



Statement on Ceasefire in Ethiopia's Tigray Region

02 July 2021

The Government of Ethiopia's announcement of a unilateral ceasefire in the Tigray region is a positive step if it leads to an end to the violence and atrocities and enables unhindered humanitarian access, assistance, and protection.

The conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia precipitated a protection crisis marked by a disregard for the safety and security of civilians. Combat, targeted attacks, air raids and explosive remnants of war as well as the presence of new Improvised Explosive Devices have killed thousands of civilians, separated many children from their families, displaced an estimated two million people inside the country and pushed more than 63,000 to flee to neighbouring countries.

The Global Protection Cluster continues to be alarmed by reports of increasing violence against women and girls – including harrowing accounts of gender-based violence, as a result of conflict and insecurity, amid severely limited access to life-saving services, including health care. Widespread looting and destruction of private and public property including health facilities and schools persists, severely hindering access to critical services. Food insecurity threatens the lives of hundreds of thousands of civilians. There remains major concern over the impact of the conflict on the mental well-being of children, families and other civilians.

Considering the opportunity that the ceasefire brings for protection and humanitarian access.

First, we remind parties to the conflict that:

Taking reprisals against civilians during the conduct of hostilities is prohibited by international humanitarian law.

All forms of sexual violence are prohibited under international humanitarian and human rights laws and may also constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity. Impunity must end.

The parties to an armed conflict should do everything feasible to verify that the objectives to be attacked are neither civilians nor civilian objects and are not subject to special protection, as is the case for schools, medical personnel, infrastructures, units and transports.

The parties to the conflict must allow and facilitate access for humanitarian relief to civilians in need. The rights of the wounded and sick must be respected in all circumstances.

Second, we call on all parties:

To adhere to their obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and commit to unhindered humanitarian access, permitting the freedom of movement and safety of humanitarian organisation personnel.

To respect and maintain the civilian and humanitarian character of sites and other infrastructure like hospitals and schools - where displaced populations forced to flee the conflict find shelter and access humanitarian assistance.

To commit themselves not to make civilians the subject to reprisals.

To ensure the protection of women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence, in line with 1325 Security Council Resolution.

To refrain from creating conditions that lead to further displacement, ensure the protection of persons while in displacement and guarantee that any return is informed, voluntary and safe, as per the Kampala Convention ratified by Ethiopia in February 2020.

The paramount priority of all actors should be addressing the humanitarian and protection needs and risks. The Global Protection Cluster and its members will continue to stand alongside civilians victimized by and surviving the ongoing conflict and provide the urgently needed support.

For further information, please contact William Chemaly, Global Protection Cluster Coordinator.

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