

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 154 - 25 May 2021

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Reported International Situation (as per 24 May)

- The US has announced Visa restrictions on “any current or former Ethiopian or Eritrean government officials, members of the security forces, or other individuals—to include Amhara regional and irregular forces and members of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF)—responsible for, or complicit in, undermining resolution of the crisis in Tigray. “
- It includes anyone who has “conducted wrongful violence” and “hindered access of humanitarian assistance”. Immediate family of these people might also be affected.
- The US is also enacting “wide-ranging restrictions on economic and security assistance to Ethiopia and will bring our defense trade control policy in line with them.”
- The Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has said that it is regrettable, that the “the attempt by the U.S. administration to meddle in its internal affairs, is not only inappropriate but also completely unacceptable”, and that it “will reassess its relations with the United States”.
- It further said that it “will not be deterred by this unfortunate decision of the U.S. administration”.
- Bloomberg says U.S sanctions complicate Vodafone funding for Ethiopia telecom entry.
- Vodafone Group PLC’s plans to expand in Ethiopia have been complicated by the U.S state development agency’s decision to pause investment in the country.
- A group including the U.K.’s Vodafone, Safaricom Ltd and Vodafone Group Ltd were awarded a new mobile-phone license by the Ethiopian government and had agreed to take a \$500 million loan from the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation for acquisition and development costs.

30 Year Independence Eritrea (per 24 May)

- May 24 is independence day in Eritrea. It has been 30 years since Eritrean independence from Ethiopia and the Derg-regime. In Ethiopia Liberation day from the Derg-regime is celebrated tomorrow, 25 May.

Accusation of use of chemical weapons (per 24 May)

- The Telegraph said exclusive footage and accounts of witnesses and victims smuggled out of the war in Tigray suggests the Ethiopian and Eritrean armies may have used powerful incendiary weapons in civilian areas.
- The victims include Kisanet Gebremicheal, a 13-year-old girl from the village of Adi’ayqoro in central Tigray who suffered agonising burns when her home came under attack on 20 April 2021.
- “A heavy weapon hit the house, and fire fell from the roof,” she said on the phone. “It burned me immediately. It had the smell of gunpowder.”
- Footage taken shortly after Ms Gebremicheal made it to the medical center shows her dark skin entirely burnt away from her arms, legs, face and hands; all that is left is a white and red paste of flesh and fat.
- “Oh, my heart. Oh, what the hell is this? Oh mum,” she wails as the nurse wrap her burnt and infected body. But the morphine doesn’t work any more, so even her mother’s soft touch is agony.
- Hamish de Bretton, the former commander of the UK’s Joint Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Regiment said: “These horrific injuries look very similar to injuries I have seen on casualties in North-east and North-west Syria. It looks like injuries caused by white phosphorus.”

- Genet Asmelash, Kisanet Gebremicheal's mother, says her two daughters were working in the family home on 20 April 2021 when the heavy weapon exploded above.
- Ms Asmelash also said there was no fighting in the area, and it was daylight when the shell struck. "There was a bad smell, something that suffocates...something like a poison or a chemical. It was like a cloud, and I could not see the house."
- Yemane Weldemicheal, an 18-year-old young man, completely from a different area, a village named Adi Woluwo in eastern Tigray was also another victim. He said: "It was April 9. I was alone sitting in my house, which is made of stone and mud. A heavy weapon landed into the house suddenly."
- "It has a suffocating smell. It made a fire inside the house. I was burning immediately. Everything except my hair was burning," he added.
- Mr Woldemicheal says both Eritrean and Ethiopian soldiers were in control of the area when he was hit, and there was no ongoing fighting.
- Medical staff told the Telegraph that they have seen more child victims and that they suspect many others died of their wounds before they made it through military roadblocks to the capital, Mekelle.
- Dan Kaszeta, a chemical and biological specialist at the Royal United Services Institute, a defence think tank said: "This could easily be the result of a white phosphorus munition. It is possible that high explosive munitions caused some fires. But this seems more likely an incendiary weapon like phosphorus."
- The Ethiopian government has denied the accusation, saying that "the charge is malicious and beyond irresponsible." and accuses it of trying to divide "the nation".

Reported situation in Tigray (per 24 May)

- Broadcasted by Dimtsi Weyane (DW) International, spokesperson of the ousted Tigray regional government said: "The government of Tigray affirms the readiness on the parts of the people and government of Tigray to collaborate and execute the U.S Senate resolution 97 in an orderly manner."
- Reported in social media that the Ethiopian Airlines is using cargo planes to transport military equipment from abroad to Ethiopia. The cargo terminal was also seen overflowing with weapons.
- A massacre took place on 8 May 2021 in the village of Abune Y'ma'eta Guh. Following fighting between Tigrayan and Eritrean forces the day before, Eritrean forces came back in the morning and shot 21 of which 19 died. Two are in critical condition.
- Among the victims are seven children under ten, one of which was a 2 month old baby.
- One of the survivors also had machete wounds. She made it to Ayder Referral hospital by 15 May.

Reported Situation in Ethiopia (per 24 May)

- The Police department of Gelana Woreda in the Guji zone said seven people including the head of the zonal security and administration office were killed in an attack.
- Commander Obsa Hundesa, head of the police department, attributed the attacks to the recently designated terrorist group 'Shene', a term used to refer to the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA).
- Five people were also seriously injured in the attack.

Reported Situation in the Horn (per 24 May)

- According to the Sudan Tribune, the UAE has withdrawn its initiative to settle the border dispute between Sudan and Ethiopia.
- The Egyptian Irrigation minister has said that it will not accept a Unilateral filling of the GERD reservoir by Ethiopia. He added that there were measures that could be taken.
- Negotiations are still at an impasse, despite the AU and US trying to resolve the dispute.

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Links of interest

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-05-24/u-s-sanctions-complicate-vodafone-funding-for-ethiopia-entry>
<https://www.tghat.com/2021/05/24/a-massacre-in-abuna-yemata-guh-at-the-foot-of-the-famous-rock-hewn-church/>
<https://www.state.gov/united-states-actions-to-press-for-the-resolution-of-the-crisis-in-the-tigray-region-of-ethiopia/>
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