

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 51 - 10 January 2021

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Reported war situation (as confirmed per 09 January)

- The Ethiopian army has reportedly built a fence along the Sudanese border to stop refugees from Tigray from getting to Sudan. Reportedly Ethiopian presence on the Sudanese border has been growing. A Sudanese TV channel reported that refugees stopped crossing for the first time on Friday.
- Bloomberg reported that Satellite images show the destruction of UN facilities and other facilities in Hitsats and Shimelba camps. The images indicate that the structures have been intentionally destroyed. Eritrean soldiers have been reported in the area, and many reports have surfaced of Eritrean soldiers killing refugees and other civilians and forcing refugees back to Eritrea.
- Shimelba camp is now completely deserted and Eritrean refugees are deported to Eritrea. Especially young men.
- Fires have also been reported in Shimelba and Hitsats refugee camps. In Hitsats there were 14 buildings on fire on January 5th and 55 other buildings have been damaged or destroyed. New fires have been detected since then.
- Ethiopian TV has reported that 300 refugees in Hitsats camp were executed by the TPLF. An anonymous source states: "The Hitsats story is a lie. Eritrean forces massively killed their own citizens in Hitsats refugee camp to punish them for leaving Eritrea escaping their shoot to kill policy."
- The massacre on the Orthodox Maryam TSION Church in Aksum in which 750 people were killed took place half December. People hiding in the church were brought out and shot in the square in front. The Maryam TSION Church is a sacred place which holds the Ark of Covenant. A witness with experience in war zones states he "has never seen such a degree of inhumanity."
- Eritrea has consolidated its military presence in the Northern border area from Tekeze, Northern Shire up to Adigrat.
- Western Tigray is divided in two new administrative zones, entirely under Amhara administration. The two new zones are: 1) Telemt (Amharic name of Tselemti), main place: May Tebri (Amharic name of May Tsebri). Part of Northern Gondar. and 2) Humera-Welqayt-Tegede Zone, main place: Humera.
- The administrator of the new Humera-Welqayt-Tegede Zone is Yeabsira Eshete. Colonel Demeke of the Welkait Committee is the deputy and head of security. The new administration is composed of Amhara identifying people.
- Reported that Tigrayan civilians from western Tigray are transported with buses to Central Tigray. The deserted houses in western Tigray are immediately taken over by Amharic settlers who are brought in.
- There have been many reports of rape in Mekelle and elsewhere. A video has also emerged of an ENDF commander admitting that the rape is taking place in Mekelle. The commander says that while it would have been expected during times of conflict, it should not be happening now that the city is well under control of the federal government.

- The number of IDPs in Tigray is at least 2.2 million people, and sources warn that starvation is used as a weapon. Without sanitation, there is serious concern for the health of the IDPs.
- 6 buses filled with soldiers are moving to Shire from Gondar.
- It is confirmed that TPLF spokesman, Sekoture Getachew, and the former director of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority and journalist, Abebe Asgedom, were killed by a drone attack one month ago. They were attacked by a drone while traveling together in a car.

Reported Regional situation (as confirmed per 09 January)

- Ethiopia has announced that it would continue with the planned second filling of the GERD dam in the absence of an agreement. The filling is planned for the coming summer.
- Sudan has expressed “deep concern” about Ethiopian intentions to proceed with the second filling. The minister for water resources said that it had serious consequences for a nearby Sudanese dam, the Roseires dam. The first filling in July 2020 also caused serious problems for Khartoum's water supply.
- The Coalition of Ethiopian Inter-Religious and Elders Council warn that conflict in the Benishangul-Gumuz region is endangering the GERD dam. The dam is located in the region, and violence is aimed at disrupting the construction of the dam.
- The GERD dam negotiations are expected to resume on Sunday, with AU experts present.
- Sudan and Ethiopia have announced that they will hold another round of negotiations regarding the border issue.
- China’s biggest port operator, China Merchants Groups, has agreed on a deal that would see Djibouti turned into a regional hub. The agreement would see an investment of 3 billion US\$. CMG already owns a 23.5% stake in the port. China has also built a railway from Djibouti to Addis Ababa.

Reported International dimension (as confirmed per 09 January)

- The British Telegraph has done extensive reporting into the involvement of Eritrean troops in Tigray. They conducted interviews of witnesses to massacres carried out by Eritrean troops in Tigray.
- One Witness said that Eritrean troops killed “dozens” of civilians in Idaga Hamus after capturing it on November 21st. Among the victims was a priest. Another saw summary executions of civilians, also by Eritreans, in Adigrat.
- There were also accounts of indiscriminate artillery firing on Humera, near the Eritrean border. This corroborates stories of other witness reports.
- EU High Representative of Foreign Affairs, Josep Borrell, talked with Deputy PM Mekonnen and conveyed EU alarm over the situation in Tigray. He also said Ethiopia must grant unrestricted access to the region.
- The American-Ethiopian Yohannes Abraham will serve as the American National Security Council Chief of Staff. He is currently the executive-director of President-elect Biden’s transition team.
- A new translation tool has been developed to translate Tigrinya into English. Lesan.ai developed this new tool. Translation to Amharic is possible as well.

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