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ORAL STATEMENT

ETHIOPIA: ACCOUNTABILITY FOR INTERNATIONAL CRIMES IS CRITICAL TO ENSURE JUSTICE FOR SURVIVORS AND A DETERRENT AGAINST FURTHER VIOLATIONS AND ABUSES

UN Human Rights Council
Thirty-third special session on Ethiopia
17 December 2021

Madam President.

Over the past year, Amnesty International has documented a litany of violations and abuses in Ethiopia – including sexual and gender-based violence, [extrajudicial killings, indiscriminate shelling and widespread looting](#)¹ – violations of international law some of which amount to war crimes and possibly crimes against humanity.

We are alarmed by the ongoing wave of ethnically-motivated arbitrary mass arrests of Tigrayans, including employees of the UN,² and the surge of mass detentions, killings and forced expulsions of ethnic Tigrayans by Amhara security forces in the Western Tigray territory of northern Ethiopia.³ Tigrayan civilians attempting to escape this new wave of violence have been attacked and killed. Scores in detention currently face life-threatening conditions including torture, starvation, and denial of medical care.

The scale and brutality of the use of sexual and gender-based violence as a weapon of war is particularly disturbing.

Amnesty International has documented how Ethiopian government aligned forces have subjected Tigrayan women and girls to rape, gang rape, sexual slavery, sexual mutilation and other forms of torture, often using ethnic slurs and death threats, in a context and scale amounting to war crimes and possibly crimes against humanity.⁴ Some survivors we interviewed said they had

¹ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: Eritrean troops' massacre of hundreds of Axum civilians may amount to crime against humanity](#), 26 February 2021.

² Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: Tigrayans targeted in fresh wave of ethnically motivated detentions in Addis Ababa](#), 12 November 2021.

³ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: New wave of atrocities in Western Tigray](#), 16 December 2021.

⁴ Amnesty International, "[Ethiopia: Troops and militia rape, abduct women and girls in Tigray conflict – new report](#)", 10 August 2021; Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: "I don't know if they realized I was a person": Rape and sexual violence in the conflict in Tigray, Ethiopia](#), 10 August 2021.

been detained for weeks and repeatedly raped; others had been raped in front of their children.

“They raped me one after the other,” one woman told us. “I don’t know if they realized I was pregnant. I don’t know if they realized I was a person.”

But it is not just one side that is responsible for crimes. Since July, when the TPLF launched an offensive into Amhara and Afar regions, Amnesty International has documented serious abuses, including sexual violence, by Tigrayan forces.⁵ In one incident in August in Amhara, survivors described being raped at gunpoint, robbed, and subjected to physical and verbal assaults by TPLF fighters. In some cases, TPLF forces told women they were raping them in revenge for the rape of Tigrayan women by federal government forces.

Accountability for these crimes is critical to ensure justice for survivors and serve as a deterrent against further abuses. The role of this Council in that regard is clear. We urge all member states to support the adoption of today’s important resolution, and the creation of a meaningful international investigative mechanism.

Thank you, Madam President.

⁵ Amnesty International, “[Ethiopia: Survivors of TPLF attack in Amhara describe gang rape, looting and physical assaults](#)”, 9 November 2021.