

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 144 - 10 May 2021

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Reported Situation in Tigray (per 09 May)

- In a new report published on Friday, the UN has said that aid convoys are being blocked.
- Relief Society of Tigray (REST) says Aman Desta, one of its inventory control officers was killed by Eritrean and Ethiopian troops while distributing emergency food in Kola Tembien, Guya sub-district.
- The report said that out of a cluster of 19 thousand children under five, 431 were found to be severely malnourished. Similarly, out of 4,447 women, 2,721 were found to be acutely malnourished.
- MSF is also reporting numbers about malnutrition; Out of 309 children screened in remote clinics, 26% were found to have malnutrition, and 6 percent had severe malnutrition.
- These MSF numbers however do not account for the entire region. In some areas, the level of severe malnutrition among children went up to 12%. Many other areas have also not been reached.
- Dedebit Media said hundreds of Eritrean troops were killed and wounded by Tigray defense forces at GerihuSernay, near the Ethio-Eritrea border.
- According to Ethio-forum, Eritrean troops have destroyed the Mereb Bridge that connects Eritrea to central Tigray from the Eritrean side. The Mereb Bridge was donated by The Netherlands two decades ago, as a contribution to the border agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia.
- Reported that Eritrean and Ethiopian forces have shelled the town of Hawzien, Eastern Tigray with heavy artillery and rockets.

Reported International Situation (per 09 May)

- On Thursday, 6 May, newly appointed US Special Envoy to the Horn of Africa, Jeffrey Feltman, paid a visit to Asmara, Eritrea, for a 3-hour meeting with President Isaias Afewerki. It was the first time in several years that a senior US official was able to meet with high-level Eritrean officials in Eritrea.
- On Friday, 7 May 2021, Feltman arrived in Sudan for a two-day visit.
- Payton Knopf, Deputy to US Envoy for Horn of Africa Jeffrey Feltman, and part of the US delegation visiting Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Sudan, stated: "We have seen a really fundamental shift in the security and political environment in Ethiopia, the most fundamental shift since the Prime Minister came to power in 2018 that has involved the escalation of violence, substantial closing of political space, and a number of other issues that have called into question the reform agenda. Ethiopia's transition as originally envisioned when Prime Minister Abiy came to power is really dead. Every major opposition figure or voice of dissent against Abiy is now in prison, and that is really the opposite of what we want to see."
- In an earlier meeting of April 28th with the Ethiopia Contact Group, Feltman had laid out US concerns about the conflict in Tigray.
- The US, Canada, Denmark, Ireland, Finland, and the EU expressed support for a donor conference to increase humanitarian funding to the region.
- The UK, US, Sweden, and Norway voiced the need for stronger sanctions against Eritrea for its non-withdrawal from Tigray.

- Denmark and the UK emphasized transparency and the need to review the Terms of Reference that will lead a joint UN (OHCHR) and Ethiopian (ECHR) investigation into crimes and atrocities committed during the conflict.
- The Netherlands, Sweden, Ireland, and Denmark said that if the international community should call for a postponement of the upcoming elections, it should only do so privately.
- The US, France, the Netherlands, and Ireland called for a balanced and strategic approach to approving projects at international financial institutions.
- On Eritrea, the meeting said the indicated withdrawal is not taking place, and the Eritreans have remained active across the region, committing human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, destruction of civilian infrastructure, and causing massive displacement.
- US Acting Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Foreign Affairs, Robert Godec, said that on the issue of elections, it is becoming increasingly clear that free and fair elections will not be possible.
- The EU said that it had intended to send election monitors, however, the EU was unable to come to an agreement with the Ethiopian government on a Memorandum of Understanding. The disagreement included the deployment of satellite phones with the monitoring teams.

Situation in Ethiopia (per 9 May)

- An extraordinary interview by the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Abu Matthias, is smuggled out of Ethiopia and aired by CNN. The patriarch calls the Ethiopian war in Tigray a 'genocide'.
- The comments were made in Addis Ababa, recorded one month ago. The Patriarch is under house arrest. He states that the Ethiopian government and its allies "want to destroy the people of Tigray."
- The Patriarch also said that he is not allowed to speak out, or make public statements, saying that "all my messages have been banned and prevented." and that "until now I have not had the opportunity to display my message through the media".
- The Patriarch spoke of the massacres that took place in Aksum, the holy city of the Ethiopian Orthodox church, the destruction of Debre Damo, and other holy places.
- The Patriarch expressed his anguish over the fate of the people of Tigray; the Sexual Violence against Women and rape, the destruction of farmers land and tools, destroying their livelihoods, the looting and killings of innocent people.
- The Patriarch called on the International community to take action to stop the genocide.
- Reuters Special investigative report says across Ethiopia, Tigrayans are being fired and jailed since fighting erupted in the Tigray region.
- Reuters spoke to more than two dozen Tigrayans who said their careers and personal lives have been upended due to their ethnicity.
- Tigrayans interviewed by Reuters said there was a new wave of arrests in the capital in April 2021. Around 300 Tigrayans were held in a warehouse-style building in Addis Ababa.
- The arrests included a priest, two women with children, and a beggar. They were arrested after showing Tigrayan issued ID cards. The crackdown has not been limited to soldiers. Tigrayan diplomats, professors, journalists, business people, and also the families of Tigrayan soldiers also say that they are feeling the backlash.
- The Ethiopian Election board has extended voter registration by 15 days for the general election on June 5th outside of the Somali and Afar region.

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Links of interest

- <https://providencemag.com/2021/05/america-faces-tough-choices-tigray-war-continues-ethiopia/>
- <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210507-us-envoy-in-sudan-for-talks-on-nile-dam-border-tensions>
- <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/ethiopia-conflict-tigravans/>
- <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/05/08/africa/orthodox-church-tigray-ethiopia-intl/index.html>