



Conflict-Related Gender Based Violence in Tigray

Summary “Voices from Tigray – Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Tigray”

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Summary “Voices from Tigray - Conflict Related Sexual Violence in Tigray”

25 May 2021 - The scale and brutality of crimes of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence against Women committed in Tigray has drawn widespread condemnation from around the world.

While Tigray has been entirely closed off from communications for three months, and large parts remain closed off, large numbers of sexual violence have been reported.

UNFPA estimated in April that 22.500 women would require support as a consequence of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence.

There is massive underreporting of sexual violence. Large parts of Tigray are closed off. Journalists and aid workers cannot reach all areas. The shame and fear associated with the violence and perpetrators acting with impunity and the destruction of local administration and hospitals compound to the problem of underreporting. What is being reported is the tip of the iceberg.

The reports that are available demonstrate despicable and horrific acts on sexual violence committed without impunity, they are widespread and characterised by their extreme and sadistic nature.

The reports include abduction, gang rape of (groups of) women held in isolated places and drugged, rape in front of relatives including husbands and children, the forced rape of women by their relatives, burning of genitals and forcing of objects into the vagina. Women are abused for being Tigrayan. Children or witnesses are killed.

Many have qualified these as Conflict-related sexual violence, used as a weapon of war used against the civilian population, and committed, in part, with genocidal intent.

Cases reported include include elderly women and girls, as young as eight years of age.

The perpetrators are mentioned as the foreign Eritrean troops heavily present in Tigray and these are most often identified as the perpetrators, followed by Amhara and Ethiopian National Defense Forces.

Eritrean Troops are in Tigray under the so-called National Service, a form of nation-wide indefinite slavery, which the UN Special Commission of Inquiry has qualified as Crimes against Humanity which are ongoing. It has recommended the practice to be referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC). In Tigray the National Service practice is deployed in a foreign sovereign state, and those in charge responsible for the perpetration of heinous Conflict-Related Sexual Violence against Women.

Due to the destruction of health facilities in Tigray which came under deliberate attack in the war, there are no relevant services available to the victims, while the trauma that was sustained, often severe, may leave the women and girls in dire need of support.

The Eritrean and Ethiopian government have so far denied or belittled the Conflict – Related Sexual Violence against Women and there is no indication of any responsibility taken to stop it. Today the Ethiopian government has convicted three soldiers in relation to rape committed in Tigray.

After months of denial, Prime Minister Abiy has now recognised Eritrean troops as present and identified these as potential perpetrators of sexual violence against Tigrayan women and girls. High-level international calls for Eritrean troops to be withdrawn, the troops remain present.

The perpetration of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence has not diminished and is spreading across the Horn. There must be concerted and coordinated international pressure and targeted sanctions. These atrocities must come to an end, and soldiers and their commanders must be prosecuted.

- The withdrawal of all foreign troops, particularly those from Eritrea
- The referral of the deployment by Eritrea of National Service in a foreign jurisdiction to the International Criminal Court
- All parties in Tigray to end with immediate effect the impunity of the use of Rape as a Weapon of War

List of Selected References to the Briefing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence against Women in Tigray

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