

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 44 - 3 January 2021

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Military situation (as confirmed per 2 January 2021)

- The TPLF is keeping control of mountainous areas in Tigray. As many analysts predicted when Mekelle was taken, the ENDF has had difficulties driving the TPLF out of well entrenched mountain positions.
- The ENDF has launched an offensive towards Samre, East of Mekelle.
- Reported cruelties against civilians include forcing relatives to commit incest on women and girls under the threat of arbitrary execution.
- Report that 150 civilians were hiding in a church in Edaghamus, Tigray. They were, reportedly, brutally killed. It is estimated that 300 civilians were killed in Edaghamus and surrounding.
- Many towns in Tigray have been attacked by ENDF and Eritrean troops by heavy artillery. The towns include: Humera, Shire, Aksum, Adwa, Adigrat, Wukro, Mekelle, Hewane, Workamba, Abi Adi, and Hagerselam. In these operations innocent civilians were attacked.
- In Mekelle, Tigray, there were air strikes and bombings on Saint George church, two Mekelle university campuses and 'adishimdehun', kebeles 03, 05, 11, 14 & 15, 'Enda Gebriel', '70 kare', and 'Latchi'.
- Abi Adi, Tigray, and its outskirts, has been hit by airstrikes on civilian neighbourhoods for one week.
- It is reported that 1000 civilians were killed in attacks on Aksum town and 500 civilians in Wukro.
- It is reported that hundreds of civilians were killed in smaller towns of Hazwzen, Digum and Nebelet.
- Pictures are emerging of the heavily damaged Al Negash Mosque in Tigray. There are clear signs of shelling. It was first reported that the mosque had been destroyed on 18 december. Reportedly, the mosque was first bombed and later looted by Ethiopian and Eritrean troops.
- The Al Negash Mosque is thought to be the oldest mosque in Africa, dating back to the 7th century. It is a UNESCO world Heritage site and was recently restored. People died trying to protect the mosque.
- Foreign Minister Demeke, Ethiopia, rejects the TPLF-claim to have carried out a pre-emptive strike.
- TPLF stated it was provoked on 3 Nov when the Ethiopian government sent commandos in an Antonov and/or cargo plane, under pretext of delivering new banknotes, allegedly with the intention to capture the Tigray regional government, which was assembled in a meeting in Planet hotel in Mekelle.

Regional situation (as confirmed per 2 January 2021)

- The US carried out drone strikes on an Al Shabaab operated radio station. No casualties were reported.
- Sudan has announced that it is redeploying more troops to the Sudan-Ethiopian border.
- The UN peacekeeping mission to Darfur in Sudan, ongoing since 2003, has ended. 800 Ethiopian soldiers helping with policing the area are returning home. Sudanese security forces will be taking over. Protests have been taking place urging for the continuation of the mission.

- The Ethiopian Border Affairs Commission (EBAC) has released a statement that all Sudanese forces should leave Ethiopian soil immediately. They condemn the Sudanese aggression and the destruction of property, looting and killings of Sudanese forces in the disputed region.
- EBAC warns that unlike in previous clashes, this time regular Sudanese military played an important role in operations. This creates a “destabilizing” regional environment.
- The EBAC called for the withdrawal of Sudanese troops and the Ethiopian government to deploy troops to protect the farmers.

Situation in Ethiopia (as confirmed per 2 January 2021)

- The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission reported that individuals wanting to leave the country now need to show their ID, which shows an ethnic classification of each citizen.
- Tigrayans at airports are being asked whether they participated in the election on 9 September. Fana, the Ethiopian state broadcaster reported that an Ethiopian airlines employee of Tigrayan origin had been charged with assisting in the organising of the election. Another Tigrayan, a manager at the state company Ethiotelcom has also been accused of participating in the election as a voter.
- The ENDF has released a list of TPLF groups and cells that have been destroyed. They include many high ranking officers as well as a former minister. A law professor at the university of Mekelle has also been arrested for allegedly creating agitation and unrest.
- Ethnic harassment continues to take place. The New York Times (NYT) reported earlier that Tigrayans had their houses sacked by police. These have not been isolated events.
- Tigrayan businesses have been targeted by ethnic profiling. Companies are having their finances investigated, others closed. The CEO of Ethiopian Airlines, among executives and employees, has been put under house arrest for communicating with the TPLF.
- The NYT reported earlier three foreign diplomats from different embassies have said that they had to search for new security contractors after a Tigrayan security company had been suspended.
- State companies are conducting purges of employed Tigrayans. Employees are detained by police.
- The NYT also reported earlier that the purge is taking place within the armed forces. Tigrayans in the ENDF have had their phones confiscated and were then put under arrest.
- The Ethiopian Attorney General (AG) Gedion has said that there have been a few “isolated incidents”. The government is taking the issue seriously. A hotline will be set up to report complaints.
- 27 people were killed by gunmen in Oromia. It is unclear who committed these shootings, although there have been some accusations that government forces were involved.

International Situation (as confirmed per 2 January 2021)

- The Ethiopian Diaspora group ED-REAP released a press statement including 5 demands: immediate withdrawal of foreign forces, a UN mandated investigation into war crimes, full access for independent media, full and unfettered access for humanitarian aid groups, and access to organisations helping with rehabilitation of Tigray.

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Links of interest

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/12/world/africa/Ethiopia-Tigray-ethnic.html>
<https://www.fanabc.com/english/ministry-of-defence-announces-list-of-destroyed-tplf-group-members/>
<https://am.al-ain.com/article/ethiopian-national-defence-force-announced-the-names-of-tplf-s-killed-officials>
<http://www.branapress.com/2020/12/31/ethiopian-border-affairs-committee-issues-a-statement-sudan-should-unconditionally-withdraw-its-forces-from-ethiopian-territories/>
<https://t.co/FRCKis06CO?amp=1>
<http://www.tigraionline.com/articles/ed-reap-press-release.html>