

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 119 - 05 April 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](#).

Sexual and human rights violation in Tigray (as per 04 April)

- Financial Times (FT) spoke to a 19-year-old student who was raped by four Eritrean soldiers and says she remembered running to a forest to escape fighting in her home town in the Tigray region.
- FT report states when she regained consciousness, she was in the forest and her blood was pouring out of her nose and genitals.
- The survivor says that she does not feel Ethiopian anymore, as the federal government would not let Tigrayans be raped by soldiers if they were citizens. She is not the only one to voice such sentiments.
- FT report said anger is evident in the streets of Mekelle. "We all want an independent Tigray now more than ever. We don't want to be occupied either by Ethiopia nor Eritrea," said Meseret Yitbarek.
- Medical Director of Ayder Referral Hospital, Kibrom G/selassie told FT that the situation in Tigray is highly polarised, which is a catalyst for violence. He described rape of Tigrayans as a weapon of war.

Reported Situation in Tigray (as per 04 April)

- Both the BBC and CNN have analysed videos that appeared on social media of soldiers rounding up and discussing the execution of young men near what they believe is Mahibere Degro, Central Tigray.
- In the video, soldiers wearing Ethiopian uniforms shot the men in the head and subsequently pushed them over a cliff.
- The soldiers are heard discussing the execution and the need to save up bullets. They also say that they have to make sure that they are all dead.
- CNN has also spoken to a man that says he was present and managed to escape. According to the person interviewed, his 23 year old brother was among the men in the group.
- Researchers have compiled a list of people that have been killed in the conflict in Tigray. The list includes 1.900 names, including that of infants and people aged over 90.
- Ethiopian and Eritrean forces have indiscriminately shelled the town of Hawzen, Eastern Tigray.
- Reports of 20 trucks of fresh Eritrean soldiers have entered the region of Tigray through Zalambessa.
- Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers have allegedly killed an unknown number of civilians in the town of Selekleka, near Shire.
- Reports of almost the entire region of Tigray is hit by power blackout for a fourth day in a row.
- The spokesperson for the TPLF has told Bloomberg in an interview that Eritrean troops have no intention of leaving Tigray. He told them instead that more troops are being sent to the region.
- Prime Minister Abiy said Ethiopia's military is fighting "on eight fronts" in hotspots including the northern Tigray region, where adversaries have adopted "guerrilla" tactics.
- "The junta [TPLF] which we had eliminated within three weeks has now turned itself into a guerrilla force, mingled with farmers and started moving from place to place," said Abiy. "Now, we are not able to eliminate it within three months," he added.
- Abiy also said that eliminating an enemy which is visible and eliminating an enemy which is in hiding and operates by assimilating itself with others is not one and the same. It is very difficult and tiresome.
- "Currently, the national defense forces and the federal forces are in a major fight on eight fronts in the north and the west against enemies which are anti-farmers, anti-civilians and causing strife among Ethiopians," said Abiy.
- He told lawmakers last month that pro-TPLF fighters were "like flour dispersed by the wind."

- Ethiopian authorities said that Eritrean troops have started withdrawing from Tigray, where they have been fighting on the side of Ethiopian forces in a war against the region's fugitive leaders.
- “The Eritreans have now started to evacuate Tigray and Ethiopian forces have taken over guarding the national border, said Ethiopia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- However, it is not clear how many Eritrean troops have left, and some in Tigray assert that the Eritrean troops aren't leaving at all.
- Tigrayan leaders have claimed that some Eritrean troops are dressed in Ethiopian military uniforms.
- The interim Mayor of Tigray, who either resigned or was fired, said in an interview that there are three reasons why he resigned from his post.
- Firstly he says that the interim administration is solely focused on restoring Mekelle, and is doing little for the rest of the region. This has created tensions regarding the hundreds of thousands of IDPs. Regional administrators to other areas had been assigned, but they have mostly remained in Mekelle.
- Secondly an ENDF general “gave land to an investor out of his will” even though he did not have authority. A conflict arose between the mayor and the general and the latter threatened to force the interim government to intervene.
- Thirdly, a man connected to Mulu Nega, the interim President of the region, was taking bribes to accept the transport of looted machinery out of the region. The man was arrested, but said that he was working for Nega.

Reported Situation in the Horn region(as per 04 April)

- Sudan Tribune says Sudan has closed Gallabat border crossing with neighbouring Ethiopia after an attack by Ethiopian militiamen.
- The closure was decided after an attack by the militiamen against the Sudanese customs officers in presence of the Ethiopian forces.
- The strategic Gallabat-Metema crossing is used by traders and workers between the two countries and serves as a transition point for Ethiopia’s imported or exported goods.

Reported International situation (as per 04 April)

- The G7 have released a statement on Tigray. They condemn the killings and other abuses that have taken place, and urge all parties to respect human rights and international law. They also call on all parties to start negotiations and an inclusive political dialogue that leads to a credible reconciliation.
- They also said that an independent investigation into the atrocities was required. They also offered to support humanitarian assistance if necessary.
- US senator and Biden envoy to Ethiopia, Chris Coons, has said that the footage emerging from Tigray of extrajudicial killings, murders, sexual violence, and other crimes is “deeply disturbing”.
- The Tigray Center for Information and Communication (T.C.I.C) calls on President Biden to hold Ethiopia and Prime Minister Abiy accountable for crimes committed in Tigray.
- Josep Borrell expressed fears that violence in Tigray could spill over into neighbouring countries. “This conflict threatens also to destabilize the whole Horn of Africa,” Borrell added.
- EU envoy Pekka Haavisto travelled to Saudi Arabia, UAE en route on his second trip to Ethiopia to discuss the crisis in Tigray.
- Labour MP and shadow minister Helen Hayes and House of Lords member David Alton, have urged the British government to invoke article 41 of the UNSC after video evidence of a massacre perpetrated by the Ethiopian army has emerged. Specifically the UK should ask the UN to set up a tribunal, such as was the case in Bosnia and Rwanda, to examine these atrocities.

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Links of interest

<https://www.ft.com/content/4f377353-b69a-41af-8e65-ddca918f599d>
<https://english.alarabiya.net/News/world/2021/04/04/Ethiopia-s-PM-Abiy-Ahmed-says-army-fighting-on-eight-fronts-including-Tigray>
https://amp.cnn.com/cnn/2021/04/03/africa/tigray-executions-reaction-us-senator-coons/index.html?_twitter_impression=true&s=0
<https://addisstandard.com/the-interview-there-was-no-prior-evaluation-to-have-me-discharged-former-interim-mayor-of-mekelle/>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ethiopia-g7-foreign-ministers-statement-on-tigray>