



## Briefing EEPA HORN No.1 - 14 December 2020

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### Military Situation

- PM Abiy visited Mekelle, the capital of Tigray on 13 December. The visit does not mean that the Ethiopian National Defense Forces have control over Tigray. The expectation is that the military situation will evolve into a protracted situation. Fighting in Tigray is ongoing in many places.
- Experts analysing satellite pictures concluding that thousands of homesteads and land and harvests have been burnt. Observers on the ground report many complete ghost towns. Civilians have been severely affected and are targeted.
- The military situation in Tigray region depends heavily on external actors, notably Eritrea and possibly UAE (through drones from its Assab base in Eritrea) and fighters from Somalia. The conflict is no longer a domestic conflict.
- There is plenty of evidence of the involvement of Eritrea, both from the ground, reported from within Eritrea and also confirmed by UN teams and acknowledged by the US on the basis of satellite images.
- The involvement of Eritrea needs to be recognised in any peacekeeping process. Eritrean conscripts are forced to join the war under the indefinite national service and forced labour practices, according to the UN these may constitute crimes against humanity. Members of the diaspora tell their relatives are being forced to fight and sandwiched between Tigray and Ethiopian federal allied forces.
- President Hamdok, Sudan, and chair of IGAD, announced IGAD emergency meeting. Eritrea, UAE, Abiy seem to be speaking to Hemedti (RSF) and Burhan, destabilising situation in Sudan.
- Tigray people will not submit to a council instated from by the federal government to replace the regional elected government. Need for peacekeeping.
- Internally in Ethiopia PM Abiy is facing considerable opposition in regions, notably the Oromo region, especially since the killing of a popular singer. The suppression of the regions, seems to be a recipe for a heavy repression or a protracted costly, serious long-term conflict, impeding progress and development. The situation is already spilling over to other regions in Ethiopia.
- There is considerable indiscriminate bombing and attacks on civilians, who are hit by attacks from the federal Ethiopian forces, militia from other regions (such as Amhara) and international allies of the ENDF, such as Eritrea. There is an urgent need for independent

investigation of breaches and massacres under humanitarian law to establish the perpetrators. External expertise required.

- The harm to the population due to the war is unspeakable: massacres and killings, violence against women and rape, a million people moved from their homes and land, cattle, land and property being destroyed, severe looting of universities and laboratories, hospitals, companies, industries, shops, transported to Amhara region and to Eritrea, where it has been sold on the market. Requires an external force to monitor the situation.
- Ethiopia has rapidly moved up to the genocide risk barometer with a high risk of genocide expected to occur. Need to protect.

#### Regional Stability

- The stability of the government in Sudan is fragile. The Eritrean leadership has been courting the RSF, the militia responsible for the genocide in Darfur. The UAE is driving an agenda of influence in Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan and Libya.
- The Renaissance Dam issue with Egypt relying on an alliance with Eritrea - leaving Abiy indebted to Isayas, and Sudan, the latter taking an independent position in the conflict so far, but a fragile situation. These are significant economic interest.
- Somalia, Al Shabaab, trained and financed (previously) by Eritrea, creating impact in Kenya and Uganda, which were attacked by Al Shabaab, and the withdrawal of US and Ethiopian troops from Somalia, create conditions for increased insurgency.
- Kenya seeking closer links with Somaliland. May consider recognition of Somaliland.
- There is a rumour that TPLF is creating a base in Eritrea to join Eritrean opposition against President Isayas.

#### Refugee situation

- The agreement for a humanitarian corridor is only including the ENDF controlled areas; there is an urgent need for access to all refugees, IDPs and people in need for humanitarian organisations in all areas, irrespective of who controls the areas. This is a great concern for the UN and UNHCR.
- Refugees have been blocked on the Ethiopia-Sudan border to flee to Sudan.
- Conscripts forced to fight have been trapped between Tigray forces, unable to desert to Eritrea or to Ethiopia and blocked from fleeing to Sudan.
- Humanitarian needs are extreme, at least at a minimum 2 million people dependent on food (which has run out), water (unavailable for many), and other basic necessities.
- There is no safety in the camps; refugees are being forcefully deported to Eritrea, they have been forced to join the fighting, families and children have been separated, and humanitarian workers tried to reach the camps have been shot.
- 100.000 refugees from Eritrea, who were in internationally recognised UNHCR camps, have been under heavy fighting among others from Eritrean troops, many refugees have been abducted and forcefully returned to Eritrea.
- Refugees who have fled have often been separated from family members. Those who fled to Addis Ababa are forcefully returned to the same camps; many have disappeared. 300 refugees put on buses have not appeared after 3 days.
- It appears that there is a deal between Eritrea and Ethiopia to hand these refugees from Eritrea back to Eritrean control. This is a serious breach of the obligation to protect. There really is a need for unimpeded humanitarian access and protection.

### Ethnic profiling and civilian targeting

- Ethnic profiling is an issue of serious concern, targeting Tigrayans anywhere in Ethiopia (the military, Ethiopian airlines, entrepreneurs, politicians, journalists and any ordinary folk) losing their jobs, not allowed to travel, licenses taken away and taken to prison.
- Hate-speech driving propaganda in the war against Tigray, which harms all Tigrayan civilians.
- Ethnic cleansing reported from many places where people have forcefully been driven from their homes, land and land and homesteads and harvests have been burnt.

### Situation in Tigray and Ethiopia

- In Tigray: complete communication shut down, no access, no communications, no electricity during last five weeks. New situation: only telephone and only in Mekelle, nowhere else. No internet, no water, no electricity and no banking services. Many fields and harvests destroyed and large numbers of cattle reportedly cattle looted.
- In Ethiopia: Journalists arrested, expelled, organisations visited, heavy control of all communications including email, phone, WhatsApp.
- Heavy attempts of influencing of media and 'influencers' through thousands of social media trolls.

### Peacekeeping

- The situation does require peacekeeping for mediation.
- Sudan is offering mediation and President Hamdok announced an emergency meeting of IGAD. Hamdok is chair of IGAD.
- A female peace-keeping initiative will help to bring down the heat and create a situation that is conducive to talks for a mediated end of the hostilities and creation of a humanitarian corridor.
- The UN Security Council has met to discuss the conflict in Tigray. The conversation was initiated by Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, the US, and the UK.
- The UN Security Council new members are: Kenya, India, Ireland, Norway.
- Kenya has a serious interest in peace in the Horn, especially as it looks at the potential economic gains from infrastructural opening through the Horn, and also the risks from a heightened exposure to Al Shabaab;
- India has been commended for its excellent fulfilment of its task in providing the All Female Force of Police Units to Liberia and has the required experience in this area;
- Ireland and Norway, new UN SC members have as priorities: Peace Diplomacy, Inclusion of Women and Protection of Civilians.
- Leaving UN SC member Belgium, former Prime Minister Sophie Wilmes is now Foreign Minister and interested in a role in crisis management.
- US and EU very concerned about the situation and considering sanction, looking for a range of options.

### Key points:

- High risk of genocide and massacres continues. Civilians in Tigray under extreme stress.
- Calls for independent investigation of war crimes, crimes against humanity and violation of humanitarian law.
- Eritrea is playing a critical role in the war and this is endangering the regional stability. Eritrea drives an agenda of destabilisation across the wider region.
- The risk for regional destabilisation is real, including Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, Somalia.

- 100.000 refugees have been left without any protection; these have fled from Eritrea but Eritrean military and security forces now exercise control.
- One million out of six million have been displaced, have lost their harvest, house, land.
- Humanitarian needs are desperate, so far the humanitarian corridor is not realised and is not neutral but only includes areas under control of the ENDF which is in violence of humanitarian principles.
- A female peacekeeping force would focus on ensuring a humanitarian corridor to all civilians in need of humanitarian aid, stop the fighting, protect civilians, and empower women in peacekeeping.

### Links

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-ethiopia-conflict-refugees/reports-of-killings-abductions-of-eritrean-refugees-overwhelming-u-n-idUKKBN28L2IF?fbclid=IwAR04xR1YlwJ-xoJy0CHuP2qOb2ATSWNO8PZ5WcAyfE8s6dY1WPVKIV9aZPM>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/12/world/africa/Ethiopia-Tigray-ethnic.html>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/12/11/ethiopia-tigray-un-attack-aid-civilians/>

<https://taz.de/Krieg-in-Aethiopien/!5736994/>

<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2020/12/ethiopia-tigray-discussion-of-the-humanitarian-situation-under-any-other-business.php>

[https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/foreign-affairs/the-un/unsc\\_priorities/id2701066/](https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/foreign-affairs/the-un/unsc_priorities/id2701066/)