

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 98 - 05 March 2021

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Reported situation in Ethiopia (as confirmed per 04 March)

- According to diplomatic sources, U.S. Secretary of State Blinken spoke to Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy twice and told him that Eritrean and Amhara forces must be withdrawn from Tigray within 72 hours.
- He further said that the Prime Minister had to dissociate himself from the Eritrean regime, cease all hostile activities immediately (without pre-conditions) and allow full and unimpeded humanitarian assistance to all parts of Tigray.
- He also offered US mediation between Ethiopia and the TPLF.
- Following the call, Prime minister Abiy reportedly met with his top officials in which they agreed that he would travel to Asmara on March 4th to discuss with President Issayas of Eritrea. The trip would not be announced.
- The meeting also showed divisions within the Ethiopian government, with some wanting to agree to the US's proposals, while others were more reluctant. Some also believe that Ethiopia was betrayed by its friends.

Reported war situation in Tigray (as confirmed per 04 March)

- It is reported that the Amhara forces have murdered 80 Tigrayan civilians in Humera, Western Tigray and threw them into the Tekeze river.
- There are reports that some Eritrean troops are deserting, taking off their uniforms and hiding in the Tigrayan countryside.
- The interim government of Tigray has said that they are unanimous in their opinion that Eritrean troops need to leave Tigray immediately. They say that Eritrean troops have committed crimes in the areas they control.
- According to sources, Eritrea has sent more troops to Adi Berak, an area between Adwa and Rama. The troops that are being sent have a very cruel reputation.
- Eritrean troops stationed near Axum have reportedly been shelling Gelila Mountain, South of the city.
- Eritrean forces have reportedly shelled highland villages around Adigrat, Eastern Tigray.
- Fighting continues between Tigray forces and Eritrean forces in North Western Tigray, between Shire and Endabaguna.
- Fighting is also continuing Southwest of Wukro. The area is still controlled by Tigray forces.
- The Eritrean army has retaken Samre, and Tigrayans have retreated deeper into the countryside. According to sources, Eritrean soldiers threatened to cut "a hand and a leg" of local inhabitants if Tigrayan forces came back and received support. It is a reference to the punishment former Ethiopian kings would carry out on traitors.
- Heavy fighting is also taking place in Adishuhu, 60 km South of Mekelle. Tigrayan forces are facing off against forces from Eritrea, the ENDF and Amhara militias. Air strikes and artillery were being used during the fighting

Human Rights situation (as confirmed per 04 March)

- UN Human rights chief, Bachelet, has said that 139 rapes had been reported in Mekelle.

- She said that incidents of atrocities, sexual violence and looting kept being reported to the UN and that “Credible information also continues to emerge about serious violations of international human rights law and humanitarian law by all parties”.
- She also reported that 8 protesters had been killed in Adigrat, Mekelle, Shire and Wukro between 9 and 10 February.
- Her office had also further corroborated certain incidents that had occurred in the conflict, including “indiscriminate shelling in Mekelle, Humera and Adigrat towns in Tigray region, and reports of grave human rights violations and abuses including mass killings in Axum, and in Dengelat in central Tigray by Eritrean armed forces.”
- Analysis received suggests that multiple parties to the conflict, including the ENDF, Eritrean forces, TPLF, Amhara forces, and other militias had committed “violations of international law”, possibly amounting to war crimes.
- The UN Chief of Human rights asked Ethiopia on Thursday that monitors be allowed into Tigray. They would be tasked with investigating claims of killings and sexual violence which could amount to war crimes.
- Ethiopian diplomacy with Eritrea is allegedly being carried out directly by Prime minister Abiy. The official Ethiopian ambassador to Eritrea, was supposedly not able to present his credentials as Ambassador due to comments he made during the Ethiopia Eritrea border war of 1998-2000. He has instead been appointed as spokesperson of the Command Post of the Federal Government’s State of Emergency on Tigray. It is not known whether another ambassador has been appointed.

Reported international situation (as confirmed per 04 March)

- Following the UNSC meeting, US Ambassador to the UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, gave a press conference during which she urged the Ethiopian government to support an immediate end to the fighting and prompt withdrawal of Eritrean troops and Amhara regional forces.
- The Ambassador emphasized that their withdrawal is an essential step to bring peace in Tigray.
- The Biden Administration has announced it was appointing a Special Envoy to the Horn.
- Estonia and Norway called for an end to hostilities and uphold international and human rights law, and independent investigation into violations and abuses and for Eritrean troops to withdraw.
- UN Relief Chief, Mark Lowcock told UNSC that it’s clear to everyone that Eritrean defense forces are operating throughout Tigray and said they must leave Ethiopia.
- The Thursday UN Security Council session on Tigray ended with no agreement, diplomats say.
- The diplomats said veto-wielding Russia and China and non-permanent member India objected to the joint statement on the grounds that it interfered in Ethiopia’s internal affairs.
- The Washington Post editorial board wrote an opinion in which it urged the Biden Administration to be firm in his interactions with Ethiopia. It should not resume aid until “U.S. priorities on Tigray are met” and also said that the US administration should be prepared to put sanctions on Ethiopia if necessary.
- UNSG, António Guterres, fully supports the statement made by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michell Bachelet, his spokesperson said. He further calls on Eritrea to withdraw its troops from Tigray.
- Tomorrow, Human Rights Watch (HRW) will release a report on abuses committed during a joint Ethiopian and Eritrean offensive on Axum in November.
- Amnesty International said the UN must immediately launch an investigation into ongoing allegations of grave violations in the Tigray region, citing an investigation by CNN as well as one of its own.

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