

Europe External Programme with Africa

SITUATION REPORT - HORN OF AFRICA & NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

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Situation in South Sudan (per 22 January)

- Intensified fighting attacking military posts has been reported across South Sudan in the largest offensives by various coalitions of opposition forces since 2017.
- The heaviest fighting is occurring in Jonglei state, and Equatoria region, with battles raging in reportedly in all but two states, especially in old hotspots with fighting increasing every day.
- Leaders within the Sudan People's Liberation Army-in-Opposition (SPLA-IO) widely view the 2018 South Sudan peace agreement as collapsed and are pursuing advances toward Bor and Juba, though they are considered unlikely to achieve these objectives in the short-term.
- In response, the South Sudan People's Defense Forces (SSPDF) deployed reinforcements to Pajut, Jonglei State, 300 kilometers north of Juba. These troops, however, were overrun by opposition forces that had pre-empted this move, killing and capturing at least 100 soldiers.
- A large number of SSPDF troops have since been stationed in Baidit Payam, Bor County, preparing for a possible counteroffensive into Northern Jonglei State including efforts to reinforce National Security Service (NSS) personnel deployed in Poktap, located just a few kilometers from Pajut.
- Chief of SSPDF Gen. Paul Nang Majok issued his troops in Baidit Payam a seven-day ultimatum to stop the advancements of SPLA-IO and allied forces, stating "the rebellion here should be crushed".
- In Central Equatoria State, a meeting of opposition commanders, led by deputy staff of operation General Wesley Welebe, took place, ordering the release of Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition (SPLM-IO) leader Riek Machar.
- Welebe further called "to move to Juba from all directions of South Sudan" to overthrow the regime, according to the SPLA-IO spokesperson Col. Lam Paul Gabriel.
- Following the meeting, the SPLA-IO attacked and claimed to have captured the strategic town of Panyume in Central Equatoria State, releasing videos of seized military equipment as evidence. Local authorities however rejected this claim.
- In Ayod town, tensions are rising with SPLA-IO and SSPDF allegedly preparing for a confrontation.
- President Salva Kiir has removed Interior Minister and Riek Machar's wife Angelina Teny, in a televised government shakeup. He further suspended three other ministers, Governor of Lakes State, Deputy Governor of Upper Nile State, and the director general of the General Intelligence Bureau of the NSS.
- Thousands of people are displaced throughout the nation, with many fleeing into uninhabitable swamps amidst reportedly completely insecure situations for local populations.
- The situation in Juba is allegedly very insecure, with heavy robbery ongoing.
- The US, Japan, Canada and European nations issued a joint statement, on Tuesday calling on "all parties to agree to an immediate cessation of hostilities and to resolve issues through peaceful dialogue."
- The UN Commission for Human Rights in South Sudan condemned the "deliberate sabotage" of the 2018 peace agreements by the renewed fighting, characterised by indiscriminate aerial bombardments.
- Drones warfare has thus far largely been absent, though sources suggest this may just be a matter of time.

Situation in Sudan (per 22 January)

- Violence committed in El Fasher, North Darfur, amounts to war crimes and crimes against humanity, said International Criminal Court (ICC) Deputy Prosecutor Nazhat Shameem Khan to the UN Security Council.
- Khan further highlighted the advancing investigations into crimes committed in El Geneina, West Darfur in 2023 by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and allied militias.
- Drone strikes have intensified in and around El Obeid, North Kordofan's capital, with RSF forces closing in on the city, report residents to Reuters.
- Over 3,000 people have been displaced between 15 - 19 January from the besieged cities of Kadugli and Dilling, South Kordofan, reports IOM.

Situation in Ethiopia (per 22 January)

- Residents living near a gold mine in the Lega Dembi area, Oromia region, have been experiencing serious health problems, including birth defects and miscarriages, reports Human Rights Watch (HRW). The health issues are linked to toxic chemicals found in the area.
- HRW urged the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to call for suspension of mine operations and recommend independent environmental assessment.
- Human rights conditions in Tigray have been deteriorating, with increasing numbers of arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances and abductions, reports Human Rights First (HRF).
- Brigadier General Guesh Gebre, a former military leader in Tigray Defence Forces, has been reportedly detained "by the Tigray military wing", states HRF. Legality of his detention remains uncertain as there has been no proper court proceeding and the exact location of the detention remains unconfirmed.

Refugee and Migration Situation (per 22 January)

- Italy's Minister of Foreign Affairs Antonio Tajani has met the Libyan Prime Minister Abdulhameed Mohamed Dbeibah in Misrata, Libya, discussing closer collaboration between the nations amidst a rise in boat departures previous month, expressing readiness to train Libyan police forces.
- Refugee children in Europe face increasingly longer asylum procedures and policy changes, which together with an impending threat of deportation leads to mental health challenges, concludes a report by the Thomson Reuters Foundation.
- Spain has opposed the EU's proposal to establish external hubs for asylum seekers, advocating instead for addressing irregular migration through collaboration with transit countries.
- Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia are facing a deteriorating humanitarian crisis, with increasing food shortages, overcrowded camps, and raising administrative burdens.
- A mass grave containing 21 bodies has been discovered in Libya, with investigation pointing towards a broader pattern of violence against migrants and refugees in Libya. A suspect with initials "MFH" has been arrested and charged with human trafficking offenses.

Links of interest

- [New Rebel Offensive Tests Fractured South Sudan Regime](#)
- [SSPDF warns SPLA-IO: Bor will not fall](#)
- [South Sudan opposition forces call for march on Juba after battlefield gains](#)
- [SPLA-IO says it has captured Panyume, government rejects claim](#)
- [Kiir replaces interior minister Angelina in cabinet shakeup](#)
- [Sudan: Atrocities 'repeated town by town', ICC prosecutor tells UN Security Council](#)
- [Drone attacks shock city in central Sudan as war inches closer](#)
- [Today's top news: Occupied Palestinian Territory, Sudan, Mozambique](#)
- [Children Affected by Ethiopia Mine Pollution Need Justice](#)
- [News: Human Rights First raises alarm over alleged arbitrary detentions and disappearances in Tigray](#)
- [Italy says ready to train Libyan police amid rising numbers of immigrants](#)
- [Lengthy asylum procedures and restrictive policies take a toll on the mental health of young refugees](#)
- [Spain opposes plan for asylum centres outside EU](#)
- [Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia face hunger, administrative hurdles amid funding gaps](#)
- [Libya authorities charge suspect with human trafficking after migrant remains found in mass grave](#)

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