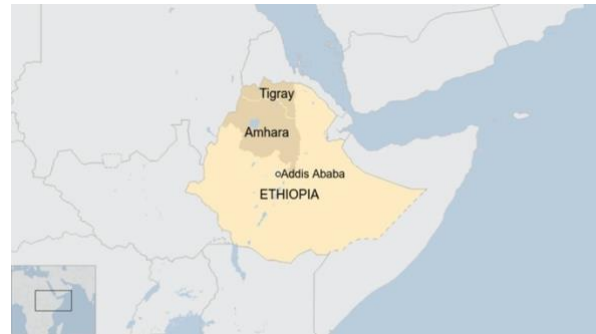


Security Advisory - Ethiopia

SUMMARY

Fighting continues in the Tigray region, with Ethiopian troops making advances on the Shire area and on the regional capital Mekele.



ETHIOPIAN TROOPS ADVANCE ON SHIRE

The Ethiopian government has announced that its forces have made advances in the Shire area of Tigray region amidst continuing fighting between the Ethiopian federal government and forces loyal to the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). Ethiopian officials have also confirmed that they have taken control of the area of Chercher, Gugufto, Mehoni and Raya, in addition to destroying a number of local bases used by the TPLF.

ADVANCES ON TIGRAY CAPITAL

Ethiopian authorities have claimed that government troops are now advancing on the state capital, Mekele, despite the TPLF claiming that fighting is ongoing in the vicinity of Alamata, which federal forces earlier this week claimed that they had retaken. The drive towards Mekele comes following the end of a three-day deadline that was set by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed for the TPLF to surrender. On Monday 16 November, a number of airstrikes were carried out against the TPLF outside of Mekele.

AID GROUPS MAKE PLEA TO HAVE ACCESS TO REFUGEES

Aid groups have once again called to have access to refugees and to help those stuck within the Tigray region, with growing fears that people are going hungry in the northern area of Ethiopia as roads remain blocked, airports are closed and the federal government moves ahead with its final push on the capital, Mekele. Banks have also been closed for days, effectively cutting off humanitarian cash transfers to some 1 million people, or one-sixth of the Tigray population. Prior to the start of fighting in the region, a locust outbreak had destroyed crops, further fuelling a food crisis. Locals also remain trapped in the region over fears that they may be killed if they make any attempts to leave. Trucks laden with food, fuel and medical supplies have been stuck outside of the region's borders since the 4 November announcement of the launching of the military offensive in the Tigray region.

While the Ethiopian federal government has promised a rapid end to the conflict, there appears to be no end in sight to the fighting on the ground, and humanitarian groups and regional and international governments are increasingly becoming concerned. The UN has reported that well over 1,000 foreign citizens are said to be trapped, though the UN notes that more than 200 foreigners have been evacuated as of 17 November. Meanwhile the Tigray regional government reported on 18 November that more than 100,000 civilians have been displaced as it called for urgent humanitarian assistance. Both the US and UN have called for humanitarian workers to be given safe passage to the region to provide much needed assistance. On 17 November, the UN humanitarian office set aside US \$20 million "for anticipatory action to fight hunger in Ethiopia," citing a long list of threats in the country, including "civil unrest, growing insecurity, locust infestations, and the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, which includes declining incomes and rising inflation."

CONTEXT

On 4 November, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed announced that he had ordered a military offensive in the Tigray region after he accused security forces aligned with the regional TPLF of attacking Ethiopian National

Defence Forces' (ENDF) positions in the state. The operations comes after two years of rising tensions between the TPLF and the federal government in Addis Ababa amidst claims that the Tigray Region was being marginalized by the Prime Minister's sweeping reforms. Prior to that, the TPLF had dominated the government before the appointment of Abiy as Prime Minister in 2018. Tensions however escalated significantly in September 2020 when the TPLF staged their own regional elections in the Tigray region in defiance of a move by the federal government to suspend national elections due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Shortly after the election, the federal government declared the vote illegal while in early October, the upper house of Ethiopia's parliament voted to withhold budgetary subsidies to Tigray. With tensions rising significantly, on 3 November, regional authorities issued a statement, accusing Addis Ababa of planning a war in the Tigray region.

TRAVEL ADVISORY

The situation across the Tigray region remains fluid and the security situation could deteriorate with little notice. Further security operations and clashes are likely in the Tigray region in the near term and disruptions to transportation and communications services are ongoing. There is also a realistic possibility of civilian harm in major flashpoint areas.

A six-month state of emergency has been declared in the Tigray region in response to recent attacks. As of 18 November communications across the Tigray region, including Internet and mobile phone networks, remain blocked, effectively limiting information on the military operations occurring in the region. Overland travel restrictions have also been reported in Mekele, where local authorities have banned civilian vehicles from the roads. Similar restrictions are likely to be imposed in other areas of the Tigray region. Airspace over the region also remains closed as of Friday and flights to Mekele (MQX), Shire (SHC), and Axum (AXU) remain suspended, though those from Gondar (GDQ) resumed on 5 November.

Neighbouring Sudan on 5 November closed its border with Ethiopia in the wake of violence erupting in the Tigray region. Authorities in Kassala state disclosed that the closure is intended to stop any potential entry of fighters into Sudan. It currently remains unclear when the border will re-open.

MS RISK ADVISORY: Anyone currently in the Tigray region is advised to closely monitor the situation and to remain vigilant at all times. You should closely monitor the local media for information on the evolving situation and you should remain aware of ongoing security operations and militant activity. Expect a heightened security presence in several areas. You should carry identification documents with you at all times, avoid large gatherings, protests and demonstrations as they may turn violent with little or no notice, and adhere to all instructions issued by the local authorities and their home governments. Anyone in the Tigray region and planning to travel via the closed airports is advised to monitor the situation, confirm flights itineraries, review contingency and evacuation plans and remain vigilant.

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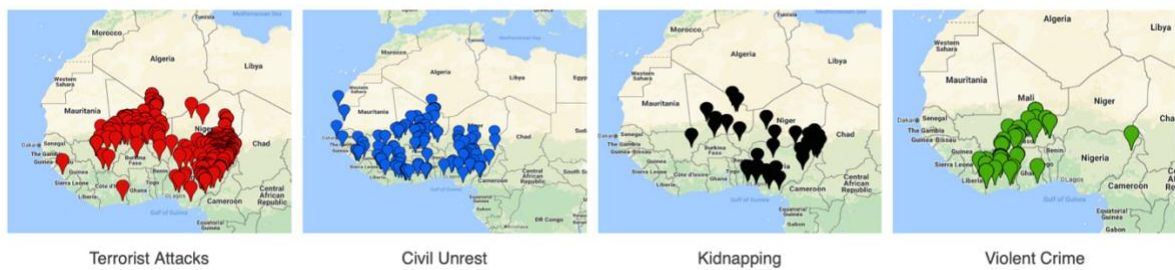
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