

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 64 - 23 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. The situation reports can be found [here](#).

Reported war situation (as confirmed per 22 January)

- Today 800 additional Eritrean soldiers arrived in Mekelle today.
- Reported that 80-100 young people were killed by Eritrean and Ethiopian forces in the Endabaguna area in the North Western Zone. The area where the victims were killed has been and still is under the control of Eritrean and Ethiopian forces.
- Report that Chinese Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV), drones, were used in the war in Tigray, by the UAE deployed in Eritrea.
- The article reads (in translation): “According to a report by TASS on December 3, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) deployed UAVs in Eritrea recently and had a big success.”
- Youuav states: “Under the continuous bombing of drones the Tigray People’s Army kept retreating. And there was no way to deal with it. The rebels couldn’t support it and began to surrender. On December 1, the Ethiopian government states that senior officials of the Tigray People’s Army had surrendered to the Ethiopia army. The official who surrendered was Kriya Ibrahim.”
- The report states that “In the civil war in Ethiopia, the pterosaur drones undertook a 24-hour non-stop bombing mission and destroyed the rebels alive.”
- The article explains that the deployment of the UAV’s made a critical difference to Ethiopia winning the war: “Although the Ethiopian army is equipped with advanced weapons including AR-2 rockets, the battle remained a stalemate because the advantages of those weapons were not fully utilized. But when the pterosaur drones joined, the situation changed quickly. Death was hovering above the heads of the rebels for 24 hours (..). The drones made the rebels feel powerless, and the destruction in this period was terrible.”
- The article confirms earlier reports published in the Situation Report EEPA. On 17 November the Spokesperson for the Tigray government, Getachew Reda, claimed that the UAE was involved in attacks in Tigray through drones sent from Assab port in Eritrea.
- Africa Intelligence published earlier that: “Rebel forces in Tigray province claim that they have been bombed by Emirati combat drones, while Addis Ababa has been releasing images of its own drones, which are observation devices made by China's Zerotech.”
- On 18 Nov Tigray President Debretsion wrote a letter to alert that “non-African actors” had provided UAVs to Eritrean and Ethiopian forces, while sources on the ground reported that UAE UAVs were carrying out attacks on Mekelle, Shire and Aksum. On 20/12 it was reported that Bellingcat confirmed the presence of “Chinese-produced drones” at the UAE’s military base in Assab, Eritrea.
- Further drone attacks were reported on in Workeamba in which 85 people died (4/12 2020); Abi Addi where civilians were attacked indiscriminately (8/12); Central fronts in Tigray (13/12 2020); in Wukro and Tembien where hundreds of civilians died among others with bombardments carried out with drones ((15/12 2020); two journalists were killed by a drone attack reported 10/1 2021 and on 21/1 2021 it is reported that the son of Sebat Nega is killed by a drone attack, driving in his car.

- A General of the Ethiopian army stated in a leaked zoom meeting video about the use of armed drones in the war in Tigray. "While the war was happening in front we were attacking/bombing them behind the frontlines with drones and we don't know who is dead and alive", said the general.
- Youuav explains that "the cost of a Chinese-made Pterosaur drone is only about US\$1 million".
- It is reported that Eritrean troops in Tigray are enforcing Eritrean citizenship on the Tigray Irob community, which is a minority group. Reportedly, Eritrean forces are appointing their own administration, have the Eritrean flag installed in parts of Irob, and occupy local government facilities.
- Report that "Escapees from Irob arrived in Mekelle last week, reported an ongoing heavy fighting all over Irobland. Widespread indiscriminate civilian mass killings and burning of houses by Eritrean forces are reported from Giitello, Gammadaa, Alitena, Awo, Harrade, Sabaya, Magauma, Mosisgade, Dawhan, Kimbiro, Agaralekoma, Maibinno, Maadia villages in Irob district. Just in the last two weeks at least 50 civilians are killed in those villages including 10 family members from Gammadaa village."
- It is reported that "about 21 to 30 civilians at church in Giitello village where they were gathered to celebrate Ethiopian Christmas at local church" were killed by Eritrean forces.
- AP/Washington Post report that pressure is growing on Somalia's government amid allegations that Somali soldiers have been sent to fight in neighboring Ethiopia's deadly Tigray conflict.
- The AP/Washington Post quotes a mother who says: "I heard that our children who were sent to Eritrea for military training have been taken and their responsibility was turned over to (Ethiopian Prime Minister) Abiy Ahmed to fight for him," and "According to the information I gathered, our children were taken straight to Mekele city," the capital of the Tigray region, she said. "You may understand how I feel, I am a mother who carried her child for nine months in my belly, that's my blood and flesh."

Reported International situation (as confirmed per 22 January)

- Poland expresses deep concern regarding the massacre in front of the Church of Our Lady Mary of Zion in Aksum in the Tigray region: "We strongly condemn the perpetrators of this barbaric crime committed in a place of worship. We expect the Ethiopian authorities to immediately take all possible measures to clarify its circumstances and punish the perpetrators."
- Poland calls "on the parties to the conflict to refrain from violence and respect human rights, to ensure the safety of the civilian population, and to properly protect the places of worship and freedom of religion. We appeal for unimpeded access for humanitarian deliveries to the Tigray province."
- Pramilla Patten, UN Special Rapporteur on Sexual Violence in Conflict, states that there are increasing reports of sexual violence against women and girls in a number of refugee camps. She expresses concern about the "more than 5,000 Eritrean refugees in and around the area of Shire living in dire conditions, many of them reportedly sleeping in an open field with no water or food."
- Norway states it is "deeply concerned by reports of the use of SGBV in Tigray. Norway joins UN Special Rapporteur Pramilla Patten in calling on all parties to commit to a zero-tolerance policy for SGBV. Obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law must be respected."

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@eepea.be any additional information and corrections.

Links of interest

<https://new.qq.com/omn/20201204/20201204A00NTS00.html>

<https://www.youuav.com/news/detail/202012/46513.html>

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/in-somalia-mothers-fear-sons-were-sent-to-ethiopia-conflict/2021/01/22/38061c1c-5c8b-11eb-a849-6f9423a75ffd_story.html

<https://www.gov.pl/web/diplomacy/statement-regarding-the-massacre-in-front-of-the-church-of-our-lady-mary-of-zion-in-aksum-in-the-tigray-region>

<https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/press-release/united-nations-special-representative-of-the-secretary-general-on-sexual-violence-in-conflict-ms-pramila-patten-urges-all-parties-to-prohibit-the-use-of-sexual-violence-and-cease-hostilities-in-the/>