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Ethiopian Anarchist Report: Nationalists Pushing for War in Tigray

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Two days after the most recent massacre on the Amhara people living in the Oromia regional state of Ethiopia, whose perpetrators were claimed to be backed by the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF), the Ethiopian federal government announced a military “operation” against the regional state of Tigray. The Federal government led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Abiy Ahmed accused the TPLF of a treasonous attack on the Ethiopian military stationed in Mekelle and called on the military to “save the country and region from instability”.

The Marxist-Leninist TPLF has for long been the dominant force in an authoritarian coalition that led the country for 27 years until Abiy came to power in 2018 in a widely celebrated “reform”. After Abiy assumed power the country started shifting to a reactionary center right politics with fascism on the rise and polarized ethnic elites exploiting ethnic divides leading to waves of violence against minorities within the federation.

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The Tigrayans' liberation struggle was birthed as a resistance against repression and discrimination but once the TPLF seized state power it turned into the oppressor. The last two years have witnessed state sponsored Anti-TPLF sentiments which helped create a siege mentality among Tigrayan population as the populist PM and many metropolitan elites started alienating the TPLF and the people of Tigray from national politics and this opened way for the TPLF to once again assume position as the defender of Tigrayans. This led to tensions building up between the Federal government and Tigray which was clearly demonstrated when TPLF held parliamentary elections earlier in September despite the elections being deemed illegal by the federal government who had postponed the 2020 elections because of the Corona virus pandemic. The Tigray regional government declared the federal government as illegitimate and expressed that it will not comply with its laws, directives, and regulations while the federal government on its part called the election "null and void". After the armed confrontation started earlier on Wednesday electricity, telephone and internet services in Tigray have been disconnected and the only official news coming from Tigray is from the regional state's TV. It is not clear what's happening in the grounds besides each government's propaganda but the latest reports indicate that the military has started air raids in the capital of Tigray, Mekelle.

The framing of the narrative from the Federal side has been that this is a defense against the attack the TPLF posed on the country and a mission aimed at "liberating the people of Tigray" from the authoritarian grips of their government. While news from Tigray is that of self-defense from an invasion by the Ethiopian forces.

This confrontation that is being exacerbated by urban right-wingers edging war against the "corrupt TPLF" and framing it as a mission against TPLF officials and not the entire region puts the country on the brink of a civil war that will have major implications in the entire region.