

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 101 - 11 March 2021

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Reported war situation in Tigray (as confirmed per 10 March)

- Tigrayan forces attacked a base near Mekelle (Chomu hill) and destroyed 4 tanks.
- There was fighting near Mekelle between Tigrayan forces and the ENDF.
- AN EU delegation and US Ambassador to Ethiopia visited Mekelle (Tigray) on Wednesday.
- Nine NGOs have written an open letter to the US ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield, asking her to make the Tigray conflict a priority during the US presidency of the UNSC and send a clear message to the Ethiopian government and other actors involved that war crimes will not be accepted.

Reported human rights situation in Tigray(as confirmed per 10 March)

- A 40-year-old rape survivor shared her experience to AFP and she says: "It was like they were fetching water." Ethiopian soldiers would line up outside her cell in a military camp, sometimes as many as 10 men waiting their turn to rape her.
- According to the rape survivor, the group assaults lasted for two weeks, after she was picked up from a street in Mekelle by Ethiopian soldiers.
- "Two nights after the soldiers drove me home, a soldier barged in during the evening curfew and raped me as my three children - aged 11, 7 and 3 - cowered in terror in an adjacent room," she added.
- The rape survivor states that: "I don't feel safe in Tigray anymore. Even the sight of the military uniform frightens me very much. Even now I am shocked, and I am wondering: What did the women of Tigray do to deserve this?" she asks.
- AFP reports says during Ethiopian President Sahle-Work's visit to Mekelle, when soldiers providing security came to inspect the facility before her arrival, rape survivors gathering in the television room cried out in horror, fearing they would be assaulted again.
- "When she (the President) came, we cried, we screamed, we didn't want to talk to her," recalled another rape survivor, who told AFP that Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers raped her for eight days in a military camp after pulling her off a bus near the Tigray town of Wukro. "We never want to talk to her (the president)," she added.
- A women's rights activist, Ms Saba said: "I think the war has already managed to create a breach between the Tigrayan people and the rest of the country. People say they don't feel Ethiopian anymore."
- "With the rapes, it's usually taken as dishonoring Tigrayans, discriminating or showing that Tigrayans don't have any dignity, that they are lower," Ms Saba said.
- Another rape survivor told the AFP that: "She was gang raped by Eritrean soldiers after being abducted from the town of Adigrat and told her they had been ordered to come after the women," she recalled.
- "This is our time. It is time for the Tigrayans to weep," she quoted her assailants as saying, adding she knows there are many more victims who have not been able to reach Mekelle.

Reported situation in Ethiopia (as confirmed per 10 March)

- The Ethiopian Deputy Chief of Mission in the United States, Berhane Kidanemariam, has written a post in which he criticizes the Ethiopian government for its handling of the War in Tigray. He said that when PM Abiy came to power he "had big hopes for genuine reforms that could transform our political

environment.” However since then he says the PM has put Ethiopia on a dark path, by arresting journalists, abusing the justice system and “using the military to suppress opposition to his rule.”

- He says that opposition politicians have been arrested on false charges, postponed elections with no cause and deregistering and debarring opposition parties.
- Berhane further accuses the government of stocking ethnic tensions to pursue his agenda, pitting Amhara and Eritreans against Tigrayans, fostering conflict in Oromo, and creating conflict with Sudan.
- He has also said that since the start of Abiy’s tenure there have been an alarming number of assassinations of major political and civic figures”, with perpetrators not being brought to justice. In some cases the assassinations were used to arrest opposition figures.
- The resigning Deputy Chief of Mission said that Abiy has invited both Eritrea and the UAE to fight in Tigray, and invited them to use drones to kill Tigrayans. He said that peace could only come after the government would tell foreign forces to leave Ethiopian territory.
- Berhane stated that infrastructure in Tigray had deliberately been destroyed and that “Hundreds of thousands of people are being displaced, killed, and deliberately starved.”
- Berhane further criticized the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission as a “leaf to the international community” which allows him to pursue “its crimes with impunity”. Instead he called on independent UN investigators to look into the crimes committed in Tigray.
- He calls on the government to release all political prisoners and start a process and start an inclusive process of national dialogue to resolve the problems in the Ethiopian system.
- He finished the message by announcing his resignation from his post and calling on Ethiopians to voice their opposition to the government's policy and start a process of national dialogue and reconciliation.
- Ethiopian Ambassador to Sudan, Yibeltal Amero said Sudan accusing Ethiopia of supplying logistics and ammunition to Sudanese rebels is baseless.
- The Oromo Liberation Front, an Ethiopian opposition party, has officially announced that it will not participate in the coming elections as they do not believe they will be free. It will not participate in an election where the outcome is already “predetermined”. Many of its party leaders and members have been imprisoned.

Reported international situation (as confirmed per 10 March)

- U.S. Secretary of State Blinken described violence in Ethiopia’s Tigray region as “ethnic cleansing” as he pressed for an investigation and the exit of Eritrean troops.
- Blinken told Congress that he wanted the region to see security forces “that will not abuse the human rights of the people of Tigray or commit acts of ethnic cleansing” which we have seen in western Tigray.
- “That has to stop and we also need full accountability”, Blinken said responding to a question from the House of Foreign Affairs Committee.
- “We need to get an independent investigation into what took place there and some kind of process, a reconciliation process so that the country can move forward politically,” he added.
- Blinken states: “We have, as you know, forces from Eritrean over there, and we have forces from an adjoining region, Amhara, that are there. They need to come out.”

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Links of interest

<https://berhanekidanemariam.medium.com/statement-on-the-current-situation-in-ethiopia-b468f7ed024a>

<https://www.straitstimes.com/world/i-dont-feel-safe-survivors-allege-rape-by-soldiers-in-tigray>

<https://addisstandard.com/news-analysis-ol-officially-out-from-upcoming-election-continues-call-for-release-of-its-jailed-leadership-members/>

<https://www.globalr2p.org/publications/joint-ngo-letter-ambassador-thomas-greenfield-ethiopia/>