



5 November 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](#).

News Highlights: Rapid changes one year after the war started, Renewed evacuation push from Libya, Lives at risk at European borders

In this week news highlights: Reuters report details abuses against Eritrean refugees; Joint Investigation Report released; First anniversary of the start of the war in Tigray; Protests against coup continue in Sudan; Mass arrests of Tigrayans in Addis Ababa; Sudan facing humanitarian crisis; Almost 400 migrants and refugees rescued in the Mediterranean Sea; Rwanda renewed commitment in receiving refugees from Libya; 91 individuals voluntarily returned to Niger from Libya; 125 migrants and refugees prevented from reaching Europe by Tunisian coast guards; French Secretary of State accused Belarusian President Lukashenko of human smuggling; Migrants and refugees' lives at risk at Poland-Belarus border; Greece rescued 400 off its coasts; Bulgaria sends troops at border to stop migrants from entering; and Organizations call for better COVID-19 vaccine distribution.

Greater Horn of Africa

Ethiopia: Reuters report details abuses against Eritrean refugees

Reuters has published a new report on abuses of Eritrean forces in Tigray. It says that the Eritrean government seized on the opportunity to destroy their old enemies, and detain thousands of Eritrean refugees that had fled Eritrea. The Reuters article details how Eritrean troops arrived in Hitsats refugee camp within days of the conflict starting. Once they arrived, they detained twenty leaders, before sending them back to Eritrea. Reuters confirmed the names of 17 of those men. In Shimelba, they detained 40 people, including women. UNHCR reports that there are still 7600 Eritrean refugees that are missing, after Hitsats and Shimelba refugee camps were closed in January and February. One former Eritrean military officer says that he has seen documents showing that Eritrea has taken 9000 refugees back to Eritrea. Reuters also reports that while Tigrayans have long welcomed Eritrean refugees, following the Eritrean occupation of Tigray, and the many atrocities Eritrean troops have committed, many Tigrayans have become hostile to the refugees. In some cases, this has led to violence, with Tigrayan militiamen attacking refugee camps. Some witnesses have said that they have spotted uniformed Tigrayan officers. However, Reuters also adds that many groups and militias, and that the command structure is very "opaque". Many different groups are fighting against the Ethiopian central government. Debretsion, head of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), denied that forces directly commanded by the TPLF were involved in attacks on refugees. He added that instances of violence should be investigated.

- [Dual Agenda: In Ethiopia's civil war, Eritrea's army exacted deadly vengeance on old foes](#)

Europe External Programme with Africa ivzw
115 Stevinstraat, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: + 32 2 231 1659; e-mail admin@eepea.be
Web: www.eepea.be

Ethiopia: Joint Investigation Report released

The joint United Nations (UN) investigation team released the report on the human rights violations in Tigray on Wednesday. The investigation has been jointly conducted with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), a body appointed by the Ethiopian government. Investigators interviewed 269 people. It concluded that “[a]ll parties to the Tigray conflict have committed violations of international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law. Some of these may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.” The report found that especially many Eritrean soldiers committed atrocities. There has been significant criticism of the Joint investigation report, as the relations with the Ethiopian government and also the limited reach of the scope have been called out. The AP reported that individuals involved in the investigations told them that Daniel Bekele, the head of the EHRC, “underplayed some allegations that fighters from the country’s Amhara region were responsible for abuses in Tigray and pressed instead to highlight abuses by Tigray forces.” Since the report was published, several people have also pointed to the inconsistencies within the report. It systematically provides low casualty numbers in recorded massacres and omits significant amounts of information, critics say. Some have also raised concerns at the limited scope of the investigation. The team was unable to travel to many parts of Tigray and visit sites of massacres. The joint investigation report also provided a long list of recommendations, including calling on parties to the conflict to “immediately end all violations” and calling for further investigations. Michelle Bachelet said most reports were from Ethiopian and Eritrean troops. She also said that since June, there have been an increase in reports from Tigrayan troops, while reported abuses by Eritrean and Ethiopian troops continued.

- [Twitter: Read the report on the OHCHR-EHRC joint investigation.](#)
- [Tigray conflict: Report calls for accountability for violations and abuses by all parties](#)

Ethiopia: First anniversary of the start of the war: rapidly evolving situations

This week marked the first anniversary of the start of the war in Tigray, which started on 3 November 2020. The conflict has seen significant developments in the last weeks. Tigrayan forces took over two key cities 400 km from Addis Ababa. The Ethiopian government has declared a state of national emergency, granting security forces additional powers. Foreign governments have also started planning contingency plans. Neighboring Kenya has ramped up security at its border. The US embassy in Addis Ababa allowed on Thursday the voluntary departure of non-essential personnel and their families. US Special Envoy to the region, Jeffrey Feltman also arrived on Thursday. He met with the AU president, and discussed political solutions to the conflict. Questions have been raised on how the current situation may lead to a process of negotiation and peace building. The question of who triggered the war and agreement on other key facts and their implications are the only way to start the negotiation and peace process, researchers argue.

- [Calls for ceasefire in Ethiopia grow amid deepening conflict](#)
- [Who triggered the Tigray War on 3 November 2020?](#)

Ethiopia: UNSC meeting called

Mexico has called a UNSC open meeting on the situation in Ethiopia. It will take place at 3pm New York time on Friday 5 November.

Ethiopia: Opposition to sign transition agreement

The spokesperson for the OLA told Bloomberg and Reuters that and has reported that Ethiopian opposition groups and parties in the conflict, including the TPLF and the OLA have agreed to the formation of a political alliance against Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. The spokesperson says that this new alliance will work towards a transitional government, and replace Abiy Ahmed. The OLA spokesperson told Bloomberg on the phone that a signing ceremony will be held in the coming days in Washington DC.

- [Ethiopia Rebels, Opposition Form Political Body Against Abiy](#)

Ethiopia: Mass arrests of Tigrayans in Addis Ababa

There have been an increasing number of reports that Tigrayans are being rounded up in Addis Ababa. The Ethiopian police has confirmed it has arrested “many people”. Residents told Reuters that many Tigrayans were among those arrested. Although Ethiopia denies it, there are fears that Tigrayans are being ethnically targeted. There have been reports for months that there has been an increase in harassment against Tigrayans. Reuters says that Tigrayans have also been systematically removed from the civil and security sectors. Tigrayans in the army have been hit particularly hard. Thousands of soldiers have been detained. One person told Reuters that he believes that over ten

thousand Tigrayans working for the military and other security services are under arrest and without charge. Local media reported that some soldiers had been sentenced to death. The man Reuters spoke to said that “There is no access to information of their whereabouts, how many are detained and in which places they are detained, how many have been sentenced to death, was there enough evidence presented against the convicts.” Relatives say that nothing has been heard from them since the outbreak of hostilities. On Thursday Facebook removed a post by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed saying that he would “bury” his enemies. Facebook said that it had removed it for “violating our policies inciting and supporting violence”.

- [News: Gov't Warns Those Spreading “Misinformation, Fear”; Says Facebook’s Removal Of Pm Abiy’s Post Shows “Its True Colors”](#)
- [Facebook removes post by Ethiopian PM for ‘inciting violence’](#)
- [A year into war, fate of Tigrayan federal forces still a mystery](#)

Sudan: Protests against coup continue

People have continued to protest the coup that took place in Sudan on 25 October. Thousands of people rallied last Saturday in the March of Millions. Three people were killed after the military deployed deadly force to disperse the crowds. The demonstrations have continued throughout the week. Thirteen people have been killed so far. In a post on the information ministry on Monday, the deposed Prime Minister Hamdok “insisted on the legitimacy of his government and transnational institutions.” He also argued that a return to civilian government could help the country out of the instability. Analysts say that the military has miscalculated but expect violence to continue for some time, however diplomats have said a power sharing agreement is closer to being agreed to. Key differences remain to be discussed.

- [Three shot dead during nationwide protests against Sudan coup](#)
- [Sudan closer to power-sharing deal to reverse military coup](#)

Sudan: Sudan facing humanitarian crisis and thousands likely to be displaced

The current unrest following the military coup in Sudan is likely to deteriorate the humanitarian situation of the country, displacing thousands of individuals across the country and the surrounding region, Action Against Hunger warns. The supply chain for food and medication has been disrupted and the number of individuals in extremely vulnerable situations is likely to grow, Action Against Hunger reports. Country Director of Action Against Hunger in Sudan Sanjida Tawhid stated that already before the current situation, 81% of the Sudanese population faced obstacles in accessing health care and around 21% was considered “severely food insecure”. Action Against Hunger’s Africa Advocacy Officer Menna Abraha added that “[d]eforestation, desertification, and recurring disasters like floods – some of the worst in decades – are all manifestations of the country’s climate dilemma”, as heavy floods in neighboring South Sudan caused thousands of people to displace in the country, adding to those displaced by the Tigray conflict, Action Against Hunger notes.

- [Current unrest in Sudan sparks fears: humanitarian needs will increase](#)

2

North Africa

Libya: 367 migrants and refugees rescued by MSF ship Geo Barents

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) rescued 367 migrants and refugees fleeing Libya during its most recent mission. 140 were unaccompanied minors, MSF stated. MSF noted in a tweet that “[o]n their journeys, minors are more exposed to forced labor, extortion, arbitrary detention and physical violence, including sexual violence”. According to Julie Melichar, MSF humanitarian affairs officer, many of those reaching Libya have little choice but to stay, as they are forced in a spiral of exploitation of forced labor, detention and torture which can last for months or even years, InfoMigrants reports. Meanwhile, at least 3,000 migrants and refugees have been camping outside a United Nations (UN)-run community center in Tripoli for the last month. After managing to escape the overcrowded detention centres in Libya, they are asking for assistance, BBC reports.

- [Libya: Thousands of migrants and refugees camp on UN’s doorstep](#)
- [Fleeing ‘hell in Libya’: Minors on board rescue ship testify via MSF](#)

Libya: Rwanda to continue receiving refugees from Libya through the Emergency Transit Mechanism Rwanda, the African Union (AU) and the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) approved the First Addendum and Extension to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) defining an Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) in Libya. Under the updated agreement, Rwanda will keep receiving and sheltering refugees, asylum seekers and individuals at risk who are currently being held in Libyan detention centers, AfricaNews reports. Since the ETM's establishment in September 2019, Rwanda has housed 648 refugees and asylum seekers from Libya, AfricaNews indicates. However, 1,680 individuals at risk are now held in Libyan detention centers in urgent need of protection and lifesaving assistance, AfricaNews notes.

- [The Government of Rwanda, the African Union, and UNHCR Agree to Continue the Evacuation of Refugees and Asylum Seekers from Libya](#)

Libya: 91 people returned from Libya through humanitarian flight

91 migrants and refugees have been returned from Libya to Niger through a voluntary return corridor organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Libyan authorities. The flight took off on November 3 and transported 60 children, 25 women, and six men in the group, AFP reports. According to the IOM Libya Chief of Mission Federico Soda, over 1,000 migrants and refugees in Libya appealed to IOM's Voluntary Humanitarian Return Assistance and have been waiting for months to return to their home country. However, the coronavirus outbreak interrupted return flights, resulting in a significant wait list for repatriation, InfoMigrants notes. Libya hosts over 600,000 migrants and refugees and many are subjected to deplorable living conditions, exploitation, and human rights violations, InfoMigrants indicates.

- [Libya: 91 migrants repatriated to Niger](#)

Tunisia: Tunisia coast guards prevents 125 Europe-bound migrants from reaching Europe amidst deal with Italy

Tunisia authorities intercepted 125 Europe-bound migrants and refugees over the weekend. Three persons were caught while loading a small boat during one of the operations on Sunday morning, according to the Tunisian news site Webdo. In 2020, Italy and Tunisia established direct lines of communication for the interception of irregular migrants. According to the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights FTDES, the two countries are currently exchanging information on a regular basis. In the frame of the agreement, Tunisia accepted the repatriation of migrants who did not qualify for asylum in Italy, in exchange for the possibility of more Tunisians migrating legally to the European country, InfoMigrants notes. The Tunisian coast guard apprehended roughly 19,500 migrants in the first nine months of 2021, according to figures from the FTDES.

3

- [Tunisian authorities pick up 125 Europe-bound migrants](#)

Europe

France/Belarus: Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko accused of human trafficking by France French Secretary of State for European Affairs Clément Beaune accused Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko's regime of "human smuggling" to the European Union. Beaune said that the Lukashenko regime organizes human smuggling directly with foreign nations, sending individuals from Iraq into the European Union (EU) through commercial planes and arranged tours, ANSA reports. European authorities recently accused Lukashenko's government of enabling migrants and refugees to travel through Minsk in order to proceed to the EU as a form of vengeance for the EU's sanctions, ANSA notes. On several occasions, human rights organizations denounced the EU reaction to increased border crossings attempts in the Belarus region as thousands of individuals are trapped on both sides of the border in dire conditions, ANSA notes.

- [France accuses Lukashenko of smuggling migrants from the Middle East and Africa to send them to the EU](#)
- [Clément Beaune: "La souveraineté d'un État n'est pas mise en cause par la primauté du droit européen" – 26/10](#)
- [France accuses Belarus' Lukashenko of migrant trafficking](#)

Poland/Belarus: Migrants and refugees risking their lives at the Poland-Belarus border

More deaths are feared at the Polish-Belarusian border as migrants and refugees, among them children, are pushed back in alarming conditions, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) spokesperson warns. Meanwhile, the tenth migrant has been discovered dead on the Belarus-Poland border, InfoMigrants reports. Crystal van Leeuwen, medical emergency manager from MSF, described the conditions at the border region as hopeless. Leeuwen explained that migrants face a “bleak dilemma”: wait at the border and put their lives at risk, or seek refuge and risk being returned by soldiers on both sides. In an interview with The Guardian, a migrant said that he was apprehended five times by Polish border guards and he was “beaten, kicked, and insulted”. The interviewee was then transported back to Belarus and after telling troops he wanted to give up attempting to reach Poland and return to Minsk, he was beaten twice by officials in Belarus, The Guardian reports. Poland dispatched 2,500 extra troops to the border region this week, increasing the total number of soldiers aiding border guards block attempted crossings to 10,000, The Guardian indicates. Meanwhile, as the tenth individual has been found dead at the border region, Belarus and Poland are disputing on which side of the border the person was found. In a statement released on Saturday, Belarusian border authorities state that the man died on the Polish side of the border and accuse Poland of having “forced other migrants to drag the body back to the Belarusian side”, InfoMigrants reports. Polish authorities have refused the accusation, InfoMigrants indicates.

- [‘People treated like weapons’: more deaths feared at Poland-Belarus border](#)
- [Tenth migrant found dead on Belarus-Polish border](#)

Turkey/Greece: 400 migrants and refugees rescued at sea by Greek authorities

On Sunday 31, a Turkish-flagged cargo ship packed with almost 400 migrants and refugees landed in Greece as Turkey failed to respond to the distress alarm launched by the boat. Many of the passengers, mostly from Afghanistan, were found hungry and dehydrated, The Guardian indicates. According to the Athens News Agency, the Greek government and the European Commission called the Turkish authorities to request for the ship to be returned but received no answer, Deutsche Wellenotes. The Greek Minister for migration and asylum policy Notis Mitarachi said that the incident represents “another dangerous and illegal journey from the Turkish coast ... facilitated by criminal gangs”, The Guardian reports. Athens accuses Turkish officials of intentionally inflaming

4

tensions by encouraging smugglers to organize illegal crossings, The Guardian notes. Turkey accused Greece of forcibly returning asylum seekers boats into Turkish waters as part of a pushback policy, The Guardian indicates. Last week, a boat carrying four persons and 23 others sank off the Greek island of Chios after sailing from Turkey, Al Jazeera reports.

- [Greece lets boat packed with Afghan refugees dock after four days at sea](#)
- [Turkish ship carrying Afghan migrants towed to Greek port](#)
- [Greece rescues cargo ship carrying 400 migrants and refugees](#)
- [Four people drown after boat carrying migrants sinks off Greece](#)

Bulgaria: Bulgaria strengthens border controls to prevent migrants and refugees from crossing 350 troops and military equipment have been sent to tighten border controls with Turkey and Greece in order to prevent migrants from entering, Bulgaria defense ministry stated on Tuesday. According to figures from the border police, Bulgaria apprehended around 6,500 refugees, mostly from Afghanistan and Syria, in the first nine months of 2021, Reuters reports. The number is three times more than in the same period in 2020, Reuters notes. The figures are significantly lower than the influx that Bulgaria experienced in 2015, when it constructed a barbed-wire barrier along the border with Turkey, Reuters explains.

- [Bulgaria sends 350 troops to its borders to stop migrant inflows](#)

World

World: Organisations call for better distribution of COVID-19 vaccines

Amnesty International (AI) highlighted on 31 October that the G20’s final declaration on improving worldwide access to COVID-19 vaccinations is lacking in detailed information. AI’s Advisor on Right to Health Tamaryn Nelson said that “(...) [m]any G20 members have vast stocks of surplus vaccines which could end up simply going to waste. Amnesty found that 500 million doses could be made available immediately if these were redistributed to lower-income

countries, yet redistribution did not even get a mention in this statement”, AI reports. The human rights NGOs called on governments and pharmaceutical firms to share vaccination doses with low- and lower-middle-income countries in order to protect millions of individuals against Covid-19, AI states. In an open letter to the G20 Heads of State and Government, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Agency for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Health Organization (WHO) urged every country to guarantee that all people on its territory, regardless of legal status have access to COVID-19 vaccines, tests, and care. The letter asked for concrete steps to eliminate obstacles to vaccination for people on the move, including refugees, migrants, internally displaced people, and asylum seekers. The letter also urged the G20 to fight against misinformation that fuels vaccine uncertainty, the IOM reports.

- [Open Letter to G20 Heads of State and Government – An Appeal to Make Vaccines Accessible to People on the Move](#)
- [G20: Vague vaccine promises are an affront to 5 million dead](#)

5

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

Disclaimer: All information in these highlights 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@eepea.be any additional information and corrections

6