

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 158 - 31 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 30 May)

- CNN said hundreds of men in the Tigray region were released following its report of their detention that prompted an international outcry.
- Eyewitnesses and aid workers told CNN that the soldiers had released all but a "handful" of the men, who were detained by Ethiopian and Eritrean forces operating in the region.
- A released detainee described physical abuse by Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers while in their custody.
- "They take us out one by one and torture us," he said. "This is the third time I've been beaten by soldiers like this. People here start running and are scared every time they see someone wearing military uniform. The world has to hear our cries and do something -- we are living in terror."
- Hunger deaths were reported to the Tigray Regional Emergency Coordination Centre from the Central and Southern district of Tigray, including people from IDP sites.
- The Regional Emergency Coordination Centre said Eritrean troops have looted rations of over 2,166 individual beneficiaries and the remaining was mixed with soil not to be used by the people.
- The Regional Emergency Coordination Centre report shows over 15 Woredas in the region were inaccessible to aid due to intentional roadblock and unwillingness of Ethiopian and Eritrean troops.
- Reported that all roads from and to Mekelle were closed on Friday. Ethiopian and Eritrean forces commanders were heard saying "because you fasted for 3 days, we will punish you for 6 days, by sealing off Mekelle."

Reported Situation in Ethiopia (per 30 May)

- BBC said over 10,000 people have attended an anti-US rally in Addis Ababa, to denounce President Joe Biden's policy on the conflict in Tigray.
- At the rally, people held placards criticising the US while others applauded Russia's President Vladimir Putin and China's leader Xi Jinping.
- In a letter, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia has requested the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Addis Ababa to arrange a high-level meeting for the Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen as Special Envoy of Prime Minister Abiy with Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation and his counterpart Sergey Lavrov, preferably in the first week of June 2021.
- Multiple sources reported on social media that Ethiopian Airlines has been transporting weapons from China and Lebanon to Ethiopia.
- The sources added the airline is transporting weapons and troops to/from Eritrea's Assab, Massawa and Asmara to Ethiopia's Addis Ababa, Mekelle and Bahirdar.
- The federal government has received a request for reimbursement of 2 billion Birr (€38 million) from the Amhara regional state for costs incurred for medical treatment provisions to members of the ENDF injured in the war in Tigray.
- The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) says Eritrean troops are brutally persecuting civilians in the Abay Chomen region of West Oromia.

- OLF said Eritrean forces have been deployed to Oromia and Benshangul-Gumuz regions and are repeating the same atrocities on civilians as that of the Northern part of the country.
- “There was tangible evidence that in April 2021, many battalions of Eritrean soldiers had been deployed to Horro Guduru, Qellam Wallaga, West Wallaga, Guji and Borana Zones of Oromia and the Metekel (Benshangul-Gumuz) region and caused enormous damages to civilians including beating, killing, looting, raping of women and children and arbitrarily detaining civilians,” said OLF.
- Three Chinese nationals whose detention was claimed by the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) were reportedly released and handed over to representatives of the ICRC.

International situation (30 May 2021)

- Bloomberg says the U.S. has asked multilateral development banks to suspend funding to Ethiopia as fresh reports of human rights abuses surfaced from the war-torn Tigray region.
- Robert Godec, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs said: “There are confirmed reports of Tigrayans dying from malnutrition and starvation.” As a result, the U.S. is “withholding support for new lending from multilateral development banks that don’t address basic human needs and are asking our allies to do likewise,” he added.
- Godec also told Congress that Joe Biden's administration is conducting a review into possible war crimes committed in Ethiopia’s Tigray region.
- “We have a fact-based review underway that is being conducted very quickly and the secretary of state will have the final determination,” said Godec. Washington takes “extremely seriously” comments by UN Commissioner for Human Rights on “atrocities that may well amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity.”
- Mr Godec added if the conflict does not “reverse course,” Ethiopia and Eritrea should anticipate “further action” from the US. “It cannot be business as usual in the face of the violence and atrocities in Tigray,” said Godec during a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing.
- Sarah Charles, Assistant to the Administrator of the USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, told Congress that the situation was increasing the risk of famine in the Tigray region. “By blocking food assistance deliveries and preventing farmers from accessing their agricultural land to plant and harvest, the armed actors are actively exacerbating the risk of famine in Tigray,” said Ms Charles.
- She also told intentional attacks on humanitarian staff to block aid from arriving in the region, including the killing of a USAID partner staff member and 7 other humanitarian workers during the conflict.
- Finnish Foreign Affairs Minister, Pekka Haavisto discussed with UN SG, António Guterres on the alarming humanitarian situation in Tigray and emphasized the importance that humanitarian workers are protected and humanitarian access guaranteed.
- EEPA is holding a Webinar on Voices From Tigray Brutalities against Religious leaders, Holy Places and Heritage in Tigray on June 8th, 14:00-16:00 EAT, 13:00-15:00 CET, 07.00-09.00 USA East. The registration link is: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_w_2_EZNvQqa0luRWLdBWeQ

Disclaimer: All information in this situation report is presented as a fluid update report, as to the best knowledge and understanding of the authors at the moment of publication. EEPA does not claim that the information is correct but verifies to the best of ability within the circumstances. The publication is weighed on the basis of interest to understand the potential impacts of events (or perceptions of these) on the situation. Check all information against updates and other media. EEPA does not take responsibility for the use of the information or the impact thereof. All information reported originates from third parties and the content of all reported and linked information remains the sole responsibility of these third parties. Report to info@eepa.be any additional information and corrections.

Links of interest

https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-05-28/u-s-to-freeze-funding-for-ethiopia-as-tigray-abuses-surface?utm_

<https://addisfortune.news/amhara-region-places-two-billion-br-in-war-recompense/>

https://edition.cnn.com/2021/05/28/africa/tigray-ethiopia-detainees-released-intl/index.html?utm_source=fbCNNi&utm_campaign=africa&utm_

<https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/the-americas/us-government-conducts-review-into-possible-war-crimes-in-tigray-1>