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Adrian van der Knaap – Country Director  
World Food Programme  
Addis Ababa  
Ethiopia  
[wfp.ethiopia@wfp.org](mailto:wfp.ethiopia@wfp.org)

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Dear Adrian,

As a long-time ex-UN staff and presently Board member of the [American Ethiopian Public Affairs Committee \(AEPAC\)](#), I am writing to raise concerns regarding the distribution of aid in Tigray and to seek assurances WFP, that has done admirable humanitarian assistance under difficult circumstances, is following robust protocols to ensure food is actually getting to the vulnerable citizens who need it.

Last week a WFP report suggested nearly half the people in Ethiopia's Tigray region are in 'severe' need of food aid. That is despite numerous comments from UN representatives in recent weeks, including WFP, confirming the aid programme was on track, with more than 4,000 trucks reaching the region since the start of the humanitarian truce in March. While I appreciate there is scope to upscale the amount of aid and open additional corridors, it does open the question as to whether aid is actually reaching the designated vulnerable end users.

As you are well aware, there is wide concern the TPLF has been controlling aid. The TPLF leadership has a track record of using aid as a political tool while in government. A [2010 Human Rights Watch report](#) titled Development without Freedom concluded: *“the [TPLF] government has used donor-supported programs, salaries, and training opportunities as political weapons to control the population, punish dissent, and undermine political opponents—both real and perceived.”* Concerns were also raised last year that aid trucks entering the region were not being returned and in August 2021 [Sean Jones, head of the USAID mission in Ethiopia, confirmed](#) TPLF forces had looted aid warehouses and trucks in Afar and Amhara Regions.

In more recent months my concerns have become more profound. Four independent reports have been released since April raising the alarm that the TPLF is restricting aid to families who can't provide soldiers for their insurgency or any individual who shows dissent. A commentary published in the [Macdonald Laurier Institute](#) confirmed (through interviews with soldiers who had fled the TPLF) only a small amount of aid is made available to those families who contributed fighters to the rebel force and very little or no aid is given to families that did not have fighters to contribute. It was suggested that priority was always given to the TPLF leaders, some select TPLF-linked businessmen and fighters. Similar reports by [Reuters](#), [Channel 4 News](#) and [The Guardian](#), reaffirmed those suggestions.

Yet, despite those reports there has been no word from WFP that I am aware of providing assurances about the distribution of aid to the ultimate intended vulnerable recipients in Tigray region. Having worked in the UN for over 30-years and managing multi-billion Common Humanitarian Funds in DRC, Somalia, Sudan and elsewhere, as well other UN wide Trust Funds that WFP was an active participating agency, I know WFP usually has strict protocols in place to ensure aid is being delivered by national or regional governments or other non-governmental organizations to those the food is intended to and need it. However, in the case of the TPLF, given their track record of using aid as a political tool and the recent allegations related to the restriction of aid to certain groups, it would seem dangerous and naïve to continue allowing them to support food aid distribution, without a transparent and verifiable monitoring and reporting system.

We have also been shocked by the theft of 12 fuel trucks this week from the WFP in Mekelle by TPLF forces. This has only reaffirmed the view the TPLF should not be playing a central role in the distribution of aid in Tigray.

We at AEPAC, would appreciate for WFP to undertake an urgent review of its processes and to identify any misuse of aid by the TPLF and to investigate their actions in Mekelle on the 24<sup>th</sup> August. Given the sheer number of Ethiopians in need in Tigray, Afar and Amhara regions, it would be an unforgivable scandal if WFP's humanitarian assistance is ending up in the hands of rebel forces rather than the vulnerable communities who are suffering.

I look forward to your response and receiving assurances the WFP will investigate recent allegations.

Yours sincerely,

**Bisrat Aklilu**  
**Board Member, AEPAC**