

## Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 193 - 29 July 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 organizations, civil society, and experts from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Uganda, and across Africa. The situation reports can be found [here](#).

### Situation in the Horn region (per 28 July)

- Several Eritrean sources state that 500 Eritrean forces that are moved to Humera are instructed to take control of the Eritrean refugee camps May Ayni and Adi Harish in Tigray to abduct refugees to Eritrea.
- The Eritrean forces are reported to be Adi Goshu on the route from Humera in the direction to Shire.
- Eritrean forces earlier destroyed the two refugee camps Shemelba and Hitsats in Tigray.
- UNHCR has lost access to the two remaining Eritrean refugee camps in Tigray because of fighting.
- Unconfirmed report that PM Abiy has left Ethiopia. The destination is not reported.
- According to Rashid Abdi, the UAE and the US are pressuring Prime Minister Abiy to enter negotiations with the Tigrayans. Reportedly Abiy continues to rebuff the initiatives.
- According to the Sudanese Tribune, tensions on the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea remain high. This comes after the deployment of additional Eritrean troops to the region.
- Refugees crossing the border have said that the Eritrean army has been assembling heavily-equipped troops inside its territory near the Hamdayet tri-border area, where the Sudanese-Ethiopian and Eritrean boundaries meet.
- Sudanese and Ethiopian officials were expected to meet Monday to discuss the border closure but there is no information about the outcome of the meeting.
- The regional government of Ethiopian Somaliland has confirmed that the railway between Djibouti and Addis Ababa has been closed by angered Somali protestors.
- The protestors are angry about an attack on their region by militia from the neighbouring region of Afar that caused hundreds of deaths.
- The Federal attorney has filed charges against members of the Tigrayan High Command with attempting to overthrow the government. Seventy-five officers have been charged, including Lieutenant General Tadesse Worede and General Gebre Tsadkan Gebre Tensae.
- Ethiopia has paraded thousands of new recruits in Addis Ababa before sending them to training. The Mayor's office said that 3000 new recruits would join the ranks of the ENDF.
- According to the AP, thousands of Eritrean refugees are facing increased violence. UN officials have said that "forces have attacked the camps, abducted or killed some of the residents, and stolen their food and possessions."
- Refugees have said that they have been targeted by both sides. Eritrean and Ethiopian soldiers have attacked and destroyed refugee camps, and Tigrayans have scapegoated them following mass Eritrean and Ethiopian atrocities in Tigray.
- Residents of Adi Harush told AP that "that Tigray forces have since abducted more than a dozen refugees and raided dozens of homes, stealing mobile phones, food and other supplies".
- The US State Department has condemned the attacks against Eritrean refugees saying that they are "deeply concerned about credible reports of attacks by military forces affiliated with the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Tigrayan militias against Eritrean refugees in the Tigray region".

- A high source associated with the Tigray regional government stated: “These are unfounded allegations.” The sources added: “The people in the regional government of Tigray have been hosting Eritrean refugees for over two decades. They continue to be welcome.”
- The source said that “The number of refugees from Eritrea entering Tigray is increasing. This demonstrates self-evidently that Eritrean refugees feel more secure in Tigray than in Eritrea despite the war that is going on.”
- The source stated: “The propaganda campaign by the Eritrean government is intended to divert the international community from the reality which is that Eritrean refugees have been abducted by the Eritrean troops and forcefully returned to Eritrea; some forced to join the fighting in Tigray. This needs an independent international investigation.”
- Reported that famished Eritrean refugees were seen in Shire looking for work.
- It is reported that since the TDF has taken back Mekelle, the number of Eritrean refugees crossing the border has increased from an average 3 a day to 35 a day.

#### Reported situation in Tigray (per 26 July)

- Reported that the town of Weldiya, capital of the North Wollo Zone in the Amhara regional state, has been controlled by Tigray Defense Forces (TDF).
- TDF control the 103.7 FM Radio station in Weldiya.
- Reported that Colonel Bezabih Bezu, commander of ENDF allied forces, and of Oromo descent, was killed in the fight against TDF in North Wollo of Amhara region by Amhara forces.
- Some youths in the town of Weldiya, Mersa and Dessie Zuria areas of the Amhara region, were seen blocking the roads to prevent the retreating ENDF soldiers.
- Reuters has released pictures showing the brutal aftermath of the conflict in the village of Sheweate Hugum in Tigray. The pictures show killed soldiers, ammunition boxes, and captured Ethiopian soldiers.
- Reuters describes that the battle that took place in June near Sheweate Hugum cost the lives of 100 government soldiers and 900 captured, including the commander.
- Two Ethiopian ENDF officers that were captured said that heavy government losses allowed the TDF to capture Mekelle. Reuters added that “Both officers were interviewed without the presence of guards, and the men said they were speaking voluntarily.” The losses on the TDF side are unclear, but Debretsion said that they were less than a thousand.
- Reuters also added that the smell of rotting corpses was strong in Sheweate Hugum. Many people were killed, and not all bodies had been buried when Reuters visited on July 10th.
- A new investigation into a second attack of white phosphorus is reported. The attack took place on April 20, 2021 in the Central zone, the district of Emba Seneyti, in the location of Azmera.
- In the attack with white phosphorus, four women were killed and animals were killed as well. Pictures of the incident are available. The Eritrean army was located in this area.

#### International Situation (per 28 July)

- The executive director of the World Food Programme has said that food supplies will run out in Tigray within the next four days if further convoys are not allowed through immediately.
- He further said that 170 trucks filled with supplies have been held up in Afar due to fighting.
- US representative Gerogory Meeks, the chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, has called on the Ethiopian government to let the trucks through.

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#### **Links of interest**

<https://widerimage.reuters.com/story/grim-aftermath-of-ethiopian-battle-offers-rare-clues-of-brutal-war>  
<https://www.state.gov/briefings/department-press-briefing-july-27-2021/>  
<https://addisstandard.com/news-fed-attorney-general-file-charges-against-members-of-tigrays-central-military-command/>  
<https://www.reuters.com/world/tigray-war-intensifies-ethiopia-parades-new-army-recruits-2021-07-27/>  
<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/us-calls-halt-violence-against-eritreans-tigray-2021-07-27/>  
<https://apnews.com/article/africa-ethiopia-eritrea-edbf5a0a2b903745642d7c73d36b8b17>