

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 67 - 26 January 2021

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Reported war situation (as confirmed per 25 January)

- Fighting between Eritrean forces and Ethiopian National Defence Forces has started around Kwiha, near Mekelle.
- There was conflict among ENDF and Eritrean troops in Adigrat on 24/1. According to sources, Eritrean troops wanted to transport Ethiopian tanks to Eritrea but ENDF soldiers resisted. Later they start shooting at each other and dozens of ENDF and Eritrean troops have been killed and wounded.
- Fighting was also reported among ENDF allied and Tigray regional forces in Endabaguna and May Tsebri surroundings.
- Abraha Desta, the head of the interim Tigray administration Bureau of Social Affairs, has reported that his office has received reports of the death of 13 people, of which three are children, due to starvation. Ten of those came from Gulomahda Woreda and three from Adwa.
- Reported by a medical worker in Adigrat that he “treated six women who had been raped by a group of soldiers and told not to seek help afterwards.” Reported that in Mekelle, “one man was beaten up after begging soldiers to stop raping a 19-year-old, according to a medical worker who treated both victims.” Reuters reports that “Mekelle charity Elshadai said it has prepared 50 beds for rape victims.”
- The administration has also published its new numbers of people in need in Tigray. They estimate that 4.5 million people are in need of emergency food assistance, and 2.5 million, up from 2.2 at the beginning of January, are internally displaced.
- The collapse of the government structure has made it difficult to deliver aid. High risk is preventing aid agencies and the regional administration from effectively transporting supplies to areas that need it.
- Aid workers report sadistic violence used against civilians, including rape: a young woman separated from relatives was given a choice to be killed or to be raped. Reuters reports that aid workers report multiple of such stories perpetrated allegedly by militia fighters from Ethiopia’s Amhara region and Eritrean soldiers, both allied with Abiy’s troops. There have been many such reports of soldiers forcing themselves on civilians or demanding sex in exchange for basic supplies.
- Eritrean refugees are high at risk. According to Reuters, medical centers in the area are under high pressure for emergency contraception and tests for sexually-transmitted diseases.
- The AP/Washington post has published new accounts of Eritrean looting and killing in Tigray: the road was full of trucks “filled with boxes addressed to places in Eritrea.” The witness also reported that Eritrean soldiers would go house to house and kill men and boys as young as 7. They would subsequently not allow burials.
- AP/Washington Post report another witness who fled into the mountains, running away from nearby fighting. When she returned 12 days later, she stumbled over 70 bodies of people she knew. The same witness reports that a boy was recruited by soldiers to do errands, and subsequently killed. The witnesses blame the majority of the atrocities on Eritrean soldiers.

- AP/Washington Post report that thousands of Eritrean soldiers allied to the Ethiopian forces are involved in Tigray: “They are accused of targeting thousands of vulnerable refugees from their own country, raping and intimidating locals.”
- AP/Washington Post express concern that Eritrean soldiers may not be leaving Tigray.
- Many Eritrean Refugees from Hitsats fled or were told to go to Shiraro, from where they were allegedly transported to Eritrea. Hitsats and Shimelba camps are reportedly deserted.
- Reported that Eritrean soldiers have also been attending meetings with humanitarian workers. Both the Eritrean and Ethiopian governments deny their presence.
- According to the Ethiopian Human Rights commission (EHRC) they found 90 Tigrayan jailed for almost three months on suspicion of being supporting TPLF, during visits to prisons in the Gambella region of Ethiopia. No police investigations has started.

Reported regional situation (as confirmed per 25 January)

- Al-Arabiya reported that the Sudanese Minister of Culture and Information, Faisal Saleh expressed his concern over the second filling of Ethiopia’s GERD. “The dam can’t be brought into operation until the three countries reach a binding agreement”, he says. This is a legally confirmed document that will allow three parties to regulate the water level in the bed of the Blue Nile River.
- Sudanese officials report that their soldiers came under Ethiopian ENDF mortar fire on Sunday while patrolling the border.
- Kenya and Ethiopian troops are fighting for control of BeledXaawo town of Somalia. Ethiopia is assisting militia loyal to President Farmaajo while Kenya is supporting other militia for Abdirashid Janan, Jubaland minister of security.

Reported International situation (as confirmed per 25 January)

- The EU is making preparation to send Finland’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pekka Haavisto, as a European envoy to deal with the crisis in Ethiopia. The Foreign ministers of EU member states met today to discuss the EU approach.
- New Ambassador Geeta Pasi, USA Ambassador to Ethiopia, was nominated by Trump and President Biden has approved her, with a comprehensive strategy to the Horn: <https://youtu.be/FoOpeCs3J2A>
- The outgoing US ambassador to Ethiopia, Michael Raynor, has called for an independent investigation into the situation in Tigray. He said that “we continue to be troubled by the activities of Eritrean actors in the region”. and called for “an immediate halt to, and independent investigation of, all credible reports of atrocities, sexual violence, and human rights abuses in Tigray....”
- The British government has answered a question of Lord Alton in the House of lords. They say that they “are shocked and saddened by further reports from Tigray of massacres of civilians, sexual violence, and attacks on Humanitarian facilities and places of worship.” The British government continues to call for independent, international, investigations into incidents in Tigray, as well as free and unfettered humanitarian access.

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