

Situation Report EOPA HORN No. 37 - 26 December

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Military situation (as confirmed per 26 December)

- Reported that US Africom has begun an operation called Operation Octave Quartz (OOQ), with a mission to relocate U.S. forces in Somalia to other East Africa operating locations “while maintaining pressure on violent extremists and supporting partner forces”. US Africom is the military command for US operations in African. OOQ started after the Trump administration announced the reduction in the number of US military deployed in Somali territory.
- The US operation Octave Quarts consists of the Makin Island Amphibious Ready Group. This is an amphibious emergency response group led by the USS Makin Island assault ship (28,000 tons and a length of 258 meters and a bridge for the flight operations of the F-35B Lightning fighter-bombers II and AV-8B Harrier and the tiltrotor MC-22B Osprey).
- The Government of Sudan announces the completion of the restoration of its border lands with Ethiopia where the army of Sudan has taken over control.
- Military exercises and drills by the Egyptian army are intensified given heightened tension in the region, including joint exercises with Sudan.

Reported situation in Ethiopia (as confirmed per 26 December)

- Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for Secretary-General Antonio Guterres states that the UN has sent two teams to assess the humanitarian needs in Ethiopia’s conflict-ridden Tigray state. One team is currently stranded in Addis Abeba requiring additional permits.
- Second UN team to assess humanitarian needs has arrived in Mekelle, is planning to go to Adigrat.
- Reported that the Ethiopia federal military killed 42 armed men who “took part in a massacre in western Benishangul-Gumuz region.”
- Ethiopia Human Rights Commission releases monitoring report on Konso Zone in SNNPR (South Ethiopia), reporting “gruesome killings, injuries, displacement and property destruction” leading to the conclusion that a “sustainable solution” is needed.
- The National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) announced that the registration of 26 political parties is cancelled.
- The Ethiopian Democratic Party (EDP) has been cancelled from registration for the elections. The EDP was founded by the Lidetu Ayalew, who was in police detention for several months and was released last week.
- NEBE is consulting today with political parties to decide a draft election timetable for Ethiopia’s general elections expected to take place in the first half of 2021.

Regional situation (as confirmed per 26 December)

- Reports that Eritrea is withdrawing its troops from Tigray.

Reported situation in Tigray (as confirmed per 26 December)

- New cabinet members appointed in the provisional interim regional administration in Tigray appointed are named as: Dr. Kahisay Birhanu, Finance Bureau Head; Engineer Alula Habteab, Construction, Road and Transport Bureau Head; Dr. Fasika Amdeselassie, Health Bureau Head; Mr. Abera Nigussie, Justice Bureau Head; Mrs. Etenesh Nigussie, Communications Affairs Bureau Head; Mr. Yosef Tesfay, Trade, Industry, Urban Development Bureau Head; Dr. Tesfay Solomon, Education Bureau Head; Dr. Gebrehiwot Legesse, Water Research and Design Bureau Head; Mr. Solomon Abera, Water Resources Bureau Head; Mr. Abrha Desta, Social Affairs Bureau Head; Mr. Gebremeskel Kassa, Tigray Interim Administration Office Head.
- The new head of the Bureau of Health in Tigray, Dr. Fasika Amdesellaise, spoke in an interview of the death of civilians in Mekelle. He served as a surgeon at Ayder Referral Hospital in Mekelle where he worked during the military operations in November.
- New head of Bureau of Health, Dr. Fasika Amdesellaise, confirmed that Wukro and Adigrat hospitals were “completely looted and empty”.

International dimension (as confirmed per 26 December)

- Egypt backs Sudan in the clashes at the border with Ethiopia.
- EU expresses concern of “grave violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law”.
- EU states that it is “of paramount importance that hostilities cease completely, that civilians are protected and that all parties to the conflict uphold international humanitarian law, including ensuring the safety of aid workers. Unimpeded humanitarian access to all people in need in all affected areas of the country must be guaranteed, to carry out needs assessments, deliver response and monitor aid in line with the humanitarian principles of impartiality, neutrality, and independence. (...) All refugees and displaced people within Tigray and beyond must be effectively protected, including preventing any act of forced and premature relocation or return.”
- EU further expresses concern with the situation of “ethnically targeted violence in Benishangul-Gumuz as well as all other allegations of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law need to be impartially investigated and accountability ensured.”

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Links of interest

<https://www.africom.mil/pressrelease/33360/uss-makin-island-arg15th-meu-arrives-off-somali-coast-joint-task-force-quartz-public-affairs>
<https://www.africa-express.info/2020/12/24/lamerica-mostra-i-muscoli-e-schiera-aggiuerritissima-forza-navale-nel-corno-dafrica/>
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