

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 62 - 21 January 2021

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Reported war situation (as confirmed per 20 January)

- Journalist Dawit Kebede, who was working at Tigray TV and reported the fighterjet downed in Tembien by Tigray forces, has been killed. He was arrested earlier in Mekelle, subsequently released, but after three days killed together with the lawyer Bereket Berhe, in Adi Hawsai, in front of the UNICEF building on 19/1.
- An American witness, who was in Aksum during the war, reports that in Aksum water and electricity went out on November 2, prior to the start of hostilities on November 3 and 4. As a result people in Aksum did not see any news. A few days later people arrived from Humera. They told that they came because of the war, that their houses were destroyed, and people had been killed.
- The witness states that a few days later shooting started when Eritrean soldiers entered Aksum with tanks. They came in thousands and killed whoever stood in their way. There were dead bodies all over the city: "I had to step over dead bodies to get there. The entire city from the bus station to the park was covered in bodies." Many civilians were killed when St. Michael church was shelled.
- The witness states that the Eritrean soldiers said they had been told to kill, to kill all Tigrayan males over the age of four. The soldiers said they were told to kill all males so that they would not come to take revenge in the future.
- According to the witness soldiers fired indiscriminately at anyone. They killed people without warning. People were not given any warning. The soldiers just fired on everything.
- The witness states that Eritrean troops killed soldiers, priests, farmers, and burned crops. The Eritrean troops forced farmers and priests to slaughter their own animals and they killed the farmers if they refused to do so.
- The Eritrean soldiers stole medicine from health facilities and destroyed the infrastructure. They broke glass windows and stole everything.
- The witness states that she heard of old women and young girls being raped.
- According to the witness, people of Aksum sought refuge in the Mariam Zion Church.
- The witness states Eritrean soldiers were completely in charge of the situation in Aksum and that ENDF soldiers watched and did nothing to stop the violence and the killing. The ENDF soldiers were fired at if they tried to stop Eritrean soldiers who were looting.
- Refugees from Shemelba and Hitsats refugee camps report that there is nothing left of the two refugee camps after they have been looted and destroyed. Refugees have relocated to the two camps Adi Harush and May Ayni, or have traveled to Addis Ababa or other places where they feel more safe.
- The refugees report that the camps were first attacked by Eritrean soldiers who tried to take those who were wanted by the Eritrean government for political reasons and were sent back to Eritrea. Afterwards Tigrayan regional forces chased the Eritrean soldiers out.

- The refugees report that several refugees were killed and that refugees had been terrified. They had not had any food rations for 2-3 months. "We ate what we could find, even plants and leaves".
- The refugees did not have difficulty passing through checkpoints on their way to Addis Ababa. But they had to pay much more than normal bus fare prices for the trip: 200 Birr from Shemelba to Shire, 1000 Birr from Shire to Mekelle, and 1500 Birr from Mekelle to Addis - per person.
- The Somali Federal Republic Federal Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation asks President Farmaajo to clarify the whereabouts of thousands of Somali soldiers trained in Eritrea. Ref 02/79/21, dated 18/01/2021.
- The Somali Parliament urges President Farmaajo to send a team to Asmara to confirm if the Somali soldiers are alive or dead. The report indicates that more than 2,800 of Somali soldiers were killed in the Tigray war.
- In a village in the Alitena region controlled by Eritreans, six men are killed. None of the six were armed or politically active. Alitena is a territory that the Eritrea Ethiopia Commission decided belongs to Ethiopia, therefore to Tigray regional state. Serious food shortages are reported in this region.

Reported situation in Tigray (as confirmed per 20 January)

- Action Against Hunger's (AAH) Ethiopia director Panos Navrozidis states: "Central Tigray is a black hole" as aid groups only have access to certain towns and many of the people are remaining within rural villages because of fear of fighting. They can not access food or health services.
- Tigray Water Resource Management Bureau stated that access to clean water in Tigray is jeopardized for many due to "damaged infrastructure, looted offices, stolen equipment and an inoperative dam."
- Nebeyu Sihul Michael, Head of Tigray's Prosperity Party sends out a letter from the Prosperity Party (PP) to new PP-members and former members of the TPLF on recruiting all ex-TPLF members to be PP members and to do all necessary surveillance regarding any kind of communication with TPLF. In case there are any cadres that look suspicious to the party, 'all necessary measures' must be taken against them as stated in a letter dated Nov 14, 2013. TPLF members are forced to become member of the PP.

Reported situation in Ethiopia (as confirmed per 20 January)

- Mr. Dina Mufti, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, denies allegations that Eritrean and Somali soldiers are among forces fighting in Tigray as baseless, speaking to the media today (20/11).
- Ethiopia disaster commission spokesman, Debebe Zewdie states that there is no starvation in Ethiopia.

Reported International situation (as confirmed per 20 January)

- The nominee US Secretary of State Antony Blinken expresses concerns about the atrocities in Tigray and the fate of Eritrean refugees in Tigray senate confirmation hearing, on a question of Sen Coons.
- Nominee Blinken states the US needs to take an active approach, that access to the Tigray region is needed, provision of humanitarian assistance, accountability, restoration of communications, and an effort to put a dialogue in place to deal with the conflict and litigate it, and expressing concerns that the situation may destabilize the Horn of Africa.
- Blinken expresses the desire for active diplomatic engagement of the US in the conflict in Tigray.
- Lord Alton asks the UK government what steps are taken to ensure that eye witness statements are taken from refugees from Tigray about reports of war crimes and crimes against humanity; how any such evidence is preserved; and what plans there are to put judicial justice in place.

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<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-conflict/ethiopians-dying-hungry-and-fearful-in-war-hit-tigray-agencies-idUSKBN29POX1>