

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 151 - 20 May 2021

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Reported situation in Tigray (per 19 May)

- Doctors told CNN that Ethiopian soldiers armed with machine guns, sniper rifles, and grenades raided a hospital in the Tigray region twice this week in retribution.
- Medical staff at the University Teaching and Referral Hospital of Axum said that the soldiers stormed the hospital in the early hours of Sunday morning, raiding the student dormitory, doctors, and patient wards, contaminating the operating room and stopping all surgical operations.
- "The troops returned again on Monday, after some medical staff and patients fled, searching for people they accused of 'tarnishing the country's image' in news reports, doctors told CNN.
- The soldiers also demanded a "list of the names of doctors who will not cooperate with the military's investigation into the hospital."
- "The soldiers removed bandages and intravenous fluids from some patients and pointed their guns at doctors and nurses who objected," one doctor said.
- MSF confirmed the incident to CNN saying that several soldiers "went ward by ward looking for patients, intimidating caretakers and threatening health staff."
- Mari Carmen Viñoles, head of MSF emergency unit told CNN the organisation was "very concerned about the frequent violations of the neutrality of the medical mission by armed groups in Tigray."
- "I feel like I am living on an isolated planet, with no law or order. The world must open its eyes that people in Tigray are living in anarchy," said a staff at Axum University Teaching and Referral Hospital.
- One doctor, who is still at the hospital, told CNN over text message they are living in fear of what will happen when the soldiers next return. "Everyone in the hospital is now helpless, with either detention or death looming at any point in the future from now."
- The soldiers appeared to be looking for pro-TPLF fighters. "If they see any wounded patient, they go to that patient and ask, 'Are you a soldier with TPLF?'" said one doctor.
- Refugees near have told Al-Jazeera that they have not received any food supplies in the two months since they have arrived in Shire.
- Both refugees and locals are struggling to find any food, sometimes going a week long, and on occasion longer, without eating anything. The starvation is so bad that some refugees are getting very sick and tired, their bodies not accepting any food anymore. Everyone has lost a lot of weight.
- Even in Mekelle, there is a widespread lack of food. One refugee says that she has not eaten anything in four days, and gives everything to her daughter.
- Refugees in Mekelle also say how Eritrean soldiers have been pillaging and burning crops in April. In one case a refugee says that "They burned my neighbour, an old blind woman together with her crops and house;". Another was forced into the fire after he begged them to leave his crops alone.
- Refugees also say that fresh Eritrean troops relieved "those who had been stationed in the area for months."
- A Tigrayan Interim Administration Official told Al-Jazeera that "There is no response. Only in December, 8,000 displaced people in Mekelle received a food ration of 30 kilos. But the number [of people displaced] is growing each day".

- The official, who wanted to stay anonymous, also said that at least 8 people had died of hunger since the start of the conflict. However, there are likely to be many more.
- Another Tigrayan Interim official has said that starvation is being deliberately used to overcome the people of Tigray. He said that “The Eritreans are telling us they will burn the food trucks if we pass. The Ethiopian troops are also blocking aid. This is a deliberate act of starving the people”.

Reported Situation in Ethiopia (per 19 May)

- Addis Standard said thirteen people including Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) leader Colonel Gemechu Ayana were reportedly taken by security forces after the court ordered their release.
- Lawyer Tuli Bayisa said 9 of the prisoners were released after the paperwork which took a long time to process while the remaining three of them remained in prison. The 9 prisoners were taken away by security forces wearing a uniform of the federal police and heavily armed.
- Tuli further said: “The security forces took the prisoners into a car and fled the area,” adding, “We don’t know where they took them.”
- Bench Sheko Zone Peace and Security Department Chief, Com. Dawit Timothios said 3 regular police officers and 6 special police officers were killed and 3 others injured by unknown forces attack in Sheko Woreda, Bench Sheko Zone, Aybera, and Sanka Kebeles.
- The author and politician, Andargachaw Tsige, and religious scholar Ustaz Abubeker have urged all Ethiopians to stand together and protest against the attempts being made by some Western nations to interfere in the affairs of Ethiopia against its sovereignty.
- Andargachaw Tsige, who is a British national also said: “I personally don’t care if the U.S government issues an entry ban on me and we should not hesitate to head to the U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa in millions and burn their flag.”
- Furthermore, a group of prominent Ethiopians and artists will be dispatched to Embassies in Addis Ababa to submit letters and express opposition against those who try to meddle in the internal affairs of Ethiopia.

Reported International Situation (as per 18 May)

- USUN Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield said the U.S. is continuously working to take diplomatic actions to help bring about an end to the crisis in the Tigray region.
- “Jeffrey Feltman has just completed a visit to Ethiopia, and I have been actively engaged on this issue insisting that it will be put on the agenda of the Security Council (SC) and successfully get a statement out of the SC,” she added.
- USAID administrator Samantha Power and UN under-SecGen Lowcock met on Wednesday 19th May to discuss the growing risk of famine and the human rights crisis in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, as well as the urgent need to ensure humanitarian staff safety and strengthen coordination in order to support a scaled-up response in Tigray.
- Power underscored the urgent need for unhindered humanitarian access and an end to hostilities in Tigray, as well as U.S. concern about Ethiopian and Eritrean forces’ interference with humanitarian operations.
- U.S. Sec. of State A. Blinken has met with Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto and both expressed shared concern over the situation in the Horn of Africa, including in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

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