

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 183 - 08 July 2021

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Reported situation in Tigray (per 07 July)

- A UN Emergency Task Force team heading to Tigray has reportedly been blocked in Serdo, Afar regional state by Ethiopian security forces on 6 July.
- They were only allowed to enter Tigray on 7 July after their laptops, satellite phone and other equipment were confiscated by the security forces.
- Reported that Chief Protocol Head of Ethiopia's patriarch his Holiness Abune Mathias, Memhir Mussie Hailu and his colleagues has been detained in Addis Ababa by Ethiopian security forces.
- MSF has called for an immediate investigation into the killing of its three staff members in Tigray.
- MSF said: "In response to the killings, we have made the extremely painful but necessary decision to suspend our activities in Abi-Adi, Adigrat and Axum towns of Tigray."
- Teams in other areas of Tigray will continue cautiously to provide assistance to people in urgent need.
- MSF further said that "Parties to the conflict must take responsibility for ensuring that an incident like the murder of our colleagues never happens again. Aid workers must be able to do their jobs in safety".
- UNHCR said they are aware of reports of alleged killing of Eritrean refugees in Tigray. They added that they "take such reports very seriously and have immediately contacted our staff, partners plus Eritrean refugees in Shire. We have not so far been able to corroborate any of the information received".
- British Embassy in Addis Ababa said 353,000 people in Tigray are experiencing famine-like conditions.
- The Embassy also said vital medicines, food assistance, sanitation supplies, and fuel are all blocked from entering Tigray and urges all to allow urgently needed aid into the region.

Situation in Ethiopia (per 07 July)

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia said over 30 Ethiopian embassies will be closed after 21 August 2021. More than 300 staff working in the closed embassies will be repatriated to Ethiopia.
- Embassies and consulates in UK, Ankara, Istanbul and Los Angeles will be among those to be closed.
- Ethiopia's human rights chief has called for the political crisis in the country to be resolved, saying it has led to widespread conflict and "the most egregious" human rights abuses.
- Daniel Bekele, the chairman of Ethiopia's Human Rights Commission (EHRC) told the BBC's Afaan Oromoo service that the biggest problem was a political one - a problem that has resulted in widespread atrocities and a humanitarian crisis.
- Mr Daniel said Ethiopian politics had become "extremely polarised", largely along ethnic lines. He added that "There were also signs of polarisation along religious lines in some areas".
- He also said the biggest worry is the extent to which Ethiopia's political leadership - in partnership with all the relevant stakeholders - are able to resolve the political crisis.
- The EHRC is currently undertaking a joint investigation with the UN over the alleged atrocities in Tigray, the main flashpoint of conflict in Ethiopia. "The investigation is going well, except for the security situation in Tigray, which still has pockets of fighting and limits our free movement," he said.
- The Ethiopian government announced that the eight months of war in Tigray has weakened the internal strength of the country and exposed it to external threats.

Situation in the Horn region (per 07 July)

- Both Saudi Arabia and Tunisia have thrown their support behind Egypt and Sudan regarding the GERD dispute with Ethiopia.

- Saudi Arabia said it supports Egypt and Sudan in “preserving their legitimate water rights”. Saudi Arabia also called on the international community to find a “clear mechanism to start negotiations between the three countries to get out of this crisis”.
- Tunisia has itself submitted a draft resolution calling for Ethiopia to immediately stop the filling of the GERD dam and calling on all three countries to return to the negotiation table.
- The meeting will take place this week. The French Ambassador, who is chairing the council this month, said last week that the UNSC was unlikely to be able to achieve anything.

International Situation (per 07 July)

- US Sec. of State Antony J. Blinken spoke with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy and stressed the need for all parties to the conflict to commit to an immediate, indefinite, negotiated ceasefire.
- The Secretary also condemned the destruction of bridges into Tigray and other impediments to access.
- He urged for the complete withdrawal of Eritrean and Amhara forces from Tigray and full, safe, and unhindered humanitarian access to populations in need.
- He also called for the establishment of a transparent process to hold accountable those responsible for human rights abuses and atrocities; and an affirmation that neither the internal nor external borders of Ethiopia will be changed by force or in contravention of the constitution.
- He added the urgency of holding an inclusive political dialogue to begin the difficult work of forging a lasting resolution to the country’s ethnic and political divisions.
- The Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee called on UN SG Antonio Guterres to prevent all Ethiopian soldiers who have participated in military operations in the Tigray from being allowed to participate in UN peacekeeping operations until their complicity in gross human rights violations can be determined by a credible vetting process.
- “All parties to the horrific conflict in Tigray including Ethiopian National Defense Force troops stand accused of atrocities against thousands of civilians in Tigray,” said Senator Bob Menendez.
- He also urged the UN to vet vigorously all Ethiopian troops to be deployed in UN peacekeeping operations to determine if they participated in military operations in Tigray.
- The European Commission has warned that Ethiopia's "siege" on its restive Tigray region is creating a "man-made famine."
- "This is not a ceasefire, it's a siege and starvation is being used as a weapon of war," said Janez Lenarčič, EU crisis-management commissioner in the European Parliament.
- He added that: “Famine is now a reality in Tigray for an estimated 900,000 people and another 1 million people are just one step away ... This famine is entirely man made and it's a disgrace to those who are responsible for it.”
- “The siege has seen Ethiopia close Tigray's borders, ban flights, destroy road and rail infrastructure, cut telecommunications, and prevent the entry of international aid workers,” he said.
- The Commissioner added atrocities, such as systematic rape and extra-judicial killings, were also being seen in the conflict, in what "may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.
- Anže Logar, Slovenia's foreign minister, also told MEPs that the fighting was now "reduced in intensity, probably as an indication that the EDF [Ethiopian Defence Force] has withdrawn from most parts of the territory" and was "putting up little resistance".
- “Allied Eritrean forces had also retreated to border regions in the north of Tigray, while the government-allied Amhara militia had retreated to western areas,” he said.
- He also said after eight months of war, 91 percent of the population in Tigray was in need of urgent assistance. "We urgently need a full ceasefire by all parties," he said.
- EEPA is holding a Webinar on Voices From Tigray: "Hunger For Peace, Hunger For Justice" on 13th July at 14:00-16:00 EAT, 13:00-15:00 CET, 07.00-09.00 U.S East. You can register here for the webinar: <https://bit.ly/3jPwi1t>.

Links of interest

<https://euobserver.com/world/152370>

<https://www.state.gov/secretary-blinkens-call-with-ethiopian-prime-minister-abiy-3/>

<https://www.msf.org/msf-calls-tigray-murders-investigation-and-respect-aid-workers>

<https://www.foreign.senate.gov/press/chair/release/chairman-menendez-calls-on-un-to-prohibit-ethiopian-troops-in-tigray-from-serving-as-peacekeepers>

https://www.bbc.com/news/live/world-africa-47639452?ns_mchannel=social&ns_source=twitter&ns_campaign=bbc_live&ns_linkname=60e5718b6f777a32b63be02a%26Rights%20chief%20blames%20Ethiopia%27s%20politics%20for%20crisis

https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/7/7/saudi-supporting-egypt-sudan-water-rights-amid-gerd-dispute?utm_campaign