



## [A New Human Rights Watch Report Details Major War Crimes Committed Against Refugees During the Tigray Conflict](#)

Human Rights Watch (HRW) issued a recent report highlighting serious war crimes and abuses committed against refugees in Tigray during the ongoing conflict there. The already vulnerable segment of the population has borne the brunt of the fighting's repercussions, and has been subjected to egregious human rights violations at the hands of both Tigrayan militias and Eritrean government forces. The new HRW findings come in the aftermath of investigations last year in 2020 which documented repeated instances in which the parties involved in the conflict entered various refugee camps, blocked critical humanitarian aid, and attacked civilians and non-combatants. Adding to the disturbing nature of the abuses is the fact that these refugee victims themselves are externally displaced citizens residing in the Tigray region who had intentionally fled and escaped violence in other areas to pursue safer lives. Therefore, advocacy groups and activists have called on belligerents to cease any hostilities towards refugees who should, on the contrary, be protected from the atrocities of the conflict.

The refugees in Tigray have encountered the very human rights abuses they intended to flee. Many of these citizens left Eritrea for example after years of worsening standards of living. Eritrea, once at war with Ethiopia, has been plagued with instability and oppression – often resulting in politically-motivated killings and a phenomenon in which only supporters of the government receive goods and services from the state. Lack of access to food and water, as well as widespread poverty, have also contributed to the influx of Eritrean refugees coming into the neighboring northern Tigray region of Ethiopia. Now, as the Ethiopian central government has gone into conflict with local Tigrayan forces, Eritrean forces have aided the former and refugees have suffered serious human rights abuses from both sides. Ultimately, the new HRW report shows that these refugees have reencountered the very terror that they hoped to leave behind.

The international community has followed the Tigrayan crisis with great attention as the humanitarian atrocities have seemingly worsened over the past few months. This latest report by Human Rights Watch has shown that it is the most vulnerable citizens in Ethiopia – refugees – that have been most negatively affected by the armed ongoing conflict. This week at the annual session of the United Nations General Assembly, the conflict will undoubtedly be a major issue discussed and debated. Social justice observers hope that there lies the possibility of more sanctions from the United Nations Security Council against the Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Tigrayan forces that have been complicit in the major human rights abuses.

As the crisis in Tigray continues, many advocacy groups have urged the need for a peaceful resolution, but questions remain regarding whether both sides are willing to come to the negotiation table. Regardless of this, the United States Department of State has reaffirmed its commitment to working with all sides of the conflict to implement a solution which protects refugees and other at-risk civilians. The United Nations has reported that while nations such as the United States are focusing on and providing much needed resources for these refugees, one of the major issues that persists is delivering that aid. It is clear and important that if nothing else, all parties involved in the conflict should at least see to it that refugees are not targeted and receive the resources they need to ensure their health and safety.