

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 22 - 11 December

[Europe External Programme with Africa](#) is a Belgium-based Centre of Expertise with in-depth knowledge, publications, and networks, specialised in issues of peace building, refugee protection and resilience in the Horn of Africa. EEPA has published extensively on issues related to 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. Key in-depth publications [can be accessed on the website](#).

Key information (in addition to what is already widely published)

International dimension (as confirmed per 11 Dec)

- Two US senators, a democrat and a republican, have introduced a resolution to impose sanctions on any political or military officials found to be responsible for human rights violations during the month of conflict in Ethiopia's northern Tigray region.
- Reports that the United States believes Eritrean soldiers are in Tigray and that this is confirmed by satellite images.
- TV images showing evidence of eritrean soldiers in Tigray.
- Experts warn that weakening of the Ethiopian military presence in Somalia is a risk factor, as the terror group Al-Shabaab can gain influence there again during the sensitive pre-election period for 2021.
- Report that a boat carrying weapons for Al-Shabaab has arrived in the coastal village of Durduri near Lasqoray in Somalia on Tuesday night.
- The US Department of Defence says it will still be able to conduct drone and strike operations in Somalia after its withdrawal of soldiers on the ground, ordered by the Trump administration.
- The US military says it conducted two airstrikes on Al Shabaab in the vicinity of Jilib 112KM south to Kismaayo in the Lower Juba region on Thursday, stating it killed 8 Al-Shabaab fighters and wounded 2.
- Wim Zwijnenburg, an expert on disarmament for PAX, said there is no evidence that UAE drones strikes are being carried out in Tigray. He recognises there are UAE drones based in Eritrea.
- Flemish Parliament (Belgium) asks for urgent diplomatic action on the conflict in Tigray to avoid famine.

Situation in Ethiopia (as confirmed per 11 Dec)

- PM Abiy Ahmed has visited Lamu Port, a component of the South Sudan Ethiopia land corridor. He hopes to push for further economic integration. Several analysts have pointed out the PM is trying to change the topic from the war towards economic issues. He has recently undertaken multiple trips to economically important areas. Ethiopia has also announced closer economic ties to Algeria.
- The Ethiopian military has said that it has rescued a thousand officers and soldiers who were imprisoned following early attacks on ENDF bases in early november.
- The Ethiopian military has said it has captured 370 soldiers in the region of Oromo. These fighters are affiliated with the OLF, a movement which has been fighting against the government for decades. Reportedly 183 of those captured were TPLF operatives providing aid to the OLF.

- Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) says that conditions for the party to participate in Ethiopian elections include: (i) leadership and rank and file members are released immediately, (ii) its offices are reopened and (iii) its members are granted the right to operate in peace in order to prepare for the election.
- New York Times reports on the involvement of rival ethnic militia groups in the conflict in Tigray, including Fano, which is a militia from the Amhara ethnic group. Along with Amhara regional government security forces, Fano took part in the intervention in Tigray.

Human Rights (as confirmed per 11 Dec)

- The New York Times has reported testimonies of Ethiopian refugees in Sudan. They tell stories about ethnic massacres in Tigray. They mostly blame government aligned militias.
- Report that 10,000 Eritrean refugees in Tigray have been forcefully returned to Eritrea.

Situation in Tigray (as confirmed per 11 Dec)

- In an interview with the BBC, two Tigray-based ENDF soldiers report that their base was attacked by TPLF forces on 3 november. The battle lasted 11 hours after which they surrendered. The TPLF transported them to the border. The soldiers say that their wounded were not treated.
- State owned Ethio-Telecom has blamed the outages of communications in Tigray on outside sabotage. A different state run newspaper has said that the saboteurs wore TPLF uniforms.
- The Ethiopian ministry of Peace has announced that 1.2 million tons of food aid has arrived in Mekelle. The ministry says this is part of wider efforts by the government to provide aid to the region.
- Several foreign factories in Tigray shut down operations. Already hard hit by the Coronavirus, many of these have had to lay off workers and cut wages. The instability in the region and Ethiopia, even before the recent war, has led to multiple businesses scaling down or ceasing operations.
- The Ethiopian electricity company announces that access to electricity will return to Tigray by 13 Dec.
- An International Rescue Committee staff member has been killed in a refugee camp near Shire, the organisation has said.

Situation refugees (as confirmed per 11 Dec)

- The Sudan Commissioner for Refugees, protection Office, states that Eritrean refugees who are currently in Tigray will maintain their refugee status automatically if they make it to Sudan.
- UNHCR: forceful repatriation of refugees from Sudan to Ethiopia is a violation of international law.
- Resettling of refugees in Sudan to a new camp close to the Amhara Ethiopia border will only be done on a voluntary basis, UNHCR states, after concerns are raised on security of refugees in the camps.
- UNHCR is deploying more equipment to Sudan to accommodate the new influx of Ethiopian refugees.
- Save the Children concerned about the vulnerability of child refugees in Sudan. Hundreds have been arriving alone. It is hard to identify them and they are at risk of human trafficking. Protecting them requires specialist care, which is often hard to provide with the limited resources available.
- Report on social media that Eritrean refugees in a detention center in Addis Ababa are lacking food, water, and other facilities and the centre looks like prison.

- 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. Publication is weighed on the basis of interest to understand 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 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@eeepa.be any additional information and corrections.

Links of interest

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/09/world/africa/ethiopia-tigray-sudan.html>
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-55215431>
<http://docs.vlaamsparlament.be/pfile?id=1628144>
<https://www.reuters.com/article/ethiopia-conflict/u-s-senators-seek-possible-sanctions-over-ethiopia-conflict-abuses-idUSKBN28K139>
<https://www.newframe.com/the-looming-long-civil-war-that-could-break-ethiopia/>
<https://eritreahub.org/more-than-10000-eritrean-refugees-forcibly-returned-to-eritrea-report>