

# Genocide and political destruction in Tigray: The imperative for systemic transformation

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This study examines the severe governance and public service challenges in the Tigray region of Ethiopia following genocide and political destruction, aiming to analyze the impact of the conflict on governance structures and advocate for transformative frameworks.

**Methods:** A qualitative survey involving 2,280 respondents was conducted using systematic random sampling and snowballing, with data collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and field observations, analyzed using ATLAS.ti version 9.

**Results:** The findings revealed significant gaps between public expectations and government performance, highlighting political destruction, governance collapse, and deteriorating public services. Importantly, the research underscores the often-overlooked invisible damage to political systems that perpetuate ongoing violence and societal decay.

**Limitations:** This study emphasizes the need for governance and political transformation that enhances accountability, transparency, and citizen engagement to prevent further political decay, calling for coordinated governance strategies aligned with democratic principles to empower citizens and contribute to Tigray's recovery, sustainable development, and social cohesion.

**Contributions:** This study contributes to the theoretical and empirical body of knowledge on the impact of genocide on politics and governance and the strategies for the post-genocide transformation of governance and society.

**Keywords:** *Tigray Genocide, Political Destruction, Governance Transformation, Civil Society Engagement, Post-Genocide Recovery*

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## 1. Introduction

The difficult circumstances following Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's rise and the Tigray People's Liberation Front's (TPLF) exclusion from national politics have created major governance challenges in Tigray. Following its loss of power, the TPLF-led Tigray Regional Government (TRG) focused on local needs. Although governance reforms were planned to tackle prewar issues, their implementation was disrupted by a genocidal war that dismantled crucial governance structures and exacerbated political crises. This devastation severely affected emerging democratic institutions, leading to an unprecedented crisis (TIPS, 2023).

After the Permanent Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) between the Federal Government of Ethiopia (FGE) and the TPLF, the Interim Regional Administration (IRA) of Tigray was formed without adequate representation from FGE. The FGE strategically relinquished its power-sharing rights under the CoHA, transforming itself into an approval authority for the IRA. The TPLF accepted this, marking a significant miscalculation that allowed the FGE to withdraw from its commitments, while

promising inclusivity in the IRA. The TPLF retained 51% of the IRA cabinet's power, leading to internal strife, as the TPLF old guard was unhappy with the appointment of Getachew Reda as an IRA president instead of their nominee, Dr. Debretsion Geberemikael (TPLF-HR, 2023). The TPLF's entrenched structure hindered the IRA's authority devolution, compounded by its weaknesses such as the lack of an interim legislative body and clear devolution plans. Consequently, the IRA emerged as a weak structure that depended on the TPLF for local governance. FGE exploited these divisions, delaying CoHA implementation and undermining the legitimacy of the IRA (GTG-IRA, 2024).

As a result, the IRA struggled to provide governance and basic services amid deepening social, economic, and security crises. Issues such as repatriating internally displaced persons (IDPs) and restoring occupied territories complicate governance. Rising crime and corruption further intensified the IRA's legitimacy crisis and tensions within the TPLF (TPLF-HR 2023). The TPLF's Central Committee attributed political decay to a leadership vacuum, while the IRA called for governance reforms, which the TPLF old guard dismissed as conspiratorial (MK-TPLF, 2024). This study was conducted in this complex political context due to the escalating governance crises in Tigray. Addressing these issues is vital for public demand, reconstruction, and state system stability in post-genocidal Tigray. Failure to tackle these challenges threatens the survival of the Tigrayan people, and emphasizes the IRA's need for effective governance.

This study aims to analyze governance issues to advocate for a responsive and inclusive government that prioritizes citizen needs and accountability. This highlights the need for the IRA to enhance its governance capacity, while ensuring inclusivity. Additionally, it underscores the importance of historical context in shaping current practices and the necessity for governance transformation aligned with democratic principles. By assessing the impact of political destruction on governance, this study aims to identify key reform areas for improving civil service delivery in post-genocide Tigray. The scope includes examining governance systems and practices, relationships among administrative bodies, and civil service delivery effectiveness. It will also address critical issues, such as drought management, the needs of displaced persons, and natural resource distribution, seeking viable solutions to these pressing challenges.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 Key Post-War Issues**

Many complex issues need to be addressed in the postwar period. These require systemic changes and transitions, considering the comprehensive damage caused by war. Communities such as ours that have been devastated by war are not only rebuilding, but also undergoing comprehensive systemic leaps and transitions.

Among the key events are systemic and political adjustment, reconstruction, recovery, and security of war-affected populations (Mylovanov & Roland, 2022); regular power sharing and the building of coalition and multilateral democracy and active political participation; and improvements in governance, the legislature, the judiciary, security, and civil service. It is important to follow power-sharing agreements and procedures that enable peaceful transition and stability (García-Godos, 2019). Researchers such as Hartzell argue that the implementation of a power-sharing agreement and an inclusive process can lead to political transformation, not only for the transition but also forever (Johnson, 2023). These aspects have a direct bearing on the restoration of the rule of law, protection of human rights, and ensuring accountability are implemented during this period. In a situation where people who encourage the protection of human rights face threats, there is a lack of accountability and prevalence of a culture of violence where criminals live freely, bringing deadly peace (Karakus, 2021). These events are not held in isolation, but in combination. To address complex problems, it is important to implement reforms in governance, political power, justice and accountability, reconciliation, peace, sustainable stability, and political transition in a complementary and supportive manner (Kurtović, 2015; McAuliffe, 2017; Richmond, 2014).

Addressing the above challenges without socioeconomic resilience has the potential to perpetuate genocidal violence, as in the case of Tigray in the form of structural and cultural violence. These

underscore the importance of addressing post-conflict socioeconomic inequalities and ensuring an equitable distribution of resources and benefits. It is important to secure the help of the international community for peace and reconciliation, and for the transition to be successful (Korniychuk, 2024).

Another event is very broad and potentially cross-generational, mental, psychological, and social suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, bereavement, grief, and post-traumatic stress disorder, which provides mental, psychological, and social help and treatment (Mifsud, 2020; Naworska, 2024). Undoubtedly, an orderly grief process protects the human dignity and feelings of veterans' families, and post-bereavement support is crucial for recovery (Ajala, 2023; Webster, Chen, & Beardsley, 2019). In particular, in the areas of healing (searching for truth), justice, and reconciliation, it is crucial to encourage victims and perpetrators to leave the past and move forward (Kizilhan & Neumann, 2020). However, the people of Tigray are in a situation where they are being oppressed by a government that is fighting against these efforts to evade accountability for genocide crimes.

Restoring the material, intangible values and beliefs that war has brought to culture and heritage and destroying foreign customs, experiences and practices created in the process of war and conducting socio-cultural awakening and reform (Atabay, Macedonio, Teba, & Unal, 2024; Iaromenko, Czyżewski, & Woźniak-Jasińska, 2024; Toborek, 2020). In Johann Galtung's language, it is important to undertake reconfiguration and re-culture (Galtung 2001). This plays a major role in restoring and strengthening political, social, and economic integration; cohesion; and unity in war-torn, disconnected, and severely affected communities (Machina & Cheri, 2022; Selvaratnam, Keat, & Tham, 2024).

The effects of war include unequal relations, unfair exploitation, domination, and constitutionalism. In this regard, it is crucial to conduct economic reforms and sustainable development on the one hand and ensure equitable benefits for all sections of society. Poor living conditions are a cause of the return to war (Al-Samurai & Al-Qaraghuli, 2021; Linnér, 2023). Specifically, women, the elderly, children, people with disabilities, and inaccessible and other vulnerable groups must be guaranteed equal access to all services, such as education, health, water, electricity, transportation, and transportation (Emmanuel & Saroor, 2022; Zaviršek & Cox, 2024).

Women-headed households, which constitute a significant proportion (30-40%) of post-conflict households, are associated with poverty and time constraints, further hindering women's participation in public decision-making and governance processes. In post-conflict governance reform, it is important to address the systemic societal challenges that limit women's participation, benefits, and decision-making (Gavrić, 2024). Gender equality and empowerment of women to participate, be represented, and make decisions in political, administrative, peace, and justice processes (Berry & Lake, 2021; Luna & Whetstone, 2024). In post-conflict communities such as Tigray, where hundreds of thousands of women are victims of violence and other atrocities, this event must be included as part of all aspects of healing, rehabilitation, and rehabilitation.

Regarding the integration and rehabilitation of militants, grassroots-based rehabilitation, rehabilitation, reinsertion and reintegration, and community reconciliation are essential for communities without resources and opportunities, such as ours (Nyandwi, 2022). To accomplish this in a meaningful way, he welcomed returnees, not to mention returning to an area where a community that had destroyed itself had not recovered from its fall; it is important to prepare for the healing, stimulation, and restoration of community life in advance. Otherwise, a fighter who returns to a community without them may use their military potential to destroy themselves. Therefore, rehabilitation, recovery, footholding, and mitigation of social crises involving returnees, displaced people, and refugees must be conducted (Khan, 2024).

For all these to be successfully accomplished, the main binding event is the participation and engagement of citizens and open and free forums for debate and discussion. By strengthening democratic processes, creating transparency, and consistently respecting the rule of law, post-conflict

communities can build better, equitable, peaceful, and free systems for all sections of society (Blair, 2020). These events were carried out in a systematic and readable manner, not separately.

These ideas are similar to the current “post”-war situation in Tigray and the reconstruction and recovery of Tigray require these changes. Since the state system is in crisis and this study has provided irrefutable evidence that people demand the importance of addressing this crisis, failure to address this event poses an existential threat to us, and we should learn from the world experiences briefly mentioned above. The main evidence from this study must also be seen in conjunction with this idea.

### **3. Research Method**

This study on the governance system focuses on evaluating the current capacity, organization, structure, processes, relationships, public participation, satisfaction levels, and key challenges within the governance framework. To this end, an in-depth qualitative analysis was conducted across 11 critical areas related to governance. Given the ongoing political and governance crisis, this study adopted a phenomenological approach grounded in the principles of Critical Inquiry. This framework emphasizes positionality and emancipatory advocacy, prioritizing the rights, freedoms, interests, and aspirations of the populace. By aligning the situational paradigm and critical dimensions of governance, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play.

Data were collected from a diverse group of 2,280 participants, including representatives from the public, government structures, political organizations, and various associations across 32 woredas and urban centers. The informants were selected using a mixed-method approach that combined systematic random sampling, snowball sampling, and purposive handpicking. Ordinary citizens were chosen through systematic random sampling, whereas community and civil society representatives were identified via snowball sampling. In addition, officials were purposively selected based on their positions and roles. The data collection methods included semi-structured key informant interviews, focus group discussions, immersion, and field observations. The data collection methods employed 213 semi-structured interviews, which allowed for an in-depth exploration of individual perspectives, while maintaining a consistent framework for comparison. In addition, guidelines for 212 focus group discussions (FGDs) were developed, each involving eight discussants. These discussions facilitated collective dialogue and provided valuable insights into community sentiments and experiences regarding governance. Furthermore, 371 informal interviews were conducted to capture spontaneous insights and nuanced perspectives that might not have emerged in more structured settings.

For data analysis, ATLAS.ti version 9 was used to thematically arrange the data based on the interview and FGD-driven codebook. The themes and emerging sub-themes were managed by considering the frequency of code occurrences, number of participants who referenced each code, and importance participants ascribed to these codes. Additional themes that emerged from immersion and observation were incorporated to supplement the findings of the interviews and FGDs, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the governance landscape.

### **4. Results and discussions**

#### ***4.1 The Current state of Governance System***

According to the amended Constitution of Tigray, the powers and functions of the regional government for social development are articulated in Article 45 of Sections 1 and 2(f). In light of these constitutional provisions, the current governance system in Tigray is characterized by several critical issues. The functions of regional government are delineated in Article 47, with specific responsibilities regarding the relationship between various government organs aimed at ensuring economic development.

Legitimacy, regular communication, complementarity, support, monitoring, and control within the governance system are currently in crisis. All interviews and FGD discussants recognized that the populace had begun to question the existence of an effective government. Regular governmental actions, organizational effectiveness, and communication channels have been undermined severely. There is a lack of a cohesive governance framework capable of leading a war-torn and complex society,

exacerbated by insufficient resources, equipment, and communication infrastructure in both existing and newly established woredas. Additionally, there has been a deliberate disruption of government communication, further complicating governance efforts (Southeastern Zone-FGD Discussants, 2024; Souther Zone-FGD Discussants, 2024).

Overall, the governance system is in a troubling state concerning its comprehensive capacity, organizational structure, and operational efficacy. The damage inflicted by the war paralyzed the state system, hindering prompt recovery and reconstruction in the aftermath of widespread destruction. The morale, initiative, and integrity of civil servants and officials have been severely compromised, leading to a culture of impunity and lack of accountability. As a result, the public feels alienated from government structures and experiences anxiety, bitterness, and instability, diminishing their expectations for satisfactory governance (Mekelle-FGD Discussants 2024; Eastern Zone-FGD Discussants 2024).

Although some government institutions make efforts to provide services, these initiatives are often overshadowed by systemic weaknesses and illegal practices. This assessment reflects a pervasive issue across all structures and sectors (North-Western FGD Discussants, 2024).

#### ***4.2 Legislatures and Local Councils***

According to Proclamation No. 45/1994, specifically Article 46(1) regarding the Regional Council and Article 74(1), which provides for the powers of the Woreda Council, these legislative bodies are designated as the supreme authorities with comprehensive powers and functions over both the executive and judicial branches of government. Articles 49 (3) (c) and 74 (2) (h) of the Tigray Constitution explicitly outline the authority to approve budgets.

Historically, during the pre-war period, legislative bodies were characterized by a significant dominance of the executive branch. The legislature's authority was effectively undermined, as it was often usurped by party executives appointed rather than elected. This situation contravened constitutional provisions, as the executive was erroneously regarded as the highest representative of people's interests. Local government councils were established based on party proposals rather than through genuine democratic processes involving the electorate (Central Zone Interview Respondents, 2024).

Currently, legislative organs are outdated and lack legitimacy as they have not been elected by the populace. Decisions made by standing committees frequently go unimplemented by executives and the judiciary. Leadership within zones and woredas is predominantly aligned with the party hierarchy, which compromises the independence of the woreda speaker and other legislative members. The genocidal war has further exacerbated the deterioration of institutional capacity, leading to numerous districts and tabiyas where local councils are either illegally constituted or entirely non-existent due to the dissolution of the regional council following the CoHA.

In some localities, there is a prevailing belief that the dissolution of local councils does not apply to them, arguing that the CoHA pertains only to the state council and should not affect legislative bodies at lower levels of governance. This perspective was systematically aired by the old-guard TPLF network to reject the authority and legitimacy of the IRA at the regional level. Conversely, non-partisans and sympathizers of the IRA call for the reinstatement of the regional council or the establishment of a provisional regional council to restore some semblance of democratic governance and to enable the IRA to devolve its governance structures, in contrast to the old guard TPLF network with a local governance structure (Eastern Zone-Interview Respondents, 2024).

The dissolution of the regional council, coupled with the lack of a clear process to validate the legitimacy of the Woreda and Tabiya councils, has gradually eroded the supremacy of public authority wielded by the legislature. The absence of councils where citizens can actively participate and vote has resulted in the emergence of numerous centers of power that operate without legal oversight. Entities such as the Tigray Army, business leaders, religious institutions, and various illegal groups have gained

significant influence. This includes organizations such as the IRA (IRA), which was established under the CoHA, and the TPLF, a signatory to the agreement (Mekelle Interview Respondents 2024).

The paralysis of legislative bodies, alongside the absence of oversight mechanisms, has dismantled the system of checks and balances that are essential among the three branches of government. Consequently, this environment has facilitated illegal appointments without the council's knowledge. Articles 71(2), 74(2)(d), and 81(1) stipulate that individuals who are not members of a council should not hold positions as chief governors or mayors. Unfortunately, the reality is starkly different; for instance, 19 out of 22 woredas in the central zone and 16 out of 18 woredas in the eastern zone have appointed chief governors and mayors who were selected by the executive and the TPLF, rather than through democratic elections (South Zone Interview Respondents, 2024).

Overall, the systematic deprivation of constitutional powers of the people has become entrenched as a matter of law, further deepening the crisis of governance in Tigray.

### **4.3 The Judiciary**

Article 64 of the Tigray Constitution delineates the powers and independence of the judiciary, affirming the fundamental principles of justice and judicial independence enshrined in Article 37, which guarantees the Right to Justice. However, the current state of the judiciary reveals significant challenges that undermine its capacity to uphold constitutional principles. While the judiciary is relatively better positioned than other sectors, it is nonetheless grappling with serious impediments in executing its powers and responsibilities.

The judiciary remains vulnerable to external influences, including those of the executive branch, political party officials, affluent individuals, and various illegal entities. This pervasive interference has resulted in the substantial weakening of judicial resources, manpower, and institutional capacity, severely compromising the judiciary's ability to deliver justice. Corruption has infiltrated the system, leading to paralysis of justice and a blatant violation of human rights and civil liberties. Judicial independence is systematically undermined, with judges often coerced into acting on directives of the executive and TPLF leadership, rather than exercising their independent judgment. This environment fosters a climate of insecurity where judges face threats to their safety and are susceptible to corrupt practices, effectively commodifying justice. Consequently, the judiciary finds itself entangled in a troubling dichotomy between independence and anarchy, lacking the supreme authority to oversee and regulate its operations (South Eastern Zone Interview Respondents, 2024).

Legal processes have significantly weakened, hampering the judiciary's ability to provide essential services. Budget constraints, inadequate salaries, and lack of necessary equipment have compounded these challenges, exacerbated by the destruction of vital data and records. The rise in social violence and criminal activity has further strained the system, while the quality and orderliness of judicial proceedings have deteriorated since the 2014 Ethiopian calendar. Serious crimes impacting the public interest, alongside a marked increase in corruption, have become prevalent (North-Western-FGD Discussants, 2024).

The judiciary's operational deficiencies are further highlighted by the absence of effective monitoring and control systems, which results in low interoperability and complementarity with other stakeholders within the legal framework. Support and oversight for social courts remain insufficient, leading to pervasive indifference towards victims of serious crimes, including assault, rape, and genocide. In addition, issues related to child custody and land disputes have resulted in decisions that adversely affect women, often based on illicit evidence and fraudulent documentation. Judicial determinations are frequently made without thorough investigation or adequate evidentiary support (Northwestern Zone Interview Respondents, 2024).

The judiciary also faces challenges related to significant criminal offences, including smuggling, human trafficking, and kidnapping, with improper bail grants becoming common avenues for evading prosecution. The integrity of the judicial process is further compromised by the replacement of

competent and ethical judges with those lacking the requisite qualifications, leading to the distortion of justice. Reports from judges indicate that unequal relationships with legal practitioners exacerbate these issues, creating an environment where justice is not equitably administered (Mekelle-FGD Discussants 2024).

Moreover, there are notable gaps in the enforcement of human rights protection and implementation of court orders by security forces. The influence of the executive and military on the judiciary significantly distorts the pursuit of justice and undermines public confidence in legal institutions. The scarcity of social courts, compounded by inadequate compensation for legal services and the absence of circuit courts, severely limits the judiciary's ability to serve the public effectively, leaving many citizens without access to justice (South Eastern Zone-FGD Discussants, 2024).

In summary, the judiciary of post-war Tigray is facing a multifaceted crisis that jeopardizes its foundational role in upholding the rule of law and ensuring the protection of human rights. The convergence of systemic corruption, external influence, and institutional weaknesses has created an environment in which justice is increasingly elusive, necessitating urgent reforms to restore the integrity and independence of the judiciary.

#### **4.4 Judicial Bodies: Prosecutors**

Proclamation No. 215/2004, specifically Article 10.9, delineates the Powers and Functions of the Bureau of Justice, emphasizing its role in safeguarding the interests of the state and its citizens. Sub-articles 10.9.3 through 10.9.6, along with sub-articles 10.9.7 and 10.9.35, provide detailed responsibilities that encompass various aspects of legal oversight and enforcement. Notably, Article 10.9.21 underscores the bureau's obligation to protect the human rights of suspects and detainees, whereas Article 10.9.13 outlines its regulatory and supervisory responsibilities. Within this framework, the judiciary's law enforcement functions, as articulated in subsections 11 and 12 of the Constitution, are critical to the effective administration of justice.

However, the Bureau of Justice currently faces significant impairments in operational capacity, integrity, ethical standards, morale, initiative, and dedication. Prosecutors within this system reportedly suffer from physical injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which is indicative of the severe stress and challenges they encounter in their roles. Many professionals within the bureau have experienced violations of their rights and interests, exacerbated by inadequate salaries and benefits. This discontent has led to a pervasive failure in law enforcement, where legal practitioners do not engage with evidence or adhere to established legal protocols (Mekelle Interview Respondents 2024).

The enforcement of laws promulgated during the conflict, as well as the implementation of new legislative measures, have been severely lacking. When evaluating the bureau's status, legitimacy, communication, complementarity, support, monitoring, and control mechanisms, it becomes evident that numerous factors hinder its transformation into a meaningful and effective institution. The prosecutor's office, in particular, exhibits deficiencies in its oversight of legal practitioners, with allegations that some lawyers act as intermediaries, seeking favors from judges and prosecutors rather than upholding the principles of justice (Eastern Zone-FGD Discussants 2024).

The Bureau operates with a troubling lack of adherence to the law, resulting in selective investigations and the omission of significant criminal activities. This issue is particularly pronounced in instances where state structures are implicated in serious and organized crimes. The Head of the Attorney General's Office is accountable to the heads of the executive who are party-affiliated and appointed at respective governance tiers and serve as a member of the executive cabinet, creating a conflict of interest that undermines the professional independence of the Attorney General. The allocation of the Attorney General's budget by the head of the executive further complicates this relationship, raising concerns about the Bureau's autonomy and effectiveness (Mekelle-FGD Discussants 2024).



Articles 33(2), 63(3), and 63(4) of the Election Law, Political Parties Registration, and Election Code, as articulated in Proclamation No. 1162/2011, stipulate that prosecutors must not be members of any political party and those who must resign. However, in Tigray, the absence of such prohibitive legislation resulted in a conflation of political and professional obligations. This situation has been exacerbated by the influence of the Tigray army and its officials, where contracts and dubious practices have become prevalent among new oligarchies.

The overall morale, professional skills, ethics, dedication, and integrity of prosecution are severely compromised, largely due to the aforementioned influences, particularly the intertwining of political party membership with judicial responsibilities. Instead of collaborating effectively with other judicial bodies, the Bureau has devolved into an entity that systematically undermines the freedom and rights of the populace. The pursuit of justice has been compromised; rather than addressing significant crimes that affect the state and its citizens, the Bureau often engages in minor offences, failing to operate within the bounds of law.

This environment has fostered a culture in which prosecutors, in collusion with lawyers, become complicit in corruption, sell illegal documents and evidence for monetary gain, and act on directives rather than promoting legal awareness and accountability. The integrity of the judicial system is thus severely compromised, necessitating urgent reforms to restore the rule of law and ensure that the Bureau of Justice operates according to its constitutional mandate (Central Zone Interview Respondents, 2024).

#### ***4.5 The Police and Security Sector***

The powers and responsibilities of the Tigray Police are outlined in Article 47(2)(f) of Proclamation No. 360/2014, which mandates the establishment of a police force dedicated to maintaining peace, ensuring security, and upholding the legal rule. Article 47(2)(d) emphasizes a community-oriented policing approach that is essential for crime prevention and intervention, while Article 30(1) prohibits inhumane treatment, reinforcing the obligation to respect human rights.

Despite these constitutional provisions, the Tigray Police and Security Forces have significant deficiencies. Before the war, the police were ill-equipped to meet their obligations, and militarization during the anti-genocide struggle eroded civilian policing capabilities, resulting in a systemic crisis characterized by rights violations and diminished public trust. The abrupt dissolution of the former police force without legal due process further compromised the integrity of law enforcement. Currently, police organizations are critically undermanned and lack training, professional competence, and motivation. Recruitment practices have incorporated individuals from the Tigray Defense Forces (TDF), many of whom lack the necessary law enforcement training. Leadership within the police often lacks formal training in professionalism, resulting in lack of institutional trust and significant ethical gaps. Alarming, police leadership has been implicated in serious crimes, including smuggling and human trafficking (Mekelle Interview Respondents, 2024; Muauz Gidey, Tesfalidet G/Gerges and Assefa Leake, 2016).

The absence of a community-oriented policing framework created a void in strategic leadership. The pre-war police structure in Tigray necessitated substantial reform; however, the current police commission's capacity for crime prevention indicates that community-oriented policing remains a viable approach. The police structure has been haphazardly implemented, undermining regular training principles. Conflicts between police and military forces have further complicated the security landscape, eroding public confidence and increasing human rights violations. The integrity of justice and the rule of law are severely compromised, aggravated by the release of previously convicted individuals and a lack of cooperation between the judiciary and security forces (Central Zone Interview Respondents 2024; Central Zone FGD Discussants 2024).

The security framework lacks coherence and the Tigray Army often encroaches on police duties, leading to violent confrontations. Proclamation 2015/2004 reveals a weak governmental structure, with inadequate empowerment of the Militia Office, resulting in ineffective crime-prevention efforts. The absence of a tailored policing structure has contributed to an increase in violent crimes. Public trust in



governmental institutions has eroded, with citizens increasingly viewing justice as reliant on external forces rather than on local law enforcement. The police have faced criticism for mishandling human rights cases and failing to protect critical infrastructure, such as the Tekeze Hydro Electric facility (South Eastern Zone Interview Respondents, 2024).

The prevailing sentiment among the populace reflects a grim reality: crime has become normalized with reports of rampant violence and human trafficking. In summary, the Tigray Police Forces are in disarray, necessitating urgent reforms to restore its role in ensuring public safety, upholding the rule of law, and fostering community trust. Without significant changes to its structure, training, and operational philosophy, the police will struggle to fulfil their constitutional responsibilities and protect citizens' rights (Mekelle-FGD Discussants, 2024; Muauz Gidey, Tesfalidet G/Gerges, and Assefa Leake, 2016).

#### ***4.6 Power Sharing and Legal Relations: The Three Branches***

Articles 46, 71, and 85 of the Amended Constitution of the Tigray National Regional State delineate the powers and functions of the council in detail. However, effective implementation of these provisions remains significantly lacking. This shortfall is compounded by a series of challenges that have emerged within both legislative and judicial branches, exacerbated by the overwhelming influence of the executive branch.

The current political landscape has led to the fragmentation of regular communication, cooperation, and complementarity among various government structures. This division is further exacerbated by serious allegations of slander and propaganda aimed at maintaining the supremacy of the IRA (IRA) while obstructing its integration with lower levels of government. The ongoing crisis between the IRA and TPLF, as well as internal conflicts within the TPLF itself, has contributed to this dysfunction. Moreover, the IRA's lack of proactive engagement at the grassroots level, coupled with delays in implementing the CoHA, has further hindered the effective operation of government structures. This inertia has led to a significant displacement of authority and responsibility within the regional governance framework (Central Zone FGD Discussants 2024).

A critical issue arises from the indistinct separation between the legislative and executive branches, which has resulted in blending of their functions. While the judiciary is ostensibly impartial, the legislature and the executive are often perceived as indistinguishable entities. The capacity and competencies of the executive and council are heavily influenced by the prevailing political climate, with the control and remedial functions of the council largely dictated by the executive's desires. This dynamic has led to a situation in which the ruling party exerts a decisive influence over all three branches of government, resulting in an executive-dominated environment in which decisions are made unilaterally (Central Zone Interview Respondents, 2024).

At the regional level, the absence of a functional legislature and corresponding body to replace the regional council further complicates governance. Article 71(2) of the Amended Constitution of the Tigray Region, along with Articles 74(2)(d) and 81(1), stipulates that the Chief Administrator of the Woreda should be elected from among the members of the Woreda Council with the Deputy Chief Administrator appointed by the Chief Administrator's nomination. This framework implies that the governor must be a council member and that a Deputy Governor can only exist in conjunction with an elected governor. However, in practice, the election of the chief governor and mayor of the woreda has not been adhered to, undermining the constitutional mandate. Additionally, there have been instances of individuals being removed from their positions and reassigned without a due process. Non-council members are appointed chief governors, which constitutes a blatant violation of law. The current leadership appears to be accountable primarily to the party apparatus that appointed them rather than to the local councils, further exacerbating constitutional breaches (Eastern Zone-FGD Discussants, 2024; Central Zone Interview Respondents, 2024).

The practice of dismissing council speakers at the behest of the executive undermines the essential checks and balances vital for effective governance. By appointing new speakers nominated by the ruling party, the executive effectively tailors the loyalty of council speakers to party interests rather than the broader public good. This has led to a deterioration in the functioning of government bodies, characterized by a shutdown of services and a focus on party meetings rather than addressing the needs of the populace. Thus, the institutional order, accountability, and legitimacy of governance are jeopardy (North-Western-FGD Discussants, 2024).

In terms of monitoring, control, and accountability, the functions of the three branches of government are dominated by the executive. The ongoing replacement of leaders who have failed to meet the needs of the populace, rather than holding them accountable, exacerbates the governance crisis. When the Woreda Council seeks judicial intervention, it often lacks respect and cooperation from the judiciary. Despite the Woreda Council being the highest authority with a constitutional mandate to approve its budget, this prerogative is routinely ignored. Consequently, these governmental bodies have lost the trust and acceptance of the people who perceive them as ineffective and unresponsive to their needs (Mekelle-FGD Discussants, 2024).

In summary, the current governance structure in Tigray is characterized by a profound disconnect between constitutional mandates and practical implementation. The erosion of institutional integrity, blending of legislative and executive functions, and lack of accountability mechanisms have culminated in a governance crisis that demands urgent attention and reform. Restoring the rule of law and public trust in governmental institutions is imperative for the stability and prosperity of the Tigray National Regional State (TNRS).

#### ***4.7 Democratic System and Accountability***

Article 8 of the Amended Constitution of the Tigray Region establishes the people of Tigray as the supreme authority, whereas Article 9 designates the Constitution as the supreme law governing the region. Article 12 mandates transparency in governmental operations, and Articles 29 through 44 enshrine various democratic rights, emphasizing respect for these rights. However, there has been a lack of substantial effort to create a system of accountability and foster democracy in Tigray.

The absence of practical initiatives for genuine coalition and multi-party democracy is evident, with opposition parties, independent civil society organizations, and free media facing significant limitations. This stagnation is compounded by a culture of fear and social-media-influenced politics, which discourages constructive dialogue and public participation in governance. Moreover, top government bodies essential for effective governance exhibit paralysis, undermining accountability and the principles of law and justice. Corruption has become endemic, particularly in sectors such as mining, land management, and municipal governance, thereby creating an environment that incentivizes corrupt practices. Previous accountability studies have been neglected, and those who challenge the status quo have faced intimidation. The judiciary's independence was compromised and heavily influenced by political and military leaders. Challenges to democracy in Tigray are exacerbated by the limited capacity of political parties, lack of democratic culture, and insufficient consensus building. The hope for political unity that existed before the war has significantly eroded, making reforms essential for establishing a genuine democracy (MK-TPLF Respondents, 2024; MK-TPLF, 2024).

Media freedom is, to some degree, improved and yet is characterized by sectarian misinformation and disinformation, with the populace relying on non-governmental outlets due to skepticism about state-owned media (Gidey et al., 2016). Suppression of expression under the guise of political unity further hinders democratic discourse. Civil society organizations face constraints and are often perceived as having a divisive agenda. Women's political participation has drastically declined from an average of 30 per cent pre-war to about 9-12 per cent, particularly in peace processes and transitional justice (Mekelle-FGD Discussants, 2024).

Democratic structures should have been established at the grassroots level; however, conflicts at higher management levels have impeded this. The interim administration and TPLF appear to excuse each

other's shortcomings, with leaders facing public complaints often reassigned rather than held accountable. As Smith notes, a decisive struggle is crucial to preventing the emergence of a new oligarchy that undermines the rule of law and erodes accountability (Smith, 2022).

The government has neglected human rights protection and the needs of the youth, women, and persons with disabilities. Victims of genocidal violence continue to lack access to justice. The intertwining of religion and state affairs in Tigray also requires urgent attention, with reports of political directives being assigned to religious leaders (Eastern Zone-FGD Discussants, 2024; Southeastern Zone-FGD Discussants, 2024). Public confidence in the rule of law is eroding as repeated investigations yield no meaningful change, allowing alleged perpetrators to evade accountability. Overall, trust, participation, and satisfaction regarding accountability and service delivery have deteriorated, complicating democracy-building efforts (Southern Zone-FGD Discussants 2024).

#### **4.8 Regular Inter-Governmental Relations**

The Amended Constitution of Tigray established a framework for regional administration, detailing the distribution of powers from the regional level to districts and sub-districts (Article 45). It confers supreme executive authority (Article 54) and mandates the oversight of government functions (Article 56(2)), emphasizing principles such as independence, accountability, complementarity, and cooperation among government structures (Articles 58, 71, 72, 79, 80, 82, 85, 90, and 91). These provisions aim to uphold the authority of subordinate entities and to ensure public service delivery.

However, there is a significant deficiency in communication and cooperation among government structures from the regional level down to Tabiya, undermining their ability to fulfil constitutional mandates. The interim administration operates with minimal engagement and lower governance levels, fostering a perception of independence from local administrations. This detachment poses risks to effective governance and reinforces the notion that interim administration is merely an extension of the TPLF rather than a facilitator of local governance (Mekelle Interview Respondents, 2024).

Inconsistencies in the support and monitoring of regional activities, particularly outside of the justice and security sectors, further complicate this relationship. The disconnect between district and city administrations creates an impression of isolation, exacerbated by zonal authorities interfering in Woreda jurisdictions without proper consultation. Reports indicate insufficient oversight by the Western Tigray Regional Administration, contributing to tensions regarding relief distribution among internally displaced persons (IDPs) in different zones (Gidey et al., 2016).

Proclamation No. 48/1994 assigns the Zonal Administration Committee the task of coordinating woreda activities, yet the lack of a council structure has led to criticism of accountability, with punitive processes creating communication gaps. While the Tigray Constitution allows for the establishment of additional administrative levels, it must be aligned with Article 54 of the Ethiopian Constitution, which emphasizes self-governance and public participation. The current zonal administration has failed to engage the populace effectively, relying on appointees rather than elected officials, which undermines direct accountability (South-Eastern Zone-FGD Discussants, 2024).

This hierarchical structure diminishes local governance capacity and skews accountability towards higher authorities, with party leadership exerting undue influence over local councils (Fiseha, 2020). Consequently, the power of the populace has been eroded by the party apparatus, consolidating authority within the powerful executive class.

Governance ambiguity, identified by scholars such as Smith in post-conflict contexts, characterizes Tigray's current predicament that traditional governance frameworks are undermined. This chaotic state reflects a lack of order and structure, presenting challenges and potential opportunities for reform (Smith 2022).

The leadership's constitutional obligation to coordinate policies from the regional level down to Tabiya was hindered by a lack of cohesive vision, resulting in ineffective governance and public dissatisfaction. Addressing these challenges is crucial for restoring trust and efficacy in Tigray's governance structure.

#### **4.9 Civil Service Delivery System**

The Civil Service is mandated to provide satisfactory services based on professionalism and competence, free from discrimination (e.g., political, religious, racial, and gender biases). However, the significant challenges have intensified over time.

First, the recruitment process for civil servants is flawed, and appointments often lack transparency and merit-based criteria. This has resulted in a lack of morale and enthusiasm among many appointed officers, particularly among the younger generation. The absence of administrative accountability and proper procedures at the regional, zonal, and Western levels exacerbates these issues. Second, political pressure influences leadership assignments, prioritizing personal relationships and loyalty over meritocracy. This undermines the integrity of civil services (SA-Leader 2024).

Third, individuals previously associated with the TPLF are often retained in public offices despite being removed from official positions, perpetuating a system in which appointments are based on personal connections rather than public service needs. This creates the perception that government offices serve individual interests rather than the public. Fourth, there is a troubling overlap between party and government functions, with a significant majority of civil servants being members of the TPLF. This fusion complicates the implementation of constitutional regulations and transforms civil service roles into tools for political agenda. Fifth, corruption issues are rampant, with civil servants frequently arriving late and leaving early, thus undermining service principles. Institutions such as municipalities and land administrations are particularly notorious for corrupt practices (Mekelle Interview Respondents, 2024).

Sixth, there is a lack of respect for expertise as political decisions often override professional opinions, hindering effective governance and leadership. Seventh, there is a gap in professional competence and skills within council decisions, limiting the opportunities for professionals to contribute to their insights. Eighth, budget deficits have led to 17 months of unpaid salary, severely impacting civil servants' motivation. This lack of funding has also hindered the recruitment of additional personnel, leading to limited service delivery in various sectors. Public grievances are particularly acute in land and mining administration, municipalities, health, and transportation (SA-Leader 2024). Some areas, such as Dela town in the Slawa district, lack essential services, such as banking, while offices such as the Sheraro Culture and Tourism Office are non-operational. These overlapping issues in civil service delivery have generated widespread public complaints, echoing findings from a similar study conducted by the IRA in Mekelle (South-Eastern Zone-FGD Discussants, 2024).

#### **4.10 Social Crisis Management System**

The amended Constitution of Tigray articulates socially sensitive objectives in Article 100(1), asserts the right to life and personal security in Article 14, and delineates the responsibility and duty of the state to provide various social services in Article 41(4-7).

In light of the current circumstances and existing capacity within Tigray, the populace is confronted with a comprehensive social crisis. The ongoing conflict in DevaTabiya has resulted in a significant depletion of resources and materials, severely hindering the ability to address pressing social issues faced by the people of Tigray. Millions of internally displaced people remain unable to return to their homes because of the failure to restore the sovereign state of Tigray. Furthermore, the region is grappling with severe droughts, exacerbating the humanitarian plight of its citizens. Prevailing social challenges have led to the exploitation of natural resources, with displaced individuals contributing to the degradation of these vital assets. Additionally, limited resources and services are appropriated by a select few illegal governmental and non-governmental entities, rather than being utilized for the benefit of the broader community (Central Zone FGD Discussants, 2024).

Efforts to recruit returnees, support veterans, and families of martyrs, rehabilitating victims of sexual violence, reuniting displaced families, and addressing the prevention and treatment of exacerbated diseases are critically lacking. Moreover, initiatives aimed at youth engagement and education as well as addressing the aftermath of genocide and various social conflicts remain insufficiently developed. The absence of meaningful and strategically planned programs to promote the revival of cultural and social values has left the populace in a state of despair (Central Zone Interview Respondents 2024).

The multifaceted challenges in these areas stem from various sectors, each contributing to the overarching difficulties identified previously. It is imperative that comprehensive and coordinated efforts be undertaken to address these urgent social issues, restore stability, and promote the well-being of Tigray's people.

#### **4.11      *System of Resource Management and Humanitarian Aid***

The amended Constitution of Tigray outlines key economic objectives and rights, including equitable benefits (Article 99(2)), the right to development (Article 43), and the duty to rehabilitate displaced individuals (Article 44(2)). However, the management of aid in Tigray is largely dominated by charitable organizations, plagued by systemic corruption and inefficiency, which fail to meet community needs and undermine equitable resource distribution. This mismanagement fostered a troubling culture of entitlement and deceit.

Local administrators and municipal officials reportedly orchestrate illegal smuggling activities, particularly in land management and resource extraction. These officials are implicated in legalizing unlawful land encroachment through fraudulent documentation, often using the seals of previous governors. Agricultural land is being appropriated for industrial use, displacing legitimate farming activities (Northwest Zone Interview Respondents, 2024).

The Land Use and Mining Natural Resources Management Directive is being systematically violated by officials and wealthy individuals, leading to conflicts reminiscent of the "blood diamond" crises in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Areas lacking developed land use guidelines have suffered from overlapping ownership claims, whereas farmers displaced by urban development receive inadequate compensation, fostering resistance against necessary interventions. Additionally, communal grazing lands are illegally appropriated for private use, exacerbating tensions. Governmental and non-governmental organizations often intervene inappropriately, complicating sustainable natural resource management. Land administration violations have supplanted legal processes that infringe upon community ownership rights. Legal entities responsible for mining licenses have been exploited, leading to civil unrest and the disenfranchisement of returning combatants. Illegal mining activities have resulted in extensive land erosion and the degradation of natural resources, with hazardous chemicals contaminating local water sources. Authorities responsible for mining oversight have failed to collaborate effectively, leading to inadequate environmental protection, particularly for federally managed forests in Tigray (Central Zone Interview Respondents 2024; North-Western-FGD Discussants 2024).

A legislative gap restricts active government participation at the woreda level, concentrating on investment licensing and agricultural management within regional authorities, which diminishes community trust and involvement. Infrastructure deficits in newly established woredas heighten vulnerability to flooding and contribute to civil unrest (Mekelle Interview Respondents, 2024).

Consequently, public confidence in resource management and aid systems has eroded, fostering a climate of discontent that risks violence. The issues surrounding land, mining, and resource depletion have escalated into national crises. A small group armed with illicit documentation drives resource exploitation, fostering oligarchic structures that perpetuate oppressive land management practices and widespread poverty (Mekelle-FGD Discussants 2024). Therefore, it is crucial to pursue reforms aimed at reconstruction and transitional governance to mitigate the risks of oligarchy and its detrimental effects on society (Mylovanov and Roland, 2022; Smith, 2022).

#### **4.12 Discussions**

The results highlight the complexity of the post-genocide political and governance dynamics in Tigray, which have significant empirical and theoretical implications. The post-genocide landscape presents challenges that require systemic change, with communities facing the dual task of rebuilding and transforming governance. Key issues include political adjustments, reconstruction, and security for war-affected populations. Scholars have argued that power-sharing agreements and inclusive governance are essential for restoring the rule of law. However, without addressing socioeconomic inequalities, the risk of structural violence remains high.

Additionally, the psychological impacts of conflict, such as PTSD and grief, necessitate mental health support and community healing. In Tigray, there is a pressing need for structured grief processes to honor victims and to facilitate reconciliation. Restoring cultural values eroded by war is crucial to fostering unity. Addressing socioeconomic disparities is vital for sustainable development, particularly for marginalized groups, such as women and children, who face barriers to essential services. The successful integration of former combatants and grassroots reconciliation efforts is critical for long-term stability, relying on active citizen participation and accountability.

The theoretical implications of Tigray's challenges underscore the need for a nuanced understanding of political reconstruction and social cohesion in postgenocidal contexts. Existing frameworks often overlook the profound impact of genocide on political systems and cultural norms. Incorporating trauma-informed approaches into governance theories is essential because traditional models neglect the psychological dimensions of recovery.

Furthermore, the insidious effects of genocide on political thought and cultural identity highlight the need for theories that address structural and cultural violence. The complexities of power sharing in Tigray reveal inadequacies in conventional political theories, suggesting a refinement to account for entrenched violence and local dynamics. Political decay and social disengagement post-genocide require theories that recognize that the absence of visible violence does not equate to peace. Addressing socioeconomic inequalities is fundamental for restoring social trust and cohesion, necessitating a theoretical framework that prioritizes distributive justice.

Finally, the prevailing narrative equating the cessation of violence with peace fails to address the ongoing structural inequalities and trauma. Theoretical frameworks must evolve to include restorative justice and community healing as the essential components of sustainable peace. A reevaluation of these theories is essential for developing effective governance and reconciliation strategies in Tigray, contributing to a more just and equitable future.

### **5. Conclusion**

#### **5.1 Conclusions**

The governance system in Tigray is currently in a state of crisis, marked by a significant disconnection between constitutional mandates and their practical implementation. While the amended constitution aims to foster social development and governance, the harsh realities of a war-torn society have overshadowed these intentions. This disconnection has led to widespread disillusionment among the populace, reflecting systemic failures that render the governance framework ineffective and unresponsive to people's needs.

Legitimacy issues plague legislative bodies, such as the Regional and Woreda Councils, which lack electoral representation and have historically been dominated by the executive. This dominance undermines their authority and fosters a culture of decision-making without proper consultation or accountability. The dissolution of local councils has created a governance vacuum, allowing power centers to emerge outside the law. Consequently, party loyalty often supersedes public interest, diminishing governance effectiveness and alienating citizens from the democratic process.

The judiciary, despite constitutional protection, faces significant external pressures that compromise its independence. Political and military influences have led to an environment where corruption thrives,

eroding public confidence in legal institutions and perpetuating a cycle of impunity. The judiciary's failure to serve as a check on the executive exacerbates the governance crisis, undermining the rule of law and protecting human rights. Urgent reforms are required to restore judicial integrity and independence.

Similarly, the police and security sectors in Tigray are hindered by systemic weaknesses that prevent them from maintaining public safety. The militarization of police forces and the absence of community-oriented policing have eroded the trust between law enforcement and communities. A lack of training and resources leaves police ill-equipped to address rising crime and human rights violations, fostering the perception that the government is unable or unwilling to protect its citizens.

Intergovernmental relations are marred by a lack of communication and cooperation, alienating citizens who view the government as an extension of the ruling party rather than a facilitator of local needs. This disconnect detracts from effective governance and exacerbates challenges in service delivery and resource management. The mismanagement of humanitarian aid further compounds the social crisis, with systemic corruption leading to inequitable resource allocation and increased social tension.

Addressing the socio-economic disparities exacerbated by conflict is vital for sustainable development and peace. Marginalized groups, including women and children, face significant barriers in accessing essential services. Targeted reforms are necessary to ensure their inclusion in the governance processes. Moreover, integrating and rehabilitating former combatants alongside grassroots community reconciliation efforts is critical for long-term stability.

The challenges in Tigray highlight critical gaps in the existing theoretical frameworks surrounding post-genocide governance and peacebuilding. A nuanced understanding of political reconstruction, reconciliation, and social cohesion is essential, incorporating trauma-informed approaches that recognize the interconnectedness of psychological well-being and social stability. By addressing these enduring effects, Tigray can foster a resilient society capable of overcoming the legacies of trauma.

In summary, Tigray's complex challenges necessitate a comprehensive approach that integrates the empirical and theoretical perspectives. The need for inclusive governance, equitable resource distribution, and community healing processes is paramount. Meaningful engagement and reform are essential for fostering a more democratic and equitable society and ultimately paving the way for sustainable peace and development in the region.

## **5.2 Limitations**

This study addresses the governance issues of opposition political parties and civil society institutions as part of the democratic system and accountability, and does not cover their aspect of internal governance and its impact on the post-genocide political system and governance.

## **5.3 Recommendations**

To address governance challenges in post-genocide Tigray, interventions must focus on the invisible destruction of the political system that perpetuates violence. A comprehensive governance reform strategy centered on legislative reform is essential for transformative change across governance sectors. Establishing independent legislative and judicial branches will ensure checks and balances and enhance legitimacy and public trust.

A robust Governance Reform Program should restore legislative powers overshadowed by executive dominance, emphasizing democratic processes, representation, and accountability. Strengthening local councils will promote grassroots democracy and public participation free from political influence. Integrating marginalized groups such as women and internally displaced persons into governance is vital. Implementing quotas for political representation and engaging these groups in community dialogue fosters social cohesion and rebuilds trust. Policymakers should also adopt trauma-informed approaches in governance and social services to provide mental health resources to affected populations.



Equitable resource distribution and social justice are critical for preventing recurrence of violence. Comprehensive assessments of socioeconomic disparities and targeted economic policies must empower marginalized groups and prioritize access to education, healthcare, and employment. Reforming the police and security forces to adopt community-oriented approaches will restore trust and ensure public safety. Encouraging active citizen participation in governance fosters transparency and accountability. Supporting civil society organizations and creating platforms for civic engagement will enhance democratic participation. Clear delineations of authority within power-sharing agreements must reflect the local dynamics and engage stakeholders in sustainable governance.

The enhancement of resources and humanitarian aid management through transparent processes will promote sustainable development. By centering legislative reform in governance transformation, Tigray can address interconnected challenges, restore public trust, and promote inclusivity. Implementing these strategies will contribute to meaningful governance transformations, enhance social cohesion, and promote sustainable peace in Tigray. Success relies on all stakeholders' commitment to collaboratively address both immediate and long-term challenges, ensuring a just and equitable future.

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