

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 30 - 19 December

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Regional situation (as confirmed per 19 December)

- Al Shabaab, Somalia's al Qaeda-allied Islamist extremist group, claims responsibility for a suicide attack in Mogadishu, Somalia, at a rally to be attended by PM Mohamed Hussein Roble, killing at least ten people. The commander of the 21st Division of the SNA General Abdiaziz Abdullahi Qooje and the commander of Danab forces in Galmudug Col Mukhtar Abdi Aden.
- Eritrea has in the past trained Al Shabaab and provided military support to it.
- Kenya and Somaliland have agreed to establish direct Kenya Airways flights between Nairobi and Hargeisa in Somaliland. This move comes shortly after an agreement was reached for Kenya to open a consulate in Hargeisa. The closer relations has created concern in Mogadishu and led to the severance of diplomatic relations between Kenya and Somalia.
- Sudanese military would be advancing towards the disputed Ethiopia-Sudan border area. The Sudanese Commander-in-Chief, Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, also visited the area on Thursday.
- Eritrean soldiers have been digging trenches on the border with Ethiopia according to multiple reports. Sudanese authorities have been warning people to be cautious in the border area.
- The Sudanese government has accused the Ethiopian government of using artillery against Sudanese troops conducting operations in the border area. Tensions have been rising between the two countries in recent weeks after Sudan reoccupied land that it said was occupied by Ethiopian farmers. The government of Ethiopia has so far not commented on the matter.
- Special forces of Afar and Amahara have reportedly, for the last three days, been fighting each in Tigray
- A fire was detected during the night of Dec. 15-16 within Hagere Selam town in South Eastern Tigray. This appears to corroborate reports of ongoing attacks in the area.

International dimension (as confirmed per 19 December)

- Both the UK government and the EU received questions by parliamentarians about their respective roles in Ethiopia. In its response the British government said that Eritrea categorically denied the presence of troops in Tigray. They also denied forcing Eritrean refugees back to Eritrea.
- Egypt has condemned the border attack by Ethiopia on Sudan. The government has said that it stands in full solidarity with Sudan and calls for all measures to ensure that such events do not reoccur. Both Sudan and Egypt are in the middle of a struggle with Ethiopia, which is building a major new dam on the Blue Nile. Egypt and Sudan fear this could have severe impact downriver. The three countries have been in negotiations, however a compromise has not been reached yet.

- The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) demands that journalist Dawit Kebebe be released immediately. He has been held since november 30th for disseminating false information and tarnishing the image of the government but has not been charged. CPJ also calls for other journalists to be released.
- The Anglican Communion has expressed regret at the death toll in Tigray. The Secretary General has written in a letter that he is deeply concerned about the current situation in Tigray.

Human Rights (as confirmed per 19 December)

- Reportedly 37 civilians were killed by Eritrean troops in Mariam Dengelat. This follows further reports of Ethiopian ENDF soldiers shooting at unarmed civilians. Recent days has also seen the emergence of names of civilians killed in Tigray emerging, this includes an entire family in Adigrat
- On social media claims of four named priests and three civilians killed by troops (reportedly ENDF and Eritrean allied troops) in Zalambessa.

Situation refugees (as confirmed per 19 December)

- Reports of Sudan authorities are instructing recently arrived Ethiopian/Tigrians refugees in Hamadyat camp to dismantle and go to the mainland of Sudan in fear of potential war between Ethiopia. This instruction was given to the refugees Friday.
- Satellite pictures have detected fires in Shimelba refugee camp in Tigray. The origin is unknown.

Reported situation in Tigray (as confirmed per 19 December)

- Ethiopia is offering rewards of 10 million Ethiopian birr (roughly \$250,000 / 205,000 euros) for information on the exact location of members of the TPLF leadership that leads to their capture. A hotline for information has been set up
- Looting continues to be reported, including 500 dairy cows and hundreds of calves stolen by Amharic forces.
- Communication with the region remains difficult. Many people are still unable to contact family and friends. News and events remain hard to confirm.
- Mekelle University announces graduation ceremony of students, pictures online are from previous years.
- Staff at Mekelle University are reporting back to work.

Reported situation in Ethiopia (as confirmed per 19 December)

- Oromo protests aimed to inform the international community about the negative electoral environment for the upcoming election as much of the Oromo leaders are in prison.
- There is concern about the inability to contact an Ethiopian church bishop in Adigrat. No communication has been received since 23 November when he reported shortages of food and medicine.
- Huawei is looking to move its regional headquarters, currently in DRC, to Ethiopia. It has said that it aims to take advantage of the growth of the telecommunications sector.

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Links of interest

<https://graphics.reuters.com/ETHIOPIA-CONFLICT/xklpvimndvg/>

<https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20201218-soudan-nouvelle-mont%C3%A9e-de-tension-dans-le-triangle-d-el-fashaga-%C3%A0-la-fronti%C3%A8re-%C3%A9thiopienne?ref=wa>

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20201218-ethiopia-offers-reward-for-help-finding-dissident-tigray-leaders>

<https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20201218-somalia-suicide-bombing-misses-pm-but-kills-several-top-commanders>