The operational environment in Tigray remains highly complex and fluid. In May, humanitarian access worsened in some hotspots as a result of hostilities and denials of movement by parties to the conflict. Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF), Eritrean National Defense Forces (ErDF), and Amhara Special Forces (ASF) continue engaging with former Tigray Defense Forces (TDF) and associated Militias. ASF remain in control of Western Tigray and some areas in North-Western and Southern Tigray. The number of incidents related to violence and threats to aid workers increased sharply in May.

Armed confrontations are highly mobile, hindering the implementation of relief operations, particularly in rural areas. There is a high risk of suffering indirect/collateral damage during road movements due to the unpredictability of the security situation. Humanitarian organizations are generally not a target, with the exception of an incident with a local NGO in Central zone in April in which one aid worker was killed. However, incidents of intimidation and harassment, physical abuse and detention of aid workers and confiscation of humanitarian relief items and equipment at check points are on the rise.

With most confrontations taking place in rural areas, partners are only able to operate on an intermittent basis, and incidents force the population to flee both within rural areas and to towns. In May, hostilities escalated in Hazwen town and surrounding areas (Eastern), as well as in Central zone. Conflict continues unabated in Southern zone, with partners unable to access Selewa, Bora, Neguene, Ofa and Zata woredas since January. Rural areas remain without electricity and communications. In areas where health centers and other basic services such as water pumps have been rehabilitated they are frequently looted and destroyed shortly thereafter.

Movements of aid partners remain unpredictable and regularly blocked by parties to the conflict. Of particular concern is the checkpoint in Embamadre town (North-Western) manned by ASF. In May, the blockage has impacted for instance the mobilization of shelter supplies from Gonder to Shire. Bottlenecks are the check points in Maychew (Southern) and Agulae (Eastern zone) both manned by ENDF. Throughout Tigray armed elements at check points are asking partners for letters of authorization. These requests contravene the statement made by the Office of Prime Minister of Ethiopia on 3 March 2021 granting “unfettered humanitarian access” in Tigray.

Parties to the conflict continue to target public infrastructure, impacting the ability of the population to access health care, water and sanitation, among others. Health workers are threatened, mobile health teams are systematically prevented from accessing certain populations, health facilities remain unsafe. On 18 May, the "Five Angels health clinic" in Shire was raided by ErDF, and on 19 May, ENDF entered "Axum Referral Hospital" and reportedly intimidated patients and health personnel.

Aid workers continue to work in a high-risk environment. Weapon bearers have accused aid workers of supporting the former government, and of carrying weapons. These allegations are serious and risk compromising the security of colleagues on the ground. Further, UN and partners report the systematic searching of cars, with occupants being interrogated for long periods of, and some being physically assaulted.