

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 47 - 07 January 2021

[Europe External Programme with Africa](#) is a Belgium-based Centre of Expertise with in-depth knowledge, publications, and networks, specialised in issues of peace building, refugee protection and resilience in the Horn of Africa. EEPA has published extensively on issues related to movement and/or human trafficking of refugees in the Horn of Africa and on the Central Mediterranean Route. It cooperates with a wide network of Universities, research organisations, civil society and experts from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Uganda and across Africa. Key in-depth publications [can be accessed on the website](#).

Military situation (as confirmed per 6 January 2021)

- A video has emerged of the head of the Ethiopian Northern Command, General Belay, saying that the Eritrean Soldiers in Tigray had not been invited and were undesirable. It is the latest statement by an Ethiopian Federal official which confirms the presence of Eritrean troops in Tigray.
- The General Belay is blaming the TPLF for starting the conflict and stopping the ENDF from guarding the border against Eritrean intrusion. Eritrea has provided major support to ENDF forces during the invasion of Tigray. This has been confirmed by the Ethiopian government as well.
- Satellite images have spotted fires near Hitsats refugee camp in central Tigray. Fighting has been reported in the area, including between Tigrayan and Eritrean forces.
- Fighting between ENDF-allied forces and Tigray regional forces has also been reported near Inda Aba Guna, near Shire, Tigray.
- Further fighting between the ENDF and Tigrayan forces has closed the road between Mekoni and Mekelle. According to reports, several buses filled with ENDF soldiers were ambushed.
- Sudanese and Ethiopian forces have clashed in the contested border region again. The Sudanese army says it repulsed two attacks carried out by Ethiopian forces. They specifically praised Sudanese paratroopers for repelling the attack.
- The Sudanese army says that the attacks were carried out by the regular Ethiopian army. They say heavy weaponry was used during the attacks and so they have ruled out miliamen as the assailants. Sudan also says it has captured an Ethiopian soldier.

Regional situation (as confirmed per 6 January 2021)

- The Ethiopian boundary commission has accused Sudan of breaching the agreement. Both countries have also accused each other of beginning the conflict. Both have also said that they want a peaceful resolution of the conflict.
- The new round of GERD dam negotiations seem to have failed. The first meeting on Sunday 3 Jan has so far been the only one that has taken place. Sudan has demanded a greater role for AU experts.
- Egypt has reaffirmed the need to reach an agreement before the summer.

Situation in Tigray (as confirmed per 6 January 2021)

- The interim mayor of Mekelle, who recently made comments about Eritrean soldiers having to leave Tigray, has said that he was merely repeating the comments of General Belay. Another official, Mulu Nega, has said that the interim mayor did not have the authority to discuss the situation and that “corrective measures” had been taken.

- The BBC reported that the government had pledged to repair the shelled Al Negash mosque. It was recently restored by Turkey and severely damaged in December by artillery shelling.
- A convoy transporting 35 tons of relief supplies arrived in Mekelle on Friday.
- Photos have emerged of the looted hospital in Adwa. Hospitals in Tigray are running out of supplies.
- January 7th is Christmas according to the coptic calendar. Prime Minister Abiy, and many religious leaders have been holding speeches to celebrate the holiday.

Situation in refugees (as confirmed per 6 January 2021)

- Eritrean opposition broadcast, Radio Erena, is reporting that Ethiopian authorities are refusing permits to leave (exit permits) for hundreds of Eritrean refugees. These refugees are mostly part of family reunion programmes and have been approved by the IOM. It is not clear why the exit is being refused.
- The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has said that many new refugees are arriving in Sudan. The many more refugees has resulted in overcrowding in Um Rakuba. They require more resources to ensure proper health standards and avoid epidemics of diseases, including Covid-19.
- The IRC says that there are an unusually high number of unaccompanied children among the refugees. The IRC is enacting better protection programmes to take care of them. Children are especially at high risk of exploitation. They are often severely traumatized as well.
- The SudanTribune reported that the ENDF has deployed more troops to the Sudanese border to prevent refugees from crossing over into Sudan. Ethiopian refugees in Sudan currently exceed 63 thousand.
- The Norwegian Refugee Council Director in Sudan, William Carter, corroborates this and says that Ethiopia is also pushing Sudan for immediate repatriation of civilians that did manage to get to Sudan.
- The Ethiopian minister of foreign affairs spokesman has said that the last details are being worked on with regards to repatriation of refugees from Sudan to Ethiopia. The spokesman said that it will start soon. Many refugees in Sudan have stated to media that they will not go back and will not feel safe.

International Situation (as confirmed per 6 January 2021)

- US Treasury Secretary Mnuchin has met with Prime Minister Hamdok, the Chairman of the Sovereign Council General al-Burham and various other ministers. They discussed economic opportunities for Sudan through the Abraham Accords, Sudanese debt repayment and the GERD dam negotiations.
- The Abraham accords were signed between Israel, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and other arabic countries in the region. Sudan officially joined the accords on 6 January, paving the way for normalisation of relations between Israel and Sudan.

Disclaimer: All information in this situation report is presented as a fluid update report, as to the best knowledge and understanding of the authors at the moment of publication. EEPA does not claim that the information is correct but verifies to the best of ability within the circumstances. Publication is weighed on the basis of interest to understand potential impacts of events (or perceptions of these) on the situation. Check all information against updates and other media. EEPA does not take responsibility for the use of the information or impact thereof. All information reported originates from third parties and the content of all reported and linked information remains the sole responsibility of these third parties. Report to info@eepe.be any additional information and corrections.

Links of interest

<https://addisstandard.com/news-analysis-we-dont-want-it-north-command-chief-on-eritrean-army-in-tigray-says-army-didnt-let-alien-forces-in-full-speech/>
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-55530355>
<https://www.rescue.org/press-release/thousands-more-fleeing-conflict-ethiopia-arrive-eastern-sudan-irc-scales-emergency>
<https://sudantribune.com/spip.php?article70296>