

**Civil society organizations in Ethiopia Call for Urgent Humanitarian Assistance, Redress
and Prosecution for the Protection of Human Rights, and Searching for a Durable Conflict
Resolution in areas affected by repeated attacks of various motivations
January 2021**

The ongoing conflicts, instability and the lack of peace observed in the different regions in Ethiopia have resulted in the displacement of multitudes of women and men, including children and the elderly, in search for peace and security. The devastation caused by these conflicts continues to have ripple effects on Ethiopian citizens, civilians, particularly women and children. The conflicts have expedited the destruction of food and water supplies, infrastructure, livelihoods, education facilities, health systems, in both sparsely and densely populated areas.

The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission has confirmed that there was a series of conflicts in the Konso Zone and surrounding areas of Ale Woreda, Segen Area Kebeles, Buniti Kebele of Amaro Woreda from November 10th to November 20th, 2020 and from November 13th to November 15th, 2020 in Gato Kebele of Derashe Woreda. EHRC cited information from The SNNPR Peace and Security Bureau statement, that estimates these brutal killings and conflicts have displaced 132, 142 people and 66 people have died, leaving 39 civilians injured. As is the case of killings committed On November 1 2020 in Wollega Zone's Gawa-Kanka, Gilla-Gogola, and Seka-Jerbi kebeles. Earlier in October 2020, killings were also reported in Gawa Kanka, Gila Gogola and Seka Jerbi kebeles of West Welega Zone. Official records show that the death toll of 32 civilians, although the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission indicated that the number is very likely to exceed the tally.

According to a report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of people displaced in Tigray has grown at an alarming rate, although there is lack of complete information on the number of people affected by the crisis in the Tigray region. More than 53,300 Ethiopians have fled Ethiopia to East Sudan in search of safety. In addition, economic and social institutions in the region, which have been suspended for the past two months, have not been able to resume the provision of services in all areas or cities, especially that of food and water provision, which poses a serious risk of famine. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHR) EHRC, in its report on the atrocious killings of over 600 civilians Maikadra Hafta Humera Woreda, Tigray Region on November 9th, 2020, stated that the killings were beyond a simple criminal act but rather were premeditated and carefully coordinated grave violation of human rights, that include killings, bodily and mental injury, as well as the destruction of property. Recent reports also indicate that the death toll may go well over 600. Many civilians were also reported to have fled the area in fear of consecutive waves of attacks.

In addition, recent reports from government led discussions and other sources indicate severe human rights violations in the Tigray region, following the operation conducted by the Federal government, there are reports of a grave amount of rape, sexual violence, murders and looting that are currently taking place in the region.

Similarly in the Benishangul Gumuz Region, the death toll from the attack that took place in Metekel Zone, Bulen Woreda, Bekuji Kebele in the early hours of December 23rd, 2020 has risen to 207. 133 of the victims were adult men and 35 were adult women. Seventeen children, one of whom six-month-old baby, and 20 elderly persons were killed. These atrocities committed on civilians in Benishangul Gumuz region, have resulted in the displacement for tens of thousands of civilians. Information from the Benishangul Gumuz region that was issued on Tuesday December 29 2020, depicts that there are 29, 688 males, 26,037 females, a total of individuals displaced from in the region totaling the influx of internally displaced individuals heading to IDP centers to 55,703. Recent reports indicate that this number has risen to 113,000 IDPs. In order to strengthen the protection and wellbeing of internally displaced people, timely and appropriate humanitarian support is of great significance.

According to recent communication with the civil society organizations in the region, the existing IDP centers are currently operating beyond their capacity, and are unable to fully provide the internally displaced people in the centers with the require basic services such as food, health services, counseling and other essential basic services. Currently the internally displaced people have sought shelter in different areas such as churches and fields in with no shelters, rather than IDP centers.

Internally displaced people, particularly women and girls' vulnerability to different forms of exploitation increases in the chaos following conflicts and other emergencies, where national and international standards are more easily circumvented and a protection vacuum is created by the weakening systems. The risks of labor exploitation, GBV and human trafficking for exploitation, and illegal adoption of children may be greater. Previous research conducted on IDP shows that in the absence of protection for these vulnerable people, the likelihood of occurrence of dire physical, and emotional, sexual violence and other abuses are increased based on the experiences of the past similar situations all over the world.

Further aggravating this situation is the threat posed by COVID-19 across the tens of thousands of internally displaced people living in life-threatening circumstances in IDP centers and temporary shelters set up for IDPs with little to no access to basic COVID-19 prevention mechanisms such as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and basic hygiene services. It also poses a challenge to women's health and hygiene needs and to their physical wellbeing and human dignity.

Civil society organizations in Ethiopia have continued to work diligently to provide assistance to those affected and displaced in various parts of the country. However, given the severity of the problem, it is still not possible to fully reach and assist victims. CSOs are also collaborating by issuing various calls and press releases on ongoing domestic problems and instability.

Cognizant of the above raised issues of concern and evidence of the high number of IDPs, we the members of a weekly virtual dialogue platform titled Gender in Focus, as a group of civil societies and stakeholders that work towards ensuring gender equality and women empowerment, call for the following actions to be taken by the Ethiopian government, humanitarian aid agencies, development partners, civil societies and relevant stakeholders.

We call upon the Ethiopian government:

- To allocate the necessary resources and provide coordination among different actors in response to this major human made disaster and
- To launch necessary measure to prevent, protect and rehabilitate the victims and families displaced from their home.
- To undertake appropriate investigation onto the killings that have taken place resulting in the influx of large number of people to be internally displaced;
- To safe guard the security of vulnerable groups within IDP camps by ensuring security and protection of vulnerable people groups within IDP camp, by taking note of the importance of protecting women and children from gender based violence.
- To seek justice for the civilians that lost their lives and their families, as well as for those who have lost their property and property.
- To expedite the reestablishment of communication and social services provision in areas affected by conflict and facilitate transportation an dissemination of food, medicine to the communities of the affected areas.
- To undertake its responsibility of protecting civilians, women and children in conflict areas from rape, and other forms of sexual and gender based violence.

- To ensure a safe corridor for the staff of civil society organizations into conflict areas, that they may be protected while rendering aid and support to the victims of various attacks.
- To provide up-to-date and accurate information on relief work and monitoring for those who have lost their lives due to the conflict as well as those who were displaced as a result of the conflicts.

We call upon international and local humanitarian aid providers

- To mobilize resources and address the urgent need for food, health services, counseling and other essential basic services, and undertake reprogramming of financial assistance towards humanitarian assistance in order to reach the civilians that are in dire need.
- To provide assistance to the government of Ethiopia in its efforts to provide support to the internally displaced people in the shelters, as well as to extend support for rehabilitation and reintegration activities.
- To develop the necessary consultation and direction with civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders.

We call upon civil society organizations:

- To mobilize networks and funding from concerned stakeholders in order to provide financial and in-kind contribution for the humanitarian efforts.
- To Provide comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration assistance to the IDPs.
- To monitor human rights violations, compile information, and engage in necessary advocacy and mobilization activities;
- To develop the necessary support for women and children that are victims of Gender Based Violence;

We call upon the private sector:

- To come together and extend their hands in the humanitarian support and contribute financially and in-kind for the internally displaced people in dire need.
- To provide their expertise, resources, and support in rebuilding and rehabilitation of destructed infrastructures, residential, educational and healthcare facilities, in order to aid the rehabilitation process of returning IDPs.
- To facilitate and connect professional associations of medical doctors, healthcare providers, counselors, psychiatrists and psychologists that can provide medical and mental health assistance to the civilians that are currently dealing with the severe trauma and psychological issues as a result of violence.

We call on media institutions and professionals,

- To perform due diligence in conducting informative, non-partisan and ethical reporting of conflicts and displaced civilians that have fled the conflict.
- To protect the anonymity of civilians who have been displaced for various reasons, as per ethical journalism standards, in order protect their identity and dignity during interviews, as well as to protect informants from further violence and repercussions.

Moreover, we sincerely urge all actors to place emphasis on preventing the occurrence of similar incidents in other parts of the country. The high prevalence of human right violation in the country due to internal conflict is very and therefore becoming normalized. Thus, high attentions and importance should be given to the monitoring of human right violations that transpire in any form from any side, so as to protect civilians and safeguard vulnerable groups.

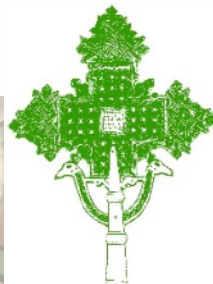
Thank you!

List of CSOs:

1. Action Aid
2. Addis Ababa Women's Association (AAWA)
3. ANPPCAN-Ethiopia
4. Beza Organizing Association of Women in Need (BOAWN)
5. Civil Society Support Programme Phase 2 (CSSP2)
6. Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Association (CCRDA)

7. Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA)
8. Ethiopian Women with Disabilities National Mass Based Association (EWDNA)
9. Family Service Association (FSA)
10. Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE - Ethiopia)
11. Good Samaritan Association (GSA)
12. Mesgana Child and Family Development Association
13. MujejeguwaLoka Women Development Association (MLWDA)
14. Network of Ethiopian Women's Associations (NEWA)
15. New Millennium Hope Development Organization (NMHDO)
16. Organization for Girls, Adults and Advocacy (OGGA)
17. Oxfam
18. PHE Ethiopia Consortium (PHEEC)
19. RohiWeddu Pastoral Women Development Organization
20. Setaweet
21. Siiqqee Women's Development Association
22. TIMRAN
23. Union of Ethiopian Women Charitable Association (UEWCA)
24. Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO)
25. Women Can Do It (WCDI)

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FAMILY
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Civil Society Support Programme
Phase 2
Partnerships supporting people



