

## Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 104 - 16 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](#).

### Reported war situation in Tigray (as per 15 March)

- Fighting between ENDF allied forces and Tigray regional forces has continued in Northern, South-Eastern and Southern fronts.
- Reports of reinforcement by Eritrean forces, recently 30 trucks loaded with soldiers entered Tigray through Rama town from Eritrea. 16 buses went towards Maykinetal and 14 towards Bizet.
- MSF says health facilities across Ethiopia's Tigray region have been looted, vandalised and destroyed in a deliberate and widespread attack on healthcare.
- "Tigray had one of the best health systems in Ethiopia, with health posts, health centers and hospitals and a functional referral system with ambulances," said MSF. "Now this health system has almost completely collapsed."
- MSF states, of the 106 health facilities visited between mid-Dec, 2020 and early March 2021, nearly 70% had been looted, more than 30% had been damaged and only 13% were functioning normally.
- "In some health facilities across Tigray, the looting has continued. And in most areas appear to have been deliberately vandalized to make them nonfunctional," said MSF. "In many health centers, such as in Debre Abay and May Kuhli, MSF teams found destroyed equipment, smashed doors and windows, and medicine and patient files scattered across floors."
- MSF says in Adwa hospital in central Tigray, medical equipment, including ultrasound machines and monitors, had been deliberately smashed. And the health facility in Semema was reportedly looted twice by soldiers before being set on fire, while the health center in Sebeya was hit by rockets, destroying the delivery room.
- The MSF report states every fifth health facility visited was occupied by soldiers. In some instances, this was temporary; in others the armed occupation continues. In Muglat, east Tigray, Eritrean soldiers are still using the health facility as their base and the hospital in Abi Addi in central Tigray, which serves a population of half a million, was occupied by Ethiopian forces until early March.
- "The army used Abiy Addi hospital as a military base and to stabilise their injured soldiers," says Kate Nolan, MSF emergency coordinator. "During that time, it was not accessible to the general population."
- DG of MSF, Oliver Behn says the attacks on Tigray's health facilities are having a devastating impact on people; health facilities and health staff need to be protected during a conflict, in accordance with international humanitarian law, but this is clearly not happening in Tigray.
- MSF says few health facilities in Tigray now have ambulances and most of them have been seized by armed groups. In Adigrat, for example, some 20 ambulances were taken and later seen being used by soldiers near the Eritrean border, to transport goods.
- "The referral system in Tigray for transporting sick patients is almost non-existent. Patients travel long distances and many health facilities have few or no remaining staff," said MSF. "Some fled in fear and others no longer come to work because they have not been paid in months."
- MSF says staff conducting mobile clinics in rural Tigray hear that women died in childbirth because they were unable to get to a hospital due to the lack of ambulances, rampant insecurity on the roads and night-time curfews. In the last four months, few women received antenatal or postnatal services and people with chronic diseases are going without lifesaving drugs.

- “The health system needs to be restored as soon as possible,” says Behn. “Health facilities need to be rehabilitated and receive more supplies, and staff need to receive salaries and work in a safe environment.”
- MSF urges services to be restored as soon as possible and for all armed groups in the area to respect medical facilities.
- Der Spiegel has interviewed a Tigrayan doctor who has fled to Sudan. The doctor says that he was a supporter of Abiy, but increasingly felt ostracised for being Tigrayan. When the war started, he fled. He says that the Ethiopian army is using starvation as a weapon. He also keeps a book of all the massacres he has heard of.
- Another Tigrayan man from Adigrat says that he was captured by Eritrean soldiers, who forced him to go from factory to factory to dismantle machinery, and take other valuables and load them into trucks. After two weeks, when he refused to continue, Eritreans tortured him and chained him up.
- The doctor also treated a man, who was beaten by Amhara militia until he lost his eyesight.
- He managed to escape, and went south, but ran into Amharic militia who forced him back into Central Tigray. He says he counted 51 bodies to where he was deported.
- He tried to reach Sudan a second time, crossing Western Tigray. He says that he passed through abandoned villages and encountered almost no Tigrayans, only “amharic speaking” people.
- When he tried to cross the border, he was shot at by the ENDF and Amhara militias. He says few refugees manage to reach Sudan.

#### Reported situation in the Horn region (as per 15 March)

- Sudan’s Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation, Yaser Abbas, said his country will defend its interests by all legitimate means should the GERD negotiations fail.
- "Ethiopia is mistakenly believing that an agreement to fill and operate the dam would restrict its use of the Nile water in the future, while Sudan and Egypt affirmed their respect for Ethiopia’s right to develop the use of its water resources in the future in accordance with the principles of international law," said Abbas.
- The Sudanese minister said Ethiopia is trying to include the water-sharing file in the negotiations on the mega-dam and absence of political will, lies behind the failure to reach an agreement on the dam.

#### Reported international situation (as per 15 March)

- Sudan has formally requested the AU, EU, US and UN to mediate the stalled process over the filling and operation of the GERD.
- The former US Assistant Secretary for African affairs during the Bush Administration, Jendayi Frazer, and the Africa program Director of the CSIS, Judd Devermont, have argued in an opinion piece that the conflict in Tigray threatens US interests. Ethiopia has been the “linchpin” for regional stability. If that were to disappear, there could be grave consequences for the international community.
- They argue that the US should increase pressure on Ethiopia and Eritrea through sanctions, consensus building, and stopping debt relief. The US should also not hesitate to “expend political capital” to make countries such as Saudi Arabia, China, and the UAE act on the issue.
- DG of WHO says in Syria, Myanmar, Yemen and Tigray millions have been denied access to essential health services, where health facilities have been destroyed and health workers have been attacked and intimidated and this must stop.

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#### Links of interest

<https://www.msf.org/health-facilities-targeted-tigray-region-ethiopia>  
<https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/542145-fighting-in-ethiopia-threatens-us-security-interests>  
<https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/chronicler-of-horrors-an-ethiopian-doctor-records-the-destruction-of-his-homeland-a-ba9139d0-d443-4dde-9458-cd18dc38cae1#ref=rss>  
<https://africanarguments.org/2021/03/tigray-why-are-soldiers-attacking-religious-heritage-sites/>