

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 78 - 06 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. 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 05 February)

- Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General, states that the situation in Tigray continues to be extremely alarming and is deteriorating rapidly.
- Dujarric states that the humanitarian response is entirely inadequate to the needs.
- The spokesperson states that humanitarian access remains restricted due to bureaucratic obstacles and due to insecurity on the ground.
- Humanitarian aid workers are prevented from accessing and helping victims from the conflict.
- According to the UN, 80 humanitarian workers are ready in Addis Ababa to travel to Tigray but are stuck in Addis Ababa for a month as they have not been receiving the necessary permits.
- Whilst 250.000 people have been reached, 4.2 million people need food aid and other assistance.
- Especially people in rural areas are not being reached by the aid efforts.
- The UN is assisting victims of gender-based violence across the Amhara and Tigray region.
- Fewer than one third out of the total number of people that the UN and humanitarian partners are trying to reach have access to water.
- Father Mussie Zerai, a priest of the Archdiocese of Asmara, Eritrea, says: "Today there is hunger in Tigray. There is talk of starvation in Tigray, because there are many areas not reached by humanitarian aid. I fear that hunger is being used as a tool of punishment and to force all forms of resistance to surrender. All of this is a crime against humanity."
- Father Mussie Zerai, who works with migrants, states that 10,000 Eritrean refugees under international protection in Tigray were deported back to Eritrea by Eritrean troops. The refugees were under the protection of Ethiopia which failed to prevent the deportations.
- The Eritrean refugees that have been deported, were sheltered in two camps, Shemelba and Hitsats in Tigray, Ethiopia. Fr Mussie Zerai said that 10,000 of the refugees were deported to Eritrea.
- The Eritrean refugees which are deported to Eritrea face punishment, torture and indefinite compulsory national services, a form of forced labour, which the UN has classified as a Crime against Humanity.
- The Eritrean refugees had fled political persecution, compulsory indefinite military service, classified as a Crime against Humanity.
- UNHCR spokesperson, Mr. Baloch, states that UNHCR estimates that 15-20,000 refugees from the two camps are dispersed in areas where UNHCR does not have access.
- Baloch states that UNHCR workers have not had access to the two refugee camps in Tigray, Shemelba and Hitsats. It has been reported that the camps are entirely destroyed and made uninhabitable.

- The UN special adviser on the prevention of genocide, Alice Wairimu Nderitu, said on Friday that she has received reports of “serious human rights violations and abuses, committed by the parties to the conflict in the Tigray region and their allies. These include extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, looting of property, mass executions and impeded humanitarian access.”
- Nderitu is alarmed by “the continued escalation of ethnic violence in Ethiopia and allegations of serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights in the Tigray region.”
- Nderitu states that “if urgent measures are not immediately taken to address the ongoing challenges facing the country, the risk of atrocity crimes in Ethiopia remains high and likely to get worse.”

Reported international situation (as confirmed per 05 February)

- European Parliament will debate the situation in Tigray in plenary on Thursday 11 February. The European Union has been active in addressing the crisis in Tigray, with concerted actions from the EU institutions and Member States.
- EU Member States have been able to ensure that the dramatic situation in Tigray has remained on the agenda of the UN Security Council during the last three months.
- Experts call on the US to also step up actions in concertation with the AU and the EU.
- It is suggested that incoming U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., Linda Thomas-Greenfield, could call on the U.N. Emergency Relief Coordinator and the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to provide the U.N. Security Council with “frank and comprehensive briefings on the humanitarian and human rights situation in areas under the control of the Ethiopian army and forces allied with it, as well as areas under the control of the TPLF.”
- Experts suggest that Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield can push the U.N. Emergency Directors to meet and declare Tigray an “L3 Emergency” – this is “the highest level of urgency that allows the U.N. humanitarian agencies to quickly mobilize staff and resources.”
- A L3 emergency move should also “trigger a special urgent donor appeal for the crisis in Tigray outside of the annual country Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), which do not include those who have sought refuge in neighboring Sudan. To be effective, this appeal will require early and urgent funding to make a difference.”
- The experts advise that USAID Administrator Samantha Power should send a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) to address the situation in Tigray: “The scale, urgency, and complexity of the crisis certainly justify – if not require – the deployment of a DART.”
- Experts emphasize that the White House should press Eritrea to pull its forces back across the border in Eritrea and withdraw all troops from Tigray.
- Experts advise that Secretary of State Antony Blinken must “urgently appoint a special envoy for the Horn of Africa to help oversee a regional diplomatic strategy. Blinken has already told senators that he would consider such a move. A special envoy could also help coordinate efforts of the African Union, the European Union, and Ethiopia’s bilateral benefactors.”

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@eepa.be any additional information and corrections.

Links of interest

<https://www.globalr2p.org/resources/statement-by-the-special-adviser-on-the-prevention-of-genocide-on-the-situation-in-ethiopia-february-2021/>

<https://www.justsecurity.org/74530/five-steps-the-biden-administration-needs-to-take-on-the-crisis-in-tigray/>