



To Permanent Representatives of Member and Observer States of the United Nations Human Rights Council, Geneva, Switzerland

22 November 2021

Ethiopia: The UN Human Rights Council should urgently hold a special session to address the ongoing human rights crisis

Your Excellency,

We, the undersigned human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs), strongly urge the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) to hold a special session on the ongoing human rights crisis in Ethiopia and to establish a robust investigative mechanism in that context. We urge your delegation to support such action without further delay.

On 3 November the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) released a [joint report](#) that found evidence of widespread violations of international human rights, humanitarian, and refugee law by all parties to the conflict in Tigray, including the Ethiopian National Defense Forces, Eritrean Defense Forces, the Tigray Defense Forces, and Amhara regional special police and affiliated Fano militias. The report also found that many of these violations and abuses may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. The report concluded that “the seriousness of these allegations calls for independent investigations and appropriate prosecution of those responsible,” and said that an international, independent mechanism can be established to collect evidence of the atrocities in preparation for future criminal prosecution.

The joint report acknowledges it was not a comprehensive investigation into the crisis in northern Ethiopia and calls for further investigations. OHCHR and the EHRC were unable to visit key sites of massacres, [like Axum](#), which was previously documented and reported on by international NGOs. Moreover, the report was only mandated to investigate abuses that took place from 3 November 2020 to 28 June 2021. The conflict remains ongoing and has spread to neighboring regions, threatening millions more civilians and where serious abuses have now also been documented. Abuses linked to the conflict are also taking place outside of the affected zones, as the High Commissioner reported last week, scores of ethnic Tigrayans have been arbitrarily arrested, including in Addis Ababa, in the last weeks alone.

In light of the joint investigation report, and as the situation on the ground continues to deteriorate, we call on the HRC to hold a special session and to urgently establish an international investigative mechanism. We believe that a special session on Ethiopia is essential to ensure international scrutiny of the situation and to establish a mechanism that will provide justice and accountability for victims.

We therefore respectfully urge you to:

- call, without further delay, for the convening of a special session of the UN Human Rights Council to discuss the human rights crisis in Ethiopia;
- support the adoption by the HRC of a resolution that establishes an independent investigative mechanism mandated to investigate, report on, and to collect and preserve

evidence of alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law and violations of international humanitarian law, some of which may amount to atrocity crimes, committed by all parties to the conflict. The mechanism should be mandated to report regularly to the Human Rights Council, as well as other UN decision-making bodies, and to present recommendations on the prevention of further human rights violations and abuses and ensure accountability. It should be designed to be complementary to regional efforts to address the crisis.

Excellencies, please accept the assurances of our highest consideration,

1. Amnesty International
2. DefendDefenders (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project)
3. Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
4. Human Rights Watch

*This letter remains open for signatories until Wednesday, 24 November 2021.
To sign on, please email Sarah Hunter at shunter@globalr2p.org.*