

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 96 - 03 March 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](#).

Journalism in the conflict (as confirmed per 02 March)

- The Committee to Protect Journalists has said that the Ethiopian government should release the journalist and media workers and provide guarantees that “the press can cover the conflict in Tigray without intimidation.” In an environment where there is already a “scarcity of independent reporting”, intimidation will lead to self-censorship.”
- The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission has said that it is concerned about the reports of journalists arrests in Tigray. It says that arresting journalists and fixers for foreign correspondents is by no means an appropriate response and authorities should either bring credible charges or release them.

Reported war situation in Tigray (as confirmed per 02 March)

- In a piece for the Boston review, Alex de Waal has said that “We Can No Longer Deny the Atrocities in Ethiopia”. The Africa expert argues that this prevents effective action to help people out of the dire situation: “The “international community”—have known for months that something truly horrendous is happening. But like shocked onlookers, they haven’t wanted to believe the facts. “
- He argues that by accepting the Ethiopian government's stance that it is a necessary step for democratic reform in the country, it blinds the international community to believing the atrocities taking place on the ground.
- He criticised Amnesty International for its first report on the conflict regarding the Mai Kadra massacre. The report, accusing the TPLF of committing the massacre, turned out to be based on three interviews and created a false impression of the conflict.
- According to de Waal, the Ethiopian army has collapsed in most of Tigray, and the brute fighting is being done by Eritrean troops. If they were to leave the area, the TPLF would resurge, and is still in fact in control of “huge” parts of the countryside.
- He further criticised the “breakthrough” the UN announced when two dozen aid workers were allowed into Tigray to deliver supplies. The teams are too small to provide effective and efficient support to those who need it, and acts more as a token force. He added that humanitarian organisations “too have been intimidated. The agencies fear being expelled from Ethiopia if they speak out.”
- The WHO Director for the Health emergency programme, Michael Ryan, said that they are concerned about the unfolding situation in Tigray.
- He further said that refugees live in overcrowded camps and conditions and that “...diseases, malaria, and other infectious diseases will continue to rise as long as the population remains in these circumstances.” High malnutrition and lack of access to water increase this risk further.
- Mr Ryan finished his statement saying that emergency services in the region were disrupted and not capable of delivering the essential healthcare pack.
- In an interview with CNN, the ousted Tigray President Debretsion Gebremichael, has said that “all acts of genocide” are being carried out in Tigray. He called for investigations into these atrocities and urged the Biden administration to keep the pressure up.

Human Rights Violations (as confirmed per 02 March)

- Al Jazeera has published new stories of survivors in Tigray after it has gained access to Tigray. The author of the article was identified as "Al Jazeera Staff".
- Several of the accounts come from Mai Kadra, where 600 people were killed at the start of the conflict. They implicate Eritrean soldiers, who raped and killed civilians there.
- Further reports are coming in of Amhara militias rounding up and killings civilians. The Tigrayans are reportedly being transported further into Tigray, many areas of which are still in open conflict.
- Several social media reports say that Amhara militias killed 250 people near Humera over the last days.
- Reports of Eritrean troops have intensified indiscriminate shelling of villages and civilians around Hawzen and Azeba areas.
- Tghat has published a new personal account of a professor that was present during the Axum massacre in November. The author, a professor at Adigrat University, says he lost a brother in the massacre. Another sister of his was wounded. His account is in line with the findings that Amnesty International published on Friday.
- Two female medical doctors of Ayder Referral Hospital have been raped by Ethiopian soldiers.

Reported in Horn region (as confirmed per 02 March)

- Fighting on the border between Sudan and Ethiopia continues to be reported in Al-Fashada. Sudanese media claims that Ethiopian forces are supported by Eritrean troops.
- Egypt and Sudan have signed a military cooperation agreement. Officials have said that both countries face similar threats to national security and want to achieve better coordination between their respective militaries.
- Speaking at the ceremony, Mohamed Farid, Chief-of-Staff of the Egyptian Armed Forces said Egypt would not hesitate to quickly come to Sudan's aid if needed. "The resources, strong will and resolve are there to implement what we have agreed to counter emergency situations," he added.

Reported international situation (as confirmed per 02 March)

- The Ethiopian Ambassador to the EU said her government would lodge a formal complaint to High representative Borell over Finish Foreign minister and EU special envoy Haavisto's characterisation of the situation in Tigray. They say it is not accurate and full of misinformation.
- US secretary of state Blinken has spoken with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on the phone. Blinken urged Ethiopia to take "immediate and concrete steps to protect civilians, including refugees, and to prevent further violence".
- He further pressed on the issue of immediate withdrawal of Eritrean and Amhara forces from Tigray.
- United Nations Human Rights Chief, Michell Bachelet said it is crucial that full and unimpeded access be immediately given to the whole Tigray region of Ethiopia.
- According to diplomats, the UN Security Council is expected to hold informal discussions on Thursday on the humanitarian situation in Ethiopia. The US, UK, France, Ireland, Norway and Estonia are looking to raise the issue in AOB format.

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Links of interest

[Alex de Waals piece in the Boston review](#)

<https://cpj.org/2021/03/ethiopian-military-detains-bbc-reporter-translators-for-afp-and-ft/>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/1/we-are-dying-tigrayans-speak-of-abuse-by-eritrean-troops>

<https://www.tghat.com/2021/03/01/the-killing-of-my-brother-the-wounding-of-my-sister-and-hidar-tision-of-aksum/>