

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 94 - 01 March 2021

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Amnesty International Report

- Amnesty International has published a report of the massacre in Aksum after having interviewed 41 survivors. The report states that both Ethiopian and Eritrean forces indiscriminately shelled Axum before entering the city. This resulted in the deaths of many civilians. People interviewed said that TPLF forces had already vacated the city, and Eritrean and Ethiopian forces did not face resistance. (22 Nov)
- Following the shelling of the city, soldiers occupied it and started searching for TPLF soldiers. They executed many young men in the process. The killings were based on “even the slightest possible clues”. Wearing camouflage patterned clothing, having pictures of people looking like farmers or fighters on your phone were reasons for execution. (22 Nov)
- Witnesses also reported that some Eritrean soldiers were wearing Ethiopian Army uniforms.
- The massacre started following a TPLF attack on an Eritrean held hill. Some locals helped the attackers while many more cheered on. After the attackers retreated, Eritrean soldiers, supported by reinforcements, went on a rampage through the city. Tanks were deployed by the Eritrean soldiers, and were actively shooting at civilians. (28 - 29 November)
- The hospital was occupied, looted, and patients killed.
- The attacks continued the following day on people that were trying to bury the bodies of the dead. Eritrean soldiers only allowed burials to start late in the afternoon on November 29th.
- The reports conclude that *“The systematic killing of hundreds of civilians by Eritrean forces on 28-29 November may also constitute crimes against humanity.”* It further calls upon Ethiopian authorities to *“stop the further commission of human rights and humanitarian law violations, including indiscriminate shelling and aerial bombardment, and deliberate attacks on civilians.”*
- It further *“urges the African Union, the European Union, the United States, and the United Nations to encourage the Ethiopian authorities to implement the above recommendations.”*

Reported war situation in Tigray (as confirmed per 28 February)

- A UNOCHA report says the humanitarian situation in Tigray region remains critical, with reports of intensified fighting across the region, particularly in the Central Zone.
- OCHA reported incidents of house searches, looting, killings and gender-based violence (GBV) against civilians have continued in the region.
- The report states despite large amounts of food aid reportedly dispatched across Tigray region, better monitoring is needed to ensure that aid is reaching those most in need.
- OCHA added that unimpeded access remains critical to ensure principled humanitarian action in all parts of Tigray. “ Additional resources are urgently required to ensure protection activities and other life-saving services to scale up”, said the OCHA report.
- An article published in VICE reported that on 10 January 2021, Eritreans troops burned crops and homes in the village of Debre Harmaz in Central Tigray.
- According to a witness who spoke to VICE from undisclosed location along the Ethio-Sudan border, there was no sign of war or even resistance fighters present when the Eritrean soldiers arrived in his village (Debre Harmaz) and went on a murderous rampage, pillaging and setting homes alight.

- “They shot at everyone, they even killed priests who were hiding in the church,” The witness said. He also heard about neighboring villages experiencing similar destruction that has also gone unreported.
- Reports of ten thousands of internally displaced people (IDPs) have been forcibly relocated from Shire campus of Aksum University to Shire prison and three schools in Shire namely, Tsehaye, Embalanso and Hibret following the arrival of international media to Tigray.
- After an investigation during which they spoke to 12 witnesses and 20 relatives, CNN has reported details on a massacre that took place in Edaga Hamus, in which at least 50, but potentially more than 100 people were killed. The massacre was carried out by Eritrean soldiers.
- The massacre took place on November 30th, when many religious pilgrims were celebrating a religious holiday. It went on for 3 days, during which bodies were left lying on the ground.
- Among the victims were at least 20 children, and one pregnant woman,
- Only on december 2nd did they allow burials, but threatened to kill anyone who they saw mourning.
- The New York Times reported that a US government report has concluded that Ethiopian officials, militiamen, and allied fighters, are carrying out Ethnic cleansing in Tigray.
- The report says that there is an apparent campaign to force out Tigrayans under the cover of war.
- There have been many reports of translators and journalists being arrested in Tigray. Many have been seized from their homes and brought to unknown locations. The arrests seem to have been carried out by Ethiopian soldiers.
- The interim government of Tigray has also stated that anyone caught providing false information to international media will be arrested.

Reported situation in the Horn Region (as confirmed per 28 February)

- The Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) says an attempt by the U.S. to make pronouncements on Ethiopia's internal affairs and particularly, the reference to the Amhara regional forces redeployment is regrettable.
- The MoFA states it should be clear that such matters are the “sole responsibility” of the Ethiopian government, which is a sovereign nation, is responsible to deploy the necessary security structures and means available in ensuring the rule of law and all concern of its borders.
- “Honoring international obligations and responsibilities should not be deemed by any entity as an invitation to dictate a sovereign nation’s internal affairs”, added the Ministry
- Sudanese media has reported that Ethiopian militiamen have kidnapped two Sudanese farmers. The attack allegedly took place in the disputed al-Fashada area.

Reported international situation (as confirmed per 28 February)

- The EU High Representative Borell and Crisis Management Commissioner Lenarčič have released a joint statement on the Axum massacre. They condemned the attack and reiterated their previous demands of free access and respect of Human Rights.
- The US secretary of state has said that he is concerned about the situation in Tigray. He condemns the violence, rapes, and other atrocities taking place there. He added that the withdrawal of Eritrean troops and Amhara regional forces from Tigray is an essential first step to peace.
- He has also called on the African Union and other International partners to step up and help solve the crisis. He further called on the International Community to work together to stop the atrocities.

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Links of interest

<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/02/26/africa/ethiopia-tigray-dengelat-massacre-intl/index.html>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/26/world/middleeast/ethiopia-tigray-ethnic-cleansing.html#click=https://t.co/vk6GL34P9w>

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR2537302021ENGLISH.PDF>

<https://www.vice.com/en/article/n7vgex/they-started-burning-the-homes-ethiopians-say-their-towns-are-being-razed-in-ethnic-cleansing-campaign>