

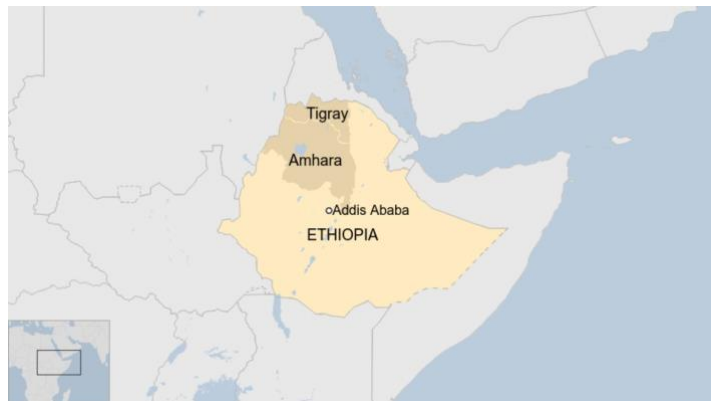
## Security Advisory - Ethiopia

### SUMMARY

Tensions continue to be heightened in the wake of last week's escalation between the federal government in Addis Ababa and officials in the northern Tigray region. Fighting has spread along Tigray's border with the Amhara region, which backs the federal government in Addis Ababa, and there are also reports of clashes near the border with Eritrea and Sudan, which has already partially closed its frontier with Ethiopia over concerns of cross-border violence.

### GOVERNMENT CONFIRMS AIRSTRIKES

On Friday 6 November, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed confirmed during a press conference that Ethiopian Air Forces (ETAF) carried out airstrikes against alleged Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)-aligned forces in the Tigray region. The Prime Minister disclosed that the airstrikes had targeted a number of long-range 'rocket launchers' in the area around the regional capital Mekele on 5 November after they had been seized by TPLF-aligned forces.



At the beginning of the offensive on 4 November, the Ethiopian government claimed that the TPLF had seized artillery systems and other equipment from Ethiopian National Defence Forces' (ENDF) bases around Mekele. However it remains unclear whether the rocket systems targeted in the strikes on 5 November had been appropriated in the initial uprising. The Prime Minister also did not disclose what type of rocket systems had been destroyed in Thursday's airstrikes, though he stated that they had a range of around 300 km (185 miles), similar to a Scud-type short-range ballistic missile. A number of major cities, particularly in the Amhara region, are within this range of Mekele though it remains unclear whether the alleged capture of the rocket systems provided the trigger for the military intervention in the Tigray region nor whether the TPLF-aligned forces had the capabilities to operate them.

Meanwhile diplomats, regional security officers and aid workers have reported that fighting is spreading to the north-western areas along Tigray's border with Amhara region, which is backing the federal government, and near the border with Sudan and Eritrea. The Prime Minister also claimed on 6 November that government troops had seized control of the town of Dansha, near the border area, from the TPLF. The Prime Minister has indicated that the military operations will continue, stating, "our operation aims to end the impunity that has prevailed for far too long and hold accountable individuals and groups under the law of the land." He further warned the Tigray population, "in order to avoid unexpected peril, I advise that you limit group movements in cities." The Prime Minister made the comments as parliament in Addis Ababa approved the formation of an interim government for the region, in a step that aims to deny the legitimacy of Tigray's regional government. The move, which does not need any further approval, effectively gives Prime Minister Abiy the power to carry out the measures against a Tigray leadership which his government sees as being illegal.

### REGIONAL GOVERNMENT DISSOLVED

During an emergency session on 7 November, parliament in Addis Ababa voted to dissolve the government of the Tigray region, declaring the administration illegal and voting to replace it. The House of Federation, which is one of Ethiopia's parliamentary chambers, disclosed that the Tigray leadership had "violated the constitution and endangered the constitutional system." The federal government has reported that the interim

administration will “appoint officials, ensure the respect for rule of law, approve the region’s budget and facilitate the process of conducting elections.”

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## 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.

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## 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 Monday 9 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 Mekel (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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References are always available.

More information is found at [www.msrisk.com](http://www.msrisk.com)

24 HR CONTACT INFORMATION:

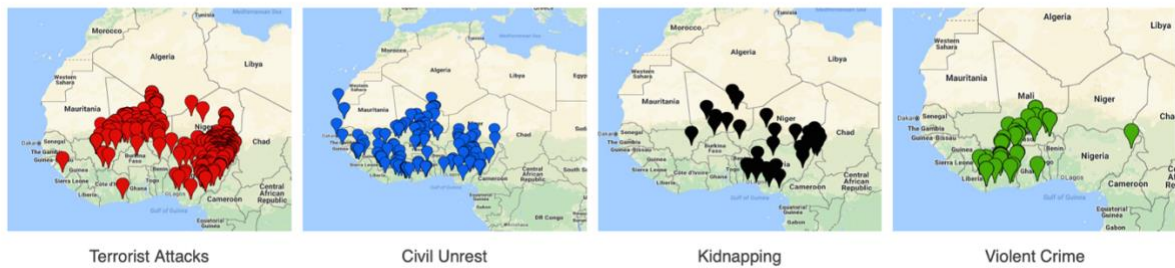
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