
MEKELLE TIMES

Special Edition | Issue

Synopsis

Fact Checks

- 2.5 million IDPs(Internally displaced people).
- More than 60, 000 Tigrayan refugees in Sudan.
- 4.5 Tigrayans need food Aid(75% of the regional population).
- 80% of the Health centers are ruined, looted or Vandalized.
- 75% of State and Private Universities have been looted and damaged beyond repair.
- 99% of Ambulances have been stolen, taken out of the country (to Eritrea), or destroyed.
- Most Government institutions were looted and vandalized..
- Computers, office furnitures and vehicles stolen.
- Thousands of innocent civilians were killed in a crossfire, airstrike and bombing.
- Thousands have been killed execution style. most by Eritrean soldiers

This is an eyewitness diary of what happened in Mekelle between 01 November 2020 to 28 December 2020, but, mainly of events and activities that happened in Mekelle and its environs, after the city fell to the Ethiopian and/or Eritrean forces on Saturday, November 28, 2020.

It has been more than two months since the war (some call it invasion some call it civil war) broke out. The possible causes, incidents and events that led to the war will be a topic of discussion in our next issue/publication. This month's publication will only focus on what happened after the war and the destruction, death, displacement of Tigrayans as a result of the war.

December 28, 2020 marks the first month since the city of Mekelle was occupied by the Ethiopian Military.

The war actually started on November 03, 2020 between Tigray defence forces and the joint forces of Ethiopia (including Amhara militia) and Eritrea following a heavy military buildup (of Ethiopian and Eritrean forces) in the borders of Tigray to attack and invade Tigray and apprehend the democratically elected political leaders of the region.



Fact Checks

- Destruction of religious facilities(UNESCO registered sites included (Al-Negash).
- Acute shortage of medication in most parts of Tigray. Diabetic patients were unable to get their medication.
- There is no gasoline in the city. Most people travel on foot.
- Power, telecom and internet services is unavailable in most parts of Tigray (Exception Mekelle and environs- limited power and telecom).
- Banks are closed. People do not have access to their own money
- There is acute shortage of basic food items.
- Absence of law enforcement(cops)

The Eritrean army invaded Tigray from northern and western Tigray, the Amhara militia came through western and southern Tigray and the Ethiopian army came through the western, northern and southern borders of Tigray. The Ethiopian government also contracted military drones from UAE to reinforce its air force. This war will haunt Ethiopia and will go down in history as one that where a country (Ethiopia) invited its former foe and archenemy (Eritrea) to invade its northern territory.

The fighting intensified in all fronts causing several IDPs(Internally displaced people) and thousands of people crossing to Sudan. The region, once the most stable and peaceful region in the country, has now become a war zone with several thousands of refugees crossing to Sudan and several more internally displaced, people moving from one city to the next city as the fighting escalated from city to city and from village to village.

The fighting has caused the death of several thousands of innocent civilians, displacement of thousands more and destruction of properties.

Every city in Tigray has been bombed by warplanes, drones and heavy artilleries. Several innocent civilians were killed. Several more unarmed civilians have also been indiscriminately killed in areas the Eritrean/Ethiopian troops occupied.

Hundreds of civilians have been randomly and indiscriminately killed in Humera, Mai kadra, Sheraro, Shire, Aksum, Adwa, Edga Hamus, Adigrat, Negash, Wukro, Dugum, Abreha Atsebeha, Sinkata, Hawzien, Nebelet., Edaga Arbi, Agula'E, Mesebo, Harena, Hagere Selam, Abiyi Adi and Mekelle.

Since November 05, 2020, the local banks, power, water and internet services have been cut off by the Ethiopian government leaving the region without any access to the external world and without power and basic services.

Editor's Notes:

Several people were so shocked as to how the Tigray defence forces could lose so much ground so fast and so easily in a short period of time.

The high hope the people of Tigray had turned into shock. The balance of power tilted to the Ethiopian government shocking several pundits.

The following are some of the factors that are considered as game changers

- UAE contracted drones (taking off from Eritrean coastal ports of Asab)
- Entire Eritrean military forces
- Entire militia and special polices of (Amhara, Oromo, Afar etc..)
- Somalian Military forces
- Media Blitz filled mostly with fake NEWS
- Support from Western countries

What started as a diary has now been put together to form a monthly Newsletter. This is a compilation of firsthand account of those of us who lived the days to tell the stories.

The newsletter is organized and written by freelance volunteers without prior experience in journalism. The freelance volunteers have put together this newsletter to give a fair, balanced and independent view since there are no independent media in Tigray to document and report on what has been going on in Tigray in the past two months.

If there are errors or/ and omissions , this is solely an honest mistake and in no way is intended to advance a political or support any political agenda.

Subsequent publications will contain more details, data and human stories. The content and details of the newsletter will also improve significantly as we solicit experienced journalists to work with us.

Tigray has been under a state of emergency. The state of emergency will continue for the coming three months. The state of emergency might be extended for another six months, because it has previously been done in Oromia (western part).

Journalism is under attack and all concerned people should push for a press corridor for experienced, independent and international media to get access to Tigray so they will report the stories to the wider world.

Life under command post

Tigray is under a command post for the coming six months. The constitution has been suspended. The military does not need search warrant to search our properties. Anyone can be arrested at the military's will any time. There is a curfew of 6:00pm and people who overstay the curfew get shot dead.

The PM said the "law enforcement" is to hunt and arrest select political leaders (not more than 100 in total). However, during the 'law enforcement' exercise several notable business leaders, people whose parents have served the country as top political leaders (now deceased) and community leaders with no ties to politics have been arrested.

Random house search and alleged theft of properties by some military officers have occurred in several areas. Some people have been shot dead at point blank in broad day light and several people have been raped (government official acknowledged this) and that has been reported to the hospitals.

There is no power, internet and telecom in most parts of Tigray. There is limited mobility as people can not travel from one city to another freely.

Most businesses are still closed. All government institutions are not providing basic services. The public notary, municipality office, courts, and tax office are still not providing services. Schools are still closed. Children stay at home and some teenagers are randomly arrested by the military.

There are no independent media sources and there is no internet to report the plight of the residents.

The local police stations are filled with military troops and people do not have hotline to report crimes, accidents or to request help if they are being attacked.

A recent viral video has been circulating and showing on TV about an Ethiopian army general asking why there is a repeated rape in the city of Mekelle. This is what you hear on government controlled media. You can use your imagination to the many rapes, theft, carjacking and killings that were not reported by the government controlled media. There are many more rapes that were not reported.

There is no humanitarian and press corridor for independent media to investigate the levels of damage and people who live outside Mekelle are unable to receive food aid. In general life under the command post is hell to most people.

Timeline-chronicles of the war

- November 01 William Davison of ICG sent a text message to a friend to inquire about heavy military buildup (of Ethiopian and Eritrean forces) .
- November 03 The Tigray Regional Government confirmed there is an eminent threat of a preemptive strike.
- November04 Military confrontation between the Tigray defence forces and the Ethiopian forces supported by the Amhara militia started.
- November 05 Banks, telephone, internet, power supply , water services have been cut off by the Ethiopian government.
- November 07-26 Ethiopian government bombed most parts of Tigray by air, drones and tanks and artilleries. Following the bombing, residents leave the city the Ethiopian/ Eritrean Armies occupy one city after the other. Those who did not leave the city during the siege were killed when the Ethiopian or Eritrean Army occupied the cities. By November 26, Humera/Shire/Axum/Adigrat/Howzien/Wukro/ Alamata/Maichew/Korem were occupied.
- November 07-26 Hundreds of civilians were massacred in Maikadra. The area was controlled by Ethiopian military. Without an independent investigation, it was reported to Amnesty International that an act of genocide committed on ethnic Amhara. The Ethiopian government claimed Tigray defence forces committed this heinous crime on civilians of Amhara ethnic Amhara. Tigray government denied the allegation and requested for an independent investigation. The Ethiopian government declined the request saying they don't need a babysitter.
- November 27 Two fighter jets flew over the skies of Mekelle, creating havoc to the city, terrorizing residents. The jets fired several bombs, but luckily they landed on the outskirts of Mekelle near Mesebo Cement factory. Several parts of Tigray were bombed by Air many times. Mekelle alone was bombed at least five times.
- November 27 Three rockets were fired to either Bahir dar or Asmara in response to the air attacks.
- November 28 Rumors about capture of an Ethiopian Military General, General Bacha Debele circulated. Several people celebrated in the city only to learn few hours later the city was being ravaged.

Date	Event
November 28	Meanwhile the city of Mekelle was rocked by tanks and heavy artilleries. There were a total of 49 shots. Most landed in residential areas, some in business areas and some in schools and a clinic. A total of 27 people died and 50 people were wounded.
November 28	The Local Tigray Television stations were taken off air (only showing music and earlier recorded programs).
November 28	The Ethiopian chief of staff came on Television to announce the capture of Mekelle.
November 29	Sunday morning. Residents stayed indoors. They could not go to church as the Ethiopian military controlled key government buildings including the police headquarter, TPLF head office, Martyrs monument, Tigray Television stations , Presidential Palace.
November 29	Local Tigray TV stations(Tigray TV and DW) continue to transmit reruns of previous programs and mostly music, disheartening the locals that tune to these stations for possible NEWS.
November 29	Breaking NEWS on DW that Tigray defence forces downed MIG-23 Ethiopian fighter jet reviving the morals of the residents.
November 29	Businesses and government offices in Mekelle have been completely looted, the level of vandalism is so bad the offices have been destroyed beyond recognition.
November 30	PM Abiy Ahmed came on National TV to give report to the “Parliament” and did a Q and A. He declared the end of war or “Law Enforcement”.
November 30	Meanwhile random profiling and harassment by soldiers continued. Most women decided to stay at home due to widespread rape.
November 30	The curfew was set at 6:00pm and hearing sporadic gun fires every night became music to the ears of the locals. Every time people hear a gunshot they fear someone could have been shot.
November 30	NEWS on Aljazeera reports that Mekelle hospital is filled with a lot of post traumatic disorder patients.
November 30	Hospitals report an increase in premature birthed and an increase in trauma patients.
November 30	There is no power in the city. The phone lines in Mekelle (only Mekelle) still works in some areas.

Date	Event
December 01	Several houses are randomly searched without court warrant. Some people said that they were told to leave their house when their house are searched and they said they y have missed valuables and cash.
December 01	Heavy artillery gun fires have been fired all day all night. Sometimes the shots were fired every 30 seconds and the sound was so terrifying some children were traumatized.
December 01	The soldiers were only stationed in few offices or posts and could not safeguard the city especially businesses. Some business people took out their products while others took their chances. Most businesses were looted.
December 01	Heavy movement of soldiers. Several people gossip to have seen many trucks filled with corpses and wounded ethiopian soldiers.
December 01	Rumors flew in the city that the former speaker of the house Mrs. Keria Ibrahim has been arrested.
December 01	There is no gasoline in town. Some taxis owners charge 5 times more to transport people. The city is totally devoid of cars as people either take taxis or choose to walk.
December 01	Local residents that left their homes to the outskirts of the city when Mekelle was bombarded on November 29 returned to their homes.
December 02	The heavy artillery gun fires continued for the second time. It has been fired the whole day and through the night. They are being fired towards Tembien and Gijet where the government thinks the Tigray defence forces are barricading.
December 02	There is still no power supply . People sometimes go to their neighbours with generators to watch TV. But the Tigray TV stations have only been transmitting music.
December 03	The heavy artillery gun fires continued for the third day in a row.
December 03	Limited public transportation services started to Quiha and Adigudom(12 and 40 kms away from Mekelle).
December 03	Two ugly yellow buses that have Eritrean Plate numbers with civilian clothed passengers(Eritreans) were noticed in the city flanked by Ethiopian military patrol trucks. One of the Buses went to Ayder Referral hospital while the other went to the Ethiopian telecom branch station to dismantle telecom servers and to either remove or vandalize the CT SCANS and MRI machines from the hospital.
December 03	Residents of Mekelle heard this NEWS and they barricaded each and every neighborhood of the city (the two buses and their passengers left the areas again accompanied by Ethiopian military patrol.

Date	Event
December 03	The military killed five people when the city residents barricaded the streets. However, most of those who got killed were just passersby. One of them was getting to his house and he was killed just in front of his family. This angered the residents of Mekelle. For a moment it looked like a strong resistance started but it was crushed by force from the get go.
December 04	Road blockage continues in most parts of the cities.
December 04	A military warehouse near Midre-Genet (aka Awash Camp) was looted. People take whatever they can from the store. This was done in front of the Military in what looks like a deliberate act to encourage people to steal. Others justify the looting as people do not have anything to eat.
December 05	Heavy fighting at Gereb Segen some 25 kms away from Mekelle.
December 05	Ethiopian military started guarding bank headquarter and select government offices(better late than never but most of the governments offices and enterprises and businesses have already been looted, vandalized-including the Mayor's office).
December 05	Tigray Prosperity Party leaders arrived in Mekelle (Travelled from Addis).
December 06	The interim government officials called the public for a community meeting.
December 06	Interim governor (Dr. Mulu Nega flanked by General Yohannes) held a meeting with representatives of the local residents. The residents requested immediate restoration of basic services.
December 07	Two youngsters were killed last night. Neighbours could hear the moaning and plea for help all night. No one dared to go out as they too could get shot. The military shot them near a major intersection (22 Mazonia) and they left them lying on the street. No one could go out to help them. In the morning Red cross ambulance took the corpses.
December 07	NEWS of several Ethiopian military casualties near Al-Assa and the military killing innocent civilians in the area in retaliation.
December 07	Power has been restored in southern region of Tigray (Alamata now occupied by the Amhara forces as property retaken by the state) and Mekoni.
December 07	Transportation services resumed to Quhia (a city some 12km from Mekelle).
December 07	Tigray defence forces announced they have downed a fighter jet near Medebay Zana (a week after PM declared the end of law enforcement).
December 08	The city of Workamba was bombed by air and heavy artillery.

Date	Event
December 08 December 08	Transportation services to Alamata resumed (Dare davil passengers and drivers). Power, telecom, internet, water and basic services are still not available (Everything is closed for business) . Local TV still airs patriotic songs and no NEWS coming from the Tigray government made the residents a little weary.
December 09	Banks in Alamata have resumed and some people travel from Mekelle (paying 800 birr one way what used to be 60 Birr) to withdraw cash from their banks by risking their lives on the way to Alamata as the roads are still considered in a war zone.
December 09	Several Ambulances taken by Eritrean soldiers from Quiha (that belong to Enderta Woreda).
Decemnber 09	Military patrol has been searching in local coffee shops for a notable business man.
December 10	Today is the beginning of the month (aka) several people flock to church the only open institution to get solace . Meanwhile, banks, airport, government offices, businesses still remain closed. Power supply, telecom, internet and water services are still not available in the city.
December 10	Meanwhile, the interim government has been calling local residents for a meeting but only few people show up and most express their grievance and request the restoration of basic services.
December 10	Local FM station has been restored and they started transmitting Ethiopian TV news feeds.
December 10	Meanwhile there is NEWS of renewed fighting in southern and western parts of Tigray.

Date	Event
December 10	Ethiopian military forces are still committing random killings (Kebede a butcher near Ayder has been shot in a broad daylight).
Decemer 10	Some people travel on foot from Adigrat with them they bring NEWS of family who have been killed by Eritrean soldiers.
December 10	Those people who traveled on foot from Adigrat confirmed Eritrean soldiers are at large from Zalanbesa to Atsbi and in Adigrat, Hawzien, Sinkata, Edaga Hamus etc).
December 11	A local resident travelled from Addis to Afar on the back of a pickup truck (paying a lot of money) then on foot from Aballa(Afar) to Mekelle some 26km on foot. Ethiopian forces are in Afar and Tigray forces in Milazat next to each other with in few kms distance.
December 11	A UN convoy was attacked by Ethiopian (Eritrean) forces in western parts of Tigray (near Eritrean refugee camp), Ethiopian government spokesperson confirmed the attack. UN officials pushing for free humanitarian corridor) has been declined by Ethiopian government. There is also no press corridor as no one is reporting the various atrocities committed in Tigray by Ethiopian/Eritrean military.
December 11	Tigray defence forces have claimed to have shot another Ethiopian military Aircraft in Western Tigray.
December 12	Transportation services (informal) to Wukro resumed.
December 12	Mekelle looks like a ghost city. All businesses closed and some of the buildings destroyed when Mekelle was attached on November 28.
December 12	All services are still unavailable. All government and private offices closed. Banks, airport, telecom, etc not providing services. All schools from KG to Universities remain closed.
December 13	The phone lines have been restored with limited network. The networks were congested as people call their family members in Addis Ababa. Later in the evening Power and water services have been restored.
December 13	Now that Power has been restored, the locals were glued to their TV(local TV have been off-air for more than a week).
December 13	The evening NEWS on Ethiopian TV aired a video of the Prime Minster with his top generals in Mekelle wearing a military uniform.
December 14	Despite restoration of power and telephone, banks, airlines, and all businesses and offices still remain closed.

Date	Event
December 15	The local telecom office opened its office and it has become the first office to provide billing services.
December 15	Meanwhile some concerned citizens have been requesting for Humanitarian and press corridor, Withdrawal of Eritrean troops from occupied parts of Tigray and Amhara forces to withdraw from West and southern parts of Tigray).
December 15	In the evening we saw an Ethiopian Airline Q-400 Airplane. The Airline opened its reservation application and some passengers who have relatives in Addis bought tickets for them. 40 passengers travelled to Addis. The Ethiopian TV announced on TV that flights to Tigray has resumed.
December 15	Tigray TV started test program (Ethiopian government owned).
December 16	Two military airplanes landed in Mekelle.
December 16	Ethiopian Airlines stopped its operation pending security clearance from NISS.
December 16	Meanwhile banks, and most businesses and offices remain closed. Few Hotels(3 star) have started providing services (mostly to the newly appointed interim government officials).
December 17	Ethiopian Airlines has not yet resumed its operation. But there are several military flights (at least four per day) The Aircrafts are said to be taking several soldiers(mostly to fight with Sudan).
December 17	A caravan of military vehicles have been going towards Tembien. There are NEWS of several fighting in Tembien and other parts of Tigray.
December 17	Transportation services to Wukro and Maichew have been working on and off.
December 17	Mekelle University has graduated students (before the students completed the final semester). The interim government governor presided over the graduation.
December 18	Power supply has been restored to Wukro and Adigrat. Electric technicians confirmed they were met by Eritrean soldiers at the check points.
December 18	Several people are now hearing news of their deceased relatives (killed mostly by Eritrean soldiers(Notable person Esayas and his son and nephew and sister have been killed inside a church compound in Edga Hamus).
December 18	Now that the phone lines are working,news reaches the city that several people were killed near Mekelle by Eritrean forces(seven in Harena, five in Motogo and seven in Maimekden). These villages are found 15-20kms away from Mekelle. But the news arrived when the phone lines were restored.

Date	Event
December 18	Two young kids were executed by Ethiopian military near Hawelti high school in a broad daylight.
December 19	There are news of heavy fighting near Korem between the Tigray defence forces and the Ethiopian army.
December 19	The interim government cabinet met with UN agency representatives and the UN officials demanded immediate restoration of peace and law informant and restoration of communication (internet) and humanitarian corridor to all parts of Tigray.
December 20	Stories of sporadic fighting in many parts of Tigray.
December 20	Transportation services to cities in southern Tigray sometimes works and mostly inconsistent as there are skirmish in certain parts of southern Tigray.
December 21	The interim mayor came on TV and announced banks are open (however when people go to the bank there is no service). We heard the banks are doing audit and perhaps will start work this week.
December 22	Diaspora community that gave up on the American Embassy and various embassies to take them out safely from Tigray started making unilateral decision and traveled to Addis using local transportation risking harassment, intimidation and request for money and putting their lives and the lives of their children at risk
December 22	Getachew Reda's(spokesperson of the Tigray command post) twitter post has become the talk of the town. The twitter post says he is well and alive and in Tigray and also informed of the downing of an Ethiopian Military gunship in Betmera.
December 23	Ethiopian Airline announced it will start three flights per day effective as tomorrow. But later on the two flights were cancelled leaving one flight per day.
December 23	All government offices, courts, schools and businesses are still closed (except few cafes, pharmacies and small shops).
December 24	It is Christmas eve in most parts of the world. Several countries are dealing with COVID-19. In Tigray, people are not wearing face masks anymore. It is very dangerous but it shows people forgot to take precaution as they are pretty much occupied with the daily news of war, destruction and death.
December 24	The news of death of relatives has reached the city now that there is limited transportation services. Several people in every corner of the city are mourning the death of their relatives.

Date	Event
December 24	Banks still remain closed. There is no internet services in the city. However, Power and limited water services are available in Mekelle and nearby cities.
December 24	Ethiopian Airline still operates one flight a day. Local transportation services to Adigrat resumed but this brings news of death of relatives and also confirms the availability of Eritrean solders in Adigrat (specially in Kebele 05 and Kebele 06)
December 25	It is Christmas day in many parts of the world and the Diaspora community in Mekelle has been leaving the city now that Air transportation has resumed. Some people reported scrutiny and harassment both at Mekelle and Addis Ababa Airport.
December 25	Banks still remain closed. Some people are hurting and starving as they are unable to withdraw money from banks unable to buy basic food items. Several people in the city are starving and need immediate food aid.
December 25	All businesses, government offices, shops remain closed. Some landlords that earn their livelihood by renting their property are hurting as most businesses are vacant.
December 25	There are news of sexual harassment, rape, carjacking and robbery by members of the Military.
December 26	Some people thing the golden opportunity that was created in the past 2.5 years and that brought investors, elites to Tigray will never come back as the war and destruction will reverse the course backward.
December 27	The banner/sign of the head office of the TPLF has been replaced by Tigray Prosperity Party. It is very symbolic to the new government as they seem to have chose deliberately TPLF office as their headquarter.
December 27	There have been heavy movement of soldiers. It looks like a musical chair as they keep on rotating the solders every few days.
December 27	There are again news of continued war in Nebelet, Agula'e, Gijet, Samre and Wore'E
December 27	The transportation services to nearby cities(Wukro, charging 300 Birr) Adigrat 800 Birr).
December 27	Presence of local police(former police) in the city. They are not armed and fear for their lives because of robbery and theft in the city (some armed with knives and guns)
December 28	Today is an annual Christian holiday of St. Gabriel. Several people flocked to church. Inside the church people found several colorful papers with writing.

Date	Event
December 28	<p>The colorful pieces of papers (supposedly from the TPLF leadership) were scattered inside the church compound (St.Gabriel). The content of the colorful pieces of paper later shows messages from the Tigray government in exile. The paper had the following four points:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local militia should not disarm• Public servants should not cooperate with the interim government of Tigray• Businesses including public transportation (Taxi) should not over charge• Businesses should continue to honor old currencies <p>People had mixed feelings about the content and the authenticity of the supposedly coded message from TPLF.</p>
December 28	<p>Government owned bank started its operations in select branches. The bank can only disburse a maximum amount of 2000 per day(or 25,000 per month). Many people do not have any money so they welcomed the limited amount. But the lines were so long and one can read the anger in their faces as they get in line to receive their own money.</p>