

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 161 - 03 June 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 01 June)

- OCHA says the overall security situation in the Tigray region remains highly complex and fluid. Ongoing hostilities are highly mobile, mostly in rural areas, hindering humanitarian operations.
- “While hostilities have largely ceased in boundary areas with Eritrea, from North-western to Eastern Zones, since March, access to these areas is often denied,” said OCHA.
- OCHA also said violence and attacks against civilians, including humanitarian workers, continue.
- “Level of food insecurity and malnutrition remain alarming. 21% of more than 21,000 children under age 5 screened for malnutrition last week were identified with severe wasting, alarmingly above the emergency 15% threshold set by the WHO,” added OCHA.
- OCHA further said health facilities continue to receive and treat survivors of GBV throughout the region, with 1,288 official cases reported between February and April. The reported numbers greatly underestimate the actual cases, as underreporting is widespread.
- There have been reports that two Eritrean divisions, 16th and 57th, on their way to Adwa.
- Reported that hundreds of Eritrean soldiers have been deployed to the town of Abi Adi on 02 June.
- In a recent update on the situation in Tigray, UNHCR has said that 8.100 Eritrean refugees have arrived from Shimelba and Hitsats refugee camps. They are continuing to find remaining refugees, who were displaced from both camps after the camps were attacked and then closed.
- They say that many refugees are still dispersed around Shiraro, Adigrat and “hard to reach” areas across the Tigray region. Two thousand unidentified refugees are thought to be in Shiraro. Meanwhile other refugees are likely heading out of Tigray to areas perceived as safer, such as Addis Ababa.
- Shimelba and Hitsats refugee camps housed 25 thousand refugees before the conflict started.

Reported Situation in the Horn region (per 01 June)

- The Sudanese Foreign minister has written a letter in which they say that a new round of negotiations, headed by the United Nations, African Union, European Union, and United States were needed to break the deadlock regarding the GERD negotiations.

International situation (per 01 June)

- Eritrean Amb to the UN, Sophia Tesfamariam, will be Chair to the African group to the UN for June 2021. Tesfamariam is known to be the right hand to Eritrean President Esayas Afeworki.
- The new Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights in Eritrea has been published.
- The report says that Eritrean forces indiscriminately bombarded Humera at the beginning of the conflict, killing 46 people and wounding 200 more.
- The report further says that when Eritrean troops took control of Adigrat on 20 November, the troops “committed extrajudicial executions of civilians and widespread sexual and gender-based violence and looting, and transported the looted goods to Eritrea on stolen trucks.”
- The Special Rapporteur also reported that the office received reports of Somali troops being transported by Eritrea to the frontline in Tigray.
- The Special Rapporteur is also raising “serious concern” about the situation of Eritrean refugees in Tigray. In particular, the Rapporteur is concerned about “alleged participation of Eritrean troops in the

Tigray conflict alongside the ENDF, and allegations of their possible implication in cases of serious human rights violations, including abductions, extrajudicial killings and executions of civilians, widespread looting and pillage, the forced return of Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers, and their imprisonment in unknown locations in Eritrea.”

- The report raises serious concerns about the humanitarian situation of these refugees saying that “During a visit to southern Tigray, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees heard horror stories of survivors’ experiences at the hands of Eritrean troops.”
- It concludes that “The situation of human rights in Eritrea remains a source of serious concern.”
- In particular it calls on the international community, including governments and civil society to:
 - Thoroughly investigate allegations of serious human rights violations, including abductions, extrajudicial killings and executions of civilians, widespread looting and pillage, and the forced return of Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers;
 - Exert international pressure on the Government of Eritrea to end the two-decade practice of arbitrary and incommunicado detention, of political opponents, prisoners of conscience and others detained because of their faith.
 - “Adopt similar initiatives to the European Union’s global human rights sanctions regime to target and impose restrictive measures on individuals, entities and bodies –including State and non-State actors –responsible for, involved in or associated with serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law in Eritrea, including acts of torture, extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and killings;
 - Avoid financing projects that may potentially violate or have an adverse impact on the human rights of the Eritrean people, and put in place mechanisms to adequately monitor respect for the basic rights of those employed in projects implemented, ensuring that the labour force participates on a voluntary basis and that workers receive adequate financial compensation.
- Voice of America (VOA) is accused of Ethiopian government propaganda by a dozen of their staffers.
- They say that large sections of the upper management are aware of it, as concerns have been raised with them about bias in the conflict, but that little has been done to remedy it.
- Some of the journalists working in VOA have quit after the network failed to properly highlight atrocities carried out by Ethiopian forces and their allies.
- They also mention that VOA extensively covered the Mai Kadra massacre in November 2020, even sending a crew, but has barely mentioned the similar massacre that took place in Axum.
- Since 2018, the Amharic section of the network has been under stringent management, which has stopped story ideas deemed damaging for the Ethiopian government, such as the Axum massacre.
- VOA has responded by saying that “VOA does its best to cover the situation in Ethiopia fairly and accurately. There are strong feelings in the region about the conflict, and we hear from partisans of all sides. Our goal is objective journalism.”
- France, the Netherlands, Germany, the UK, the United States, and other European countries have called for a ceasefire in Tigray to prevent a famine and to allow humanitarian access to the region.
- Finish Foreign Minister and EU envoy to the Horn, Pekka Haavisto, spoke with UN Director General Guterres about the “alarming Humanitarian situation”. Both called for humanitarian access to the region and protection of humanitarian workers.
- Belgium reiterates deep concern regarding the worsening humanitarian situation in Tigray, Ethiopia.
- 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 U.S East. The registration link is: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_w_2_EZnvQqa0IuRWLdBWeQ

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Links of interest

<https://www.unocha.org/story/daily-noon-briefing-highlights-afghanistan-ethiopia>

<https://mg.co.za/africa/2021-06-02-voice-of-america-is-airing-ethiopian-propaganda-staffers-claim/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/02/calls-grow-ethiopia-declare-ceasefire-tigray-allow-aid>

<https://reliefweb.int/search/results?search=tigray>

<https://undocs.org/A/HRC/47/21>