

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 87 - 18 February 2021

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Reported war situation in Tigray (as confirmed per 17 February)

- TPLF Spokesperson, Getachew Reda states that “The war in Tigray is mainly spearheaded by Eritrean army generals. Ethiopian chief of general staff, General Birhanu Jula as well as Northern commander General Belay Seyoum are now practically the army spokesperson of the Eritrean army.”
- Getachew Reda says that “Notable, Eritrean Generals such as Sumon Equbu (nickname Riesi Mirak) and Hadush Efreim are leading the war and they are usually heard via intercepted military radio communications, undermining the orders of the Ethiopian army commanders.”
- Getachew said he “firmly believe in the continuity and unity of Ethiopia as a nation.”
- Getachew reflected that because of the “magnificent pain” suffered by the people of Tigray, many Tigrayans “will now have a hard time to regard Ethiopia as their own nation (country).”
- Getachew stated that “It's only the people of Tigray who have the right to decide whether to continue being part of Ethiopia or not. For now, the focus of the resistance is to remove the invaders and bring the region into normalcy, once that is achieved, the people of Tigray will be given the chance to decide its future.”
- Getachew stated that “We understand the destiny of our people is not dependent on the position that foreign powers take. We are paying tremendous sacrifice to defend our dignity, our democratic and human rights, for this purpose thousands of Tigrayan youth are joining the armed struggle.”
- Getachew stated he recently learned that Abiy's government is referring to TPLF as ‘Junta’: “We learned this from the prisoners of war, that they were sent to capture the weak fugitives of ‘Junta’; a new nickname the government is using to refer to TPLF leaders.”
- Getachew states that ENDF and Eritrean soldiers are not told the truth before going to battle. They do not know “that they are engaging with well armed opposition forces.”
- Getachew stated: “We do not have anything negative against these soldiers, as they are deceived to take part in this war. We see them dying in thousands in every fight, we have pity for that. When they are captured we don't have the moral courage to do any harm to them, since most of them are misled and deceived, they had no clue what they were getting into.”
- Getachew states that PM Abiy's weapon is the total communication blockade in Tigray, which helped him to disseminate a false narrative about the war being over, contrary to the facts on the ground.
- President Isayas from Eritrea sets out in a speech to the nation that he does not support the Ethiopian Constitution. He states PM Abiy has some good ideas but some are too hasty to implement.
- President Isayas states that federalism does not work and that Ethiopia would break down. He says he advised president Meles against the Constitution in 1994. He is now advising PM Abiy.
- According to President Isayas the current conflict is triggered by the “Janda” of the TPLF. “Janda” is a tigrinya word for ‘Junta’.
- President Isayas said he did not support the GERD Dam on the Nile: it is not a priority among many regional priorities. In fact he advised to postpone the agenda in 1993. Meles continued pursuing his perspective, despite Isayas' advice. The Dam is not the agenda of Ethiopia but of foreign powers.

- Isayas said that foreign powers have been behind the TPLF government for decades and behind the defamation of Eritrea and that this is a continuation of their policy.
- The Eritrean President stated that the guerilla fighting being undertaken by the remaining leaders of TPLF is worrying: they want to create a war of attrition and then launch a counter offensive and this may take a long time.
- The Tigray interim administration released a statement asking people not to give cover to the “dispersed remnants” of TPLF.
- There were fireworks today in Mekelle as youth in the city celebrated TPLF's 46th anniversary, which is tomorrow on the 18th of February and is usually a large national celebration.
- The Ethiopian government has publicly announced power outages across Tigray region, blaming TPLF. Others suggest it is to prevent celebration of the TPLF 46th anniversary.
- One of the leaders of the TPLF in the battle areas denied the allegations that it was responsible for power outages, stating “it is keenly interested to have good phone communication which is difficult without power. TPLF thinks the ability of the Tigrayan people to support the struggle increases with infrastructural services.”
- Reported that Prosperity Party leaders in Mekelle have been told by HQ to leave Mekelle.
- Nebiyu Sihul, has been removed from his position as head of Tigray Prosperity Party and is now heading the party's members empowerment follow up bureau, based in Addis Ababa.

Reported situation in the Horn Region (as confirmed per 17 February)

- Bekele Gerba, secretary general of the Oromo Federalist Congress, who has been on hunger strike, has been transported to a hospital for treatment.
- The family of Bekele Gerba, says that he was “abducted” during transport and forced to go to a military hospital instead of a private one, and was returned to prison without treatment.
- Ethiopia welcomes Turkish mediation if it is offered. The Ethiopian Foreign Ministry spokesperson said that close Turkish ties to both Ethiopia and Sudan would allow it to solve the conflict peacefully.
- Sudan has summoned its ambassador to Ethiopia for consultation. This comes following Sudanese accusations that Ethiopian troops crossed its border.

Reported international situation (as confirmed per 17 February)

- Jutta Urpilainen, EU commissioner for international partnerships, points to the importance of the EU, IMF, World Bank, UK, US, and Canada indicating to PM Abiy that without full humanitarian access to Tigray, financial support for the government will not be available.
- The Tigray diaspora in Washington D.C held a demonstration as Ethiopian negotiators arrived at the World Bank to request debt relief. The protesters highlighted that finances are diverted to war and genocidal crimes committed in Tigray.
- Deutsche Welle reported that Germany’s aid commitment to Ethiopia is 350 million and this is a critical support to the Ethiopian government if it is continued.
- Dutch PM Mark Rutte spoke with PM Abiy expressing concerns about the human rights situation in Tigray and called for a peaceful solution to the conflict and unrestricted access for humanitarian aid.
- Reported that the Arab League stands with Sudan and its sovereignty in its crisis with Ethiopia.
- The Centre for Strategic International Studies organises a webinar “Restoring Humanitarian Access in Ethiopia” on Monday, February 22, 2021 9:00 am - 9:45 am. The purpose is to discuss the challenges to humanitarian access in Ethiopia and a pathway forward. Life questions can be asked [here](#).

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Links of interest

<https://www.csis.org/events/restoring-humanitarian-access-ethiopia>
<https://crd.org/2021/02/17/grave-human-rights-violations-in-tigray-must-be-investigated/>