

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 110 - 24 March 2021

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Reported War Situation in Tigray (as per 23 March)

- Fierce fighting between ENDF allied forces and Tigray forces was reported today near Negash district, Eastern Zone of Tigray.
- Reports of dozens of civilians who were allegedly killed by Eritrean and Ethiopian soldiers in Teka Tesfay village, Eastern Tigray.
- New sources from Asmara, Eritrea, report razzias, as attempts to send more troops to Tigray.
- A meeting took place on 19 March 2021 09:00am in the Mai Ayini refugee camp. The meeting was scheduled for the 17th but had to be postponed due to security issues.
- The meeting was held by the Administration Ethiopian of Refugees and Returnees Affairs (ARRA) and UNHCR with a selected group of refugees originally from the Hitsats and Shimelba camps, which have been destroyed and left empty. The meeting was about their change of location. The relocation process is only available for refugees who came from Shimelba and Hitsats camps.
- The Oromo Prosperity Party (OPP) acknowledged the occurrence of violence in Oromia Special Zone in the Amhara Regional State and blamed the Amhara Regional State for the attacks.
- The party has condemned the attacks against Oromo civilians and demanded that perpetrators whom they identified as being members of the Amhara Regional State Special Forces be brought to justice.
- "The OPP have identified that extremist elements within the Amhara Regional State leadership are engaged in conspiracy to harm the solidarity the Oromo and Amhara people enjoy," said OPP.
- During the 11th regular session of the Ethiopian parliament, Mohammed Hassan, a Member of Parliament asked about the conflict in Wollo and suggested that the attacks were carried out by Amhara special forces on the Oromo community.
- "The attacks are ethnically and religiously motivated against the Oromo community using OLF/Shane as a pretext. Amhara political forces are holding Wollo Oromos as a hostage to secure their interest in Oromia regional state," said the MP.
- The UN has said that there continues to be a massive displacement of people, with at least a 140 thousand new arrivals.
- They also say that the new Ethiopian government sharing mechanism for movement of cargo and workers has allowed for an increase in presence and operations. The situation remains dire.

Prime Ministers Abiy's Speech to Parliament

- Ethiopian Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed, admitted that troops from neighbouring Eritrea were present in the conflict-torn Tigray region and suggested they may have been involved in abuses against civilians.
- In his speech to the Ethiopian parliament, Abiy thanked the Eritrean people and government for a lasting favour they did to the Ethiopian soldiers during the conflict, without giving details. "After the Eritrean army crossed the border and was operating in Ethiopia, any damage it did to our people was unacceptable," he said.
- "We don't accept any damage because it is the Eritrean army, and we would not accept it if it were our soldiers. The military campaign was against our clearly targeted enemies, not against the people. We have discussed this four or five times with the Eritrean government," he added.

- The PM said according to the Eritrean government, its soldiers had taken over trenches on the border. "Eritrea told us it had national security issues and as a result had seized areas on the border but had vowed to leave if Ethiopian soldiers returned to the trenches," he added.
- Abiy also said the Ethiopian government had raised accusations of widespread looting and rights abuses by Eritrean soldiers in Tigray. "The Eritrean government has highly condemned it and said they will be accountable if any of their army participated in this," he added.
- In his speech Abiy accused Amnesty, the United Nations and other agencies of being "part of the TPLF family."
- The PM also admitted there had been abuses and atrocities and said the perpetrators would be held accountable.
- During the same speech, the PM compared the rape of girls and women by Eritrean and Ethiopian troops to TPLF's attack on the ENDF Northern Command base.
- Speaking in Amharic, the Prime stated that "those who are complaining about the rights of raped women in Tigray, they should know that those women (Tigrayan women) were raped by men but our soldiers in the Northern command were attacked by daggers and nobody talks about them (the soldiers). Northern Command was not only attacked but also humiliated."
- The PM also dismissed fears of imminent conflict with Sudan. "Sudan in its current state isn't in shape to fight with a neighbouring country, it has lots of problems. Ethiopia also has many problems. We don't need war. It is better to settle it in a peaceful manner," he added.

Reported international situation (as per 23 March)

- The US ambassador to the UN, has said that they were concerned about reports that "many forces operating in Tigray are committing crimes in Axum."
- The EU high representative for Foreign Affairs, Borrell, has said that they were ready to "activate all our foreign policy tools" against those that are committing human rights abuses.
- He says the EU wants 1. full humanitarian access to the region, 2. an independent investigation, 3. Eritrean troops to be withdrawn.
- Cameron Hudson of the Atlantic Council Africa Center, has argued that Ethiopia should learn from Sudan regarding the conflict in Tigray. He says that the current situation has many similarities to the way Bashir handled the conflict in Darfur. The conflict in Darfur led to many economic sanctions on Sudan, and the complete isolation of the regime. It is only in the last two years that change has been taking place.
- He says that the situation in Tigray has escalated a lot faster, but that there is still time to slow down the "carnage". Both the US and the EU, are increasingly signalling their willingness to use harsher measures if necessary. This could hurt Ethiopia a lot, if it does not change course.
- A statement signed by the heads of the IOM, Interaction, the WHO, UNHCR, and other UN, international and non-governmental organisations says that reports of "Indiscriminate and targeted attacks against civilians, including rape and other horrific forms of sexual violence, continue to surface. This must stop."
- They call on all actors to "fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law;" stop the abuses and respect and protect women and children.
- They say it is essential to have an independent investigation, also specifically one that investigates conflict related sexual violence, involving the UN Human rights body.

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Links of interest

<https://www.iustsecurity.org/75410/ethiopia-take-a-lesson-from-sudan-and-stop-the-war-in-tigray/>

<https://usun.usmission.gov/remarks-by-ambassador-linda-thomas-greenfield-at-a-un-security-council-arria-formula-meeting-on-religion-belief-and-conflict/>

<https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/statement-gender-based-violence-tigray-region-ethiopia>