

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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Ethiopia Summary 25 November 2022

The Ethiopian government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) agree on a peace accord, paving the way for humanitarian aid to enter Tigray without hindrance. The deal also agrees for a disarmament process to take place alongside "foreign and other forces, excluding the Ethiopian army". However, the TPLF accuses Eritrean forces of continuing to operate in Tigray. A challenge remains regarding a territorial dispute between Tigrayan forces and neighbouring Amharan forces, which entered western Tigray in November 2020 to back federal troops. Attacks on civilians in Oromia region continue, as well as reprisals by government forces amid intensified fighting in recent weeks. The 27th edition of the United Nations Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP27) in Sharm el-Sheikh (Egypt) gives Egyptian officials an opportunity to place greater visibility on the challenges it faces of potentially reduced water supply from the Nile. Ethiopia continues to face strong economic headwinds, driven by several factors including the global fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the resumption of conflict in Tigray, and an acute drought across the Horn of Africa.

Tigray rebels and Ethiopian government agree to peace accord...

Representatives from the **Ethiopian** government and the rebel group **Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)** began peace talks in **Pretoria (South Africa)** on 25 October, the first formal dialogue since the **Tigray** conflict broke out in November 2020, and agreed to a peace accord on 2 November.¹ Despite a humanitarian truce in place since 24 March, hostilities between the TPLF and government forces in the Tigray region resumed in August, resulting in a large-scale humanitarian crisis. A **United Nations (UN)** investigation has found that all sides fighting in the Tigray war have committed violations that might amount to war crimes (see *ARC Briefing Ethiopia Sep 2022*).

The talks were mediated by an **African Union (AU)** team led by former **Nigerian** president and current AU envoy **Olusegun Obasanjo** (1999-2007), **Kenya's** former president, **Uhuru Kenyatta** (2013-2022), and **South Africa's** former deputy president, **Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka**.² Following the peace accord, the relevant parties established a telephone hotline on 7 November, aimed at addressing any instances of fighting as well as coordinating the planned disengagements.³ This was followed by the signing of the accord and the roadmap for its implementation, on 12 November, in **Nairobi** (Kenya) with Kenyatta promising "severe sanctions" for perpetrators of any atrocities following the agreement.⁴ Ethiopia's prime minister **Abiy Ahmed** (2018-present) on 14 November hailed the accord as "one step forward":

"We have discussed, agreed and signed. The next thing expected from us will be to implement honestly what we have promised to make the peace sustainable."⁵

The peace accord included a requirement for both parties to immediately allow for humanitarian aid to enter Tigray without hindrances. On 15 November, the first humanitarian aid since August arrived,⁶ which will provide some relief for millions in the region who are living in dire conditions and facing

¹ Africa News, 24 Aug 2022

² Aljazeera, 25 Oct 2022

³ Reuters, 7 Nov 2022

⁴ Al Jazeera, 12 Nov 2022

⁵ Al Jazeera, 15 Nov 2022

⁶ Associated Press News, 15 Nov 2022

famine owing to the blockade impacting the flow of aid into Tigray. This was exacerbated by fuel shortages and the disconnection of services such as water supply, internet and electricity.⁷

Despite the ceasefire agreement, **United States (US)**-based **Voice of America** reported on 17 November that Tigray remains the subject of a communications blockade, with internet services still not restored.⁸ The **World Health Organization (WHO)** cautioned on 28 October that approximately 9% of health facilities in Tigray are fully functional while Ethiopia's health ministry estimates that it will require at least \$1.4 billion to restore health facilities in the region as well as in other conflict-affected areas of the country.⁹

The peace accord also outlined a disarmament process, to take place alongside "*foreign and other forces, excluding the Ethiopian army*", withdrawing from Tigray. Although it was not specified to which foreign or other forces the peace accord referred, **Eritrean** forces entered Tigray in September 2020 to fight in support of the Ethiopian government.¹⁰ Disarmament of the TPLF began on 10 November, but on 19 November, the Tigrayan regional authorities accused Eritrean forces of continuing to commit atrocities against Tigrayan civilians as well as looting properties belonging to individual and religious institutions. The regional media, **Tigray TV**, aired footage alleging that Eritrean forces had killed 63 civilian victims, including ten children, in **Egela**, central Tigray, since the peace accord was agreed.¹¹

US state department spokesperson **Ned Price** confirmed on 22 November that US secretary of state **Antony Blinken** had conducted a call with Abiy during which he underscored:

"...the importance of immediately implementing the cessation of hostilities agreement, including withdrawal of all foreign forces and concurrent disarmament of the Tigrayan forces".¹²

The prospects for the success of the peace accord remain uncertain. The Ethiopian government faces the daunting task of mending diplomatic fences; since the onset of the war, tensions have ratcheted up between Ethiopia and several global players including the **Irish** government, which Ethiopia accused of conducting an "*attack against its sovereignty, territorial integrity*" following Ireland's criticism of the government's role in the Tigray war.¹³ More recently, on 28 October, the Ethiopian government's communication service claimed that the country was being subjected to a "*sinister political agenda*".¹⁴ For the Tigrayan representatives, risks of internal conflict remain, as elements of the agreement may be viewed as too great a concession, such as the disarmament of the TPLF, the Ethiopian government assuming control of highways and airports in Tigray, and controlling the Tigrayan capital, **Mekelle**.

... as conflict continues in Amhara and Oromia

A challenge remains over a territorial dispute between Tigrayan forces and neighbouring **Amharan** forces, which entered western Tigray in November 2020 to back government troops, taking large amounts of territory of which they claim historical ownership. The recent peace accord does not deal with this land issue and Abiy has stated that the matter should be resolved "*legally and through discussion*", which raises the risk of continued skirmishes between the parties.¹⁵

Long-standing tensions between armed groups in Amhara and **Oromia** also continue, with loss of life and displacement of people in the two regions adding to the humanitarian challenges facing aid workers in Ethiopia. In July, the government attributed a spate of massacres of Amhara civilians in Oromia State to the **Oromo Liberation Army (OLA)**, classified as a terrorist group by the Ethiopian

⁷ Foreign Policy, 14 Nov 2022

⁸ Voice of America News, 17 Nov 2022

⁹ Addis Standard, 22 Nov 22

¹⁰ Al Jazeera, 15 Nov 2022

¹¹ Addis Standard, 21 Nov 2022

¹² United States Department of State, 22 Nov 2022

¹³ Addis Standard, 14 Oct 2022

¹⁴ Addis Standard, 28 Oct 2022

¹⁵ Al Jazeera, 15 Nov 2022

government since 2018. Despite the OLA denying these claims, the state went on to institute a crackdown on OLA fighters operating in the region (*see ARC Briefing Ethiopia Jul and Aug 2022*).

The region remains beset by attacks on civilians as well as reprisals by government forces. Fighting between the parties in Oromia has intensified in recent weeks, despite the implementation of the peace deal in Tigray.¹⁶ The government has often placed blockades on travel and communication in the region, impacting the flow of information outside of Oromia and making media houses increasingly reliant on eyewitness accounts of the impact of fighting in the region. The **Associated Press** reported on 26 October that drone strikes carried out in Oromia had killed several civilians during the week of 17 October amid fighting between the OLA and the government forces.¹⁷ On 9 November, the **Addis Standard** reported that civilians in **Nekemte** city (Oromia) had been killed during clashes between members of the OLA and state forces. It further reported that OLA members broke into a prison in the city, freed several prisoners and seized a special force's campsite in **Kumsa Moroda**. Government forces led an offensive that resulted in them taking control of the town. The **Addis Standard** quoted a witness as saying that they could not tell "*the exact number of casualties*" owing to restrictions on movement but:

*"After gaining full control of the city, government security forces have been hunting down residents whom they suspected of having associations with the rebel fighters."*¹⁸

The **United Nations Office of Coordination Humanitarian Affairs** cautioned on 11 November of deteriorating security and humanitarian conditions in the southern and western parts of Oromia. There are an estimated 740,000 Internally Displaced People in western Oromia, while clashes continued in southern Oromia's **Guji** and **West Guji** areas, all against the backdrop of a severe drought that has affected at least 3.5 million people in the region.¹⁹

Egypt presses for a resolution to GERD at COP27

The 27th edition of the **United Nations (UN) Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP27)**, held in **Sharm el-Sheikh (Egypt)** from 6-20 November, provided an opportunity for Egyptian officials to place greater visibility on the challenges Egypt is facing regarding the potential for reduced water supply from the **Nile**.²⁰ Ethiopia's downstream neighbours, Egypt and **Sudan** have long argued that water scarcity will be exacerbated by the actualisation of the **Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam** project.

Irrigation and water resources minister **Hani Swailem** expressed his hope on 13 November that the countries would resume negotiations to reach an agreement on the GERD project soon. Negotiations between Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia, which were sponsored by the AU, were stalled in April 2021 after the parties failed to reach an agreement.

Egypt's President **Abdel Fattah El Sisi** (2014-present) hosted former US speaker of the house, **Nancy Pelosi**, on the sidelines of COP 27 and according to presidential spokesperson **Bassam Rady**, stressed:

*"The firm position on the necessity of reaching a binding legal agreement on filling and operating the dam, in order to achieve the interests of all parties and maintain Egypt's water security."*²¹

Ethiopia battles economic woes as central bank moves to address forex crunch

Ethiopia is continuing to face strong economic headwinds, driven by several factors including the global fallout from **Russia's** invasion of **Ukraine**, the resumption of conflict in Tigray and an acute

¹⁶ Foreign Policy, 16 Nov 2022

¹⁷ Associated Press, 26 Oct 2022

¹⁸ Addis Standard, 9 Nov 2022

¹⁹ United Nations Office of Coordination Humanitarian Affairs, 11 Nov 2022

²⁰ The Reported, 27 Aug 2022

²¹ Egypt Today, 10 Nov 2022

drought across the **Horn of Africa**, the worst in 40 years.²² The Ukrainian government announced on 17 November that it will transport 27,000 tons of wheat from Ukraine to Ethiopia to help ease the impact of the drought.²³ This comes after Ukraine's cabinet announced in September that it would provide Ethiopia and **Somalia** with \$11.4m worth of wheat (see *ARC Briefing Ethiopia Oct 2022*).

Despite the economic woes, Abiy remains upbeat regarding the country's long-term prospects. Abiy addressed the **House of Peoples Representatives** on 15 November, praising the resilience of the economy as well as citizens' "culture of hard work".²⁴ Abiy also reassured the house that the conflict in Tigray has not hindered the country's growth trajectory.²⁵ This sentiment is in sharp contrast to the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**, which reports that the war has led to economic growth slowing from 9% in 2019 to 6.1% in 2020, 6.2% in 2021 and projected to dip to 3.8% in 2022.²⁶

Ethiopia's growth prospects certainly hinge on the success of the peace accord, particularly in light of stalled progress towards agreeing on a programme with the IMF, largely due to the resumption of conflict in Tigray. However, the IMF has reacted positively to the peace accord, noting that it is considering the next steps towards establishing a funding programme for the country.²⁷ The IMF also stated that the Ethiopian government has expressed its interest in accessing a loan to address the impact of the drought in the country.²⁸

Planner

28 Nov 2022 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) United Nation's Annual Internet Governance Forum.**

6 Feb 2023 **(Ethiopia) National referendum on the creation of Ethiopia's 12th region.**

Chronology

23 Nov 2022 **Lilongwe (Malawi) BBC News. Tadikira Mafubza**, stepson of **Malawi's** former president **Peter Mutharika**, has been arrested in connection with 30 bodies of **Ethiopian** nationals found in Malawi in October;

23 Nov 2022 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) Addis Standard. Ethiopian Airlines** announces it is preparing to resume flights to **Tigray** considering the signed peace accord, with plans to land at **Mekelle** and **Shire** airports;

22 Nov 2022 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) European Union.** The **European Union**, through its partnership with the **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** and **World Food Programme (WFP)**, grants €33m (\$34.4m) to education services and school feeding programmes for children living in conflict-affected areas in **Ethiopia**;

21 Nov 2022 **Tigray (Ethiopia) Africa News.** Officials confirm the arrival of 14 more humanitarian aid trucks in **Tigray** carrying fuel and food aid from the **World Food Programme (WFP)**;

21 Nov 2022 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) All Africa.** Land development and administration bureau of **Addis Ababa** terminates contracts for 90 hectares of land in the city, awarded to institutions and citizens, which have remained undeveloped since the issuance of licences;

20 Nov 2022 **Khartoum (Sudan) Sudan Tribune.** National intelligence and security services director **Temesgen Tiruneh Dinku** and his **Sudanese** counterpart, **Ahmed Ibrahim Mufadal**,

²² Al Jazeera, 1 Jun 2022; Financial Times, 3 May 2022

²³ Addis Standard, 17 Nov 2022

²⁴ Sudan Tribune, 15 Nov 2022

²⁵ The East African, 16 Nov 2022

²⁶ African Business, 14 Nov 2022

²⁷ Bloomberg, 4 Nov 2022

²⁸ Bloomberg, 8 Nov 2022

sign a memorandum of understanding to increase intelligence sharing on counterterrorism and crime between their organisations;

17 Nov 2022 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Bloomberg*. **Ethiopia Electric Power** announces the beginning of electricity exports to **Kenya** following a successful test of a 2,000MW transmission line connected to the **Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam**;

17 Nov 2022 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *The FinTech Times*. **United States**-based **Mastercard** partners with national payment system **EthSwitch** and **Oromia Bank** to offer Mastercard services including debt, credit and prepaid cards to the **Ethiopian** market;

18 Nov 2022 **Geneva (Switzerland)** *Addis Standard*. The **United Nations Human Rights Office** issues a statement condemning the execution of seven people, including an **Ethiopian** woman, on 16 November by authorities in **Kuwait**;

16 Nov 2022 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Reuters*. Finance ministry and telecoms regulator **Ethiopia Communication Authority** renews the process of selling a 40% stake in state-owned **Ethio Telecom** and plans to issue a second full telecoms licence;

15 Nov 2022 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *All Africa*. Ethiopia's national intelligence and security service director general, **Temesgen Tiruneh**, and his **Kenyan** counterpart, General **Filp Kamuru**, sign a memorandum of understanding to work together to prevent terrorism, human trafficking, and organised crimes and terrorism;

15 Nov 2022 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Borkena*. Prime minister **Abiy Ahmed** announces the establishment of a national anti-corruption committee tasked with leading the government's fight against corruption;

8 Nov 2022 **Oromia (Ethiopia)** *Addis Standard*. The **World Health Organization** discloses that it is working to contain a **cholera** outbreak in the **Harena Buluk** and **Berbera** in southern **Oromia**, which has killed nine people since it began;

28 Oct 2022 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Addis Standard*. **The Ethiopian Red Cross Society** condemns the killing of one of its ambulance drivers, **Mengist Minyil** at its **North Gonder** branch in **Amhara** region, alleging he was killed by "unnamed armed forces";

28 Oct 2022 **Tigray (Ethiopia)** *Al Jazeera*. **World Health Organization** officials warn that the **Tigray** region has run out of medical supplies such as vaccines, antibiotics and insulin with many deaths likely going unrecorded from preventable and treatable diseases.

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