

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 842

Condemning the sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls in Ethiopia and emphasizing the urgent demand for humanitarian responses to meet their needs.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DECEMBER 7, 2021

Ms. SPEIER (for herself, Ms. LOIS FRANKEL of Florida, Ms. BASS, Ms. JACOBS of California, Mr. MALINOWSKI, Mr. CASTRO of Texas, Ms. TITUS, Mr. QUIGLEY, Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ, Mr. COHEN, Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York, Mr. CARSON, Mr. MCGOVERN, Ms. SHERRILL, Mr. GOMEZ, Mr. EVANS, Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin, Ms. BONAMICI, Mr. GARAMENDI, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mr. WELCH, Mr. ALLRED, Ms. TLAIB, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Ms. MENG, Mr. BOWMAN, Ms. GARCIA of Texas, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. CICILLINE, Mr. TORRES of New York, Ms. WILSON of Florida, Mrs. LAWRENCE, Ms. JAYAPAL, Ms. PINGREE, Ms. BROWNLEY, Mr. LEVIN of Michigan, Mr. SHERMAN, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. PHILLIPS, Mr. CORREA, Ms. HOULAHAN, Ms. WILLIAMS of Georgia, Ms. SÁNCHEZ, Mr. GREEN of Texas, Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD, and Ms. ESCOBAR) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

RESOLUTION

Condemning the sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls in Ethiopia and emphasizing the urgent demand for humanitarian responses to meet their needs.

Whereas the ongoing conflict in northern Ethiopia that began in the Tigray region is impacting safety, health, and human rights, particularly that of women and girls, and exacerbating underlying gender inequality;

Whereas, in January 2021, the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict called on all parties involved in hostilities in Tigray to commit to a zero-tolerance policy for crimes of sexual violence, in line with their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law;

Whereas parties to the conflict include the Ethiopian National Defense Forces, the Eritrean Defense Forces, regional forces from Amhara and other regional states of Ethiopia, and forces aligned with the Tigray People's Liberation Front;

Whereas, in January 2021, the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict called on the Ethiopian Government to exercise due diligence obligations to protect all civilians from sexual and other violence, allow for an independent inquiry into all allegations of sexual and other forms of violence, hold perpetrators accountable, provide redress to victims, and prevent future violations;

Whereas the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator briefed the United Nations Security Council in April 2021 that sexual violence was being used as a weapon of war in the Tigray region;

Whereas, in April 2021, the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict confirmed accounts of sexual violence perpetrated by armed combatants, including—

- (1) the systematic use of rape and sexual assault;
- (2) holding women and girls captive for days and repeatedly assaulting them;
- (3) targeting young girls and pregnant women; and

(4) forcing family members to watch relatives being brutally violated;

Whereas the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights conducted an investigation and released their report on November 3, 2021, which documented likely violations of human rights and humanitarian law obligations committed by all parties to the conflict that may also amount to war crimes involving sexual and gender-based violence of women, girls, men, and boys, including but not limited to—

- (1) gang, oral, and anal rape;
- (2) insertion of foreign objects into the vagina;
- (3) transmission of HIV; and
- (4) forced nudity;

Whereas women and girls continue to be impacted disproportionately by the months-long government shutdown of essential services, including electricity, banking, and telecommunications, and the obstruction of humanitarian assistance, including food, fuel, medicines, and other humanitarian supplies, which negatively impacts their well-being and heightens their risk of sexual exploitation and abuse, including by aid workers, in exchange for necessary supplies;

Whereas growing food insecurity, a lack of fully functioning health facilities, the result of deliberate attacks by warring parties on health care, the spread of COVID-19, and the shortage of basic needs in Tigray is reportedly contributing to alarming rates of malnutrition and risks of negative coping mechanisms, including sex for survival;

Whereas, due to the deliberate disruptions of humanitarian supplies, including to construct shelter or for water, sani-

tation, and hygiene, many displaced civilians are sheltering in unfinished or damaged buildings, most of which do not include separate spaces or latrines for women and girls, thus increasing risks of gender-based violence and the spread of certain infectious diseases;

Whereas over 2,100,000 people have been internally displaced in Tigray, and an estimated 5,200,000 people there are in need of humanitarian assistance as of August 2021, while another 300,000 have reportedly been displaced in the neighboring Amhara and Afar regions, where an estimated 1,700,000 are facing food insecurity as a result of the spreading hostilities;

Whereas women and girls who are internally displaced continue to be at increased risk of sexual violence;

Whereas widespread reports and hundreds of firsthand accounts indicate that women and girls have been subjected to sexual violence, including gang raping, genital burning, the forcing of foreign objects into their genitals, and sexual slavery;

Whereas systematic mass sexual violence against women and girls by combatants in Tigray is estimated to have been used against as many as 10,000 survivors or more since the conflict began, and nearly a quarter of reports received by 1 agency alone involved gang rape with victims as young as 8 years old;

Whereas the United Nations Population Fund projects that as many as 22,500 survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in Tigray may seek clinical care in 2021, and reported that there is no systematic response or survivor-centered care for most survivors, which further

traumatizes survivors and impedes their ability to access services;

Whereas Tigray's Regional Health Bureau recorded approximately 1,324 cases of gender-based violence between November 2020 and May 2021, and incidents of gender-based violence are likely to be undercounted due to lack of access to the conflict zones, stigmatization of sexual assault, survivors' fear of retaliation, and limited access to services and trusted medical service providers;

Whereas over 3,800,000 people have limited access to services in Tigray, with only 38 percent of health facilities operational, with aid agencies impeded from rehabilitating and reequipping health facilities, and 29 percent of health facilities at partial capacity to provide post-rape treatment;

Whereas, despite the urgent need to provide survivors of sexual violence with support services and clinical management of rape, including emergency medical treatment, postexposure prophylaxis to prevent sexually transmitted infections, emergency contraceptives, and psychosocial support, the Ethiopian Government has blocked the delivery of medicines and medical supplies, many health workers have not received salaries for months, proper gender-based violence case management services, including mental health and psychosocial support, remain insufficient in most locations in Tigray, and emergency contraception was only available in less than half of the facilities assessed by the United Nations;

Whereas health care workers documenting cases of sexual violence face reprisal attacks, and the majority of health facilities in the Tigray region have been damaged and

looted, impeding crisis-affected populations' access to health services;

Whereas international humanitarian actors continue to face access and security issues that prevent aid from reaching the victims of violence, and ongoing conflict has resulted in the deaths of at least 23 humanitarian aid workers in Tigray since November 2020;

Whereas journalists reporting on evidence of sexual violence operating in Tigray face threats, intimidation, harassments, and arrests;

Whereas the Department of State's 2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices noted significant human rights abuses in Ethiopia, including "lack of investigation of and accountability for violence against women; crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting members of racial or ethnic minority groups; and existence or use of laws criminalizing same-sex sexual conduct";

Whereas, in May 2021, the Department of State issued visa restrictions for Ethiopian and Eritrean Government officials and security forces, including those who have conducted wrongful violence and abuses against people in the Tigray region;

Whereas, in August 2021, the Department of the Treasury imposed sanctions on the Chief of Staff of the Eritrean Defense Forces under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act for being a leader of an entity engaged in serious human rights abuses, including sexual violence, committed during the ongoing conflict in Tigray, and cited the use of sexual violence "by men in uniform" as a weapon of war and "a means to terrorize and traumatize the entire population";

Whereas the United States issued a sanctions regime in September 2021, targeting those responsible for, or complicit in, prolonging the conflict in Ethiopia;

Whereas the United States has already committed nearly \$637,000,000 since November 2020 to scale up the humanitarian response in Ethiopia, including programs to address food insecurity and malnutrition, as well as dedicated support for survivors of gender-based violence such as case management, safe spaces, and psychosocial support; and

Whereas global funding gaps for the Tigray humanitarian response persist, particularly for services to address the unique and increasing needs of women and girls, with only \$500,000 of the United Nations emergency funding appeal for Tigray in December 2020 identified for gender-based violence programming and only \$1,500,000 to meet a large and growing need for sexual and reproductive health care; Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) condemns the atrocities and possible crimes
3 against humanity being perpetrated against women
4 and girls in Ethiopia;

5 (2) condemns the deliberate and widespread at-
6 tacks on health care, including deliberate destruction
7 and occupation of facilities, by warring parties;

8 (3) condemns the blockade of humanitarian as-
9 sistance, including for food, fuel, and medicines, and
10 the shutdown of essential services including banking,

1 telecommunications, and electricity that is harming
2 the civilian population, particularly women and girls;

3 (4) notes the joint investigation conducted by
4 the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and the
5 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for
6 Human Rights into the human rights violations and
7 abuses allegedly committed by all parties in the con-
8 text of the Tigray conflict, and urges these parties
9 to ensure that the investigation paves the way for a
10 robust, independent, transparent, and impartial
11 mechanism that can ensure evidence of related
12 crimes are preserved for future accountability;

13 (5) reaffirms the importance of United States
14 diplomatic pressure on all parties to the conflict to
15 permanently cease hostilities and respect the current
16 cease-fire agreement, fulfill their obligations under
17 international human rights and humanitarian law,
18 and allow unhindered access for humanitarian re-
19 sponders to meet the needs of people impacted by
20 the conflict;

21 (6) emphasizes the critical importance of ensur-
22 ing women meaningfully participate in the design
23 and implementation of humanitarian action and the
24 negotiation of peace agreements to meet their unique
25 needs in this crisis context, to protect their human

1 rights, and to provide an environment for reconcili-
2 ation;

3 (7) urges the Governments of Ethiopia and Eri-
4 trea to—

5 (A) condemn sexual and gender-based vio-
6 lence perpetrated against women and girls in
7 this conflict;

8 (B) hold all perpetrators who commit acts
9 of sexual and gender-based violence account-
10 able;

11 (C) provide redress to survivors of sexual
12 and gender-based violence; and

13 (D) ensure documentation and prompt in-
14 vestigation of reports of sexual and gender-
15 based violence committed during the conflict
16 that is survivor-centered;

17 (8) emphasizes the urgent need of all parties to
18 the conflict to—

19 (A) commit to an immediate, indefinite,
20 negotiated cease-fire;

21 (B) issue clear and public instructions to
22 armed forces and groups that forms of sexual
23 and gender-based violence are prohibited and
24 punishable on the basis of direct and command

1 responsibility, including superiors who ordered
2 or failed to prevent or stop violations; and

3 (C) engage in an inclusive political dia-
4 logue to work toward a lasting resolution to
5 Ethiopia’s ethnic and political divisions; and

6 (9) urges the President of the United States to
7 ensure accountability for human rights abuses and
8 atrocities committed against civilians, including
9 women and girls in the Tigray region and neigh-
10 boring regions of Amhara and Afar, and other parts
11 of Ethiopia, including by—

12 (A) supporting the full investigation of
13 atrocities against women and girls in Tigray,
14 Amhara, Afar, and other parts of northern
15 Ethiopia; and

16 (B) directing the Department of State and
17 the United States Agency for International De-
18 velopment to—

19 (i) leverage existing programs and al-
20 locate new resources to provide comprehen-
21 sive support to survivors of sexual and
22 gender-based violence, including sexual and
23 reproductive health services, psychosocial
24 care, and legal services, including those
25 under the United States Strategy on

1 Women, Peace, and Security per the
2 Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017;

3 (ii) support local civil society organi-
4 zations, particularly women’s organiza-
5 tions, that provide relief to survivors of
6 sexual violence and ensure staff security is
7 prioritized for frontline responders; and

8 (iii) support the United Nations and
9 other humanitarian aid responders to es-
10 tablish a coordination mechanism to ensure
11 comprehensive prevention, mitigation, and
12 response to sexual and gender-based vio-
13 lence.

○