

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 93 - 26 February 2021

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Reported war situation in Tigray (as confirmed per 25 February)

- An official with the Tigray's region provisional administration told state media that troops from a "neighbouring country" destroyed factories and universities during the conflict in Ethiopia's northern Tigray state, apparently referring to Eritrea.
- Alula Habteab, who heads the provisional administration's Construction, Road and Transport Bureau, appeared to openly criticise soldiers from Eritrea, as well as the neighbouring Amhara region, for their actions during the conflict.
- "There were armies from a neighbouring country and a neighbouring region who wanted to take advantage of the war's objective of law enforcement," he told the state media.
- According to the official, troops from across the border had destroyed major factories in Tigray, such as the Almeda Textile and Adigrat pharmaceuticals factories, and two major universities in Adigrat and Axum. "These forces have inflicted more damage than the war itself," added the official.
- He also accused the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) of having "seized numerous properties" which belong to the Tigray state government, including many machineries which belong to private contractors. "Universities and factories Tigray produced over the last 30 years have all been destroyed," says the official.
- In a letter addressed to the editor of DEVEX and EU observer, the Ethiopian Embassy in Brussels states it is regrettable that the statement and facts given by Mr. Pekka Haavisto about the situation in Ethiopia does not reflect the reality on the ground and contains unsubstantiated claims.
- The letter added the Ethiopian government was willing to facilitate travel to the region for the Foreign Minister to have first-hand account, however, Minister Haavisto showed no interest to travel to the region, but instead resorted to visit the refugee camp in Sudan and "extrapolate grossly inadequate information" to provide unfolded claims that put unnecessary pressure on the Ethiopian government.
- The letter posted on the official website of the Embassy says the assertion made by the Minister stating: "You have come to a situation which is militarily and human rights-wise, humanitarian-wise very out of control," does not reflect, by any means whatsoever, the tangible progress being registered thus far.
- "The Minister's inaccurate narrative does not also go along with the testimonies given by officials from different international humanitarian organizations operating in the region" says the letter issued by the Embassy.
- The letter also says the Foreign Minister's assertion that: "The government themselves do not have a clear picture, particularly in areas controlled by Eritreans" is what one would not expect from a person in the high office and representing the European Union. "Such a statement is by far an erroneous claim and at best a condescending view towards Ethiopia," added the Embassy.
- Amnesty International (AI) report says between 19 and 29 Nov. 2020, Eritrean troops operating in Aksum, Tigray, committed a series of human rights and humanitarian law violations, including killing hundreds of civilians.

- “Over an approximately 24-hour period on 28 - 29 Nov. 2020, Eritrean soldiers deliberately shot civilians on the street and carried out systematic house-to-house searches, extrajudicially executing men and boys,” says the AI report
- The report also says that :”In the immediate aftermath of the massacre, Eritrean troops shot at those who sought to remove bodies from the streets”.
- Reported that the rape victims in Ayder Referral and Mekelle hospitals are being forcefully evacuated following the arrival of international media institutions.
- Reports of air strikes in Samre, Yechilay and Temben areas by Ethiopian allied air force.
- According to multiple sources, the ancient Monastery of Maryam Qaretsa, near Samre town was bombed by ENDF allied forces. The fate of over 100 monks in the monastery remains unknown.
- Satellite imagery shows that 508 buildings have been burned down near Gijet town last week.
- DX Open Network analysis says that this indicates that it was part of an intentional effort, rather than combat operations.
- According to the Africa Report, the conflict in Tigray has had a significant impact on the Ethiopian economy. The currency has inflated by 19% and the IMF projected GDP growth for 2020 has been re-adjusted to 0%. In comparison, the economy grew by 10% last year.

Situation in the Horn Region(as confirmed per 25 February)

- Sudan Tribune says Eritrea has distanced itself from the ongoing border tensions between Sudan and Ethiopia and called for an amicable solution to the dispute.

Reported international situation (as confirmed per 25 February)

- The United States says it remains deeply concerned by Eritrean troops in Ethiopia’s Tigray region, and by credible reports that they are committing grave human rights abuses and forcibly returning Eritrean refugees to Eritrea.
- “We urge Eritrea to withdraw its troops immediately from Ethiopia’s Tigray region, and to investigate and hold accountable those responsible for human rights abuses,” says the U.S. statement at the Human Rights Council.
- The UN Special rapporteur on the Human Rights situation in Eritrea has addressed the UN Human Rights Council. He said that he had received credible reports and first hand accounts of “allegations of grave human rights and humanitarian law violations, including extra judicial killings, targeted abductions and forced return of Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers to Eritrea, allegedly by Eritrean forces.”
- He also called for an independent investigation into the refugee camps attacks and the potential kidnapping of Eritrean refugees.
- He has also said that he has requested access to Eritrean asylum seekers and migrants which would be in Eritrean prisons. He has not received a response to previous requests to visit Eritrea and assess the Human Rights situation there.
- The Special Rapporteur has not seen any improvements in Human Rights or the Rule of Law in Eritrea.
- The Eritrean Ambassador has dismissed the report as unjustified and senseless.
- Ethiopians living in the U.S. gather near the White House in Washington, DC in protest to end the ongoing conflict in the Tigray region.

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