

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 141 - 05 May 2021

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Children victim of Situation in Tigray (as per 04 May)

- Save the Children says almost 5,000 children are currently separated from their parents as the result of the conflict in Tigray, Ethiopia, with many living in unsafe and dire conditions in informal camps.
- “Six months on since the fighting started, at least 917 unaccompanied and 4,056 separated children have been recorded by the UN. Many of them have no adult caregivers and are at risk of neglect and sexual and physical abuse,” said Save the Children.
- Save the Children said many of the children were separated from their parents while fleeing for their lives during the conflict. Others have lost their parents to violence.
- Save the Children added: “We are gravely concerned for the mental and physical wellbeing of these children. Separated children face enormous challenges in meeting their basic needs, missing the people in their lives who would usually help them find food, water and shelter.”
- Some of these children are currently not in safe care and many are living in a single room where over 50 people sleep, exposing them to further risks of harm including physical and sexual violence.
- “In the past two months, more than 950 girls and women have reported they have been raped. But, in reality, this figure is likely to be much higher. Women who have spoken with Save the Children’s Emergency Health Unit say that many survivors are too scared to report the sexual assault or to seek treatment, due to stigma and fear of reprisal,” added Save the Children.
- Save the Children’s Country Director in Ethiopia, Ekin Ogutogullari, said: “The situation in Tigray is critical. Six months since the start of this conflict, hundreds of thousands of people have still not received assistance. The humanitarian response is underfunded, and the international community must continue to step up to ensure the funding matches the scale of this crisis.”
- Further, Magdalena Rossman, Save the Children’s Child Protection Advisor for the Tigray Response, said: “A family that is split apart through conflict suffers hugely, both psychologically and physically. Children who are separated from their parents often tell us they are afraid and are unable or unwilling to engage in simple activities that used to give them pleasure.”
- Amnesty International (AI) said African and other world leaders must urgently speak out and do more to stem the ferocious tide of human rights and international humanitarian law violations in the armed conflict that has now raged for six months in the Tigray region.
- “Six months since the start of the conflict in Tigray, there is no lack of credible evidence of human rights and international humanitarian law violations, but the response from the African Union and United Nations has been woefully insufficient,” said Deprese Muchena, AI’s Regional Director for East and Southern Africa.
- Deprese Muchena said: “It is unconscionable that women and girls in Tigray are facing sexual violence while the world looks on. Meanwhile, hospitals and humanitarian providers have had supplies decimated in the conflict and are ill-equipped to assist.”
- “It is imperative that international, independent investigations are carried out into the allegations of serious violations by all sides, with those responsible held to account, to send a clear message that there will be zero impunity,” added Deprese Muchena.

- Deprose Muchena concludes: “If the international community’s tepid response to the conflict in Tigray continues, there is a real threat that the already dire situation could spiral completely out of control.”

Situation in Ethiopia (as per 04 May)

- Former Amhara region Police Commissioner, Abere Adamu, has died. The circumstances of his death are unclear. Commissioner Abere was replaced by Commissioner Tekola Ayfokiru last week after recent violence in South-Wello, North-Shewa and Oromo Special zones of the Amhara region.
- Ethiopia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement that Ethiopia has learnt with disappointment the EU’s decision to cancel its planned election observation mission to Ethiopia.
- The Ministry further said: “It is very unfortunate to have learnt that the issue of communications equipment was put forth as a deal-breaker for the EU to observe one of the most hoped-for democratic elections in the country’s history, adding that the demand has come as a surprise to the government of Ethiopia, as none of these elements were a bone of contention in past elections.”
- “At a time when the telecommunication infrastructure in Ethiopia has made huge strides employing the latest available technologies, questioning the effectiveness and efficiency of its services is not a convincing reason to take the hasty decision of cancelling the mission’s deployment,” said the ministry.

Reported Situation in the Horn region (as per 04 May)

- Eritrea's president, Isaias Afewerki, arrived in Khartoum for talks with Sudanese officials amid tensions over a longtime border dispute between Sudan and Ethiopia.
- The Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs rejected Sudan’s claim of the Benshangul-Gumuz region and accused Sudan of running an unwarranted, provocative and increasingly bellicose propaganda campaign.

Reported International situation (as per 04 May)

- Sec. Antony J. Blinken met with EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission Josep Borrell and discussed ways to deepen U.S-EU cooperation on shared foreign policy priorities, including Russia, Iran, China, Afghanistan, and the Horn of Africa.
- U.S. Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, Jeffrey Feltman will travel to Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Sudan from 4-13 May 2021. He will hold meetings with officials from the respective governments as well as the United Nations and the African Union.
- EU high representative Josep Borrell says despite all efforts by the European Union, it was not possible to reach an agreement with Ethiopian authorities on key parameters for the deployment of an EU Electoral Observation Mission in view of the parliamentary elections on 5 June 2021. As conditions are not fulfilled, the deployment of the mission has been cancelled.
- “The integrity of an electoral observation mission is a cornerstone of the EU’s support for democracy. The EU regrets the refusal of the fulfilment of standard requirements for the deployment of any Electoral Observation Mission,” added Borrell.
- He said it is disappointing that the EU has not received the assurances necessary to extend to the Ethiopian people one of its most visible signs of support for their quest for democracy. The EU encourages the Ethiopian authorities to increase efforts to guarantee all Ethiopians can exercise their legitimate political and civil rights.
- EU Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez Lenarčič said over 1 million people have been displaced in Tigray after six months of the conflict and thousands have been facing sexual and gender-based violence. “Meeting basic needs and providing protection is a priority and all civilians in Tigray must be able to access humanitarian aid,” he added.

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Links of interest

<https://www.savethechildren.net/news/six-months-almost-5000-children-separated-parents-conflict-tigray#>
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/05/ethiopia-tepid-international-response-to-tigray-conflict-fuels-horrific-violations-over-past-six-months>
<https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/97691/ethiopia-statement-high-representative-josep-borrell-cancellation-election-observer>
<https://addisstandard.com/news-alert-ethiopia-responds-to-eu-cancellation-of-election-observation-mission-says-communications-equipment-demand>