

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 199 - 12 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 11 August)

- UNHCR has said that it has regained access to the two remaining refugee camps in Tigray. It has delivered assistance to 23 thousand refugees since August 5th.
- It added that it urgently required additional funding to provide the necessary aid to the refugees in the region and scale up operations. It is requesting an additional 165 million.
- UNHCR is calling for safe passage which will allow refugees from Mai Aini and Adi Harush to be moved to the new site of Alemwach, near Dabat town, some 135 kilometers away.
- Since 4 August, UNHCR with ARRA and non-governmental organization WISE, have begun issuing temporary identification documents to Eritrean refugees who fled to Addis Ababa from the Shimelba and Hitsats camps
- UNHCR has also observed more refugees crossing into Sudan from Ethiopia. Last month, more than 275 refugees, of which about 40 were Eritrean, arrived in Sudan's Hamdayet.
- Debretsiion Gebremichael, leader of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), told Reuters that: "We are in talks with the Oromo Liberation Army but he didn't give further details."
- Getachew Reda, a spokesperson for the TPLF, said: "Some sort of agreement" was in the works. "It's only natural that we work together with people who have a stake in the future of the Ethiopian state."
- The Spokesman of TDF told Tigray Mass Media Agency (TMMA) that in an operation called "Operation Sunrise" TDF has killed, captured and injured over 10,000 ENDF and allied regional forces and freed more than 20 towns in the Amhara region.
- Photographic evidence has emerged of the TDFs capture of Kuyu, North Shewa, which sits on the main road linking North.
- Amnesty International has released a report on sexual violence in Tigray. In it it says that "It's clear that rape and sexual violence have been used as a weapon of war to inflict lasting physical and psychological damage on women and girls in Tigray".
- Amnesty International interviewed 63 girls and women between March and June 2021. Fifteen interviews were conducted in person, and forty-eight remotely using secure lines. They also interviewed doctors, humanitarian workers, and nurses. Additionally they used data from other humanitarian organisations relating to sexual violence and health services.
- The report says that "The sexual violence perpetrated against women and girls in different areas of Tigray throughout the nine- month conflict is shocking in its scale and level of brutality."
- It continues by stating that "The patterns of sexual violence emerging from survivors' accounts indicate that the violations have been part of a strategy to terrorize, degrade, and humiliate both the victims and their ethnic group. The fact that such practices have been widespread and continuous indicates that this strategy has been tolerated at the highest level of government in both Ethiopia and Eritrea."
- Twelve of the survivors of sexual violence interviewed by Amnesty International were held for days and weeks during which they were repeatedly raped, most of them by several men. Three of them were children. One 16 year old girl says that she was abducted in a minibus. When she arrived at a house a ENDF officer asked her where her father was. When she told him that he was dead, the officer called her a "liar" and proceeded to rape her.

- Another 17 year old girl says that she was held captive for two weeks in January and repeatedly raped by eight Eritrean soldiers.
- A third 21 year old woman says that she was abducted on November 5th from the Badme area by Eritrean and Ethiopian soldiers and held for 40 days with 30 other women. During that time, she was raped repeatedly by groups of soldiers.
- Amnesty International has outlined several other stories of women being held for multiple days or months and being raped repeatedly by soldiers. Some of those women were already pregnant at the time, or were raped in front of their children.
- Amnesty International further described several incidents of soldiers inserting foreign objects into the vaginas of women. Objects such as “burning rods”, gravel, plastic, or metal.
- The report further says that “Evidence collected and reported by Amnesty International also suggests that these acts may have been committed as part of an attack against the civilian population of Tigray. These acts were committed by Ethiopian and Eritrean forces, the Amhara Regional Police Special Force and Fano militia in a manner that was widespread and/or systematic, and any single act of rape carried out in this context, where the perpetrator was aware of the wider context, would amount to a crime against humanity.”
- “According to the findings of this report, Ethiopian and Eritrean forces may also have committed the war crime and crime against humanity of sexual slavery, the war crime and crime against humanity of torture, and the crime against humanity of persecution.”
- Lastly Amnesty international reports that sexual assault survivors had little or no access to psychological or medical support in camps and town in Ethiopia and Sudan. Little capacity exists, and much infrastructure has been destroyed.
- Agnès Callamard, The Secretary General of Amnesty International said that: “It’s clear that rape and sexual violence have been used as a weapon of war to inflict lasting physical and psychological damage on women and girls in Tigray. Hundreds have been subjected to brutal treatment aimed at degrading and dehumanizing them”.

Situation in Ethiopia (per 11 August)

- According to the Addis Standard, 10 Staff members of Awlo Media were released yesterday after 41 days of imprisonment in the Afar region. Another four remain in prison.
- The Ethiopian office of the Prime Minister issued a statement in which he called on all Ethiopians to join the army to stop the Tigrayans. It said that: “Now is the right time for all capable Ethiopians who are of age to join the Defence Forces, Special Forces and militias and show your patriotism”.
- They also called on people unable to join the armed forces to help out in other ways. It said that the “media, artists, and social activists are expected to contribute towards strengthening the peoples support for the country.”
- A spokesperson for the OLA has said that the group is working on an alliance with the TDF. He told the Associated Press that “The only solution now is overthrowing this government militarily, speaking the language they want to be spoken to.”
- He continued by saying that “We have agreed on a level of understanding to cooperate against the same enemy, especially in military cooperation”.
- He did however acknowledge that there were significant historical barriers, and that some doubt remained.

International Situation (per 1 August)

- According to USCRI The U.S. government is soon expected to release a decision on whether it will label the atrocities in Tigray as a genocide.

Disclaimer: All information in this situation report is presented as a fluid update report, as to the best knowledge and understanding of the authors at the moment of publication. EEPA does not claim that the information is correct but verifies to the best of ability within the circumstances. Publication is weighed on the basis of interest to understand potential impacts of events (or perceptions of these) on the situation. Check all information against updates and other media. EEPA does not take responsibility for the use of the information or impact thereof. All information reported originates from third parties and the content of all reported and linked information remains the sole responsibility of these third parties. Report to info@eepe.be any additional information and corrections.

Links of interest

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR2545692021ENGLISH.PDF>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/10/ethiopia-calls-on-civilians-to-join-army-to-fight-tigray-rebels?sf14876632>

<https://twitter.com/USCRI/c/status/1425450082720178177?s=20>

<https://apnews.com/article/africa-only-on-ap-ethiopia-b280e6622d66b7e7f9b12cd1d0041ae8>