



Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism WhatsApp Workshop Seminar

Series 16

Conversation with Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia

Ethiopia in the wake of political turmoil and military intervention

Community Voices for Peace and Pluralism - Africa (CVPP) is a non-profit network of women professionals providing services in preventing, transforming and solving violent conflict, including ethnic and religious conflicts around the world. CVPP also builds capacities through a peace and pluralism approach. This is ensured as CVPP is composed of women and a few men from networks that are dedicated to address societal gender inequalities. The network is composed of professional women who can also offer consulting services on global peace and security.

The WhatsApp Workshop Seminar Series initiative began in the wake of Global COVID-19 Pandemic which rendered physical meetings impossible globally. The Pandemic has hit the world's vulnerable and most marginalized hardest. These are the communities a huge number of women under CVPP work and interact with in their various and diverse societies. As such members of CVPP decided to meet this unprecedented challenge by having weekly discussions in which they share stories, new skills from each other through the WhatsApp platform. The WhatsApp platform is more convenient because it is cheaper and can reach far and wide societies at a fairly cheaper cost than that of the Zoom, Skype platforms that may be beyond reach for most African communities.

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Introduction by Shuvai Busuman Nyoni: Good afternoon, good morning, good evening CVPP family. It's such a privilege to be with you all today and to moderate this conversation.

Allow me to take a brief moment to thank our brand-new conveners, Mandy and Kijala for the opportunity to moderate today. I also say congratulations on your new role as conveners. I look forward to working with you both. Thank you also to Madame Selina for her continued excellent work as administrator and helping us has everything in place.

Before I introduce our speaker for today, let me also use this moment to once again, offer huge congratulations to our very own founder and phenomenal daughter of the continent Ms. Wairimu Alice Nderitu on her appointment as UN Special Envoy on the prevention of genocide and other atrocity crimes.

Wairimu's appointment is timely, groundbreaking and significant for many reasons not least because of her being female, African, bearing and holding deep lived and professional experiences and her decades long work in and with communities. In the women's rights and feminist movements, it is a well and fast held tenet that many of the grand policy positions are unattainable if they are not formulated together with those they affect and relate to. Wairimu's appointment is significant to me because it is an opportunity to leverage just this.

I now introduce Emebet Getachew Abate, who is our guest for today. Emebet, or Emeye as I like to call her, serves at the Life and Peace Institute as Country Manager for Peace Building work in Ethiopia. She is a peace, security and governance expert on the Horn of Africa and

has close to 10 years experience working with the African Union PSC and other regional mechanisms. She has worked with various international institutions and obtained her MA from the Kofi Annan Peacekeeping Training Center. Emeye is a lover of tea, and dislikes coffee in spite of her Ethiopian heritage.

Emeye, over to you!

Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia: Thank you so much Shuvai for the introduction and I hope you're all doing well. I've recorded my presentation so that it's easier to follow

Shuvai Busuman Nyoni: Awesome 🙌🙌 we are ready

Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia: Good afternoon my sisters, I hope you are all doing well in your respective locations. I am glad to be invited to speak and brief you on the current situation in Ethiopia but before I delve into the current political turmoil; I want to put a few things into perspective so that it helps you to also understand how the situation that we are in today you know came about. Before you know the ascent of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to power in 2018; there was an intra political contestation within the then coalition party or the ruling party called the EPRDF which stands for Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front which ruled Ethiopia since 1991. That party was a makeup of ethnic groups of/you know from Tigray, Amhara, Oromo, and southern nations and other ethnic groups but the dominant ones are Tigray, Amhara and Oromo ethnic groups but within even that the composition Tigray or the TPLF were seen as you know standing tall in terms of political dispensation and also a number of policies being led by the TPLF and since the down fall of the previous regime; the dark regime in Ethiopia is also being governed through a system of ethnic federalism by which 6 of the 9 regions have their own territories and self-rule with their languages and administration in place since you know like 1991. This was you know mainly contested – the ethnic federalism contested by opposition especially from the Amhara elite that the foundation for ethnic federalism is based on the narrative to dismantle the Amhara domination of power in the history of Ethiopia. So, our history by itself is contested by different ethnic groups and there are different claims, accounts of the state formation itself and the role of Amhara, Tigray and Oromo in the process of nation building.

So in the 1970s and '80s, the TPLF from Tigray had a huge grievance towards what they say the domination of Amhara group through culture, language and the way of governing Ethiopia and you know its image, I think this is also shared by majority of Oromo elite. So

Amhara see the last 30 years of rule in Ethiopia under this ethnic federalism had undermined Amhara's as well as part of the geographical boundaries as part of the Amhara region where included or given to the Tigray region hence the grievance among Amhara was quite strong after the death of former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi in 2012 the EPRDF was sinking in terms of political coherence as well as there was brewing political tension, situation in Oromia region since 2015 and in 2018, the Oromo and Amhara elite within the party – EPRDF worked together with the opposition both in and outside the country to abruptly the TPLF leadership and brought Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to power and the disgruntled members of the TPRF went back to their region but still there was open communication and working relationship between the federal government and the Tigray region.

So, it was when the Prime Minister started to unleash his several of his policies which TPLF began to push back. For example, Abiy dissolved the EPRDF and his own party which is called the Ethiopian Prosperity party which all regions in the form of federal system accepted except Tigray and Oromo opposition mainly the Oromo liberation front and other critical groups and Abiy was furious that TPLF did not sign up for this you know project or the new party and started to attack TPLF as well subtly and even at times overtly. In addition, sometimes, Abiy and his supporters especially from the Amhara elite called the last 27 years as a dark period in Ethiopia completely tarnishing the image of TPLF, blaming them for committing gross human rights abuses in different regions. Abiy also arrested a number of TPLF officials including the people in the military, the business people and also Tigrayans in government. There were a number of purges within all institutions, purging especially from the Intelligence. I think he was purposely making sure that they are no longer occupying key positions in different institutions. Then TPLF members felt that they are the only ones being targeted and made accountable for all the mistakes that happened in Ethiopia and grew resistance to such claims. TPLF argued that if there is accountability should be applied across the board, across ex EPRDF officials including close advisors of Prime Minister himself. But Abiy made sure that he sides lined TPLF. Abiy felt emboldened to continue his attack on TPLF. Similarly, TPLF continued their defensive tactics but they also had less strategy on how to work with the federal government for them accepting Abiy's rule mean the end of federalism they you know in terms of competing ideologies and then the abolishment of the constitution which you know guarantees ethnic minorities to self-determination.

Amidst this political crisis and tension that the COVID pandemic came adding further complications to the political crisis and situation; this is through mainly elections which were

supposed to be held in August 2020 but postponed in a very controversial manner where by the upper house guaranteed Abiy to stay more in power after his term which came to an end ideally in October 2020. Here, major opposition parties TPLF and the big political figures in Oromia for example Jawa Mohammed, who has huge support in the Oromia region; they all opposed the process calling it an illegal move by the Prime Minister to illegally stay in power. Major opposition individuals who were calling for a transitional government and advocating for that were arrested and are still behind bars. Despite all of this, you know also this decision, the TPLF went ahead and organized elections in the Tigray region which it received majority votes but at this point the escalation reached at its highest point as the parliament continued to start to slash support in terms of physical support to the Tigray region and several economic sanctions were put in place to weaken the TPLF and Abiy really continued to take tough measures and stance against members of TPLF and both TPLF and Abiy continued the neutral victimization which culminated in the current war and many and others especially after the start of the war, their analysis was mainly looking at how and who started or initiated the war which in my opinion is in material that events that led us to this situation are more critical than focusing on which party initiated it. TPLF admitted yesterday (put a date here) that they started controlling the military base in the north was majority of Ethiopians military hardware and equipment stationed since the war with Eritrea in '98. TPLF thinks it was squeezed or sandwiched from different sides on all fronts including Eritrea and on the west from Sudan and it needed to make primitive moves before it is attacked because the attack is imminent, a number of escalating points. We have passed the milestone of escalation of violence continued even as I said two years ago back so now you have a situation where the 10-day long war continued to escalate. You have more than 15,000 refugees who have fled already to the neighboring country Sudan; and lots of civilians massacred. We have seen the Amnesty International report that number of civilians and hundreds were killed although it is hard to verify who committed those atrocities. Tigray region is also under siege with no telecommunication, electricity and humanitarian aid. It is also Ethiopia's harvest season and I think also given the natural disasters such as locust infestation that have already impacted Tigray region and have made things difficult to predict even.

Finally, I think in terms of the context, currently there is a lot of escalation. Yesterday alone the TPLF fired a missile which is extending through Bahir Dar and Gondar region. They kept saying to continue those attacks. The government continued to squeeze it and make it yield.

So there is already tension building and even in Addis, and unfortunately on all efforts on mediation and diplomacy have futilely failed and I think there is a strong pushback from the prime minister because the African union tried even the Sudanese prime minister tried to mediate and negotiate the two parties but all of the efforts failed because there is a strong pushback from the federal government.

Happy to receive all your questions after this and looking forward to brainstorming on what could be done in light of the situation

Shuvai Busuman Nyoni: Thank you very much Emeye for this enlightening, educative and informative presentation.

Today we really want to make sure we can also put forward potential solidarity actions especially those that reflect the needs and priorities of Ethiopians.

CVPP community, please feel free to start bringing in your questions and comments even as we listen to the presentation.

Summary:

1. Longstanding societal grievances based on identity, economic and socio-cultural differences
2. Differences have resulted in deep political rift all against a background of militarized and securitized politics
3. War was preceded by 2 years of ongoing violence of varying degrees of intensity
4. Long history of events preceding war is more critical than pin-pointing who started this current war
5. Humanitarian crisis is building up as violence escalates and spreads beyond Tigray region - up to 15,000 refugees have already been displaced and moved into Sudan.
6. All efforts at diplomacy and dialogue have failed.

Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia: Well summarized, thank you!

Mary: In this unfortunate situation, is there a particular stand or intervention Women of Ethiopia are taking?

Shuvai Busuman Nyoni: CVPP family please do feel free to share questions and thoughts....

Shuvai Busuman Nyoni (responding to Mary): Thank you for this question. Emeye as you answer can you also share on the gender dimensions of this crisis.

Mary: TV revealed some women in uniform, right?

Kijala Shako, Kenya: Hey CVPP Please send your questions directly to Mandy and I. We will post on your behalf.

Shuvai Busuman Nyoni (responding to Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia): Sorry, your audio is not audible. Please resend it

Mary (responding to Shuvai Busuman Nyoni):  wondering too

Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia: To be very honest, the current situation is not enabling especially for women to speak up, to organize and stand up against any injustices. Unfortunately, the last 10 years in Ethiopia, the Civil Societies space has really been weakened. Now it is hard for people to come and mobilize and stand up and do campaigns to say enough or stop the war. On top of that, you have the government actually communicating to the larger audience/public saying that if people are talking about dialogue at this point, then it means they are siding with TPLF or what it is referred to as Mafia group. This really discourages people to come out and speak up even when the women and children are bearing the brunt of the conflict. We have seen already that majority of the refugees are women and children. We also have people being armed across the regions in Amhara and Tigray where we have child soldiers going to face a number of issues. I don't see women coming out to speak against this particular war. Majority of people seem to be justifying the war as if it is just war against a specific group. But we know the damage is affecting civilians and ordinary people in Tigray. Unfortunately, there is not enough mobilization happening domestically.

Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia ((responding to Mary): Sorry for that

Immaculate (responding to Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia): This one works...

Shuvai Busuman Nyoni: Interesting rich insights. Thank you.

My few questions:

1. To what extent are the tensions with Egypt contributing or even relevant to the current escalation?
2. How likely is it that other ethnic groups will be motivated to attack the federal state?
3. Do you think there is a real threat of secession or disintegration of the federalism?
4. With the high level of poverty and unemployment in the country how big is the threat of youth mobilization?

I will listen on the radio, thank you 😊

Mandiedza Parichi(PhD), Zimbabwe:I wanted to find out if there are any initiatives that have been done before to try and manage conflict. What could be the weaknesses of the peace initiatives since the conflicts continue to recur?

Kijala Shako, Kenya: Some additional questions from the group Emeye:

1. What is the impact for rest of Ethiopia i.e. the potential for current conflict to spread? (Even beyond Ethiopia) Why should this alarm us Africans and members of CVPP?
2. What is significance of AU dismissing the Head of Security?
3. What are the gender dimensions of this situation?
4. What are the sentiments of ordinary Ethiopians? Is there unity of purpose?
5. What in your opinion are priority actions?

Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia : Regarding the political spread of the violence to other parts of the country, I think it is highly likely. Already the OLF (Oromia Liberation Front) have been attacking especially Amhara ethnic regions. Before the war, over 200 people from Amhara group were massacred in mass. This kind of violence will continue because at the moment the perception among the Oromos is that once the war is finished in the North, it will come down to their region which is in the West and South part of the country. So there is already response from armed groups particularly from OLF. There is also tensions rising up and potentially there will be military fragmentation within security operators. So at this point, you can't say that it is already spilling over to other parts of the country, but from what it looks like especially since yesterday they fired missiles in Gondar and Bahir Dar trying to

damage airport facilities. So there is already tensions building up in Amhara region and that by itself is a spill over. There is potential to spill over to other regions as well.

Salim Umar, Nigeria: Good afternoon our presenter and moderators. My question: Is there any likelihood of a foreign involvement/interest in the conflict?

Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia: The reason why we should be alarmed as Africans, especially members of the CPPP, is because Ethiopia, East Africa Region and IGAD Region are situated in the hotspots. They are surrounded by unstable regions like Sudan, who is going through a difficult transition, South Sudan who is recovering from a civil war and Eritrea who has a rather fragile leadership. To add to that, what happens in Northern Ethiopia, directly affects Eritrea. Somalia is largely affected as well because the Ethiopian forces have withdrawn from Somalia, in order to escalate military intervention back at home. The population in Ethiopia is the biggest risk for the entire region. Kenya for instance, is already worried about what is happening in Ethiopia, because of the refugees that will engulf her borders. Sudan has already felt the tension and is already in discussion with Ethiopia on how to put an end to the crisis. They have received more than 17,000 refugees already. They do not know how things will possibly escalate to create a human crisis. The refugee crisis alone in the Tigrayans' region might fuel tensions. If the situation continues, and the war doesn't end within two or three days, as the Prime minister said, then we are not sure what will happen in the rest of Ethiopia. This is likely to create a lot of tensions and can bring about regional crisis, in the coming months and weeks.

Currently in the AU, there is an ongoing campaign launched by the government to dismiss or sack individuals who are of Tigrayan origin, who may or may not have links with TPLF. This is not only at the AU. Yesterday, there was a search order for Tigrayan staff at the World Food Program. Moreover, in NGOs like ISS, there are some of my colleagues whose houses were searched. There is already an order for the airlines not to allow Tigrayans to travel outside the country. There are a number of arrests happening in Addis-Tigrayans from the business community and also those who have been serving in various positions in government offices. Measures have been put to ensure that Tigrayans are squeezed in a number of places. These are the measures that were taken by the AU, as a direct order from the Minister of Defense, so that he is dismissed effectively. Regarding the question of the sentiments of ordinary Ethiopians, as earlier said, the Tigrayans/TPLF are a minority. The majority who are in the center of Addis and Amhara region support the war because they feel

that this is just war and that it is an attack on TPLF. For this reason, people are not looking at the cost of war or the kind of implications it will have on the economy, people's psychological state and the effect on human capital. Sadly, in Ethiopia, the masculine state has been exposed. People are in support of the Prime Minister because they feel that in a period of two or more years, he has been a little bit too soft, and that he was not handling the situation properly. So now, when he started acting in a militaristic way, he is being praised by a number of people. These individuals include his ministers. Surprisingly, the Ministry of Peace, which was created to handle such situations, is now praising the war. This is very unfortunate.

Fulata Moyo: 🙌👊

Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia: To shed more light on what can be done and the priority of actions. There statements being made here and there. The international community should have coordinated activity. This includes the AU, IGAD, EU and all the actors concerned. They shouldn't go each on their own. There needs to be a coordinated message from them. Secondly, there is need for more pressure to be put on both parties. All the actors should move beyond tweets and declarations. Instead there should be tangible peace plans that will continue post war. The following should be done. First, there needs to be cessation of hostility and a call for immediate ceasefire. The international community has to push for creation of a safe zone for humanitarian assistance, inside Tigray. Secondly, parties should stop finding faults in each other. They should instead start recognizing each other. That should be the starting point of calming the situation and putting an end to hostility. Thirdly, there needs to be a revision of the timetable for elections and national dialogue. Both parties need to sit down and iron out their differences. The Prime Minister however intends to finish off TPLF. In his view, there is no way he can sit down and negotiate with members of TPLF; hence, the war has just begun, and its main agenda is to eliminate TPLF. He believes that there is no reasoning with TPLF, thereby making mediation efforts difficult.

Kijala Shako, Kenya: Additional questions from the Member

1. Isn't this war enabling a dictatorial regime, even if the war ends within the next few days?
2. There were reports of inter-ethnic clashes before the war already, can this war endanger the fragile stability and put oil onto the fire?

3. How can IGAD help? What is to expect of a future regional integration?

Shuvai Busuman Nyoni: That is a very sobering point - the hyper masculinization and militarization of the state.

We may need to think about potential action/ messaging to counter this.

Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia: Regarding the question on likelihood of foreign investment in the conflict, the answer is; yes. To start with, Eritrea, the Eritrean president and Ethiopia's Prime Minister have a common enemy who is TPLF. It goes back in history, in the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The Eritrean President is now settling scores by assisting and strategizing with the Ethiopian Prime Minister to eliminate TPLF. Currently, there are Eritrean soldiers assisting from the North. As a result, TPLF announced yesterday that they might strike Eritrea if they continue pushing from the North. Sudan on the other side is not interested in assisting the war. However, they gave in to pressure from the Prime Minister to; close their borders, monitor any illegal movement of small arms and light weapons, and to inhibit any form of humanitarian support coming to Tigray. Despite that, Sudan is accepting refugees coming from Tigray.

Egypt is the elephant in the room. Currently, there is a military operation training happening in Sudan. With the tensions surrounding the grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, Egypt wouldn't do anything to destabilize Ethiopia. The government has been saying that TPLF is working with Egyptian elements to destabilize the entire country. From the Egyptian side, there is no concrete evidence to corroborate that they have been supporting any violence in Ethiopia. However, there is already a perception and an understanding from the government, that that is possible and that it is already happening, even though there is no proof to support that perception.

Kijala you are right. The war has already enabled the Catamaran system of regime. The Prime Minister who I have nothing personal against him, however, if you look at the last two or three years, he has been seeing Ethiopia positively. There is also a belief that Ethiopia should be united. He is planning to unite Ethiopia by having some sort of ideology, which is tied to a religious belief, that all of us should be one. Even though in theory it sounds like a good idea, it could be a problem practically because; there are more than 80 ethnic groups who have a number of interests and grievances, boiling and fueling tensions in the past thirty or so years. Moreover, many people have been criticizing them for not prioritizing what

needs to be prioritized. For example, starting a national dialogue to discuss the numerous grievances that have caused tensions in Ethiopia- this should have been a priority. Another point to discuss is how Ethiopians want to be governed, by looking at the constitution and the system of ethnic federalism among others. There are different interests that need to be dealt with since he had power. Sadly, none of them have been addressed. He started shifting his attention to other issues which many people do not think they are a priority. There is a huge fear at the moment, that we might revert to a totalitarian system, because there is the thinking,” it’s either you are with me or against me.” There is a philosophy of the Prime Minister which is called “Medemer” which urges that “all of us should come together to form a strong nation.” Many people question the meaning of that in different parts of the country, considering that there are a lot of issues that have not been addressed. Even in the midst of the tensions, the Prime Minister is still popular in the center and the Amhara constituency. He however is losing popularity in his own Oromo constituency, because they feel like they have been abandoned and their questions have not been addressed. There is also the issue of him creating the image of a united Ethiopia by dismantling the ethnic federalist system. This does not sit well with them. Yes, there is a possibility of dictatorial tendencies and further division within and across ethnic lines.

Salim Umar, Nigeria: What in your own informed perspective do you think should be an entry point for any country/organization for possible mediation and dialogue with a view of resolving the conflict?

Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia: Thank you, Salim. I think that is a good point in terms of entry point. As much as there is war, there are also different interests in place. The civil society was afraid to speak up. What should be the basis for the civil society to speak up is that the war is not a means to an end, because it costs civilian lives. Moreover, the healing process and the aftermath of the war can be too much to bear. For any organization, both domestic and international, there should be a call for de- escalation. This does not mean that you side with one side or the other. One will be standing for human dignity and human lives. This should be the core value when advocating and coordinating any sort of campaign to end this conflict. Standing for humanitarian issues should not be seen as standing with any party. The starting point should be fighting for civilian lives and protecting the civilian in the midst of this crisis.

Shuvai Busuman Nyoni: We have just reached the half way mark of our discussion.

Thank you so much CVPP for your questions and comments on this very concerning and unfolding situation.

Please keep them coming, remembering to put forward suggestions for solidarity actions by CVPP.

Fulata Moyo: Thanks, Emebet for your deep insights.

Shuvai Busuman Nyoni: Emeye, you briefly touched on the Ministry of Peace under the new PM. There is also a truth Commission slated for Ethiopia, to what extent can these two mechanisms be leveraged and can any advocacy be directed towards them?

What is the perception of the state of people who are preaching/ advocating for peace?

Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia: Thank you, Shuvai. Forgive me if I will sound pessimistic. Regarding the ministry of peace and reconciliation commission, there is a concern on how they have been operating in the midst of this crisis, even though they are newly formed institutions. They should have been calling for calm and peace. However, they have been siding with the directives coming from the Prime Minister's office. All institutions were told to condemn the actions of TPLF, and not to sympathize with TPLF, as it will be seen as treason. There is however a fear in these institutions to act according to their mandate. Just last week, a member of the reconciliation commission came out and said that there is no possibility for reconciliation with TPLF. He took a stance to say that there is no need for reconciliation with TPLF, therefore supporting the war. You can imagine how these institutions have been acting in ways that could bring about unexpected outcomes. Two weeks when the war started, one of the faith-based organizations called the IRCE (Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia), called together different religious denominations and they came together to ask for an immediate cessation of hostility without any pre-conditions. This is historical because they stood their ground. After they released that statement, they were under pressure to explain why they sided with TPLF or the JUNTA, as they are called in the northern part of Tigray. It's unfortunate that our institutions cannot act contrary to the directives coming from the prime minister's office. It is purely a top-down kind of approach that has been in use.

Salim Umar, Nigeria: Thank you very much for your rich and informed perspective.

Shuvai Busuman Nyoni: Emeye - is there any room for community engagement? Especially through the religious council you mentioned?

Also, given that the war is underway, is there any room for the knowledge community/researchers?

Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia: Regarding community engagement, there is a potential. However, with the current environment, having such a dialogue will be very difficult. People ethnically profiled. If you happen to talk about dialogue or you happen to suggest something else, you will be targeted. With that fear, the community engagement is not likely to happen. The religious council however is handling some of the areas that have tensions, and that have been marked as conflict areas in the system, in the last couple of weeks. The IRCE has been involved in bringing communities together in order to have a dialogue. The IRCE however have been under a lot of pressure and they do not want to go back to the point of rating the situation between the federal government and the Tigray region. Everyone is currently waiting for the war to end so that there can be a winner. The majority are not looking at what the war will cost. They are not looking at the cost of lives, the humanitarian crisis and the food insecurity that will affect the region. Perhaps there needs to be more solidarity coming from the Pan-African community. People should be aware of what is happening in Ethiopia. This has been inhibited by most likely language, since people cannot understand fully what is happening on the ground. If there is some sort of push from the larger region, it will be of great help, since the ones who want to speak about peace cannot because they will be targeted, hence the silence. Those who are able to speak, are speaking from the diaspora. That fear can be tackled through solidarity efforts of the Pan-African community.

Shuvai Busuman Nyoni: As we move towards concluding our session today, I would like to invite any thoughts on possible areas of action and recommendations.

Some of what has come through so far includes:

- 1. Coordinated activity from various actors including clear and coordinated messaging - no one should be going it alone**
- 2. Actors need to move beyond tweets and declarations need to put pressure on both sides for cessation of hostilities, immediate cease fire should be the message**

3. There needs to be a clear peace plan - humanitarian safe corridor and zones of safety for humanitarian assistance

4. Parties need to deescalate conflict and threats of violence

5. Pressure on the parties to dialogue - there needs to be action and advocacy to find points of intervention that highlight opportunities to move back from the brink of non-negotiation or no-dialogue and wiping out for both sides - a position that highlights the true cost of war.

6. Entry points for dialogue/ mediation- pointing out that war is not a reliable means to an end - calling for de-escalation is on the basis of toll of war.

7. Potential for the Religious Council to bring communities together - so question becomes about messaging to and for Religious Council and such actors.

Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia: Succinctly put Shuvai!

Adding to that I would say the pan African community should continue to raise awareness on what's happening on the ground. There's literally genocide taking place on communities. It is highly likely that the war would come to an end with huge cost to communities mainly in Tigray but this wouldn't end the crisis we are in because the crisis would continue to Oromia where currently there's an ongoing rebellion.

Mandiedza Parichi (PhD), Zimbabwe: I suggest if members are agreeable that we establish a cluster that will work with our Ethiopian sisters and Shuvai to work on recommendations already provided by the group and generate more since this conflict is still on.

Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia (responding to Mandiedza Parichi (PhD), Zimbabwe): That would be good. The pressure needs to be sustained and should reach all stakeholders—AU/IGAD/UN and the diplomatic community in Addis.

Also, in other parts—I haven't seen a single African leader calling for peaceful resolution of the crisis

Stella: Thanks dear Emebet 🙏🙏🙏

Fulata Moyo: There is need to invest into unveiling the history (her-story) that provide the roots to the current existing tensions and violence. Can part of the pan-African engagement

focus on gathering learning from the story of Ethiopia that provide such deep rootedness to the current situation?

Is it possible for us to urge the UN to invest in ensuring that one of the important ‘case study’ for The Special Adviser against Genocide (Our own Madame Alice Nderitu) to start with on her role?

Shuvai Busuman Nyoni: Thank you for all the suggestions and insights. Please keep them coming. We are winding down now.

Fulata Moyo: IGAD does not seem to be very effective in some corners. How can we ensure that we hold them accountable to delivering for peace for Ethiopia especially since Ethiopia is a member?

Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia: I think there is a place to call for an independent investigation as to who committed and how certain atrocities were committed in the last one week alone. Yes, it’s a tough task for the special advisor given the government would push back on such request but that’s one form of pressure.

Shuvai Busuman Nyoni: (responding to Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia): These calls can certainly be made to the HRC through the High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet. I believe Amnesty International is already on this.

Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia (responding to Fulata Moyo): I thank you for that. In terms of IGAD and its role in this current situation, I think one tricky issue is that the current Executive Director is the right hand man for PM Abiy Ahmed and he was appointed by him due to his affiliation. So, though they released a statement last week, I doubt that IGAD will come forcefully. One way the IGAD might push things is if there is increased mounting pressure from the IGAD region and its leaders. As we speak, I think Sudan has through PM Hamdook, put some effort. But I doubt that IGAD region member states have been calling for calm and peace. I haven’t seen any leaders’ concerned putting statement on Ethiopia. Perhaps engaging Uganda, South Sudan, Sudan and the wider East Africa region might put pressure on IGAD to push for certain negotiations or dialogue to lead on that front. I know for example, there was an interest to call for IGAD extra ordinary summit but there was pushing back on that effort as well. So, I think IGAD’s role won’t be forceful unless there is another layer of pressure coming from other actors. On this point, even at the AU level Ethiopia is the chair of this month with Peace and Security Council. There is an advantage there to call

Ethiopia itself to respect and adhere to the principles of the convention of AU on different fronts. That could be one entry point.

Fulata Moyo: I visited the museum that captures the ‘genocide’ that happened in connection to Mingistu Haile Mariam. We do not want to have history repeat itself in similar violence, even though we have a different leadership that seems to be pro-peace!

Kijala Shako, Kenya: One more question from the members;

Ethiopia constitution provides for cessation, why didn’t Tigray just have a referendum to leave?

Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia: Unfortunately it is and unless the war is stopped immediately, we might hear more gruesome stories.

Fulata Moyo (responding to Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia): Thanks, Emebet!

Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia (responding to Kijala Shako, Kenya): Kijala, there is that provision of Article 39 which guarantees all nations and nationalities to self determination. But within the last 3 years, we saw escalating tensions building up of anger and de-legitimization from Tigray and also federal government. As I mentioned earlier, we saw the election that was conducted on September in Tigray region was seen by many as referendum by itself and that eventually they would be a de-facto state that would become independent. Already there are political parties within Tigray who are pushing for independence for Tigray to become an independent country. so that is why the ruling party in Tigray was seen as moderate in comparison with other political parties being formed that have radical stand on self determination. But for Tigray and leadership now, they don’t want to invoke article 39. However, given the election that took place in September, they were thinking of invoking Article 39. They were using it to negotiate and also put pressure on the federal government. However, the situation escalated and culminated into this war. Now it will be even more difficult for Tigray region to table that because they are not in the parliament. All of their 38 representatives were being called by the Tigray 8 regional state and they cut ties with the federal government. It would make it very difficult for them to push for that at this point

Shuvai Busuman Nyoni: Emebet, I will call on you now to make your closing remarks and then we will close today's forum.

Fulata Moyo: Although Ethiopia is not a SADC member state, can we also challenge SADC to be involved? I am asking because the current chair is my President, Rev Dr. Lazarus Chakwera, and he and Ethiopian PM speak similar faith language. Can we strategically use that commonality as a tool for mediating dialogue?

Akelo (responding to Fulata Moyo): The Chair of the African Union is currently South Africa, President Ramaphosa.

Salim Umar, Nigeria (responding to Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia): This is more worrisome to me too. I'm yet to hear or see any concrete attempt to intervene by any African leader. Perhaps, our docility towards the plight of our brothers and sisters in an African country is not worth our leaders' intervention. But more annoying is the rush to issue lame statements on global affairs.

Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia: Thank you so much everyone for tuning in! It's a difficult moment here in Ethiopia and we really need your support to amplify minority voices. Given the implication of the wider peace and security dynamic in the region, calling for Ethiopia's stability should be a common agenda.

Sylvie Ndogmo: 🙏🙏🙏

Kijala Shako, Kenya (responding to Akelo, Kenya): Also the current Chair of the AU Peace and Security Council is Ethiopia.

Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia: Kindly keep this conversation in this community for safety and security reasons. Thank you and let's have the conversation going. I will also keep updating you on the unfolding situation.

Salim Umar, Nigeria: Thank you very much for your very educating and informed perspective dear sister Emebet. Our conveners we are grateful. The CVPPA family thank you very much for your support and participation.

Fulata Moyo (responding to Kijala Shako, Kenya) How ironic!!

Shuvai Busuman Nyoni (responding to Fulata Moyo): This is an interesting idea. Worth a try

Kijala Shako, Kenya: All these are definitely pressure points for us to take into consideration.

Salim Umar, Nigeria (responding to Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia): This is very important and I must remind us that all presentations on CVPPA are covered by the relevant copy rights laws.

Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia (responding to Fulata Moyo): Not SADC as a block but South Africa can be very helpful. Ramaphosa is already engaged in the Dam negotiation and he's been trying to push the peace agenda to the PM as well but again big push back from Ethiopia.

Shuvai Busuman Nyoni: Thank you so much everyone. We will end the discussion here for today. Of course we can continue to discuss. Please remember that the discussion details remain here so as not to endanger anyone.

Emeye, thank you for sharing and for your deep insights!

Amaseganalu, shukran jazeelan, Asanteni sana everyone 🙏🙏

Our convenors Mandi and Kijala, thank you for the opportunity. Over to you!

Emebet Getachew Abate, Ethiopia (responding to Shuvai Busuman Nyoni) Thank you my sister for leading the discussion! Lots of love ❤️

Kijala Shako, Kenya: Comrades please accept heart felt gratitude from Mandy and I;

Thank you Emebet for Speaking from the heart and sharing bravely of difficult matters. We wish you and yours grace in these complex times.

Thank you Shuvai for crocheting our thoughts and being a wonderful Navigator helping us to unpack and understand the issues deeply

Comrades this seminar would not have been possible without your active engagement and probing queries

Let us remember that as we have always done, the conversation does not end here.

Our solidarity is evidenced both in Philosophy and Action across the diverse platforms represented in our group.

Selina, we appreciate all that you always do to ensure that our seminar series are of high quality.

Wairimu thank you for this platform that gives us all an outlet and a voice in ways that none other is able to give especially as political space across the region continues to shrink day by day.

Comrades, Aluta Continua!

BIOGRAPHIES



Emebet Getachew Abate

Working experience with local and international NGOs, Emebet Getachew Abate is an expert on peace and security and good governance in the Horn of Africa. Emebet has more than six years of experience engaging the African Union Commission and African Union Peace and Security Council and the different sub-regional mechanisms include peace and security.

Emebet is currently working with Life & Peace Institute where she is the Country Manager for peace building work in Ethiopia, promoting inclusive peace building projects in Universities involving youth in different parts of the country. Previously, Emebet served as Representative to the African Union, coordinating international, regional and sub-regional advocacy efforts on the protection of civilians in armed conflicts across conflict zones, particularly South Sudan, Sudan, Burundi, Cameroon and DRC. Emebet worked with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Addis Ababa focusing on promoting peace and Security in the Horn of Africa and the African Union. She also worked as Research Intern with Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in Sweden, African Rally for Peace and Development in Addis Ababa.

Emebet earned her Master's degree in Gender Peace and Security from the Kofi Annan Peacekeeping Training Centre in Ghana and earned the Commandant's prize for best student of the year, she also holds a BA in Sociology and Social Anthropology from Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia and a certificate in Human Rights from University of Oslo.



Shuvai Busuman Nyoni

Shuvai Busuman Nyoni is a Gender, Peace and Security practitioner and researcher. She currently serves as the Executive Director of the African Leadership Centre (ALC), Nairobi, Kenya. The ALC is a research and training initiative that focuses on nurturing next generation African leaders, thinkers and practitioners within the peace, security and development sector. She has worked extensively with a range of regional and national policy makers, civil society actors and academics in post-conflict and transitional countries on the African continent. Shuvai's work also includes investigation and documentation of sexual and gender based violence in conflict settings. Prior to joining the ALC, Shuvai worked as the Director of Interventions for the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) in Johannesburg South Africa where she led the CSVR policy engagement with the African Union.

Shuvai currently represents the ALC on the Steering Committee of the African Union's Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation – FemWise-Africa and also serves on the United Nations Advisory Board on Human Security.

She is an alumna of the ALC's Peace, Security and Development Fellowships for African Women and is currently pursuing a PhD in Leadership and Security Studies at the University of Pretoria.