

Europe External Programme with Africa

SITUATION REPORT - HORN OF AFRICA

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Situation in Ethiopia (per 24 May)

- The Federal Supreme Court Cassation bench of Ethiopia ruled to release Colonel Gemechu Ayana, senior leader of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), and ordered his release from police custody.
- Peace and Security Bureau chief of Amhara region Desalegn Tassew says over 4,500 suspects have been arrested in relation to the ongoing 'law enforcement operation' in the region in the past week.
- The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) said in a statement that several people including journalists and activists have been arrested in the past week in what the federal and regional government have said was a coordinated rule of law operation.
- Chief Commissioner of EHRC, Daniel Bekele, said that the commission was aware of the steps that the government is taking to enforce law and order in various parts of the country, but "such arrests are not in line with the principles of human rights and are not appropriate."
- Daniel Bekele has also urged federal and regional state security forces to refrain from arresting suspects before criminal investigations are held, arresting journalists for their work, and detaining people without a court order.
- He also called on the whereabouts of all detainees to be immediately communicated to families.
- Unrest, mass detentions, casualties and deaths have emerged in the past few days due to clashes among security forces and armed groups in some parts of the Amhara region.
- Recently, tensions have been running high in the Amhara region after the regional government announced law enforcement measures.
- Residents of Mota town in East Gojjam zone of the Amhara region reported clashes were due to the government's attempt to disarm Fano, a group of armed militia in Amhara regional state.
- A member of the Fano group from Merawi town near Bahir Dar said: "The group has played a crucial role in averting the aggression of Tigray forces but the treatment we are getting from both the federal and regional government is disappointing."
- The president of the Amhara regional government, Dr. Yilkal Kefale, said his government has no intentions of disarming or attacking Fano.
- He claimed that the law enforcement measures targeted only those involved in criminal activities such as illegal arms trafficking, killing and robbery.
- Further, the federal government said the operation in Amhara region is part of the ongoing law enforcement efforts in Addis Ababa, Oromia, Somali and other regions of the country.
- "Extensive measure are being taken against groups involved in arms trafficking, money laundering, looting, destruction of property, suspicion of murder and wreaking havoc in the Amhara region," said the federal government.

Situation in Tigray (per 24 May)

- World Food Programme (WFP) Ethiopia said more empty trucks from 2021 are exiting the Tigray region and returning back after delivery of critical supplies provided by WFP, enabling the truck reruns and more will follow.
- “These trucks will increase our capacity nationwide, making WFP’s and other partners’ humanitarian response to all affected populations possible,” added WFP Ethiopia.

Regional Situation (per 24 May)

- During the Somali Presidential handing over ceremony, departing Somali president Farmajo said the return of about 5,000 soldiers who completed training in Eritrea last year was delayed in order to avoid impact on the political situation and elections; their files have been handed over to incoming President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud.
- President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud also said he will work on the return of the soldiers trained in Eritrea as soon as possible so that they can participate in the liberation of the country.
- The United Nations (UN) reported last year that Somali soldiers were spotted in Tigray fighting alongside Ethiopian and Eritrean forces against Tigray defence forces. Parents of the soldiers have been demanding their return since last year.

International Situation (per 24 May)

- The United Nations Security Council held a meeting on 23 May on the Somali election, and the threat of Al-Shabaab attacks. Council members expressed concern about Al-Shabaab attacks and urged Somalia to implement the Somali Transition Plan, as laid out in UNSC Resolution 2628, by taking on more security responsibilities.
- US Amb Linda Thomas-Greenfield told the UN Security Council (UN) that digital technologies have immense potential to support global peace and security but can also be used to cut off access to information, suppress freedom of expression, and spread disinformation, escalating conflict: “In Ethiopia, authorities have cut off internet access in the Tigray region since November 2020 – as conflict erupted between the Ethiopian National Defence Forces and regional forces in Tigray.”

Links of interest

[Amhara state security detain thousands in ongoing crackdown](#)

[Mass arrests and casualties reported in Amhara state as law enforcement operation are ongoing](#)

[Federal government statement on law enforcement in Amhara and other regions](#)

[Twitter: WFP trucks exiting Tigray](#)

[Twitter: Amb Linda Thomas-Greenfield on the potential of digital technologies](#)

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[Twitter: Somali president Farmajo on the return of 5,000 soldiers](#)

[Peaceful Transfer of Power in Somalia Offers Long-Awaited Opportunity to Advance Urgent National Priorities. Special Representative Tells Security Council](#)

[Federal Supreme Court Cassation bench frees OLF senior leader Col. Gemechu Ayana](#)

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