

# Conflict Weekly

*A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world*

Conflict Weekly #179 | Vol. 04 | Issue No.23 | 08 June 2023



(The ongoing wildfire season in Canada has caused unprecedented damage, the impacts of which are felt as far as Norway.

Image Source: Reuters)

## Canada's Wildfires, and Reviews of two reports on Tigray and the Arctic Ice-melt



An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

Gender | Environment | Ethnic Violence

External Interventions | Armed Conflicts | Peace Processes



## Canada: Raging Wildfires and its fallouts

Akriti Sharma

### In the news

On 7 June, Canada's Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Steven Guilbeault, stated: "We are already seeing one of the worst wildfire seasons on record, and we must prepare for a long summer. The threat of increased fires due to climate change." Canada has been witnessing hundreds of wildfires resulting in the evacuation and destruction of infrastructure. The wildfires have engulfed 9.4 million hectares of land since 7 June 2023.

According to the government of Canada, projections indicate a potential for continued higher-than-normal fire activity in broad areas of the country. The ongoing wildfires are caused by drought conditions. Canada is currently at the national preparedness level five, indicating that it has fully committed all its national resources to mobilise the fight against the fires.

On 7 June, the US President, Joe Biden, directed his administration to deploy all available federal firefighting forces that can rapidly assist in suppressing fires impacting Canadian and American communities.

### Issues at large

First, the unusual intensity of wildfires. Canada has the world's most dense forests, making it prone to wildfires every year. However, this year the intensity of wildfires is unusually high. The wildfires, which used to be restricted to the country's southern parts, have spread to the eastern parts. Additionally, intense levels of wildfires are uncommon during the beginning of the summer.

Second, climate change links to extreme weather events. The unusual increase in the frequency, intensity, and magnitude of wildfires can be attributed to climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has claimed a strong link between extreme weather events and climate change. Climate change is also acting as both a cause and effect. It has triggered wildfires contributing to more emissions along with air pollution and at the same time, forests which are carbon sinks are getting destroyed.

Third, the worsening air quality. Canadian cities like Toronto measured an Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) of seven, indicating a "high risk" to human health. Calgary, Edmonton, and Fort Smith had an AQHI of five, implying a "moderate risk." The smoke crossed Canada and affected US cities, including New York, which witnessed poor air quality. Citizens were advised to wear masks to avoid the health risks of poor air quality.

### In perspective

First, keeping a check on human-caused wildfires. Even though 85 per cent of the ongoing fires have been caused by natural causes like lightning, 15 per cent are caused by human actions. Natural reasons cannot be controlled, but human causes can be restricted.

Second, the vulnerable segments of society. The wildfire impacts are much higher for the vulnerable population including the indigenous communities. The preparedness and response plans need to take enhanced action for vulnerable populations.

Third, efficient preparedness. Since Canada is expecting a harsh wildfire season, early warning systems and emergency plans would help reducing the damage caused by wildfires.

---

### IPRI REPORT REVIEW

## **Persisting Ethnic Cleansing in Ethiopia's Tigray region: Four Takeaways of HRW Report**

Anu Maria Joseph

On 1 June, Human Rights Watch (HRW) released a report titled "[Ethiopia: Ethnic Cleansing Persists Under Tigray Truce](#)." The Deputy African Director at Human Rights Watch, Carine Kaneza Nantulya, stated: "The November truce in northern Ethiopia has not brought about an end to the ethnic cleansing of Tigrayans in the Western Tigray Zone; if the Ethiopian government is really serious about ensuring justice for abuses, then it should stop opposing independent investigations into the atrocities in Western Tigray and hold abusive officials and commanders to account."

Human Rights Watch has called on the Ethiopian government to "suspend, investigate and appropriately prosecute" officials who have committed human rights abuses in Western Tigray.

On 6 June, Al Jazeera quoted the Ethiopian government rejecting the allegations by HRW, stating: "This distorted and misleading portrayal of the situation attempts to undermine peaceful coexistence and fuel inter-ethnic conflict and obstruct the national efforts for peace and reconciliation."

The conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region between the Ethiopian federal forces, Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), and respective allies (Amhara forces, Eritrean forces and Oromo Liberation Army (OLA)) ended with the signing of a peace agreement in November 2022. Although the deal has ended the hostilities between the parties, a negative peace still persists in Tigray. The report by the HRW says the ethnic Tigrayans are being targeted, suffering from human rights violations and forced expulsions.

The following are four takeaways from the report.

### **1. Continuing ethnic cleansing of the Tigrayans despite the peace agreement**

From September 2022 to April 2023, the HRW interviewed 35 people, including the victims of the abuses, members of aid organizations and witnesses. It found that despite the truce agreement, Amhara security forces known as "Amhara Liyu," a militia group known as "Fano," and interim authorities engaged in forced expulsions, killings during detention, torture and inhuman treatment of ethnic Tigrayans in the Western Tigray Zone. The detainees were held for an extended period in police stations, prisons, military camps and other unofficial sites in the region. Several interviewees said that 70 people, including residents and detainees, were forcibly expelled from the Western Tigray region. The report quotes a Reuters story on the Fano militia expelling 2,800 people from five detention sites in Western Tigray in early November, including men, women, and children. Nearly 47,000



UN-registered displaced people in Sudan told HRW they are threatened by officials and security forces in Tigray against returning home.

## **2. Lack of accountability and justice to the human rights abuses in Tigray**

The Ethiopian government has shown little interest in prosecuting those who committed human rights atrocities in Tigray. An inter-ministerial task force set up by the Ministry of Justice had previously promised to investigate the atrocities in Western Tigray by December 2022. The government has not yet released any details of these inquiries or prosecuted anyone for the atrocities. When Ethiopia was under review by the UN Committee against Torture in May, Ethiopian officials downplayed the allegations of ethnic cleansing.

## **3. Little international monitoring and investigations in Western Tigray**

Although the international actors, including the EU and the US, had emphasised the priority of justice for the victims of human rights atrocities, they failed to initiate concrete benchmarks to hold the perpetrators accountable. Instead, immediately after the signing of the peace agreement, many international actors, including the US and the EU, sought to revive the strained relations with the Ethiopian government besides stressing accountability for the atrocities. On 15 March, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali met the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken to strengthen bilateral relations. On 4 April, the EU foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, emphasised that the normalization of ties with Ethiopia would depend on the development of the peace process and refrained from addressing the lack of progress on justice for the victims.

## **4. Emphasis on the need for monitoring by national, regional and international actors**

The report has emphasised the role of national, regional and international actors in monitoring the human rights abuses in Tigray. HRW calls on the Ethiopian government to ensure that human rights monitoring authorities, including the National Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, have access to the conflict-hit regions to conduct investigations. It emphasises the need to establish an independent body for the Ethiopian government to monitor the repatriation of displaced communities. It highlights that the African Union Monitoring Mission, which is to visit Western Tigray in June, should publicly report on rights abuses and humanitarian access in the region. It stresses concerted efforts by international actors to support the mechanisms of monitoring and investigating violence.

### In perspective

This is not the first time ethnic cleansing has been reported in Tigray. Since the conflict broke out in November 2020, Tigrayans have been targeted on the basis of ethnicity. HRW released similar reports on ethnic cleansing in Ethiopia during the months of April, June and December 2022. Although the peace agreement in Tigray mentions justice to the victims of the abuse, an end to the civil conflict between both the TPLF and Ethiopian federal forces does not translate to an end to ethnic conflicts. Referring to a truce as a yardstick for a sudden end to ethnic cleansing is unfeasible. The issue lies deep within the ethnic complexities of Ethiopian society. Ethnic issues in Tigray need to be addressed from the grassroots. The recommendation for a comprehensive monitoring mechanism is unlikely to address the issue.

---

## Sea Ice-Free Arctic: Three Takeaways of article by Nature Communications

Rashmi Ramesh

### In the news

On 6 June, a research article titled "[Observationally-constrained projections of an ice-free Arctic even under a low emission scenario](#)" was published in Nature Communications, highlighting the effects of climate change on the Arctic Sea ice. The authors observed the changes in the sea ice area in the Arctic across all the months by comparing three sets of satellite images with the CMIP6 multi-model simulations. Against the backdrop of the impact of greenhouse gas emissions, the authors emphasise the "importance of planning for and adapting to a seasonally ice-free Arctic in the near future."

The following are three takeaways.

### **1. Sea ice-free summers**

Researchers have shown that the Arctic summers will be practically sea ice-free by the 2030s. There was a significant reduction in sea ice past 12 months, beyond the range of internal variability range (Climate variability that occurs due to natural internal processes is internal variability and one that is influenced by anthropogenic forces is external variability.). This trend is strongest in summers, with September being the most ice-free month. Early summer sea ice loss is projected to occur later in this century. However, this does not imply that the Arctic will be completely ice free, but the oldest and thickest part of the sea ice is drastically dwindling. Since it is the tundra zone, it is impossible not to have sea ice at all. During winters, sea ice and snow will accumulate. However, the sea ice that forms henceforth, will melt away (sea ice-free summers) and chances of drifting bergs will be higher. The Arctic currently has only two percent of the oldest and thickest ice (the ones that do not melt easily) remaining. Most importantly, the researchers highlight that despite concentrated efforts towards reducing emissions, sea ice-free summers in the Arctic are inevitable, meaning that the developments are beyond correction and reversal.

### **2. Strong GHG influence on reducing sea ice**

The study indicates that the influence of greenhouse gas (GHG) on the Arctic is a dominating factor in reducing the sea ice cover. The GHG influence can be separated from other factors owing to its dominance. It also shows an expanded human influence on the cryosphere.

### **3. The vicious cycle**

Climate change is affecting the Arctic in a skewed manner. The net radiation balance tends to produce larger changes in the Arctic, known as Arctic amplification. The causes and consequences of the Arctic amplification are cyclical - what might be a cause can become a consequence too. Anthropogenic factors are warming the Arctic at a fast pace. Consequently, there is a significant effect on the ecosystem and the human population living inside and outside the Arctic region.



### In perspective

The exact extent of the effects of climate change in the Arctic is debatable. There is no agreement on the level of Arctic amplification in comparison to the global rate of warming. Earlier studies showed that the Arctic was warming twice as fast as the global rate even before the 21st century. The IPCC's 'Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate' 2019 revised the figures and said that the Arctic surface air temperature has "likely increased more than double the global average" in the past 20 years.

In 2021, the Arctic Monitoring Impact Assessment Programme reported the Arctic had warmed three times faster than the planet. It also found that in the case of global warming at two degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial levels, the sea ice is highly likely to disappear. In 2022, researchers at the Finnish Meteorological Institute concluded that the Arctic is warming four times faster than the rest of the planet and is concentrated towards the Eurasian Arctic and the Barents Sea, warming seven times faster than the global average. Two other studies by the American Geophysical Union (2021) and Geophysical Research Letters (2022) point to the Arctic amplification standing at a four-fold pace.

---



## Issues in Peace and Conflict This Week: Regional Roundups

Rishika Yadav, Taffy Tonia A, Lakshmi Parimala H, Nithyashree RB, Subiksha S, Sreeja JS, Varsha K, Jerry Franklin, and Immaculine Joy Paul

### East and Southeast Asia

#### North Korea: UNSC criticized for discussing satellite launch

On 4 June, the Strait Times reported that North Korea denounced the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for addressing the satellite launch and asserted its intention to reject sanctions and defend itself. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's sister, Kim Yo Jong, criticized the Security Council for being a "political appendage" of the US and disregarding North Korea's right to the exploration of the space. She condemned the UNSC's interference in North Korea's internal affairs and the violation of its sovereignty.

#### South Korea: Sanctions imposed on a North Korean hacking group

On 2 June, South Korea imposed sanctions on Kimsuky, a North Korean hacking group which is believed to have been involved in Pyongyang's satellite launch. In a joint advisory with the US, Seoul stated that the group conducts large-scale cyberattacks on think tanks, academic institutions and news outlets. The hackers carried out spear-phishing campaigns, imposing as journalists, academics, or individuals linked to North Korean policy circles. The US, South Korea, and Japan have emphasised that any launch by Pyongyang utilising ballistic missile technology violates multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions.

#### Cambodia: Concerns over AUKUS alliance

On 6 June, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen expressed concerns over the AUKUS alliance comprising the US, Britain, and Australia. He stated: "The small-scale alliance relevant to nuclear-powered submarines among the U.S, Britain and Australia are becoming a concern for ASEAN and countries in the region," Hun Sen emphasized that AUKUS contradicts the 1995 Treaty of Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone. He warned that this military alliance could lead to a "dangerous arms race" in the region, posing a significant security threat.

#### Indonesia: Multilateral naval exercise

On 5 June, the Indonesian Navy launched the Komodo drills in its waters off the coast of Makassar, South Sulawesi, joined by navies from the US, the UK, China, Japan, Russia, South Korea, and 29 other countries. Fifteen vessels, including those from China and Russia, participated in the drills off Sulawesi Island.

#### Thailand: Bangkok to cut electricity supply to Myanmar's border casinos

On 2 June, The Irrawaddy reported the decision of the Provincial Electricity Authority (PEA) in Bangkok to cut off the electricity supply to illegal casinos along the Salween River in Myanmar. The Myanmar Embassy in Thailand requested this decision after the Chinese ambassador to Myanmar, Chen Hai, met with the Myanmar junta. Chen Hai urged them to combat cross-border crime, online fraud, and illegal gambling. According to the news report, even though there will be an electricity shutdown, the casinos will still be able to operate due to having backup generators.



### Myanmar: State troops raid in the Sagaing region

On 1 June, according to the Irrawaddy, in 2022, the Myanmar junta troops conducted raids in a Ye-U Township village in the Sagaing region, resulting in the reported death of approximately 29 residents.

### South Asia

#### Nepal: Swapping land as an option to resolve the Kalapani dispute according to Nepalese PM Dahal

On 2 June, on the third day of his visit to India, in an interaction with the media, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal revealed that he and the Indian Prime Minister discussed the boundary issues. He suggested swapping the Kalapani area with the Siliguri Corridor (both under Indian administration), thereby giving Nepal access to Bangladesh. This was put forward on similar lines to the India-Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement 1974, where the two countries exchanged multiple enclaves. However, this idea has been denounced by the Deputy General Secretary of CPN-UML (The Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist)), Pradip Gyawali, who described it as "very immature." He gave four reasons: "First, there is no provision to allow land swap in our constitution. Second, land swap is the last option for us, because first, we have to establish our claim over Kalapani. Third, that route [chicken's neck] is important for India. And fourth, a person like the prime minister should not show his cards when formal talks have not begun. The prime minister should not speak lightly on such a sensitive issue."

#### Bangladesh: UNHRC demands international recognition of the 1971 genocide

On 1 June, The Daily Star reported that the UN Human Rights Council had included the demand for international recognition of the 1971 genocide during the Bangladesh Liberation War on the agenda of its 53rd session in July 2023. The UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, received the statement from Stichting BASUG (Bangladesh Support Group), a Bangladeshi diaspora organization with a special consultative status of the ECOSOC along with several other organizations. Besides reiterating the "international recognition of the 1971 genocide," the organization stated that the genocide was planned and carried out by the Pakistani military during the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971.

### Central Asia, The Middle East, and Africa

#### Israel: Six injured in Ramallah in the West Bank

On 7 June, Israeli forces raided residences in Ramallah to demolish the home of a bomb attack suspect. The Israeli forces stated that the operation intended to destroy the house of the terrorist who attacked Jerusalem on 23 November 2022. A group of Palestinians protested against the operation, during which six people were injured in clashes. A member of the Abbas Fatah party, Abdel Fattah Dola, stated: "The demolition of the homes of fighters is a collective punishment that falls under the war crimes committed by the occupation against our people." According to Al Jazeera, since January, 158 Palestinians, 20 Israelis and two foreign nationals have been killed in the Palestinian attacks.



### Libya: Egyptian migrants sent back

On 5 June, the BBC reported the deportation of thousands of Egyptian migrants back to Cairo by the Eastern Libya Forces. Further, 4000 migrants were identified during raids among human traffickers in the east of Libya. The BBC report also referred to an Egyptian security source, stating that 2200 of the 4000 migrants illegally residing in the country were repatriated. It also referred to migration agencies saying that there are nearly 500,000 migrants in Libya; most of them are attempting to travel to Europe by boat, while others have found jobs and settled in the country.

### Sudan: Clashes continue despite US sanctions

On 2 June, the BBC reported on the ongoing fighting in Khartoum between the Sudanese Army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), despite US sanctions. According to the BBC, the army had resumed air strikes and was reported to have used more artillery to clear the paramilitaries off the streets.

### Senegal: Nine dead in lethal clashes

On 2 June, according to an Al Jazeera report, nine people were killed in clashes between the riot police and supporters of Ousmane Sonko, a major opposition leader of the African Patriots of Senegal for Work, Ethics and Fraternity (PASTEF). Earlier, he was sentenced to two years in prison for allegedly "corrupting the youth". Cars and buses were set on fire in Dakar, while clashes were reported in various places including Ziguinchor, where Sonko served as a mayor since 2022. Interior Minister Antonie Diome stated: "We have noted, with regret, violence has led to the destruction of public and private property and, unfortunately, nine deaths in Dakar and Ziguinchor."

### Europe and the Americas

#### Ukraine: Russia claims to have hit Storm Shadow and HIMARS

On 4 June, Russian Times reported on the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation's claims on missile attacks. According to the report, airstrikes were conducted on the Ukrainian military's airfields using long-range precision-guided air-launched missiles. The report quoted the ministry stating: "Command posts, a radar installation, Ukrainian aviation equipment, and storage facilities with weapons and ammunition were hit." The ministry also claimed to have shot down multiple missiles, including storm shadow missiles and rockets from HIMARS (High Mobility Artillery Rocket System) in Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia.

#### The UK: NATO allies conduct joint training exercises in Estonia

On 4 June, the UK's Ministry of Defence stated that the UK engaged in extensive training exercises with NATO allies, involving over 10,000 personnel from 11 countries in Estonia on 2 June. British three RAF Typhoon fighter jets and five Army Air Corps Apache helicopters participated in a joint exercise named Spring Tempest. They practised firing heavy machine guns and advanced missiles at sea targets, showcasing the ability to conduct precision strikes. The training was supported by a Forward Air Controller, operating from a Wildcat helicopter.



### **The US: State of emergency for the LGBTQ community declared by Human Rights Campaign**

On 6 June, Human Rights Campaign (HRC), a political advocacy organization promoting equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals and communities in the US, declared a state of emergency for the LGBTQ community in the US, citing the passing of 525 anti-LGBTQ bills in 41 states, including 220 targeting transgender people. HRC President Kelley Robinson stated: "The multiplying threats facing millions in our community are not just perceived, they are real, tangible, and dangerous. In many cases they are resulting in violence against LGBTQ+ people, forcing families to uproot their lives and flee their homes in search of safer states, and triggering a tidal wave of increased homophobia and transphobia that puts the safety of each and every one of us at risk."

---

### **About the authors**

Akriti Sharma and Rashmi Ramesh are Phd Scholars at the NIAS. Anu Maria Joseph and Rishika Yadav are Research Assistants at NIAS. Subiksha S, Taffy Tonia A, Lakshmi Parimala H and Nithyashree RB are Postgraduate Scholars at the Stella Maris College, Chennai. Sreeja JS, Varsha K, Immaculine Joy Paul and Jerry Franklin are Postgraduate Scholars at the Madras Christian College, Chennai.

## Recent Conflict Weekly Issues

**Conflict Weekly**  
 An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office  
 A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

4 May 2023, Vol.4, No.18

**Another ceasefire in Sudan, and a Counteroffensive in Ukraine**

Anu Maria Joseph and Padmashree Anandan



(Sudanese refugees who fled the fighting waiting for food packages distributed by the World Food Programme (WFP) in Sudan-Chad border. Image Source: Mahamat Ramalane, Reuters)

**SPECIAL COMMENTARY**  
**The State of Conflict in Myanmar:**  
**Violence, Counter-Violence, and the Current Impasse**

KONRAD ADENAUER STIFTUNG National Institute of Advanced Studies

**Conflict Weekly**  
 An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office  
 A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

11 May 2023, Vol.4, No.19

**The Armenia-Azerbaijan Stalemate**

Abigail Miriam Fernandez



(Azerbaijani soldier fixing the flag of Azerbaijan near the town of Lachin. Image Source: Azerbaijan, Karen Minasyan, AFP)

**SPECIAL COMMENTARY**  
**Violence in India's State of Manipur:**  
**Clash of Perceptions of Marginalization and Victimhood**

KONRAD ADENAUER STIFTUNG National Institute of Advanced Studies

**Conflict Weekly**  
 An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office  
 A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

20 April 2023, Vol.4, No.16

**Violence in Sudan and the Battle for Bakhmut**

Trisha Roy and Padmashree Anandan



(Smoke rising from Khartoum city after fighting erupted between two rival military factions. Image Source: Omer Eiden, Anadolu Agency)

KONRAD ADENAUER STIFTUNG National Institute of Advanced Studies

**Conflict Weekly**  
 An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office  
 A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

13 April 2023, Vol.4, No.15

**Violence in Israel and 25 Years of the Good Friday Agreement**

Mohaimen Khan and Sourina Bej



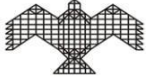
(Israeli police detaining Palestinian worshippers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Image Source: AP, Mahmoud Illean)

KONRAD ADENAUER STIFTUNG National Institute of Advanced Studies



### About NIAS-International Peace Research Initiative(IPRI)

National Institute of  
Advanced Studies



The International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI), initiated in 2018 at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), is a part of the Conflict Resolution and Peace Research Programme at the School of Conflict and Security Studies.

IPRI undertakes research on various issues relating to peace with special emphasis on radicalisation, sustainable peace, gender roles in peacebuilding and global protest movements. IPRI researches are published as briefs, reports and commentary.

### About Konrad Adenauer Stiftung



The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is a political foundation. Established in 1955 as “Society for Christian-Democratic Civic Education,” in 1964, the Foundation proudly took on the name of Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. KAS cooperates with governmental institutions, political parties and civil society organizations, building strong partnerships along the way. In particular, KAS seeks to intensify political cooperation in the area of development cooperation on the foundations of its objectives and values. Together with the partners, KAS makes a significant contribution to the creation of a global order that empowers every country to determine its own developmental priorities and destiny in an internationally responsible manner.

KAS has organized its program priorities in India into five working areas: Foreign and Security Policy; Economic, Climate, and Energy Policy; Rule of Law; Political Dialogue focused on Social and Political Change; and Media and Youth. The India Office of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation takes great pride in its cooperation with Indian partner institutions that implement jointly curated projects and programmes.

### About Conflict Weekly



The Conflict Weekly an academic endeavour to bring every Wednesday/Thursday a weekly analysis of the conflict and peace processes in the world; aiming to look at the larger peace picture. It is published by the NIAS-IPRI in collaboration with the KAS India Office.

**Editor:** D. Suba Chandran

**Assistant Editor:** Anu Maria Joseph

**Editorial Team:** Harini Madhusudan, Ankit Singh, Rashmi Ramesh, Femy Francis, Akriti Sharma and Padmashree Anandan.