



UNOG Bi-weekly press briefing, Ethiopia OHCHR - UNHCR 13 Novembre 2020

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Shotlist

1. Exterior wide shot, Palais des Nations building to rear and red leaves tree in foreground, a cloudy day.
2. Wide shot, podium with speakers in a near-empty Room XIV in line with COVID-19 distancing measures, Palais des Nations.
3. **SOUNDBITE (English) — Rupert Colville, spokesperson for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, OHCHR: “The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet is expressing increasing alarm at the rapidly deteriorating situation in Tigray. She warns that if the Tigray national... regional forces and Ethiopian Government forces continue down the path they are on, there is a risk this situation will spiral totally out of control, leading to heavy casualties and destruction, as well as mass displacement within Ethiopia itself and across borders.”**
4. Medium shot, big screen TV showing Zoom participants in foreground and podium with speakers to rear, side shot, Room XIV, Palais des Nations.
5. **SOUNDBITE (English) — Rupert Colville, spokesperson for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, OHCHR: “While the details of the alleged mass killings reported by Amnesty International in Mai-Kadra in south-west Tigray have not yet been fully verified, the High Commissioner is calling for a full inquiry. If confirmed as having been deliberately carried out by a party to the current fighting, these killings of civilians would of course amount to war crimes.”**

6. Medium shot, journalist signing a paper, Room XIV, Palais des Nations
7. **SOUNDBITE (English) — Rupert Colville, spokesperson for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, OHCHR: “Despite the severing of communications with Tigray making it difficult to verify the extent of the damage so far, we’ve received reports from a variety of sources suggesting increased airstrikes by Government forces as well as fierce ground fighting between the opposing forces.”**
8. Medium shot, journalist sitting and using listening device, Room XIV, Palais des Nations
9. **SOUNDBITE (English) — Babar Baloch, spokesperson for the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR: “Fighting in Tigray yesterday moved closer to Shimelba refugee camp – which hosts 6,500 Eritrean refugees – raising concerns of mass displacement from the camp itself. UNHCR is making preparations to receive refugees who have already begun arriving at another refugee camp, Hitsats, 50 kilometres away, and is considering further relocation options in the region.”**
10. Medium shot, podium with speakers talking, Room XIV, Palais des Nations.
11. **SOUNDBITE (English) — Babar Baloch, spokesperson for the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR: “The numbers of refugees seeking safety in the neighbouring Sudan are increasing rapidly – with over 4,000 crossing the border in just one day.”**
12. Medium shot, journalist standing behind camera, Room XIV, Palais des Nations.
13. **SOUNDBITE (English) — Babar Baloch, spokesperson for the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR: “The transit centre at Hamdayet border crossing has a capacity to accommodate only 300 refugees but is already overwhelmed with 6,000 people. Sanitation facilities are insufficient, impacting hygiene.”**
14. Wide shot, journalist listening in foreground and podium with speakers to rear, Room XIV, Palais des Nations.
15. **SOUNDBITE (English) — Rupert Colville, spokesperson for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, OHCHR: “The High Commissioner is also extremely alarmed at reports of cuts to essential water and electricity supplies, in addition to the communications blackout and the blocking of access by road and by air. This means there is already a dramatic impact on the civilian population.”**
16. Medium shot, podium with speakers, side shot, Room XIV, Palais des Nations.
17. Medium shot, UN staff member sitting and listening, touching his mask, Room XIV, Palais des Nations.
18. Medium shot, screen with broadcast to foreground and podium with speakers to rear, side shot, Room XIV, Palais des Nations.
19. Exterior Close-up, Palais des Nations building and trees in autumn leaf.

Story

Reported Ethiopia massacre: UN rights chief warns of spiralling situation, urges an end to fighting

Disturbing reports of an alleged massacre have surfaced in Ethiopia's Tigray region amid fighting between national and regional forces that threatens to spiral "totally out of control", the UN warned on Friday.

Reacting to emerging details of mass killings involving scores of victims in the town of Mai-Kadra, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, expressed "increasing alarm at the rapidly deteriorating situation", her spokesperson said.

"She warns that if the Tigray national (and) regional forces and Ethiopian Government forces continue down the path they are on, there is a risk this situation will spiral totally out of control, leading to heavy casualties and destruction, as well as mass displacement within Ethiopia itself and across borders," Rupert Colville said during a regular Press briefing in Geneva.

Although the details of the alleged atrocity reported by Amnesty International in south-west Tigray "have not yet been fully verified, the High Commissioner is calling for a full inquiry", Mr Colville continued. "If confirmed as having been deliberately carried out by a party to the current fighting, these killings of civilians would of course amount to war crimes."

Insisting on the need to "stop the fighting and prevent any further atrocities from taking place", the OHCHR spokesperson highlighted the devastating nature of the conflict.

"Despite the severing of communications with Tigray making it difficult to verify the extent of the damage so far, we've received reports from a variety of sources suggesting increased airstrikes by Government forces as well as fierce ground fighting between the opposing forces."

Cuts to essential services and relief agencies were also deeply worrying, Mr Colville noted.

"The High Commissioner is also extremely alarmed at reports of cuts to essential water and electricity supplies, in addition to the communications blackout and the blocking of access by road and by air. This means there is already a dramatic impact on the civilian population."

Since 2018, when Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed was elected and merged several ethnically based regional parties into a single national force, regional and political tensions have risen, amid an ambitious reform programme.

Violence erupted at the start of the month in Tigray involving federal and local forces, following the reported takeover of an army base in the Tigrayan capital, Mekelle, after which the Prime Minister ordered a military offensive.

In a statement issued in response to the escalating situation, UN Secretary-General António Guterres called for "immediate measures to de-escalate tensions and ensure a peaceful resolution to the dispute".

Prior to the Tigray escalation, dozens of people in western Oromia region were killed and injured in attacks.

In its latest alert over the safety of civilians in Tigray, the UN refugee agency, UNHCR, reiterated concerns for the safety of more than 96,000 Eritreans who are living in four refugee camps, and the host community living alongside them.

They are in addition to the 100,000 people in Tigray who were already internally displaced at the start of the conflict.

"Fighting in Tigray yesterday moved closer to Shimelba refugee camp – which hosts 6,500 Eritrean refugees

– raising concerns of mass displacement from the camp itself,” said Babar Baloch, UNHCR spokesperson. “UNHCR is making preparations to receive refugees who have already begun arriving at another refugee camp, Hitsats, 50 kilometres away, and is considering further relocation options in the region.”

Refugees from Ethiopia continue to flee into neighbouring Sudan “increasingly rapidly”, Mr. Baloch said, “with over 4,000 crossing the border in just one day”.

Inside Sudan, those arriving from Ethiopia have been offered temporary shelter in transit centres near the border entry points of Ludgi in Gederef and Hamdayet in Kassala state.

They receive water and meals, while UNHCR and local authorities jointly screen and register the men, women and children seeking safety.

“The transit centre at Hamdayet border crossing has a capacity to accommodate only 300 refugees, but is already overwhelmed with 6,000 people,” Mr. Baloch explained. “Sanitation facilities are insufficient, impacting hygiene.”

Reiterating her 6 November appeal for talks and resolve differences “without delay” and an immediate cessation of hostilities, UN Human Rights chief Bachelet insisted that both sides should understand “that there will be no winner” in such a conflict.

“A protracted internal conflict will inflict devastating damage on both Tigray and Ethiopia as a whole, undoing years of vital development progress,” she said. “It could, in addition, all too easily spill across borders, potentially destabilizing the whole sub-region.”