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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 Highlights: Case on Ethiopian rights abuses lodged at AU body, France pushes for ‘mandatory solidarity’, Side event at AU-EU Summit

In this week’s News Highlights: Case on Ethiopia lodged at African Union human rights mechanism; 300,000 displaced in Ethiopia’s Afar region says Afar government, aid to Tigray blocked; US lawmakers advanced a bill that could mandate action on Ethiopia; African Union Summit ends with unclear way forward for Ethiopia; Anti-coup protesters hit with tear gas by Sudan security; Three BBC journalists briefly arrested amid protests in Sudan; South Sudanese refugees who return lack access to aid; Drought in the Horn causes millions to face hunger; Pair get sentenced to 20 years, accused of torturing migrants and refugees in Libya; 163 migrants and refugees intercepted off the east coast of Tunisia; Second Prime Minister’s appointment in Libya under high tension, after United Nations warnings; A potential “mandatory solidarity” on migration for EU member states; Brussels plans to give more oversight to Frontex surveillance; The Turkish Foreign Minister blames Athens for human rights violations; Iranian refugees threatened with deportation after attending a protest in Turkey; LGBTQIA+ refugees facing difficulties in family reunification in Ireland; Protesters arrested after setting fire to equipment at a planned migrant camp in Greece; Migrants and refugees struggling to integrate in Greece; Migrants and refugees transported in “horror box” to Austria; “Serbia will not be a parking lot for migrants” Interior Minister says.

Brussels Event: Conference “Critical Issues for AU-EU Collaboration on Health and Science”

During next week’s African Union – European Union Summit, taking place in Brussels on 17 and 18 February, Research Advisors and Experts Europe (RAEE) is organising a side event on “Critical Issues for AU-EU Collaboration on Health and Science”. The speakers include Hon. Fortune Charumbira, acting President of the Pan-African Parliament, and Hon. Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus (tbc), Secretary-General of the World Health Organisation as well as other speakers. The meeting will discuss critical issues of health and science in EU-AU collaboration. The hybrid event can be attended in person as well as online.

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The greater Horn of Africa

Ethiopia/Eritrea: PM Abiy visits Asmara, Eritrea

Several sources confirmed that Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed visited the capital of Eritrea, Asmara, yesterday 10 February. The visit was not publicly announced and no further details of the meeting have emerged thus far.

Ethiopia: Case lodged at African Union human rights mechanism

The African Union's Commission on Human and People's Rights is asked to look into the conduct of Ethiopian troops in the war in Tigray by lawyers acting on behalf of Tigrayan civilians. The rights organisation Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) submitted the complaint together with the US legal firm Debevoise & Plimpton and the Pan African Lawyers Union (PALU). Antonia Mulvey, executive director of LAW, said the alleged violations "could amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, but further investigation would be required." In November 2020, since the conflict with the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) started, a wide range of human rights violations have been committed by Ethiopia in its war against Tigrayan rebels, notes the claim. The violations include mass killings, sexual violence, and military targeting civilians, according to the legal complaint submitted to Africa's top human rights body.

- [Ethiopia accused of 'serious' human rights abuses in Tigray in a landmark case](#)

Ethiopia: 300,000 displaced in Ethiopia's Afar region says Afar government, aid to Tigray blocked

The Afar regional state government accused Tigray troops of killing civilians and looting in a statement on Monday. The statement, giving no further details, alleged the troops have "massacred innocent people, looted and destroyed various institutions, and displaced more than 300,000 innocent people." According to the United Nations, food delivery to the neighbouring Tigray region was being blocked by the fighting in Afar, where hundreds of thousand of people are living in famine conditions. *Reuters* was told by one of the aid workers in Afar that one of her colleagues had been killed in the fighting and two were missing. An article on *Africa Intelligence* noted that Ethiopian's Prime Minister Abiy has so far been silent on the fighting in Afar.

- [Fighting in Ethiopia's Afar region displaces 300,000, aid blocked to Tigray](#)
- [Abiy remains silent on Tigray offensive in Afar](#)

Ethiopia: US lawmakers advanced a bill that could mandate action on Ethiopia

On Tuesday a new sanctions legislation, the bipartisan 'Ethiopia Stabilisation, Peace, and Democracy Act', was advanced by United States lawmakers, amidst concern by the US congress that the Joe Biden administration is lacking a comprehensive plan to end violence in Northern Ethiopia. The bill is now on the President's desk. If the bill passes,

the White House would be called upon to impose sanctions on anyone who found undermining efforts to reach a ceasefire in Ethiopia and it would restrict financial and security support to Ethiopia.

- [Ethiopia – US: Congress advances sanctions bill requiring American strategy](#)
- [A BILL to support stabilization, peace, and democracy efforts in Ethiopia](#)

Ethiopia: African Union Summit ends with unclear way forward

DW remarks that the African Union Summit, held this weekend, closed with unclear prospects on how the leaders intend to tackle some of the key issues facing the African continent, including the war in Ethiopia. DW states it is unclear to what extent a possible ceasefire was discussed at the Summit. Ethiopia strongly advocated for the non-interference of foreign actors in the conflict.

- [African Union summit raises more questions than answers](#)

Sudan: Anti-coup protesters hit with tear gas by Sudan security

Protesters rallied across several cities in Sudan this Monday and again on Thursday to demand a return to civilian rule and justice for protesters killed since last year's coup. They were met with teargas. In the city of Wad Madani, south of Khartoum, anti-coup protesters were seen waving Sudanese flags and carrying posters of people killed in the crackdown. On Thursday, protesters also demonstrated against the arrests of Khalid Omer Yousif and Wagdi Salih, two critics of the military who were arrested on Wednesday. The Sudanese Professionals Association, which called for anti-coup protests, said the latest demonstrations were "a message to the dictatorship that authority lies with the people." According to an *AFP* correspondent, protesters in Khartoum called for the dissolution of the powerful paramilitary Rapid Support Forces commanded by Sovereign Council leader Burhan's deputy, Mohamed Hamdan Daglos (Hemedti).

- [Sudan anti-coup protesters march in Khartoum, other cities](#)
- [Sudan security forces fire tear gas at anti-coup protesters](#)
- [Protesters Take to Sudan's Streets Again, Decrying Coup, Arrests](#)

Sudan: Three BBC journalists arrested amid protests

On Monday, the *BBC* reported that three of their journalists were briefly arrested in the Sudanese capital of Khartoum as thousands of Sudanese took to the streets across the country in the latest anti-coup protests in the African Nation. The journalists were taken to an unknown location in Khartoum. Late Monday the three journalists were released, said the *BBC*.

- [BBC says Sudan arrested 3 of its journalists amid protests](#)
- [Sudan authorities arrest BBC journalists covering protests](#)

South Sudan: South Sudanese refugees who return lack access to aid

Some South Sudan refugees and internally displaced persons are slowly returning to their original settlements in South Sudan. However, they have not received humanitarian assistance since returning, states the *United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)*. “When conflict erupted in 2016, I fled to South Darfur in Sudan but now that there is relative peace in my own country, I decided it is time for me to return to my people,” reveals Haja Fartak, one of the 2,000 refugees who have recently returned to Raja, Western Bahr el Ghazal. Nimir, Buram, and Fordos in South Darfur are where most of the new returnees are being sheltered.

- [South Sudanese refugees return to Raja, Western Bahr el Ghazal, but face challenges](#)

Horn of Africa: Drought in the Horn causes millions to face hunger

The *World Food Programme (WFP)* is warning that across the Horn of Africa, particularly in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia, more than 13 million people face severe hunger as the driest conditions in decades spread a devastating drought. Michael Dunford, WFP’s Regional Director for Eastern Africa says “[h]arvest are ruined, livestock is dying and families are bearing the consequences of increasingly frequent climate extremes.” He went on to add, “droughts in the Horn of Africa are becoming more frequent and severe and are one of the key drivers of hunger across the region, devastating livelihoods and forcing families from their homes. These impacts reinforce the need for immediate humanitarian action and the importance of building the resilience of communities for the future.” The situation in Eritrea as a consequence of the drought is as yet unreported, although UNICEF fears that the drought will cause high levels of malnutrition there, too.

- [Millions face hunger as drought grips Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, warns World Food Programme](#)
- [UNICEF Eritrea Humanitarian Situation Report, End-of-Year 2021](#)

North Africa

Libya/Italy: Pair get sentenced to 20 years, accused of torturing migrants and refugees in Libya

In the Sicilian city of Palermo in Italy on Thursday last week, two Bangladeshi men were sentenced to a 20-year prison term by a preliminary hearing judge (GUP) Clelia Maltese for allegedly detaining and torturing migrants and refugees waiting to cross the Mediterranean Sea to reach Italy, in the Zuwara Prison in Libya. The two men arrived in Italy on May 28, 2020, where they were identified by other migrants and refugees who had stayed at the camp and they were arrested on July 6 that year after the alleged victims accused the defendants of holding them captive and beating them up for months while they were in Libya.

- [Pair accused of torturing migrants in Libya gets 20 years](#)

Tunisia: 163 migrants and refugees intercepted off the east coast

On Saturday, the Tunisian navy intercepted 163 migrants and refugees off their country's east coast. Among the passengers were nine women and 16 children. The vessel was found 12 kilometers off the coast of Sfax which is a key departure area for migrants seeking to make their way to Italian and other European shores according to the Tunisian defense ministry. *AFP* reported that the Tunisian coast guard intercepted 19,500 migrants during crossing attempts over the first three quarters of 2021. At least 1,553 missing migrants and refugees were recorded last year after using the central Mediterranean route which has become the world's deadliest migration trail according to UN agencies like International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

- [Tunisia rescues 163 migrants off east coast](#)

Libya: Second Prime Minister's appointment under high tension, after United Nations warnings

The Libyan Parliament appointed Fathi Bachagha as Prime Minister on Thursday 10, to replace Abdelhamid Dbeibah, despite warnings and efforts to reconcile the country's political system by the United Nations (UN). This means that two persons now lay claim to the title of Prime Minister. On Monday 7, Deputy Spokesman for the UN Secretary-General, Farhan Haq, cautioned about the formation of an eventual parallel government that could result from this decision. "The importance of the elections was so that there can be a greater unification among the Libyan people, and we don't go back to the sort of discord and disarray that have marked, really, the past decade", he said during a press conference at the UN HQ in New York. Under the aegis of the UN, the Dbeibah government was set up to lead a transitional government until the next election, scheduled for 24 December 2021, but this did not take place due to a lack of consensus between the different powers. This appointment is a source of tension, reveals *Al Jazeera*. On Wednesday night, sources told the newspaper that Abdulhamid Dbeibah was the victim of an "assassination attempt" with a firearm. For now, Dbeibah refuses to step aside, reports *The Guardian*.

- [UN cautions Libyan parties against returning to strife](#)
- [Libya: Gunmen attack Dbeibah's car ahead of vote to replace him](#)
- [En Libye, le Parlement défie le gouvernement avec un nouveau Premier ministre](#)
- [Libya has two prime ministers as political divisions deepen](#)

Europe

EU: A potential "mandatory solidarity" on migration for member states

Last Thursday, EU interior ministers agreed on the principle of "compulsory solidarity" on migration policy issues. France, as President of the EU Council, has chosen to make the notion of solidarity a binding principle when it comes to the distribution of refugees between the Member States. However, this could also mean that member states who do not want to take in refugees contribute financially, or amp up border protection, said a German MP. "Everyone

agreed that there is an important dose of responsibility and some obligatory solidarity”, French Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin said. According to Germany’s interior minister, 12 member states are actually “willing to take in” refugees, says *Euractiv*. But *Euractiv* also reports the difficulty to obtain information from the interior ministry of these 12 member states, and says that the number is reportedly exaggerated for circles of various EU interior ministers. Therefore, the next Interior minister Council, on 3 March, will aim to negotiate the details of the application of this principle.

- [EU states agree to “mandatory solidarity” on migration](#)
- [EU states agree step-by-step approach to migration reform](#)

EU: Brussels plans to give more oversight to Frontex surveillance

Europe’s border agency Frontex could be put under more intensive control by the European Commission, amidst allegations of complicity in pushbacks and frivolous spending. Ylva Johansson, the EU commissioner for home affairs, shared the idea at the latest meeting of EU interior ministers. “We should at least once a year have a political management board for Frontex with ministers [...] to gather and take some political steering and make policies for the development of Frontex,” she said. Hanne Beirens, Migration Policy Institute Europe director stated that Frontex is dealing with highly controversial issues in the fields of migration, especially allegations of breaching fundamental rights, and that such allegations pose a reputational risk for the European Union, reported *the EU Observer*.

- [Brussels in push for more oversight over troubled EU border agency](#)

Turkey/Greece: Foreign Minister blames Athens for human rights violations

The Turkish Foreign Minister, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, appealed to the international community to react to the pushbacks of irregular migrants and refugees carried out by Greece. During a conference with the Finnish Foreign Minister last Tuesday, 8 February, he claimed that Turkey’s neighbour was violating international law, without omitting, in his opinion, the role of the EU. “Many migrants lost their lives because of the pushbacks, because Greece pierced the boats. The European Union is as guilty as Greece”, he said. He blames the EU for turning a blind eye to the situation, because “Greece protects the borders of the EU”, he added. Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu also maintained accusations that Greece was responsible for the deaths of 19 migrants and refugees last week. Greece continues to contest these accusations as “patently false”, according to Migration and Asylum Minister Notis Mitarachi cited on Twitter.

- [FM Çavuşoğlu calls for end to Greece’s migrant pushback policy](#)
- [Migration and Asylum Minister Notis Mitarachi’s tweet](#)

Turkey: Iranian refugees threatened with deportation after attending a protest

Three Iranian refugees are threatened to be deported from Turkey after attending a demonstration against Ankara’s

withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, which aims to protect women from violence. Lily Farji, Zeinab Sahafi, and Ismail Fattahi are charged with “disturbing public order”, and “participating in unlawful demonstrations”, reported *the Guardian*, alongside Mohammad Pourakbari, who was detained with them without attending the protests. The demonstrations took place last March, and the group lost their appeal against a deportation order in April. Turkish authorities finally stated earlier this month that they could be deported. “They came to Turkey to survive. They’re trying to stay here so as not to die” said Buse Bergamali, the lawyer of the four. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Iranian dissidents and asylum seekers number 24,300 people in Turkey.

- [Iranian refugees face deportation from Turkey for attending demonstration](#)

Ireland: LGBTQIA+ refugees facing difficulties in family reunification

In Ireland, the International Protection Act requires refugees wishing to bring in their spouses to be married or at least be in a civil union, which makes it difficult for LGBTQ+ couples, according to the *Dublin Inquirer*. In effect, this excludes same-sex refugee couples who keep their relationship secret for security reasons. “A lot of international protection applicants come from countries where homosexuality is banned or frowned upon,” said lawyer Stephen Kirwan. The Irish government offers alternatives, like family reunification for any non-European Economic Area (EEA) who fulfils strict conditions on income and savings, or the opportunity to bring the partner with a tourist visa and then marry on the Irish territory. However, option a is unrealistic for refugees and option b would still exclude them on the grounds that they were not married before. Therefore it is not adequate according to Kirwan. “It’s just an unlawful discrimination, and it’s just not good enough to point to some potential alternative schemes”, he said.

- [Gay Refugees Face Extra Hurdles When Trying to Bring Their Partners to Join Them in Ireland](#)

Greece: Protesters arrested after setting fire to equipment at a planned migrant camp

Four people have been arrested on the island of Lesbos after a peaceful march against a proposed new migrant camp degenerated. The protesters set fire to earth-moving equipment, according to the authorities. A police statement Tuesday said the four suspects face charges including attempted grievous bodily harm, arson and property destruction, reports *Associated Press*. The new camp could accommodate up to 3,000 new migrants and asylum seekers, while Lesbos has become known for its overcrowded camps in 2015. While the EU is funding similar projects on various Greek islands, human rights activists are concerned that the lack of space will severely curtail freedom of movement.

- [Greek protesters torch equipment at island migrant camp](#)

Greece: Migrants and refugees struggling to integrate

Refugees and migrants in Greece struggle to integrate amidst hurdles created by the Greek government, reports *DW*. Aid organisations try to assist, but they are run privately. Meanwhile, Greece's asylum policy makes it all but impossible to claim asylum.

- [Greece: Refugees, asylum-seekers struggle to integrate](#)

Austria: Migrants and refugees transported in "horror box"

Austrian police report finding eight Turkish nationals hidden in a box under a semi-trailer near the Hungarian border. *Info Migrants* explains that the police said in a statement that the box had been especially modified for transporting people. As for the persons transported, they called the box a "horror box". In addition to the insecurity and discomfort, there is the cold, with temperatures close to 0 degrees, and the exhaust fumes, which are harmful to breathing. The driver of the truck, also a Turkish national, was arrested on suspicion of trafficking and is believed to charge around 15,000€ per person for the journey, according to the police.

- [Migrants smuggled from Romania in "horror box"](#)

Serbia: "Serbia will not be a parking lot for migrants" Interior Minister says

Monday 7 February, hundreds of undocumented migrants and refugees have been stopped and taken to centres by the Serbian police in a vast operation. Local media do not report the exact number of migrants apprehended, but it stated that Interior Minister Aleksandar Vulin went to the site to compliment the police for the management of the operation. Aleksandar Vulin also reportedly said that Serbia will not be a parking lot for migrants, and such interceptions are intended to ensure the safety of citizens. Migrants and refugees apprehended were reportedly transferred to hosting centres, according to *Info Migrants*.

- [Hundreds of migrants stopped in northern Serbia](#)

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

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