

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 128 - 16 April 2021

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Reported International situation (as per 15 April)

- The UN's top humanitarian official, Mark Lowcock told the UNSC in a briefing document that the UN and its humanitarian partner agencies have seen "no proof of the withdrawal of Eritrean forces" from the Tigray region and that the humanitarian situation in Tigray is worsening.
- Lowcock did say however that they have received reports that "Eritrean soldiers now wearing Ethiopian Defence Force uniforms." He continued to state that humanitarian staff also continue to report atrocities committed by Eritrean troops.
- One incident he mentioned was in Adwa where "Eritrean troops killed three people and injured at least 19 more in an unprovoked indiscriminate shooting".
- He also says that Eritrean soldiers are not the only perpetrators.
- Amhara militias have been actively attacking and killing Tigrayans as well. In some cases Amhara militias were spotted wearing ENDF uniforms as well.
- Lowcock reported that one agency estimated that "30% of all incidents against civilians involved some sort of sexual violence." The majority of these rapes are committed by men in uniform. He followed by saying that "Cases reported have involved Ethiopian National Defense Forces, Eritrean Defense forces, Amhara Special Forces, and other irregular armed groups or aligned militia."
- Nearly a quarter of the reports received involved gang rape, sometimes over periods of days. Girls as young as 8 have been targeted.
- He concluded by saying that "there is no doubt that sexual violence is being used in this conflict as a weapon of war, as a means to humiliate, terrorize and traumatize an entire population today and into the next generation."
- Human Rights Watch (HRW) says the UNSC needs to act on Ethiopia's Tigray region.

Reported Situation in Tigray (as per 15 April)

- Fierce fighting between Eritrean troops and Tigray forces have been reported in Eastern Zone of Tigray.
- Reports of fighting between ENDF allied forces and Tigray forces in the Southern Zone of Tigray.
- Reported that more than 120 armoured vehicles of ENDF allied forces consisting of 23 buses, 50 Ural cars, 5 heavy artillery, 5 Zu-23, 39 patrol cars and 1 revolutionary pick up has passed through Adigrat towards Bizet and Enticho towns.
- Reported that over 150 ENDF convoys have passed through Alamata, Southern Tigray towards Woldia town, Amhara region.
- According to Ethiopian regional officials, Eritrean soldiers have killed nine civilians in Adwa. The official also said that the ENDF intervened to protect the town. There have been many reports from different sources and newspapers of shootings taking place near Adwa. However the number of casualties vary, and this is the first time ENDF soldiers have been reported taking part in the defence of the town.
- The spokesperson for PM Abiy has said that the Eritrean soldiers shooting on civilians might have been "TPLF fighters" wearing Eritrean uniforms.
- Dimtsi Weyane (DW) International reported that Tigray forces ambushing squad have captured four Eritrean troops and three Eritrean civilians in a spying mission holding Tigray identity card.
- In a launching meeting of Tigray Universities Forum, the Chief Interim Administration of Tigray region, Dr. Mulu Nega complained that the university community of the four universities in Tigray in general and Mekelle University in particular are in resistance to his administration.

- Dr. Mulu further reflected that even the University president is ashamed of calling his name properly in the students' graduation ceremony of Mekelle University.
- Fana Hagos Berhane (PhD), former President of Tigray Supreme Court has been appointed as President of Mekelle University replacing Professor Fetien Abay who has been serving as Acting President of the University since mid-September 2020.

Reported situation in Ethiopia (as per 15 April)

- The National Electoral Board of Ethiopia said only 25,000 of the 50,000 election posts are opened so far for the 6th election slated to 5 June 2021, though the voter's registration is left with only 8 days.
- Reports of fighting between Qemant ethnic group militias and Amhara forces in the North western part of the Amhara regional state.

Sexual and human rights violation in Tigray (as per 15 April)

- Reuters has spoken to a young mother who was trying to get home with food for her two children when she says soldiers pulled her off a minibus in Tigray region, claiming it was overloaded.
- The young mother said she was repeatedly raped by 23 soldiers who forced nails, a rock and other items into her vagina, and threatened her with a knife. Reuters said doctors showed them the bloodstained stone and two 3-inch nails they said they had removed from her body.
- "The woman, 27, is among hundreds who have reported that they were subjected to horrific sexual violence by Ethiopian and allied Eritrean troops since the war began in Tigray," said the doctors.
- Dr. Fasika Amdeselassie, Head of the Interim Health Bureau of Tigray region said some women were held captive for extended periods, days or weeks at a time.
- "Women are being kept in sexual slavery," said Fasika. "The perpetrators have to be investigated."
- Fasika said at least 829 cases of sexual assault have been reported at the five hospitals since the conflict in Tigray began. "Most of the women who have come forward are either pregnant or sustained severe physical injury from the rapes," said Fasika.
- Fasika added most of the region's health facilities are no longer functioning, and travel between towns remains dangerous.
- Further, eight doctors at five hospitals told Reuters that most of the rape victims described their attackers as either Ethiopian soldiers or Eritrean troops. "It was more common for women to report sexual violence by Eritrean soldiers," said the doctors.
- Reuters says they have interviewed 11 women who said they had been raped by soldiers from Eritrea, Ethiopia or both. Most didn't want to be identified due to fear of reprisals.
- Four said they were kidnapped, taken to military camps and gang raped, in some cases alongside other women. The women did not know the camp names but said they were located near Mekelle and the towns of Idaga Hamus, Wukro and Sheraro.
- Five other women said they were held in fields or deserted houses for up to six days. And two said they were raped in their own homes.
- Healthcare providers also shared details of nine other cases of sexual assault, including the ordeals of two 14-year-old girls.
- "This is being done to dishonour the women, to break their pride," said a doctor at Ayder Referral Hospital of Mekelle.

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