house, the EDF responded with threats. She said that the soldiers mistreated and insulted her.

> **"Whenever I ask permission to leave the house, they will ask me, "Are you going to go out and give information to Woyane [the name referring to the TPLF]?" Are you going to tell them, "They did this to me?"" They used to threaten me, saying that they were not yet done; there would be more. They used to control me just like their own wife. I have endured all the suffering just not to die. It was better to give my soul and still be alive." [74]**

Later, Bezawit managed to convince the soldiers to let her leave the house to purchase basic items. She used the opportunity to contact a social worker who covertly facilitates medical assistance in the district. However, she only managed to get HIV/AIDS and pregnancy tests.[75] A health worker providing care for Bezawit told Amnesty International that Bezawit had disclosed being beaten by EDF soldiers while held in her house. They added that Bezawit is living under heavy psychological harm from the violence and is still undergoing physical and psychological follow-up treatment.[76]

---

[66] Interview by voice call with a health worker at Adigrat, 5 July 2023.
[67] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023.
[68] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023.
[69] Interview by voice call with a social worker, 24 June 2023.
[70] Interview by voice call with a medical expert, 20 June 2023.
[71] Interviews by voice call with three survivors, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023.
[72] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023.
[73] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023 (previously cited).
[74] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023 (previously cited).
[75] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023 (previously cited).
[76] Interview by voice call with a health expert, Adigrat, 20 July 2023.

The health worker confirmed that all 11 survivors interviewed for this research had been subjected to rape. Additionally, they noted that one of the survivors interviewed had experienced rape during the EDF's initial capture of Kokob Tsibah as well as during a subsequent capture after the signing of the CoHA.[77]

Mahlet, a 38-year-old woman, was also held captive in her home and survived sexual violence. Due to her determination not to leave her ill and elderly mother behind, she decided to remain in the district while other residents fled the conflict. After the EDF entered Kokob Tsibah district, they searched her house. They found Mahlet's brother's ENDF ID card. Mahlet told them that he had been in the ENDF for a long time and lived in Addis Ababa.

> **"One of the soldiers asked me if my brother fought against them [the EDF]. I told him I did not know. In the meantime, the other soldier asked the one questioning me, "Why are you giving her time? Why don't you just take her?" And then they told me they needed me and took me with them." [78]**

Mahlet's elderly mother could not move around due to her health condition and pleaded with the soldiers to leave Mahlet alone. Mahlet said the soldiers ignored her mother's plea and threatened her, "if you don't stop, this will also be your fate." On that day, Mahlet recalled that the soldiers took her to the nearby forest, and two of them raped her while the third soldier asked them to stop. [79]

> **"One of the [EDF] soldiers insisted "leave her alone. She is a woman." But they told him "It is none of your business. Go away from here." So, two of them raped me. They kept me in the forest for around 3 hours and I came back to my home."[80]**

For close to three months, the soldiers restricted Mahlet from leaving her home, and she said they raped her multiple times. She told Amnesty International that she was not able to leave the house even to get medicine for her mother.

> **"The soldiers used to come to the house whenever they wanted and rape me. Then the other will follow. They stayed in our house for around three months. I could not leave the house even to buy the essentials. I went through a lot. I could not even tell this to anyone."[81]**

GANG RAPE

Among the survivors interviewed by Amnesty International, ten of them said that they had been raped by multiple perpetrators.[82] Four of the survivors who were sexually enslaved inside the EDF camp also stated that before they had been transferred to the camp, they had been raped by multiple EDF soldiers.[83] Two survivors described the context in which they had been gang raped; they were presented with two impossible choices between being raped or killed.[84]

Wubit, a 51-year-old woman, lost her husband long before the conflict. She said she had no land and used to raise her children through her work as a daily labourer. On 3 November 2022, two days after the conflict broke out in Kokob Tsibah, three EDF soldiers came to her house and started interrogating her. Wubit was later raped at knifepoint.

> **"They came carrying both guns and a knife. They threatened to slaughter me. They asked me "Where is your husband? Where are your children?" Two soldiers raped me and threated to kill me if I resisted. When I saw the knife, I was shivering. I said to myself "They're not killing me with the gun, are they going to slaughter me?"[85]**

She said the rape happened multiple times throughout the EDF's stay in Kokob Tsibah district.

---

[77] Interview by voice call with a health expert, Adigrat, 20 July 2023.
[78] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah,18 May 2023.
[79] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah,18 May 2023 (previously cited).
[80] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah,18 May 2023 (previously cited).
[81] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah,18 May 2023 (previously cited).
[82] Interviews by voice calls with four survivors from Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023; Interviews by voice calls with six survivors from Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023.
[83] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023; Interviews by voice calls with three survivors from Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023
[84] Interview by voice calls with two survivors, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023.
[85] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023.

"I could not escape as they will ask where we are going and prevented us from escaping. I could not defend myself. If I say no, they will kill me. They raped me multiple times."[86]

Adey, a 45-year-old woman, was in her house on 1 November 2022 when intense fighting broke out between the Tigrayan forces and the ENDF and its allied forces, including the EDF. As the fighting intensified, her house was hit by what she described as "heavy weaponry". When two EDF soldiers came to the house afterwards, she was hiding in the ruins.

"They thought I was dead. My house was partly demolished because of the strike. They were surprised that I was alive. They told me "We thought you were dead." And then they raped me." [87]

Adey was also beaten heavily while the EDF soldiers interrogated her.

They were asking me "Where are your soldiers? Where are the remaining once?" They beat me a lot. [88]

Immediately after she was assaulted, Adey left for a monastery. She said she stayed there for one month and only sought medical assistance on 8 April 2023. Adey said she has since tested positive for HIV.[89]

IMPACTS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

ACCESS TO EMERGENCY MEDICAL HEALTH SERVICES

The survivors of sexual violence interviewed by Amnesty International, currently experience several medical conditions, yet none of them had received comprehensive emergency medical care. Nine out of the 11 survivors interviewed obtained medical care only after the EDF withdrew from Kokob Tsibah on 19 January 2023.[90]

Crucial post-sexual assault care must be administered within 72 hours to provide preventive measures for sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy .[91] This includes the administration of post-exposure prophylaxis, which can prevent HIV infection, post potential exposure to the virus.

In Kokob Tsibah district, all medical facilities were destroyed during conflict. A report published in February 2023 by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), found that 20 out of the 22 heath facilities were completely destroyed in Genta Afeshum *woreda*, where Kokob Tsibah district is located .[92] One of the remaining two heath facilities in the *woreda*, was a medical centre that continued to provide sexual and reproductive healthcare, including post-sexual violence care, amidst the conflict.[93] Before the EDF withdrew from Kokob Tsibah, survivors were not allowed to leave the district to travel and obtain medical services.[94]

One survivor said she managed to obtain medical support, six days after the first assault, while another survivor only got HIV and pregnancy tests weeks after she had first been raped.[95] Another survivor said she had received medical support one month after the EDF withdrew from the district. She went to a nearby pharmacy for a pregnancy test. When she found out that she was pregnant she decided to have a self-administered abortion as she had no access to a medical centre which could provide abortion services.

"When I found out that I was pregnant, I told myself that I would rather die than give birth", she said. She later received post-abortion medical services from a hospital.[96]

---

[86] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023 (previously cited).
[87] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023.
[88] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023 (previously cited).
[89] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023 (previously cited).
[90] Interviews by voice calls with nine survivors, Kokob Tsibah, 18 and 19 May 2023.
[91] World Health Organization, *Health care for women subjected to intimate partner violence or sexual violence: A clinical handbook*, WHO/RHR/14.26, p.40.
[92] UNHCR, *Protection Monitoring and Solutions report*, February 2023, UNHCR-Ethiopia-Protection-Monitoring-and-Solutions-PMS-Report1-Mekelle-February-2023.pdf
[93] Interview by voice call with a health expert, Adigrat, 20 July 2023.
[94] Interviews by voice calls with ten survivors from Kokob Tsibah, 18 and 19 May 2023.
[95] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023.
[96] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023.

"I went and gathered some disposed medicine, such as ampicillin, and took traditional medicine. That helped me to have an abortion. But later when I came to the hospital, they gave me further treatment."[97]

Another survivor said she later tested positive for HIV. [98] Ten out of the 11 survivors described physical trauma from being assaulted, including constant pain in the uterus area and kidney complications. [99]

All the interviewed survivors disclosed lingering psychological harm from being assaulted.[100] Survivors expressed struggling with depression, horrific nightmares, severe lack of sleep, and general confusion. During the interview with Amnesty International, Adey frequently mentioned that she has suicidal thoughts. She disclosed this to her therapist and continues to receive psychological support.

"I have no interest in life anymore. All I want to do is kill myself. When people converse, I always think that they are talking about me."[101]

Survivors often miss their medical follow-ups due to lack of money for transport. Many of them would be unable to walk for two hours to the hospital due to physical complications from the abuse they experienced.[102] A medical worker explained that some of the survivors do not take their medication properly as they do not have enough food. [103]

The medical worker also added that though supply of medicines has increased since November 2022, especially for HIV and STDs, it still does not match the demand at their health centre. Medication for psychiatric cases is still irregular, necessitating that survivors purchase these from private pharmacies, at high prices.[104] The interviewee flagged shortage of human resources as another significant and ongoing challenge, given the health centres' overwhelming caseload, due to the destruction of other health centres in the area. The medical expert also highlighted that the staff at their centre had been working without a salary for over two years since 2020. [105] Following the signing of the CoHA, she said they finally received six months' worth of salary.

"We did not even receive 10 birrs for two years. We have now received a six month's salary. So, our human resources situation is better, but there is still a shortage. We are suffering from trauma and burn out." [106]

The medical worker also emphasized that there continues to be a shortage of medication for sexual and reproductive health services, including treatment for HIV and other STDs. They added that restoring medical services at a local level is crucial for survivors to attend their follow-ups at a nearby location. [107]

STIGMA

Survivors said that they do not disclose what happened to them, and those who do face stigma. Two interviewees told Amnesty International that they feel ashamed about what happened to them. [108] One survivor who disclosed that she tested positive for HIV said she eats, drinks, and sleeps in a secluded location. After she lost all her property, she is now staying in a relative's house. Due to stigma, she has considered taking her own life.[109]

Another survivor told Amnesty International that she can no longer go to the church as often as she used to. She said people would talk about her and in whispers identify her as "those who were raped." [110]

"It is not easy as it was before and, I do not tell people what happened to me. Sometimes I feel shame."[111]

---

[97] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023 (previously cited).
[98] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023.
[99] Interviews by voice calls with 10 survivors, Kokob Tsibah, on 18 and 19 May 2023.
[100] Interviews by voice calls with 11 survivors, Kokob Tsibah, on 18 and 19 May 2023.
[101] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023.
[102] Interviews by voice calls with three survivors from Kokob Tsibah, 18 and 19 May 2023.
[103] Interview by voice call with a health expert, Adigrat, 20 July 2023.
[104] Interview by voice call with a health expert, Adigrat, 20 July 2023 (previously cited).
[105] Interview by voice call with a health expert, Adigrat, 20 July 2023 (previously cited).
[106] Interview by voice call with a health expert, Adigrat, 20 July 2023 (previously cited).
[107] Interview by voice call with a health expert, Adigrat, 20 July 2023 (previously cited).
[108] Interviews by voice calls with two survivors, Kokob Tsibah, 18 and19 May 2023.
[109] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023.
[110] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023.
[111] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023 (previously cited).

A social worker who continued to closely follow up with survivors in Kokob Tsibah says that survivors are faced with both perceived and actual stigma. She said a number of survivors she is currently working with will often mention to her that they don't want to engage in social life due to assumptions that community members talk about them. She confirmed that two of the survivors interviewed for this report faced stigma from family members and the community.[112]

She said one of the survivors interviewed for this research was briefly separated with her spouse because of the sexual violence she survived.

> **"She is married, and she and her husband separated because of the sexual violence she survived. But we intervened to mediate between her and her husband. Now she is back to her house. In addition to the impacts of the physical abuse survivors are going through, they are now faced with the psychological trauma, the extreme poverty they were pushed into and the stigma they face from the community. We are trying to educate people that this is not the survivor's fault. Some survivors used to hide in their homes, and they used to say that the community gossips about them. In collaboration with another CSO [civil society organization] we are working on awareness creation – especially with elders and community leaders – on how to tackle stigma against women who went through this violence."** [113]

[112] Interview by voice call with a social worker, 24 June 2023.
[113] Interview by voice call with a social worker, 24 June 2023 (previously cited).

EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS OF CIVILIANS

EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS IN KOBOB TSIBAH DISTRICT



Kokob Tsibah District: Satellite imagery shows that many new structures - highlighted with blue boxes - have appeared between 28 March 2022 and 4 December 2022. New machine-built earthen berms are also visible. Red arrows show burn scars on the road from destroyed vehicles and red circles highlight three structures that appear damaged or destroyed. The vehicles were destroyed between 2-3 November 2022, according to satellite imagery (not shown).

Four residents of Kokob Tsibah district told Amnesty International that they had witnessed the EDF kill civilians at close range between 1 November 2022 and 19 January 2023, primarily in early November. The four residents witnessed the killing of three people between the age of 40 and 70, including one priest. [114]

[114] Interviews by voice calls with four witnesses, Kokob Tsibah, 21, 22 and 23 May 2023.

Witnesses gave a detailed account of how the victims were executed by the EDF, including one of the victims who was stabbed to death in front of his wife and children.[115]

Six others reported that their male relatives had been found dead, with wounds that indicate executions at close range. Among the six victims, five of them were between the age range of 68 and 90, while one was 42 years old.[116]

In total, eyewitnesses, victims' families, local interim administrative officials, and community members provided information about the killing of 23 men and one woman.[117]

Residents of the district said the EDF and ENDF engaged in combat against Tigrayan forces from 1 to 3 November.[118] One resident said the Tigrayan forces were initially pushed back to Kokob Tsibah on 31 October 2022.[119] Subsequently, six witnesses heard what they described as heavy weapons, which were continually fired as from 1 November 2022.[120]

Abraha, a resident of Kokob Tsibah stated that the "the heavy shelling" of the district began on 1 November 2022 and lasted until around 2 pm on 3 November 2022. He recounted that he had left his house with his family on 2 November 2023 looking for shelter from the fighting.[121]

> **"The Tigrayan forces were fighting with the Eritrean Forces at a place called Fatsi. Later, the Tigrayan forces came to where we lived, told us that the enemy [Eritrean Forces] was coming, and directed us to vacate the area. So, we left our homes to hide. We also heard that there was the Ethiopian army there with the Eritrean military. But I have not seen any of them; they were far away. We live near the border, so the weapons were being fired from Eritrean soil. The village Fatsi is located north of our place." [122]**

The Tigrayan forces eventually started to retreat from Kokob Tsibah on 2 November 2022, and the EDF and ENDF captured the city. According to residents, the ENDF left the city and proceeded towards Adigrat, while the EDF stationed their camp in the Fiya Keshi village. [123] The ENDF returned to the Kokob Tsibah district following the EDF's withdrawal from the city on 19 January 2023.[124]

During the EDF's stay in Kokob Tsibah, men in the district were suspected by EDF soldiers of being members or supporters of the Tigrayan forces. Some were apprehended or asked questions before being killed. [125] Not all the families Amnesty International interviewed had the chance to provide a proper burial to their loved ones, at a cemetery.

Shewit, a Kokob Tsibah resident, only managed to bury the body of her husband at a church, three months after the EDF withdrew from the district. She, together with her 80-year-old husband, had fled the heavy fighting in Kokob Tsibah on 2 November 2022. However, on the same day, he suddenly decided to return home to take care of the house and cattle, assuring his family that he would be back soon. She recalled:

> **"I became anxious when my husband did not return as he had promised. I went back to our district on 5 November 2022, as the conflict subsided on 4 November 2022. That was when I found out that my husband had been killed on 2 November, at around 4 pm, and his body left at the gate of the house. His older sister was inside the house when he was killed. He was the breadwinner of our 12 children.**
>
> **My husband's body was not buried for three consecutive days. Upon my return, I called some of my neighbours to help me carry the body and bury him inside the compound. We mourned his death for**

---

[115] Interview by voice call with a witness, Kokob Tsibah, 21 May 2023.
[116] Interview by voice call with a witness, Kokob Tsibah, 22 May 2023; Interviews by voice calls with three witnesses in Kokob Tsibah, 20 May 2023; Interviews by voice calls with two witnesses in Kokob Tsibah, 21 May 2023.
[117] On file with Amnesty, A list of victims of extrajudicial executions by the EDF, compiled by the local authorities; Interview by voice call with a former government interim official, Kokob Tsibah, 7 June 2023; Interviews by voice calls with 17 witness, family members, Kokob Tsibah, 20 to 23 May 2023.
[118] Interviews by voice calls with two residents of Kokob Tsibah, 20 May 2023; Interview by voice call with a resident of Kokob Tsibah, 10 August 2023.
[119] Interview by voice call with a witness, Kokob Tsibah, 10 August 2023.
[120] Interviews by voice calls with two witnesses, Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023; Interviews by voice calls with three witnesses, Kokob Tsibah, 20 May 2023; Interview by voice call with a witness, Kokob Tsibah, 10 August 2023.
[121] Interview by voice call with a witness, Kokob Tsibah, 20 May 2023.
[122] Interview by voice call with a witness, Kokob Tsibah, 20 May 2023
[123] Interview by voice call with a witness, Kokob Tsibah, 10 August 2023; Interview by voice call with a witness, Kokob Tsibah; 20 May 2023; Interview by voice call with a witness, Kokob Tsibah, 22 May 2023.
[124] Interview by voice call with a resident, Kokob Tsibah, 20 May 2023; Interview by voice call with a resident Kokob Tsibah, 22 May 2023.
[125] Interview by voice call with a witness, Kokob Tsibah, 20 May 2023; Interview by voice calls with two witnesses, Kokob Tsibah, 21 May 2023.

more than three months, until we eventually laid him to rest at the nearby church on 14 February 2023." [126]

Another family member of a victim killed by the EDF at Kokob Tsibah, Abeba, said her husband's body remained at the place where he was killed for three months. Like Shewit, Abeba and her family decided to flee the district on the evening of 1 November 2022, amidst intensifying fighting and sporadic shelling. Yet, her 70-year-old husband, who had remained behind to look after family properties, was killed by EDF soldiers conducting house-to-house searches.

> **"They killed him on the late night of 3 November 2022 and subsequently took away our cattle. The Eritrean soldiers came and killed my husband. As I have learned later from a monk who witnessed the incident, my husband was killed merely on suspicion of being the father of a *Junta* [an informal reference to Tigrayan forces sometimes used by the federal government of Ethiopia or allied forces]."** [127]

As the armed conflict in and around Kokob Tsibah district escalated on 2 November 2022, a few residents sought refuge in a nearby, St Michael, Church. Among them was Priest Meheretab, a member of the clergy, who sought shelter with his wife and children. According to him, people sheltering in the church were locked in different rooms to hide from EDF soldiers. He recounted how EDF soldiers came to the church, forcefully broke into rooms, and forced the people out of hiding. Priest Meheretab recalled the shooting of another priest during this incident:

> **"Adjacent to the room I was hiding were a few other people, including a 70-year-old priest. The priest was sick, and his hands were shaking. He used to beg at the church. I did not see them shoot, but I heard the EDF soldiers saying, "bring him, bring him," then heard a gunshot."** [128]

58-year-old Yemane, who was in the same room as the victim, witnessed the incident. He described the killing to Amnesty International:

> **"They [EDF soldiers] broke the room door and asked all of us to come out of hiding. Then, they forced us to remove our top clothes. They asked each one of us if we were militias; and we told them that we are farmers. They inspected our shoulders, looking for marks of rifle belts that would indicate that we were fighters. They could not find any marks. Then, they made us lie on the ground and started beating us while still demanding [interrogating] for answers to their question. The 70-year-old priest was also lying on the ground, topless, facing towards the sky, and spreading his arms, as he was told to.**
>
> **In the meantime, I do not know what the priest said to one of the soldiers, but he directly shot the old man in the chest. Then, he [the EDF soldier] came to us and said, "If anyone tries to pick the body or try to bury him, you will all be killed."** [129]

According to a former local interim government official, some families still do not know the whereabouts or fate of their relatives. The official, who was responsible for facilitating the burial of bodies, said the community managed to bury most bodies at nearby churches, including at St Michael Church of Kokob Tsibah, on 20 January 2023. He added that on that date, a burial ceremony was held for bodies that had not been buried properly or that had been left unburied for periods ranging from 11 to 80 days.[130]

17 family members and close relatives interviewed by Amnesty International also stated that EDF soldiers prohibited them from collecting the bodies and attempting to bury their loved ones.[131] Many of the deceased were left where they were killed, for days, before being buried. Interviewees further noted that a proper burial at nearby churches happened only after EDF withdrew from the district.[132]

---

[126] Interview by voice call with a witness, Kokob Tsibah, 20 May 2023.
[127] Interview by voice call with a witness, Kokob Tsibah, 20 May 2023.
[128] Interview by voice call with a witness, Kokob Tsibah, 22 May 2023.
[129] Interview by voice call with a witness, Kokob Tsibah, 23 May 2023.
[130] Interview by voice call with a former government interim official, Kokob Tsibah, 7 June 2023.
[131] Interviews by voice calls with 17 witnesses and family members of victims, Kokob Tsibah, 20 to 23 May 2023.
[132] Interview by voice call with a former government interim official, Kokob Tsibah, 7 June 2023; Interviews by voice calls with three witnesses, Kokob Tsibah, 20 May 2023; Interview by voice call with a witness, Kokob Tsibah, 22 May 2023.

EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS IN MARIAM SHEWITO DISTRICT

According to residents interviewed by Amnesty International, the battle in Mariam Shewito started on 25 October 2022, the same day the AU officially announced the start of peace talks between the TPLF and the government of Ethiopia, in Pretoria, South Africa.[133]

Amnesty International interviewed 21 witnesses, survivors, and family members of victims of extrajudicial killings, who shared their testimonies regarding the execution of 20 civilians by the EDF in Mariam Shewito district between 25 October and 1 November 2022. Witnesses and family members of the victims declared that victims were civilians[134], most actually farmers. One interviewee added that one of the victims was a priest.[135] As in Kokob Tsibah district, EDF soldiers banned residents from collecting and burying bodies of their loved ones.[136]

A social worker who had documented cases of these executions in the district provided a list of more than 100 names of people who they said had been extrajudicially executed within this period.[137] Amnesty International was not able to independently corroborate all these cases remotely.

Birhan, a 45-year-old woman, and her husband, were parents to six children, four under the age of 18. On 25 October 2022, EDF soldiers came to their house and asked her 50-year-old husband to carry water from their house to an unknown location. Birhan never saw her husband alive again. After her husband was taken, Birhan said she endured abuses by the EDF, including beating and insults:

> **"They used to come and ask me to give them things repeatedly, and they kept taking my goats. If they felt like I was frustrated by their requests, they often beat me, including using the butt of the rifle."** [138]

Birhan's neighbours came on 4 November 2022 and told her that people in the neighbourhood were looking for the bodies of their loved ones. Birhan said she went to look for her husband's body and found it partially decomposed. She temporarily buried the body where it was found, and only managed to properly bury him at the church later. [139]

Fereweyni was five months pregnant when the EDF suddenly broke into her house on 28 October 2022. Her husband was confident that the EDF soldiers would not attack him as he was a farmer. However, the soldiers took Fereweyni, her husband and her four children near a river. She said the soldiers were beating them on their way.

> **"They asked us to lie down on the ground. One of the soldiers was pointing the gun at me, and the other told him to leave me alone, saying I was pregnant. Then they let me, and my children go. My youngest was hesitating to leave his father. After we had walked for a few minutes, we heard a gunshot. We started to cry."** [140]

Sixty-eight-year-old Negash, a resident of Mariam Shewito, told Amnesty International that on 24 October 2022, he took his family out to a village called Deare Weyni after he became aware that heavy fighting was approaching Mariam Shewito district. On 30 October 2022, he sought shelter in a cave in Deare Weyni village as the fighting intensified. Both the EDF and the ENDF took him and two other men out of hiding from the caves; the EDF soldiers shot all three of the men. Negash survived the gunshot and recounted what had happened.[141]

---

[133] African Union (AU), "AU launches peace talks to end the conflict in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia", 25 October 2022, au.int/en/pressreleases/20221025/au-launches-peace-talks-end-conflict-tigray-region-ethiopia
[134] Interviews by voice calls with 21 witnesses, survivors, and family members of victims of extrajudicial killings, Mariyam Shewito, 14 - 17 May 2023.
[135] Interview by voice call with a family member of the victim, Mariyam Shewito, 14 May 2023.
[136] Interviews by voice calls with four witnesses, Mariyam Shewito, 14 May 2023; Interviews by voice calls with two witnesses, Mariyam Shewito, 16 May 2023; Interviews by voice calls with three witnesses, Mariyam Shewito, 13 May 2023; Interviews by voice calls with three witnesses, Mariyam Shewito, 17 May 2023.
[137] On file with Amnesty International, List of names of people extrajudicially executed provided by social worker documenting cases.
[138] Interview by voice call with a family member of the victim, Mariyam Shewito, 17 May 2023.
[139] On file with Amnesty International, List of names of people extrajudicially executed provided by social worker documenting cases (previously cited).
[140] Interview by voice call with a family member of the victim who is also a witness to the killing, Mariyam Shewito, 17 May 2023.
[141] Interview by voice call with a survivor of an attempted extrajudicial execution, Mariyam Shewito, 13 May 2023.

> The Shabiya [EDF] and the ENDF took us out of the cave. However, it was the EDF soldiers who shot us; the two men died on the spot. The soldiers would surely return to check if we were dead. Some people found me and tried to stop the bleeding. A young lady came and told them to apply honey, which helped stop my bleeding. But I was worried that if they [the EDF] found the people who helped me, they would kill them. So, I told them to leave, and I spent nine days inside the bush without getting medical help. [142]

Negash said the soldiers asked him if he had children who had joined the Tigrayan forces. He said he told them he has children who are members of Tigrayan forces and believes that this could have been the reason they attempted to kill him. He also added that one of the people who was executed was a teacher, and the other, his friend.[143]

[142] Interview by voice call with a survivor of an attempted extrajudicial execution, Mariyam Shewito, 17 May 2023 (previously cited).
[143] Interview by voice call with a survivor of an attempted extrajudicial execution, Mariyam Shewito, 17 May 2023 (previously cited).

PILLAGE OF CIVILIAN PROPERTIES

In addition to sexual violence and extrajudicial executions of civilians, EDF soldiers pillaged civilian properties and belongings in Kokob Tsibah and Mariam Shewito districts. Most of the 49 survivors, witnesses, and family members of victims interviewed for this research said the EDF had looted their essential properties and livestock, impacting their livelihood.[144] Many have been pushed to depend on aid or on family members for shelter and food, while some say they are now sustaining themselves through begging.[145]

All survivors of sexual violence interviewed, despite their diverse social backgrounds, expressed a profound sense of loss when comparing their previous life with their current socio-economic circumstances.[146]

Martha is among them. She lost her entire possessions due to the conflict. She said that most of her belongings were looted by the EDF. After the EDF looted every household item, slaughtered her sheep, and took her two oxen, Martha ended up in a small, rented house.[147]

> **"The EDF looted the entire property I had in my house, including my TV and bed. My house was also shelled during the conflict. I have nothing now, just an empty house. I had two oxen and 15 sheep. They [EDF soldiers] slaughtered it all. I had five beehives; it is destroyed."** [148]

Another survivor of sexual violence, Wubit, said the EDF looted her personal belongings, which included 30-grams of gold jewellery, blankets, a mattress, and mobile phones.[149]

> **"They only left one bed and an old table in my house. They stole all my clothes as well. They did not even leave a pillow behind. They looted and slaughtered my 20 chickens, which I had been using to generate income through the sale of eggs."** [150]

Mahlet, who also survived sexual violence, used to own a small restaurant business.

> **"They brought a car and looted everything in my restaurant. I used to have a good business. They did not leave a single thing. They took the fridge, the TV, the chairs, everything! I had an ox and many sheep. They took all of those. There was dough in the house with which they had me bake Injera for them.[151] We used to have sheep, goats, ox, and donkeys. I begged them to leave at least some when they took our household items; but they mocked me and called me "*Agame*"."** [152]

---

[144] Interviews by voice calls with 11 victims from Kokob Tsibah, 18 to 19 May 2023; Interviews by voice calls with 15 victims in Kokob Tsibah, 20 to 22 May 2023; Interviews by voice calls with seven victims, Mariyam Shewito, 13 to 17 May 2023.
[145] Interviews by voice calls, 11 victims from Kokob Tsibah, 18 to 19 May 2023; Interviews by voice calls with 15 victims in Kokob Tsibah, 20 to 22 May 2023; Interview by voice calls with seven victims in Mariyam Shewito, 13 to 17 May 2023.
[146] Interviews by voice calls with 11 survivors of sexual violence and victims of pillage, from Kokob Tsibah, 18 and 19 May 2023.
[147] Interview by voice call with a victim, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023.
[148] Interview by voice call with a victim, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023 (previously cited).
[149] Interview by voice call with a victim, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023.
[150] Interview by voice call with a victim, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023 (previously cited).
[151] *Injera* is an Amharic term for Ethiopian bread; a sour fermented pancake like flatbread, traditionally made from teff flour.
[152] Interview by voice call with a victim, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023. For details around the term "*agame*" see footnote 44.

45-year-old Adey also lost her entire property, cattle, and crops that she relied on for a living. Her son's kiosk was looted, and the EDF stole her domestic animals. She had two cows, one ox, ten sheep, and fifteen hens. Her apple trees were also destroyed. She now relies on begging to sustain herself. She said she has only one cloth to put on, which she has borrowed.[153]

Pillage had a significant impact on the local population who relied heavily on a traditional way of farming using their domestic animals. The looting significantly impacted the ability to provide daily meals and generate income for those who depended on animal products for their own sustenance and their value in sales. In addition to the pillage and destruction of their homes and farms, two survivors also said they had lost wealth accumulated over the years.[154]

[153] Interview by voice call with a victim, Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023.
[154] Interviews by voice calls with two victims from Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023.

VIOLATIONS OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

The conflict in northern Ethiopia began in Tigray region in November 2020, and later spilled over to neighbouring Amhara and Afar regions. The federal government's army and its allied forces fought against the TPLF. The ENDF was supported by the EDF, the Special Police units of Amhara and Afar regional states, and the Amhara militia that calls itself "Fano." As such, fighting between the parties to the conflict is governed by international humanitarian law, governing non-international armed conflicts, which, among other things, seek to protect civilians and fighters who have ceased to take part in hostilities.

Ethiopia is bound by Article 3 common to the Four Geneva Conventions (Common Article 3), Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions (AP II),[155] and customary international humanitarian law. Moreover, Ethiopia is bound to "ensure respect" for international humanitarian law by the EDF.[156] As such, Ethiopia has an obligation to take actions to prevent rape, sexual slavery, extrajudicial executions, and pillage committed by the EDF.

Eritrea is not yet a state party to AP II; therefore, Common Article 3 and customary international humanitarian law, apply to its forces. Eritrea is responsible for rape, sexual slavery, and extrajudicial executions, as well as pillage, by EDF members in Tigray, in violation of international humanitarian law. Customary international criminal law is also applicable in respect to both Ethiopia and Eritrea .[157]

Eritrea and Ethiopia have an obligation to effectively investigate and, where there is sufficient evidence, prosecute – in line with international standards on the right to a fair trial and without resort to the death penalty – serious violations of applicable IHL (International Human Rights Law) rules amounting to war crimes, for which individual soldiers and commanders can be held criminally responsible. Alleged war crimes documented in this report include rape, sexual slavery, murder, and pillage against civilians.[158] Crimes under international law and other human rights abuses documented in this report are part of the pattern of extrajudicial executions[159], pillage, and sexual violence[160] by the EDF militia against civilians in Tigray since the beginning of the conflict in northern Ethiopia, as documented by Amnesty International, ICHREE and others.[161]

Moreover, rape, sexual slavery and murder may amount to crimes against humanity, if it is established that the warring factions committed these acts with knowledge that the attacks were "part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against the civilian population". [162]

---

[155] Ethiopia acceded to Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), adopted on 8 June 1977, entered into force on 7 December 1978, on 8 April 1994.
[156] The Geneva Conventions of 1949, Article 1; ICRC *Customary IHL Study*, Rule 144.
[157] Neither Ethiopia nor Eritrea are parties to the Rome Statute.
[158] Geneva Conventions of 1949, Article 3 (a); Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), adopted on 8 June 1977, entered into force on 7 December 1978, Article 4 (2)(a), (e) and (g); ICRC *Customary IHL Study*, Rules 52, 89, 90, and 93; Rome Statute, Article 8(2) (c)(i) and (ii), (e)(v) and (vi).
[159] Amnesty International, *Ethiopia: The Massacre in Axum (*previously cited).
[160] EDF, ENDF, ASF, Fano committed widespread rape against ethnic Tigrayan women and girls. See Amnesty International, *Ethiopia: "I don't know if they realized I was a person": Rape and sexual violence in the conflict in Tigray, Ethiopia* (previously cited)
[161] UN Human Rights Council, *International Commission of Human Rights Experts report on Ethiopia (ICHREE),* September 2022, ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2022/09/international-commission-human-rights-experts-ethiopia-united
[162] Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Article 7. Crime against humanity, including its contextual element, is part of customary international criminal law.

Eritrea is party to several international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)[163] and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR).[164] Eritrea has signed but not ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol). These treaties apply extraterritorially to the acts of the EDF, in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.[165]

Under international human rights law, Eritrea has an obligation to prevent, investigate and, if there is enough evidence, prosecute, in line with international fair trial standards and without application of the death penalty, crimes committed by the EDF under international law.[166] Human rights violations committed by the EDF in Tigray region, engage Eritrea's international responsibility under applicable human rights treaties and customary law.

Ethiopia is party to the ICCPR, ICESCR, CEDAW, CAT, ACHPR and the Maputo Protocol.[167] International human rights law imposes an obligation on Ethiopia to protect all persons within its territory, including civilians in Tigray, from human rights violations committed by the EDF, and to provide necessary medical and psychosocial support to victims and survivors of such human rights violations, including comprehensive sexual and reproductive healthcare, as well as adequate remedies and reparations for harm suffered.[168] Failure by Ethiopia to prevent and punish human rights violations perpetrated by the EDF, engages Ethiopia's international responsibility under applicable human rights treaties and customary law.

RAPE AND SEXUAL SLAVERY AS WAR CRIMES AND POSSIBLY CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

Rape is defined under international law as sexual penetration or "invasion," however slight, when committed by force, threat of force or coercion, by taking advantage of a coercive environment, or against a person incapable of giving genuine consent.[169] Rape violates the rights to equality and non-discrimination, to physical integrity, and to the prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment.[170]

Ethiopia's Criminal Code prohibits and punishes rape. The scope of the definition of rape in the Criminal Code falls short of international standards but includes contexts where a woman has been compelled to submit to sexual intercourse by violence or grave intimidation, or after the perpetrator rendered the victim unconscious or incapable of resistance.[171] The Code has a higher sentence for perpetrators committing rape against girls, and for rape by multiple perpetrators.[172]

The crime of sexual slavery occurs when the perpetrator exercises "any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership over one or more persons, including by purchasing, selling, lending or bartering such a

---

[163] For the ratification status of international human rights treaties by Eritrea, See ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=59&Lang=EN

[164] To establish the list of countries that have signed, ratified/acceded to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights as at 15 June 2017, See, au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36390-sl-african_charter_on_human_and_peoples_rights_2.pdf

[165] Human Rights Committee, General Comment No.31: The Nature of the General Legal Obligation Imposed on States Parties to the Covenant, 26 May 2004, UN Doc. CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.13, para. 10; General Comment No.36 on Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, on the right to life, 30 October 2018, UN Doc. CCPR/C/GC/36, para. 63; African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, General Comment No.3 on African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights: The Right to Life (Article 4), para.14; The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), General Recommendation No.30 on Women in Conflict Prevention, Conflict and Post-conflict Situations, 01 November 2013, UN Doc. CEDAW/C/GC/30, para. 2, 8 and 9.

[166] The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (previously cited), paras. 8, 20 and 38.

[167] For the ratification status of international human rights treaties by Ethiopia, see ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=59&Lang=EN ; Ethiopia ratified the Maputo Protocol on 18 July 2018.

[168] Human Rights Committee, General Comment No.31, (previously cited), para.18; General Comment No.36, paras 27 and 64; CEDAW, General Recommendation No.30, (previously cited), para. 38 (b); Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), 25 November 2003, Article XI; and The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Guidelines on Combating Sexual Violence and its Consequences in Africa, 05 November 2017, Guidelines No.6, 9, and 10.

[169] See International Criminal Court, Elements of Crimes, Element 1, Article 7 (1) (g)-1 and Article 8(2)(e)(vi)-1(2). Coercive circumstances that prevent consent include circumstances created by the perpetrator, such as fear of violence, duress, detention contexts, and the abuse of power. Consent is also negated if a perpetrator takes advantage of coercive circumstances that already exist, even if they are not of their making, such as those inherent to armed conflict. For more on this, see Amnesty International, *Rape and sexual violence: Human rights law and standards in the International Criminal Court* (Index: IOR 53/001/2011), 1 March 2011, amnesty.org/download/Documents/32000/ior530012011en.pdf

[170] CEDAW general recommendations 19 and 35 prohibit gender-based violence including rape as a human rights violation and outline the steps states must take to comprehensively respond. General Recommendation 30 focuses on the obligations of duty bearers in conflict, conflict prevention and post-conflict contexts, and reaffirms State obligations to act to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in conflict, including rape.

[171] Proclamation No.414/2004, The Criminal Code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2004, Article 620.

[172] Proclamation No.414/2004, The Criminal Code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2004, Article 620 (2) (d)

person or persons, or by imposing a similar deprivation of liberty on them, and the perpetrator caused such person or persons to engage in one or more acts of a sexual nature."[173] The phrase "powers attaching to the right of ownership" is to be interpreted as "the use, enjoyment and disposal of a person who is regarded as property, by placing him or her in a situation of dependence which entails his or her deprivation of any form of autonomy."[174] Factors to be taken into account when determining whether "powers attaching to right of ownership" have been exercised over a person include "detention or captivity and their respective duration; restrictions on freedom to come and go or on any freedom of choice or movement; and, more generally, any measure taken to prevent or deter any attempt at escape."[175]

Rape and sexual slavery constitute war crimes when "the conduct took place in the context of and was associated with an armed conflict," and the perpetrator was "aware of factual circumstances that established the existence of an armed conflict."[176] As documented by Amnesty International, the acts of rape perpetrated by the EDF against Tigrayan women, were committed during a non-international armed conflict, and individual alleged perpetrators were aware of the circumstances of the conflict. Moreover, EDF members held Tigrayan women captive in a military camp or forcefully confined them in their own houses, therefore "imposing a ... deprivation of liberty on them," and committed "acts of sexual nature" against them. The confinement lasted for days, weeks or months, and during this time, the perpetrators treated their victims as their own property, raping them on numerous occasions and controlling many aspects of their behaviour. The perpetrators were acting in a non-international armed conflict of which they were aware. Therefore, the documented cases of rape and sexual slavery perpetrated by EDF members against Tigrayan women in Kokob Tsibah district, amount to the war crimes of rape and sexual slavery.

Rape and sexual slavery may amount to crimes against humanity when committed as "part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against [the] civilian population, with knowledge of the attack." [177] Amnesty International has previously documented that some crimes committed in the context of the armed conflict in Tigray and neighbouring regions may amount to crimes against humanity.

In the report "'I Don't Know if They Realize I Was a Person': Rape and Sexual Violence in the Conflict in Tigray, Ethiopia," Amnesty International interviewed 63 women and girls who reported being raped by Ethiopian and Eritrean forces, as well as forces allied with them. Evidence gathered in that report indicate that these acts were part of an attack against the civilian population of Tigray, conducted in a widespread and/or systematic manner. Each instance of rape occurred within this context, where the perpetrator was aware of the broader circumstances. The report concluded that these crimes amounted to crimes against humanity, and both the Ethiopian and Eritrean authorities failed to investigate or prosecute the perpetrators adequately.

Moreover, Amnesty International has previously documented that, throughout the conflict, there have been patterns of rape and other forms of sexual violence committed by the parties to the conflict, including the EDF, against women in Tigray as "part of a strategy to terrorize, degrade, and humiliate both the victims and their ethnic group."[178] The cases of rape and sexual slavery documented in this report should be seen as part of a broader pattern of attacks targeting women in Tigray. The present report further documented that sexual slavery has been perpetrated against Tigrayan women in the Kokob Tsibah district. Taken together with previous documentation by Amnesty International, the cases of rape and sexual slavery documented in this report can be considered as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against the civilian population and may amount to crimes against humanity.[179]

SEXUAL SLAVERY AS TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

Actions by the EDF also amount to trafficking in persons. Under the Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, trafficking is defined as "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the

[173] International Criminal Court, Elements of Crimes, Articles 7(1)(g)-2, and 8(2) (e) (vi)-2.
[174] International Criminal Court, *The Prosecutor v. Germain Katanga*, Case ICC-01/04-01/07, Trial Chamber II judgment, 7 March 2014, para. 975.
[175] ICC, *The Prosecutor v. Germain Katanga*, Trial Chamber II judgment (previously cited), para. 976.
[176] Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Article 8(2)(e)(vi); ICC, Elements of Crimes, Articles 8(2)(e)(vi)-1, paras. 3-4, and 8(2)(vi)-2, paras. 4-5; ICRC *Customary IHL Stud*y, rule 156.
[177] Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Article 7(1)(g).
[178] Amnesty International, *"I don't know if they realized I was a person": Rape and sexual violence in the conflict in Tigray, Ethiopia* (previously cited), p. 12.
[179] For details of the rape as a crime against humanity see Amnesty International, "*I Don't Know If They Realized I Was a Person" – Rape and Other Sexual Violence in the Conflict in Tigray, Ethiopia* (previously cited) p. 31.

giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery, or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the removal of organs."[180]

By taking women to their military camps for sexual violence, the EDF's actions appear to meet this definition, as the women were transported to, transferred, and harboured there using coercion and the use or threat of violence, for the purpose of sexual exploitation. States have an obligation to prevent and protect people from trafficking and ensure full reparations to survivors.[181]

MURDER AS A WAR CRIME AND POSSIBLY A CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY

In this report, Amnesty International documented that EDF members engaged in acts of extrajudicial executions against civilians. These acts amount to serious violations of the prohibition of murder under Common Article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and customary international humanitarian law.[182] Extrajudicial executions further constitute an arbitrary deprivation of life and violate the right to life protected under international human rights law.[183]

Murder amounts to a war crime when the perpetrator kills a person knowing that they are a civilian or are a wounded, sick or captured fighter, and with awareness of the context of the armed conflict.[184] Amnesty International has documented multiple cases in which EDF members extrajudicially executed civilians in Kokob Tsibah and Mariam Shewito districts. Given these acts were committed in the context of a non-international armed conflict, of which the alleged perpetrators were aware, such executions amount to the war crime of murder.

Moreover, murder constitutes a crime against humanity when perpetrated as "part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against [the] civilian population, with knowledge of the attack."[185] As discussed above, Amnesty International has previously documented that, throughout the conflict in Tigray, the various forces that have been fighting against the Tigrayan forces "committed serious violations as part of the same widespread and systematic attack against the Tigrayan population," including the crime against humanity of murder.[186]

To the extent that the extrajudicial executions committed by the EDF against Tigrayan civilians are part of this widespread and systematic attack directed against the Tigrayan population, they may amount to the crime against humanity of murder.

PILLAGE AS A WAR CRIME

International humanitarian law prohibits pillage.[187] Pillage amounts to a war crime where the perpetrator appropriates property for private or personal use without the owner's consent, and where such an act is committed in the context of an armed conflict of which the perpetrator is aware.[188]

Amnesty International documented several acts of pillage perpetrated against victims and survivors of rape and sexual slavery by EDF members. Given these acts have been committed in a non-international armed conflict, of which the alleged perpetrators were aware, they amount to the war crime of pillage.

In light of the adverse impact that pillage perpetrated by the EDF has had on the livelihood of victims and survivors, as documented in this report, such acts also violate Eritrea's obligations under the ICESCR,

---

[180] Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, adopted in 2000, entered into force on 25 December 2003, Article 3(a).
[181] For more information on the patterns of trafficking in persons in Tigray, and the relevant international law, please see the following communication sent on 11 May 2022, by UN Special Rapporteurs, including the UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons to Eritrea (previously cited)
[182] The Geneva Conventions of 1949, Article 3(1)(a); ICRC *Customary IHL Study*, rule 89.
[183] ICCPR, Article 6; ACHPR, article 4; Human Rights Committee, General Comment No.36 on article 6: right to life, 3 September 2019, UN Doc. CCPR/C/GC/36, para. 1.
[184] Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Article 8(2)(c)(i); ICC, Elements of Crimes, Article 8(2)(c)(i)-1.
[185] Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Article 7(1)(a).
[186] Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, *Ethiopia: "We will erase you from this land": Crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing in Ethiopia's Western Tigray Zone*, (previously cited) pp. 169-170.
[187] ICRC *Customary IHL Study*, rule 52.
[188] Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Article 8(2)(e)(iv); ICC, Elements of Crimes, Article 8(2)(e)(iv), paras. 1-5.

particularly the right to an adequate standard of living.[189] The infringement of this right, in turn, may also affect the enjoyment of the right to life of victims and survivors.[190] Eritrea must provide remedies and reparations, including restitution and compensation, to victims of acts of pillage committed by the EDF. Moreover, Ethiopia also had an obligation to protect all persons in Tigray from acts of pillage perpetrated by the EDF. Given that it has failed to do so, Ethiopia must provide victims of acts of pillage with adequate reparations.

[189] International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Article 11.
[190] The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights: the right to life (article 4), General Comment No. 3, November 2015, para. 43.

PROSPECTS FOR JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

This report documents serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, which also constitute crimes under international law. Yet, the findings represent a mere fraction of egregious violations and abuses in the context of the conflict in northern Ethiopia. However, the prospects for domestic accountability for these crimes and reparation for victims are bleak. Conflict of interest on the part of the Ethiopian authorities in pursuing justice, weak institutions, including lack of independence and impartiality of the justice system, and weaknesses in the domestic legal framework to effectively investigate and prosecute crimes under international law, have contributed to this.

Since the armed conflict in Tigray began, the Ethiopian government has resisted the independent, impartial, and comprehensive investigations of the parties to the conflict, of alleged crimes under international law. The hindering of access to investigation and monitoring mechanisms established by the UN Human Rights Council and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, has included restricting internet and communications, and banning independent journalists from the conflict zones; [191] through these actions, the Ethiopian government has hampered justice and accountability.

Both Eritrea and Ethiopia have an obligation to conduct effective, independent, impartial, and transparent investigations into allegations of crimes under international law perpetrated by the EDF in the armed conflict in Tigray, including those documented in the present report. However, all parties to the conflict have repeatedly downplayed crimes under international law and other human rights abuses implicating their forces. [192]

Earlier investigations and a very limited number of prosecutions by Ethiopia's Attorney General's Office into allegations of extrajudicial executions of civilians and rape and other forms of sexual violence pre-dating the violations documented in this report lacked transparency.[193] A joint investigation by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed the concern that "the investigations conducted by Ethiopian national institutions do not match the scope and breadth of the violations it has identified through its investigations nor that those investigations which are being undertaken sufficiently comply with international standards, including with respect to transparency."[194]

The CoHA between the federal government of Ethiopia and the TPLF envisages the adoption of measures to achieve accountability and justice, as per the Ethiopian Constitution and the AU Transitional Justice Policy

---

[191] Reuters, "Six million silenced: A two-year internet outage in Ethiopia", 29 September 2022, reuters.com/article/ethiopia-internet-shutdown-idAFL8N2ZM09X; Aljazeera, "Ethiopia's Tigray conflict and the battle to control information", 16 February 2021, aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/16/ethiopias-tigray-conflict-and-the-battle-to-control-information

[192] AP News, "Eritrean President dismissed human rights violations allegations against his forces as a "fantasy"", 9 February 2023, apnews.com/article/politics-kenya-government-ethiopia-isaias-afwerki-eritrea-ab9b7755875fe21b797f5f50fec58a3b; Amnesty International, *AU, UN must prioritize justice, Truth and reparations in Ethiopia* (Index: AFR 25/6021/2022), 12 September 2022, amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/6021/2022/en/

[193] Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, "*We Will Erase You from This Land" – Crimes against Humanity and Ethnic Cleansing in Ethiopia's Western Tigray Zone*, (Previously cited), p. 205.

[194] Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and the UN OHCHR, *Report of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) / Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Joint Investigation into Alleged Violations of International Human Rights, Humanitarian and Refugee Law Committed by all Parties to the Conflict in the Tigray Region of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia*," 3 November 2021, OHCHR-EHRC-Tigray-Report.pdf, para. 376.

Framework. [195] The same agreement also established a mechanism mandated to monitor the implementations of the CoHA. [196] Following the signing of the CoHA, the Federal government is in the process of adopting a Transitional Justice Policy Framework, which places emphasizes non-judicial reconciliatory approaches. [197]

The Ethiopian government, one of the parties to the conflict itself implicated in perpetrating crimes under international law and other human rights abuses in the Tigray region, exclusively owns the transitional justice process, casting doubt on its credibility. With a sole focus on local actors, the transitional justice framework does not encompass accountability for crimes under international law committed by the EDF.

The transitional justice policy draft lays out plans to utilize domestic justice mechanisms to hold perpetrators of crimes accountable.[198] The domestic justice mechanisms in Ethiopia, at present, cannot meet standards of fair process, independence, and impartiality as required under international human rights law.[199] According to Ethiopian law, investigation and prosecution of crimes committed in times of conflict are under the exclusive jurisdiction of military police, military prosecutors, and military courts which raises fair trial concerns including independence and impartiality.[200]

Various reports by Amnesty International have found that EDF members have committed crimes under international law and other human rights violations.[201] Some of these Eritrean soldiers have returned to their home country and Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki has denied the participation of his country's troops in the conflict.[202] While Ethiopia's authorities could request the extradition of Eritrean soldiers in order to stand trial in Ethiopia, it appears difficult that the Eritrean government would consent to such an extradition request.

Ethiopian criminal law does not have provisions that criminalize crimes against humanity, so domestic justice mechanisms cannot prosecute crimes against humanity or the same acts or conducts substantially. [203]

In June 2023, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights prematurely terminated the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry on the Situation in the Tigray Region of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia (CoI) that it had established in May 2021. The African Commission justified this move by stating that the Ethiopian government was in the process of adopting a national transitional justice policy and because of "positive developments" in the Tigray region, despite evidence of ongoing crimes under international law and other human rights abuses. This followed close to two years of sustained pressure and a smear campaign against the CoI by the Ethiopian government. In February 2023, the Deputy Prime Minister, in an address to the African Union Executive Council, argued that the CoI "undermine[d] the AU-led Peace Process, the Peace Agreement, and its full implementation," and demanded that the African Commission "stop its consideration to undertake a unilateral investigation irrespective of ongoing national efforts." [204]

In December 2021, the UN Human Rights Council established the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia to "conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into allegations of violations and abuses of international human rights law and violations of international humanitarian law and international refugee law in Ethiopia committed since 3 November 2020 by all parties to the conflict, including the possible gender dimensions of such violations and abuses, by building upon the report of the

---

[195] Tghat, The Pretoria Agreement, 3 November 2022, Article 2 (f), tghat.com/2022/11/03/the-pretoria-agreement/
[196] African Union, "The African Union Launches the African Union Monitoring, Verification and Compliance Mission in Mekelle, Tigray Region, Ethiopia", 29 December 2022, peaceau.org/en/article/the-african-union-launches-the-african-union-monitoring-verification-and-compliance-mission-in-mekelle-tigray-region-ethiopia
[197] Foreign Policy, "Ethiopia is not ready for Transitional Justice", 14 March 2023, foreignpolicy.com/2023/03/14/ethiopia-tigray-war-crimes-transitional-justice-human-rights/#cookie_message_anchor
[198]African Union, "The African Union Launches the African Union Monitoring, Verification and Compliance Mission in Mekelle, Tigray Region, Ethiopia" (previously cited).
[199] Turkel Commission, Israel's Mechanisms for Examining and Investigating Complaints and Claims of Violations of the Laws of Armed Conflict According to International Law, February 2013, hamoked.org/files/2013/1157610_eng.pdf, pp. 114–117 and 129, para. 82; UN, *Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law*, December 6, 2005, UN Doc. A/RES/60/47, para. II(3)(b).
[200] Defense Forces Proclamation No 1100/2019, Article 38 (1) (c) and (d); The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has stated in its Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Fair Trial and Legal Assistance in Africa, that State parties to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights must ensure that civilians are not tried before military courts. These courts must be limited to determining "offences of a purely military nature committee by military personnel"; Principle 29 of the UN updated Impunity Principles states that "The jurisdiction of military tribunals must be restricted solely to specifically military offences committed by military personnel, to the exclusion of human rights violations, which shall come under the jurisdiction of the ordinary domestic courts or, where appropriate, in the case of serious crimes under international law, of an international or internationalized criminal court."
[201] See footnotes 25, 27 and 28.
[202] AP News, "Eritrean President dismissed human rights violations allegations against his forces as a "fantasy"" (previously cited).
[203] Amnesty International, *Ethiopia: UN and AU must prioritize justice, truth, and reparations in Ethiopia*, (AFR 25/6021/2022), 12 September 2022, amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/6021/2022/en/
[204] Human Rights Watch, *Threats to Terminate the Mandate of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia,* 28 February 2023, hrw.org/news/2023/02/28/threats-terminate-mandate-international-commission-human-rights-experts-ethiopia

Office of the High Commissioner and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission".[205] ICHREE's mandate requires it to "collect and preserve evidence, to identify those responsible, where possible, and to make such information accessible and usable in support of ongoing and future accountability efforts".[206] The Ethiopian government has similarly pushed for premature termination of ICHREE.[207]

Amidst continued crimes under international law and other human rights abuses, and given the bleak prospects for domestic accountability, it is critical that the ICHREE's mandate be renewed at the 54th session of the UN Human Rights Council and fully supported. Ethiopia's partners, including the United States, the European Union, and its Member States, should also place greater emphasis on encouraging the Ethiopian government to accept an internationally mandated investigation and accountability mechanism which ensures justice for all victims.

[205] EHRC-OHCHR Joint Investigation Report on Tigray Conflict, 3 November 2021, ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/OHCHR-EHRC-Tigray-Report.pdf
[206] UNHRC, International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/ichre-ethiopa/index
[207] The Deputy Prime Minister of Ethiopia announced at the 15 February 2023 Executive Council of the African Union meeting that the Ethiopian government planned to table a resolution at the 52nd session of the UN Human Rights Council to terminate ICHREE's mandate, See Amnesty International, Re: Threats to Terminate the Mandate of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (Index: AFR 25/6500/2023), 1 March 2023, amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/AFR2565002023ENGLISH.pdf#:~:text=In%20his%20speech%20during%20the%20Executive%20Council%20meeting,ICHREE%20during%20the%2052nd%20session%20of%20the%20Council.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Communities in Kokob Tsibah and Mariam Shewito have had their lives changed, irreversibly, by the violations they experienced at the hands of the EDF. Women who have survived rape and sexual slavery face lifelong medical conditions and trauma. The families of those killed grieve their loved ones and mourn their inability to have laid them to rest as they would have wished. Most survivors interviewed felt profound loss in their socio-economic circumstances after their belongings and livestock, so vital to their livelihood, were looted.

When asked what justice would look like to them, most survivors of rape and sexual slavery said that they wanted to see those responsible brought to justice. Some said they would testify against those who perpetrated these crimes if they were asked to. One survivor said, "I want the EDF to be brought before justice and for them to withdraw from Tigray. Today or tomorrow, they should be brought before justice." [208] Another said, "For me, the priority is to avoid sexual violence anywhere else in the world. No woman should face this again." [209] Others saw the process of being interviewed by Amnesty International as a small step towards justice with one female survivor saying, "The first justice for me is that I came here today to speak about what has happened to me." [210]

Guarantees of non-repetition were critical to most survivors, and they saw this in diverse ways. One survivor of rape stressed the crucial role of the international community in this respect. She said, "If those at the very top, across the world, say that those who did this to us are punished, and this will never happen again, then that is justice for me."[211] Many saw non-repetition as intimately connected to peace.[212] Some were concerned that the EDF may return to their districts and commit other human rights violations.[213] One survivor said, "For me, justice is peace. We are still scared that they will come back and attack us. Even before aid, we want peace." [214] Another said, "The first step should be peace. After the peace, we want our house to be reconstructed and back to our previous life. I want to live with my family as I used to." [215]

Survivors' immediate and urgent practical needs came through clearly. Community members highlighted the need for aid, rebuilding their homes, food, medical assistance, and transportation to the hospital.[216] One survivor of rape said, "Let us say peace has prevailed, but will I be able to give birth after this or have my life back again? I still have lots of issues with my uterus. So, I need more medical assistance."[217] Another said, "My priority is my health; it is deteriorating. My kidney is still not so well. There is a shortage of food as well. We are starving."[218] A social worker stressed that the difficulty for survivors to disclose their experiences to

[208] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023.
[209] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023.
[210] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023.
[211] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023.
[212] Interviews by voice call with four survivors from Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023; Interview by voice call with survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023.
[213] Interviews by voice call with four survivors from Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023; Interview by voice call with survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023.
[214] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023.
[215] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023.
[216] Interviews by voice call with 11 survivors from Kokob Tsibah, 18 and 19 May 2023.
[217] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023.
[218] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023.

the authorities in confidence negatively impacts their ability to access support. According to the social worker, survivors often fail to receive prioritized aid because they are hesitant to reveal their ordeal of rape.[219]

When asked about their calls to the international community, survivors gave diverse responses. One woman said: "Expose the truth so that no one goes through this brutality and injustice again." [220] Another survivor said, "What we want from the international community now is to get sustainable peace. Please get us aid as soon as possible. The young men who went to the bush to fight should return to school. The world should listen to our voices now." [221]

In their calls to the interim authorities and federal government, survivors requested guarantees of peace. One said, "We want this war to be the last one. We want peace. Humans were treated like animals throughout this conflict. We are also dying out of starvation. Our sons should not die because of a war as well. Let this be the last war." [222] Others sought support for survivors of sexual violence still in hiding: "Many people who did not get the chance that I got are still locked in their houses. Many women are not seen and are not getting medical support." [223] Redress also featured prominently in their calls to government, with one survivor saying: "We lost all our properties, so we need compensation. The entire population lives under catastrophic conditions, those who once had a roof over their head now sleep in the streets. So, we need to be redressed." [224]

RECOMMENDATIONS

TO THE ETHIOPIAN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT:

- Issue a clear order to Ethiopian armed and security forces, including in the Western Tigray Zone, Gulo Mekeda and Irob Districts, prohibiting sexual violence, extrajudicial executions of civilians, and any other human rights law violation or crime under international law..
- Order its forces to protect the civilian population against human rights abuses committed by the EDF on Ethiopia's territory.
- Ensure that the EDF and other relevant Eritrean authorities cooperate fully with investigations into rape and sexual slavery, extrajudicial executions and pillage perpetrated by the EDF in Tigray.
- Ensure prompt, effective, independent, impartial, and transparent investigations into crimes under international law allegedly committed since 4 November 2020 in Tigray, Afar and Amhara regions.
- Bring those allegedly responsible for such crimes before civilian courts to be tried in compliance with international fair trial standards, without recourse to the death penalty.
- Liaise with the interim government of Tigray to ensure that survivors of rape and other forms of sexual violence obtain comprehensive sexual and reproductive healthcare.
- Ensure that survivors of rape and other sexual violence are included in government decision-making that affects them, including in the ongoing transitional justice process.
- Respond favourably, without further delay, to requests for invitations to carry out a country visit by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Guarantees of Non-Recurrence.
- Invite the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions and the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls, its Causes and Consequences to visit northern Ethiopia to investigate allegations of extrajudicial executions and unlawful killings committed by the parties to the conflict.

TO THE ERITREAN GOVERNMENT:

- Issue clear orders to the EDF and other security forces prohibiting the commission of acts of sexual violence, extrajudicial executions, pillage and any other human rights violations or crimes under international law.

---

[219] Interview by voice call with a social worker, 24 June 2023.
[220] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 18 May 2023.
[221] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023.
[222] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023.
[223] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023.
[224] Interview by voice call with a survivor, Kokob Tsibah, 19 May 2023.

- Thoroughly investigate and prosecute members of the EDF allegedly responsible for such crimes before civilian courts to be tried in compliance with international fair trial standards, without recourse to the death penalty.
- Ensure that the EDF and any other relevant institution cooperates fully with the Ethiopian authorities in respect of investigations into crimes under international law perpetrated by EDF members in Tigray.
- Extend an invitation to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Eritrea to conduct a country visit and to, among other, meet and speak freely with the relevant authorities as well members of the EDF in order to contribute to the establishment of criminal responsibility of crimes under international law and other human rights abuses committed by EDF in Ethiopia and reparations for the same.

TO THE AFRICAN UNION PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL:

- Step up public and private engagement on the Tigray conflict, including through placing the situation on its agenda.
- Request the Special Envoy of the African Union Commission Chairperson on Women, Peace, and Security to conduct a field visit to Tigray to assess the levels and patterns of conflict-related sexual violence and issue a public report containing the findings of the visit and recommendations to relevant actors, including the governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea.

TO THE AFRICAN UNION MONITORING, VERIFICATION AND COMPLIANCE MISSION (AU-MVCM):

Monitor, verify and publicly report on:

- The implementation of the principles that explicitly underpin the CoHA: "respect for fundamental human rights".
- The state of protection of civilians – specifically, if "parties to the agreement are protecting the Human Rights of the civilian population, upholding the applicable international humanitarian law principles that Ethiopia is a party to".
- Whether parties to the agreement "condemn, specifically, sexual and gender-based violence and any act of violence against children, women, girls and the elderly".

TO THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS:

- Reinstate the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry on the Situation in the Tigray Region and ensure that its mandate concludes with a report of its findings and recommendations.
- Through its Working Group on Death Penalty, Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Africa, request to visit northern Ethiopia to investigate widespread extrajudicial and summary killings by parties to the conflict.

TO THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL:

- Send his Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict to the Tigray region of Ethiopia as provided for by Security Council resolution 1888, which calls upon the Secretary-General to "take the appropriate measures to deploy rapidly a team of experts to situations of particular concern with respect to sexual violence in armed conflict;" and deploy his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict to carry out a visit to Tigray and/or refugee camps in Sudan, to speak to survivors and report back, including on survivors' priorities for assistance and justice.
- As part of a wider policy to ensure that all members of national armed forces are vetted before being deployed to UN or African Union peacekeeping missions to ensure that they have not committed crimes under international law and other human rights abuses, ensure that no members of the Ethiopian or Eritrean armed forces are deployed to any such multilateral mission before being fully vetted.

TO THE UN SPECIAL PROCEDURES, INCLUDING THE UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN ERITREA:

- Continue to monitor the human rights situation in northern Ethiopia and report to the UN Human Rights Council on allegations of crimes under international law and other human rights abuses committed by the EDF in Ethiopia.

TO MEMBER STATES OF THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL:

- Extend the mandate of ICHREE at the 54th session of the UN HRC and take steps to strengthen and support the work of the body.
- Call on Ethiopia to fully cooperate with ICHREE and other UN human rights mechanisms and to grant such bodies full and unhindered access to its territory and to allow them to meet and speak freely and privately with victims and survivors, witnesses, and victims' family members.
- Call on Eritrea to fully cooperate with the ICHREE and other UN human rights mechanisms and allow them to meet and speak freely and privately with EDF members.
- Extend the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on Eritrea at the 56th session of the UN Human Rights Council and take steps to include measures for the Council to scrutinize allegations of crimes under international law and other human rights abuses by the EDF in Ethiopia.

TO THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU) AND ITS MEMBER STATES:

- Continue to ensure that justice and accountability remain a top priority in EU-Ethiopia relations across all areas of relations and up to the highest level, in line with the Council Conclusions of 24 April 2023 which highlight EU and Member States' support to "accountability and transitional justice [as] the backbone of lasting peace and reconciliation".
- Engage with all Ethiopian counterparts to immediately end crimes under international law and other human rights abuses, including those committed after the signing of the CoHA.
- Building on EU leadership in establishing the ICHREE mandate, unequivocally support the renewal of the ICHREE mandate at the UN Human Rights Council, including through pro-active and timely diplomatic outreach in support of these efforts.
- In the same spirit, pro-actively engage with all parties, including ICHREE, the Ethiopian government and the UN HRC to ensure support to ICHREE in its efforts to access, monitor, gather evidence and report on crimes under international law and other human rights abuses in the country.
- Ensure concrete, visible follow-up on ICHREE's report recommendations to send a clear signal of EU and Member States' commitments on human rights to the Ethiopian civil society and to victims and survivors of rape and other forms of sexual violence. Likewise ensure that the UN HRC remains seized of the human rights situation in the country going forward.
- Ensure that all EU and Member State funding, including to the EHRC (Ethiopian Human Rights Commission) and national transitional justice initiatives, are coupled with diplomatic action in support of human rights, and particularly of victims' rights to justice, truth, and reparations for crimes under international law and other human rights abuses.
- Provide funding and full political backing for programming on sexual and gender-based violence in the country and provide visible support to groups of survivors and victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence. At the same time, pro-actively support evidence-gathering on crimes under international law and other human rights abuses in all areas of Ethiopia affected by the conflict, with a view to ensuring justice for victims and survivors.
- Reinforce contacts and genuine consultations with Ethiopian human rights defenders (HRDs) – particularly women human rights defenders (WHRDs) and civil society to include their crucial views in EU and Member State work to support accountability in Ethiopia, including protecting WHRDs at risk for their critical views.

TO ETHIOPIA'S DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS:

- Engage with all Ethiopian counterparts to immediately end crimes under international law and other human rights abuses, including those committed after the signing of the CoHA.
- Ensure that justice and accountability are a top priority in in relations with Ethiopia and up to the highest level.
- Unequivocally support the renewal of ICHREE's mandate at the UN HRC, including through pro-active and timely senior diplomatic outreach in support of these efforts.
- Engage with all parties, including ICHREE, the Ethiopian government and the UN HRC to ensure support to ICHREE in its efforts to access, monitor, gather evidence and report on crimes under international law and other human rights abuses in the country.

- Enhance funding to survivor groups and organizations providing support and services for survivors.
- Provide funding and full political backing for evidence-gathering on crimes under international law and other human rights abuses in all areas of Ethiopia affected by the conflict, with a view to ensuring justice for victims and survivors.
- Reinforce contacts and genuine consultations with Ethiopian HRDs – particularly WHRDs – and civil society to include their crucial views in EU and member state work to support accountability in Ethiopia, including protecting WHRDs at risk for their critical views.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL IS A GLOBAL MOVEMENT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. WHEN INJUSTICE HAPPENS TO ONE PERSON, IT MATTERS TO US ALL.

CONTACT US


info@amnesty.org


+44 (0)20 7413 5500

JOIN THE CONVERSATION


www.facebook.com/AmnestyGlobal


@Amnesty

“TODAY OR TOMORROW, THEY SHOULD BE BROUGHT BEFORE JUSTICE”

RAPE, SEXUAL SLAVERY, EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS, AND PILLAGE BY ERITREAN FORCES IN TIGRAY

Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF) committed war crimes and possibly crimes against humanity in Ethiopia’s Tigray region, immediately before and after the signing of a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement between Ethiopia’s federal government and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) in November 2022.

In this report, Amnesty International documented at least 20 cases of extrajudicial executions committed by the EDF in the Mariam Shewito district between 25 October and 1 November 2022, while in the Kokob Tsibah district it found that EDF soldiers executed 24 people between November 2022 and January 2023. In all these cases, multiple interviewees corroborated claims that victims of extrajudicial executions were civilians. In the context of the armed conflict in Tigray, extrajudicial executions of civilians amount to the war crime of murder.

Amnesty International further documented that, in the Kokob Tsibah district, the EDF held at least 15 women captive for nearly three months at their military camp between 1 November 2022 and 19 January 2023, and committed rape in a situation amounting to sexual slavery. Other women were held captive at home and also subjected to sexual slavery. Taken together with previous Amnesty International documentation on crimes under international law committed in the Tigray region, these cases of rape and sexual slavery could be considered as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against the civilian population, potentially amounting to crimes against humanity.

INDEX: AFR 25/7152/2023
MONTH/YEAR (EG: SEPTEMBER 2023)
LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL