

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 88 - 19 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 in Tigray (as confirmed per 18 February)

- Hunalem Ashagre, the local head of the Prosperity Party, has said that the invasion in Tigray has cost 1.5 billion ETB (31 million €) in damaged and looted property.
- In this gesture of solidarity, PM Abiy has donated his one month salary, 200,000 birr (4.157€) from the sale of the Medemer book and three water tanker trucks through the Office of the Prime Minister. He calls upon all to join the #RebuildTigray solidarity initiative.
- PM Abiy Ahmed attended a virtual meeting with the Tigray provisional government to agree to mobilise support for the Tigray Region in national solidarity with our people, as the region rebuilds.
- It is to be recalled that hundreds of EFFORT and REST vehicles as well as property was stolen and destroyed from factories, shops, universities and citizens by Ethiopian and Eritrean forces.
- A letter is posted at Ayder Referral Hospital in Mekelle stating that patients who were beneficiaries of community-based health insurance, free and other scheme users are no longer considered for health services, if they are not able to pay.
- Previously patients who are unable to pay were able to get health services for free when they provided a support letter from their respective administration. At this critical time, the free health services are stopped for people who are not able to pay.
- Heavy fighting has been reported around Mekelle. This follows several reports of intensifying activity around the city. Earlier this week, trenches and barricades were reportedly being set up on the outskirts of the city ENDF soldiers.
- Antonov airplanes were seen flying over Mekelle.
- There have been power interruptions throughout the day throughout Tigray.
- Mekelle and Adigrat celebrated Lekatit 11 (TPLF anniversary and national celebration) with the national colours of red and yellow balloons as well as flags around the city.
- The UNHCR has said that it has re-established a regular presence in the two southern refugee camps, Mai Ayni and Adi Harush. It is strengthening protection and registration services in both camps.
- UNHCR and its partners are planning the relocations of refugees from both Shimbela and Hitsats refugee camps. Both sites were closer earlier in the month by the Ethiopian government.
- According to the UN 5 thousand refugees have already arrived in Mai Ayni and Adi Harush, with an estimated 15 thousand now dispersed or missing.
- The UNHCR reports 7 IDP sites in Mekelle, with an estimated 52 thousand IDPs present.
- The AP has reported on the massacre which occurred in Aksum. It reports that over 800 people were killed in the massacre at the church Our Mary of Zion, committed by Eritrean soldiers.
- A church deacon interviewed by AP said that he estimated that thousands had been killed in the city.
- The AP source states that bodies were left in the streets, with hyenas feeding on the dead overnight.
- According to the report, indiscriminate shooting continued for days in Aksum.

- Some bodies were left for days before anyone attended to them. One university lecturer recalled “I saw a horse cart carrying around 20 bodies to the church, but Eritrean soldiers stopped them and told people to throw them back on the street.” Many were buried in mass graves.
- Another person interviewed by AP said that federal police and forces were not doing anything to stop the massacres.
- When asked federal forces said orders came from above to not intervene. “They said: ‘What can we do? This shouldn’t have happened from the beginning. This is from above.’”
- Thousands of displaced people had sought shelter in the church. Soldiers then entered the church of Our Mary of Zion and “cornering and dragging out worshippers and shooting at those who fled.” The deacon was able to flee, stumbling over dead bodies as they went along.
- The killings themselves are still going on when the interview took place last week. The deacon said that he buried 3 more people the morning of the interview.
- The deacon also said that in rural areas the situation is much worse. He believes thousands more have been killed in villages surrounding the city.
- Videos appear from Adwa town where Ethiopian soldiers are collecting youths and at same time shooting and killing some of them. The videos show bodies laying in the corners of the street and Ethiopian soldiers ordering the young boys to move the body from the road to the side.

Reported situation in the Horn Region (as confirmed per 18 February)

- According to the Daily News Egypt, The Prime Minister of Sudan, Hamdok, has requested the involvement of the African Union, the European Union, the United States, and the United Nations to help move the negotiations regarding the GERD dam forwards.
- Saudi Arabia has offered to mediate the GERD negotiations. The offer was made on Tuesday, during a meeting between the Saudi minister for African Affairs and senior Sudanese officials, including the Prime minister.
- Ethiopia has accused Sudan dismantling local institutions in the disputed territory. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also accuses Sudan of invading Ethiopia at a time when it was occupied elsewhere.
- AP concluded after its own investigation, that the UAE was withdrawing from its Assab base in Eritrea. Satellite pictures that AP analyzed showed that barracks and other buildings were being dismantled. They have also found records of ships going back and forth between Assab and the UAE.

Reported international situation (as confirmed per 18 February)

- Biden Mulls over the appointment of a Special Envoy for Horn of Africa, which, “ if created, would bring more diplomatic firepower to the brewing crisis in Ethiopia.”
- The EU Development Commissioner has said that the bloc needs to plan carefully with regards to Ethiopia. The new budget is coming into force soon. The Commissioner said that the EU and its Member States need to have a broader strategy regarding Ethiopia, and an idea of what to do with the financial support to Ethiopia.
- USAid mission director Sean Jones has completed a tour in Tigray this week. The visit addressed humanitarian and governance challenges associated with conflict to “identify solutions for rapidly scaling up assistance to reach as many communities as possible.”
- Tigrayans also celebrated Lekatit 11 around the world with diaspora holding an event via Zoom. The Tigray government was represented through Ambassador Berhan Meskel.

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Links of interest

<https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/unhcr-regional-update-11-ethiopia-situation-tigray-region-1-14-february>

<https://apnews.com/article/witnesses-recall-massacre-axum-ethiopia-fa1b531fea069aed6768409bd1d20bfa>

https://apnews.com/article/eritrea-dubai-only-on-ap-united-arab-emirates-east-africa-088f41c7d54d6a397398b2a825f5e45a?utm_campaign=SocialFlow&utm_source=Twitter&utm_medium=APMiddleEast

<https://www.devex.com/news/eu-development-chief-calls-for-united-response-on-ethiopia-99184>