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Civilians in Ethiopia's Tigray Region at Heightened Risk

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International Community Should Act Now to Protect Population

For several weeks, towns in Ethiopia's northern Tigray region have endured [regular bombardments](#) from an escalating joint offensive by Ethiopia and Eritrea forces against Tigrayan forces. Yesterday, the government forces [captured](#) Shire, a major town in Tigray. Attacks around the town – already host to thousands of Tigrayans [forcibly displaced](#) from Western Tigray in an earlier ethnic cleansing campaign – led to further flight as [fearful residents evacuated](#) the town in droves.

The trickle of reports emerging from a region largely cut off from the world for more than a year are terrifying. The attacks have resulted in untold civilian casualties, including aid [workers delivering food](#), property destruction, and large-scale displacement.

Atrocities by Ethiopian and Eritrean forces after the previous capture of towns in Tigray heighten concerns for the civilians remaining in Shire and elsewhere of more killings and other [abuses](#), and mistreatment in [displacement camps](#). Since the fighting resumed in late August, Tigrayan forces fighting in the neighboring Amhara region have also reportedly carried out [killings of civilians and pillaged property in Kobo town](#).

Statements from the [United Nations](#), United States, [European Union](#), and [African Union](#) have done little to deter abuses as the warring parties have faced few consequences. With AU-led peace talks floundering, key actors need to change tack.

Both the EU and US have global sanctions regimes, but have not applied them to Ethiopia. So far the US has only imposed sanctions against Eritrea, despite the role the Ethiopian military and regional forces and Tigrayan forces have played in well-documented war crimes. Global financial institutions such as the World Bank have [released development funds](#) to Ethiopia, including to support reconstruction and recovery efforts in Tigray, despite the government's effective siege of Tigray that has put hundreds of thousands at [risk of starvation](#). The UN Security Council has on occasion discussed the conflict, but always behind closed doors and it has yet to add Ethiopia to its formal agenda, mostly due to a lack of support from the council's African members. The UN secretary-general's [recent acknowledgment](#) that the conflict is [spiraling out of control](#) makes it even more important for the Security Council to address the situation, including during a possible discussion later this week.

The US and EU, as well as the Security Council, should use the appropriate tools, including targeted sanctions and an arms embargo, to protect civilians at risk. The suffering of civilians in Ethiopia should no longer be tolerated in the name of political expediency.

ecoi.net summary:



Tigray region: Civilians at risk following the capture of the town of Shire by government forces

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