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The Tigrayan Defence Forces (TDF), the armed wing of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), launches an offensive against the federal government by seizing regional airports and carrying out coordinated attacks in the Amhara and Afar regions with local ethnonationalist militia forces. This development occurs a few days after a group of seven anti-government groups, including the TPLF, announce the formation of a new coalition tasked with overthrowing prime minister Abiy Ahmed's (2018-present) government called the Ethiopian Peoples' Forces Alliance for Survival. This war will divert resources away from other security priorities, potentially even from addressing the rising risk of intercommunal violence in the Gambella Region, the latest outbreak of which kills 12 people. The state-owned power utility, Ethiopian Electric Power (EEP), reports a strong increase in electricity exports in the past fiscal year.

Tigrayan forces launch offensive declaring a 'defensive war'

The **Tigrayan Defence Forces (TDF)**, the armed wing of the **Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)**, [launched](#) an offensive against the federal government on 23 September. TDF forces seized at least three airports in the **Tigray Region**, including **Mekelle's Alula Aba Nega International Airport**. Tigrayan forces have also embarked on offensive operations in the neighbouring **Afar** and **Amhara** regions in coordination with local nationalist militia forces in those regions.

The Tigrayan government [released a statement](#) following the commencement of these offensives, stating that its forces were actually countering federal aggression and that Tigray had "entered a defensive war". According to the TPLF, it has been subject to a sustained campaign of artillery and drone strikes by the federal government and that its decision to launch its own offensive was done as an act of self-defence. There is some legitimacy to the TPLF's claims, as the TDF and the **Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF)** have been engaged in a low-level conflict for several months now. This has included the TDF's efforts to secure full control over Tigray and ENDF-directed drone strikes on Tigrayan and allied forces. Both the TPLF and the federal government are known to push propaganda and misleading statements but media outlets and aid agencies have independently verified several of these drone strikes. [Most recently](#), a humanitarian aid truck was targeted in an ENDF drone strike in Tigray's **Hibret Tabia** area on 20 September. An estimated 41 tonnes of food aid was destroyed in this attack.

The TPLF believes that this is the beginning of a new full-scale war between it and the federal government. This is indicated by the TDF's initial offensive moves, particularly the decision to order troops into Amhara and Afar. In Amhara, the comparatively well-trained Tigrayan forces will act as a force multiplier for the Amhara nationalist militias (also known as **Fano**) that are already fighting the ENDF in that region. This will force the federal government to commit additional resources to Amhara to prevent the momentum shifting towards the Fano fighters. The TDF's incursion into Afar is likely intended to intercept and disrupt the vital logistics routes that travel through that region, connecting Ethiopia's capital to the **Port of Djibouti**. Ethiopia conducts over 90% of its maritime trade through **Djibouti Port**; cutting off this logistics route would inflict economic damage on Ethiopia.

The **2020-2022 Tigray War** caused substantial harm to Ethiopia; as many as 600,000 people were killed, over 2.5 million others were displaced, and an [estimated](#) \$44 billion in economic damage was inflicted. The war was also marked by numerous war crimes and allegations of ethnic cleansing. A second Tigray War threatens to be just as destructive.

Notably, this war will be fought under significantly different circumstances than the first. Ethiopia is now embroiled in multiple localised low-level conflicts with ethno-nationalist groups, the largest of which is the ongoing conflict with the Fano organisations. As such, the ENDF's resources are already stretched thin entering this new conflict. However, the military will compensate for its reduced ground capabilities with increased drone strikes. The ENDF has built up its stockpiles of drones and related weapons in the intervening years and improved its capabilities with these modern weapons.

However, the most notable change is the fact that the first Tigray War was fought between the TDF on one side and an alliance comprising federal forces, local nationalist militia groups, and the Eritrean military. In the intervening years between the end of the war in 2022 and now, the federal government has fallen out with most of these former allies, many of whom have since aligned with the TPLF.

Anti-government alliance announced

This new alignment was confirmed on 20 September when **Zemene Kassie**, the chairperson of the **Amhara Fano National Movement (AFNM)** (the largest Fano alliance), [appeared](#) on the TPLF-controlled **Tigray TV** and announced that seven anti-government groups had formed a new coalition called the **Ethiopian Peoples' Forces Alliance for Survival**. Kassie stated in the announcement that the coalition is dedicated to overthrowing prime minister **Abiy Ahmed's** (2018-present) government.

This new group [comprises](#) the TPLF, AFNM, the **Oromo Liberation Army (OLA)**, the **Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF)**, the **Afar Revolutionary Democratic Unity Front (ARDUF)**, the **Benishangul Peoples' Liberation Movement (BPLM)** and the **Gumuz Peoples' Democratic Movement (GPDM)**. It should be noted that the ONLF's participation is disputed, as one faction of the group has committed to the new coalition while the second has publicly rejected it.

The exact nature and commitments of the new coalition have not yet been made public; as such, it is unclear whether the other members will feel compelled to militarily support the TPLF in the new conflict. However, this new alignment is potentially a watershed moment in the coordinating and unifying of anti-government forces in Ethiopia. Notably, the Ethiopian Peoples' Forces Alliance for Survival mirrors the creation of the **Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)**, which was formed by ethno-nationalist politico-military entities such as the TPLF in the late 1980s to combat the **Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC)**, or **Derg**, which governed Ethiopia at the time. The EPRDF would go on to be Ethiopia's ruling party for nearly 30 years and is the predecessor of the current ruling party, the **Prosperity Party (PP)**.

Already, the new coalition appears to be providing a mechanism for the coordination and cooperation between the TPLF and the AFNM in Amhara and the ARDUF in Afar. Any alliance with the other organisations does increase the threat of the conflict spreading to other regions in the country, particularly, the **Oromia**, **Somali**, and **Benishangul-Gumuz** regions. The creation of this group will have alarmed the federal government, especially given that the TDF offensive began so soon after it was announced. An alliance between the AFNM and the TPLF would be concerning enough, but authorities will now need to be ready for increased insurgent activity in other regions as well.

Thus far, the federal government has denounced the new alliance as a foreign-backed plot. Abiy's East Africa Advisor (and former Tigray regional president) **Getachew Reda** has [claimed](#) that **Eritrea** and **Egypt** have backed the Ethiopian Peoples' Forces Alliance for Survival in a joint effort to undermine the Ethiopian state. This was partially [repeated](#) by Abiy's spokesperson, **Billene Seyoum**, who accused Eritrea of financing the new coalition. Ethiopia has repeatedly accused Eritrea of financing anti-government groups in recent months, including the TPLF and AFNM. There have long been indicators that the neighbouring state is seeking to undermine the Ethiopian government; these efforts are believed to have intensified as Ethiopia has begun to openly covet Eritrea's ports and coastline. Eritrea has maintained a military presence along its border with Ethiopia ever since the Tigray War, including occupying territory disputed by the two countries. As such, the possibility that Eritrea could get drawn into the war against the ENDF cannot be discounted.

Intercommunal clashes in Gambella region

The deteriorating security situation in northern Ethiopia will compel the federal government to divert resources from elsewhere in the country to Tigray, Amhara and Afar. This will weaken the state's ability to respond to other security crises in the country. Illustrative of such crises was the outbreak of [intercommunal violence](#) in the **Gambella Region** on 18 September, in which at least 12 people were killed.

The clashes occurred in the region's **Itang** area, and the majority of victims were believed to be passengers on a bus that was ambushed while travelling through the area. The reasons behind this attack have not been confirmed but Gambella has experienced rising levels of intercommunal violence in recent years, partly exacerbated by the influx of refugees from neighbouring **South Sudan**. Regardless, the region's security environment is clearly deteriorating and needs additional security resources. The fact that such resources are now unlikely to be deployed suggests that the environment will deteriorate further in the coming months.

Strong increase in electricity exports recorded

Although Ethiopia's economy faces a precarious future given the threat of a spreading war through the northern regions, at present, the country is experiencing positive economic momentum. Indicative of this, the state-owned power utility, **Ethiopian Electric Power (EEP)**, [revealed](#) on 29 August that the country earned \$475.7m from electricity exports in the past fiscal year. This is a 25% increase year-on-year.

Ethiopia considers electricity exports to be a potentially lucrative revenue stream; these exports are made via the **East African Power Pool (EAPP)**. Hydropower makes up 97% of Ethiopia's electricity production, which has positioned Ethiopia as a regional green energy leader. This preponderance of green power is significant given that there is growing pressure from foreign markets to reduce the carbon footprint throughout the production value chain. In an effort to press this advantage, Ethiopia is considering developing additional hydropower dams to boost its generation capacity (*see ARC Briefing Ethiopia Aug 2026*).

In the more immediate term, the EEP announced that it will soon double the amount of electricity it supplies to its **Kenyan** counterpart, **Kenya Power**, from 200 megawatts (MW) to 400MW from December of this year, boosting EEP's export income.

Planner

Feb 2027 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** Assembly of the **African Union (AU) Heads of State and Government**;

Chronology

22 Sep 2026 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Container News*. **Danish** shipping giant **Maersk** extends the period before its Late Payment Fee applies to customers in **Djibouti** and Ethiopia to 15 days from seven days;

22 Sep 2026 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *ENA*. Water and energy ministry issues a statement denouncing recent comments by **Egypt's** irrigation minister who reiterated Egypt's position that the **Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)** is illegal;

21 Sep 2026 **New York (United States)** *Addis Standard*. **United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Antonio Guterres'** spokesperson **Stéphane Dujarric** expresses Guterres concern over the deteriorating security environment in Ethiopia;

21 Sep 2026 **Addis Standard (Ethiopia)** *APA*. **Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF)** officials claim that over 280 **Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)** fighters have surrendered to federal forces;

21 Sep 2026 **Addis Standard (Ethiopia)** *Borkena*. The **Ethiopian Media Authority** suspends **Tigray TV's** operating licence, accusing the regional broadcast network of 'disseminating content that threatens national security' and incites conflict;

19 Sep 2026 **Washington, D.C. (United States)** *The Reporter*. The United States (US) government removes **Ethiopia** from its list of nations subject to its **International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR)**, easing restrictions on the sale of weapons to Ethiopia;

19 Sep 2026 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *The Reporter*. The **Ethiopian Statistical Service (ESS)** reports that informal employment accounts for 44.2% of total employment in the country while formal employment accounts for 53.9% of the total;

19 Sep 2026 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Addis Standard*. The **Australia**-headquartered **Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP)** ranks Ethiopia 138th out of 163 countries in its **2026 Global Peace Index**;

18 Sep 2026 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Borkena*. **National Movement of Amhara (NaMA)** political party accuses local government and security agencies of facilitating ethnic cleansing targeting Amhara communities in the **Central Ethiopian Regional State** and the **Oromia Region**;

12 Sep 2026 **New Delhi (India)** *ENA*. Prime minister **Abiy Ahmed** attends the **BRICS Summit** in New Delhi;

10 Sep 2026 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Borkena*. Authorities release 300 Amhara political prisoners who had completed the government-mandated so-called 'rehabilitation training';

10 Sep 2026 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *The Reporter*. Authorities release over 600 prisoners, including political prisoners and activists, following a sustained campaign by the **Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC)**;

8 Sep 2026 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Borkena*. Officials in the **Gorca** district of **South Ethiopia Region** express concerns over repeated deadly raids by armed gunmen from the neighbouring **West Guji Zone (Oromia Region)**;

6 Sep 2026 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Addis Standard*. The **Ethiopian Heavy Truck Drivers Association (EHTDA)** reports that at least eight heavy truck drivers had been abducted and their vehicles destroyed in the **Oromia Region's West Wellega Zone**;

4 Sep 2026 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Borkena*. Armed gunmen attack a gold mine in the **Oromia Region's West Wollega Zone**, killing an unconfirmed number of people;

31 Aug 2026 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Borkena*. Reports claim that over 15,000 ethnic **Amhara** residents are sheltering in the forests in the **Oromia Region's Gida Ayana District** following attacks on their home villages by Oromia security forces and nationalist militia groups;

26 Aug 2026 **Mekelle (Ethiopia)** *Addis Standard*. The **Tigray** regional government claims that the recent visit by former **Nigerian** president **Olusegun Obasanjo** to Mekelle as a peace envoy was unsuccessful, as he brought no new proposals or tangible solutions from the federal government;

26 Aug 2026 **Addis Standard (Ethiopia)** *Addis Standard*. The **Ethiopian Statistical Service (ESS)** reveals that annual inflation increased to 15.3% in July from 13.9% in June.

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