



## As Ethiopia Conducts Military Ops in Tigray, the African Union Pushes for Peace

**OE Watch Commentary:** The African Union (AU) and the Ethiopian government appear to be at odds over Ethiopia's military response to its troubled, semi-autonomous Tigray region. According to *The East African*, a regional news site out of Kenya, the AU's chairperson, Moussa Faki Mahamat, wants Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to forego the military crackdown in order to avoid harming civilians. However, Abiy (in Ethiopia the first name is generally used even when addressing someone formally) stated the military operation would continue to go forward, ceasing when its objectives—disarmament of what it refers to as the criminal junta, restoration of the legitimate administration, and apprehension of those involved—are met.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development has called for dialogue, the AU has offered an inter-Ethiopian peace effort, and various diplomats have pressured Ethiopia to pursue peace. However, Abiy, the article notes, has run out of patience with the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), claiming that it attacked an Ethiopian military camp in an attempt to steal artillery, a charge the TPLF denies. The Ethiopian government then declared a state of emergency and began bombarding the region.

A brief review of the TPLF's history can help in understanding the present conflict. Founded by former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, the TPLF ruled Ethiopia as part of a coalition for over 20 years. That came to an end in 2018 when Abiy became Prime Minister. This year, Abiy cancelled elections because of COVID-19, but the TPLF held them anyway, with the federal government declaring it would not recognize the results. It should be noted that other issues have also fueled the animosity between the two sides, including Abiy claiming the TPLF stole funds during its time in power and has hired child soldiers.

The AU and others have been pressuring Abiy to pursue peace because there is concern the fighting might lead to the conflict not only intensifying but also spreading to nearby regions, including Eritrea, which according to the article shares some ethnic similarities to Ethiopia. Abiy, though, rejects the idea that Ethiopia is descending into chaos, and calls such concerns unfounded.

An expert cited in the article explained that for long-term peace to occur, Ethiopia needs to implement security and justice reforms. Meanwhile, Abiy, who won the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize for his work in ending the postwar stalemate between Ethiopia and Eritrea, now finds himself in the position of pursuing military operations against the TPLF while the AU and others press him to stop. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



*Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.*  
Source: The Kremlin, Russia/Wikimedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abiy\\_Ahmed#/media/File:Abiy\\_Ahmed\\_2019.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abiy_Ahmed#/media/File:Abiy_Ahmed_2019.jpg), CC BY 4.0

***“The African Union on Tuesday implored the Ethiopian government to go slow on bombarding the troubled Tigray region, even as Addis Ababa insisted the situation was an internal matter.”***

**Source:** Aggrey Mutambo, “Africa: Abiy Stays Put As AU Asks Ethiopia to Go Slow in Tigray,” *The East African/AllAfrica.com*, 10 November 2020. <https://allafrica.com/stories/202011100921.html>

*The African Union on Tuesday implored the Ethiopian government to go slow on bombarding the troubled Tigray region, even as Addis Ababa insisted the situation was an internal matter.*

*In a measured statement, however, the AU reaffirms a “firm attachment to the constitutional order, territorial integrity, unity and national sovereignty of the Federal Democratic Republic of*

*Ethiopia to ensure stability in the country and in the Region”.*

*Following Ethiopia's launch of airstrikes on the military installations of the TPLF, the group claims all 10 of them so far “have missed targets”.*

*In a statement posted on their Facebook page, the TPLF accused Addis Ababa of “ethnic cleansing on the people of Tigray”.*

*“We will Last December, TPLF refused to dissolve and join the new Prosperity Party (PP) formed by Abiy for a centralised policy of the ruling government. soon remove the fascist Abiy regime for once and for all,” TPLF stated.*

*Abiy also accuses the group of operating with impunity, stealing public funds during its reign in power, committing atrocities, rejecting court orders issued by the federal judiciary, hiring child soldiers and frustrating the operations of the Ethiopian National Defense Force.*