

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 53 - 12 January 2021

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Reported war situation (as confirmed per 11 January)

- The former President of Tigray region, Abay Weldu, is arrested by Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF). According to ENDF the arrest was made in a remote valley. Abay Weldu was the President of the Tigray Region from 2010 to 2018.
- It was noted that in the TV images Abay Weldu looked very unwell.
- Tigray acting Deputy President Dr. Abraham Tekeste is also arrested, Abraham Tekeste was the Minister of Finance and Economic Cooperation (MoFEC) of Ethiopia in 2016; he was MoFEC's State Minister for four years, and served as Deputy Commissioner to the National Planning Commission of Ethiopia (2015-2016) and Minister of Urban Development Policy Research and Plan Bureau Head of Ethiopia (2005-2010).
- Names of other arrests include Dr. Redae Berhe, former chief auditor of the Tigray region; Dr. Muleta Yirga, Director of the Tigray Statistics Agency; Mr. Iqubay Berhe, Head of Religious Affairs in Tigray; Mr. Getachew Tefari, Head of Security of the Tigray President Office; Mrs Kiros Hagos, Head of the Bureau of Social Affairs of the regional government of Tigray.
- Those that were arrested had left Mekelle and were in different locations in the rural areas in Central Tigray.
- Many other TPLF affiliated individuals were arrested when ENDF took control of Mekelle on Nov 28. It should be noted that TPLF has more than half a million members in Tigray.
- It is reported that TPLF members have been arrested and taken to Eritrea. This happened especially in Shire town.
- Expert notes that any of the officials in the list of civil arrests could have been arrested at any time without engaging in the war.
- It is reported that the son of Sebhat Nega, Tekeste Sebhat, was killed by a drone attack when he was driving in his car. This happened five or six weeks ago. It was earlier reported that TPLF spokesman, Sekoture Getachew, and the former director of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority and journalist, Abebe Asgedom, were also killed by a drone attack one month ago. They were attacked by a drone while traveling together in a car. (Situation Report 51)
- It is reported that Major General Ibrahim Abduljelil, the head of logistics of TPLF and Brigadier General Gebrekidan Gebremariam have been killed by the ENDF.
- Eritrean soldiers have forced 6.000 refugees from Shimelba camp to return to Eritrea. Of those politically active, 120 have disappeared. Eritrean soldiers also killed 64 people in the camp.
- Report transmitted by people walking on foot to Mekelle, that in December dozen citizens were massacred by Eritrean forces in the church of Medhanie Alein Gu'etelo near Asefe, not far from Adigrat. It happened on the anniversary of the Church Saint.
- Fires have been detected in Asgede, in North West Tigray. Fighting has been reported in the area.

- The convoy heading for Shire has reportedly been ambushed by Tigray regional forces. Casualties are unclear. A high ranking officer might have been part of the convoy.
- An ENDF colonel has been killed by Tigrayan forces during fighting in BoraSolewa near Maychew. Reportedly his forces had been involved in the killings of civilians (reported in Situation Report 52).
- Reports of door to door killings of civilians en masse in BoraSolewa, Tigray, for days. Borasolewa is an area of resistance by the TPLF against the federal government military operation.
- More detail has been released on the massacre at the Maryam Zion Church in Aksum. On Tuesday, 15th of December, Ethiopian federal troops and Amhara militia approached the Maryam Zion Cathedral in Aksum. The church was full, and 1,000 people may have been in the building or the compound surrounding it. A confrontation happened after which people were forced to come out on the square. The troops opened fire and 750 people are reported to have been killed.
- Many residents of Aksum are still staying in rural areas and have not returned yet.
- Gunfire in Mekelle reported in Situation Report 52 was related to the arrest of Sebhat Nega as dozens of federal soldiers were shooting in the air to celebrate over a longer time.

Reported Regional situation (as confirmed per 11 January)

- The GERD dam negotiations have collapsed again. Sudan, Egypt, and Ethiopia have had difficulties in agreeing on a framework for the negotiations. Sudan wants a greater role for AU experts. However both Egypt and Ethiopia have reservations about this. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sudan has said that it will look for alternative methods to resolve the issue, if the talks fail.
- Kenyan forces were hit by an attack by an Improvised Explosive Device (roadside bomb) in Somalia. It killed 4 Kenyan soldiers and wounded 8 more. Reportedly it is the third attack in 48 hours.

Reported situation in Ethiopia (as confirmed per 11 January)

- According to Amhara Mass Media agency (AMMA), 300 Ethiopians living in Sudan are returning every day due to tensions between Ethiopia and Sudan. Ethiopians living all over Sudan, are returning with their families and belongings. Returnees interviewed say that they faced harassment and attacks on their properties. It is estimated that 3.500 Ethiopians living in Sudan have returned from Sudan so far.
- The SudanTribune reported that the Ethiopian forces launched an attack into Sudan, killing five women and a child. They clashed with Sudanese forces. An Ethiopian fighter jet carried out attacks in the area.
- An OCHA report on the Benishangul Gumuz region says that the security situation in the region is deteriorating. An increase in violence has been seen since July 2020.
- Humanitarian organisations have moved their staff out of the Benishangul Gumuz region.
- OCHA estimates that the conflict in Benishangul Gumuz has created over a hundred thousand IDPs.

Reported International situation (as confirmed per 11 January)

- British House of Lords member, Lord Alton, has called on the British government to investigate the reports of massacres and attacks on refugee camps in Tigray.
- Experts say that the Eritrean presence in Tigray is making the situation worse. Strong antagonism between Tigray and Eritrea, coupled with large scale looting and many reports of massacres, is strengthening Tigrayan resolve to fight to the end. By turning to guerrilla warfare, the TPLF and militias are threatening a war that could take many more months or years.

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Links of interest

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-conflict/ethiopian-military-says-it-killed-15-members-of-rebellious-tigray-forces-captured-8-others-idUSKBN29F0JF>
<https://eritreahub.org/massacre-at-tigrays-mariam-of-zion-cathedral-in-aksum>

