

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 170 - 17 June 2021

Europe External Programme with Africa is a Belgium-based Centre of Expertise with in-depth knowledge, publications, and networks, specialised in issues of peacebuilding, refugee protection, and resilience in the Horn of Africa. EEPA has published extensively on issues related to the movement and/or human trafficking of refugees in the Horn of Africa and on the Central Mediterranean Route. It cooperates with a wide network of universities, research organizations, civil society, and experts from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Uganda, and across Africa. The situation reports can be found [here](#).

Reported situation in Tigray (per 16 June)

- Fierce fighting between ENDF allied forces and Tigray defense forces was reported in the North western and Central zones of Tigray. Massive fighting was also reported in different parts of Tigray in recent days.
- An eyewitness from Alitena, Erob district, Eastern Tigray told Tigray Media House (TMH) that Eritrean troops killed 13 members of his family and denied them burial for 14 days.
- "Eritrean troops also looted everything from our house. They have killed and burned one of my family members," said the eyewitness.
- The UN humanitarian chief warned that the 1984 famine that killed more than 1 million Ethiopians could occur again if aid access to Tigray is not quickly improved, scaled up and properly funded.
- "There is now famine in Tigray," said Mark Lowcock at a private, informal meeting of the UNSC. He put the blame on Eritrean forces. "Eritrean soldiers are using starvation as a weapon of war," he said.
- He added that: "'Rape is being used systematically to terrorize and brutalize women and girls. Aid workers have been killed, interrogated, beaten, blocked from taking aid to the starving and suffering and told not to come back."
- He said the Tigray interim administration has reported deaths from starvation. "The situation is set to get worse in the coming months, not only in Tigray, but in Afar and Amhara, as well."
- He also said the scope of the problem is massive and there were 123 humanitarian agencies operating in the area and 10 times as many aid workers in Tigray today than at the start of the crisis in November.
- "But substantial further scale-up is urgently required if we are to make a significant impact on growing needs," he said.
- Ethiopia's U.N. envoy said Eritrean troops in the Tigray region are expected to "definitely leave soon," after a top U.N. official told the UNSC that Eritrea's soldiers were using starvation as a weapon of war.
- The U.N. ambassador, Taye Atske Selassie Amde, said the Eritrean withdrawal "is a matter of sorting out some technical and procedural issues."
- "Our expectation is that they will definitely leave soon," he told reporters after the council briefing. He also said the situation in Tigray did not warrant the Security Council's attention.
- UNICEF has also warned that 33,000 severely malnourished children in currently unreachable areas of Tigray are also at high risk of death.
- During the webinar "Voices from Tigray" on Crimes against Refugees, testimonies were heard of Eritrean minors being among the soldiers fighting Tigray.
- The Eritrean soldiers are deployed through the mechanism of National Service, which has been qualified as a Crime against Humanity and leaves Eritreans in indefinite slave-like conditions of an integrated approach to militarise all activity in the country.
- The latest National service round, the 33rd round, includes minors who were in the last class of school, and it was said to have been deployed to two refugee camps in Ethiopia, which were both destroyed.

Reported Situation in Ethiopia (per 16 June)

- An Eritrean human smuggler, accused of extorting thousands of refugees and migrants in Libya, has been sentenced to 18 years in prison in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa.

- Tewelde Goitom, known as Walid, was also ordered to pay a fine of 200,000 birrs (\$4,608) – the maximum allowed, according to Ethiopian legislation.
- Another human trafficker, known as Kidane, escaped from prison in Ethiopia and he is currently back in Libya. He is alleged of committing grave crimes.
- Eyewitnesses told the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) that Ethiopian Airlines is transporting military weapons to Jimma (Oromia), Hawassa (SNNPR), Kombolcha (Amhara) and Mekelle (Tigray).
- Prime Minister Abiy was seen driving a UN plated car for the ruling Prosperity Party final election campaign in the town of Jimma in Oromia regional state on 16 June 2021.
- Amnesty International calls for the release of Dawud Ibsaa, the chairman of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), who is under house arrest for months.

Situation in the Horn region (per 16 June)

- The foreign ministers of Arab countries have backed calls for the United Nations Security Council to intervene in a long-running regional dispute over GERD.
- Ethiopia has rejected an Arab League resolution calling on the UNSC to intervene in a lingering dispute between Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia over GERD.
- Ethiopia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the resolution was a repeat of the Arab States' misguided positions on the GERD. "As a result of its egregious support to the baseless claims of Egypt and Sudan related to GERD, the Arab League has already squandered its opportunity to play a constructive role."

International situation (per 16 June)

- Dame Barbara Woodward, UK Ambassador to the UN said Eritrean troops must withdraw from the Tigray region in Ethiopia without delay.
- "We were told in March that Eritrean forces would be withdrawing. It is now June - there can be no further delay," said Woodward during a briefing to the UNSC on Tuesday.
- Woodward also said: "We called today for Council members to come together and urge with one voice for an immediate ceasefire and access to humanitarian aid."
- She further said it is not drought or locusts causing this hunger in Tigray, but the decisions of those in power. That means those in power can also end the suffering.
- Ireland's U.N. ambassador, Geraldine Byrne Nason also said: "All evidence now points towards an unfolding humanitarian catastrophe. People in Tigray are starving and we cannot delay ... we have to ensure that no more lives are lost."
- A report by Facebook says they removed a network of accounts, Pages and Groups in Ethiopia for coordinated inauthentic behavior (CIB).
- "We removed 65 Facebook accounts, 52 Pages, 27 Groups, and 32 accounts on Instagram for violating our policy against coordinated inauthentic behavior. This network originated in and focused on domestic audiences in Ethiopia," said the report.
- The report also said the people behind this activity coordinated with one another and used fake accounts as a central part of their operations to mislead people about who they are and what they are doing, and that was the basis for our action.
- "This network posted primarily in Amharic about news and current events in Ethiopia, including the Prosperity party, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, and criticism of Egypt and Sudan related to Ethiopia's mega dam project," added the report.
- The report added most recently, they commented about protests against the US sanctions on Ethiopia.
- "Although the people behind it attempted to conceal their identities and coordination, our investigation found links to individuals associated with INSA, the Information Network Security Agency in Ethiopia," said the report.

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Links of interest

<https://www.voanews.com/africa/un-deaths-starvation-reported-ethiopia-tigray>
<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-conflict-un/ethiopia-u-n-envoy-says-eritrea-troops-to-leave-tigray-soon-idUSKCN2DR2HY>
<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/tigray-ethiopia-famine-rapes-tipping-point/>
<https://english.lokmat.com/international/eritrea-forces-should-withdraw-from-tigray-without-further-delay-uk-envoy-to-un/amp/>
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/15/infamous-human-smuggler-sentenced-to-18-years-in-ethiopian-prison>
<https://addisstandard.com/news-amnesty-calls-for-the-release-of-olfs-chairman-under-house-arrest-for-months/>
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<https://about.fb.com/news/2021/06/removing-coordinated-inauthentic-behavior-from-ethiopia/>