

Voices from Tigray

Hunger for Justice, Hunger for Peace

13 July 2021

Introductory Statement

This last of a series of five webinars we explore steps towards justice and peace in Tigray after the turn of events in which Tigray Defense Forces have taken control back of Mekelle and the larger part of Tigray in “Operation Alula”.

Yesterday it was reported that in Operation “Tigray Mothers” the South of Tigray was also entirely liberated.

In order to come to a pathway towards peace, we need to consider issues relating to justice. In this series of webinars we have been discussing issues of Crimes against Humanity, War Crimes and Violations against Humanitarian Law as well as severe human rights violations.

Truth is an indispensable element of any pathway to justice and to peace. In this series of webinars we have been searching for truth. The search for truth was hampered by a complete communication shut down in the first three months and again, today, there is almost a complete information shut down. This is creating a situation of impunity against atrocious crimes.

Today we consider what civilian people in Tigray have testified when they were able to do so. As EEPA we have rigorously verified the testimonies. What we presented early on in the Situation report has been systematically denied by the perpetrators, but as time went by, each of those stories appeared to be true. To mention a few, this has been the case for:

- The involvement of Eritrean troops in the war
- The massacre in Aksum, the holy place of pilgrimage of the Orthodox church
- The destruction of the oldest African Mosque in Tigray
- The unspeakable conflict related sexual violence against women
- The killing and abduction of refugees

To this long list we add today:

- The systematic destruction of health facilities and livelihoods in Tigray
- The preparation of the war prior to 3 and 4 November 2021 by allied forces
- The start of the war on 3 November by a hostile attack intended to remove the Government of Tigray
- Unshown footage of hand-over of heavy weaponry by Ethiopian National Defense Forces on the 5th of November in Eritrea to Eritrean troops
- Unshown footage of a attack with White Phosphorous, a chemical weapon, on civilians in Tigray, allegedly by Eritrean forces

In today's Webinar we are discussing the following:

- How the war began
- The destruction of health facilities on a systematic scale
- The systematic destruction of livelihoods
- The attack with chemical weapons on civilians

While EEPA is confident of the sources and the checks implemented to verify the information, independent investigations remain absolutely necessary to establish the veracity of all of information and testimonies.

Today, 13 July 2021, the UN Human Rights Council has adopted the resolution expressing deep concern about abuses in Ethiopia's northern region of Tigray and calling for the swift withdrawal of Eritrean troops which it said were "exacerbating the conflict".

In previous webinars we heard testimonies of the people of Tigray who had been silenced for three months. Today again, there is silence. Those who had wanted to speak from Mekelle at today's webinar, can not communicate.

We use today's webinar to show some of the pictures and footage that we have received from Tigray in the previous months. The Situation Reports have systematically reported on these events, but the images show new dimensions of the hardship endured and speak to the hunger for justice and peace, that we will be discussing today.

After presenting the videos and images, we will have a discussion with the audience on the key issues that need to be faced to move into the direction of justice and of peace in Tigray.

Order of the videos and powerpoint:

1. Destruction of Livelihoods
2. Destruction of Health Facilities

3. The attack with Chemical Weapons
4. The start of the War
5. Powerpoint reviewing the key issues

Followed by questions of the audience