

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 45 - 4 January 2021

[Europe External Programme with Africa](#) is a Belgium-based Centre of Expertise with in-depth knowledge, publications, and networks, specialised in issues of peace building, refugee protection and resilience in the Horn of Africa. EEPA has published extensively on issues related to 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 organisations, civil society and experts from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Uganda and across Africa. Key in-depth publications [can be accessed on the website](#).

Military situation (as confirmed per 3 January 2021)

- The Federally appointed provisional mayor of Mekelle, Mr. Atakilti Haileslassie, has urged for the immediate withdrawal of Eritrean Troops from Tigray. This is the first time Ethiopian Federally appointed officials have officially admitted that Eritrean soldiers are involved in operations in Tigray.
- Eritrean military captain Gubssa Kahsay has died. Sources in Tigray state he died during operations with Tigray Defence Forces in Tigray. In Eritrea, EritTV broadcasted his death caused by illness. In the past few weeks, at least five high ranking Eritrean military have died from illness, according to authorities.
- Report of shooting among Ethiopia National Defense Forces (ENDF) soldiers in a meeting held at Meles Zenawi Academy in Mekelle, Tigray. Federal Ethiopia Prosperity Party military officials ordered federal police and military forces, who are patrolling Mekelle, to fight the Tigray Defense Forces (TDF) in mountainous areas where TDF are engaging guerilla warfare. Forces refused to take the order and argued they came to Mekelle to keep peace, order and arrest TPLF leadership; not to engage in a fight with TDF. Dozens were wounded and are receiving medical treatment at Ayder Hospital.
- ENDF formations are reportedly gathering around Mekelle, Tigray, and surrounding towns (including in Qwiha, where shots were fired on 3 January).
- Sudanese military intelligence has said it has arrested 45 TPLF fighters arriving in Sudan.
- Eritrean soldiers in Tigray select people with relatives abroad. They select them by offering people to call relatives. Those with relatives abroad are then detained. The relatives overseas are subsequently extorted for money, with the threat that the relatives will be killed. This has been reported in Rama and other places. Eritrea is involved in abductions for ransom extortion in Sudan and Libya and previously in Egypt.
- Report of severe violence against women: “countless number of women” are victims of physical and sexual abuse and rape, including gang rape. Some of these acts are aggravated by other forms of brutality like shooting victims or mutilating them with knives.
- In Mekelle many women are asking for a post pill as a precaution for avoiding unwanted pregnancy.
- Report that women are kidnapped and taken by armed forces from different parts of the region without any information of their whereabouts. Call made for urgent investigation.
- *Unconfirmed report* that ethnic Tigray Ethiopians in peacekeeping missions abroad have been redeployed to the Ethiopian-Sudan border and that two Eritrean divisions are surveilling this operation.

Regional situation (as confirmed per 3 January 2021)

- The Sudanese army deputy of staff has said that Sudan will restore sovereignty over the entire al-Fashqa region which is occupied by ethnic Amhara Ethiopian farmers.

- The dispute over the area of the al Fashaqa on the Ethiopia-Sudan area is rooted in colonial times. Land in use by Ethiopian farmers belongs to Sudan. A compromise was reached in 2008: Ethiopia would acknowledge the legal status of the border, while Sudan would allow the Ethiopian farmers to live there. The status of the agreement has recently been challenged.
- The Egyptian President Al-Sisi has spoken with the Sudanese Chairman of the Sovereignty Council, Al Burhan, stressing “Egypt's support to Sudan across all fields”.
- An agreement reached between the US and Sudan. The US will provide 111 million US\$ to pay off bilateral debt, 120 million US\$ to help pay the IMF, and 700 million US\$ for budgetary assistance.
- The Sudanese finance minister announced the aid would help Sudan to clear its arrears with the World Bank, and make it eligible for the IMF Highly Indebted Poor Countries Programme.
- Negotiations on the Ethiopian GERD dam restarted Sunday under chairmanship of . Representatives of the AU, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan, were in attendance. The meeting was held virtually. The meeting collapsed because Egypt refused to accept a paper put on the table for discussion.
- According to the Ethiopian State Broadcaster Fana, most of the issues regarding the filing and annual operations of the dam are agreed. The differences are about future water development projects on the Abbay Basin and on the “co-relations between the GERD Guidelines and Rules “.
- The number of Tigrayan refugees in Sudan has grown to 61.000. It is estimated 1200 pregnant women are in the camps.
- Refugees in Um Rakoba camp clashed. There have been high tensions between refugees of different ethnic groups. According to the Sudantribune, aid workers have been avoiding these camps as a result.

Situation in Ethiopia (as confirmed per 3 January 2021)

- There are concerns about the increase in violence in Ethiopia. The number of massacres that have been taking place in the last months has been increasing in regularity. The Federal government is being confronted with multiple crises at once.
- The OLF, an insurgency mainly fighting in the region of Oromia, has reportedly “graduated” hundreds of new fighters. Recent months have seen a surge in violence in the region.
- Electricity is still not available in the vast majority of Tigray. Satellite images show many towns without lights.

International Situation (as confirmed per 3 January 2021)

- The UNHCR is concerned about the reported forced repatriation of Eritrean refugees from Addis Ababa to Tigray. Many Eritreans fleeing the conflict in Tigray have been forced to return to the camps they left in november. UNHCR is requesting access to all facilities at which refugees are being held.
- The ENDF has left the Shire area, where the Eritrean refugees in Tigray are hosted, reportedly under control of Eritrean troops and this area is not safe for Eritrean refugees who fled Eritrea.
- It was further announced that Eritrean refugees will not be allowed outside of camps without a pass.

Disclaimer: All information in this situation report is presented as a fluid update report, as to the best knowledge and understanding of the authors at the moment of publication. EEPA does not claim that the information is correct but verifies to the best of ability within the circumstances. Publication is weighed on the basis of interest to understand potential impacts of events (or perceptions of these) on the situation. Check all information against updates and other media. EEPA does not take responsibility for the use of the information or impact thereof. All information reported originates from third parties and the content of all reported and linked information remains the sole responsibility of these third parties. Report to info@eepea.be any additional information and corrections.

Links of interest

<https://www.africanews.com/2020/12/31/sudanese-army-retake-border-area-with-ethiopia/>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-55476831>

<https://sudantribune.com/spip.php?article70283>

<https://sudantribune.com/spip.php?article70287>

<https://www.awashpost.com/2021/01/02/mounting-violence-in-ethiopia-exposes-deepening-fault-lines-and-leadership-crisis/>