

## Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 179 - 02 July 2021

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### Reported situation in Tigray (per 01 July)

- After heavy fighting in Endabaguna yesterday (30/6) between Amhara militia and Tigray Defense Forces, the Tezeke Bridge connecting Western Tigray to Tigray has been destroyed (today 1/7). It is one of the main supply links into Tigray.
- Reported that eye-witnesses said that Amhara militia and ENDF soldiers placed dynamite and then walked away and a few moments later the bridge exploded.
- The destruction of the Tekeze bridge means a devastating blow for humanitarian efforts trying to respond to the looming famine, at catastrophic and emergency levels for 900.000 people in the region.
- UNSC Resolution 2417, unanimously adopted in 2018, recognized the link between conflict and hunger, and condemned the use of starvation as a method of warfare and set out preventative and accountability measures that may be imposed.
- The conflict in Ethiopia is the first real test for the UNSC of whether it can take early action to realize the preventative objectives of the resolution and reduce the risk of conflict-induced hunger or famine.
- Pictures and footage have emerged online of a function in Mekelle, attended by Tigray President Debretsion Gebremichael, the President of the Government of Tigray. The footage shows the President singing the Tigrayan anthem and the President making an announcement.
- Reports that the Government of Tigray, led by President Debretsion, has taken over all administrative affairs, including in Shire with regards to refugee protection.
- A NOTAM (Notice To All AirMen) has been issued for Tigray. No aircraft is allowed to fly under 29 thousand feet. Reportedly, the TDF has retaken control of anti air batteries around the region.
- Reported that prisoners held in Eritrea before the war have been forcibly deployed in Tigray. The arrangements for deployment appear to have been made prior to the war in Tigray started on 4 Nov.
- The Eritrean soldier's testimony reads: "I reached the Ethiopian border on 2 November 2020. It was a large army. Before that, I was in prison. Directly from the prison to Ethiopia. I came with 160 other prisoners. Some of us spent 8, 9 or 10 years in prison. All of us were sent to Ethiopia. Some people spent 13 years in that prison; they arrested them when they tried to escape to Ethiopia."
- The Eritrean soldier specifies: "They released us on 30 October from prison and on 2 November I was in Sheraro. The first point they took us to was called 'Sambal' - all the area is a mountain area. It is called Sambal, very close to Badme. Then we go directly to Sheraro. It's not a big battle, we directly go inside Sheraro. But when we are inside Sheraro, there is fighting, much fighting, for three days."
- The testimony clarifies that the Eritrean soldiers were forced to fight: "There were people who rejected to fight. They said 'why should we die in another country'? Now all of them are in prison. Most of them are in Mai Serwa. They are in very bad condition, like in any prison. No-one knows exactly how they can live, they don't allow their families to visit them. Three of them were my colleagues that I know personally. Even some leaders rejected to fight, so President Isaias sent them to prison first, then on house arrest in a closed area."
- The soldier from Eritrea further testifies that: "Inside the towns in Tigray, there was the Ethiopian army. The Eritrean army was all around the towns. We wore the same uniform as the Ethiopians. Everything

for us, it was like the Ethiopian army, and the Eritrean army was until Mekelle - from the Eritrean border until Mekelle. We have all the army equipment, all the army cars, and even the heavy equipment for bombing.”

- Footage shows Ethiopian Northern command handing over heavy mechanised weapons to Eritrean soldiers on Eritrean territory in Gash-Barka region near Sheraro. The footage is dated 5th of November.
- Reported that since March 2021, Eritrean and Ethiopian forces have been integrated. Eritrean troops have been seen wearing Ethiopian uniforms. Bloomberg reported as early as 8 December 2020.
- More recently CNN reported on 13 May 2021: “A CNN team traveling through Tigray’s central zone witnessed Eritrean soldiers, some disguising themselves in old Ethiopian military uniforms, manning checkpoints, obstructing and occupying critical aid routes, roaming the halls of one of the region’s few operating hospitals and threatening medical staff.”
- Reported that all Bank Accounts opened in the Tigray region were freezed. Bank services were also suspended by the order of federal authorities. Tigray remains under a communication black-out today.

#### Ceasefire & Secession (per 01 July)

- US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed of Abu Dhabi about resolving and promoting a ceasefire for the conflict in Ethiopia.
- In an opinion piece for Responsible Statecraft, Alex de Waal has argued that the US should send a delegation to Mekelle to negotiate with the Tigrayans and hear their demands.
- He also said that a “humanitarian ceasefire needs to specify how the government will permit aid operations to reach the TDF-controlled areas, which have a population of more than five million people who need emergency aid.” He pointed out that just last week PM Abiy Ahmed accused aid organisations of working with the TDF. The following day three MSF workers were killed.
- He also urged international observers to be sent to Tigray to verify that Amhara and Eritrean troops are withdrawing. He points out that it is in the best interest of everyone as the TDF has threatened to invade Eritrea or Amhara if it does not happen.
- Additionally, he proposed a prohibition for military aircraft to fly over Tigray, Prisoners of War, and a complaints mechanism need to be discussed in order for a ceasefire to be able to last.
- De Waal also argued that “ceasefire should be a step towards political negotiations aiming for peace. Often, a ceasefire agreement includes a commitment to ending hostile rhetoric. That isn’t happening. The Ethiopian statement indicates the opposite intent. It refers to the Tigrayan political leaders as “the criminal clique.” Reda routinely describes the government as ‘fascist.’”
- Bahar Oumer, an Ethiopian Human Rights activist, interprets a press conference as saying that the Ethiopian government has abdicated responsibility for affairs in Tigray.

#### Developments in Ethiopia (per 01 July)

- Reported that the profiling and arrest of ethnic Tigrayans in Addis Ababa has intensified in recent days.
- Residential areas such as 22, Bole and Teklehayamnot were targeted by Ethiopian security forces to hunt ethnic Tigrayans in the capital.

#### International developments (per 01 July)

- At the US-EU High-Level Roundtable on the Humanitarian Emergency in Tigray of 10 June, Mark Lowcock, UN Under-Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs, reported that the UN documented at least 130 cases of humanitarian access violations: 50 cases involving Eritrean soldiers; 54 cases involving Ethiopian soldiers; 21 cases involving Amhara militia; 4 cases involving Ethiopian/Eritrean soldiers; 1 case involving Tigrayan soldiers.
- The UK issues a statement that it stands ready to work with the Ethiopian government, Tigrayan authorities, the United Nations, and other international partners to expedite the delivery of humanitarian assistance: “It is crucial that there is a political process for all parties to find a long term resolution to the conflict in Tigray.”

#### Links of interest

<https://twitter.com/BaharJOumer/status/1410261974915633157>

<https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2021/06/30/ethiopia-on-the-brink-of-collapse-as-the-tigray-conflict-reaches-a-boiling-point/>

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-conflict-bridge/bridge-on-tekeze-river-in-ethiopia-tigray-destroyed-aid-group>

<https://eritreahub.org/disentangling-the-eritrean-forces-integrated-into-the-ethiopian-military>