

**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](#).

### **News & Horn Highlights: Tigray forces withdraw and call for peace, Resolution on rights probe in Ethiopia adopted, 164 people drown off Libya**

In this week news highlights: Tigray forces announce withdrawal in a bid for peace; Reports of bombings in Tigray; UN Human Rights Council adopts resolution to implement human rights probe in Ethiopia; Experts call for renewed international pressure on Ethiopia; Allegations of rape during Sudan protests; Hamdok may resign; Refugees drown in shipwrecks off Libya; UN team was unable to enter restricted Belarus-Poland border zone; Increase in asylum applications by Syrians in Europe; Migrants in Germany important for the labor market says study; Failure of rescue operation may have contributed to channel deaths; Empathy and safe passage for refugees arriving in Britain; Call to protect children on the move; Refugees in UK hotels cannot distance amidst Omicron; and IOM says Female migrants face more challenges reintegrating than men.

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#### **Great Horn of Africa**

##### *Ethiopia: Withdrawal of Tigray forces announced*

Tigray leader Debretsion Gebremichael has sent a letter to the UN Secretary General announcing the withdrawal of all Tigray forces from regions outside of Tigray. “We trust that our bold act of withdrawal will be a decisive opening for peace,” stated Debretsion. The letter continued by addressing the immense casualties and suffering caused by the war. In order to protect the people of Tigray, Debretsion called for the international community to establish a no-fly zone over Tigray for hostile aircrafts and drones, and the imposing of an arms embargo on Ethiopia and Eritrea. Furthermore, the letter called for the UN Security Council to establish a mechanism in order to ensure the cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of external forces from Tigray. In addition, the International community and the UN were called to find an urgent way to provide critical humanitarian aid to the region. The Ethiopian government dismissed the withdrawal of the Tigray forces, which stated it was clearing out the forces.

- [Letter addressed to the UN Secretary-General](#)
- [Tigrayan forces to pull out of nearby Ethiopian regions in ceasefire offer](#)

##### *Ethiopia: Bombings in Tigray after withdrawal announcement, says Tigray media*

Tigrayan media says that the Ethiopian government has engaged in the bombing of civilian targets in the past 2 days since the announcement of the troop withdrawal by the Tigray government. They state that a drone attack on Monday killed 23 people. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) states that it has received reports of air strikes on Alamata in Tigray between 15 and 17 December. The report states that there have

been casualties, including deaths, although the numbers are unclear. Meanwhile, no humanitarian trucks have arrived in Mekelle since last week. Meanwhile, the US has expressed concern over the sale of drones by foreign countries such as Turkey, and the use of armed drones by the Ethiopian government in the conflict.

- [Ethiopia says army clearing Tigrayan forces from two northern regions](#)
- [Ethiopia: Airstrikes in Tigray hits a public transport bus and a marketplace, killing 23](#)
- [Daily Noon Briefing Highlights: Ethiopia – Yemen](#)
- [Foreign Drones Tip the Balance in Ethiopia’s Civil War](#)
- [EXCLUSIVE U.S. concerned over Turkey’s drone sales to conflict-hit Ethiopia](#)

#### *Ethiopia: Outcomes of the UN Human Rights Council meeting on Ethiopia*

The UN Human Rights Council met on Friday 17 December to discuss a draft resolution submitted by the European Union on Ethiopia. The Council voted in favour to implement an international rights probe into the war in Ethiopia. As per the resolution, the President of the Human Rights Council will appoint three human rights experts to lead the probe. Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights Nada Al-Nashif noted in the meeting that over 400,000 people in Tigray were living in famine-like conditions, as the aid blockade remains intact. Furthermore, Al-Nashif expressed concern over the mass arrest of Tigrayans. The resolution that was adopted further calls for an end to violence against civilians, including gender-based and ethnic violence, and calls for full humanitarian access. The UN Security Council was also set to discuss the situation in Ethiopia under ‘any other business’, but no outcomes have been published. The meeting was requested by Estonia, France, Ireland, Norway, UK and the United States.

- [Ethiopia crisis: Human Rights Council sets up international rights probe](#)
- [UN rights council orders probe into abuses in Ethiopia’s conflict](#)
- [Over Ethiopia’s objections, UN rights body backs war monitor](#)

#### *Ethiopia: Call for peace amidst withdrawal*

Published and unpublished briefings by experts call on international diplomats to push for peace, now that the Tigray forces have agreed to withdraw from all external regions. As the peace proposal from Tigray was rejected by the Ethiopian government, experts push for more international pressure to ensure an end to the atrocities, genocidal tendencies and alleged war crimes committed as part of the conflict. Calls for international action have included sanctions on Ethiopian and Eritrean authorities from the European Union and putting on hold financial support.

- [Ethiopia: The Daunting Obstacles to Peace in Ethiopia](#)

#### *Sudan: Allegations of rape after protests in Sudan*

The UN Human Rights Office stated that it had received 13 allegations of rape and gang rape by Sudan’s security forces during Sunday’s protests. The protesters reached the Presidential palace to protest the military coup and the return of PM Hamdok. As the protesters were dispersed, women were sexually harassed, raped, and gang raped, according to the allegations. The UN has called for a thorough investigation.

- [Two deaths, 13 rape allegations reported after Sudan protests](#)
- [UN calls for investigation into allegations of rape during Sudan protests](#)

#### *Sudan: Sources state Hamdok intends to resign*

Various media reports that PM Hamdok intends to resign over lack of political support. Sources close to Hamdok told *Reuters* that the decision may be announced in the next hours, as per the time of writing of these highlights. The decision would follow large-scale protests in Sudan on Sunday, which rejected the military coup and Hamdok’s decision to return as part of the agreement.

- [Sudan's PM Hamdok intends to resign within hours -sources](#)
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## North Africa

### *Libya: 164 refugees dead in a shipwreck in the Mediterranean*

A UN migration official says that at least 164 people drowned in two separate shipwrecks off the coast of Libya in the past week. A spokesperson for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Safa Msehli said at least 102 people were reported dead after their wooden boat capsized on Friday and at least eight other people were rescued and returned to Libya. The second shipwreck took place on Saturday. The Libyan coastguard retrieved at least 62 bodies, Msehli said. The same day, the coastguard intercepted a third wooden boat with at least 210 refugees on board, she added. Crossing attempts from Libya have increased after the violent crackdown and imprisonment of refugees and migrants in Libya past October.

- [Shipwrecked refugee crossings leave 164 dead in the Mediterranean, says UN](#)
  - [More than 160 migrants drown in shipwrecks off Libya, UN says](#)
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## Europe

### *Belarus/Poland: UN team blocked from accessing Belarus/ Poland border*

A UN human rights office team that travelled to the Belarus-Polish border from 29 November to 3 December say they have uncovered “dire conditions” for migrants and refugees that are camped there, but they had not been granted access to the border area itself. Currently, thousands of migrants and refugees are forced to camp at the border for weeks at a time, and their conditions are growing more dire as the temperature has dropped. Several people have already died. Belarus is being accused by western countries of having engineered the migrant influx to pressure the bloc, which has imposed sanctions over the regime’s crackdown on the opposition and independent media.

- [Belarus, Poland block UN team from accessing border amid migrant crisis](#)

### *UK/France: Failing of rescue operation may have contributed to channel deaths*

Last month, “serious failings” in a rescue operation may have contributed to the death of 27 refugees in the channel between the UK and France, according to lawyers representing family members of persons who died. There are calls for a public inquiry to determine if “acts or omissions” by British agencies have resulted in human rights breaches, coming alongside separate legal cases against the UK and French authorities involved. *Utopia 56*, an organization that supports refugees in northern France, has lodged a complaint at the Paris prosecutor’s office. More than 900 people crossed during this weekend, reported *The BBC*, and hundreds more refugees have attempted the crossing in the last few days.

- [‘Serious failings’ during rescue may have contributed to Channel deaths](#)
- [Migrant crossings: More than 900 cross Channel in two days](#)

### *UK: Safe passage and more empathy for refugees arriving in Britain*

The British government’s failure in implementing safe routes for refugees has forced many of them to make dangerous journeys to seek safety in the UK, says Ahmad Bostan, Labour Councillor for the Abbey Ward in the United Kingdom. The British government has made a number of legislative changes to tackle illegal immigration that many

rights organizations have expressed concern over. Last week in the House of Commons, the controversial Nationality and Borders bill was passed with the aim of regulating migration.

- [Lack of safe routes leaves Afghan refugees to make dangerous journeys to the UK, warns Refugee Council](#)
- [UK councilor calls for safe passage, more empathy for refugees arriving in Britain](#)

*EU: Applications for asylum from Syrian people increases*

More than 78,000 Syrians have applied for asylum in the European Union so far this year, which is a 70 percent increase from last year. They are fleeing from the dire situations caused by the aftermath of the war, states *Al Jazeera*. The war has increased poverty, corruption, destruction of infrastructure, government repression and attacks by armed groups. In addition, hostilities are continuing. The Syrian government is unable to secure basic needs and nearly 7 million are internally displaced, nine out of 10 live in poverty in Syria, and about 13 million need humanitarian assistance which is a 20 percent increase from last year. Belarus is accused of opening its borders to the EU for the crossing of refugees and migrants for deliberate pressure on the EU. This created a standoff with the EU, which accuses Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko of orchestrating illegal migration in retaliation for European sanctions against him.

- [New Syrian migrants seek Europe, driven by post-war misery](#)

*Germany: Migrants are important for the labor market*

In Germany, important labor markets would come to a standstill without migrants and refugees, according to a study published at the end of November. Migrants and refugees are shown to play a key role in shortage professions – professions that have more job openings than job applications. One of the authors of the study, Sarah Pierenkemper, stated that “[i]n those occupations particularly relevant to society and where workers are especially scarce, we would be in a fix without international skilled workers.

- [Migrants in Germany increasingly important for the labor market](#)

*EU/Opinion: Children must be protected on European borders*

Anita Bay Bundegaard, director of *Save the Children Europe*, wrote about the impact of the picture of three-year-old Alan Kurdi, who lost his life off the Turkish coast in September 2015. Bundegaard states the picture of his lifeless body became a tragic symbol of the human cost of the European Union’s inhumane response to migration. The policies that have been implemented since have increased the abuse and violence against children on the move, says Bundegaard. “This year 1,600 people, including dozens of children, have died or disappeared in the Mediterranean Sea while trying to reach Europe from North Africa or Turkey,” she states. Therefore, Bundegaard calls on the EU to “restore respect for international law and invest more strongly in providing solutions, while also ensuring the humane treatment of children and families.”

- [We must protect children on Europe’s borders](#)

*UK: Rise of omicron cases causes fear for Afghan refugees in UK hotels*

There is fear of the potential risk the omicron variant of COVID-19 poses to the health of thousands of Afghan asylum seekers who are being housed by UK authorities in temporary hotel accommodations, warn some experts. Jenny Phillimore, a professor of migration and super-diversity at the UK’s University of Birmingham, who has conducted extensive research into access to healthcare among asylum seekers, warned that if an outbreak occurs among the many families currently residing in temporary hotel accommodation, it is “highly unlikely” that they will be able to protect others from also becoming infected. Phillimore said that while she was conducting her research during

previous waves of infection she was told “there were no additional hygiene measures” and asylum seekers “were not provided with masks.”

- [Serious fears’ for Afghans in UK refugee hotels as omicron cases soar](#)
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## World

*World: IOM study showing returning female migrants face more reintegration challenges than men*  
Today, a study was released by the International Organization for Migration, showing that female migrants who return to their countries of origin had more difficulty than men in reintegrating long-term into their community. Accessing employment, training opportunities, and health-care services were challenges the women reported to face most often, partly as a result of abuses and exploitation during their migration journey. Sonja Fransen, research project manager of Maastricht University, said, “So far, little comparative evidence had existed on the reintegration experiences of forced and voluntary returnees, male and female returnees and on the understanding of gender-related issues in reintegration outcomes.” General programmatic recommendations underlined the importance of pre-departure counseling to manage returnees’ expectations, immediate and timely assistance upon return, particularly in terms of economic and psychosocial support, and of community- engagement to overcome barriers linked to returnees’ stigmatization.

- [Returning Female Migrants Face More Reintegration Challenges than Men: IOM Study](#)

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\* If you have any comments, questions, or additions to the next news highlights, please let us know.

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