

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 153 - 24 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 23 May)

- The Telegraph said civilians in Tigray have suffered burns consistent with the use of white phosphorus, a potential war crime. Leading chemical weapon experts said the footage is consistent with white phosphorus, which is banned from use against human targets under international law.
- CNN reports that parts of Tigray are controlled by Eritrean troops and these have checkpoints on a major road artery sealing of Aksum. Humanitarian aid and journalists are not allowed through.
- CNN found fresh evidence of atrocities being committed in Tigray.
- The Consortium of Religious Institutions of Tigray documented that over 326 priests, deacons, Sunday student's and sheiks were massacred by Ethiopian and Eritrean troops in the Tigray region.
- The Consortium also denounced the genocidal war in Tigray and declared their solidarity with his Holiness Abune Mathias, the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.
- OCHA says humanitarian access in Tigray remains unpredictable with incidents of denial of movement of relief cargo and confiscation of humanitarian vehicles and supplies by parties to the conflict.
- "Military checkpoints are aggressively searching humanitarian vehicles and regularly demanding permission from local authorities or the Northern Command," said OCHA.
- OCHA added food cluster partners reported access difficulties has reached at least 25 Woredas.
- In Eastern Zone, Agula checkpoint (south of Wukro) became the most significant bottleneck to humanitarian movements out of Mekelle over the past two weeks with multiple days-long closures due to security and military movements.
- OCHA said several partners were stopped, held back for hours, or sent back to Mekelle without completing their missions, affecting the delivery of health and relief supplies to main towns and hospitals in Adigrat, Adwa, and Axum.
- OCHA further said only about 1.8 million people of the 5.2 million in need of food assistance were reached since late March. And over 2 million people have been displaced by the conflict to date.
- OCHA added that US\$853 million is required to assist 5.2 million people until the end of the year, with almost US\$200 million needed by the end of July.
- Reported that 11 civilians were killed after Eritrean and Ethiopian forces shelled Bora Chellena and its vicinities, Southern Tigray by heavy artillery and rockets. Over a dozen were also injured.
- More than 100 homes of farmers including an elementary school were also destroyed by the shelling and over 150 cattle were killed.
- Over 50 trucks transporting food aid from Gondar to Shire, Northwestern Tigray were stopped by Amhara forces in MayTsebri, a town seized by Amhara forces. NGOs were also told to halt their job.
- Artists representing Tigray regional state at the so-called 'Ethiopia Week' were seen dressed in all black and used the occasion to highlight the ongoing "genocide" in Tigray, reported on social media.

Reported Situation in Ethiopia (per 23 May)

- Ethiopia's Foreign Affairs Minister has denied the allegations of the use of a chemical weapon against the people of Tigray. It also labeled the charges as "malicious" and "beyond irresponsible".
- The Attorney General (AG) of Ethiopia said three Ethiopian soldiers have been convicted of rape and one of killing a civilian in Tigray, the first public statement that soldiers had been found guilty of crimes against civilians in the conflict, few days after the Attorney General reported no civilians death.

- The AG added investigation indicates that a total of 110 civilians have been killed by Eritrean troops in Axum on 28-29 November 2020, including 40 who were killed in home raids.
- New York Times (NYT) says Simon Marks, an Irish journalist working for The New York Times, was expelled by the Ethiopian government.
- NYT said Mr. Marks had been reporting extensively on the war in Tigray, where there are widespread accounts that the Ethiopian military and its Eritrean and militia allies are committing atrocities, including massacres and sexual assault.
- "It is alarming that the government of Ethiopia treated the journalist, Simon Marks, like a criminal, expelling him from the country without even letting him go home to get a change of clothing or his passport," said Michael Slackman, The Times's assistant managing editor for international.

Reported Situation in the Horn (per 23 May)

- According to Sudan Tribune (ST), Egyptian infantry forces has arrived in Sudan to participate in bilateral military exercises involving ground, naval, and air armies of the two countries.
- "Preparations have been completed for the launch of the joint military maneuver 'Guardians of the Nile' to confront any possible threats from 26-31 May," said the Sudanese army.
- Somali Guardian said a number of Somali recruits have recently escaped an Eritrean camp after they were sent to train there by Somalia's federal government.
- The news has sparked protest in the capital Mogadishu by parents demanding government explanation on the whereabouts of their missing sons and renewed fears by families that the boys might have been killed in the war in Tigray.

Reported International Situation (as per 23 May)

- POLITICO said the EU has demanded an investigation into the killing of an Ethiopian journalist early this month and expressed "serious concern" over the expulsion from the country of Simon Marks, an Irish reporter who publishes in the NYT.
- "The EU is seriously concerned about the shrinking space for freedom of the media and harrassment, arrests as well as restrictions imposed on Ethiopian and international journalists in Ethiopia," said an EU spokesperson in a statement.
- Foreign Policy (FP) says the Biden administration has planned Visa-restrictions on Ethiopian officials over Tigray. The new measures are an "opening diplomatic salvo" and a "shot across the bow", and come amid deteriorating relations between Washington and Ahmed's administration.
- According to Bloomberg, the Biden administration has prepared economic sanctions against Ethiopia that could halt finance from the U.S. to Ethiopia, and loans by international financial institutions.
- The U.S. sanctions being considered will mainly affect financial support to Ethiopia's budget and will include a request that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund withhold funding.
- The Guardian said the Biden administration is shifting to a more direct strategy to force Ahmed to end continuing human rights abuses in Tigray and allow free flow of much-needed humanitarian aid.
- 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-Cassell, 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.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/05/23/exclusive-ethiopians-suffer-horrific-burns-suspected-white-phosphorus/>
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/23/washington-toughens-stance-to-fight-atrocities-in-ethiopia>
<https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/ethiopia/>
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/20/world/africa/ethiopia-new-york-times-simon-marks.html>
<https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/05/21/biden-visa-restrictions-ethiopia-tigray-conflict-eritrea-war-crimes-humanitarian-crisis/>
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<https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-concerned-media-rights-ethiopia/>
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