



[Tigray Conflict in Ethiopia Intensifies and Results in a Growing Humanitarian Crisis](#)

Violence has broken out in Ethiopia's northern state of Tigray between regional forces of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the national government. Hundreds of soldiers and civilians are said to have been killed, with the escalation of the fighting in recent weeks. Serious clashes first began on November 4th, and have continued to intensify since, with some signs pointing to the outbreak of a full-blown civil war. At the heart of the conflict is disagreement between the predominant political party in Tigray and the federal government, which stretches back to 2018 when current Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed ascended to the role. Of particular concern is the growing humanitarian and refugee crisis there, with thousands of civilians fleeing from the violence in Ethiopia's Tigray region and traveling across the border to neighboring Sudan. Regional powers including the African Union have called for an immediate ceasefire, but the Abiy government has said that it is not willing to negotiate until the leaders of the TPLF are in custody. As a result, the fighting looks set to continue, at an inordinate cost of human life and safety.

In 2018, a popular uprising brought Abiy Ahmed into power in Ethiopia. Until that uprising, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Front, a multi-ethnic coalition comprised of political parties representing each segment of Ethiopian society, had ruled the country since 1992 when the country's Marxist government was overthrown. Within this multi-ethnic federation, the TPLF, the bloc representing Tigray, amassed major influence and was in de facto control of Ethiopian politics at the expense of other groups. This changed in 2018, when Ahmed was brought to power after the popular uprising against the TPLF's corruption, human rights record, and incompetence. One of Ahmed's first actions as prime minister was to disband the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Front in an attempt to further democratize the country. However, this sidelined the TPLF and cut off the group from the influence it had grown to know. Since then, Ahmed's government has frequently accused the TPLF of attempting to destabilize his government through covert actions to bring themselves back into national power.

Recently, on November 4th, the tension between the Abiy government and the TPLF exploded when an Ethiopian army outpost in Tigray was attacked and the government blamed Tigrayan militants. The TPLF denied any responsibility for the attack, and its leader, Debretsion Gebremichael, called for dialogue with the government in its immediate aftermath. Gebremichael also accused Abiy Ahmed of manufacturing outrage in order to further denigrate the TPLF and consolidate his power. Further complicating the situation, the TPLF has refused to recognize Ahmed's legitimacy after he postponed elections scheduled for this past summer in the face of the coronavirus pandemic.

The fighting in Tigray has intensified significantly in the preceding days, and there are widespread reports of both sides committing atrocities against civilians and each other. The Ethiopian military claimed it had killed over 550 Tigrayan fighters, but an internet and cellular blackout has made independent verification impossible. A report from Amnesty International accused Tigrayan fighters of massacring "scores" of noncombatants in a village on the western edge of the conflict in what would amount to a serious breach of the Geneva Convention if true. Ultimately, the ongoing conflict has fostered an overwhelming humanitarian and refugee crisis, with thousands of civilians fleeing their homes and traveling across the border to Sudan. The crisis has been exacerbated by the fact that aid agencies have had extreme difficulties accessing the Tigray region, and the local government estimates that a total of more than 100,000 civilians have been displaced and are in need of assistance due to the recent eruption of violence in early November.