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United Nations High Commission of Refugees (UNHCR)

Research Report

Topic 2: Regarding the situation of refugees from the Ethiopia Tigray region



By Inaya Cuevas and Marieloise Blunk

Introduction:

Ethiopia has made important development gains over the past two decades, reducing poverty and expanding investments in basic social services. However, ongoing wars, the latest between the government army and rebellions from the Tigray region have been a disaster for the country. Furthermore, the conflict has caused massive numbers of refugees to flee from the Tigray region.

Definition of Key Terms:

Unconditional

- When a subject can have or do actions without any conditions

Cash transfers

- A direct transfer of payment to an eligible person. The cash transfer can either be unconditional or conditional cash transfers. Organizations funded by a local or regional government, but also private donations.

Rebellions

- An act of the people resisting the established government or leaders in power.

Poverty

- When a person is extremely poor and cannot acquire the necessary materials needed to live

Background Information:

Around 2.2 million people are displaced resulting in children being separated from their parents. The number of disturbing reports of sexual violence against women and children are getting to an unnoticeable amount.

With about 924,000 refugees and asylum seekers, mostly from South Sudan, Somalia, and Eritrea, Ethiopia is the third-largest refugee hosting nation in Africa. Armed warfare between the Ethiopian government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front, a local rebel group, erupted in November 2020. Millions of Ethiopians were internally displaced by the prolonged violence, which claimed thousands of lives. Eastern Sudan served as a haven for an estimated 59,000 refugees who had left Ethiopia.

Millions of Ethiopians are still in urgent need of protection and humanitarian assistance after more than a year of conflict. The conflict-torn regions of Tigray, Afar, and Amhara in Ethiopia are home to an estimated 9 million people who lack access to sufficient food. Nearly 40% of the people of Tigray are food insecure to a severe degree.

The latest statistics of Ethiopian refugees show an increasing rate since 2008. As a result of the newest war, the number of Ethiopian refugees has never been as high before, in 2018 there were 903,226 refugees. The number of refugees did decline in 2019 but since then the number has been increasing again leading to 821,383 refugees in 2021.

The refugees' living conditions are getting worse from not having proper shelter, not enough food to survive, or not getting accepted into other counties. The access to adequate shelters for refugees to be housed in remains below the standard by only 46%. Millions of Ethiopians lack sufficient food to consume because of years of drought and violence. Currently, the Tigray region is home to hundreds of thousands of refugees due to violence. The majority lack access to food, housing, medicine, and water, and many are terrified for their lives. Additionally, in 2021 two of the major refugee camps located in Shimelba and Hitsats were abandoned. The camps were housing around 20,000 Eritrean refugees, as the camp was looted and destroyed. Series of air strikes have also been attacking camps, hospitals, pharmacies, and farms in Tigray leading more people getting killed including childing.

Major Countries and Organisations Involved

Countries

- Ethiopia
- South Sudan
- Somalia
- Eritrea

Organizations

- World food programme (WFP)
- Serving East African Refugees (SEAR)
- UN Refugee Agency

Relevant UN Resolutions

- OHCHR rules on Adequate Shelter

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-housing/human-right-adequate-housing>

- OHCHR report on human right violations in Tigray

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/OHCHR-EHRC-Tigray-Report.pdf>

- Refugee Response Plan to Ethiopia Conflict

<https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/eth>

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Millions of refugees, internally displaced individuals, and host communities are receiving humanitarian aid and protection thanks to the collaboration of the UN Refugee Agency, the Ethiopian government, and regional partners. Women, children, and men fleeing Tigray are receiving emergency shelters, food, clean water, and humanitarian supplies including blankets and sleeping mats.

The UNHCR has been collaborating with partners to deliver vital healthcare and sanitation services in the middle of the COVID-19 outbreak. The UNHCR is putting precautions in place to stop COVID-19 from spreading in refugee camps, including PPE and sanitation supplies, and arranging health examinations and vaccinations for refugees. An average of 18 liters of water per person per day are distributed across all camps to satisfy the needs for clean water and sanitation.

Possible Solutions

1. UNHCR handles it
2. Pressure Tigray to surrender
3. Military intervention on behalf of Tigray to prevent refugee crisis
4. Sanction Ethiopia to aid Tigray
5. Provide Temporary refugee camps in developed countries
6. Improve conditions of refugees within Ethiopia

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