

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 145 - 11 May 2021

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Reported Situation in Tigray (per 10 May)

- A document addressed to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church, obtained by the Telegraph claims a number of mass killings have taken place over the past five months in Tigray, stating that at least 78 priests were massacred in one zone of the Tigray region.
- The letter says that priests, deacons, choristers, and monks have been massacred over the last five months in Tigray.
- Half a dozen survivors confirmed this to the Telegraph and said that both the Ethiopian national army soldiers and Eritrean troops took part in these massacres.
- The letter the Telegraph received was sent on 15 April and lists the number of clergymen killed over the past five months in the church administrations.
- Witnesses told Telegraph that the churches of Gergera Maryam, Adi-Zeban Karagiorgis, Kidanemihret Bosa, Teksa, and the monastery of Da Abune Ayzgi are among those, where churchmen were killed.
- The Telegraph report said Kahsay and his deacon son Halfom fled their homes to the nearby mountains of Seharti district after receiving news that the Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers were raiding churches. Two days later Halfom returned back to the church in the village to see if the situation had improved.
- "I begged my son not to go back. He promised me he would return. But he did not return. The Eritrean soldiers killed my son," said Kahsay. "I learned a week later the villagers picked up my son's body. I did not attend his burial. He was only 25."
- Three witnesses told the Telegraph that Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers specifically target Saint's celebration days to execute members of the church.
- "In the afternoon of 9 January 2021, there were many of us in the church of Adi'Zeban Karagiorgis. We were there to celebrate the birth of the Virgin Mary," said one witness. "Suddenly, eight Ethiopian soldiers entered the churchyard. The soldiers picked 12 young deacons between the ages of 15 and 20. They took them out and shot them down," he says.
- Hadera, who survived a massacre at the Gergera Da Mariam church said there have been various killings and massacres since early December 2020. The 76-year-old says he was praying on 1 February 2021 when 12 Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers barged into the sacred room of the church.
- "They entered the holy room with their shoes and shouted over us saying you are our enemies because you have comforted and preached to the villagers that this shall pass. You should not have done that," said Hadera.
- He added: "There were six priests in the room. They shot us all and left the church. My friends died. It is nothing short of a miracle I survived."
- Globe and Mail said monasteries and holy shrines have been destroyed in Tigray and churches were burned everywhere as well as the blood of priests and deacons continues to spill.
- The report said a list of damaged religious sites and the slain priests and monks have been compiled and it includes 14 churches and four monasteries damaged by shelling and looting by Ethiopian and Eritrean troops since the war began last November.
- Kedir Kiyar, spokesman for the International Association of Muslims in Tigray said: "Nothing has been done to hold anyone accountable."

- “Eritrean soldiers entered a historic mosque, near the town of Nebelet, shot dead a pair of brothers who were guardians of the mosque, and then looted it of its valuables before hitting it with heavy weaponry and damaging it significantly,” Kiyar added.

Situation in Ethiopia (per 10 May)

- “Addis Standard (AS) report says ethnic Tigrayans who were repatriated from Saudi Arabia on 5 April 2021 have been kept in detention centers in Addis Ababa.
- The report said the returnees were jailed in Saudi Arabia and welcomed to Addis Ababa with yet another arrest. They told Addis Standard: “We were detained without charge after being arrested by Addis Ababa police; later we were released on bail.”
- “I was having coffee with my friends when they took me. The police approached us and asked to see our IDs; then we were taken to ‘amistegna’ police station,” said Elias.
- According to Elias, the police then explained to them that the reason for their arrest was the violation of Covid-19 preventive measures. “After they took us and we reached Gelan, it was clear that we were arrested because of our ethnic identity. All of the inmates were ethnic Tigrayans,” he said.
- He added that there were over 500 ethnic Tigrayans at the detention center among which about 40 were Saudi repatriates. Some of them were from Addis Ababa while the rest were people who recently arrived from Tigray.
- Elias said: “We were held in cold cells for a month until suddenly we were released on the guarantee of our ID cards.” He added saying that “I left hundreds of prisoners behind. Most of the prisoners don’t have family members in Addis Ababa and were daily laborers.”
- The Holy Synod said the message delivered by his Holiness Abune Mathias, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church on the situation of Tigray is personal and not the position of the church.
- According to the secretary-general of the Holy Synod, Abune Mathias’s speech is an issue that has not been discussed or decided by the Holy Synod and does not represent the Holy Synod.
- A journalist working for the Oromia Broadcasting Network was gunned down near his home. Police say that he was killed by OLF-Shene militants. He is the second journalist killed in Ethiopia, following Dawit Kebede, who was killed in Mekelle in January 2021.
- The National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) has responded to a letter by 5 US senators which laid out concerns at the state of the upcoming Ethiopian elections.
- NEBE says that stakeholders have had robust participation in the “initial” organisation of the elections and that this 6th general election is the most transparent in Ethiopian history.
- They also say that reform at this stage would “carry significant technical, financial, political, and security risks” and “imperil the integrity, credibility, inclusivity, and timeliness of the electoral process.”

Reported International Situation (per 10 May)

- U.S House of Foreign Affairs Committee representatives G. W. Meeks and M. McCaul said: “We are deeply concerned by the failure of the government of Ethiopia and Eritrea to honor their public commitments to withdraw Eritrean forces from Ethiopia. The only viable path toward a durable cessation of hostilities and inclusive political dialogue will not be found through military action.
- U.S Ambassador to Ethiopia, Geeta Pasi hosted his holiness Abune Mathias, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, at her residence and discussed the current situation in Ethiopia and specifically the humanitarian crisis in Tigray, including his recent public message.
- The UN said around 120 former peacekeepers from Ethiopia have sought asylum in Sudan and were taken to a location where they can safely undertake their refugee status to be determined.
- The personnel were set to be repatriated as part of the phased withdrawal of the UNAMID from western Sudan’s Darfur region. “As of now, 120 former UNAMID peacekeepers who were due to be repatriated have sought international protection,” said a UN peacekeeping spokesperson.

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<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/terror-and-security/least-78-priests-massacred-one-zone-tigray-leaked-letter-claims/>
<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-in-tigrays-war-ancient-christian-and-muslim-houses-of-worship-risk/>
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