

# Conflict Weekly

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*A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world*

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## Permanent ceasefire in Ethiopia and a report on the supply chain behind war crimes in Myanmar

Anu Maria Joseph and Madhura Mahesh



(Ethiopian government and Tigray leaders sign ceasefire agreement. Image Source: Phill Magakoe, AFP)

### Report Review

## The Supply Chain that fuels War Crimes in Myanmar

## Ethiopia: Federal government and Tigray agree to a permanent ceasefire

### In the news

On 2 November, the Ethiopian government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) signed a peace deal brokered by the African Union and former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo in South Africa. The African Union's mediator to the conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region said that the parties to the conflict have agreed to a "permanent cessation of hostilities." The government's lead negotiator said both sides agreed to end all forms of hostilities and restore federal authority in Tigray. Both parties also agreed on a single defence force for Ethiopia, and on TPLF entering a disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) programme. Further, a new interim administration is to be appointed in Tigray until the elections, and humanitarian aid and services are to be restored.

Former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo said that the Ethiopian government and Tigray authorities have agreed on an "orderly, smooth, and coordinated disarmament along with "restoration of law and order," "restoration of services," and "unilateral access to humanitarian supplies." Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said: "The commitment to peace remains steadfast and our commitment to collaborating for the implementation of the agreement is equally strong." The head of the Tigray delegation, Getachew Reda, said: "Ultimately, the fact that we have reached a point where we have now signed an agreement speaks volumes about the readiness on the part of the two sides to lay the past behind them to chart a new path of peace." The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomed the agreement, and his spokesperson said: "It is very much a welcome first step, which we hope can start to bring some solace to the millions of Ethiopian civilians that have really suffered during the conflict." The US Department of State spokesperson said: "The African Union's announcement of the signing of a cessation of hostilities between the government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front represents an important step towards peace."

### Issues at large

First, a previously failed truce. In March 2022, the Ethiopian government declared an immediate "humanitarian truce," aiming to deliver food aid to 5.5 million people in need. However, in August, the fighting resumed with the TPLF accusing Ethiopian and Eritrean forces of launching massive joint offensives in Tigray causing widespread civilian casualties.

Second, continued fighting during the ceasefire talks. On 26 October, BBC reported heavy fighting taking place on several fronts in the northern Tigray region while peace talks were underway in South Africa. A senior military officer of TPLF told the BBC that fighting near Adwa town involved heavy artillery and tanks. There have also been reports of clashes with Eritrean forces near the border in the Afar region. The continued fighting squandered any potential success of the peace talks.

Third, ambiguity over unaddressed issues. To begin with, the agreement makes no mention of Eritrea or forces from the Ethiopian neighbourhood that have fought alongside the Ethiopian army. Though the agreement states that the Ethiopian army will protect the country from

“foreign incursion,” many are sceptical about whether Eritrea, TPLF’s sworn enemy would abide. In addition, political issues, including territorial disputes between Tigray and the neighbouring Amhara region remain unresolved. Furthermore, the question of the implementation of key provisions in the deal including Tigray’s interim administration, distribution of humanitarian aid, and resumption of blocked services remains unresolved.

### In perspective

First, achieving a permanent ceasefire in Tigray won't be easy. The conflict, rooted in the long-standing ethnopolitical rift, violent regime change, territorial disputes, failed truce, and a large humanitarian crisis makes the peace deal still seem increasingly volatile.

Second, though both sides agreed to a permanent ceasefire, a critical question of how and when the key provisions would be implemented on the ground remains unclear. Besides, the unaddressed issues create uncertainty.

Third, the sudden ceasefire is a significant achievement, a hope to end the two-year deadly conflict. The agreement is a delicate opportunity to consolidate a permanent ceasefire and long-term stability in Ethiopia, though the initial steps appear complex.

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### Report Review

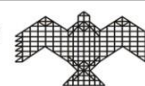
## **The Supply Chain that fuels War Crimes in Myanmar: Four takeaways**

On 3 November, Amnesty International (AI) released a report on the supply of aviation fuel to Myanmar that is aiding the war crimes committed by the Myanmar military through its air strikes. The report is authored in collaboration with Justice for Myanmar which traced the business and economic interests of the military. Amnesty International used its data on violations of human rights and international law in Myanmar and mapped the air strikes between 2021 and 2022 through on-the-ground and remote research across the country.

### Four takeaways

First, the extent of the air strikes conducted by the Myanmar military. The Myanmar military led a coup under the leadership of Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 1 February 2022 and subsequently carried out crackdowns on protestors. One of the methods for the crackdown was conducting air strikes with the help of fighter jets and attack helicopters. The AI report highlights that between March 2021 and August 2022, the military carried out 16 unlawful airstrikes in Kayah, Kayin, and Chin states as well as in the Sagaing region. At least 15 civilians were killed, and another 36 were injured. These attacks targeted civilian infrastructure like houses, religious buildings, medical facilities, schools, and camps for displaced persons. The report outlines that the military used unguided bombs and inaccurate rockets indiscriminately causing widespread civilian casualties which are classified as war crimes under international humanitarian law.

Second, major suppliers of aviation fuel. Puma Energy and Asia Sun Group are the two major companies that dominate Myanmar’s aviation fuel supply. Puma Energy is a Swiss global energy company based in Singapore, and Asia Sun Group is a Myanmar-based mid-sized



business conglomerate. Puma Energy has two Myanmar-based companies, Puma Energy Asia Sun (PEAS) and the joint venture National Energy Puma Aviation Services (NEPAS). The joint venture partners are Myanmar Petrochemical Enterprises (MPE) and the Asia Sun Group. Puma Energy Asia Sun is responsible for the management and storage of aviation fuel in the Thilwa port terminal in Yangon and NEPAS aids to procure oil and distribute the fuel stored in the ports. Asia Sun Group and its subsidiaries act as the “consignee” of the fuel shipments coming to Myanmar and it allegedly acts as a proxy for the military to import fuel and is responsible for the supply of fuel to the military air bases. Other players in the supply chain are Chevron, ExxonMobil, Rosneft, PetroChina, and Thai Oil. Maritime insurers, vessel owners, shipping agents, and truck distributors are also part of the supply chain.

Third, the supply to storage facilities with direct links to war crimes. The aviation fuel arrives at the Thilwa port terminal in Yangon managed by PEAS. The fuel, supplied by PetroChina's Rosneft, Chevron, ExxonMobil, and Thai Oil, is distributed to various airports in Myanmar, mainly by Cargo Link Petroleum Logistics owned by Asia Sun Group. The report outlines two different types of fuel distribution, one directly to the military bases and the other to the NEPAS storage facilities in airports. Data shows that from December 2021 to early August 2022 a total of 54,861,888 litres of Jet A-1 was distributed to Myanmar out of which 37,837,844 litres of Jet A-1 was delivered to NEPAS storage facilities, and 17,024,044 litres was delivered to the air bases. Amnesty International found that there were a few airports with NEPAS storage facilities which have a direct link to war crimes. For instance, the Nay Pyi Taw airport shares an airstrip with a nearby military base and satellite images have shown that both the civilian and military aircraft use the same fuel storage tank for refuelling.

Fourth, the military's influence on secure fuel supply. Before the release of the report, Puma Energy announced that it was leaving Myanmar after it admitted that the military was using fuel distributed by them. This admission included that the company was supplying fuel to the military before February 2021 and after the coup, they exercised their influence to terminate the supply. The other logistics and fuel companies involved in this fuel supply chain have expressed that they were not aware of this and were under the assumption that the fuel supplied by them was only being used for civilian purposes and said that they had done due diligence to make sure they were not used by the military. This shows that despite reassurances from local suppliers and distributors, the fuel reached the military bases and was used to fuel jets that conducted the air strikes. It highlights the control and influence of the military on local businesses and their power in siphoning off from the civilian supply. All these companies are connected to NEPAS, PEAS, and Asia Sun Group and have declared that they will be ceasing all their operations in Myanmar. The Amnesty International report urges the companies, states, and other international organisations to take steps and impose sanctions so that all supplies of aviation fuel do not reach Myanmar to cripple the ability of the military to conduct air strikes.

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## Also, from around the world

Avishka Ashok, Apoorva Sudhakar, Joel Jacob, Abigail Fernandez, Rashmi BR, Anu Maria Joseph, Padmashree Anandhan, Sethuraman N and Madhura Mahesh

### East and Southeast Asia

#### **Myanmar: UNHCR appeals to cease forced deportations from neighbouring countries**

On 2 November, the UNHCR appealed to Myanmar's neighbouring countries to immediately cease the forced return of people who fled the country, calling such deportations as "placing countless lives at risk." People are fleeing amid "indiscriminate violence" against civilians, which continues across the country and infighting between Myanmar's military and ethnic armed groups in several border areas. The UNHCR statement comes days after Reuters reported that Malaysia had deported 150 Myanmar nationals, including former navy officers seeking asylum, despite the risk of arrest they face on being returned home.

### South Asia

#### **Pakistan: Levies official killed amid open fire on a polio team**

On 27 October, a Levies official was killed when armed men opened fire on a polio team in the Chaman district of Balochistan. Officials said, "this act of terrorism will not be spared" and assured that the government is "committed" to providing security to the polio teams in the campaign, by tightening security after reported attacks in Balochistan's Pishin district as well. This attack came as the Balochistan health department launched a five-day anti-polio campaign in the province. Previously, a police head constable guarding the polio team was killed after armed militants opened fire in Pishin.

#### **Afghanistan: SIGAR report highlights humanitarian and economic crisis**

On 30 October, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) in its 57th quarterly report highlighted the political, economic, humanitarian and human rights situation in Afghanistan. The report mentioned the significance of the 'Afghan Fund' saying that the US State Department provided USD 3.5 billion in frozen Afghan central bank assets to benefit the Afghan people. Further, the report claimed that USAID had failed to answer its data request on the US spending in Afghanistan. Additionally, the report expressed concerns about the human rights situation including the reopening of schools for girls, freedom of speech and media in Afghanistan.

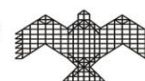
### Central Asia, Middle East and Africa

#### **Armenia-Azerbaijan: Putin holds talks with Aliyev and Pashinian in Sochi**

On 31 October, Russian President Vladimir Putin held talks with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Sochi. In a joint statement released after the talks, Armenia and Azerbaijan promised to refrain from the use of force, and negotiate issues based on respect for each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of borders. Additionally, it stated that the two sides would work to normalise relations, foster peace and stability, and ensure the security and economic development of the region. Meanwhile, President Putin described the meeting as "very useful."

#### **Israel- Palestine: Four Palestinians killed in West Bank and East Jerusalem**

On 3 November, four Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces in separate incidents. The Palestinian Ministry of Health said that a Palestinian man was killed in West Bank. The Israeli police confirmed that the firing happened as a response to the locals who protested and threw firebombs at them, while they raided a Palestinian man's home for ramming his car





into an Israeli soldier. In another incident, a man was shot by the police for allegedly stabbing an Israeli officer in Jerusalem's Old City. Simultaneously, the Israeli raids in Jenin continued; two Palestinians were killed, including an Islamic Jihad fighter.

### **Syria: Australia repatriates from refugee camp**

On 29 October, Home Affairs Minister of Australia Clare O'Neil issued a statement on the repatriation of four Australian women and their 13 children from a Roj camp in Syria. The repatriation is a plan to bring back Australian women and children who are relatives of dead or jailed Islamic State fighters. The Minister said: "The decision to repatriate these women and their children was informed by individual assessments following detailed work by national security agencies." The repatriation plan is similar to the plans followed by the US, Italy, Germany, France, Netherlands, UK, Canada, and Belgium.

### **Somalia: At least 100 killed in twin bomb attack**

On 30 October, at least 100 people were killed and more than 300 were injured in twin car bomb explosions near Somalia's capital Mogadishu. AFP news agency quoted the president saying, among the victims "who were massacred were mothers with their children in their arms." He appealed for international medical aid for the injured civilians. The president blamed al Shabaab militant group for the attack which targeted the education ministry. A pro-al Shabaab Somali Memo website reported that the group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

### **Democratic Republic of the Congo: Thousands protest against Rwanda's alleged support to M23**

On 31 October, thousands took to the streets of Goma to protest Rwanda's alleged support to M23 rebels following Kinshasa's recalling of its interim acting ambassador to Kigali. Al Jazeera quoted a civil society representative from the protests: "We denounce the hypocrisy of the international community in the face of Rwanda's aggression." The development comes after M23 rebels captured two towns along a highway leading to Goma. Previously, on 29 October, the DRC ordered the Rwandan ambassador to Kinshasa to leave the country within 48 hours.

## Europe and the Americas

### **Slovakia- Poland: Cyber attacks target IT infrastructure in parliaments**

On 29 October, the Polish and Slovakian parliaments were hit by cyber attack affecting the functioning of the Senates. Slovakia's Deputy Speaker Gabor Grendel said that the parliament was hit around 1100 hours when it was set to vote on several bills. Grendel said that the parliament was informed by the head of the administrative department that the entire parliament's computer system was down due to a cyber-attack. Slovakian Speaker Boris Kollar said that the attacker has not been identified. The Polish parliament's IT infrastructure was attacked and according to the authorities, Russia is suspected to be behind the attack. The Polish Senate issued a statement saying: "The attack was multi-directional, including from inside the Russian Federation." Polish Senate Speaker Tomasz Grodzki called the Russian government a "terrorist regime."

### **Ukraine: UK ministry of defence report of the state of new Russian soldier recruits**

On 31 October, the UK Ministry of Defence in its intelligence update reported that since mid-October, Russia had deployed several thousand newly mobilised reservists to the front lines

and the majority of them were ill-equipped to fight. The regular Russian combat units are equipped with 5.45-millimetre AK-74M or AK-12 rifles compared to the 7.62-millimetre AKM. The Ministry of Defence suspects that Russia will have to deploy two types of small arms ammunition to the front lines due to the new integration of reservists. The Ministry said that it will complicate Russia's strained logistics system.

### Europe: 50 countries sign against human rights violations in China

On 31 October, Finland joined 49 countries in signing a statement that condemned China for violating human rights in the Xinjiang region in the discussion of the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly. China allegedly violated human rights by torturing, raping and forcing Uighurs and other minority Muslim groups to give up their language and religion. China was also accused of having camps for the minorities in the Xinjiang region. China has rejected the accusations stating that it was the West's political tool against it. The discussion on the Xinjiang report in the UN has not progressed yet, as China has disagreed to discuss the content of the report.

### Cuba: UNGA passes resolution condemning US embargo on Cuba

On 3 November, the UNGA passed a resolution with a 185-2 vote share condemning the embargo placed on Cuba by the US in 1960, marking the 30th resolution on the embargo. The two countries that voted against the resolution were the US and Israel, whereas Brazil and Ukraine abstained. The US opposed the resolution but said that it will be standing with the Cuban people and will continue to support them in a meaningful way. In response, Cuba's deputy representative at the UN said: "If the United States government was really interested in the welfare, human rights and self-determination of Cubans, it could lift the blockade."

### Ecuador: Explosive attacks kill five police personnel; the government declares state of emergency

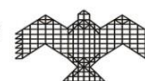
On 1 November, Ecuador's Prime Minister Guillermo Lasso declared a state of emergency in the two cities after five policemen were killed in attacks in Guayaquil, and seven prison officers were taken hostage in Esmeraldas. They were released after negotiations. The Ecuadorian government suspects that the attacks were responses to the transfer of prisoners from overcrowded and violent penitentiaries.

### The US: Pentagon to send HIMARS worth USD 275 million to Ukraine

On 28 October, the Pentagon announced a new military assistance package to Ukraine to support its fight against Russia. The package includes USD 275 million High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) launchers, small arms and satellite systems. The US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said that these weapons would make "such a difference to the battlefield" and that this support would be consistent. This package currently entails the US's overall security assistance of more than USD 18.5 billion, since the beginning of the invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

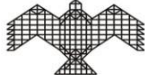
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### About NIAS-International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI)

The International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI), initiated in 2018 at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), is a part of the Conflict Resolution and Peace Research Programme at the School of Conflict and Security Studies.

IPRI undertakes research on various issues relating to peace with special emphasis on radicalisation, sustainable peace, gender roles in peacebuilding and global protest movements. IPRI research are published as briefs, reports and commentary.

### About Konrad Adenauer Stiftung

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is a political foundation. Established in 1955 as “Society for Christian-Democratic Civic Education,” in 1964, the Foundation proudly took on the name of Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. KAS cooperates with governmental institutions, political parties and civil society organizations, building strong partnerships along the way. In particular, KAS seeks to intensify political cooperation in the area of development cooperation on the foundations of its objectives and values. Together with the partners, KAS makes a significant contribution to the creation of a global order that empowers every country to determine its own developmental priorities and destiny in an internationally responsible manner.

KAS has organized its program priorities in India into five working areas: Foreign and Security Policy; Economic, Climate, and Energy Policy; Rule of Law; Political Dialogue focused on Social and Political Change; and Media and Youth. The India Office of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation takes great pride in its cooperation with Indian partner institutions that implement jointly curated projects and programmes.

### About Conflict Weekly

The Conflict Weekly an academic endeavour to bring every Wednesday/Thursday a weekly analysis of the conflict and peace processes in the world; aiming to look at the larger peace picture. It is published by the NIAS-IPRI in collaboration with the KAS India Office.

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