

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 132 - 22 April 2021

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Reported Situation in Tigray (as per 21 April)

- Tigrayan TV Channel Dimtsi Weyane International has said that on April 16th, Eritrean and Ethiopian soldiers were defeated near Semema. According to the Dimtsi Weyane, 400 were killed and over 500 wounded.
- Since April 18, 2021, ferocious fighting is underway in the major fronts in Central and Northwestern Tigray.
- This offensive is reportedly being led by Eritrean minister of Defence, General Filippos Weldeyehanes, and Ethiopia's senior General Abebaw Tadesse.
- In this major offensive 27 infantry divisions, five mechanized divisions of EDF and 11 infantry, 4 mechanized divisions & 2 battalions of ENDF are engaged in the fighting.
- Reported that Ethiopia's compact helicopter Mi-35 downed by TDF in Guya.
- Doctors Without Borders have reported that they treated people that were wounded by Eritrean soldiers indiscriminately shooting in Adwa. DWB stated that the shooting took place on April 12.
- According to the organisation, 20 people were brought in, 12 of those were critically wounded.
- The people they spoke to all report that there was no military activity at all in the area when "soldiers wearing Eritrean uniforms" started shooting at civilians.
- The shooting of civilians in Adwa by Eritrean soldiers was reported multiple times last week by various sources.
- Active shooting took place in Mekelle, around Lachi bus station, on Wednesday. Several youths are reported to have been shot and killed when they tried to prevent looting by soldiers.
- MSF says that the road linking Adigrat and Axum in Tigray has been blocked for the last 12 days and it is hampering life-saving medical activities at MSF supported hospitals in Aksum as key supplies cannot be sent in.
- MSF also said the road blockage is affecting mobile clinics in rural areas outside of Aksum.
- MSF added Axum hospital is running out of supplies and they will run out in 3 days if nothing changes.
- MSF called the political and military authorities in Tigray and Ethiopia to allow essential supplies to be transported from Adigrat to Axum as soon as possible.
- There are blackouts in Central, Northwestern, and Western Tigray. This has been the case for the last five days.

Sexual and human rights violation in Tigray (as per 21 April)

- A report published by Al-Jazeera disclosed stories of displaced people from Western Tigray who were victims of rape, looting and extrajudicial killing allegedly perpetrated by Amhara forces.
- A woman told Al-Jazeera that the Amhara fighters in charge of her hometown of Humera and other disputed areas of western Tigray had just ordered all Tigrayans in her neighbourhood to leave their homes within 24 hours.
- "The militiamen who have been terrorising us for months, told us we are not allowed to live there anymore, because we are Tigrayans. They ordered us to leave empty-handed. They said all the properties we owned belong to Amharas, not to us" said the 34-year-old mother of three.

- The woman says after walking for 7 hours with her three children and a brother-in-law, they were stopped by four Amhara militiamen as they reached a bridge on Tekeze River. The Amhara men separated her from the children and brother and took her into an abandoned farmer's house and four of them took turns raping her.
- She added that after they finished, the militiamen inserted into her genitals a hot metal rod that burned her uterus. "I begged them to stop, she told Al-Jazeera, "I asked them, crying, why they were doing that to me. What wrong have I done to you?"
- "You did nothing bad to us," she said they told her. "Our problem is with your womb. Your womb gives birth to Woyane" This is a term used to refer to the TPLF: "A Tigrayan womb should never give birth."
- A doctor who treated her said: "The sexual assault made her infertile. Her bleeding has now stopped but she cannot walk and has to keep her legs spread."
- Doctors at the Ayder Referral Hospital said the number of rape cases on April 1 stood at 272. Within one week, it had jumped to 330.
- "Overall, 829 women have reported sexual assault to major hospitals of Tigray. The figure was 518 on April 1," said Hayelom Kebede, chief executive director of Ayder Referral Hospital.
- The UN says sexual violence is being used as weapon of war in Tigray region.
- UNICEF's James Elder says on CNN that the impact on women is devastating: "Some of these were groups of soldiers over multiple days in front of a child, or in front of a husband. What it does, is it shatters them."

Reported Situation in the Horn region (as per 21 April)

- Ethiopia has said that the way to move the GERD dam negotiations forwards is by involving the Bureau of the Assembly of the AU.
- In a letter to Sudanese PM Hamdok, Ethiopia has said that if "parties negotiate in good faith" results are possible and a "win-win" outcome can be achieved.

Reported International situation (as per 21 April)

- The U.S Embassy in Eritrea said Eritrean forces need to withdraw from deep in Tigray, where they are making a horrible humanitarian situation even worse.
- EU envoy to the region, Haavisto, has told EUobserver that the situation in the region is "dire".
- There are growing numbers of people being displaced, and these displacements are primarily based on ethnic grounds.
- Haavisto says that the conflict could lead to a new migration crisis if it is not tackled soon. Many refugees could end up moving towards Europe.
- EU High Representative Borell said that the EU wants to send an election-observation mission if the situation allows it. Ethiopian elections are due to take place in August.
- Borell also says that the election in Ethiopia should be preceded by a "national dialogue".
- UNICEF is warning that the conflict is depriving hundreds of thousands of children of their rights. The problem is even more acute for women and girls.
- The UNICEF spokesperson has said that the conflict is an education and nutrition emergency. He further said that the cases being reported are only the tip of the iceberg.

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Links of interest

<https://euobserver.com/world/151617>

<https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/what-we-do/news-stories/news/ethiopia-survivors-describe-being-shot-soldiers-tigray>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/21/a-tigrayan-womb-should-never-give-birth-rape-in-ethiopia-tigray>

<https://addisstandard.com/news-icl-ethiopia-launches-mass-covid-19-test-campaign-in-tigray/>