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Ethiopia: Three killed, 19 injured in Tigray as Eritrean troops open fire on civilians

Amnesty International can confirm that Eritrean troops killed three people and injured at least 19 in an unprovoked attack on civilians in the centre of Adwa town on 12 April.

Witnesses told Amnesty International that Eritrean troops were passing through the town located in the Tigray region, when they suddenly opened fire at people on the main street close to the bus station.

“Three people lost their lives and at least 19 others are in hospital from yet another unlawful attack by Eritrean troops on civilians in Tigray. Deliberate attacks on civilians are prohibited by international humanitarian law and must stop,” said Sarah Jackson, Amnesty International’s Deputy Regional Director for East Africa, the Horn and the Great Lakes.

“We are calling for an international investigation into this and other incidents and allegations of human rights violations, including war crimes and possible crimes against humanity, committed in the ongoing conflict in Tigray.”

Six witnesses told Amnesty International that the some of the injured were taken to Don Bosco hospital in Adwa town, and 19 of them were rushed to Axum referral hospital for advanced medical care.

Teklu*, who works in the bus station told Amnesty International: “The Eritrean soldiers on the back of one Ural military truck and another heavy truck started shooting. We scattered in different directions. I hid in the drainage. We knew that they are Eritreans soldiers because they were swearing in Tigrinya, the heavy trucks had Eritrean number plates and Eritrean defense force camouflages. They were shooting from the backs of the moving trucks.”

Sertse*, who was also near the bus station at the time of the incident, told Amnesty International: “I was walking from my shop which is near the PanAfric hotel towards the bus station. The shooting started immediately after the two trucks passed me. There were rickshaws on the road and the soldiers on the first truck were shouting in Tigrinya to the rickshaw drivers to clear off the road. Then the soldiers on the second truck started shooting. There were many people on the street.”

According to a member of the medical staff at Axum University Teaching and Referral Hospital, all of the people that were received at the hospital had either been shot in their chests, stomachs, legs, and hands, and six of them were in critical condition as of 13 April. The staffer said one girl was in shock due to blood loss, and that other patients had suffered broken hands and legs.

Solomon*, another witness, said: “The Eritrean soldiers came on two heavy trucks from the Adi Abun area. I was on the road just outside of my home when the shooting started at around 8 am. It

was sudden and I thought there was a gunfight going on in the area. In fact, there was no fighting but just shooting at passersby. One of the deceased was killed just five metres from my home. He died instantly. I saw him.”

“There must be justice and accountability for war crimes and human rights violations in Tigray. This attack and other allegations of violations must be independently and impartially investigated by an international inquiry. Ethiopia and Eritrea must fully cooperate with such investigations and ensure full reparation for victims and their families,” said Sarah Jackson.