

# The Role of ICRC (International Committee of The Red Cross) as a Protector of Children & Women in The Tigray Ethnic Conflict in Ethiopia in 2020- 2022

Faizah Nur'ain<sup>1</sup>, Novi Rizka Amalia<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of International Relations, Faculty of Humanities, Darussalam University, Jl. Raya Siman Km. 5 Siman, Ponorogo, East Java, 63471, Indonesia.

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer of UNIDA Gontor, Department of International Relations, Jl. Raya Siman Km. 5 Siman, Ponorogo, East Java, 63471, Indonesia.

Corresponding Email: [faizah.nur'ain@mhs.unida.gontor.ac.id](mailto:faizah.nur'ain@mhs.unida.gontor.ac.id)

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## Abstract

*The Tigray non-international armed conflict began in 2020 between Ethiopian military forces including ENDF (Ethiopian National Defense Force), EDF (Eritrean Defense Force), ASF (Amhara Special Forces) and Amhara Militia Groups and TPLF rebels, the conflict began when TPLF rebels attacked Ethiopian military bases operating in the Tigray region and this conflict ended in 2022 in this conflict there have been violations of International Humanitarian Law. The Tigray armed conflict that involved civilians as the main target for women and children. This research aims to analyze the role of the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) based on international humanitarian law as a protector of children & women in the Tigray ethnic conflict in Ethiopia in 2020-2022. This research uses a literature study research design with descriptive qualitative methods, data collection techniques using literature studies looking for sources from several journals, books, previous research and international websites. This research was analyzed using the concept of human rights in war and international organizations. The results of the research show that the ICRC is one of the international organizations that is able to play a role in accordance with the functions of international organizations as an initiator, facilitator and mediator which can ease the burden on the victims when the war lasts until after the war.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The beginning of conflict of internal strife in the Tigray region began when the appointment of Abiy Ahmed Ali as Prime Minister of Ethiopia who has played a role as a peace actor between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 2018. Abiy Ahmed Ali's role in reforming the political order of the Ethiopian government triggered disputes from parties that have dominated the seat of the Ethiopian government, especially from the TPLF (Tigrayan People's Liberation Front) group that has played a role for approximately 30 years in occupying the seat of the Ethiopian central government.<sup>1</sup> The peak of the non-international armed conflict in the Tigray region between the Ethiopian central government military and the TPLF rebels occurred on November 4, 2020. The armed conflict that hurts civilians around the armed area especially affects women and children victims. The tactics used by armed actors in engaging civilians as targets in war to weaken each other's power. Sexual violence is a tactic used to undermine each other.<sup>2</sup>

Acts of sexual violence are not only committed by one party but by all actors involved in the ceasefire in the Tigray region. The negative impact of the ceasefire also triggered the famine suffered by children in particular. The Ethiopian central government is also cracking down on people who provide support and empathy for the actions taken by the TPLF.<sup>3</sup> One of the international organizations involved in providing access to humanitarian assistance during the armed conflict until after the armed conflict in the Tigray region is the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) which focuses on dealing with victims of the ceasefire by the principles and values of International Humanitarian Law protecting civilians in the form of spiritual and physical health.<sup>4</sup> In non-international armed conflicts, there are limitations, where civilians are not allowed to be targeted in armed war, by the stipulation of international humanitarian law. Civilians must still be guaranteed security and protection in the form of body and mind, enforce human rights law against victims who are in the enemy camp, and humanize warfare so that there are no casualties from civilians, especially from women and children. International legal law is an international law that focuses on providing rules and limits in armed conflicts that are by the mission of the Geneva Convention regarding the prohibition of making civilians enemy targets to weaken enemy forces.<sup>5</sup>

In the non-international armed conflict that occurred in the Tigray region, many women and children who were victims of non-international armed conflict were subjected to violence, and the community environment became threatened, causing a sense of fear that triggered people to leave Ethiopia and become refugees to countries around Ethiopia. The international organization involved in handling cases of women and children victims during war is the ICRC to be able to alleviate the suffering of victims in refugee camps and establish cooperation with other international organizations to be involved in handling victims of war. The ICRC's important role as an international humanitarian organization focuses on handling victims of war crimes with International Humanitarian Law that applies in war. This makes researchers interested in examining the extent of the ICRC's role with the foundation of International Humanitarian Law as a protective law for children and women victims in the Tigray armed conflict.

## II. METHODOLOGY

In this study, the authors used a qualitative method. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), Qualitative Research is one type of research that has findings with procedures that do not use statistical or quantification research related to numbers. All sources obtained by researchers come from literature studies. The case study became the research design. The case study is about a non-international armed

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<sup>1</sup> Sara Mokaddem, "Abiy Ahmed's 'Medemer' Reforms:," *POLICY CENTER FOR THE NEW SOUTH* PB-19/08 (2019): 1–9.

<sup>2</sup> Ranit Mishori et al., "Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Continues in Tigray, Ethiopia," *The Lancet* 402, no. 10407 (September 2023): 1023–25, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(23\)01734-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(23)01734-8).

<sup>3</sup> Muhammad Iqbal, "KAJIAN YURIDIS PELANGGARAN HAK ASASI MANUSIA (HAM) TERHADAP KORBAN KONFLIK BERSENJATA NON INTERNASIONAL DI TIGRAY, ETHIOPIA DITINJAU HUKUM HUMANITER INTERNASIONAL" (Padang, UNIVERSITAS BUNG HATTA, 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Yessi Juniar Rahmad, "PERAN INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF RED CROSS (ICRC) MENANGANI KORBAN KONFLIK BERSENJATA INTERNASIONAL DI AFGHANISTAN TAHUN 2013-2016" 7 (2019), [https://ejournal.hi.fisip-unmul.ac.id/site/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/eJournal%20Yessi%20Juniar%20Rahmad%201302045106%20\(03-04-19-03-54-04\).pdf](https://ejournal.hi.fisip-unmul.ac.id/site/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/eJournal%20Yessi%20Juniar%20Rahmad%201302045106%20(03-04-19-03-54-04).pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Lusy K.F.R. Gerungan, "PERLINDUNGAN TERHADAP PEREMPUAN DAN ANAK KETIKA PERANG DALAM HUKUM HUMINITER INTERNASIONAL" Vol. XXI/No.3 (2013): 76–83.

conflict that occurred in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. Human rights violations based on international humanitarian law. The actors of the armed conflict involved civilians as targets in the attack to cause the main victims of civilians, namely victims of women and children. The absence of the role of the Ethiopian government in providing access to humanitarian assistance triggered increasingly unfavorable conditions for the victims of war.

### **III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Ethnic Tigray's internal conflict with the Ethiopian government began in 2018 since the appointment of Abiy Ahmed Ali as Prime Minister of Ethiopia, but there has not been a ceasefire conflict. The background of the Ethnic Tigray coalition party, TPLF (Tigrayan People's Liberation Fronts), which has dominated the seat of the Ethiopian government for approximately 30 years, is considered a dirty party that commits acts of corruption so that it is known as the source of internal conflict.<sup>6</sup> With the appointment of Abiy Ahmed Ali, who comes from the Oromo Ethnicity, there are steps in equalizing the seat of the Ethiopian government so that the coalition in each Ethiopian ethnicity has the right to occupy the seat of the Ethiopian government without being dominated by one ethnicity. November 4, 2020, was the peak of the beginning of the ceasefire between the Ethiopian government military under Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali and the TPLF rebels, where the TPLF launched an armed attack on the headquarters of the Ethiopian federal troops in the Tigray region to seize weapons.<sup>7</sup> During the TPLF attack on Ethiopian troops in the Tigray region, Abiy Ahmed Ali also mobilized the Ethiopian government military to provide direct attacks on the TPLF rebels.

#### **The Humanitarian Crisis of Armed Conflict with Child & Women Victims**

In the Tigray armed conflict, there is a humanitarian crisis, especially for women and children. The Government's failure to protect the victims of the ceasefire, women and children who are classified as civilians where civilians are not allowed to be the target of war. In the case of the Tigray ceasefire, Ethiopia is one of the countries with the highest number of victims of exploitation of women and children through sexual violence in the African region in the history of non-international armed conflicts. The casualties are increasing due to the prolonged armed conflict.<sup>8</sup> Sexual violence is one of the crimes of armed conflict, with the primary victims being women and children. Sexual violence is also one of the tactics or strategies used in warfare. During the ethnic Tigray armed conflict, many human rights violations occurred. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission has recorded 108 cases of rape and sexual harassment. The threats given by the state military or by the rebels of the TPLF party for families to commit acts of sexual abuse against their own families to sexually abuse refugees who are in the refugee camp area to get guaranteed food suppliers.<sup>9</sup> There were murders, kidnappings, and even massacres. The impact of sexual violence, especially in the act of rape, on victims, especially women and children with medical records, where the severe impact of sexual violence is the occurrence of pregnancy and also the transmission of HIV disease. The perpetrators of sexual crimes are not only from the Ethiopian military but also from Tigrayan groups and Eritrean military forces that took part in the armed conflict.<sup>10</sup> However, few medical records have been submitted on the impact of sexual violence on women and children. Gross human rights violations that have gone undetected in this conflict have led to a lack of data on the effects of sexual violence victims to be recorded.

The strategy of sexual violence is one of the tactics used by conflict parties to undermine their cultures. In the Tigray conflict, military forces forced women to rape military men infected with HIV or hepatitis to transmit the disease to women and children afterward. The spread of HIV or hepatitis can undermine the unity of the community by creating fear and anxiety. This strategy has been evident since the start of the ceasefire between perpetrators—targets of sexual violence range from underage

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<sup>6</sup> Bimo Pragilaksono, "Konflik Berkepanjangan Ethiopia: Sebuah Penghampiran Mediasi Ethiopia-Tigray," *Jurnal Sentris* 3, no. 1 (July 15, 2022): 16–26, <https://doi.org/10.26593/sentris.v3i1.5062.16-26>.

<sup>7</sup> Jon Abbink, "The Politics of Conflict in Northern Ethiopia, 2020-2021: A Study of War-Making, Media Bias and Policy Struggle," *African Studies Centre Leiden The Netherlands*, 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Valerie R Cook, "Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War in Ethiopia's Tigray Region and the Developing Adjudication of Violations of the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa," *American University International Law* 37, no. 2 (2022): 389–90.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations, "CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL," no. S/2021/312 (March 30, 2021).

<sup>10</sup> Mishori et al., "Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Continues in Tigray, Ethiopia."

children to older women and women with disabilities.<sup>11</sup> Physical and psychological distress has a devastating impact on victims of sexual violence. There are no facilities or shelters that provide a sense of security for civilians who are still trapped in areas of armed conflict. There are several cases of children who were abandoned by their family members who were kidnapped by military forces and left without knowing the safety conditions of the children. Troops used women and children as tools in warfare as a tactic to weaken enemy strongholds. The accusations made by the soldiers victimized women. Sexual violence was perpetrated by the military forces by inserting foreign objects into the reproductive organs to sterilize the wombs of Tigray women so that they would not have a future generation.<sup>12</sup>

A factor in the lack of data recorded in medical records on sexual violence against women and children is that access to health services is difficult to operate in the Tigray conflict. Victims of sexual violence do not receive health services after sexual violence. There are also other factors where victims deliberately do not report cases of sexual violence for fear of stigmatization, which can lead to isolation in the family due to families who do not want to accept sexual violence, which makes emotional changes that increase trauma and depression and trigger suicide.<sup>13</sup> Sexual violence will have a lasting impact on the next generations of families. Victims of sexual violence experience physical damage and psychological disorders due to the trauma experienced, triggering risky actions. Many of the women who become pregnant after rape have to care for children they did not expect. Under these conditions, there is an increase in abortion, the impact of which not only affects the fetus in the mother's womb but also affects the health of the mother after the abortion. Not only is abortion an escape for pregnant women, but they also take drugs, consume alcohol, and commit suicide.<sup>14</sup>

Pregnant women were fearful during the armed conflict, as some pregnant women who gave birth did not deliver in hospitals. The decline in the interest of pregnant women to deliver in health institutions has led to an increase in deliveries outside of health institutions. Pregnant women prefer to stay inside their homes and even pay in hidden places to avoid being shot or sexually assaulted. Delivery outside of health institutions will significantly impact mothers and children due to the lack of medicines and vitamins to consume.<sup>15</sup> Children are more vulnerable to malnutrition between the ages of 6 months and 59 months. The prolonged armed conflict in Tigray has affected the condition of the food consumed by children and the diseases that children have suffered. Children are more vulnerable when they are six months to -8 months old due to the lack of knowledge of complementary foods that children should consume when they are six months old and vaccinations that children should receive to provide immune vitamins. The most vulnerable disease suffered by children is diarrhea due to the inadequacy of clean water for consumption, which makes children's appetite decrease.<sup>16</sup> Children in the internal camps in the Tigray region still cannot access water supply, as water sources have been destroyed and water has become polluted. Inflation in the price of staple foods significantly influences the lack of nutrition consumed by children in refugee camps. Children who are malnourished will fall into the category of.

- a. Violations of International Humanitarian Law Against (Civil) War Victims in the Tigray Non-International Armed Conflict Additional Protocol II Article 4

<sup>11</sup> Venisa Yunita Sari, Nurfitri Nugrahaningsih, and Uly Nuzulian, "Implementasi Rezim Internasional dalam Menangani Conflict-Related Sexual Violence di Tigray," *Intermestic: Journal of International Studies* 7, no. 1 (November 30, 2022): 154, <https://doi.org/10.24198/intermestic.v7n1.8>.

<sup>12</sup> Mengistu Welday Gebremichael et al., "Rape Survivors' Experience in Tigray: A Qualitative Study," *BMC Women's Health* 23, no. 1 (July 13, 2023): 372, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-023-02502-0>.

<sup>13</sup> Girmatsion Fisseha et al., "War-Related Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Tigray, Northern Ethiopia: A Community-Based Study," *BMJ Global Health* 8, no. 7 (July 2023): e010270, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2022-010270>.

<sup>14</sup> Lebeza Alemu Tenaw et al., "Medical and psychological consequences of rape among survivors during armed conflicts in northeast Ethiopia," ed. Wanich Suksatan, *PLOS ONE* 17, no. 12 (December 12, 2022): e0278859, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0278859>.

<sup>15</sup> H. E. Abraha et al., "Armed Conflict Drives Most Births to Occur out of Health Facilities: Evidence from Tigray, Ethiopia," *BJOG: An International Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology* 130, no. 8 (July 2023): 987–89, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-0528.17429>.

<sup>16</sup> Gebretsadkan Gebremedhin Gebretsadik et al., "Prevalence and Multi-Level Factors Associated with Acute Malnutrition among Children Aged 6–59 Months from War Affected Communities of Tigray, Northern Ethiopia, 2021: A Cross-Sectional Study," *Conflict and Health* 17, no. 1 (March 18, 2023): 10, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13031-023-00508-x>.





Article 4 of Additional Protocol II states that anyone who is not involved in the war. Civilians who must be respected by war actors are not allowed to be targeted by war. Especially for children who are in areas of war conflict must be a priority to be protected and rescued to a safer place and provide access for children to be able to return together with separated families. In the Tigray armed conflict, there have been human rights violations during the war that have adversely affected civilians, especially children, and women who are not involved in the armed conflict in the Tigray region. Human rights violations in the Tigray war are targeted as a strategy in the war that is used to weaken each other's strength by providing threats, kidnappings, sexual violence, and killings. Children who are targeted for sexual violence are forced to see sexual violence that occurs in homes, public places, and places of refuge. Women who were deliberately abducted to be separated from their families by Ethiopian military forces, and children who sought safety in refugee camps had to be separated from their families and keep themselves safe in the Tigray armed conflict.

b. Violations of International Humanitarian Law Against (Civil) War Victims in the Tigray Non-International Armed Conflict Additional Protocol II Articles 13, 14, 16

In Additional Protocol II Articles 13, 14, 16 say that armed actors are not allowed to attack civilians and vital objects located in populated areas such as places of worship, drinking water sources, food barns or irrigation channels. Population areas that must be avoided by ceasefire actors without involving population areas as an area to conduct a ceasefire. It has been written that attacks on the population are not allowed, in the Tigray armed conflict there are violations of international Humanitarian Law. Assaults on civilians in populated areas of Tigray have resulted in sexual violence and murder. The ceasefire actors damaged public facilities in the Tigray region such as hospitals, schools and places of worship. Not only that, the ceasefire actors also destroyed food sources and seized livestock owned by the people of Tigray to be able to meet their daily food needs and damaged clean water source facilities that could threaten the health of the people of Tigray.

The implementation of international humanitarian law in international law through the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to carry out emergency actions during armed conflicts around the world and introduce international humanitarian law as the law of war. The ICRC is independent and neutral and does not take sides with anyone in protecting victims of war, maintaining the dignity of victims in armed conflicts and providing access to humanitarian assistance. The ICRC's role is based on the 1949 Geneva Conventions in Additional Protocol II in Non-International Armed Conflicts.<sup>17</sup> The ICRC also acts to alleviate and prevent the suffering of victims of war by strengthening the duties and functions of international humanitarian law.<sup>47</sup> The ICRC's active role in protecting the victims of the Tigray armed conflict through the distribution of access to humanitarian assistance services during the armed conflict and after the Tigray armed conflict. Additional Protocol II on non-international armed conflicts also discusses the prohibition of all forms of violence against life in war and being able to maintain physical and mental health for victims of the ceasefire. and prohibits armed conflict actors from committing acts of murder, cruel acts, humiliation of personal dignity to looting. Violations of International Humanitarian Law that occurred in the Tigray conflict have involved civilians as objects of sexual violence and murder.

### The Role of ICRC in the Tigray Conflict

In the non-international armed conflict in the Tigray region, there has been a humanitarian crisis in the lives of civilians, especially women and children. The government's failure to protect the victims of the ceasefire the victims of women and children who are targeted by the war. In the case of the Tigray ceasefire, Ethiopia is one of the countries with the highest number of victims of exploitation of women and children victims through sexual violence in the African region in the history of non-international armed conflicts. Victims are increasing due to the prolonged armed conflict.<sup>18</sup> Sexual violence is one of the crimes in armed conflict. Sexual violence is also one of the tactics or strategies used in warfare. During the Tigray armed conflict, many human rights violations occurred.<sup>19</sup> Gross violations of International Humanitarian Law will greatly affect the survival of victims due to psychological and physical impacts. The Ethiopian government, which prioritizes personal interests without seeing the impact suffered by civilians in the Tigray region, always lives with fear and anxiety

<sup>17</sup> "The ICRC's Mandate and Mission" (International Committee of the red Cross, n.d.), <https://www.icrc.org/en/mandate-and-mission>.

<sup>18</sup> Cook, "Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War in Ethiopia's Tigray Region and the Developing Adjudication of Violations of the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa."

<sup>19</sup> Mishori et al., "Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Continues in Tigray, Ethiopia."

because there is no guarantee of security and protection. Justice is denied to the civilians in the Tigray region, and the ethnic Tigrayans are discriminated against in the conflict. In this event, there are not only human rights violations but also violations of the Law of War that are also violated by the actors of the armed conflict. The international organization involved during the armed conflict in the Tigray region until after the armed conflict occurred was the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross). The ICRC carries out its duties by the foundation of the Geneva Conventions by implementing international humanitarian law in armed conflicts always understanding the submissions regarding human rights violations in war conflicts and providing the latest conditions regarding the armed conflicts that occur.<sup>20</sup> The ICRC's role in protecting victims during the Tigray armed conflict is still ongoing until after the Tigray armed conflict. The ICRC can carry out its duties to the Tigray war area which can provide emergency assistance to victims who are still in the conflict area. helping the civilians of Tigray, especially women and children who are victims of the armed conflict to stay safe and have a fulfilling daily life amid the Tigray armed conflict.

a. ICRC as a Facilitator in Tigray Conflict

ICRC is one of the organizations that focuses on the humanitarian field, especially in the distribution of humanitarian assistance during war. In the Tigray armed conflict, the ICRC helped distribute food supplies and essential facilities needed by the victims, assisted in the restoration of water sources and livelihoods, provided medical services, saw the condition of prisoners and helped families to find separated family members, and provided services in post-conflict mental recovery. The ICRC was able to ease the burden suffered during wartime. The ICRC collaborated with the Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS) to send 77 medical personnel, distribute 1,700 mobility aids, and deploy 127,000 ambulances from 14 ERCS branches. It also distributed fuel and restored telecommunication services in the Tigray region.<sup>21</sup>

The assistance provided by the ICRC has been recorded: 36,400 detainees received assistance, 4,095,000 people in towns and villages up to the detainee received clean water facilities, 260,000 people received communication services to get back with separated families, 11,400 people received post-conflict physiotherapy services, 1,700 ICRC members were involved in handling war victims including journalists as well as community leaders and religious leaders, 420,900 received cash in empowering agrosystems, 178,000 received basic household facilities and also 45 ERCS sections continued to distribute facilities according to the needs of the victims.<sup>22</sup> The bad condition of the Tigray armed conflict area when the Ethiopian central government blocked the access of humanitarian aid to Tigray victims who need humanitarian assistance in an emergency. Not only that, the medics in charge of helping to treat the victims were also targeted in sexual violence committed by the ceasefire actors. With the situation getting worse, the ICRC made a strategy to still be able to distribute health assistance to victims who were difficult to reach by negotiating with the actors involved in the armed conflict and conducting special communication to be able to influence the actors to facilitate the process of distributing humanitarian assistance in armed conflict areas. ICRC can act as a facilitator by the functions of international organizations by channeling access to humanitarian assistance in the form of daily needs of the victims, providing access to health services in the form of medicines and vaccines for victims to get emergency health services to get health facilities after the Tigray armed conflict to restore physical and mental conditions that are disturbed due to acts of sexual violence during the war. The ICRC also helps prisoners in each camp to continue to get proper facilities and receive humanitarian assistance.

b. ICRC as Initiator in the Tigray Conflict

Not only does the ICRC operate within the Tigray armed conflict area, it also plays an active role in refugee camps and areas outside the Tigray armed conflict area by providing haven and protection for civilians fleeing the armed conflict area. As well as providing solar panels to generate electricity in refugee camps and helping to charge the telecommunications of victims to contact families who are still missing. The ICRC also increases the budget set to continue to be able to distribute aid to victims with an increase in the budget every year.<sup>23</sup> Refugee camps still in the Ethiopian region, especially in the Afar region, have access to basic food supplies including flour,

<sup>20</sup> Yves Sandos, "The International Committee of the Red Cross as Guardian of International Humanitarian Law" (International Committee of the red Cross, 1998), <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/misc/about-the-icrc-311298.htm>.

<sup>21</sup> "Northern Ethiopia: Our Work in Tigray, Afar and Amhara" (International Committee of the red Cross, April 2, 2022), <https://www.icrc.org/en/northern-ethiopia-tigray>.

<sup>22</sup> "Ethiopia" (International Committee of the red Cross, 2022), <https://www.icrc.org/en/where-we-work/africa/ethiopia>.

<sup>23</sup> "Humanitarian Needs Grow in Ethiopia's Tigray Region" (United Kingdom: International Committee of the red Cross, March 4, 2021), <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/humanitarian-needs-grow-ethiopia-tigray-region>.

beans, salt, and oil as well as emergency facilities.<sup>24</sup> The ICRC operating in the Tigray region can provide logistical assistance in the form of medicines, vaccines, and daily necessities needed by the victims, to provide socialization to workshops on the prevention of COVID-19, measles, cholera, and other infectious diseases. COVID-19 prevention is the main strategy in the socialization event because the Tigray armed conflict occurred during the COVID-19 virus. ICRC participated in restoring telecommunication networks and distributing fuel for transportation. International organizations can act as mediators by being neutral, where with this neutrality international organizations can provide assistance services to victims who are still in the ceasefire area. The ICRC has carried out the function of an international organization as an initiator by providing access to alternative assistance to victims of the ceasefire by restoring telecommunications services and distributing fuel for lighting and transportation to resume operations. The ICRC, which cooperates with partners of 14 ERCS branches in the Ethiopian region in overcoming emergency problems, provides ambulances to be deployed directly to the Tigray conflict area to bring victims to get first aid. Not only that, the ICRC also provides cash as capital in running the agro system.

c. ICRC as Mediator in the Tigray Conflict

The ICRC and ERCS have had a major influence in overcoming the emergency problems experienced by the victims. The alertness of the two humanitarian organizations always provides alternative solutions when unable to reach or distribute aid to victims who are beyond the reach of the ICRC and ERCS. Alertness in approaching troops operating in the ceasefire area by convincing the role and mission carried out by the ICRC by the foundation of international humanitarian law. The ICRC's role does not only benefit one party but benefits every actor involved in armed conflict to get the attention of the ICRC.

The routine dialogue of the ICRC program has a major influence on awakening the sense of responsibility of the actors of armed conflict for their actions and realizing the importance of protecting civilians who are the main object of international humanitarian law that must be protected. Routine dialogue also triggers awareness to restore threatened economies, damaged buildings, and public facilities, as well as rebuild food supply sources and clean up areas where weapons materials are still available to be destroyed immediately so as not to affect the population's environment. The ICRC has also carried out the function of an international organization as a mediator and carried out the role of international humanitarian law in Additional Protocol II of 1977 non-international armed conflict article 18 which requires the ICRC to act as a neutral humanitarian organization without having to take sides with certain groups. The ICRC's role in the Tigray conflict is not only to distribute humanitarian aid to civilian victims but the ICRC also pays attention to prisoners who are under the control of armed conflict actors and the return of prisoners with separated families. The ICRC is also not involved in negotiations with political parties. Providing health services to ceasefire actors who need access to health services.

This study explains that the ICRC, which is involved in the distribution of aid to victims of the Tigray armed conflict, has fulfilled the functions of the International Organization that have been set. The ICRC can act as an Initiator by providing alternative solutions as emergency management carried out by ICRC members who can collaborate with humanitarian partners who are still operating in Ethiopia, collaborate with other International Organizations in expanding the reach of aid distribution, and collaborate with countries in the Ethiopian region in expanding asylum for refugees who are victims of the Tigray armed conflict. After the Tigray armed conflict, and Tigray entered a period of peace, the ICRC distributed medicines, medical equipment, hygiene equipment, and food supplies transported by hundreds of trucks and cargo flights and restored 29 hospital units that had been looted by the actors of the armed conflict.<sup>25</sup> The ICRC's active role in providing and resolving problems in the aftermath of the Tigray conflict has fulfilled the duties under international humanitarian law, where the ICRC can operate during armed conflict and must continue its role after the armed conflict in the Tigray region.

The main role of the ICRC after the Tigray conflict is to reach areas in the Tigray region that have not been visited by ICRC members for humanitarian assistance due to conflict conditions that make it impossible for ICRC members to operate in remote areas. One of them is in Dembidolo blood,

<sup>24</sup> "Ethiopia: ICRC Resumes Aid Convoys to Tigray after Six Months" (Ethiopia: International Committee of the red Cross, April 14, 2022), <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/ethiopia-icrc-resumes-aid-convoys-tigray-after-six-months-0>.

<sup>25</sup> Fatima Sator, "Ethiopia: Even during Period of Peace, Lasting Humanitarian Consequences of the Conflict Remain" (Ethiopia: International Committee of the red Cross, March 3, 2023), <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/ethiopia-even-during-period-peace-lasting-humanitarian-consequences-conflict-remain>.



victims who need special care to get access to conflict rehabilitation. In the Tigray region, there is also malnutrition among pregnant women, and children under the age of five are particularly vulnerable to malnutrition.<sup>26</sup> The ICRC's efforts to improve the condition of pregnant women and toddlers by holding nutrition programs as a lifesaver. After 2 years of experiencing the impact of the Tigray armed conflict, the ICRC strategized to hold regular dialogues with the military, armed forces, and security forces to be able to fade the impact of the Tigray conflict on the victims and carry out their duties by the basis of international humanitarian law. In 2023 the ICRC expanded its cooperation with ERCS in providing adequate medical facilities and restoring health activities in hospitals.<sup>27</sup> The ICRC's neutrality in reducing tensions between Tigray civilians and Ethiopian military forces without providing defense for one side, the goal of regular dialogue to be able to reduce the suffering of the victims to be able to restore the situation peacefully. The ICRC can play a protective role for the victims of the Tigray ceasefire with the main victims being women and children. ICRC's ability to provide a safe place, provide emergency assistance to victims during wartime to health services after the Tigray armed conflict, and help to identify sexual violence in the Tigray armed conflict which is classified as a violation of international humanitarian law that must be followed up to get sanctions for sexual violence, abduction and murder of civilians.

### **Islamic View on the Tigray Conflict in Ethiopia**

Abiy Ahmed Ali is the Prime Minister of Ethiopia who has served since 2018 now he comes from the Oromo ethnicity and adheres to Islam. Abiy Ahmed Ali has experience in resolving conflicts between Muslims and Christians through community dialog that led to peace. Not only that, Abiy Ahmed Ali also received the Nobel Prize in 2018, where Abiy Ahmed Ali was able to make a peace agreement with Eritrea. The Ethiopian people trust in Abiy Ahmed Ali as the successor to the mandate of previous leaders to maintain peace and security for the Ethiopian people. The Ethiopian background has a high sense of tolerance for the differences that the Ethiopians have which include religious differences or ethnic differences. The internal conflict that occurred when Abiy Ahmed Ali took office was a non-international armed conflict that occurred in the Tigray region, where Abiy Ahmed Ali could not mediate to achieve peace in resolving this Tigray armed conflict. In fact, in the Tigray conflict women and children became the conflict actors' strategy in weakening the enemy's strength by committing acts of sexual violence. The absence of the state's role in enforcing human rights law in war, the participation of the Ethiopian government in blocking access to humanitarian assistance to cut off communication networks in the Tigray region. the absence of sanctions against the perpetrators of the regional ceasefire that triggered the increase of perpetrators to engage in acts of sexual violence or the increase in damage to public infrastructure of the perpetrators who came from the Ethiopian military forces and TPLF rebels.

Violations of international humanitarian law for acts of sexual violence, abduction, and murder. International humanitarian law must be obeyed by the Ethiopian government which has ratified international humanitarian law to be applied in its country. In the Tigray conflict, the Ethiopian government does not provide restrictions on the actors involved in the Tigray armed conflict so civilians are victimized and feel worse conditions with situations that make life difficult for civilians. All facilities that are the right of civilians cannot be accessed and cause suffering for the lives of civilians. Ethiopia is one of the countries in the history of Islamic civilization, where the first time Islam came to the African region was in the country of Ethiopia which is commonly called Habasyah. The king at that time accepted the teachings of Islam well and spread the teachings of Islam throughout Africa. The spread of Islam without coercion and threats, the spread of Islam is channeled with a sense of peace without hostility. The Ethiopian government should take the tactics of the previous government on how the role of a state should be to achieve the welfare of its people, without bloodshed. Conflict resolution in Islam does not resort to violence but rather acts through peaceful means.

Conflict resolution that has been applied by the Prophet Muhammad SAW. without using violence or warfare, it is better to avoid acts of bloodshed. The Prophet was able to conquer the Arabian territories to spread Islam through peace and negotiate with enemies who opposed the actions taken

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<sup>26</sup> "Responding to Urgent Humanitarian Needs in Amhara and Other Hard to Reach Areas in Ethiopia" (Ethiopia: International Committee of the red Cross, September 15, 2023), <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/responding-urgent-humanitarian-needs-amhara-and-other-hard-reach-areas-ethiopia>.

<sup>27</sup> "Ethiopia: Health Facilities Lack Supplies amid Ongoing Violence. Civilians Struggle to Rebuild Livelihoods" (Ethiopia: International Committee of the red Cross, February 20, 2024), <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/ethiopia-health-facilities-lack-supplies-amid-ongoing-violence-civilians-struggle-rebuild>.



by the Prophet to respect each other even though the Prophet's position was at a great disadvantage. Conflict resolution does not have to be used through violence or war because the act of war will have a large and long impact on the lives of people who are not involved in war conflicts. A state must play a fair role in carrying out the mandate that has been set to convey the mandate perfectly. If a country has established a law, justice must be upheld so that there is no dispute in a country. In the Tigray Ethnic armed conflict, Ethiopia has ratified the laws upholding human rights in war with the foundation of international humanitarian law, therefore the state must be neutral in handling the Tigray Ethnic armed case without having to favor one group. The main victims in the Tigray conflict are the women and children who have violated the Human Rights law.

The role of the Ethiopian government is important in being a mediator in resolving the non-international armed conflict between Ethiopian military forces and the TPLF rebels so that bloodshed does not occur. Conflict resolution is through peace through negotiation or agreement. The fair attitude of the Ethiopian government is expected by the Tigray civil society without any discrimination. Tigray civil society needs guaranteed rights to protect individuals and groups from the threat of ceasefire violence and enforce human rights laws in war. Law enforcement in a country must be enforced as fairly as possible without any element of providing benefits or superiority to any group, but rather, the aim and enforcement of a country's law is to achieve the welfare of society without harming the people within it. The community feels that they receive security and protection without any elements of discrimination. State leaders must be obedient and trustworthy in carrying out the tasks entrusted by their people to become a better government. The Ethiopian government must be able to enforce the laws of its country by resolving armed conflicts through peaceful means without armed conflicts having an impact on civilians who are in areas of armed conflict, especially women and children victims who are not allowed to be targeted in armed conflicts.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The researcher concludes that in the non-international armed conflict that occurred in Ethiopia, especially in the Tigray region, which began on November 4, 2020, until the end of the conflict on November 3, 2022, there have been gross violations of human rights committed by armed conflict actors in the Tigray conflict area. Human Rights violations that target civilians in the conflict. The primary victims in this conflict are women and children who are subjected to sexual violence, abduction, and murder. In the Tigray armed conflict, the Ethiopian Government has no role to play in stopping the conflict, and on the contrary, the Ethiopian Government is also involved in this conflict. The Ethiopian Government has blocked the distribution of access to aid facilities and health access services due to the revocation of communication services in the Tigray region. The perpetrators of the armed conflict also attacked the medics through sexual harassment, who were tasked with reaching the unreachable areas as well. As a result of the Tigray conflict, many civilians have chosen to flee to refugee camps outside of Sudan. An international organization capable of acting as an initiator, facilitator and mediator during the Tigray conflict was the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) which played a role in distributing humanitarian aid during the Tigray conflict until after the Tigray armed conflict. The ICRC can provide security guarantees and protection for victims and civilians, especially women and children in the Tigray non-international armed conflict.

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