

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 95 - 02 March 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. The situation reports can be found [here](#).

Journalism in the conflict (as confirmed per 01 March)

- A BBC reporter, Girmay Gebru, has been arrested. The BBC has been told that he was sent to a military camp.
- Two local “fixers” for foreign journalists were arrested by the Ethiopian army. Fitsum Berhane who works for AFP and Alula Akalu for the Financial Times. This is in line with reports over the weekend of translators and other “fixers” being arrested.
- AFP calls on the Ethiopian authorities to release a man who was arrested while he was serving as a translator for a team of its journalists reporting in the Tigray region.
- According to the AFP, Fitsum Berhane was arrested after working for three days as a translator for a team of AFP journalists duly accredited by the Ethiopian authorities for a series of reports in the northern region of Tigray.
- Other translators and “fixers” have said that they have been threatened with arrest or death if they lead journalists to mass graves or sensitive spots.
- “We have not been informed of any specific charges against Fitsum Brhane. His collaboration with a media outlet should not be a motive for his arrest, and we call for his immediate release,” said Phil Chetwynd, AFP’s Global News Director.

Reported war situation in Tigray (as confirmed per 01 March)

- USAID has deployed a Disaster Assistance Response Team to respond to growing humanitarian needs stemming from conflict in Ethiopia’s Tigray region.
- According to the USAID, the team will identify priority needs to scale up assistance and work with partners to provide life-saving aid to people in need.
- Reported that two academic staff members of Mekelle University have been arrested by Ethiopian troops and they are currently detained at Hibret Defense College near Mekelle University main campus
- Getachew Reda, advisor to the President of Tigray government, said that the US State Department statement urging Eritrean and Amhara forces to withdraw from Tigray is commendable, but doubted that the Ethiopian government would follow them.
- In a series of tweets he attacked the Ethiopian government. He has not posted anything on twitter since December, and the Ethiopian government has claimed to have killed him.
- Getachew also claims that 8 Eritrean divisions have been sent South of Mekelle to fight Tigray forces.
- Reported in social media that Ethiopian and Eritrean troops are shooting and looting residents of Mekelle near Mesfin Industrial Engineering factory and scores are reported to have been injured.
- There have been further reports of Eritrean telecom being installed in Northern Tigray regions. Similarly the Eritrean dial code has been reportedly expanded into Tigray.
- According to aid organisations in Sudan, more refugees are coming in from Tigray.
- The Ethiopian government has rejected a US call to withdraw regional forces from Tigray.

- According to The Reporter, Ethiopian banks are seeing an increase in non-performing loans as people based in Tigray have stopped paying back their loans. Several big banks have been “highly affected”.

Human Rights Violations (as confirmed per 01 March)

- There are numerous reports of Tigrayans being deported from the Western Tigrayan Lowlands by Amharic regional forces. They are being deported to Central Tigray. Only those that can be identified as Amharic can remain.
- Tigrayans that have not been deported yet are being put under “quarantine”. They have little to no access to food and emergency supplies.
- According to reports the administrative boundaries in Western Tigray have been abolished. Villages and places are reportedly being given entirely new names.
- Unconfirmed reports say that in Humera, Regional Amharic militias are killing Tigrayans and have prepared trucks to transport people to Shiraro.
- According to sources, female students from Ayder Referral Hospital College of Health Sciences in Mekelle were raped yesterday by Ethiopian troops while traveling from the library to their dormitories.
- The raped victims of the College are currently receiving treatment at Ayder Referral Hospital.
- Human Rights Watch (HRW) said Ethiopian federal forces carried out apparently indiscriminate shelling of urban areas in the Tigray region in November 2020 in violation of the law of war.
- The HRW report shows that artillery attacks at the start of the armed conflict struck homes, hospitals, schools, and markets in the city of Mekelle, and the towns of Humera and Shire, killing at least 83 civilians, including children, and wounding over 300.
- “These attacks have shattered civilian lives in Tigray and displaced thousands of people, underscoring the urgency for ending unlawful; attacks and holding those responsible to account,” said Laetitia Bader, Horn of Africa director at HRW.

Reported in Horn region (as confirmed per 01 March)

- Clashes are continuing between Sudan and Ethiopian supported militias. The Sudanese military announced that it had retaken control over a part of the Al-fashada area after Ethiopian backed militias took control of it over the weekend.
- The military official added that the Sudanese army set up a camp in the “Hassan Kardi ” area, off the border with Ethiopia, and continues to inspect the border area to verify the presence of militia or not.

Reported international situation (as confirmed per 01 March)

- The United Nations Security Council will focus on the situation in Tigray and Yemen on March 11th.
- The USUN ambassador, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, has said that the US is prepared to elevate and table the crisis in Ethiopia.
- The Swedish Prime Minister reiterated deep concern for Tigray, the need for de-escalation, full humanitarian access and protection of civilians.
- Assita Kanko, Member the Europe Parliament, urges Eritrean troops to withdraw from Tigray and she is waiting for an answer from HR Borell about the activation of clauses under the Cotonou Protocol.
- The Ireland Mission at the UN says UNSC will discuss troop-contributing countries to the UN Mission in South Sudan this week.

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Links of interest

<https://www.afp.com/en/agency/press-releases-newsletter/afp-calls-release-translator-working-its-journalists-ethiopia#>

<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/03/01/africa/ethiopia-mfa-us-tigray-troops-intl/index.html>

<https://www.ft.com/content/272737c8-7897-4a3e-89a2-2e45f41e45a3>

<https://todaynewsafrica.com/human-rights-watch-concludes-abiy-ahmeds-soldiers-bombed-civilians-to-death-schools-hospitals-and-markets-in-tigray-region/>