

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 90 - 23 February 2021

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Reported war situation in Tigray (as confirmed per 22 February)

- President of the International Federation of the Red Cross, Francesco Rocco, speaks in an interview of the devastation he saw during his visit to Tigray a week ago, which was pale in comparison to anything he had seen in his professional capacity.
- Rocco said he was still “overwhelmed by the level of emotion and impact the visit had on him”, and stated that “the needs are enormous.” People have no food, no water, no medicine or drugs.
- Rocco found that 90-95% of the health facilities are not working and was especially struck by the “systematic aggression to the health facilities.” He had heard reports of “looting of the facilities in the rural areas health posts.”
- Rocco expressed concern for the aid workers: “The situation on the ground is very volatile and you have to be very careful.” He said “Ethiopian Red Cross volunteers are paying a bloody price, trying to reach rural areas.” and emphasised there is still fighting and no cease-fire in Tigray.
- Rocco spoke with emotion about the frustration that there is no clearance for the humanitarian flights of the Red Cross: “We are ready. We have loaded our cargos. But we can not send medicine, drugs and food.” He said “elderly and children are in desperate need of food.”
- Rocco stated Red Cross volunteers were in need of psycho-social support as frustration was growing that they had nothing to distribute in such a devastating situation.
- Asked why the Red Cross could not distribute when the Ethiopian government said it was, Rocco stated: “Maybe the Ethiopians have an invisible channel to provide aid, a different channel than we are using; I don’t want to blame anyone but as a reality unfortunately, hospitals are empty, there is no medicine, drugs and food.”
- Rocco stated that the 200.000 IDPs in Mekelle and towns were supported by local communities. He asked attention for the children living alone in camps as they had been separated from their families during the fighting.
- The most recent UN situation report on Tigray says that despite progress, the “humanitarian response remains drastically inadequate compared to the sheer magnitude of needs across the region.” The food situation in Tigray has become very critical.
- Reports of ethnic targeting of Tigrayans in UN peacekeeping forces in Juba, South Sudan. Pictures show men that have been beaten up, reportedly after they refused to go back to Ethiopia.
- Reportedly 39 of ethnic Tigrayan Ethiopian peacekeepers were forced to the airport to transport them back to Ethiopia, whilst 15 were sheltered by the UNHCR. Similar forcible return from AMISOM in Somalia was reported among fears that the returnees may face torture and execution.
- A video footage shared by the Tigray Media House shows a summary execution of male civilians by Ethiopian forces in Southern Tigray.
- About three days ago there was a massacre of more than 100 civilians in the area of Gijet, in the village Khisret, which happened after the massive TDF counter-offensive. A short film clip shows dead bodies of youth that have been massacred and women in shock. The perpetrators were identified as Ethiopian government soldiers.

- DW reported from Tigray that 160 civilians were executed in Chelena Bora district, Southern Tigray by Ethiopian forces on Jan 8.
- Fear is expressed that Eritrean and ENDF forces may destroy the Tekeze hydropower dam. This would keep the region without electricity and in the dark for a long period of time.

Reported situation in the Horn Region (as confirmed per 22 February)

- FANA, the Ethiopian government broadcaster, reported that the chief of the Ethiopian army is in the UAE for a visit to the crown prince and other government officials.
- According to sources, the Sembel Hospital in Asmara has been closed since April 2020. Supposedly it was due to Covid-19. The hospital is privately operated by the PFDJ. It is apparently being used to service the international community.
- This leaves only two hospitals open to the public in Asmara, Eritrea: Halibet hospital (a military hospital that provides services to civilians) and Orotta hospital.
- Sudan owns the land where Ethiopia built the GERD, claims former negotiator Dr. Ahmed Al-Mufti. He told the Saudi-owned *Alarabiya* that his country granted the land to Ethiopia in 1902 on the condition that Addis Ababa would not establish any water infrastructure without Khartoum's approval.
- In his interview on the programme *Al Boud Al Akhar* (The Other Dimension), Al-Mufti added that Sudan could ask for the land to be returned to Sudanese sovereignty.

Reported international situation (as confirmed per 22 February)

- The High representative of the EU, Joseph Borell, said in a statement that urgent and full humanitarian aid is required in Tigray. He also said that allegations of Human Rights abuses need to be investigated and that International Law is respected.
- Four months after the start of the war - because we can call it war - 80% of the 6 million Tigray population are still unreachable. And there are areas where fighting is still going and there is no humanitarian access, said High Representative of EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Joseph Borrel in his press remarks.
- The United Nations Human Rights Councils 46th session started on Monday and will last till the 23rd of March. Among other things, the annual report on the situation in Eritrea will be discussed.
- The Ethiopian Macha-Tulama Oromo Organisation (USA Board) speaks of the alarming situation of Oromo political prisoners who are on hunger strike since 27 January 2021.
- The Macha Tulama Organisations states that "Putting parts of Oromia under a Command Post, a de-facto military rule with far reaching mandates including unauthorised search, arrest, jail, and extra judicial killings have put the country on a very dangerous course."
- The Macha Tulama Organisations says that "Ongoing Wars in Oromia and Tigray, and massive displacements in Metekel and other areas, have robbed the people of any hope for peace and democracy."
- According to Deutsche Welle, the conflict in Tigray is straining Ethiopian German relations. Both Chancellor Merkel and foreign minister Maas have raised concern about the situation.
- Dutch member of Parliament Martijn van Helvert held a Facebook session, where he answered questions about the conflict in Tigray.
- The United States has announced it would decouple some of the aid to Ethiopia from the GERD dam issue. The pause in aid affects 272 million dollars. Reassessment includes humanitarian aid to Tigray.

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Links of interest

<https://undocs.org/A/HRC/46/1>

<https://www.dw.com/en/german-ethiopian-relations-suffer-over-tigray/a-56655824>

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20210222-sudan-owns-land-where-ethiopia-built-dam-claims-ex-negotiator/>