

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 117 - 01 April 2021

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Agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia (as per 31 March)

- Martin Plaut, a journalist specialised on the Horn of Africa has published following report, received from inside Eritrea. It is reproduced verbatim.
 - “1. No plans to pull Eritrean troops from Ethiopia – the press release by the Ethiopian government is propaganda and far from the truth. Eritrean forces will not leave Tigray.
 - 2. What has been agreed is for 12 Division currently in Tigray to be assimilated with Ethiopian Defence Force immediately. This will be followed by the rest of Eritrean forces coming under Ethiopian command.
 - 3. All Eritrean army uniforms in Tigray will change to Ethiopian Defence Force immediately.
 - 4. One of Abiy’s delegates was Dr Abraham, security and spy expert, who will be responsible for the operations of both countries. He will align the necessary technological and satellite infrastructure of both countries.
 - 5. On the Eritrean side, Brigadier General Simon Gebredingel has been assigned to work with Dr Abraham.
 - 6. Current Eritrean Army Generals will be forced into retirement and replaced by Ethiopians.
 - 7. Federation talks are said to start soon.”
- Much of this information supplements similar information that has come from Ethiopian sources. However none of it has been confirmed.
- Dina Mufta, the spokesperson of the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, retracted his statements of yesterday, that Eritreans and Ethiopians would be happy to come together in a federation.
- Today, Dina Mufti came on the Ethiopian TV and side stepped the Independence Day remarks confidently and blamed others for twisting his speech. He said Ethiopia recognizes the Independence and Sovereignty of Eritrean.
- Eritrea has announced that it will be expanding its road network in the Gash-Barka region. The region links Eritrea to Sudan and Ethiopian Western Tigray (through Humera). A picture was posted with a military national service person in uniform, working on the roads.

Reported Situation in Tigray (as per 31 March)

- Oromia Regional State Communication bureau said unknown numbers of civilians were killed in the West Wollega Zone of the region in Babo Genbel Woreda, Bone Kebele.
- The state bureau has blamed the OLF/Shene group acting on the orders of the TPLF for the attacks, which it described as gruesome and horrific.
- Sudan Tribune (ST) said Eritrean forces killed two refugees on the Sudanese-Ethiopian border as they were returning to their areas in Tigray from the Hamdayet reception centre in Sudan.
- They were leaving due to the lack of services in the crowded reception centers. Both camps are full.
- The witnesses said that the people killed were shot directly in the head. Some Oromo refugees were among those trying to flee. Some of those that survived were transported back to Hamdayet.

- The ST report also said the Gadaref State proposed a location for the third camp but no decision has been made as it should be first visited by the UNHCR and the Commission for Refugees before making a final decision.

Reported International situation (as per 31 March)

- The US Congressional committee on Foreign Affairs is increasing pressure on the Biden administration to take more forceful action over the pressing humanitarian situation in the Tigray region. It is urging the administration to use targeted sanctions immediately on all involved parties, including Ethiopia.
- The move came through a bipartisan letter from Gregory Meeks, Democratic chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and ranking Republican Michael McCaul was sent to US Secretary of State A. Blinken and Sec. of Treasury Janet Yellen.
- The letter says: “We urge the [Biden] administration to utilise all available tools, including Global Magnitsky authorities and other targeted sanctions, to hold parties accountable for their actions and bring an end to this crisis.”
- The letter implicates all sides in such abuses and stresses that additional targeted accountability measures cannot wait. It also says that the conflict threatens problems for the future of US-Ethiopia bilateral relation if the situation does not improve. “While we remain committed to the important bilateral relationship between the US and Ethiopia, this conflict jeopardises shared political, economic and security priorities,” Mr Meeks & Mr McCaul wrote.
- The US state department has released its annual reports on human rights around the world. It indicated that there has been a dramatic increase in ethnic tensions and resulting violence.
- It finds that millions of Ethiopians have been displaced in recent years, most of them due to violence.
- It also concludes that the Ethiopian government, Eritrea, TPLF, regional militias, and other armed forces have committed human rights abuses, extrajudicial killings, sexual assaults, and others.
- Cameron Hudson, a senior fellow with the Atlantic Council's Africa Centre, argued that Washington is following a gradual approach in ratcheting up the pressure on Ethiopia.
- “We [the US] have already suspended our development assistance and our security assistance. Those moves seem to have very little impact in changing [Addis Ababa's] approach to the conflict in Tigray. The next level of pressure is clearly going to be direct punitive measures,” added Mr Hudson.
- Mr Hudson states the letter addressed to Mr Blinken and copied to Ms Yellen, is an indication of potential sanctions by the departments of State and Treasury. “This likely will translate into sanctions unless Washington starts to see greater movement on the key issues it is asking for changes on, namely the withdrawal of Eritrean and Amhara forces, the launch of the international human rights investigation, unhindered humanitarian access and some sort of domestic political dialogue,” Mr Hudson said.
- On the role of Treasury specifically, Mr Hudson said: “The Treasury does two big things that affect US policy on Ethiopia: It administers US sanctions and it controls the US vote at the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) ... The US has leverage in denying or delaying Ethiopia multilateral financing and assistance and not just bilateral assistance.”
- The UAE has invited the foreign ministers of Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia to Abu Dhabi to resume diplomatic dialogue and end disagreement over the GERD.
- Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Oman announced their support to Egypt and Sudan’s efforts to protect their shares in the Nile River’s water, stressing their water security is an integral part of the Arab region’s security.

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Links of interest

<https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/2021/3/meeks-mccaul-lead-letter-to-secretary-blinken-urging-accountability-over-crisis-in-ethiopia>
<https://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article69380>
<https://eritreahub.org/rapid-developments-in-the-horn-of-africa>