

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 146 - 12 May 2021

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Reported Situation in Tigray (per 11 May)

- Dimtsi Weyane (DW) International TV released a battlefield report citing Tigray defense forces spokesperson Gebre Gebretsadik and said in recent weeks over 6,300 Ethiopian and Eritrean forces were killed and wounded by Tigray defense forces. Only 34 soldiers were captured.
- From 03 to 05 May 2021, there was heavy fighting between Tigray Defense Forces and ENDF allied forces in areas near Yechilay, Shawa'ta-Hegum, and Finariwa, Kola Tembien Woreda. In these three days of fierce fighting, over 2,605 (1,088 killed and 1,517 wounded) Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers were incapacitated. In addition, many weapons, ammunition, and other military equipment were also captured.
- On 07 May 2021, Tigray defense forces took an offensive against nine divisions of Ethiopian and Eritrean forces that were coming from three different positions at Koraro near Hawzien, Megeb, Digum, and Adi A'ikor. In this fierce fighting, more than 1,896 Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers were killed and over 1,813 were wounded.
- In the fight on 07 May 2021, Eritrean Defense Forces 25th and 27th infantry, as well as 46th and 47th mechanized divisions participated. The ENDF's 13th, 20th, 23rd, 31st, and 33rd divisions also participated.
- In addition, 3 Mortar, 1 Dshk, 14 Bren, many Kalashnikovs, sniper rifles, and other ammunition and military equipment were captured.
- A deliberate campaign to prevent farming is unfolding in the Tigray region, a top regional official said, warning that the result will be starvation.
- "There is a campaign that has been started to prevent farming. Regrettably, this campaign is being done by some of those tasked with law enforcement," Abebe Gebrehiwot, deputy head of Tigray's interim government told state-owned Tigray TV.
- Abebe, an official appointed by the federal government who is in charge of economic affairs, said the effort includes blocking seeds from reaching parts of the region and telling Tigrayan farmers they aren't allowed to farm.
- He also said affected areas include Shire, currently home to tens of thousands of displaced Tigrayans, and Hawzen, which has seen intense fighting in recent days.
- "Vehicles transporting seeds are being blocked from moving beyond an area known as Kobo inside the Amhara region just south of Tigray," he added.
- Further, he said efforts to prevent the entry of seeds and efforts to stop farming have no other message than perhaps, "Let the people of Tigray perish with starvation."

Reported Situation in Ethiopia (per 11 May)

- Ethiopia has denied the killing of civilians in Tigray. Ethiopia's deputy Attorney General told reporters that a great majority of those killed in the November Axum massacre were fighters and not civilians.
- "It is established that the great majority of those killed in the said incident, though they were not in uniform, were members of the fighting force of TPLF who engaged the Eritrean forces. These forces attacked civilians in the streets. 93 individuals were killed due to the fighting", said Fikadu Tsega.
- His comments contradict reports by multiple independent accounts.

- Reports detailing the official version of what happened in the historic city of Axum by Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International (AI) blamed Eritrean troops fighting in Tigray. It said the deaths were mostly civilians.
- According to Amnesty, Eritrean troops went on a rampage and systematically killed hundreds of civilians in cold blood.

Reported Situation in Horn region (per 11 May)

- The Commission for Refugees (COR) of Sudan said it has transferred Ethiopian soldiers to refugee camps after they sought political asylum in Sudan.
- The asylum seekers are from the Tigray region and fear for their life after the eruption of the war between the federal government and the Tigray forces in northern Ethiopia.
- "The first batch of asylum seekers left El Fasher airport via a UN plane to Kassala airport in eastern Sudan and was transported to Um Gargorah camp for the Ethiopian refugees," said the Commissioner for Refugees in North Darfur.
- The total number of soldiers who applied for asylum has reached 120, including 14 women.
- According to Sudan Tribune (ST), Sudan has officially informed the United Arab Emirates (UAE) of its adherence to placing border markers with Ethiopia before entering into investment projects in the disputed Al-Fashaqa area.
- The head of the Sovereign Council, Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, returned to Khartoum after talks with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed on Sunday. In statements to reporters, the Minister of the Cabinet Affairs Khaled Omer Youssef said Sudan conveyed to the UAE its position on the Emirati initiative on the border dispute with Ethiopia.
- "Sudan has conveyed to the Emirates its clear position in the (border) agreement that has settled the issue since 1972," stressed Youssef.

Reported International Situation (per 11 May)

- The U.S. said it strongly supports democratization in Ethiopia as it nears a national election on June 5, while noting a free, fair, and credible election can happen only with a conducive electoral environment.
- U.S. Sec. Antony Blinken had pressed for Ethiopia's and Eritrea's commitments to withdraw Eritrean troops from Tigray immediately, in full, and in a verifiable manner.
- "If that (a conducive electoral environment) is to be achieved, the government of Ethiopia must respect the freedom of assembly, the freedom of speech, political participation, and access to internet and information," said State Department spokesperson Ned Price.
- Price said political parties should discourage violence, and state security forces should demonstrate restraint in the use of force and partisan tactics: "We're also working closely with international partners to promote community-based dialogue to minimize violence surrounding the elections."
- "As we consider our aid to Ethiopia, we want to make sure that in the first instance, we're not doing anything that would place a further burden on the people of Tigray, who are in such humanitarian plight," said Price.
- Former U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia David Shinn told VOA it is not possible to have an election in the Tigray region, adding "there are some real concerns as to the viability of an election on June 5th" in Ethiopia, outside of Tigray.
- Former Ambassador and Assistant Sec. of State, Herman J. Cohen said the deaths and displacement of several hundred thousand citizens in Tigray, as well as the serious instability in Oromia, make it impossible to accomplish a valid election as early as next June 5.

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Links of interest

<https://news.yahoo.com/anti-farming-campaign-underway-tigray-113539985.html>

<https://www.africanews.com/2021/05/11/ethiopia-claims-fighters-not-civilians-killed-in-tigray-massacre/>

<https://www.voanews.com/africa/ethiopia-must-set-right-environment-election-us-says>

<https://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article69552>

<https://twitter.com/CohenOnAfrica/status/1391881140600967168?s=100>