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Tigray External Affairs Office

Briefing From The National Government of Tigray August 23, 2021

I. Humanitarian Concerns

Preliminary damage assessments conducted by the Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) program indicate that outreach in IDP sites housing over 2.2 million people remain low; around 10 percent of IDPs living in Shire, Adwa, Mekelle, Aksum, and Adi'grat have access to health care or potable water, while IDPs receiving assistance that considers the needs of women, children and people with disabilities stands at just 32%. The program was able to identify six cholera hotspots including in Mekelle, Axum and Sheraro, in addition to other outbreaks of seasonal diseases such as Malaria. IDP sites in Tigray remain desperate for more emergency shelter kits particularly in light of challenges presented by the ongoing rainy season, exposure to COVID - 19 remains an obstacle at congested sites. A critical lack of funds and shortage of pharmaceuticals has made it impossible for the health sector to resume even the most basic services, including psychological support for rape survivors. Eritrean refugees currently residing within Tigray face similar conditions with cases of preventable deaths related to lack of health services documented.

Government and partner organizations are finding it impossible to meet the needs of beneficiaries. OCHA and USAID have been forced to temporarily cease operations due to among other things depletion of humanitarian supplies including food and fuel. The federal government has put in place security protocols including individual electronic scanning of all aid items; with a capacity to scan just 10 vehicles a day, well below the 100 a day needed to address and avert exacerbating famine. Partners have also expressed fears over the security of staff traveling through the Semera - Abala corridor impeding the free flow of humanitarian workers and assistance. Only 32 of 800 trucks of aid necessary to meet humanitarian needs were allowed to enter Tigray in the past week. This is just 5.92% of the aid required. Power cuts and lack of fuel has rendered milling houses dysfunctional and families including those in urban areas are reverting to using charcoal to prepare meals.

II. State Terror and Hate Crimes

A report issued on August 18, 2021 by Human Rights Watch ‘Ethiopia: Ethnic Tigrayans Forcibly Disappeared, Discriminatory Arrests, Detentions, Business Closures in Addis Ababa’ offers a glimpse into the nature of the hate crimes and state terror being perpetuated, if not their full scale and barbarity.

Tigrayans continue to be routinely abducted, forcibly disappeared, tortured and murdered at detention camps throughout Ethiopia, with no option for legal recourse. Children and adolescents are being targeted for abduction, coerced into providing false testimony and paraded as captured TDF child soldiers for the purposes of propaganda.

III. Other Concerns

The Bureau of Education has established a task-force and is appealing for international assistance to conduct damage assessments and implement plans to rehabilitate educational facilities, distribute resources and deploy teachers with the aim of resuming schooling in September, after an 18-month disruption. There are currently 153 repurposed schools serving as IDP cities across Tigray, while many others were the target of deliberate and systematic destruction by Ethiopian, Eritrean and Amhara forces.

In other news, the annual Ashenda festival was celebrated by female members of the National Government of Tigray’s defense forces, in tandem with their male counterparts, across all fronts. While cities and villages across Tigray celebrated the holiday in a somber mood in solidarity with the women and girls across Tigray that have suffered from sexual violence and rape at the hands of hands of Ethiopian, Amhara and Eritrean forces