

Situation Report EPPA HORN No. 86 - 17 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 war situation in Tigray (as confirmed per 16 February)

- Devex has reported on the conditions that many raped women from Tigray find themselves in after arriving in camps in Sudan. Many of the women have asked to abort the pregnancy, however due to Sudanese legislation, this has been made difficult.
- Sudan allows abortion for 90 days after the start of the pregnancy, but only if a police report has been submitted and a judge determined that it occurred.
- These obstacles have led many to seek illegal abortions, which are significantly more dangerous for the health of these women.
- Similarly, according to Devex, there is a lot of trauma with the refugees in Sudan.
- According to people in Mekelle, there is a lot of military activity taking place in the city. The details are not known, however there have been multiple reports of ENDF soldiers digging trenches in and around the city. Similarly there has been an increase in military aerial activity above the city.
- Electricity interruptions have also been taking place in the city and power outages throughout Tigray.
- Reports of bombing of civilians near Gijet and Samre by ENDF warplanes. Civilian casualties reported.
- Reported that one ENDF brigade of the 11th division was destroyed in the Gijet battle where the 32 division was annihilated.
- There was an alleged air raid in Samre, phones there have been disconnected.
- Reported fighting was taking place near Shire today.
- Report of fighting today near Wajirat.
- The TPLF claims to have shot down a couple of Ethiopian warplanes.
- According to the Sudanese military, Eritrea is assembling soldiers on its border.
- In a phone interview with Tigray Media House, Getachaw Reda, TPLF's executive member, said that more than a hundred thousand soldiers have died in the war in Tigray.

Reported situation in the Horn Region (as confirmed per 16 February)

- The Ethiopian Minister of Foreign ministry spokesperson has said that Ethiopia welcomes the South Sudanese offer to mediate between Sudan and Ethiopia. He added that Ethiopia was always willing to negotiate and settle issues peacefully.
- Following the attack on Lucy Kassa, an Ethiopian government linked twitter account, dismissed the attack by stating that she was not officially registered as a journalist in Ethiopia.
- Al Jazeera, who is covering this, says that there have been claims by journalists that "the government is employing a coordinated strategy to oppress and undermine journalists through social media, state media and the Ethiopian diaspora". However it could not verify this.
- The Committee to Protect Journalists has condemned these attacks and demanded an independent investigation into these incidents.

Reported international situation (as confirmed per 16 February)

- The British Minister for Africa has urged Eritrean troops to immediately withdraw from Tigray. He is also concerned about the recent Ethiopian Human Rights Commission report.
- In the Hoover Institution Series “Battleground with a H. R McMaster”, a former National Security advisor to President Trump, President Paul Kagame of Rwanda has called on the United Nations Security Council to act on Tigray.
- President Kagame said that the situation in Tigray was very concerning, and the number of deaths reported was too high to let Ethiopia and the African Union handle the situation alone.
- President Kagame named the following reasons why the UN should intervene in Tigray.
 - the presence of Eritrean troops in Tigray turns the conflict into an international and civil one.
 - Two refugee camps have been destroyed and between 15 and 20 thousands Eritrean refugees in Tigray have gone missing. Eritrean troops have been implicated in these crimes. This gives the UNSC the right to act on the issue.
 - Tigray is being confronted with a potential famine, where 2.3 million people need urgent access to supplies. Ethiopian troops are making access difficult and restricting access to water and aid, including that of the UN.
 - More than 2 million people are now internally displaced. This is putting a further strain on other crises such as the locust infestation and Covid-19. There is high food insecurity, and the reticence of the Ethiopian government to ask for help will lead to a disastrous situation in Tigray.
 - the UN and other organisations are reporting serious violations of the Geneva Conventions and other International Humanitarian Law. Some reports are also suggesting acts that could constitute ethnic cleansing.
 - Ethiopia is entirely focused on its fight in Tigray, leading to the weakening of regional stability as Ethiopia retreats from its peacekeeping obligations. It has withdrawn soldiers from Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan. Furthermore recent months have seen increasing tensions between Somalia and Kenya, and around the GERD dam.
 - Sudan itself is in the middle of a precarious political transition which could be destabilized. This is creating a dangerously unstable situation that terrorist organisations such as Al Shabaab could exploit.
- The President concluded that when a state is not able to stop atrocities on its territory, such as genocide, the UN has a duty to intervene.

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Links of interest

<https://devex.shorthandstories.com/the-price-women-and-girls-are-paying-for-ethiopia-s-war/index.html>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/16/ethiopia-tigray-conflict-and-the-battle-to-control-information>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XldaFUOCCv8&feature=youtu.be>

<https://www.agencecofin.com/gestion-publique/1602-85246-ethiopie-paul-kagame-appelle-a-une-action-directe-du-conseil-de-securite-de-l-onu-pour-resoudre-la-crise-dans-le-tigre>