

## Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 195 - 03 August 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](#).

### Reported situation in Tigray (per 02 August)

- According to the AP, a Sudanese official in Kassala province has found around 50 bodies, some with gunshots and their hands bound, floating in the Tekeze river.
- Another Tigrayan refugee told AP that he was taking care of bodies found by fishermen, but suspected there were more. He also shared a video of people preparing shrouds for floating dead bodies.
- Another doctor told AP that he had seen many barbaric things, including bodies that had been struck by an axe.
- Testimonies of two young men were broadcast on Dimtsi Woyane, the Tigrayan public broadcaster. Both men are part of a group of 32 refugees that reached Tigray. The whereabouts of a further 43 traveling with them is unknown.
- They further say that the situation is worsening in western Tigray, where attacks on Tigrayan civilians by Amhara militias have become very common. According to them, the Fano militias have been targeting boys as young as 15.
- Two other refugees that arrived earlier, and have helped new arrivals with the crossing of the river say that it has become a daily occurrence to see dead bodies floating down the Tekeze river.
- All four said they were being shot at by soldiers and militia as they attempted to cross the river.
- One instance was described "There were a lot of people from Adebay and Humera. They were young, old, children and women. They were 95 in total. After we helped the 21 cross the river, around 15 soldiers came. We told the kids to hide but the soldiers didn't spare them. They killed four. Another one was shot while he was in the water. We see daily one or two dead bodies with their hands tied behind their backs floating on the river Tekeze. This is genocide."
- Ethiopian Airlines has denied that it has been carrying weapons and ammunition for the Ethiopian army. In a tweet, it said that the accusations were baseless and unfounded.
- Dedebit Media said an ENDF senior officer and other 200 ENDF soldiers had surrendered to Tigray Defense Forces.

### Situation in the Horn region (per 02 August)

- Violence has broken out between the Afar and Somali groups in Djibouti. This comes in the wake of rising tensions between both groups in Ethiopia.
- Dr. Hamdok, President of Sudan, has offered mediation in Ethiopia.
- Dr. Hamdok received a message by Eritrean President Isayas, during a meeting on 30 July with Eritrean President Advisor Yemane Gebreab and Foreign Minister Osman Saleh.

### International Situation (per 02 August)

- In an article for Politico, Arminka Helić, a former special advisor to British Foreign secretary William Hague, said that Ethiopia is showing "echoes of Yugoslavia".
- She says that like Yugoslavia, Ethiopia has many ethnicities, is in a state of change, has politicians that are using nationalism to advance their political careers, and uses war and violence as an expression of that nationalism.

- She continues the comparison by saying that similarly to Yugoslavia, the conflict in Ethiopia started in Tigray, but is slowly spreading to other Ethiopian regions. She further argues that the world, when faced with the collapse of Yugoslavia, took too long to act, and only did so when it was too late. She urges countries to act faster, and ensure that Ethiopia does not go down a similar path.
- Internal tension is rising in Ethiopia and in several regional states opposition to fighting in Tigray is reported, such as in Benishangul Gumuz and opposition to the Prosperity Party in the Gambella region.
- Turkish President Erdogan has spoken with Prime minister Abiy on the phone. During the call, the President underscored it would continue to provide “every kind of support to Ethiopia.”
- The African Court On Human and Peoples’ Rights has issued an advisory opinion on “The Right To Participate In The Government Of One’s Country In The Context Of An Election Held During A Public Health Emergency Or A Pandemic, Such As The Covid-19 Crisis”.
- The opinion comes following a request by the Pan African Lawyers Union of Lawyers asking for clarification on three questions:
  - How should states determine whether or not to conduct elections in the context of a health emergency or a pandemic?
  - What obligations to states have to ensure their citizens' right to participate in the government of their countries?
  - If a state decides to postpone elections because of a health emergency or pandemic, what obligations arise as a result?
- On the first question, the court said that it leaves it to domestic law to govern the conditions under which elections are held and therefore, it is also for the states to determine whether or not to postpone an election in an emergency situation. However, a postponement should be an exception to the principle that elections must be held regularly, within the required timeframe.
- On the second issue, the court reiterated that states must take measures to ensure that any elections held are conducted in such a way so as to prevent transmission of the disease, while still maintaining the "integrity of the electoral process."
- The Court also pointed to guidelines issued by various organizations, including the WHO, saying it was up to Human Rights Organisations to set guidelines. It however added that any restrictions must be set out in law, proportionate, and non-discriminatory. The measures must also not adversely impact the essence of the rights at issue.
- On the Third issue it reiterated a set of specific criteria for states to apply if elections are postponed. In particular, the Court held that any postponement must comply with Article 27(2) of the African Charter and Article 4(1) of the ICCPR. A postponement must be for “protecting the health and life of the people” and should not be used in “unduly prolonging their term of office.”
- The ruling is relevant as the Ethiopian elections became a contentious issue between Tigray and the Federal Government in september 2020. The Federal Government postponed its election, taking issue with the decision of the Tigray Regional State Government to hold elections in compliance with the deadline for elections set out in the Constitution.
- In response to growing needs in the Tigray region, the US has provided more than \$149 million in additional humanitarian assistance, including more than \$105 million from the USAID.
- The US is the largest single donor of humanitarian aid to the Tigray response efforts, providing nearly \$637 million since the conflict began.
- USAID Chief Samantha Power is arriving in Addis Ababa.

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### **Links of interest**

<https://www.tghat.com/2021/08/02/we-see-daily-one-or-two-dead-bodies-with-their-hands-tied-behind-their-backs-floating-on-the-river-tekeze/>  
<https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-africa-sudan-race-and-ethnicity-ethiopia-1afde1960e66425a2c9586a431fb5a6a>  
<https://www.african-court.org/cpmt/storage/app/uploads/public/60f/574/3a6/60f5743a61e75369142990.pdf>  
[United States Strengthens Efforts to Fight Famine in Tigray, Ethiopia with More Than \\$149 million in Additional Humanitarian Assistance | Africanews](#)