

SITUATION REPORT - HORN OF AFRICA & NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

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Situation in Ethiopia (per 28 May)

- Families across several locations in the Tigray region, namely Shire, Adwa, Enticho, Aksum and Wukro Maray, confirmed that their children were forcibly conscripted, reportedly by the Tigray forces aligned with Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), between 21 and 26 May.
- Sources confirmed that Tigray police has also been involved in the forced military conscription of youth.
- Ethiopia's federal elections scheduled for 1 June are not expected to be competitive due to fragmented and weakened opposition parties, insecurity across Amhara, Oromia and Tigray regions, suspended voting in several areas, and the ruling Prosperity Party running uncontested in 64 constituencies.
- The National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) announced that 46 constituencies, including 38 in Tigray and 8 in the Amhara region, are not included in the elections due to insecurity and political tensions. NEBE stated that the elections will be held in these places later but did not specify the timeframe.
- Reuters reports that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's Prosperity Party is expected to dominate the elections, as the opposition remains weak and fragmented despite over 10,000 registered candidates.
- The African Union electoral observation mission arrived in Addis Ababa with a team of 73 observers from 37 African countries. The delegation is led by former Kenya president Uhuru Kenyatta.
- The Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) officials warned foreign diplomats that any attempt to operationalize the alleged "Tsimdo" initiative, would face retaliation from Ethiopia, as it is deemed as a threat to Ethiopia's sovereignty linked to opposition.
- The term Tsimdo emerged previously in relation to an alleged alliance between the TPLF and Eritrean regime.

Situation in Sudan (per 28 May)

- The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) claimed to have shot down a drone near Ed Damazin in Blue Nile state after it reportedly crossed into Sudan from Ethiopia, amid rising tensions over alleged Ethiopian support linked to Rapid Support Forces (RSF) operations.
- Observers reported that arms shipments through Ethiopia to support the RSF in Sudan are no longer hidden which causes outrage and further instability.
- The SAF said they secured Al-Baraka near Al-Kurmuk in Blue Nile state after clashes with the RSF and allied Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) fighters near the Ethiopian border.
- The SAF chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan reportedly said he is willing to open talks with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) if the UAE ends its support for the RSF and respects Sudan's unity.

International and regional situation (per 28 May)

- Eritrea celebrated its 35th Independence Day on 24 May, with the Eritrean president, Isaias Afwerki, delivering a keynote speech during the celebrations in Asmara. In his address, President Isaias focused on global and regional political issues, criticizing the existing system as unfair.
- He further questioned the US policy under President Trump's administration, including the effectiveness and legality of US tariffs, military pressure, unilateral actions against Venezuela and Iran, and broader attempts to preserve influence.

- Critics pointed out that President Isaias' speech focused on global issues in order to deflect from the internal situation in Eritrea.
- The African Union Commission (AUC) and Sudan have congratulated Eritrea on the 35th anniversary of its Independence Day.
- Representatives of Eritrea, Ethiopia's FANO group, Sudan's SAF and various militia groups reportedly recently met in Port Sudan. The outcome of the meeting is uncertain, but points towards a strengthening of this alliance.
- Observers state that the Eritrean regime is attempting to create new coalitions.
- A new Human Rights Watch report states that the UAE, through Abu Dhabi-based security firm Global Security Services Group (GSSG), recruited and deployed Colombian private military contractors to support the RSF in Darfur, including their operations around El Fasher.
- Kenya renewed calls to reopen the Kenya-Somalia border, with Health Cabinet Secretary Aden Duale saying the closure is ineffective, limits revenue, and weakens oversight of cross-border movement.
- Somaliland President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi Irro has accused Somalia and Djibouti of interfering in Somaliland's affairs, warning that Hargeisa will defend its security and political decisions amid tensions over its ties with Israel.
- The African Union Commission (AUC) has expressed concern that talks between Somalia's federal government and the Somali Future Council ended without consensus, urging all parties to resume inclusive dialogue and respect constitutional order.

Refugee and migration situation (per 28 May)

- EU negotiations over the controversial deportation bill broke down after states and the EU Parliament failed to agree on the launch, with member states pushing for July next-year, while the EU Parliament sought immediate effect and subsequently proposed 1 January 2027 as a compromise.
- The Netherlands is advancing plans for European Union (EU) "return hubs" in non-EU countries to transfer rejected asylum seekers while repatriation or resettlement arrangements are processed.
- The EU's Operation Irini will reportedly provide training, equipment and infrastructure support to the northeastern Libyan coast and law enforcement authorities, thus bolstering their capacity to intercept, return and detain people trying to reach Europe, showed a leaked document reviewed by Statewatch.
- Morocco has carried out large-scale deportation operations against sub-Saharan African migrants since 14 April, with rights groups reporting around 800 arrests near Fnideq and Belyounech and forced transfers toward Algeria or deportation flights from Casablanca.

Links of interest

- [Ethiopia's elections will not be politically competitive: two reasons why](#)
- [Ethiopian leader Abiy's party set to dominate elections despite insecurity](#)
- [Elections will not be held in 46 constituencies across the Amhara and Tigray regions](#)
- [An African Union election observation mission led by former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta has arrived in Addis Ababa.](#)
- [News: ENDF says diplomatic community briefed on potential response to "Tsimdo" initiative - Addis Standard](#)
- [Sudan military says drone from Ethiopia shot down near Ed Damazin](#)
- [Sudanese army captures Al-Baraka near Ethiopian border after RSF clashes](#)
- [Exclusive: Sudan's Burhan open to talks with UAE but ceasefire not imminent | Middle East Eye](#)
- [Keynote Address by President Isaias Afwerki on the Occasion of the 35th Independence Anniversary Asmara, 24 May 2026](#)
- [The Master of Distraction: How Isaias Afwerki of Eritrea Poses a Strategic Risk to the West](#)
- [From Bogotá to El Fasher](#)
- [Kenya-Somalia border will be re-opened soon, CS Duale says - Hiiraan Online](#)
- [Statement of the Chairperson of the AU Commission on the Occasion of the 35th Independence Anniversary of the State of Eritrea](#)
- [Somaliland president accuses Somalia, Djibouti of interference after Israel dispute - Hiiraan Online](#)
- [Statement of the African Union Commission on Somalia | Union africaine](#)
- [EU deportation bill stalls as governments and MEPs fight over when to start](#)
- [Netherlands pushes ahead with bid to deport migrants to countries outside EU | The National](#)
- [Revealed: EU agreement to expand deadly migration cooperation with Libya's eastern forces](#)
- [Morocco launches mass deportations to block Europe migration route | Middle East Eye](#)

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