

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 148 - 17 May 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 (per 16 May)

- Amnesty International stated that recent findings by the Ethiopian Attorney General's office on Aksum are not credible and raise concern that "the purpose of the investigation is to cover up the massacre."
- The Director of Crisis Response, Joanne Mariner, stated that several of the claims made by the AG findings regarding the perpetrators being TPLF fighters "stretched the bounds of credulity".
- Amnesty International calls for an independent investigation in the Aksum massacre.
- Reported that more than 19 civilians including children were indiscriminately killed in Guh village, Hawzien, Eastern Tigray by Eritrea and Ethiopian forces.
- Eritrean troops have been bombing villages and areas across the road from Adigrat to Adwa by heavy artillery from their base from the town of Muglat, Eastern Tigray.
- The Guardian has released an interview with a catholic sister working in Mekelle. In the interview the sister says that "Rape is happening to girls as young as eight and to women of 72. It is so widespread, I go on seeing it everywhere, thousands. This rape is in public, in front of family, husbands, in front of everyone." She continued by saying "Every single woman, not only once. It is intentional, deliberate. I am confident in that from what I am witnessing."
- The catholic nun also said that IDPs in Mekelle are sleeping with 40 to 65 people in a single room. for 3 to 6 thousand people there are four toilets for men and four for women.

Fighting in Tigray (per 16 May)

- Ethiopia has claimed that it has killed a hundred Tigrayan fighters trying to cross the border into Ethiopia from Sudan.
- Tigray sources dispute that Tigray defence forces have crossed the Ethiopia-Sudan border, stating that the Tigray forces are in many parts of western Tigray and these forces engaged in the fighting in Western Tigray.
- Tigray defence forces have dispatched brochures in Western Tigray in many woredas (districts), motivating the people to continue their resistance against the invasion.
- Reported that fresh deployment of Eritrean troops into Tigray has continued. Recently, three buses loaded with Eritrean troops have arrived at the town of Adwa, Central Tigray.
- Leaked video footage shows Eritrean troops shelling villages in Tigray. The troops in the video were heard saying in their own language (Tigrigna), that the heavy weapons they were firing aimed at massacring people in the towns of Shire, Axum, and Adwa.

Reported Situation in Ethiopia (per 16 May)

- Ethiopia has revoked the press credentials of New York Times reporter Simon Marks in early March. Appeals by the NYT have been rejected. The credentials were revoked after Marks returned from Tigray.
- The US has called on Ethiopia to respect freedom of the press.

- Ethiopia has postponed the national elections. The head of Ethiopia's election board said it would be impossible to hold a planned June 5 vote due to mounting logistical issues.
- "The vote will not happen on June 5... We can't tell you the date as the board has to examine the inputs it received from parties," said Birutkan Mideksa, Chairwoman of the election board.
- Birutkan Mideksa also said that the election postponement would not be longer than three weeks.
- A leaked document revealed that the Amhara regional government has requested the federal Ethiopian government around 100 million Birr (nearly 2 million euros) in funding for the treatment of wounded soldiers in the war on Tigray.
- Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) High Command said they have "detained" three Chinese nationals involved in mining operations around Medi, West Wellega, Oromia regional state.
- The OLA statement said mining companies operating in the area have been responsible for the displacement of many farming communities that were not adequately compensated.
- Reported in social media that Dr. Birhanu Nega, the leader of the opposition party EZEMA was beaten by a group of men in the town of Woldiya, Amhara regional state.

Reported International Situation (as per 16 May)

- The EU has condemned the blocking of Humanitarian aid to Tigray and said in a statement that humanitarian aid blockades by military forces in Tigray are severely impeding the ability for assistance to reach rural areas, where the humanitarian crisis is at the worst level.
- "The use of humanitarian aid as a weapon of war is a grave violation of international humanitarian law and is putting at risk the lives of millions of people. Immediate and full-scale assistance should be provided, in order to avoid starvation" added the statement.
- U.S. Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, Jeffrey Feltman said increasing political and ethnic polarization throughout Ethiopia is deeply concerning. "The atrocities being perpetrated in Tigray and the scale of the humanitarian emergency are unacceptable," said Feltman.
- Feltman added the U.S will work with its "international allies and partners to secure a ceasefire, end this brutal conflict, provide the life-saving assistance that is so urgently needed, and hold those responsible for human rights abuses and violations accountable".
- GOP Rep. Michael McCaul of Texas has said that Ethiopia and Eritrea are not holding up their public commitments and calls on the Biden Administration to "use all available tools, including sanctions and other restrictive measures, to hold all perpetrators accountable and bring an end to this conflict."
- U.S Sec. A. Blinken condemned the conduct of forces that continue to carry out atrocities and hinder distribution of humanitarian assistance in Tigray and those responsible must be held accountable.
- The US Senate Committee on Foreign relations will hold a briefing on Challenges and Opportunities for the United States in the Horn of Africa on Monday 17 March. Feltman will be among those testifying.
- It also warned that those responsible for deliberately preventing timely access will be held to account.
- EEPA is holding a Webinar on Conflict related Sexual Violence against Women in Tigray on May 25th, 14:00-16:00 EAT, 13:00 - 15:00 CET, 07.00 - 09.00 USA East.
- The EEPA Webinar will be opened by Hon. Julia Duncan-Casell, former Liberian minister of Gender and Social Protection, and it will include testimonies from women in Tigray. The registration link is: <https://bit.ly/3hqFbx1>

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Links of interest

<https://www.state.gov/travel-by-u-s-special-envoy-for-the-horn-of-africa-jeffrey-feltman/>
https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/98491/Ethiopia
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<https://eritreahub.org/mondays-critical-hearing-will-shape-american-policy-towards-the-horn-sanctions-against-eritrea-need-to-be-on-the-table>