

Voice to Victims of Violence, killings, Rape, looting, and Displacement in Conflict areas.

Civil society organizations in Ethiopia have been making repeated calls through statements and press releases, expressing their concern with regard to the current victimization of civilians as a result of ongoing conflicts arising in different parts of the country. The calls urged the stakeholders to take action in preventing conflict, protecting civilians, provide adequate humanitarian aid and other support for victims of these predicaments. In addition to calls and advocacy work, coordination efforts are under way by the civil society, who are working hard to provide assistance to the affected and displaced civilians affected and displaced by conflict in various regions in the country.

However, civilian casualties continue to rise due to conflict, instability, and unrest that erupt in various parts of the country. Recently, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) confirmed reports of ethnic based attacks in the Amhara and Oromia regions, particularly in the North Showa and Oromia Special Zones on April 17. These attacks were centered particularly in Shoa Robit and Ataye towns, and have resulted in the loss of civilian lives. There are also reports of civilian killings, property destruction in Kamashi Zone of Benishangul-Gumuz Region on April 18, 2021, as well as attacks by armed groups in Jimma Zone's Limmu Kosa Woreda, and Amaro Special Woreda in Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region on April 22 2021, both of which were confirmed by the EHRC via its social media channels¹. Moreover, UN OCHA's recent report dated May 6 iterates despite the scaled up response by humanitarian actors, the continued active hostilities in the Tigray region are causing impediment for scaling up response in rural areas.² As per the reports of UNHCR, the number of internally displaced people is currently at 2.3 million.³

We the members of 'Gender in Focus' platform, as a group of civil societies and stakeholders that work towards ensuring gender equality and women's right, have been mobilizing to raise our concern regarding the number of people who have lost their lives in the conflict in different parts of the country, the growing number of displaced people, and the rape of women, girls and children, looting, destruction, sexual and gender based violence, and displacement in conflict areas. To this effect, we, the concerned civil society organizations are issuing the following call on behalf of the civilians that we represent.

1. The Government of Ethiopia:

The Ethiopian government has the authority, structure and the capacity to protect its citizens and thus holds the lions share in its responsibility to protect its citizens. Thus we urge the government to address the following issues:

¹ <https://twitter.com/EthioHRC/status/1386258530978648066>

² <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-tigray-region-humanitarian-update-situation-report-6-may-2021>

³ <https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/pdfsummaries/GA2021-Ethiopia-eng.pdf>

- To provide necessary and adequate protection to citizens in different parts of the country;
- To ensure accountability for attacks resulting in loss of life, destruction of property and displacement;
- To develop conflict resolution strategies with other parties to prevent conflicts from reaching such stage;
- To pay attention and respond to citizens' needs and demands in the event of a conflict;
- To protect vulnerable civilians from further attacks by government structures;
- To pay special attention while facilitating humanitarian aid to people living with disabilities, women and girls with disabilities who are often at greater risk in situations of conflict;
- To facilitate a redress and rehabilitation mechanism for victims of violence such and credible investigation and persecution of perpetrators;
- To Collaborate with non governmental and aid organizations to set up dignified temporary shelters for IDPs with their consent and consultations and provide access to food, shelter, and give due attention for the special needs of women and children in the dissemination of aid;
- To ensure the safe delivery of aid to the people in need and provide protection for civil society organizations that seek to provide support in conflict areas.
- To allow for independent and impartial investigations of the various atrocities occurring in different regions of the country.

2. Civil society organizations: CSOs are established to protect the rights of different sections of the society, to ensure the right to life, respect of rule of law, facilitate provision of social and economic services, as well as protection of and defending for the human rights of citizens and their communities when such rights are violated. We therefore issue the following calls to the civil society sector, as it has a responsibility to magnify the issues of the society it represents:

- To raise the voices of citizens to government and to non-governmental organizations regarding the ongoing human rights abuses in various parts of the country, the killings of civilians, the rape of women, violence by armed forces, the growing number of internally displaced citizen, children who have lost their family, women who have been subjected to atrocious sexual and gender based violence, and the general unrest and instability in communities at large.
- To show their non partisanship through balanced and rational action to that can show a real overseer nature of CSO for the damages faced by the civilians;
- To strengthen their coordination of financial and in-kind support to respond to the victims of conflict;

- To establish strong systems that provide rehabilitation and protection assistance to IDPs,
- To provide the necessary psychological support to women and children who have been victims of gender-based violence;
- To ensure proper monitoring mechanisms of human rights violations against citizens;
- To strengthen their efforts of advocacy and influencing activities;

3. International and local humanitarian aid providers: When mobilizing resources and address the urgent need for food, health services, counseling and other essential basic services, we request the international aid providers to consider the following:

- Provide humanitarian assistance including the provision of emergency food, water, shelter and other sanitation and medical supplies, counseling and other basic services;
- Ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of humanitarian and rehabilitation programs by working in collaboration with other local civil society organizations;
- To consider reprogramming of financial assistance of other planned projects towards humanitarian assistance in order to reach the civilians that are in dire need.
- To continue their commitment to providing assistance to the government of Ethiopia in its efforts to provide support to the internally displaced people in the shelters,
- To extend support for rehabilitation and reintegration activities.

4. Media Houses and Members of the media: We request members of the media to report accurately on the attacks on citizens that the agenda gets the attention it deserves, and employ ethical journalistic standards in their reporting of conflicts. We also encourage media to undertake independent monitoring, documenting and reporting of violations of civilian rights.

5. We implore all other actors in the conflict to refrain from actions that destroy human lives, civilian property to take positive measures in the protection of humanity.

In general, we seek to empathize on the value of human life. The right to life and safety should be guaranteed to all civilians. We stress our concern over human rights violations that are clearly and frequently committed in various parts of the country. This instability has caused the citizens to feel perturbed by the recurring violence. Thus, we implore all actors to play important and positive roles by taking the above actions to avoid further damage to civilians, to respond to the plight of women and children and prevent human right violations.

Members of the 'Gender in Focus' platform and other concerned civil society organizations

May 2021

List of CSOs:

1. Action Aid
2. Civil Society Support Programme Phase Two (CSSP2)
3. Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association(EWLA)
4. Family Service Association (FSA)
5. Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE)
6. Gate for Opportunity (GO)
7. Live Addis
8. Mujejeguwa Loka Women Development Association (MLWDA)
9. Network of Ethiopian Women's Associations (NEWA)
10. New Millennium Women Empowerment Organization (NMWEO)
11. NNPWE
12. Organization for Girls, Adults and Advocacy (OGAA)
13. PELUM Ethiopia Consortium
14. PHE-Ethiopia Consortium(PHEEC)
15. Quman Women Development Association (QWDA)
16. Rooci Wadu Rohi Weddu Pastoral Women Development Organization
17. Save the Children
18. Siiqqee Women's Development Association
19. Tarkanfi Sustainable Development
20. TIMRAN
21. TIRET
22. Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO)
23. Women Can Do It (WCDI)

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Civil Society Support Programme
Phase 2
Partnerships supporting people



Save the Children

WC DI

