

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 35 - 24 December

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International dimension (as confirmed per 24 December)

- Alex de Waal, Executive Director of the World Peace Foundation at The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, asks who will call out Eritrea's role in the Tigray conflict, amid "mounting evidence that activities of Eritrean troops include perpetrating war crimes on a vast scale."
- Ethiopian government has not been able to clarify to Egypt when workers will return to work in factories in Tigray, which were closed four months ago. Factories in Tigray have been heavily looted.
- Egypt plans to file an international lawsuit to protect Egyptian investments in Ethiopia, stating \$10 million has been lost by Egyptian investors so far in Ethiopia due to the unrest in the Tigray region.
- US troops being pulled out of Somalia and redeployed in Kenya and Djibouti, from where US troops would continue to surveil the Al Qaeda affiliated terrorist organisation Al Shabab.
- The redeployment of US troops to Kenya comes at a time that Kenya is under pressure of debt repayments to China, related to the Belt and Road Initiative. Kenya faces a risk to lose ownership of Mombasa port which serves as a collateral for the debts to China in 'debt-for-equity swaps'.
- US Secretary of State, Pompeo, announces 18 million USD for refugees affected by the Tigray conflict.

Regional situation (as confirmed per 24 December)

- President of Somaliland, Bihi, meets President of Djibouti, Guelleh, to discuss peace and stability.
- Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Ambassador Dina Mufti states Ethiopia and Sudan have agreed to resolve the border issue, blaming 'enemies of Ethiopia' for the escalation. In other reports Sudan was accused of an unfruitful discussion with the Ethiopian delegation yesterday.
- Reported that the Sudanese armed forces state they recaptured areas and camps in eastern Sudan.
- The Committee of the affected lands of Al Fashqa in Gedaref state states that it will reject any negotiation of the Sudanese Government with the Ethiopian delegation to discuss the border until the Sudanese army is in control of all known international border points between the two countries.
- Der Spiegel spoke to a witness who stated Eritrean troops killed 81 civilians held up in the Al-Nejashi mosque; another witness reports shelling and looting by Eritrean troops.

Military situation (as confirmed per 24 December)

- Report of targeted attack on civilians in Benishangul Gumuz regional state. An eyewitness stated there were up to 500 gunmen. Over 90 deaths, burning of houses and displacement were reported. Local medics reported treating victims with gunshot wounds.

- Report that Sudan has arrested an Ethiopian captain and four soldiers accused of planning assassinations on Ethiopian refugees of Tigray nationality in Sudan.

Reported situation in Ethiopia (as confirmed per 24 December)

- Regional government of Benishangul Gumuz in Ethiopia said that five officials accused of orchestrating the killings were arrested. The list of arrests reportedly includes a former social affairs deputy at the Federal ministry of labour and social affairs, the former vice president of Benishangul Gumuz region and the Metekel Zone Prosperity Party office head.
- Benishangul-Gumuz, a region in Ethiopia, is populated by Humuz and other ethnic groups, but according to reports, recently farmers and business people from the Amharic region entered into the area, claiming fertile land, according to reports.

Reported situation in Tigray (as confirmed per 24 December)

- Human Rights Watch (HRW) Laetitia Bader reports findings of interviews with refugees from the Tigray conflict. Residents of towns in western Tigray report initial heavy shelling, followed by the entering of Ethiopian federal forces and Amhara police forces known as "Liyu Hail" and Amhara youth militia groups known as "Fano." HRW reports looting by both Amhara forces, as well as 'unidentified gunmen'.
- Refugees told HRW they witnessed extrajudicial executions by federal forces and their allies. Victims were suspected TPLF members, fighters, retired soldiers, but also business people and farmers.
- Refugees from Mai Kadra see hundreds of bodies, both ethnic Amharas and Tigrayans, says HRW.
- Medical professionals, notably in Humera, were overwhelmed "by the influx of injured civilians and bodies of those who had been killed in the heavy shelling," during military action in Tigray says HRW.
- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reports that the two humanitarian assessment teams that entered Tigray on Monday are headed to Shire and Mekelle. The assessment is estimated to be completed in a week.
- The Amhara groups who now administer the region that was Western Tigray, now the provisional "Setit Humera zone" are reportedly politically divided.
- New reports of massacres and executions in Adigrat, Tigray. Calls for investigation of what transpired.

Situation refugees (as confirmed per 24 December)

- MSF acting emergency coordinator in Gedaref, Sudan, warns that the number of people relocated from Hamdayet to Um Raquba camp is going to accelerate as "the scale of needs is alarming."
- UNHCR and partners urgently seek US\$156 million to support refugees fleeing Ethiopia's Tigray crisis.

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Links of interest

<https://addisstandard.com/news-alert-eyewitnesses-say-more-than-90-killed-in-fresh-attack-in-bulen-wereda-benishangul-gumuz-region-cautions-civilians-to-join-safe-villages/>
<https://www.msf.org/sudan-services-refugees-must-increase-avert-disaster>
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<https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/12/23/interview-uncovering-crimes-committed-ethiopia-tigray-region>
<https://twitter.com/mkheiom/status/1341731346557890561?s=20>
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<https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/a-country-on-the-brink-ethiopia-sinks-deeper-into-sectarian-conflict-a-36f15bb1-a7a0-4add-925b-03fe4a80c5b8>
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