

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 157 - 28 May 2021

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International situation (27 May 2021)

- British MP Helen Heyes tabled a motion in the House of Commons calling on the British government to “table a resolution at the UN Security Council setting up a tribunal to investigate sexual violence in the conflict in Tigray as a war crime, a crime against humanity or a constitutive act of genocide.”
- The resolution also said that it “notes the high level of sexual violence in the conflict in Tigray, resulting in an estimated 10,000 women being raped in the four months to March”.
- The British government is also warning of a famine in Tigray “within months”. The British special envoy for famine, Nick Dyer, made that assessment after a visit to the region.
- Dyer further said that atrocities, including rapes and killings, were continuing in the region.
- US president Biden released a statement in which he raised his concern regarding the crisis in Tigray.
- He said that “Belligerents in the Tigray region should declare and adhere to a ceasefire, and Eritrean and Amhara forces should withdraw” and that all parties must ensure “unimpeded humanitarian access” to the region.
- He also said that the US was urging Ethiopia to promote a process of “reconciliation, human rights, and respect for pluralism. Doing so will preserve the unity and territorial integrity of the state, and ensure the protection of the Ethiopian people and the delivery of urgently needed assistance.”
- The US is committed to help Ethiopia and engage with the AU and other partners to solve the challenges in the Horn.
- The Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing on the Tigray Conflict in Ethiopia and the U.S. response to it.
- U.S. Ambassador Godec and Acting Assistant Secretary Bureau of African Affairs told the Senate Panel that the U.S State Department is looking at a range of further actions against individuals in Ethiopia including the Magnitsky Act.
- In his opening remarks, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman, Bob Menendez (D-NJ), said that he sees “echoes of Darfur. There are reports of extra-judicial killings, sexual violence, and forced displacement of Tigrayans. Armed actors have looted and destroyed health and education installations, and attacked refugee camps.” and that “We appear to be witnessing war crimes and crimes against humanity.”
- He continued by saying that “It has become abundantly clear that events on the ground call for a robust response from the U.S., the region, and the international community, one that conveys an unequivocal message: we will not tolerate war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic violence.”
- Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee said there's little hope that Ethiopia's June 21st elections can credibly reflect the will of the people.
- Menendez also said that the U.S. should “impose targeted financial sanctions on individuals perpetuating conflict, use our voice and vote at international financial institutions to oppose all funding that does not directly support the basic needs of the Ethiopian people”

- In his opening remark, U.S. Senator Jim Risch (R-Idaho) said that “The war in Tigray is a threat to not only the future of the Ethiopian state and the wider region, but also to the strategic economic and security interests of the United States. “

Reported situation in Tigray (per 27 May)

- According to a source, Eritrean and Ethiopian troops are also taking young men and IDPs from shelters in Axum. Troops are also conducting house-to-house searches. Allegedly 400 people have been taken.
- Witnesses told CNN that hundreds of young men were rounded up from displaced people camps in Shire, a town in the Tigray region.
- CNN reported on the searching of IDP centers in Shire by Eritrean and Ethiopian soldiers, and the seizing of hundreds of young men.
- They spoke to several people wishing to remain anonymous who said that “Four military vehicles first encircled the Adi Wenfito and Tsehay camps, witnesses said, before soldiers began rounding up young men, forcing them onto buses and taking them to a location believed to be on the outskirts of Shire.”
- A man described hours of beatings by Eritrean and Ethiopian soldiers. “Many of us are young but there are people there much older who don’t be able to withstand the beatings much longer,” he said.
- The UN has condemned the arbitrary and brutal arrests in military-led raids in Shire.
- “International humanitarian and human rights law strictly prohibit the arbitrary arrest and ill-treatment of any person,” said Dr Catherine Sozi, Humanitarian Coordinator, calling on the immediate release of all those who have been arbitrarily arrested.
- She added that the UN and its humanitarian partners urge enhanced efforts to protect the civilian population and that they are ready to engage with military commanders to protect civilians.
- ICRC is increasing its budget in Ethiopia to \$72,7 million and Sudan to \$40,3 million. It is the largest ICRC appeal in four years.
- Tigray Media House (TMH) said an Ethiopian fighter jet has bombed villages near Neksege sub-district in Southern Tigray.

Reported Situation in Ethiopia (per 27 May)

- The Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox church has reiterated his calls for peace at the biannual Holy Synod conference. Abune Mathias I said that it is “important to pay the necessary price for the sake of peace since the root solution to all our problems is peace and only peace.”
- He called for “inner strength” and cooperation in order to avert starvation in Tigray.

Situation in the Horn region (as per 27 May)

- The World Bank has said that it is allocating \$2 Billion for Sudan.
- The World Bank vice-president for eastern and southern Africa said that “The funds would be used to finance big infrastructure projects along with other schemes to help displaced people over the next 12 months”.
- The funding comes in addition to the US \$1 Billion and French efforts to offer debt release.

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Links of interest

<https://ethiopia.un.org/en/128792-un-condemns-arbitrary-and-brutal-arrest-least-200-idps-military-led-raids-shire-town-tigray>

https://amp.cnn.com/cnn/2021/05/26/africa/ethiopia-tigray-detained-by-soldiers-intl/index.html?_twitter_impression=true

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/05/26/statement-by-president-joe-biden-on-the-crisis-in-ethiopia/>

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/58550/conflict-in-tigray-ethiopia>

<https://www.foreign.senate.gov/press/chair/release/-chairman-menendez-opening-remarks-at-committee-hearing-on-us-strategy-and-policy-response-t>