

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. Previous Horn reports can be found [here](#).

News Highlights: Preventable civilian deaths in Tigray, EU's continued support to the Libyan coast guard, Hunger crisis in Greek camps

This week news highlights: 5,000 blockade-related deaths in Tigray, states report by Tigray health bureau; Eritrean refugees in Tigray at dire risk due to deteriorating conditions; Tigrayan forces expanding into the Afar region; Evidence points to the use of a Turkish drone in an attack that hit 58 civilians in Tigray; The ICRC returns to Tigray with aid after months of absence; Four dead in protests in Sudan against the military rule; Sudanese women's rights activist detained in Sudan capital; WHO chief criticized by Ethiopian representative; EU calls for continuation of controversial Libyan coast guards training program; Hunger crisis in refugee camps in Greece; Refugees could be prevented from joining close families in the UK due to new rules; Ministerial conference in Vilnius to debate the challenge of EU's border control

The greater Horn of Africa

Ethiopia: Over 5,000 blockade-related deaths in Tigray, states report

The Tigray region's health bureau published a report which cites that at least over 5,000 civilian deaths caused by disease and malnutrition related to the humanitarian aid blockade were recorded between July and October 2021. The deaths were mainly caused by malnutrition or a lack of essential medical supplies. Issued by Hagos Godefay, head of Tigray's health bureau, the report states that 5,421 deaths were confirmed. The paper does not include the combatant death or deaths that could have occurred in some occupied areas outside of Tigray forces' control, where the blockade has limited data-gathering. "Since the magnitude of the destruction and health crisis in the inaccessible areas is undoubtedly high, the survey is bound to underreport the real extent of the crisis", said Hagos Godefay. Despite the latest resumption of humanitarian convoys, notably by the Red Cross, the Ethiopian authorities have not said when the government blockade will be completely lifted.

- [Report: 5,000-plus deaths under Ethiopia's Tigray blockade](#)

Ethiopia/Eritrea: Eritrean refugees in Tigray at dire risk due to deteriorating conditions

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) spokesperson Boris Cheshirkov said that "basic services for Eritrean refugees in the two camps [Mai Aini and Adi Harush refugee camps in the Tigray region of Ethiopia] have been severely compromised for many months due to the security situation. The desperate situation in these camps is a stark example of the impact of the lack of access and supplies affecting millions of displaced persons and other civilians throughout the region." Boris Cheshirkov said UNHCR was told by refugees of increasing preventable deaths – more than 20 over the last six weeks – linked to the overall decline in conditions, and in particular the lack of medicine and health services. The clinics in the camps have been essentially closed since early January when they finally completely ran out of medicine.

- [Deteriorating conditions putting Eritrean refugees at grave risk in Tigray](#)

Ethiopia: Tigrayan forces expanding into the Afar region

The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) published a statement saying that Tigrayan forces have been provoked into launching operations into Afar. It states the forces do not aim to stay long, but are responding to pro-government forces that attack Tigrayan positions from Afar. TPLF announced withdrawal and a ceasefire from surrounding regions last month. Since then, at least 108 Tigrayan civilians were killed this month in airstrikes, said the United Nations Human Rights Office, warning of a looming humanitarian disaster. In Tigray's capital of Mekelle on Tuesday, the TPLF made a statement accusing pro-government forces in Afar of intensifying their attacks on the rebels to "obstruct humanitarian operations" and create a "severe security crisis." *AFP* reported on Monday that the Ethiopian Government said, "no government defense forces" were in Afar.

- [Ethiopia's Tigray Rebels Say Pushing Into Neighbouring Afar](#)
- [Ethiopia's Tigrayan rebels attempting to expand into Afar region](#)

Ethiopia: Evidence points to the use of a Turkish drone in an attack that hit 58 civilians

Photos obtained by *Politico* provide concrete evidence of the use of Turkish drones in a strike on the night of 7 January that killed 58 people, including children, who had taken refuge in a school in the town of Dedebeit (Tigray region). These photos reveal slivers of a laser-guided bomb that were fragments extracted by aid workers on the ground. Another drone strike was reported by the United Nations on 15 January, in the Tigrayan towns of Maychew, Korem, and Samre, reportedly killing 12 civilians. Wim Zwijnenburg, the project leader of humanitarian disarmament at PAX, a Dutch peace organization, identified the nature of the weapon and its link to a Turkish company. "There is a very strong case to make that these drones should never have been exported at all," he said, noting that Turkey is a signatory to the UN's arms trade treaty, which stipulates a risk assessment should be done on the potential of human harm before a sale is carried out. Turkey signed the pact, but it has not ratified it. At present, questions and requests to respective government officials in Ethiopia and Turkey remain unanswered.

- [Evidence from civilian bombing in Ethiopia points to Turkish drone](#)

Ethiopia: The ICRC returns after months of absence

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is making its way back to the humanitarian stage in Mekelle, the capital of the Tigray region. The ICRC says it has been able to provide basic necessities, including essential drugs, to health facilities after it received approval from the Ethiopian authorities to do so. "It is a huge relief that this first shipment is reaching hospitals", said Apollo Barasa, health coordinator at the ICRC. The shipment comes after ICRC raised the alarm last week over the extended lack of humanitarian access to the Tigray region. An easing of the security situation would allow for the organization of further humanitarian convoys to Tigray, as the region is experiencing a dramatic escalation of the civil conflict, says the ICRC. "Medical personnel in the north of Ethiopia work in extremely difficult conditions, responding to the urgent needs of the people", explained Apollo Barasa. The ICRC reminds all parties to the conflict that they must facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those who need it the most.

- [ICRC aid flight delivers lifesaving medical supplies to Tigray](#)

Sudan: Thousands protest against military rule, 4 people die

More protests have broken out in Sudan, where people took to the streets on Monday and on Wednesday to protest military rule and attempts at brokering by the United Nations. Three people died on Monday, and one person died on Wednesday. The Central Committee of Sudan Doctors says 77 people in total were killed since the October 25 military power grab. The thousands of Sudanese protesters rallied, calling for civilian rule and demanding justice for those killed in crackdowns since a military coup nearly three months ago.

- [Thousands protest in Sudan against military rule](#)

- [Sudan security forces kill three anti-coup protesters: Medics](#)
- [Sudan forces crackdown on protesters](#)
- [Sudanese rally against UN bid to resolve the post-coup crisis](#)

Sudan: Women’s rights activist detained in Sudan capital

Sudanese women’s rights activist Amira Osman was detained by Sudanese security forces who raided her home in Khartoum on Sunday morning 23 January. Her arrest has caused condemnation from within Sudan, as well as from the United Nations mission in Sudan, who expressed their outrage over the arrest citing a “pattern of violence against women’s rights activists in Sudan”. Amira Osman was active on women’s rights in Sudan particularly during the rule of former Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, who was deposed in 2019.

- [Sudanese women’s rights activist Amira Osman arrested in raid](#)
- [Sudan: Women’s Rights Leader Detained in Sudan Capital](#)

Ethiopia: Ethiopian representative criticizes WHO chief

Zenebe Kebede Korcho, Ethiopia’s ambassador to the United Nations, interrupted a World Health Organisation (WHO) board meeting to criticize the WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, claiming that he “has not lived up to the integrity and the professional expectations required from his office and position.” Dr. Tedros, who previously served as Ethiopia’s health minister, was accused by the Ethiopian foreign ministry on of spreading misinformation about the war by pointing out the desperate situation of civilians and noting that the Ethiopian government was preventing medicines from reaching them.

- [Ethiopia slams WHO chief at an international meeting over Tigray comments](#)
- [WHO board halts Ethiopia’s anti-Tedros speech, postpones probe decision](#)

North Africa

Libya: EU calls for continuation of controversial Libyan coast guards training program

The *Associated Press* obtained a confidential European Union military report which encourages the continuation of Operation Irini. The controversial program aims to train Libyan coastguards and the navy to manage the interception and the return of thousands of migrants and refugees. Though the operation Irini ended in March 2021, the report stated the “excessive use of force” by Libyan authorities, also saying that the training is “no longer fully followed”, explained the *Associated Press*. The report contains concrete evidence of refugees’ mistreatment by the authorities. Furthermore, the appointment of Mohammed Al-Khoja (a militia leader) at the head of the Department for Combating Irregular Migration is an additional reason, according to some, to cease any cooperation with Libyan authorities. Nevertheless, the *Associated Press* reported that spokesman Peter Stano confirmed that the EU remains determined to train coast guard personnel and bolster Libya’s capacity to manage a massive search-and-rescue area of the Mediterranean.

- [Migrant abuses continue in Libya. So does EU border training](#)

Europe

Greece: Hunger crisis in refugee camps

About 6,000 refugees, which is an estimated 40% of camp occupants, are denied basic means of subsistence because of the center-right administration decision to halt food provisions for those no longer in the asylum procedure, as stated by the International Rescue Committee (IRC). Martha Roussou of the International Rescue Committee said “It is unthinkable that people are going hungry in Greece, through no fault of their own they have fallen through the cracks and all because of a problem created by gaps in legislation and policy.” The Greek government is being accused

of inciting the hunger crisis in refugee camps with “conscious” policy choices that have left thousands unable to access food.

- [Greek government blamed for the hunger crisis in refugee camps](#)

UK: Refugees could be prevented from joining close families in the UK due to new rules

According to the CEO of the *Refugee Council* Enver Solomon, the new UK government plans in the nationality and borders bill, currently being debated in the house of Lords, will severely restrict family reunion and “all but destroy” the main safe route used by refugees families to reunite with loved ones. The new plans by the government aim to restrict family reunion rights for refugees who traveled through a safe third country before reaching the UK. This applies to many refugees, including thousands of refugees who traveled to the UK in small boats. As many as 3,500 people per year could be prevented from joining their loved ones if the proposal in the bill becomes law, as per calculations by the Refugee Council using government data. This would equal 17,500 people in the next five years.

- [New rules could prevent thousands of refugees from joining close family in UK](#)
- [Immigration bill could ‘all but destroy’ safe, legal routes to UK: Charity](#)

EU: Ministerial conference in Vilnius to debate the challenge of EU’s border control

On the 20 and 21 January, representatives of EU Member States gathered to discuss border security, asylum applications, and pushback phenomena. While the practices of illegal pushbacks and human trafficking were strongly condemned by Ylva Johansson, European Home Affairs Commissioner, political opinions were divided. According to the Greek Migration and Asylum Minister Notis Mitarachi, “if people have the right to arrive in any European member state without any papers and without due process, then the whole Schengen code, the whole Schengen visa system, is meaningless”, he said. On the other hand, Ylva Johansson emphasized the need to respect a person’s right to asylum. As the outcome of the conference, Ylva Johansson called for the Member States to gather in precautionary action, “to prevent people from departing on smuggling routes and to swiftly return people to the country of origin when they have no right to stay”, she said.

- [EU interior ministers balance migrant rights and strong border](#)

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

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