

Situation Report EPPA HORN No. 77 - 05 February 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. EPPA 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 international situation (as confirmed per 04 February)

- Reported that in a recent audio recording, recorded secretly in a cabinet meeting of the interim regional Tigray administration, led by Dr Mulu, cabinet members said that they are administering “almost only Mekelle.” The rest of Tigray is controlled by Amhara and Eritrean forces.
- The cabinet members asked the question: “how can the Amhara region take Southern and Western Tigray without constitutional change?” They stated: “unless we answer these questions, the people of Tigray can never accept them.”
- Dr Mulu explains during the meeting that he was told in Addis that the administration zones of Tigray will remain the same and that the aim of the military actions was only law enforcement and not a restructuring of administrative areas.
- AP reports that “Eritrean forces are almost everywhere in Tigray.” The source traveled across Tigray.
- All members of the United Nation Security Council (UNSC) called for increased humanitarian access during a closed-door meeting to discuss the humanitarian situation in the Tigray.
- The meeting had been requested by Ireland and Estonia, France, Norway, Britain and the United States.
- French President Macron and German Chancellor Merkel urged PM Abiy to increase aid access.
- U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken spoke with Abiy calling for “immediate, full and unhindered humanitarian access to prevent further loss of life.”
- Barbara Woodward, the U.K.’s permanent representative to the UN stated that the UN SC members all shared the view that “the incremental progress” of opening humanitarian access so far is not enough.
- A report by the Famine Early Warning Systems Network finds that in the coming weeks more parts of central and eastern Tigray will enter Emergency Phase 4. This is one step below famine.
- Reported that people are dying from hunger in Aksum, Tembien, Shire and Zalambessa. In Adigrat, water shortage is forcing people to drink from rivers. Fearing attacks, some are hiding in caves.
- The United Kingdom has condemned the destruction of the two refugee camps, Shemelba and Hitsats, in Tigray, and calls for urgent assistance to the Eritrean refugees who have been displaced.
- Reported that UN Humanitarian Assistance Chief, Lowcock, told the UNSC that there are reports of Eritrean refugees being attacked, killed, abducted and taken back to Eritrea.
- Fillipo Grandi, the UN’s High Commissioner for Refugees, said this week that 15,000 to 20,000 Eritrean refugees are missing after the Hitsats and Shimelba refugee camps in Tigray were flattened.
- Vice reports that military trucks were pictured by satellite around the time that the refugee camps, Shimelba and Hitsats, were destroyed.

- The damage in the two refugee camps is extensive. The latest pictures, taken on January 27, show up to 721 structures damaged and 531 destroyed. 99 of those are catastrophically or extensively damaged. The intent seemed to have been to make sure the camps could no longer be used.
- The damage to the Shimelba and Hitsats camps is a lot more extensive than was originally estimated. A previous report by AP news estimated that only 400 buildings had been destroyed.
- The former deputy director of the Somali Intelligence Agency has said that young Somalis were being forced to fight for Eritrea and Tigray and that he spoke to some of them.
- Al-Shabaab militants have reportedly captured the Warmahan town in Somalia. During the attack, three Somali soldiers were killed and others wounded.
- A State Department Spokesperson said that the Biden Administration considers the appointment of a special Envoy for the Greater Horn of Africa.
- Biden will announce an end to US support for offensive operations against Houthis in the Yemen war.

Reported war situation (as confirmed per 04 February)

- Fighting is going on in Yechila, 50-60 km South of Abi Adi between the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) and Tigray regional forces. Yechila is on the border between Tigray and Amhara. According to sources from the battlefield, 59 ENDF soldiers were killed and 9 captured.
- A fire was detected near Edaga Arbi, a region where continued fighting has been reported.
- Reports of fighting between ENDF allied forces and Tigray regional forces in Temien and Maychaw.
- Al Arabiya reported that Ethiopian troops attacked the Sudanese army at Al-Fashaqa region, inside the Sudanese border today. Sudanese forces repulsed the attack and dozens of Ethiopian troops were killed.
- Satellite imagery near the vicinity of Mekelle University Arid campus shows a major fire damage next to a building used for cattle farming. This happened in January.
- Footage has emerged of shelling of the Amanuel Orthodox Church. The church, situated near the badly damaged Al Negash Mosque, was also shelled. The shelling happened previously.

Reported situation in Ethiopia (as confirmed per 04 February)

- FANA, the Ethiopian government broadcaster, announced that the government has set up a task force to investigate the allegations of sexual violence in Tigray. The task force will be composed of members from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs (MoWCYA), the Ministry of Defence, and the Federal Attorney General. The task force has arrived in Mekelle to begin investigations.
- Ethio-Forum reported that L.General Molla Hailemariam, Chief commander of ENDF infantry forces, is under house arrest since 04/11/2020. There is a report that his brother Mr. Guesh was killed in his office by Eritrean troops in Mekelle on 08/12/2020.
- Politician Mr. Lidetu Ayalew was prevented from boarding a U.S. flight today by government forces. Mr. Lidetu, a leader of an opposition party, was travelling to the U.S. for medical reasons.

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Links of interest

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210204-un-still-hoping-for-humanitarian-access-to-tigray>

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-02-04/un-security-council-urges-access-to-war-ravaged-ethiopia-region>

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/un-ethiopia-may-not-have-control-of-a-large-part-of-tigray/2021/02/04/8f693356-66f2-11eb-bab8-707f8769d785_story.html

<http://www.fanabc.com/english/a-task-force-starts-investigating-alleged-sexual-violence-in-tigray/>

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-02-02/ethiopian-opposition-claims-52-000-dead-in-northern-conflict>