

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 100 - 10 March 2021

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Sexual violence in the conflict (as confirmed per 09 March)

- In Shire, a 15 year old teenager was raped by ENDF soldiers in a condominium housing while everyone watched including her brother and no one could do anything about it.
- In Kerseber, a woman was abducted by Eritrean troops and was gang raped twice. Once by three people and then by 12. She was unable to walk when she came to the hospital and reported that there were 8 more women in her block who experienced the same violence.
- In Ayder Referral Hospital, Mekelle, a medical student was raped by a federal police. She was walking back from the library with her friend at night. Her friend escaped but was physically assaulted with bruises on her body. Medical evidence supports anal penetration. 10 more student survivors have come forward since then.
- A health care professional from Adigrat shared that more than 170 women have reported to the hospital to access care for sexual violence. This number has been increasing and reached a peak of 40 reports in one day a few days ago.
- A 7 months pregnant woman was asked for sexual intercourse by an ENDF soldier. When she refused and said she was pregnant he stomped her belly and went away, this was reported by a health care professional who met her during her follow up.
- A young girl looking after cattle was met by Eritrean soldiers and was asked to go with them but when she refused she was hit with a stone and sustained head injury and was treated in Adigrat hospital.
- In the outskirts of Mekelle, different women were abducted for weeks and worked as maids for the soldiers. And encountered countless sexual abuses.
- In the outskirts of Mekelle, a married woman with children was summoned every night and raped by ENDF soldiers for a week and later came for medical advice.

Eritrean Involvement in the conflict (as confirmed per 09 March)

- A source from Mekelle stated that Eritrean troops have occupied the town of Abi-Adi following the withdrawal of Ethiopian forces.
- Civilians travelling from Mekelle to Adigrat were stopped and robbed by Eritrean troops.
- Eritrean troops have penetrated deep into the mountains near Adigrat. They are taking cattles and food items from farmers who fled to the mountains.
- A source close to the elected Regional Government of Tigray reports that preparations for war were ongoing prior to the 4th of Nov, as "Tigray was already surrounded by different forces including Eritrea which had been unusually moving close to Tgiray, way before the election took place in Tigray. The conflict had been evolving since Abyi came to power and continually attacked Tigrayans and the TPLF. When differences widened, TPLF withdrew from the coalitions of EPRDF which was renamed as PP."
- The source states: "The Tigray regional government officially took the position that postponement of national elections was unconstitutional and the Ethiopian federal government was a care-taking government after October 5. The regional government decided that it cannot continue ruling its own region without mandate from the people and accordingly conducted the regional election."
- The source close to the Tigray regional government states that "The federal government, in close collaboration with the Eritrean government, had been making military preparations to launch an attack on Tigray. Already a number of divisions had been mobilized by the federal government towards Gondar, Afar, and Raya to attack Tigray, respectively from the West, East, and Southern parts of Tigray."

- The source states: "The Tigray government received information on a pending attack in the last week of October. Apart from that, the Federal government had been secretly organizing the Northern Command to launch sudden secret operations and kill leaders in Mekelle in times when they gather for meetings or other purposes. The regional government had this intelligence information."
- The source states that "using its special forces in Northern Command, Abiy had planned to suddenly round and kill leaders off the TPLF ruling party leaders when they gather for meetings."
- The source states that "Serious preparations had been taking place for more than two years and that Tigray was militarily surrounded prior to the start of the war." He adds "the ruling party had a meeting four days before the clash with the Northern command, and the preparations of the Abiy and Eritrea were openly discussed."
- A source from Mekelle University stated that he had received a confidential briefing on the tensions arising prior to the 4th of November.

Reported situation on the conflict (as confirmed per 09 March)

- The Guardian states that Ethiopian troops and their allies in the region of Tigray face a growing insurgency fuelled by a series of massacres and other violence targeting civilians.
- The reports says despite government claims of improved security, a series of fierce fighting were reported in Samre, and Adigrat areas, including reports of clashes in central and western Tigray.
- The report said U.S and European officials have been closely following the fighting in Samre. One said a "complex, dynamic and chaotic" contest was under way. The TPLF "got hit pretty hard in the first months and took some time to recover. Now they seem to have rallied," the official said.
- Independent observers and TPLF officials told The Guardian that "Massacres and human rights abuses are motivating many young Tigrayans to take up arms."
- "Tigrayan youth are very angry. Until recently, (the TPLF) couldn't train or arm all of the volunteers that were coming to them. In recent days, they are telling them to come forward again," said a TPLF official.
- An interim official says 100 billion Birr needed to repair destroyed companies of the Endowment Fund for the Rehabilitation of Tigray (EFFORT) in eastern and central Tigray.
- Authorities in Ethiopia's Tigray accused security forces from the neighbouring Amhara region of kicking thousands of Tigrayans off their land in recent days.
- "It's clear that the Amhara regional forces are forcibly removing people of Tigrayan origin from (the western) region," Gebremeskel, chief of staff of Tigray's interim government told AFP.
- "We strongly condemn the forced removal of Tigrayans and it needs to stop immediately," he added.
- Prime Minister Abiy calls for the youth to join the national army and police as Ethiopia has external and internal enemies.
- Experts are warning of the escalating situation between Sudan and Ethiopia. Both countries have clashed repeatedly over different issues over recent months.
- Recent months have seen an influx of forces to the border area. There are also concerning reports that Eritrea is itself being involved in the military buildup. Similarly, recent months have seen a closing of ties between Egypt and Sudan and recently signed a military cooperation agreement.
- The fear is especially that a small spark could lead to an escalating conflict between multiple parties.
- Sudan News Agency (SUNA) says the Ethiopian government has supplied weapons and ammunition to a Sudanese rebel group to attack a border town in the Blue Nile State.
- "The Ethiopian government provided logistical support to Joseph Tuka's forces in the Blue Nile State, including weapons, ammunition and combat equipment," said SUNA.

Reported international situation (as confirmed per 09 March)

- An EU delegation is flying to Mekelle, arriving in the morning of 10th March by invitation of the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and will be visiting a hospital and an IDPs camp.

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Links of interest

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/08/atrocities-insurgency-ethiopia-tigray>

<https://www.barrons.com/news/thousands-kicked-off-contested-land-in-ethiopia-s-tigray-official-01615214715>

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/africasource/the-unintended-consequence-of-ethiopias-civil-war-might-be-a-border-war-with-sudan>