

Forum: Security Council

Issue #SC-02: The situation in Ethiopia

Student Officer: Hannah Baker

Position: President of the Security Council

Introduction

Ethiopia is a country located in West Africa, bordering Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, Sudan and South Sudan. With a population of 119 million and a landmass of over a million km², it is the second most populous country in Africa.

Historically, colonization from the Ottoman Empire, the British and the Italians have rendered Ethiopia politically unstable. After this era of colonization and foreign rule, the first Ethiopian emperor was named. However, Emperor Haile Salassie rule came to an abrupt halt after the military coup of 1974. The military implemented the Provisional Military Government of Socialist Ethiopia (DERG), but this new state was also short-lived due to political instability and flawed socialistic policies which crippled the economy.

After constant political turmoil, Mengistu Haile Mariam, a former president of Ethiopia, established the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in 1987. Parallel to the previous attempts of government, the republic fell. Mengistu was overthrown and exiled in 1991. After the fall of the Republic, many changes came to be. One of the main changes was giving the power and choice to regions to separate and succeed from the nation if they so desired. Eritrea, now a country in Africa, did just that in May of 1991. Furthermore, the division of Ethnic groups started to occur. Present day; there are four major ones and eighty different ethnic groups in total. The 4 central groups are Oromo, Amhara, Somali, and the Tigrayans. They are the central groups because they have a larger population. Throughout the years, these four main ethnic groups have had tension and conflicts.

However, the main conflict is occurring between the Trgrayans and the central government of Ethiopia. The Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed, wanted to establish a new political party that would remove power from the ethnic group political parties, like the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). Tigray refused to join the party and even went as far as declaring the prime minister and the central government illegitimate. Ethiopia has always been unstable with the rising and falling of governments and regimes. Now, Ethiopia is facing another political, refugee, and political crisis, that calls for global attention and quick and strong actions. If not, the crisis could destabilize the whole country and bring down one of Africa's biggest and most stable economies.

Delegates must act quickly and decisively to ensure the safety of the citizens of Ethiopia alongside the legitimacy and stability of one of the leading economies of Africa.

Definition of Key Terms

Ethnic violence

A form of political violence directed at ethnic groups. Is very common in Africa where many countries were formed by colonizers without regard for different ethnic groups in the country and disagreements that may have been and still are present. The main ethnic groups in this conflict are the Oromo, Amhara, Somali, and the Tigrayans.

Refugee

A person who has been forced to move out or leave their home or nation due to a natural disaster, war, or conflict.

Famine

A famine is a period where there is large-scale starvation due to a lack of food.

Secede

The act of withdrawing from a union, political alliance, country, etc. Currently, many people in the Tigray region wish to secede from Ethiopia as a result of the crisis.

Humanitarian aid

Material and logistic assistance is provided to people who are in need due to an emergency. It aims to alleviate suffering, save lives and maintain human dignity.

Issue Overview

The Ethiopian Crisis in the Tigray region that started in November began as a result of changes in the country and surrounding areas after Abiy Ahmed, the current Prime Minister, came into power. He rose on a platform of anti-corruption and pro-democracy in the midst of anti-government protests and was elected to be PM in April 2018. The actual conflict began on the morning of November 4th, 2020 when the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) launched attacks on multiple military bases including a federal military base in Sero. The TPLF soldiers raided armories, jammed communication between federal forces, and captured federal soldiers. PM Ahmed, citing Tigray's refusal to postpone a regional election (in defiance of the federal government) and its attack on a federal military base, ordered the country's army to invade the Tigray region. What followed next was nothing short of complete chaos. The eruption of a full-fledged civil war has led to a severe ongoing humanitarian crisis. The two sides have so far been fighting for nearly a year over control of individual towns in a bid to secure the Tigray region. Furthermore, there have been several grave allegations of human-rights violations (including shootings, mass murder, sexual violence, looting, and destruction/mis-use of foreign aid) committed by the TPLF forces, government forces, and foreign Eritrean troops that have gotten involved with the conflict as well.

Historical background

Abiy Ahmed's rise

Abiy Ahmed, previous to becoming the prime minister, had been an armed soldier who fought against the communist regime in Ethiopia. He later became known for being a fierce political activist. This led him to run for office, in which he won the elections, winning him the title of Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia. Once he came to power, he revolutionized his country by making radical changes to Ethiopia. One of these decisions was signing a peace agreement that accepted that Eritrea was an independent nation, which had been in dispute for sixteen years. He also worked with other nations around the Horn of Africa to promote peace and unity among nations. He granted political asylum to prisoners of politically unstable nations, became a recognizable player in African politics, and even received a Nobel prize for his tremendous work. One of his main goals was to promote democracy and equality amongst the various ethnic groups. He worked on this by constructing the Prosperity party, which was negatively looked at by various federal districts, most notably, Tigray. Abiy Ahmed had vowed to promote free elections in 2020 as democratization promised support and acceptance, but due to the coronavirus, the elections were postponed. Tigray's government viewed this as fraud and challenged Ahmed's federal government. Due to this, tensions grew exponentially between the Tigray region and Ethiopia's federal government.

Eritrea's independence

Eritrea was previously the northernmost province of Ethiopia. Starting in September of 1961 the thirty-year struggle for independence from Ethiopia was deadly for both sides and also many civilians. The Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) was the main group fighting for independence against the central government in Addis Ababa. In May of 1991, the province gained independence and seceded from the country. This caused decades-long negative relations between the states. Only recently with the efforts of current prime minister Abiy Ahmed, are the two states cooperating and engaging in positive relations. Eritrea's involvement in the Tigray conflict has been very secretive and scrutinized by the international community. There have been confirmed reports of Eritrean troops interfering illegally and helping the government troops. This is a sign of the increasingly good relations between the two countries, but the troops have not been conducting correctly and both states are denying their presence in the region. These troops are being accused of committing crimes such as ethnic violence and sexual abuse to many Tigrayan and Amhara people.

Latest events

Fighting

As of right now, the Tigrayan soldiers are currently battling the Ethiopian government as a result of the escalating tensions between the two parties. Tigray's TPLF (Tigray People's Liberation Front) was at the forefront of the political field of Ethiopia. It dominated the government for a period of twenty-five years before Abiy Ahmed became Prime Minister. Ahmed created a new party in search of unity in the nation. The party and political reforms completely shut the TPLF out. In November, tensions began escalating until the elections were postponed. The TPLF saw this as an act of aggression against a fair democracy. Tensions broke into violence, which has not stopped until now. A ceasefire was declared, but that did little to nothing to stop the violence and war crimes being committed on Ethiopian soil.

Ethnic conflict and displacement

Tigrayans have been a predominant ethnic group in Ethiopia with more than 7 million people. In the Tigray region, Tigrinya is spoken in contrast to Amharic, the official language of Ethiopia. In 1975 the TPLF led a rebellion against the military government that was in place at the time. The consequence of this failed rebellion was a widespread famine in the north of the country.

The government, trying to alleviate the damage, started relocating many Tigrayans to the south where the land was more fertile. This was met with international outcry due to these actions closely resembling ethnic cleansing. Finally in 1989 Tigrayan groups regained control over the province and aided in overthrowing the government. The fact that this government was mostly controlled by the Tigrayans caused conflicts and tensions throughout the country for many decades. Eritrean border disputes were common, creating more issues in the Tigray province. Due to decreased funding and other complaints from in the Tigray province tensions between the current government and the Tigrayans heightened leading us to the situation that we can observe now.

Major Parties Involved

Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)

The party used to be one of the most important and powerful parties in all of Ethiopia until the Prime Minister Abi Ahmed Ali disbanded it. Previously , the party had ruled Ethiopia's government for almost three decades, and the party used to be a major coalition to many different smaller regional governments such as the one in Tigray.

Prosperity Party

The party is a fairly new one. The prime minister formed the party in 2019 as a direct response to his initiative to disband the EPRDF political party. The Prime minister had a vision of unison and collaboration with the regions of Ethiopia. The Prime Minister and the party later accused the TPLF of "orchestrating ethnic violence across the country" (Newman). This party has been praised for transcending the ethnic groups and focusing on Ethiopia as a whole.

Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)

The Tigray People's Liberation Front is a leftist political party that belongs to the regional government of the Tigray region to the north of Ethiopia. The party formed in the late 1970s to push for specific goals centered around the Tigrayan region. At the start of November, the party organized an attack and a full-scale military operation against the Ethiopian military. They have been in conflict with the Prosperity Party and Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed ever since.

Ethiopian's National Defense Forces (ENDF)

The Ethiopian's National Defense Forces is a military branch of the government which is led by Kenea Yadeta, the Minister of Defense. It oversees anything related to the military such as the ground force, navy, and air force. Due to the conflict with Ethiopia, the ENDF has over 140,000 soldiers currently active. The government sent soldiers to a neighboring region (Amhara region) and captured countless cities including the capital city of Tigray.

Eritrea

Eritrea is an independent nation that borders Ethiopia. Thirty years ago, it used to be a part of Ethiopia, but they opted for independence instead of remaining with the nation Eritrea wanted to be its own independent nation since it had a decline of autonomy. After this, Ethiopia and Eritrea had negative relationships with each other until Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's efforts resulted in a better relationship. As of right now, Eritrea has offered its support to Ethiopia. They have sent troops to sack towns and the Eritrean forces were even responsible for a civilian massacre. Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki has shown his support as an ally to the Central National Government and the Prosperity Party due to his relationship with Prime Minister Ahmed.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
February 18th, 1975	The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) party was founded during the Ethiopian civil war.
June 1991	The TPLF overthrows the military junta government to stop the civil war. The party goes on to lead a four-party coalition. The coalition respects the Ethiopian concept of federalism but harnesses a strong central government to keep it in power.
April 2nd, 2018	Abiy Ahmed is elected by the government as the prime minister after a wave of anti-government protests aimed at calling out corruption and inaction. Ahmed goes on to drive out corrupt politicians, unite various political parties, and receive a Nobel Prize for his efforts in creating peace with Eritrea by solving a border dispute.
October 11, 2019	Abiy Ahmed receives the Nobel Peace prize for mending relations with their neighboring country of Ethiopia.
December 1st, 2019	Under the leadership of PM Abiy Ahmed, a new political party, the “Prosperity Party”, is launched. The new party is the merger of nearly all major political parties in Ethiopia. The TPLF is the only major party that does not merge within the new party.
September 8th, 2020	After postponed elections after the coronavirus pandemic, elections took place in Tigray. The central government cuts funding on welfare programs in Tigray, igniting the conflict.
November 3rd, 2020.	TPLF launches an attack on a government-controlled military base due to their belief that the government was getting ready to attack the region due to them continuing with their elections. They take many weapons and ammunition.

November 4th, 2020	PM Ahmed orders Ethiopian troops to invade the Tigray region.
February 2021	Eritrean troops, who are allied with the central government are accused of killing hundreds of civilians in Axum, Tigray. The government denies any involvement.
March 2021	Finally, the central government admitted involvement from Eritrean troops, and claimed they left. However, a UN humanitarian aid probe confirms that troops are still in the Tirayan region.
April 22nd, 2021	The UNSC (United Nations Security Council) issues a joint statement expressing their concern over human rights abuses and sexual violence in the region.

Relevant UN treaties and Events

Not much action has been taken as of yet, however the UNHRC (United Nations Human Rights Council) passed a [resolution](#) (A/76/53) that outlined the issue and called attention to various aspects of the situation including humanitarian aid, violation of Human Rights and accountability for the violation of those human rights.

Past Action

As of 2021, the situation has now risen to a humanitarian crisis with a grand total of 1.7 million people displaced. There have been many instances of mass murder, famine, and mass sexual violence committed by soldiers. Nearly a year of waiting and watching. No concrete action has been taken, and as of right now, the crisis has reached an exponential level of chaos that needs to be resolved immediately.

Possible Solutions

Given the severity of the situation, the security council must collaborate with different countries, each with a different point of view, to come to a consensus and ultimately save lives.

Delegates must address the crumbling democracy, economic collapse, abuse of human rights and ongoing violence in the region through **sanctions, international pressure, humanitarian aid and foreign pressure**.

Bibliography

Al Jazeera. (2021, November 9). *From PM sending troops to Tigray to TPLF taking Mekelle: Timeline*. Conflict News | Al Jazeera. Retrieved December 24, 2021, from <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/4/six-months-of-ethiopias-tigray-conflict-a-timeline>

BBC. (2020, December 28). *Tigray Crisis: Eritrea's role in Ethiopian conflict*. BBC News. Retrieved December 24, 2021, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-55295650>

Early and later history of Ethiopia by Cedarberg Africa. Cedarberg. (2021, July 13). Retrieved December 24, 2021, from <https://www.cedarberg-travel.com/early-later-history-ethiopia/>

Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. (n.d.). *Relief of Ethiopia*. Encyclopædia Britannica. Retrieved December 24, 2021, from <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ethiopia/Relief>

Ethiopia - World Directory of Minorities & Indigenous Peoples. Minority Rights Group. (2020, November 19). Retrieved December 24, 2021, from <https://minorityrights.org/country/ethiopia/>

Kirby, J. (2020, December 3). *Ethiopia's unfolding humanitarian crisis, explained by top aid official Jan Egeland*. Vox. Retrieved December 24, 2021, from <https://www.vox.com/22104666/ethiopia-conflict-refugees-sudan-nrc-jan-egeland>

Neuman, S. (2021, March 5). *9 things to know about the unfolding crisis in Ethiopia's Tigray Region*. NPR. Retrieved December 24, 2021, from <https://www.npr.org/2021/03/05/973624991/9-things-to-know-about-the-unfolding-crisis-in-ethiopias-tigray-region>

Appendix or Appendices

I. Article providing detailed introduction into the Ethiopian crisis

<https://www.npr.org/2021/03/05/973624991/9-things-to-know-about-the-unfolding-crisis-in-ethiopias-tigray-region>

II. Article detailing the history of the Tigray region

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Tigray-historical-region-Ethiopia>

III. Great analysis on the build-up of the conflict

<https://www.dw.com/en/the-conflict-in-tigray-ethiopia/a-58886256>

IV. Ethiopia's Civil War and a deep dive into its history

https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/ethiopias-civil-war-is-a-disaster-thats-onlygetting-worse/2021/09/01/4452129a-0ae2-11ec-a7c8-61bb7b3bf628_story.html

V. A look into the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Ethiopia

<https://www.vox.com/22104666/ethiopia-conflict-refugees-sudan-nrc-janegeland>