

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 106 - 18 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 17 March)

- Sky News report states the breadth and depth of human suffering in Ethiopia's Tigray region is perfectly clear to humanitarian workers, human rights groups and the international diplomatic community.
- The report says humanitarian organizations have complained publicly about the failure of the Ethiopian government to allow their team full access in Tigray. "I would say we have access to about 30% to 40% but there are large areas we can't get to," said a humanitarian worker.
- According to the report the federal government may not have the ability - or the authority - to offer access to parts of the country (region) that it simply does not control.
- Sky News is the first broadcast journalist to travel South of Mekelle, Tigray's regional capital and says Ethiopian and Eritrean troops were seen patrolling roadside towns.
- A Sky news crew stopped at the outskirts of a village called Mayweini and local residents told the crews that they were standing next to a shallow grave. "There are two (men) buried here, the rest we took and buried at the church," said a man named Hadush.
- In the village of Mayweini, there was a massacre on the 23rd of February, 2021. "More than 80 civilian residents were murdered in the village by Eritrean troops," said Hadush.
- Another resident of the village said Eritrean troops killed dozens, including a 13 years old boy. "Yes they killed a 13-year-old kid. They told the kid to come and the kid went to the soldiers. They (soldiers) killed him by shooting in the head, I saw it with my eyes," said the resident.
- The residents also said the soldiers made them wait for three days before they could collect the bodies to be buried and some had disappeared.
- "There are a lot of people who died but their bodies were eaten by hyenas... after a week we found only bits of clothing. We identified them by the clothes they were wearing," said Letemeskel.
- According to the residents, the massacre in Mayweini village was an act of revenge after government aligned forces had lost a battle to the Tigray regional forces in a nearby village called Cheli.
- The Sky news reporter continued to the village of Cheli and met with family members who lost their loved ones. "Yes, there was a battle. It was on the day of St. Selassie, on the 7 February (15 February in the western calendar)," said Hagos Beyene.
- According to the residents of the village (Cheli), ENDF allied forces and Tigray regional forces clashed here on the 15 February. The following week, on 23 February, a mix of Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers returned, accusing locals of supporting the enemy.
- "Oh, they murdered a lot, of course we haven't counted them all. When they found people in their houses they killed them. We escaped but many died," said Hilften Hagos, Mr Beyene's 15-year-old daughter.
- Another 25-year-old resident named Haile Selassie Kiros told Sky news that his two brothers had been shot. "From every house two, three, four (people) have died. There are many who are missing and we can't find them."
- A woman named Shashie in the village of Cheli told Sky news how her husband was killed. "On the day of 15 February we all ran away but my husband wanted to stay at home. I asked him to come but he said he wanted to stay with the animals. They burnt the house and our food. Then they killed him."
- According to the villagers of Cheli, more than 180 civilians were killed by Ethiopian and Eritrean forces.

- “We don’t know what the situation is in the rural parts of Tigray region and what we don’t know really worries us,” told a senior UN official to Sky News.
- A German news crew from ZDF reported from Mekelle, Aksum and Shire in Tigray. The German crew were the first foreign journalists to reach Aksum since the start of the war.
- The ZDF crew spoke with a woman in a hospital who had been sexually assaulted by Eritrean soldiers. The doctor of the clinic says that more women are looking for help: “They are traumatized, physically and psychologically.”
- ZDF shows images of graves in Aksum of victims killed in their houses and on the streets during the Aksum massacre. ZDF spoke to witnesses of the massacre and surviving family members of victims.
- ZDF shows masses of refugees in Shire, many living without shelter. Witnesses explain that they have been driven from their houses, and family members have been killed by Eritrean soldiers.
- USAID chief, Samantha Power, says the humanitarian situation in the Tigray region remains critical.
- “MSF’s finding that most hospitals and clinics are damaged, looted, and deliberately vandalized to make them non-functional is reprehensible and has happened to almost 90% of the region’s health centers,” she added.

Reported situation in the Horn region (as per 17 March)

- According to Al-Arabiya, Al-Burhan, Chairman of the Sovereignty Council of Sudan, has demanded the withdrawal of Ethiopian forces from all Sudanese territory.
- SPLM-North Vice Chairman Joseph Tuka has denied reports claiming he had received military support from Ethiopia to carry out an attack on a border town in Blue Nile State.
- Ethiopian News Agency reports Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen’s remarks at a GERD Dam symposium in Addis Ababa. He stated that Ethiopia will not be stopped from exercising its right of using the Nile River for its development.
- Ethiopian Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy, Seleshi Bekele, stated that the second phase of filling the GERD dam will commence in the upcoming rainy season.
- Sudanese media SUNA News reports that refugees continue to flee Ethiopia to Sudan despite the strict border control between the two countries. UNHCR is stated to have reported that 75.000 refugees have entered Sudan since November, counting only those that crossed official checkpoints.

Reported international situation (as per 17 March)

- The UK government’s Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office states that the UK has been “consistent, alongside the UN and international partners including the US, in calling for the protection of civilians in Ethiopia, respect for human rights and the withdrawal of Eritrean forces.”
- In addition, “The Foreign Secretary raised the need for independent, international, investigations into allegations of human right abuses and violations when he met with Prime Minister Abiy during his visit to Ethiopia on 22 January.”
- Today, 18 March, the UK Parliament’s International Development Committee will hold a formal meeting, an oral evidence session, on the humanitarian crisis in the Tigray region.
- Former UK MP and former international development minister Sally Keeble states that despite early warnings that the conflict in Tigray is “of a different order”, the world is “standing by, allowing a genocide to unfold in Tigray, Ethiopia.”

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Links of interest

<https://committees.parliament.uk/event/4024/formal-meeting-oral-evidence-session/>

<https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/zdf-mittagsmagazin/zdf-mittagsmagazin-vom-16-maerz-2021-100.html>

<https://news.sky.com/story/ethiopia-hundreds-executed-thousands-homeless-the-human-cost-of-fighting-in-tigray-12247307>