

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 34 - 23 December

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Military situation (as confirmed per 23 December)

- Social media sources indicate heavy fighting on three fronts on Tuesday. Tigray sources report an ENDF brigade was destroyed in Hugumburda on the way to Mayichaw town, a division destroyed in BietMara, Alaje, one battalion destroyed in Maykintal (Central front), and two brigades on Zana, Shire fronts.
- Further Tigray reports indicate an Ethiopian fighter jet was downed at Abiy Addi.
- Advisor to the elected government of Tigray, Getachew Reda, states that fighting continues on many fronts: “enemy forces are being routed in Zana, had already lost hundreds of soldiers in Adet and Tsimbla.” He claims that Eritrean and Ethiopian forces have lost an air force gunship in BietMara.
- Getachew Reda accuses the Ethiopian Government of carrying out a “genocidal campaign” in Tigray.

Regional situation (as confirmed per 23 December)

- The United States Africa Command reports that the USS Makin Island ship has arrived in Somalia to relocate US “forces in Somalia to other East Africa operating locations while maintaining pressure on violent extremists and supporting partner forces”.
- Refugees International reports that Eritrean refugees are being rounded up in Addis Ababa and returned to Tigray after having fled from Tigray, and are also being deported back from Tigray to Eritrea, from where they originally fled. This confirms reports by journalist Stijn Vercruyse (VRT) who interviewed Eritrean refugees in the refugee camps in Shire reporting forced deportations.
- VRT journalist shows images of Eritrean soldiers in Tigray. It would appear from the now available evidence that Eritrean soldiers crossed the border in Ethiopian uniforms, and participated in fighting, and are looting in Tigray.

International dimension (as confirmed per 23 December)

- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Commissioner Bachelet urges independent investigation of human rights abuses, stating “the need for independent human rights monitors to be given access to Tigray to adequately assess the human suffering resulting from the conflict, verify allegations and to help ensure accountability for violations”.
- OHCHR Bachelet urges Ethiopian authorities to provide unhindered access to the Tigray region. Two humanitarian assessment missions have entered Tigray on Monday (21 Dec.)
- OHCHR spokesperson Liz Throssell office states that OHCHR has held talks with the Ethiopian government and plans to prepare a team to verify reported rights abuses as soon as possible.

- UK House of Lords member David Alton sends a report to UK Government Ministers which warns of serious human rights violations in the conflict in Tigray and increasing internationalisation of the conflict.
- Social media messages state that Eritrea would have ordered Egyptian ambassador to leave Asmara.
- Norwegian Professor Kjetil Tronvoll states in an open letter to Ethiopian authorities that he has experienced “repeated and grievous ad hominem attacks from an Ethiopian government spokesperson and internet trolls associated with the regime”.
- Norwegian Refugee Council appeals again for unhindered access to Tigray for their aid workers and relief trucks, which are on standby.

Reported situation in Tigray (as confirmed per 23 December)

- Journalist Stijn Vercruyse, VRT reporter currently in Tigray, reports serious injuries caused by bombs; stating that there is an acute lack of assistance, doctors and medical supplies in Shire, Tigray. According to the VRT, the situation is a humanitarian disaster in the making.
- The VRT has also seen evidence of tanks filled with loot in Shire.
- VRT further shows footage of many deserted ghost towns in the Shire area.
- Accounts on social media allege heavy damage and looting in Adigrat, Tigray, including factories; source reports the university campuses were occupied by Eritrean soldiers and everything has been taken.
- A new provisional administrative department “Setit Humera zone” has been created and will include all the areas west of the Tekeze river in Tigray. This includes almost all the lowlands where many Tigrayans live. This new administrative department will be administered as part of the Amhara region.
- Many villages in the Western Tigray region are completely deserted. The majority of the houses have been looted. The inhabitants have fled the area. A witness reports that security administrators in the region are encouraging Amhara to settle in the empty houses and bring their families.
- Amhara militiamen are reportedly recruiting 20,000 more men. They want to use this manpower to face Sudan and police the new administrative area, the “Setit Humera zone”. The Amhara special forces are currently fighting the Sudanese army at the border over control over fertile land.
- People continue to be killed in the streets by militiamen and soldiers. A video of an unknown date shows panicked people on the streets of Mekelle running from gunshots.
- In Humera, a large number of residents have fled and signs in Tigrinya have been covered. Shops and houses are closed. In Dansha, bars and hotels were renamed and reopened after their owners fled.
- Shops in Mekelle remain closed.

Situation refugees (as confirmed per 23 December)

- Journalist Stijn Vercruyse (VRT) warns of a lack of food, water, and medicines for the Eritrean refugees and other displaced people.
- Refugees in Adi Harush refugee camp state that attackers came to confiscate around 180 cellphones. The refugees feel unsafe, continue to hear heavy weaponry, and are not allowed to leave the camp.

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