

Washington Update - By Mesfin Mekonen
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1. Child soldiers in Tigray.

Reports from Tigray show that the TPLF are committing crimes against humanity, including by recruiting child soldiers in violation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The international community must condemn the TPLF's refusal to abide by the ceasefire declared by the government of Ethiopia, and apply pressure for it to demobilize children and halt violent and provocative activities.

The Child Soldiers Prevention Act (CSPA) is a United States federal statute signed into law by President George W. Bush on December 23, 2008, as part of the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008. The law criminalizes leading a military force which recruits child soldiers.

in 2008 House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security hearing Committee on the Judiciary

"There is a clear legal prohibition on recruiting and using child soldiers. Over 110 countries, including the United States, have ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on Rights of the Child, which prohibits recruitment and use of child soldiers under the age of 18. But individual recruiters continue to operate with impunity, violating their countries' policies and treaty obligations".

The TPLF's actions threaten to create a humanitarian disaster on a scale that exceeds the crisis in Syria, and to destabilize Ethiopia and the entire region.

The U.S. and the international community must stop averting their eyes from the unfolding disaster and act quickly to help avoid a preventable catastrophe.



2. GERD dam second filling.

The bad news from Tigray is counterbalanced by news of the second filling of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the Blue Nile. Hydroelectric plants powered by the GERD are set to start generating power in the coming months. The GERD, the largest hydro power project in Africa, is the key to Ethiopia's future prosperity and source of pride and solidarity for the entire nation.

Although 85% of the water in the Nile originates in Ethiopia, in the Blue Nile, the Ethiopian people derive very little benefit from the river.

The GERD will meet Ethiopia's need for power. Today, 83% of Ethiopians lack access to electricity; 94% rely on wood for daily cooking and heating. This is an unacceptable situation, especially since Ethiopia possess abundant water resources and hydropower potential, second only to the Democratic Republic of Congo in all of Africa. Only 3% of this potential has been developed