

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 129 - 19 April 2021

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Reported Situation in Tigray (as per 18 April)

- Eritrea told the UNSC that it has agreed to start withdrawing its troops from Ethiopia's Tigray region, acknowledging publicly for the first time the country's involvement in the war.
- The admission to the 15-member council comes a day after U.N. aid chief Mark Lowcock said the world body had not seen any proof that Eritrean soldiers have withdrawn.
- "As the looming grave threat has been largely thwarted, Eritrea and Ethiopia have agreed at the highest levels to start withdrawal of Eritrean forces and simultaneous redeployment of Ethiopian contingents along the international boundary," wrote Eritrea's U.N. Ambassador Sophia Tesfamariam.
- She said the allegation of the use of sexual violence and hunger as a weapon is false: "The allegations of rape and other crimes lodged against Eritrean soldiers is not just outrageous, but also a vicious attack on the culture and history of our people."
- In a recorded speech at Dimtsi Woyane (DW) International, the ousted President of Tigray state, Debretsion Gebremicheal said Abiy's government "is ravaging" the people of Tigray using both the Ethiopian and foreign forces it has invited.
- He says the Ethiopian and foreign forces are conducting persistent attacks with the intention of exterminating the people of Tigray with bullets and hunger.
- "As we speak civilians are being mercilessly murdered in every corner only because they are Tigrayans. Tigrayan women are facing sexual violence that is difficult to imagine committed in any corner of the world," he added.
- He further said that the wealth and properties that the people of Tigray have created and accumulated in the last 30 years are being looted and destroyed by Ethiopian, Amhara and Eritrean forces.
- Reported that Ethiopian and Eritrean forces alongside the Amhara militia have started a major offensive on the Central, Northern and Northwestern part of Tigray region.
- Eritrean and Ethiopian forces are indiscriminately shelling villages and towns of these zones.
- Reports of ongoing renewed and intensified mass arrests and ethnic profiling of Tigrayans in Addis Ababa, particularly in the 22 area.
- Journalists Fitsum Berhane and Tamirat Yemane were re-arrested in Mekelle by members of the Ethiopian Federal Defense Forces (ENDF).
- The statement by the ENDF says they were arrested while live broadcasting what it described as "false propaganda" from their studio in a private house in Mekelle, the capital of Tigray region.
- The statement further said, officials within the Tigray Interim Administration leadership structure alleged to be working with anti-peace forces, were also detained in relation to the journalists arrests.
- Telecom, electricity and transport services are in complete shut down in Central, Northwestern and Western Zones of the Tigray region for a fourth day in a row.
- The Office of Interim Administration of Tigray told BBC that they received reports of people who have died of starvation from some areas of the region.
- However, the Federal National Disaster Risk Management Commission said the rumors that 150 people have died of starvation in Tigray Regional State are untrue.

- Former President of Mekelle University, Prof. Kindeya G/hiwot said in a tweet yesterday that trucks which were transporting facemasks and other protective equipment for Covid-19 to Tigray region were intentionally set on fire and destroyed by Ethiopian and Eritrean forces.
- The President added cars which were carrying medical supplies including ORS to be used for children in the Tigray region were systematically destroyed by ENDF allied forces.

Reported situation in the Horn region(as per 18 April)

- Eritrea's Minister of information, Yemane Gebremeskel said U.N. Coordinator in Eritrea and OCHA's representative to the country were summoned by Foreign Ministry of Eritrea.
- He says Eritrea strongly protests against wayward practices and fallacious reports issued by OCHA and a couple of other UN Agencies on basis of opaque affiliations with the TPLF.

Reported International situation (as per 18 April)

- Finnish Minister Pekka Haavisto and Dr. Debretsion Gebremicheal discussed the situation in Tigray.
- Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield told the UNSC that the U.S. is gravely concerned regarding the deteriorating humanitarian and human rights situation in the Tigray region.
- The Ambassador says there are credible reports that Eritrean forces are re-uniforming as Ethiopian military in order to remain in Tigray indefinitely. "The Eritrean government must withdraw its forces from Ethiopia immediately," the ambassador added.
- "We are horrified by the reports of rape and other unseparably cruel sexual violence that continue to surface. The degradation and trauma associated with these attacks will have long-term effects on the affected communities," said the ambassador.
- She condemned all sexual violence and demands perpetrators be brought to justice.
- She also called for an end to hostilities and for the Ethiopian government to deliver upon a political settlement to the crisis; permit unhindered humanitarian access; allow for independent, international investigation into human rights abuses and violations; protect civilians; enact the immediate withdrawal of Eritrean and Amhara regional forces from Tigray; and hold those responsible for human rights violation accountable.
- Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield told Face the Nation that more has to be done by the US and its allies to address atrocities in Tigray, including systematic gang rapes of young girls. "We have to make sure that the victims hear our voices, but also the perpetrators know that we are concerned," she added.
- Jake Sullivan, National Security Advisor to the US President said the Tigray crisis and sexual violence demand attention and action.
- He added that the UNSC should speak with one voice in calling for an end to abuses and withdrawal of Eritrean forces from Tigray.
- Senator Chris Coons says he is disappointed that Prime Minister Abiy has not yet fulfilled his commitments to withdraw Eritrean forces, remove obstacles to humanitarian access and hold perpetrators of human rights abuses accountable.
- He also expressed his concern by the atrocities continuing to occur across Ethiopia inside and outside of Tigray.

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Links of interest

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/eritrea-admits-presence-ethiopia-tigray-tells-un-withdrawing-2021-04-16/>
<https://addisstandard.com/news-journalists-rearrested-in-tigray-army-claims-they-were-preparing-to-broadcast-false-propaganda/>
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