

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 32 - 21 December

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Regional dimension (as confirmed per 21 December)

- The 38th IGAD extraordinary summit took place on Sunday 20 December in Djibouti. It was chaired by PM Hamdok of Sudan.
- During the IGAD meeting, Ethiopian PM Ahmed met with Sudanese PM Hamdok to discuss bilateral relations. According to PM Hamdok it was agreed that Sudan and Ethiopia will hold a meeting of the High Boundary Committee on 22 December (Tuesday) to delineate their shared border.
- According to diplomats present, the tensions at the summit were running high. They also dispute that PM Hamdok had a meeting with PM Ahmed.
- President Farmaajo and President Kenyatta had a bilateral meeting during the IGAD Summit. Somalia and Kenya have agreed to hold de-escalation talks. The AU put pressure on them to resolve the row.
- In a further development, Somalia has sent hundreds of Turkish-trained Gorgor unit troops to Dolow near the border with Kenya and Ethiopia. Kenya has also deployed more forces to the area.
- Turkey has recently been sending troops and equipment to Somalia. There are reports that Turkey may deploy drones to the area in support of the Somali army. Turkey opened its biggest overseas base in Mogadishu in 2017 and sees Somalia as a major partner in the region.
- The Sudanese Tribune and DW have reported that the Sudanese military has regained control of Jabal Abu Tayyur, in the disputed land on the Ethiopian-Sudan border. According to reliable sources, the military is advancing further. Heavy fighting against Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) and Amharic militia is taking place in Metena near the Ethiopian-Sudanese border. The Sudanese military reportedly attacked an Ethiopian army base. The army Chief of Staff al-Barun personally oversaw the operation.
- The Ethiopian government and media are said not to be reporting the military clashes with Sudan.
- The first journalist visiting the Western Shire region of Tigray, VRT journalist Stijn Vercruyse, reports footage of deserted homesteads. He states that the estimation that 1 million Tigrayan people have been displaced in Tigray might be an understatement. Vercruyse confirms the presence of Eritrean soldiers and confirms the abduction of Eritrean refugees in Tigray by Eritrean forces back to Eritrea. He found the Shimelba refugee camp almost deserted.
- The Somali Foreign Minister was in Brussels today to meet EU officials. Somalia is increasing its pressure to remove Kenya from AMISOM, the AU peacekeeping mission in Somalia. It has dispatched officials to other AMISOM member countries. Under the AMISOM agreement, Somalia can not do this unilaterally.

- Footage on social media of an ENDF general who escaped to Eritrea when the conflict with Tigray started on 4 November. He states that Eritrea welcomed Ethiopian military, providing full support.

International dimension (as confirmed per 21 December)

- EU High Representative, Josep Borell, released a statement on the IGAD Summit: “The European Union joins the millions across the region affected by the current crises, in placing their faith in today’s summit. We support all efforts to encourage dialogue and to silence guns. As IGAD’s most significant international partner, we also hope that the outcome of today’s meeting will bring the region a step closer to finding a sustainable solution to the ongoing crises, in line with respect for international commitments and, in particular, international humanitarian law.”

Reported situation in Tigray (as confirmed per 21 December)

- BBC published testimonies of witnesses from Mekelle reporting that artillery shelling took place before November 28th. The shelling destroyed houses in residential areas and killed civilians. In one case a whole family was killed, leaving only a little boy alive. A doctor says that he personally saw 22 bodies. It was hard to take proper care of those wounded by the artillery due to a critical shortage of medical supplies.
- Flights from Addis Ababa to Mekelle were cancelled on Sunday.
- There are reports of looting of ritual books and other artifacts from remote monasteries in Tigray. These are being transported to Eritrea.
- According to an analyst, the entire leadership of the TPLF is intact. Over 70 of them have retreated to the mountains. Only two have been arrested.

Reported situation in Ethiopia (as confirmed per 21 December)

- Three people were killed by an explosion in Addis Ababa, caused according to the Addis Abeba policy by an abandoned bomb. It took place near the city center and three people were killed. There have been several explosions in the capital since the offensive in Tigray started. Police have blamed the TPLF for some of these explosions, although evidence has not been presented. The TPLF has not claimed responsibility for any of these.
- Social media reports that children of current and former TPLF leaders are detained in Mekelle. The daughter of former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, Semehal Meles, and the youngest son of former Major General Hayelom, Berhanemeskel Hayelom, are mentioned to be among them.
- Ten Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) leaders, cadre and journalists have been arrested. These are: Mohamed Ragasa, OLF Central Committee Member and Spokesperson of the OLF; Murataa Sabaa, OLF Central Committee Member; Ayyaantuu Bulchaa, Journalist (SBO); Ibsaa Gaaddisaa, Journalist (SBO); Dr Gadaa Oljirraa - Office Administrator of OLF Chairman; Yeroosan Hayyuu Organisational Affairs- Finfinnee area); Tumsaa (Asaffaa Fikadu) - Member of Organisational Affairs; Gurmuu Ayyanaa - OLF cadre; Geessisaa Kuusaa - Organisational Affairs- Mandii area; and Lidia Ali Miseensa - Women Association member. It is not known where they are being detained.
- Fighting between Amhara and Afar militias is taking place in Wollo Province.

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