

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 173 - 23 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](#).

Reported situation in Tigray (per 22 June)

- It is reported that Operation Alula by Tigray Defense Forces (TDF) has resulted in defeat of Ethiopian allied troops in many areas from Abiy Adi to the river Giba. TDF is close to the outskirts of Mekelle.
- The TDF would control several roads including the road to Adigrat at Agula'e as well as the road to the south, surrounding Mekelle.
- The reports suggest that TDF has encircled Mekelle from 3 sides from a distance; ENDF units that had been airlifted into Mekelle are unable to move to Adigrat or to the South as roads are blocked.
- The TDF took control of Adigrat for several hours to gather supplies. It was taken by the TDF without a fight after Ethiopian troops withdrew from the city. The TDF withdrew after having gathered supplies located in the city. Eritrean troops then entered Adigrat.
- Reported that Adigrat was shelled by Eritrean forces when EDF reached Adigrat. The ENDF has denied that it lost control of the area.
- Reported that the bombing was heard in Mekelle overnight, but people have resumed their work as normal.
- Reported that Agulae has fallen to the TDF.
- Images shown of large numbers of Prisoners of War (POW) taken by the TDF. TDF spokesperson Getachew Reda states that the 'Government of Tigray' has requested ICRC to help feed the POW as there are "far too many".
- There are several reports that several people were killed in an airstrike in Togoga, 25 km from Mekelle. Ethiopian airplanes dropped a bomb on a market. Five people that have been wounded have reportedly arrived in Ayder Hospital in Mekelle, among them children.
- The airstrike reportedly took place on Market day. It is unclear how many people were killed.
- There are also reports of ambulances sent from Mekelle to help bring injured civilians in Togoga has been denied passage by ENDF soldiers who control the checkpoints.
- The UNHCR has said that there are an estimated 1.7 million IDPs in Tigray. They added that in some classrooms in Mekelle, 5 refugees sleep on a single mattress.
- An Eritrean soldier has provided testimony that he was sent directly from prison to Sheraro on October 30, and he said that he arrived in Sheraro via Badme on November 2. He knows the dates because there was a TV in the prison so he knows he was released on October 30th.
- It would appear that the prisoners were released to fight in the war in Tigray, prior to the start of the war on 3-4 November.
- Another Eritrean refugee testifies that "The Eritrean army kidnapped many Eritreans from Tigray and brought them back to Eritrea. Some people came back to Eritrea and left again to Sudan."

- The testimony states that people that were forced to return were put in prison for a month, and then forced to join the National Service. Deserters and former soldiers remained imprisoned longer.

Ethiopian Elections (per 22 June)

- Counting is underway in the 437 constituencies where voting took place on Monday. In 110 constituencies voting did not take place, most being delayed until September. In the 38 Tigrayan Constituencies no date has been set yet.
- The Ethiopian Citizens for Social Justice party (Ezema) said it filed 207 complaints after officials and militias blocked election observers.
- The Ethiopian National Election Board chairwoman said that opposition election observers had been chased away from polls in two regions.
- The Board also said that the certified results would be announced within 10 days.
- The Safaricom-led group which gained a bid for telecom operations in Ethiopia has received US approval despite US economic sanctions.

International situation (per 22 June)

- Belgium states that it ‘emphatically’ denounces the involvement of Eritrean troops in the Tigray conflict at the UN Human Rights Council.
- Belgium announces that a resolution on the human rights situation in Eritrea will be presented later in the 47th session of the Human Rights Council.
- Germany states in the Human Rights Council that the involvement of Eritrean soldiers in human rights violations in Tigray is grave cause for concern.
- Germany remains very concerned about massive restrictions of human rights in Eritrea.
- The United Kingdom raised allegations of atrocities committed by Eritrea forces in Tigray, including using famine as a weapon of war at the Human Rights Council, calling it “unacceptable”. The UK stated that Eritrea must remove its forces from Tigray immediately.
- The EU Council discussed on Monday 21 June the dramatic situation in Tigray, Ethiopia, “where a full-blown humanitarian crisis is currently pushing an estimated 400,000 people to the brink of man-made famine and loss of life.”
- The EU Council will discuss Ethiopia as a full discussion item on the agenda of the July Foreign Affairs Council.
- The Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the US Senate, Gregory Meeks, states that he is gravely concerned the elections in Ethiopia are far from “credible, free, and fair”.
- The Qatar National Bank has sued Eritrea over a 286 Million US\$ loan that was never repaid. The Washington DC Bankruptcy Court has ruled that Eritrea is in default. The arrangement may allow Qatar National Bank to seize property of Eritrea worldwide.
- EEPA is holding a Webinar on “The involvement of Eritreans in the war in Tigray” on June 29th, 14:00-16:00 EAT, 13:00-15:00 CET, 07.00-09.00 U.S East. The registration link is: <https://bit.ly/3qfQ335>

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.reuters.com/world/africa/polls-open-ethiopias-sidama-region-counting-continues-elsewhere-2021-06-22/>
<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-06-22/tigray-dissidents-claim-territorial-gains-in-ethiopian-civil-war>
<https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/bd/corporate/companies/us-sanction-waiver-saves-safaricom-ethiopia-deal-3445994>
https://twitter.com/reda_getachew/status/1407310691493625856?s=20
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/06/21/>