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Rebellion

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UN calls for an end to 'reckless war' in Ethiopia



Sources: IPS [Tens of thousands of people have been displaced from their homes by the conflict in Tigray, northern Ethiopia, where civilians are victims of confrontation between regional and national forces, and many have sought refuge in neighbouring Sudan Photo: Hazim Elhag/UNHCR]

GENEVA – [The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights](#), Michelle Bachelet, made an impassioned appeal on Tuesday 3 to all parties to stop the armed conflict in the Tigray region of northern Ethiopia and prioritize the protection of civilians.

"No one is winning this reckless war that is engulfing more and more parts of the country. Every day more people suffer and die," Bachelet said one year after the start of hostilities between the Ethiopian national army and the forces of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (FLPT).

"I am deeply concerned that, at an already critical time, a general state of emergency has been declared in Ethiopia. There is a risk of aggravating a human rights situation that is already very serious," Bachelet said in presenting a joint report by her office and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission.

Faced with the emergency announced by Addis Ababa on Tuesday 2, Bachelet warned that "it generates very serious concerns. While international law allows for certain emergency measures in response to threats to the life of the nation, strict requirements must be met and key rights cannot be limited at all."

"The risks are serious that, far from stabilizing the situation, these extremely broad measures, including broad arrest and detention powers, will deepen divisions, endanger civil society and human rights defenders," Bachelet said.

"No one is winning this reckless war that is engulfing more and more parts of the country. Every day more people suffer and die" (Michelle Bachelet).

In recent days, there have been reports of continued shelling by the Ethiopian army on Mekelle, the regional capital, and further advances by Tigray forces on the neighbouring Amhara region, with continuing allegations of serious human rights violations and abuses.

The report released by Bachelet's office in this Swiss city says that from November 3, 2020 to June 28, 2021 "all parties to the Tigray conflict have committed violations of human rights, humanitarian and refugee law."

The current conflict erupted when the central government ignored regional elections in Tigray and FLPT militants attacked a national army base, triggering a large-scale struggle with alternate dominance of the territory and the incursion of forces from neighboring Eritrea in support of Addis Ababa.

Along with the still undetermined number of fighters killed, thousands of civilians have been victims of fighting and repression – including humanitarian activists such as several from Médecins Sans Frontières – and tens of thousands have fled as internally displaced persons or seeking refuge mostly in neighbouring Sudan.

Por ejemplo, el 28 de noviembre de 2020 un bombardeo del ejército sobre instalaciones en Mekelle causó la muerte de 29 civiles, y en la ciudad de Humera los proyectiles de las fuerzas contendientes explotaron sobre barrios civiles y allí mataron a 15 personas entre el 9 y el 11 de ese mismo mes.

Por esas mismas fechas, un grupo juvenil de tigrinos mató a más de 200 civiles de la etnia amárica en la ciudad de Mai Kadra, y en represalia las fuerzas del poder central mataron a más de 100 civiles tigrinos, en su mayoría jóvenes, en Axum, en la zona central de la conflictuada provincia.

“Los últimos informes de asesinatos y ataques indiscriminados destacan la necesidad de investigaciones adecuadas y rendición de cuentas por lo que se ha estado desarrollando en Etiopía durante el año pasado y que, trágicamente, muestra pocas señales de disminuir”, indicó Bachelet.

También destacó que “mientras millones de personas enfrentan inseguridad alimentaria e incluso amenaza de hambruna, las restricciones de acceso para las organizaciones humanitarias son profundamente preocupantes”.

“Insto a las partes a garantizar un acceso seguro y regular a la ayuda humanitaria de la que dependen millones de personas”, subrayó.

The report also reports arbitrary detentions, extrajudicial executions, robberies, looting and destruction of property and livelihoods, sexual and gender-based violence, forced displacement and cutting off communications, committed by virtually all parties involved in the conflict.

Dispatches from the ground indicated that FLPT rebels consider the report released in Geneva "flawed" and that the government of Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, a 2019 Nobel Peace Prize laureate for his efforts to achieve peace with neighboring Eritrea, has accepted it with reservations.

"While we have serious reservations regarding some aspects of the report, we recognize and accept it as an important document that complements our ongoing effort to provide compensation to victims, ensure accountability and take preventive action," Ahmed said.

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