

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 136 - 28 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 peacebuilding, refugee protection, and resilience in the Horn of Africa. EEPA has published extensively on issues related to the 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](#).

Reported Situation in Tigray (as per 27 April)

- France 24 says Eritrean soldiers are blocking and looting food aid in Tigray, according to government documents obtained, stoking fears of starvation deaths as fighting nears the six-month mark.
- The reports said concerns of impending humanitarian disaster and the role of Eritrean troops in exacerbating the situation have been echoed in multiple presentations given to aid groups by the Emergency Coordination Centre of Tigray's interim government.
- "The most recent presentation, on 23 April 2021, says Eritrean soldiers had forced aid workers providing food relief out of multiple parts of Tigray, including the areas of Samre and Gijet south of the regional capital Mekele," added the report.
- In the presentation it says: "Eritrean soldiers have also started showing up at food distribution points in Tigray, looting the supplies after our beneficiaries became frightened and (ran) away."
- An official who attended the April 23 2021 presentation spoke to AFP and said aid workers were visibly frustrated over their inability to access parts of the region.
- "Some of the NGO workers were crying because of the systemic denial. Some of them were screaming, crying," said the official, adding that government officials coordinating relief efforts were also fed up.
- The report says Eritrean Information Minister Yemane Gebremeskel denied the allegations. "No way that Eritrea can block humanitarian assistance or loot them," he told AFP in an email.
- General Yohannes Gebremeskel, head of a command post in Tigray, told AFP that: "In the last two weeks we had access problems to pass some of the checkpoints, especially controlled by Eritreans."
- General Yohannes referenced a critical checkpoint between Adigrat and Axum as an example.
- "We have sent our staff to talk to the Eritrean commanders who are commanding those troops at the checkpoint. We are waiting to hear the reply," said General Yohannes.
- Mulu Nega, head of Tigray's interim government, told AFP that people are complaining about the road and food distribution and said his officials were investigating.
- Abadi Girmay, Head of the Tigray Interim Bureau of Agriculture and Development, says there would be unprecedented danger in the next 3 to 4 years if the agricultural sector does not recover.
- He said if life is to continue in Tigray, at bare minimum, what we lost last year must be compensated this year and the agriculture sector must be restored to normal and we should get harvest subsequently.
- The Bureau Head stressed that the agriculture sector and farmers were most devastated. "If we can not get a harvest this year, by the next 3 to five years we could face a very serious problem. And it may induce famine, it could be the worst history in the country," he added.
- Abadi also warned that Tigray faced a threat that would result in displacement, induced famine, starvation, and subsequent death if the people of Tigray and Ethiopia at large, including aid providers, do not contribute to the rehabilitation of the agriculture sector in Tigray.
- "From our studies, to establish woredas structures we need at least 200 million ETB, but to restore back structure in the whole of Tigray's we need at least 120 billion ETB. We know that cannot be realized now, it's a dream now. Maybe within 5 to 10 years with the appropriate help," he said.

- He also added: “We have managed to raise funds that could be enough to purchase 120,000 quintals from different partners, however, Tigray needs at least 600,000 quintals of seed that amounts to around 24 billion ETB.” He added in the coming 3 to 4 years there will be a serious situation where starvation could claim the lives of many.

Reported Situation in Ethiopia (as per 27 April)

- Addis Standard said students who took the entrance exam to Ethiopian universities in the year 2020/2021 are opting to enroll in private universities due to security concerns.
- Solomon, who is a resident of Addis Ababa and one of the students who took the university entrance exam told Addis Standard that: “I scored 471 in the entrance exam. I didn’t apply or select my preferred university to be placed in as requested by the Ministry of Science and Higher education. If my placement was going to be outside Addis Ababa, I wouldn’t have gone anyways.”
- He continued: “That’s why I enrolled in one of the private university colleges by paying all registration fees plus the first-semester fee which is around 4,500 ETB,” while explaining that the reason he took such a measure was ‘feeling unsafe outside Addis Ababa’ due to the deteriorating security situation in the country and fear of violence following the upcoming general election.

Reported Situation in the Horn region (as per 27 April)

- Social media sources indicate Somalia’s president Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo will step down shortly.
- Reuters says residents of Somalia’s capital Mogadishu fled neighborhoods on Tuesday fearing renewed clashes between rival factions in the security forces, who have split in a dispute over an extension to the president’s term.
- Government forces also raided an independent radio station and confiscated equipment.
- Forces loyal to the opposition hold parts of the city and the two sides clashed over the weekend, raising fears that al-Qaeda-linked al-Shabaab insurgents could exploit a security vacuum as state forces turn on each other.
- "This morning, we were surprised to see more well-armed pro-opposition troops have settled in this area of Siigaale, they told us to move," said Abdullahi Mohamed, a local elder.
- Maryam Al-Mahdi, Sudan’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, is visiting a number of African countries to explain Sudan’s position on the process of filling and operating the GERD.
- The minister will meet the leaders of the 4 countries (The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda) to brief them about the Sudanese position on how to resolve the existing dispute over the giant dam.

Reported International situation (as per 27 April)

- In his first interview, U.S envoy to the Horn of Africa, Jeffrey Feltman said the conflict in Tigray has the potential to spiral into a full-fledged regional crisis, citing a comparison to the war in Syria.
- “Look at what the collapse of Syria and the chaos of civil war has meant,” said Feltman, citing the refugee crisis and its impact on Europe, as well as the rise of terrorist groups in the power vacuum from the collapse of the country.
- He also said: “Ethiopia has 110 million people. “If the tensions in Ethiopia would result in a widespread civil conflict that goes beyond Tigray, Syria will look like child’s play by comparison.”
- “In terms of an immediate focus, without question, there has to be attention paid to Tigray,” he said. and other leading priorities were the Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute and the tensions over the GERD.

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Links of interest

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210427-eritrean-troops-block-loot-food-aid-in-tigray-documents>

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/residents-somalias-capital-flee-amid-splits-within-security-forces-2021-04-27/>

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/04/26/u-s-africa-envoy-ethiopia-crisis-tigray-jeffrey-feltman-biden-diplomacy-horn-of-africa/>

<https://addisstandard.com/analysis-tigray-interim-agriculture-development-bureau-head-warns-against-looming-starvation-in-the-years-to-come/>

<https://sudantribune.com/spip.php?article69491>