

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 108 - 22 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 Sexual Violence in Tigray (as per 21 March)

- Report published by CNN says more evidence has emerged that shows sexual violence being used as deliberate weapon of war in Ethiopia's Tigray region.
- The CNN report states that women are being gang-raped, drugged and held hostage, according to medical records and testimonies from survivors.
- According to doctors who spoke CNN, almost all the women they treat recount similar stories of being raped by Ethiopian and Eritrean troops. And the women said the troops were on a self-proclaimed mission of retribution and were operating with near-total impunity in the Tigray region.
- CNN has spoken with several women in Hamdayet, Sudan who describe being raped as they fled fighting in Tigray. "He pushed me and said you Tigrayans have no history, you have no culture. I can do what I want to you and no one cares," a woman said of her attacker. She is now pregnant.
- "Many say that they were raped by Amhara forces who told them they were intent on ethnically cleansing Tigray," a doctor working at Hamdayet refugee camp told CNN.
- "The women that have been raped say that the things that they say to them when they were raping them is that they need to change their identity - to either Amharize them or at least leave their Tigrayan status - and that they've come there to cleanse them - to cleanse the blood line," said Dr. Tedros Tefera. "Practically this has been a genocide," he added.
- Channel 4 News has published a harrowing report into sexual violence against women in Tigray. One of the survivors told Channel 4 News that she and five other women were gang-raped by 30 Eritrean soldiers who were joking and taking photos throughout the attack.
- "She knew they were Eritrean troops because of their dialect and uniforms. She was able to return home, only to be raped again," she said. "When she tried to escape, she recalled being captured, injected with a drug, tied to a rock, stripped, stabbed and raped by soldiers for 10 days," she added.
- According to Channel 4, many more women and young girls are being treated in Ayder referral Hospital and many has been referd there by hospitals in rural areas that are not equipped to handle rape cases.
- CNN report says more than 200 women had been admitted to the hospital for sexual violence in recent months, but many cases have been reported in rural areas with limited to no access to medical care.
- A coordinator at a gender-based violence crisis center in Tigray said they used to hear cases every few days or once a week. Since the conflict, up to 22 women and girls seek treatment for rape every day.
- "Demand for emergency contraception and testing for sexually transmitted infections have surged in recent months. Many of the women who have been raped have contracted sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV," doctors told CNN.
- A doctor said: "Many of the women she treated were physically abused, with broken bones and bruised body parts. And the youngest girl she treated was 8 years old, while the oldest was 60."
- The French Newspaper Liberation has also published accounts of rapes from people in Adigrat and Mekelle. It tells how many women have been raped multiple times, some for extended periods of time. In one case, a husband had to pay a ransom to Eritrean soldiers to get his wife back.
- One woman was kidnapped by Eritrean soldiers, forced onto a bus, and sent to the countryside. There she found herself isolated, together with 30 other women, being gang-raped and beaten every day. When she asked to see her child, the Eritrean soldiers executed him in front of her.

Reported War Situation in Tigray (as per 21 March)

- Fighting between ENDF allied forces and Tigray forces has continued in South-Eastern Tigray.
- Fires within a settlement have been detected for the third day in a row in Humera, western Tigray. The location falls within an active area of conflict.
- In the fight between the Eritrean troops and Tigray defense forces, over 17 vehicles of the 29th division loaded with Eritrean troops were ambushed and burnt in Hintalo district, Dengolat sub-district.
- Commanders of the 29th division of Eritrean forces have been reportedly killed near Samre district.
- Eritrean forces have destroyed Maryam Dengolat's Church, near Samre using heavy artillery.
- The Prime Minister of Ethiopia office has released a communique giving a final notice to TPLF leaders to surrender. It continued saying that TPLF officials should do this to prevent "misery to their people".
- In an interview, an ENDF's General said that he was in Ba'eker near Humera, western Tigray and had instructed Battalions in secret which before the war in Tigray started on Nov. 4/2020.
- "We prepared the tanks and bullets for the war and alerted our allies in the Northern Command. We were ahead of them (Tigray)," said the General.
- The LA times reported of a massacre that took place on January 8th in Bora. Ethiopian soldiers went from house to house, killing a 160 people.
- There is a lot of anxiety in Mekelle. The New York times reported that the city is uneasy, all while many refugees and wounded come through the city. The population also feels targeted by the ENDF, afraid of displeasing them. According to one NYT story, a man was followed home by four soldiers and beaten to death after a "heated argument in a bar".
- Ayder Referral hospital in Mekelle says that they have received 250 bodies since november 28th. They say that most appear to have been killed by government soldiers.
- The NYT reported that when journalists were briefly allowed in the city in February, many people rushed to see them to tell stories of atrocities.
- They also spoke to Mai Kadra refugees, who claim that the massacre was carried out by Fano, an Amhara militia. According to these refugees, most victims are Tigrayan.
- The Ethiopian deputy head of Mission in the US, who quit early this month, is calling for peace negotiation.
- He further said that the TPLF was entrenching itself, and becoming more capable at defending itself.

Reported situation in the Horn region (as per 21 March)

- Ethiopia said the proposal to involve an international Quartet in GERD negotiations will only prolong the duration of the dam's second filling and suggested the proposal was a distraction.

Reported international situation (as per 18 March)

- Former Liberian President Sirleaf has commended President Biden for sending Senator Coons to Ethiopia in relation to the war in Tigray. She was one of the dignitaries appointed by the AU to mediate the conflict at the beginning of the crisis.
- The US Ambassador to Ethiopia will be travelling to Mekelle, Tigray region on 22/03/2021.
- US president Biden has held a virtual meeting with the UNSC permanent representatives to discuss US re-engagement and priorities and has urged action on a variety of issues, including on Tigray.

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Links of interest

<https://www.channel4.com/news/the-horrors-of-the-hidden-war-inside-the-tigray-conflict-in-ethiopia>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/19/world/africa/ethiopia-tigray-atrocities.html?smid=fb-share>

<https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2021-03-19/ethiopia-tigray-war-massacre-bora>

<https://apnews.com/article/ethiopia-uganda-united-states-d1fc4db2fc9f3c3fe2809f2324bf5c1b>

https://edition.cnn.com/2021/03/19/africa/ethiopia-tigray-rape-investigation-cmd-intl/index.html?fbclid=IwAR2oKXS_g3Wszir1nxGS-og-guRfOwVLqHM_Mqk6JP9a9sCA3-1xxgFFK0eQ

https://www.liberation.fr/international/afrique/viols-de-masse-en-ethiopie-plus-aucune-femme-ne-se-sent-en-securite-au-tigre-20210321_MBNPIWC7NFGPNAZKN3HDH7ZXZU/

<https://twitter.com/EthiopiaEU/status/1372893773324247044?s=20>