

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 156 - 27 May 2021

Europe External Programme with Africa is a Belgium-based Centre of Expertise with in-depth knowledge, publications, and networks, specialised in issues of peacebuilding, refugee protection, and resilience in the Horn of Africa. EEPA has published extensively on issues related to the 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](#).

International situation (26 May 2021)

- In a briefing seen by AFP, Senior UN officials are warning the UNSC that urgent measures are needed to avoid famine in Tigray.
- Mark Lowcock said in the note that 20% of the population is facing serious food shortages. 80% of the harvest has been destroyed or looted, while 90% of livestock has been killed or looted. He further estimated that 2 million people have been displaced.
- He wrote that "Despite improvements in March and the cooperation of authorities at the local level, humanitarian access on the whole has recently deteriorated," and that humanitarian operations continued to be attacked, obstructed and delayed.
- He also says that rape and sexual violence remains "widespread and systematic" throughout the region. Public infrastructure also continues to be destroyed.
- US Secretary of State Blinken has arrived in Cairo to meet with President Sisi and other Egyptian officials.
- The US Department of Defence Spokesperson has said that the US "has imposed wide-ranging restrictions on security assistance to include military aid to Ethiopia".
- The Irish ministry of Foreign affairs expressed its concern at the expulsion of NYT journalist from Ethiopia. They worry about the "shrinking space for media freedom. "
- A full US senate committee hearing on "Ethiopia in Crisis: U.S. Strategy and Policy Response" will be held on Thursday May 27th at 11:00 AM EST.

Situation in the Horn region (as per 26 May)

- Sudan has said that Ethiopia has started the second filling of the GERD dam in early May. The process is expected to continue throughout the summer when seasonal rains come.
- Talks regarding the dam between Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia have stalled.
- Ethiopia has denied that it has started the second filling.

Reported situation in Tigray (per 26 May)

- MSF has said that it is very concerned at the forcible taking of hundreds of people from camps where internally displaced people are seeking refuge in Shire. MSF teams have seen the ongoing emptying of these camps.
- The UN has also said that it is "deeply alarmed" at the rounding up of hundreds of people in Shire.
- Tewodros Aregai, interim head of Tigray's Northwestern Zone, told AFP Tuesday the arrests were spurred by reports that anti-government forces had infiltrated the camps and that operations were underway to screen refugees.
- The UNHCR has said that 700 refugees have been swept up by the military.
- The Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR) has said that "reports of sexual violence against women and girls in the conflict-hit Tigray region need to be acted upon immediately."
- SOWAR is a coalition of more than 60 organisations working on women's rights in 32 countries in Africa.

- They also called on “the special rapporteur on the rights of women in Africa to urge relevant authorities to ensure women and girls in the region are protected from rape and sexual assault in line with Ethiopia’s human rights obligations.”
- The US has supplied the Tigray Health Bureau with 33 vehicles and 33 million worth of medical supplies. It is part of a USAID handover.
- The vehicles are meant to increase the mobile health capacity that has become a critical part in the humanitarian response in Tigray. It helps mobile teams to respond to remote areas and transport patients to the remaining functioning medical stations.
- The International Organisation for Migration has said that there are over 1.7 million people displaced due to the conflict. The assessment was conducted between 01-22 April.
- The highest concentration is in Shire, where 575,115 IDPs are “residing in overcrowded collective shelters, including schools, within the host community and in open spaces.”
- Other urban areas also have high densities of IDPs with Adwa having 188,910, Sheraro 165,223, and Mekele 200,909.
- According to analyses of datasets, there is a “pressing need to deal with growing food insecurity, particularly to assist those displaced, as well as providing shelter, water, sanitation, hygiene and other non-food items in the overcrowded sites across the conflict-affected area.”
- The Global Society of Tigray Scholars and Professionals (GSTS) has said in a statement “what is happening in Tigray is similar to what we saw in Rwanda in the early 1990s where the civilians suffered the most, partly resulting from the AU’s and the UN’s failure to act”.
- They also decried the lack of African Union action on the situation in Tigray, saying that ““what is more distressing is the deafening silence of AU and African governments on the ongoing tragedy in Tigray.” and accusing it to be “complicit or in denial” with the AU president endorsing the “law and order” operation.
- Videos of the Testimonies delivered at the Webinar “Voices From Tigray - Sexual Violence against Women in Tigray” can be found on the [EEPA youtube page](#).
- It includes the [presentation by Hon. Julia Duncan-Cassel](#), former Minister of Gender in Liberia, calling for “concerted and coordinated international pressure and targeted sanctions.”

Reported Situation in Ethiopia (per 26 May)

- The Federal Court has discontinued the testimony of the former speaker of the Ethiopian House of Federation (2nd chamber of parliament) after she refused to testify against former TPLF members. She was originally due to testify for three days.
- Jawar Mohammed, an Ethiopian opposition member on trial for terrorism related offences, and other defendants have said that they will no longer appear in court until court decisions are respected.
- This comes after a report found that many people detained in Oromia remain in detention even after a court has ordered their release. Jawar and other defendants say that they “no longer believe that court orders will be honored by the executive bodies.”
- They also said that they will go on a hunger strike and that the trial be postponed until after the elections.

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Links of interest

<https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20210526-ethiopia-s-tigray-region-at-serious-risk-of-famine-warns-top-un-official>

<https://nation.africa/kenya/gender/rights-groups-demand-inquiry-on-violence-against-women-in-tigray-3413210>

<https://addisstandard.com/news-jawar-et-al-threaten-to-quit-hearing-attendance-until-court-decisions-are-respected-commence-two-days-hunger-stri>

<https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/over-17-million-people-displaced-due-conflict-need-urgent-assistance-northern>