

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 47 - 08 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 7 January 2021)

- Reported that ethnic Tigray soldiers being suspended and/or returned from Ethiopian peace-keeping missions are imprisoned by the Ethiopian Federal Government.
- Reported that ethnic Tigrayan military attachés in Ethiopian diplomatic services abroad are sacked.
- Reported that Eritrean soldiers were ambushed by Tigrayan forces East of Wukro.
- Pictures have emerged of the ambush between Mekoni and Mekelle. Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) forces were ambushed by Tigray forces.
- Report that Eritrean forces occupy Hitsats town in Tigray and control the area, including a refugee camp which hosts 25.000 refugees from Eritrea. The camp has still not been reached by humanitarian organisations and refugees and communities have been without food supplies for over two months.
- The ENDF released the names of 9 senior TPLF members they have captured, according to the report.

Regional situation (as confirmed per 7 January 2021)

- An Eritrean delegation has met with the Chairman of the Sovereign Council Al-Burhan of Sudan. They discussed regional security and tried to strengthen bilateral ties and regional security. The Eritreans reportedly offered to mediate the conflict between Ethiopia and Sudan. Sudan rejected the offer.
- One of the leading African Constitutional and Human rights law experts, Paulos Tesfagiorgis, has argued that the peace process that the AU initiated to solve the conflict in Tigray was undermined by the AU Commission chairperson, Moussa Faki Mahamat, from the beginning. According to Tesfagiorgis, Mahamat was “blatantly partisan” and undermined the peacemaking process.
- Tesfagiorgis argues that the Chairperson’s position “violates the letter and spirit of the African Union and IGAD constitutive documents and numerous subsequent resolutions,..” Mahamat undermined any chances of peace and the principles that the regional and continental bodies pursue, he states.
- It was earlier reported that a proposal at the 38th Extraordinary Conference of IGAD for the AU Commission Chairperson, Mahamat, to visit Tigray was withdrawn from the communiqué.
- Tesfagiorgis also stated that “Today there is alarming news of starvation in Eritrea. The regime has politicized the issue of the virus and opted to use it as a weapons to starve and weaken the people by enforcing lockdown without the means to feed them.”

- Eritrea has taken complete lock-down measures. A source from Eritrea reported the COVID-spread is 'devastating', reporting that doctors, drivers and government officials have reportedly been infected.
- The UN fears that the recent conflict in Tigray has facilitated massive COVID-19 community transmission in Tigray. Other sources suggested the conflict has facilitated the spread across all involved regions, including Eritrea.
- Sudan has confirmed the arrival of more refugees from Ethiopia. The humanitarian official said that most refugees cross at night, to avoid military patrols on the border, stopping refugees from crossing.
- The Ethiopian government has denied that more Ethiopian troops had been placed on the border to prevent refugees from crossing into Sudan.
- The Council for the Arab States of the Gulf encourages members to cooperate with Sudan.
- No agreement has yet been reached on reopening negotiations on the GERD dam. Sudan and Egypt disagree on the role that AU experts should play during the negotiations.

Situation in Ethiopia (as confirmed per 7 January 2021)

- In its recent report crisis NGO ACAPS ranks humanitarian access in Ethiopia with Very High Access Constraints. Areas not under the control of the government remain inaccessible for humanitarian aid.
- ACAPS states that the border with Sudan has been partially closed since the Tigray conflict started.
- The associate director of Human Rights Watch has said that it is essential to allow unhindered access to Tigray. With estimations on the number of IDPs ranging from 200 thousand (by the UN) to over 2 million (by the interim Tigray government), it is important to have unhindered access to reach them.

Situation in Tigray (as confirmed per 7 January 2021)

- The majority of the displaced people in the area have returned home, but most of their belongings have been looted. The UN has observed massive damage and vandalism to public health centres. Infrastructure and other public buildings urgently need repairs.
- The UN has only provided food relief to Mekelle and Mai Ayni and Adi Harush refugee camps. It would appear that until now no food has been provided to the camps Shemelba and Hitsats, home to 50.000 Eritrean refugees. These have not received food since October last year.

International Situation (as confirmed per 7 January 2021)

- The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) held a virtual meeting on Wednesday. They discussed various challenges and initiatives for the promotion of peace and security. UN Chief Antonio Guterres expressed support for the AU "silence the guns" initiative. Liberia's former President, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, called on the Council to take bold steps towards ending conflicts.
- President Kenyatta of Kenya has laid out Kenya's agenda for its year tenure of a non-permanent UNSC seat. It includes a greater role for Africa and the Global South, COVID-19 vaccines for Africa, and a revitalised multilateralism aimed at strengthening global peace and security.

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@eeepa.be any additional information and corrections.

Links of interest

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/1788376>

<https://www.unocha.org/story/daily-noon-briefing-highlights-ethiopia-8>

<https://www.acaps.org/country/world/special-reports#container-1592>

<https://africanarguments.org/2021/01/the-ethiopian-conflict-and-the-abrogation-of-the-au-mandate-by-the-commission-chairperson/>