

Fighting erupts near Tigray border, dashing hopes of peace in Ethiopia

The renewed violence comes amid a worsening humanitarian situation in Africa's second-most-populous country

By [Rachel Chason](#) (Washington Post)

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Farmers pass a tank that allegedly belonged to the Eritrean army on a road southwest of the Tigrayan capital, Mekele, in June 2021. (Yasuyoshi Chiba/AFP/Getty Images)

NAIROBI — Fighting erupted Wednesday near the border of Ethiopia's Tigray region, ending a months-long cease-fire and launching a new phase in a civil war that has had devastating humanitarian consequences.

The Ethiopian government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), [which had both appeared ready for peace talks earlier this summer](#), confirmed in separate statements that fighting had resumed. Each side accused the other of starting the violence. According to the TPLF, the government began an "extensive offensive" at 5 a.m., after five days of repositioning its forces. The government countered that the TPLF had ignored peaceful alternatives and launched an attack that "officially violated the cease-fire."

Ethiopia, which is Africa's second-most-populous country and was long heralded as a beacon of stability in its region, has been ravaged for nearly two years by civil war. The government declared a humanitarian truce in March, allowing more aid to reach the northern region of Tigray, but the situation for civilians there remains dire. Thousands have been killed and millions displaced.

A report this month [by the World Food Program](#) found that nearly half of Tigray's 5.5 million residents were in "severe" need of food, with malnutrition rates expected to increase until the October harvest. The number of people needing food aid in Tigray and the neighboring regions of Afar and Amhara has increased by 44 percent since January, the report said. Communication and banking services have been cut in Tigray for more than a year, and access for journalists has been restricted, making it difficult to assess the scale of the crisis.

Last week, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, head of the World Health Organization, described the situation as “the worst disaster on Earth” and criticized world leaders for their silence about the conflict.

“I haven’t heard in the last few months any head of state talking about the Tigray situation anywhere in the developed world. Anywhere. Why?” asked Tedros, who is an ethnic Tigrayan.

“Maybe the reason is the color of the skin of the people in Tigray,” he said.

[They fled hundreds of miles to escape war in Ethiopia. But they fear it wasn’t far enough.](#)

The war started in the fall of 2020 after Tigrayans held their own elections in defiance of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. The TPLF, a regional political party, had ruled the country for three decades before Abiy came to power in 2018. When TPLF forces attacked an Ethiopian military base in Tigray, Abiy, a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, launched a military offensive.

Last November, thousands of TPLF troops [advanced to within 200 miles of the Ethiopian capital](#), Addis Ababa, prompting Abiy to say he would lead government forces from the front line. The rebels, who were [pushed back](#) in December, returned to Tigray.

The war has been marked by accusations of atrocities on both sides. A [report by the United Nations last year](#) found that both had “committed violations of international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law, some of which may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.”

In a statement Wednesday, the TPLF called the government’s current actions part of a “genocidal assault on the people of Tigray.”

“Tigray’s Army is reliably ready to repulse this offensive,” the statement said, “and transition into a counteroffensive to liberate occupied sovereign Tigrayan territory and return our displaced people to their homes.”

A government statement that followed accused the TPLF, which the government has labeled a “terrorist organization,” of ignoring attempts to establish peace and launching an attack Wednesday morning near the towns of Bisober, Zobel and Tekulesh.

“They have committed attacks and are crying out with the false propaganda that they have already mastered,” the government statement said. “As the Amharic proverb goes, ‘a lash whips itself and screams.’”

Ethiopia downed plane carrying weapons to TPLF rebels –

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August 24, 2022 (KHARTOUM) – Ethiopia downed a plane carrying weapons to the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) an armed group fighting the national army in the northern part of the country, said the official news agency on Wednesday.

“The plane, which flew from Sudan and violated Ethiopia’s air space, was heading to Tigray through the northern part of Humera to deliver armaments to the terrorist group,” Maj Genl Tesfaye Ayalew, Head of the Ethiopian National Defence Coordination Main Department and Deployment.

The Ethiopian Air Force shot it down at 10:00 pm on Tuesday, added Ayalew.

The agency described the plane as “the property of Ethiopia’s historical enemies” without openly accusing a country of supporting the TPLF.

In a related development, the Ethiopian government and the Tigray rebel group confirmed the resumption of the fighting dashing hope for a humanitarian ceasefire, followed by peace talks to end the armed conflict.

In Khartoum, the Sudanese government did not react to the Ethiopian statement.

Military sources said that the government is investigating the Ethiopian claims before issuing a statement.

On August 23, South Sudanese presidential adviser Tut Gatluak told Sudan Tribune that Sudan and Ethiopia agreed in principle to end the border dispute through peaceful dialogue instead of military means.

Gatluak was in Khartoum to hand over an invitation from President Salva Kiir to Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan to attend the graduation of the first unified forces in South Sudan.