

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 165 - 10 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 organizations, civil society, and experts from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Uganda, and across Africa. The situation reports can be found [here](#).

Webinar “Voices from Tigray” (8 June 2021)

- His Eminence Archbishop Angaelou opened at the webinar “Voices of Tigray”: “We must speak together. We must recognise the humanitarian challenge at the moment. I very much hope that this is all fake news. I hope that all of these videos are contrived. I hope there is no truth to any of this. But the overwhelming proof is that this is not the case.”
- The archbishop stated: “To hear from many voices of the destruction of churches is incredibly painful. Because these churches have been there for centuries. The churches have always been a safe place, a place of refuge, a place of pilgrimage. They are a part of people’s life and witness and faith. Even more distressing is the attack on heritage, that is encapsulated by these places, places of spirituality and worship, the heritage of benevolence, the heritage of family. The things that the world seeks now. It is the actual being of people, at the core of their identity and who they are. The attack on religious leaders is very distressing as they are pillars of faith and an example of lived faith in the world.”
- The Opening Address by his Eminence Archbishop Angaelos is available here: <https://youtu.be/W3CQNmbdy-Q>
- Helen Berhane, a former prisoner of conscience for her religious beliefs, opened the testimonies in the Webinar “Voices from Tigray”. She said: “What has been done secretly in Eritrea for decades, is now done in another country.”
- All testimonies presented to the conference are available here: https://www.eepa.be/?page_id=5111

Reported situation in Tigray (per 09 June)

- Tigrayans interviewed by the BBC say that they have no food and are starving. They said that their crops and cattle had been taken by armed men, and that the few remains of food they managed to keep are now gone. “Now we don't have anything”.
- They also told the BBC that no one is giving them aid. According to a local official, no federal assistance was being provided, and “limited assistance was coming through for neighbouring Amhara.”
- They also said that they cannot flee, as all the roads are blocked. If you want to pass, you need to offer soldiers substantial bribes. Most people however don't have any possessions left.
- Voice of America (VOA) says about 200 people are believed to be buried in and around the town of Hawzen, Eastern Tigray after more than seven months of the war. Some of them have been buried in mass graves.
- Locals told VOA that there are about 20 graves in all, containing bodies that were found in the streets after multiple battles, the most recent of which happened just a few weeks ago.
- Letay Girmay, 50, says she helped bury bodies and hopes they can soon be moved to a churchyard.
- “The bodies lay ... on the ground for 7 or 8 days,” she said. “And there was no one to help us take them to the church, so a few of us buried them. They smelled bad, rotting and attracting maggots.”
- A broadcast by Dimtsi Weyane (DW) International says the ousted government of Tigray is ready to organize, coordinate and ensure timely delivery of humanitarian assistance to the people of Tigray.

- Parents and teachers in Tigray have said that schools have not yet reopened. This comes after the interim administration announced that all schools would reopen.
- The chairman of the committee set up to provide salaries to teachers said that the 1700 private school teachers in Mekelle have yet to start giving classes again.
- Teachers were reportedly ordered to start giving classes again. However they want some conditions to be met before they start. This includes months of backpay, the fate of IDPs taking shelter in schools, and psychological aid to the children that need it.

Reported Situation in Ethiopia (per 09 June)

- In an open letter to the US, the Oromo Global Forum asked for US action in Oromia. The OGF is an alliance of “45 Oromo civic, professional, faith-based organizations, and scholars”.
- They want to bring to the attention of the US administration the “invasion of Oromia by Eritrean soldiers, in a serious escalation of the civil war in Ethiopia by Abiy’s government.”
- They say that more than 30 thousand Eritrean and Amhara troops have been deployed to Oromia. According to the letter, those Eritrean soldiers are also starting to commit atrocities in Oromia.
- The letter continues by laying out the fear that Oromia will suffer the same fate as Tigray, putting millions of people in misery and at risk of starvation.
- The UNHCR has said that it is concerned about reports of refugees being returned against their will to Ethiopia from Djibouti.
- Clementine Nkweta-Salami, UNHCR’s Regional Director said that “Djibouti has been an exemplary host to refugees in many ways, so it is disappointing to learn of these developments. We call upon the Djibouti authorities to uphold their international obligations in relation to asylum.”

Reported Situation in the Horn region(per 09 June)

- Sudan Tribune (ST) says the Ethiopian army has deployed extra troops along their common border with Sudan in the Amhara region as militiamen continue to attack Sudanese farmers.
- ST added the recent troop build-up of forces on the Ethiopian side of the border took place in adjacent areas to Taya, Um Dablo, and Wad Alagouz, and Haskanit areas as well as Qatrand settlement.

International situation (per 09 June)

- The EU and the US will be holding a high-level virtual meeting regarding the conflict in Tigray on 10 June. The meeting intends to highlight the humanitarian emergency unfolding in the region, and will be live-streamed. It can be accessed [here](#).
- It will include remarks by US UN ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, as well as the US envoy to the region, and two EU commissioners. UN humanitarian chief Mark Lowcock will also be attending.
- According to a Senior US diplomat, PM Abiy Ahmed has asked veteran diplomat Amb Tekeda Alemu to take a delegation to Washington to ease diplomatic tensions between Ethiopia and the U.S.
- The Eritrean minister of Foreign affairs has blamed American intervention for the continuation of the conflict in Tigray.
- The Italian Embassy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia said Italy adheres to the international appeal for a humanitarian ceasefire in Tigray. The Embassy added that the civilian population must be protected, agricultural activities must be facilitated and humanitarian access must be allowed to ensure food security to all Ethiopian people.

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Links of interest

<https://ogfonline.org/urgent-appeal-to-stop-the-invasion-of-oromia-and-benishangul-gumuz-regional-states-by-eritrean-forces/>
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349824181_Tigray_Atlas_of_the_humanitarian_situation
<https://www.voanews.com/africa/residents-dig-mass-graves-bury-tigray-war-victims>
<https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/article/avoiding-regret-probable-failure-ethiopian-state>
<https://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article69652>
<https://www.suna-sd.net/read?id=714600>