

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 188 - 19 July 2021

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Reported situation in Tigray (per 18 July)

- Spokesman of Government of Tigray, Getachaw Reda said Tigray Defense Forces have carried out operations against pro-government troops in the neighbouring Afar region.
- The Government of Tigray has released around 1,000 Ethiopian Defense Force soldiers captured during recent fighting.
- He told AFP that the "very limited action" targeted special forces and militia fighters from Oromia region, Ethiopia's largest, who were massing along the Tigray-Afar border.
- "We took those actions to ensure those forces are sent back to Oromia, and we have managed to do that," he said, adding that there were some casualties but he could not provide figures.
- He also said: "Our action was very limited to dispersing the peasant militia from Oromia that was mostly press-ganged into fighting the useless war."
- He also confirmed that Tigray defense forces were also active in the northern Amhara region, where thousands of militia fighters mobilised in border towns in advance of planned anti-TPLF operations.
- "We have also conducted successful operations in Wag-Hemra, which is in the Amhara region, and even as we speak some units are operating in between Mai-Tsebri in Western Tigray and adjoining Amhara territory," he said.
- The WFP convoy that reached Tigray was constituted of a 48,000-litre fuel tanker, 29 food trucks, 6 trucks with mobile storage units, and 16 trucks with health, WASH and shelter & nutrition items for the humanitarian community.
- According to Tigray Media House (TMH) Ethiopia's Ministry of Science and Higher Education has sent a letter to the President of Mekelle University ordering to vacate non-Tigrayans students through the Afar region so that the Ministry can pick them up from there.
- TMH also said the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development of Ethiopia has told Mekelle University that there is no budget to pay the salary of more than 8,000 academic and administrative staff for the month of June 2021.
- Civil servants, teachers, health workers have all not been paid and this is adding to the crisis in Tigray.

Situation in Ethiopia (per 18 July)

- The Ethiopian Media Regulator has suspended the Addis Standard, an independent news organisation. The organisation said it would appeal the decision.
- The Ethiopian Media Authority accused them of having links to the TPLF. It said that "We have learned that the Media has been a platform to advance the terrorist group's agenda".
- The conflict in Tigray is starting to spill into neighbouring regions. There has been increased "rebel" activity in Afar and Oromia.
- A state media report published on Saturday accused the TPLF for blocking aid into Tigray via Afar using "heavy shelling" and "heavy artillery."
- Getachew Reda has denied any aid delivery had been disrupted. "Where the fighting happened, there is no major highway that is being used for aid purposes," he said.

- A press statement released by the Ethiopian Prime Minister, Abiy referred to the TPLF as "Ethiopia's cancer."
- The statement says: "The junta is probably the only group in history that used its political power to disintegrate its own country."
- The statement also said: "We can confidently say, the junta will be uprooted in a manner that will ensure it will not bud again."
- "As the saying goes, a Satan which stays long cannot be removed immediately. It is inevitable that it rests in one way or another. But surely, the junta will be removed so that it will not grow again," said Abiy.
- He also added: "We will work to remove the weed, referring to the TPLF. But while removing the weed, we will try our best not to damage the wheat."
- Witnesses have told Reuters that hundreds of Tigrayans have been arrested in recent weeks in Addis Ababa.
- One Tigrayan lawyer said that 108 people have been arrested recently. They are not appearing in front of courts within 48 hours, and no one knows their whereabouts.
- He added that while there were arrests prior to the Ethiopian withdrawal from Mekelle at the end of June, they have since then intensified.
- Another man told Reuters that he and 75 other Tigrayan men had been arrested on July 5th. They were then beaten with sticks and sent to a military camp.
- Tigrayan businesses are continuing to be targeted. Many have been ordered to closed. Authorities have cited various reasons for this, including links to the TPLF and "disturbing the area". In some cases, no justification has been given at all.

International Situation (per 18 July)

- The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has started visiting members of the Ethiopian Defense Forces detained in the Tigray region earlier this week.
- "Visiting people in places of detention is a core part of our mandate and an established role for the ICRC in the country. We are pleased to now be extending this important activity in Tigray," said ICRC's Head of Operations in Ethiopia, Maria Soledad Rueda Garcia.
- Garcia added that: "As elsewhere in Ethiopia, our visits in Tigray focus on the protection and dignity of the detained individuals. Our ongoing bilateral dialogue with the concerned authorities is essential to that work."
- The German Foreign Office says latest reports out of Ethiopia are worrying and in Tigray we are witnessing a further deterioration of the humanitarian situation and there have been clashes again.
- The office said there is the danger of a renewed increase in severe violence between different population groups. These developments must be stopped while that is still possible.
- "We call on everyone involved to agree and adhere to an immediate ceasefire. It is completely clear that all foreign troops must immediately and fully withdraw from Tigray," said the Office.
- The Office added the need for a transparent investigation into the human rights violations. Any redrawing of borders through armed force or by other unconstitutional means is unacceptable.
- The Office has also called for safe, unhindered and permanent humanitarian access to Tigray as a top priority. And those who have fled due to the conflict must be able to return safely to their homes.
- The Sudanese Minister of Irrigation Yasser Abbas has said that in order to solve the GERD dam crisis, guarantors need to participate in negotiations.

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Links of interest

<https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/10/417391/World/Africa/Ethiopias-Tigray-war-spills-into-neighbouring-regi.aspx>

<https://www.tghat.com/2021/07/18/the-cancer-of-ethiopia-statement-by-pm-abiy-ahmed/>

<https://www.icrc.org/en/document/ethiopia-icrc-starts-detention-visits-members-ethiopian-armed-forces-tigray-region>

https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/ethiopias-tigray-forces-say-they-released-1000-captured-soldiers-2021-07-17/?utm_campaign=trueAnthem%3A+Trending+Content&utm_medium=trueAnthem&utm_source=facebook