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Submission by:

Dr Ewelina Ochab

International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute

Chancery House 53-64 Chancery Lane

London WC2A 1QS United Kingdom

Email: ewelina.ochab@int-bar.org

I. Introduction

1. This report, produced by the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI) and the Coalition for Genocide Response, focuses on the atrocities perpetrated in Tigray, Ethiopia.

2. Established in 1947, the International Bar Association (IBA) is the world's leading international organisation of legal practitioners, bar associations and law societies. The IBAHRI works with the global legal community to promote and protect human rights and the independence of the legal profession worldwide.

3. Coalition for Genocide Response is a UK-based charity that works towards a comprehensive response to genocide and other international crimes, engaging the UK, regional and international actors.

4. In 2023, the IBAHRI convened the Tigray Inquiry, an independent inquiry into the atrocities in Tigray since November 2020. The full report is attached as **Appendix A.**

II. Atrocity Crimes in the Tigray

5. Tigrayans have been subjected to horrific atrocities during the Tigray war in the region between November 2020 and November 2022. Many of these atrocities continue to this day. Among the submissions received by the Inquiry, mass killings, sexual violence, and starvation were the most commonly identified crimes.

6. Despite the ceasefire in November 2022, the situation of the communities is still dire. The ceasefire may have stopped the guns, but atrocities continue to be committed, including rape and sexual violence. The communities continue to face a humanitarian crisis which claims lives to this day.

7. The atrocities have not received enough international focus despite the war being one of the deadliest in recent years and the atrocities meeting the legal definition of international crimes**.**

The Risk of Genocide

8. In October 2022, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum issued a warning of a heightened risk of genocide in Ethiopia's Tigray region. According to the statement, *'the situation had deteriorated exponentially as Ethiopian security forces, supported by Eritrean forces and Amhara special forces, seized key towns and cities imperilling vulnerable Tigrayan civilians.'*[1] As the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum added:

[1] See: https://www.ushmm.org/information/press/press-releases/museum-warns-of-heightened-risk-of-genocide-mass-atrocities-in-ethiopia.

> ethnic-based targeting and the commission of mass atrocities have been an intentional strategy of parties to the conflict between the Ethiopian and regional Tigrayan governments and their allies that began in November 2020. In the past two years crimes against humanity and war crimes have been perpetrated with impunity. These crimes include murder, rape, sexual violence, persecution, and other inhumane acts. There is growing evidence of sexual slavery and forced pregnancy.[2]

9. This is not the first such warning concerning the situation in Ethiopia and the risk of genocide. In December 2021, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum identified several warning signs of potential genocide against the Tigray people including,

> reports of massacres and other targeted killings of Tigrayan civilians, dehumanisation and hate speech—amplified on social media—encouraging violence against members of the group, mass arrests and arbitrary detention, and possible collective punishment in the form of a human-made famine in the Tigray region.[3]

10. In October 2022, the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that:

> the situation in Ethiopia is spiralling out of control. Violence and destruction have reached alarming levels. The social fabric is being ripped apart. (...) Civilians are paying a horrific price. Indiscriminate attacks — including in residential areas — are killing more innocent people every day, damaging critical infrastructure and limiting access to vital services. Hundreds of thousands of people have been forced to flee their homes since hostilities resumed in August, many of them for the second time. We are also hearing disturbing accounts of sexual violence and other acts of brutality against women, children and men.[4]

11. In October 2022, the World Health Organisation Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus indicated that there was a *'very narrow window now to prevent genocide'* in Tigray.[5]

12. While in November 2022, Ethiopia's government and Tigray forces agreed to stop hostilities, reports suggest that some atrocities continued and continue still at the time of writing this submission.

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[2] Ibid.

[3] See: https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/blog/risk-of-genocide-ethiopia.

[4] See: https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2022-10-17/secretary-generals-opening-remarks-the-press-ethiopia.

[5] See: https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-media-briefing---19-october-2022.

13. In December 2022, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum warned that despite the ceasefire agreement, *'civilians continue to suffer egregious human rights violations perpetrated by Eritrean and regional militia forces.'*[6] Among others, according to data from the Tigray Health Bureau in November and December 2022, 852 cases of rape and sexual violence were reported by survivors.

Mass Killings

14. The Tigray war has seen several cases of mass killing and extermination. The below mentions a few of such cases.

The Axum Massacre (28-29 November 2020)

15. On 19 November 2020, Ethiopian and Eritrean forces took over Axum, a city in northern Ethiopia, and unleashed a litany of atrocities there. For a week, *'the forces shot civilians and pillaged and destroyed property, including healthcare facilities. After Tigray militia and Axum residents attacked Eritrean forces on [28] November, Eritrean forces, in apparent retaliation, fatally shot and summarily executed several hundred residents, mostly men and boys, over a 24-hour period.'*[7]

16. On 28-29 November 2020, Eritrean troops are said to have systematically killed hundreds of unarmed civilians in the city. Reportedly, they opened fire in the streets and conducted house-to-house raids. Amnesty International, a non-governmental organisation working on human rights globally, indicated that the massacre may amount to a crime against humanity.[8] Amnesty International's interviews with survivors revealed extrajudicial executions, indiscriminate shelling and widespread looting.[9] As Amnesty International reported:

> Ethiopian and Eritrean troops carried out multiple war crimes in their offensive to take control of Axum. Above and beyond that, Eritrean troops went on a rampage and systematically killed hundreds of civilians in cold blood, which appears to constitute crimes against humanity.[10]

17. The number of casualties is reported as several hundred[11] with some suggesting approximately 800.[12]

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[6] See: https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/blog/risks-of-mass-atrocities-in-ethiopia-remain-high-despite-peace-deal.
[7] See: https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/05/ethiopia-eritrean-forces-massacre-tigray-civilians.
[8] See: https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/02/ethiopia-eritrean-troops-massacre-of-hundreds-of-axum-civilians-may-amount-to-crime-against-humanity/.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] See: https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/02/ethiopia-eritrean-troops-massacre-of-hundreds-of-axum-civilians-may-amount-to-crime-against-humanity/.
[12] See: https://apnews.com/article/witnesses-recall-massacre-axum-ethiopia-fa1b531fea069aed6768409bd1d20bfa.

The Adigrat Massacres (November - December 2020)

18. The Adigrat massacres refer to several mass killings in and around the city of Adigrat including Zalambessa, Hawzen, and Idaga Hamus. After Adigrat, the second-largest city in Tigray, was captured by Eritrean soldiers, the media reported on summary executions of civilians.[13] According to a witness:

> After Adigrat was captured, Eritrean soldiers gathered a group of young males in civilian attire and accused them of being TPLF fighters. They were taken towards the outskirts of the city, towards the road leading to Adwa (a city some 60km east of Adigrat). At least twelve of them were shot dead. I saw the bodies of other people in the city who had been killed by the same soldiers.[14]

19. The bishop of Adigrat, Abune Merha Kiristos, is reported to have a handwritten list with the names of 1,151 people priests had reported killed in surrounding areas since the conflict began.[15]

The Dengelat Massacre (30 November 2020)

20. On 30 November 2020, a group of Eritrean soldiers opened fire on Maryam Dengelat church while hundreds of worshippers were celebrating mass.[16] As CNN reported:

> People tried to flee on foot, scrambling up cliff paths to neighbouring villages. The troops followed, spraying the mountainside with bullets. The soldiers went door to door, dragging people from their homes. Mothers were forced to tie up their sons. A pregnant woman was shot, and her husband was killed. Some of the survivors hid under the bodies of the dead. The mayhem continued for three days, with soldiers slaughtering residents, displaced people and pilgrims. Finally, on 2 December [2020], the soldiers allowed informal burials to take place but threatened to kill anyone they saw mourning.[17]

21. Hundreds of people are reported to have been killed in the massacre. Among those killed were *'priests, old men, women, entire families and a group of more than 20 Sunday school children, some as young as 14.'*[18]

Rape and Sexual Violence

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[13] See: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/climate-and-people/eritreas-shadow-war-ethiopia-laid-bare-amid-accusations-eritrean/.
[14] Ibid.
[15] See: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-conflict-eritrea-killings-idUSKBN2BI372.
[16] See: https://edition.cnn.com/2021/02/26/africa/ethiopia-tigray-dengelat-massacre-intl/index.html.
[17] Ibid.
[18] See: https://edition.cnn.com/2021/02/26/africa/ethiopia-tigray-dengelat-massacre-intl/index.html.

22. Reports suggest that approximately 120,000 women have been subjected to rape and sexual violence during the Tigray war. However, the number is likely to be on the conservative side of estimates, as the crime continues to be underreported due to associated stigma and other reasons.

23. While all parties to the conflict are said to be involved in the crime, Eritrean soldiers are heavily implicated. Similarly, Eritrean troops are said to be involved in recent cases of rape and sexual violence, as perpetrated after the ceasefire of November 2022.

24. In a witness statement collected by Professor Gebremeskel Hailu, Professor of Law at the Mekelle University School of Law, one of the witnesses stated that:

> The perpetrators were Eritrean soldiers. They were telling us that they [were] Eritrean soldiers. We also know them by the language they speak. We sometimes told them, we are brothers but they reply "We don't know you… We have nothing related to you."

25. In September 2023, Amnesty International reported that the EDF committed war crimes and possibly crimes against humanity in the Tigray region, immediately before and after the ceasefire.

26. The report entitled '**Today or Tomorrow, They Should Be Brought Before Justice – Rape, Sexual Slavery, Extra-Judicial Executions and Pillage by Eritrean Forces in Tigray**,'[19] documents how EDF soldiers were responsible for rape and sexual slavery, extra-judicial executions, and pillage. The report is based on 49 interviews, with victims and survivors of violations, their family members, and witnesses, conducted remotely between 13 May and 15 July 2023. Their testimonies were further corroborated using information from social workers, medical experts who treated victims and survivors, local government officials, and civil society organisations. Among others, the report identified several cases of rape and sexual violence including:

> Between 1 November 2022 and 19 January 2023, members of the EDF in Kokob Tsibah district held at least 15 women captive for nearly three months at their military camp. While held, these women were repeatedly subjected to rape by EDF members in a situation amounting to sexual slavery. They were also subjected to physical and psychological abuse and deprivation of food, water, and medical services. The EDF in Kokob Tsibah district also perpetrated gang rape and rape against women held captive in their own houses, a situation that also amounts to sexual slavery. According to survivors, a social worker, and local officials, the EDF targeted the women on suspicion that their husbands, sons, or male relatives were in the Tigrayan forces. (...)

[19] See: https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/09/eritrean-soldiers-committed-war-crimes-and-possible-crimes-against-humanity-in-the-tigray-region-after-signing-of-agreement-to-end-hostilities/.

Fanta was among the 15 women who survived sexual violence after being held inside the EDF military camp for close to three months. On the day the EDF captured Kokob Tsibah, on 1 November 2022, they asked Fanta about the whereabouts of her husband; Fanta answered that they were divorced.

She told Amnesty International that five EDF soldiers gang-raped her for three consecutive days – 1 to 3 November 2022. She was kept in a house where the EDF militants stayed before they moved her to the military camp. "During the three months that we were held by the EDF, people were already mourning for us thinking that we were dead," Fanta said. She told Amnesty International that multiple EDF soldiers repeatedly subjected the women to rape while they were held in the camp.

She recalled:

> "They kept taking turns raping me for the entire three months. I have never seen anything like this in my entire life. They never left me for the entire three months. When one of them leaves, the other will come. Is there anything that EDF did not do? We were locked [inside the camp] since the day they [EDF] took us to the camp. We could not go out and get medical support. We could not visit our family. There were many women detained with me. They asked us, "Why did you stay in the city?" We told them, "We did not expect you to capture the town." (...)

More than 40 women in Kokob Tsibah district reported to the [a] civil society organisation that they had been subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence in the context of the conflict after the signing of the CoHA. The social worker told Amnesty International that they had recorded a total of 160 cases of sexual violence in the context of the conflict, between November 2020 and January 2023.

Survivors experienced rape and sexual slavery in various settings, including inside an EDF military camp and in civilian residences, including in their own homes.

Survivors of sexual violence and witnesses to killings, identified perpetrators through their uniforms, the Tigrinya dialect, and the type of questions they asked. 40 Kokob Tsibah and Mariam Shewito are near the Eritrean border, and survivors say they are familiar with the Eritrean dialect. According to survivors, EDF soldiers frequently asked them, "Weren't you chanting that Tigray will win?" and used the popular slur "Agame"43 against them.

A medical expert who provided services for survivors said their centre has handled 2250 cases of conflict-related sexual violence from parts of Eastern

Tigray Zone, including Kokob Tsibah – between November 2020, when conflict broke out, and June 2023. The medical expert also added that, in June 2023, they received 76 new cases of conflict-related sexual violence in just one week. Survivors of rape and other forms of sexual violence from the Irob and Gulomakeda districts are reporting to the health centre. The expert added that patients from the Kokob Tsibah district came with physical and psychological harm.' (...)

Among the survivors interviewed by Amnesty International, ten of them said that they had been raped by multiple perpetrators. Four of the survivors who were sexually enslaved inside the EDF camp also stated that before they had been transferred to the camp, they had been raped by multiple EDF soldiers. Two survivors described the context in which they had been gang raped; they were presented with two impossible choices between being raped or killed.

Wubit, a 51-year-old woman, lost her husband long before the conflict. She said she had no land and used to raise her children through her work as a daily labourer. On 3 November 2022, two days after the conflict broke out in Kokob Tsibah, three EDF soldiers came to her house and started interrogating her. Wubit was later raped at knifepoint.

> "They came carrying both guns and a knife. They threatened to slaughter me. They asked me "Where is your husband? Where are your children?" Two soldiers raped me and threatened to kill me if I resisted. When I saw the knife, I was shivering. I said to myself "They're not killing me with the gun, are they going to slaughter me?"

She said the rape happened multiple times throughout the EDF's stay in Kokob Tsibah district. (...)

Adey, a 45-year-old woman, was in her house on 1 November 2022 when intense fighting broke out between the Tigrayan forces and the ENDF and its allied forces, including the EDF. As the fighting intensified, her house was hit by what she described as "heavy weaponry". When two EDF soldiers came to the house afterwards, she was hiding in the ruins.

> "They thought I was dead. My house was partly demolished because of the strike. They were surprised that I was alive. They told me "We thought you were dead." And then they raped me."

Adey was also beaten heavily while the EDF soldiers interrogated her.

They were asking me "Where are your soldiers? Where are the remaining ones?" They beat me a lot.

> Immediately after she was assaulted, Adey left for a monastery. She said she stayed there for one month and only sought medical assistance on 8 April 2023. Adey said she has since tested positive for HIV.[20]

27. Similar evidence of sexual violence has been reported by Human Rights Watch, Physicians for Human Rights, and UN mechanisms, among others.

The Crime of Starvation

28. There is a growing body of evidence suggesting that starvation in Tigray is not an unintended consequence of the conflict but indeed a method of war.[21]

29. Among others, the World Peace Foundation, a philanthropic foundation for research into peace processes affiliated with the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, reported that:

> A combination of open-source satellite imagery, internal US Government reporting, and fire tracking data from NASA Fire Information and Resource Management System (FIRMS) and Fires in Settlement (FIRIS) reveal that Ethiopian and Eritrean forces appear to be **burning what they are not able to carry with them**. Independent analyst, Ryan O'Farrell, revealed a trail of fires, verified through satellite and FIRMS data, following Eritrean and Ethiopian forces throughout their offensives in Southern Tigray. Beginning January 15, FIRIS detected fires on the outskirts of Humera that, over four days, destroyed warehouses and the surrounding fields. Recent satellite imagery shows the burnt remains of at least 508 structures in the town of Gijet, Southern Tigray, where a Sky News team later corroborated the damage and documented the burning of **grain stores for humans and livestock**. (...)[22]

30. Professor Gebrekidan Gebresilassie Eshetu, President and CEO of the Global Society of Tigray Scholars and Professionals, submitted to the Tigray Inquiry evidence on atrocities that were to destroy the socioeconomic infrastructure the communities relied upon. To this end, the EDF destroyed the water supply of Kissad Gaba. As he testified:

> According to the key informants, the incident (destruction) was committed where no war was ongoing and the area was under the control of the Eritrean forces. One of the witnesses interviewed had a small hotel and the Eritrean forces were living in his hotel for almost a month after the occupation of the town during the wartime in Tigray. He is informed that the command to fully destroy the water treatment and supply system of Kissad Gaba was given by three Eritrean

[20] See: https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/09/eritrean-soldiers-committed-war-crimes-and-possible-crimes-against-humanity-in-the-tigray-region-after-signing-of-agreement-to-end-hostilities/.
[21] See: https://sites.tufts.edu/wpf/files/2021/04/Starving-Tigray-report-final.pdf.
[22] See: https://sites.tufts.edu/wpf/files/2021/04/Starving-Tigray-report-final.pdf.

commanders of that area.[23]

31. This has led to the people of Kissad Gaba being forced to drink unsanitary water, with many dying or becoming unwell due to waterborne diseases.

32. In response to the Tigray Inquiry, Tigrayan Advocacy and Development Association, a UK-based non-governmental organisation promoting democracy, peace, human rights, justice and economic opportunities in Tigray through advocacy and development work, submitted that:

> The Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Amhara forces left **a trail of scorched earth policy in which they deliberately burned houses, forests, and field crops ready for harvest; cut mango orchards, papaya trees, and plant nurseries; mixed grains with soil; looted and slaughtered livestock; and killed hundreds of protected wild animals.** To ensure no harvest for the next season, ENDF, EDF, ASF,[24] and Fano militia[25] worked in tandem to block vital agricultural supplies, including seeds, destroyed and looted farm tools and prevented farmers from tilling their land during the most crucial period.[26]

33. This scorched earth policy and the deliberate destruction of vital resources for the people contribute to the evidence towards the prohibited act of *'deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.'*[27]

The Ongoing Occupation of Tigray

34. Despite the ceasefire, and Eritrean withdrawals from some parts of Tigray, Eritrean troops continue to operate within Tigray. Their presence constitutes an explicit breach of the terms of the CoHA of November 2022.[28] As reported by Omna Tigray:

> While the CoHA calls for the immediate removal of invading forces from Tigrayan territory, Eritrean and Amhara forces continue to occupy large swaths of Tigray. While Eritrean forces are occupying parts of Northern Tigray, and in particular, the homelands of the Irob and Kunama people, Amhara forces still maintain control of Western Tigray. This continuing occupation has dire consequences for the Tigrayans living under Eritrean and Amhara control, who continue to face physical and psychological torment, intimidation, attacks against their identity, and the threat of death.[29]

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[23] Professor Gebrekidan Gebresilassie Eshetu, written submission.
[24] Amhara Regional Police Special Forces.
[25] An informal Amhara militia group.
[26] Tigrayan Advocacy and Development Association, written submission.
[27] Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
[28] See: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-64635898.
[29] See: https://omnatigray.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/June-2023-Quarterly-Situation-Report-2.pdf.

35. Their presence is further associated with reports of rape and sexual violence which continue to this day.

The Situation of Minority Groups

36. Within the horrific atrocities against Tigrayans, there are small targeted communities that require further attention due to the particular threats that they are facing. Among them are the Irob and Kunama minority communities.

37. The Irob is a small community of about 30,000-35,000 people who speak their language, Saho. They mostly live in the north-eastern part of Tigray.[30] Because of its location, the region populated by the Irob has been claimed by Eritrea.[31] As Martin Plaut, journalist and political commentator, indicated:

> The Irob district has effectively been annexed by Eritrea, which is treating it as part of its territory. Links with the rest of Ethiopia have apparently been cut and maps of humanitarian aid show that none appears to be reaching the area — leaving people on the edge of starvation. It's almost as if Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy has washed his hands of the Irob.[32]

38. The community has been subjected to horrific atrocities, including a massacre of about 50 people in Irob on Ethiopia's Christmas Day, 7 January 2021. As reported by GQ:

> It began on Christmas Eve – 6 January in Ethiopia's Coptic calendar – when everybody was home with family, preparing for the following day's feasts. Eritrean soldiers knew this fact. That morning they crossed the border and plucked four young men from their gardens, marched them quietly across the river to a spot just outside town, lined them up and executed them. At first, nobody noticed. Neighbours assumed the four men had left Irob for supplies in Adigrat. (...)
>
> On 6 January the invading Eritrean troops committed their first killing. The following day they flooded back into Alitena, searching for young men, just as they had done on Christmas Day 1999. This time townsfolk heard them coming and locked their doors, praying the Eritreans would spare their home. (...)
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> Nine boys were herded downhill to tall grass beside Alitena's river and told to line up just yards from the spot where they had begun playing volleyball. Then the soldiers raised their guns and started shooting. One by one the boys fell back –

[30] See: https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/aug/07/people-are-under-siege-why-ethiopias-war-in-tigray-isnt-over.
[31] See the decision regarding the delimitation of the border between Eritrea and Ethiopia: https://legal.un.org/riaa/cases/vol_XXV/83-195.pdf.
[32] See: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/4/tiny-ethnic-group-fears-extinction-as-tigray-war-enters-6th-month.

some from headshots, others in the chest – into the water. (...)[33]

39. Since the early days of the war in Ethiopia, the community has been facing an existential threat:

> The Irob district has been under the total control of Eritrean forces who crossed into Ethiopia to support its federal troops in the fight against the TPLF.'[34] Aljazeera reported a member of the community saying that 'perhaps up to 50% of the original population… fled to regional cities in Tigray and even to Addis Ababa, leaving mostly elderly and children behind.[35]

40. The situation of the community continues to be dire even after the ceasefire, as '*Eritrean troops continue to loot livestock and kidnap people in Irob and elsewhere. The advocacy group Irob Anina has counted 56 disappearances from Irob and the next-door district of Golomkeda since the ceasefire. There are fears they have been forcibly recruited into Eritrea's military.*'[36]

41. Rita Kahsay, a leading international advocate for Tigray, of Irob heritage, and the executive director of Irob Anina Civil Society indicated:

> Women from a tiny ethnic minority in Tigray, the Irob, report they were gang raped by Eritrean troops when they were hiding in the villages of Irob, then repeatedly raped by ENDF and members of Ethiopian Federal Police at Moyale. Many of these women will bear the horrors of these crimes for generations. As well as the trauma, many women will endure physical illnesses. Around half of them have become pregnant as a result of weaponised rape. With the conditions they are still in, (concentration camps, war zones and famine) they have extremely difficult pregnancies and suffer stillbirths or give birth to extremely malnourished babies who will have growth problems for the rest of their lives.[37]

42. According to the New Humanitarian, *'No Irob refugees believe it's safe to return to their home region. It's one of the few areas of Tigray that remains inaccessible to aid agencies, according to the Tigray Regional Emergency Coordination Centre, a group of international and local NGOs and regional government officials.'*[38] Tesfaye Awala, the chair of Irob Anina Civil Society is reported saying that 'Eritreans still occupy half of Irob.'[39] He believes that *'Eritrea is trying to erase the Irob community and establish a*

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[33] See: https://www.gq-magazine.co.uk/politics/article/tigray-conflict-ethiopia-eritrea.
[34] See: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/4/tiny-ethnic-group-fears-extinction-as-tigray-war-enters-6th-month.
[35] Ibid.
[36] See: https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/aug/07/people-are-under-siege-why-ethiopias-war-in-tigray-isnt-over.
[37] See: https://www.centreforwomensjustice.org.uk/new-blog-1/2022/6/17/international-day-for-the-elimination-of-sexual-violence-i-would-rather-have-been-murdered-than-endure-what-i-did.
[38] See: https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2023/02/16/Ethiopia-Tigray-Amhara-peace-minorities.
[39] Ibid.

military buffer zone in their strategic highlands.'[40]

43. Rita Kahsay, Rowena Kahsay, who was elected by Tigrayan diaspora communities in the UK as their senior advocate, and Sally Keeble, a former UK MP and Minister in the Department for International Development, and international development, relief and advocacy director, included in their book the testimony of an Irob woman. She testified that:

> At the start of the war, a lot of women were raped, young men were killed and properties were looted. It was awful. I have no words to describe it. (...) After Adigrat was bombed, it wasn't safe to stay any longer. I took my baby and joined seven girls to escape to a neighbouring village called Haraze. We would travel at night and sleep during the day. It wasn't allowed to travel during the day. When we almost got to the last city before the village, we got caught by an Eritrean soldier.
>
> For two weeks, the soldiers gang-raped me. For 14 days they wouldn't stop, despite my pleas and cries to at least breastfeed my daughter. They told me they would kill her too. My daughter was still less than two years old. They would continue raping me while my daughter cried from hunger. When I begged to feed my daughter they would say, "What is the point? She is Tigraweyti. Let her die." They said they would continue to rape me until my husband came as he was a government official. They were so many and they would take turns until my womb started bleeding and then they would come back and continue. The men would rape us all. Sometimes three men as a group would rape a girl. They would do whatever they wanted. You are not allowed to look them in the face. All of us were raped, they would take turns and rape us as a group while saying, "We are cleansing your wombs, now you will have clean babies that are not Woyane."[41]

44. Other numeric minorities in Tigray include the Kunama. According to New Humanitarian, in the early 2000s, there were approximately 5,000 Kunamas in Ethiopia. Many of them settled in Ethiopia '*fleeing land expropriation and Eritrea's (often indefinite) military conscription.'*[42] They further reported that '*When the 2020 Tigray war began, the Ethiopian government allowed Eritrean forces to cross the border to fight their mutual foe – the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). But Eritrean soldiers also kidnapped Kunama refugees, forcibly returning them to Eritrea.'*[43]

45. The situation of these minority groups requires urgent investigation as the data in the public domain is scarce and does not enable a proper analysis of the situation and the risks faced. In particular, it is crucial to examine the atrocities perpetrated by Eritrean

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[40] Ibid.
[41] Rita Kahsay, Rowena Kahsay and Sally Keeble, 'In Plain Sight. Sexual violence in the Tigray' (2023), 50ff.
[42] See: https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2023/02/16/Ethiopia-Tigray-Amhara-peace-minorities.
[43] See: https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2023/02/16/Ethiopia-Tigray-Amhara-peace-minorities.

troops against these numeric minority communities and assess the effect of these atrocities upon the communities, including the risk of genocide.

V. Internet Shutdowns

46. As part of efforts to cut off access to vital resources, the Tigray region has suffered one of the longest-standing internet shutdowns in the world, which provides important additional context to the conflict and has allowed for the impunity of the atrocities committed by Eritrean forces.

47. As recognised by the UN in 2018, access to the internet is protected under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as an essential forum for the enjoyment of freedom of expression.[44] A report by research group Top10VPN found that 42% of all 131 internet shutdowns have occurred at the same time as other human rights abuses with the intention to stifle the free flow of information out of the country on the atrocities being committed and allow Governments to hide their crimes, and conceal evidence for future accountability efforts.[45]

VI. Recommendations

48. In view of the above, IBAHRI and the Coalition for Genocide Response recommend the following to the Government of Ethiopia:

- To cease all atrocities in Tigray and wider Ethiopia, and in particular, atrocities which meet the legal definition of international crimes (war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide);
- To investigate all atrocities perpetrated and ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice;
- To introduce compulsory training to all members of the military on conflict-related sexual violence;
- To invest in general education and public campaigns on the issue of conflict-related sexual violence;
- To provide assistance to victims and survivors of all atrocities perpetrated in Ethiopia.

[44] United Nations Human Rights Committee General Comment No. 34.
[45] Top10VPN, The Cost of Internet Shutdowns, www.top10vpn.com/research/cost-of-internet- 132 shutdowns/.