

# SITUATION REPORT - HORN OF AFRICA

## No. 482 - 25 September 2023

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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 organisations, civil society, and experts from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Uganda, and across Africa. The Situation Reports can be found [here](#). To receive the situation report in your e-mail, [click here](#). You can unsubscribe at any moment through the link at the bottom of each e-mail.

### International Situation (per 25 September)

- A US contractor originally from Ethiopia, Abraham Teklu Lemma, has been accused of espionage by providing documents to the Ethiopian government. He had top secret security clearance to access these.
- The documents included maps, photographs and satellite imagery of the war in Tigray.
- The classified national defense information was allegedly transmitted by Lemma in August and September of last year, according to the affidavit. Lemma is accused of transmitting the files to an official of an intelligence service.
- The communications “included a discussion of military activities of a rebel group involved in an armed struggle against the government of the Relevant Country”, states the affidavit.
- The foreign official asked Lemma among others to identify logistics centres and command centres.
- Lemma continued to access and transfer information into 2023. The affidavit notes that Lemma deposited large sums of cash in bank accounts in the US, coinciding with the transfer of information, and coinciding with his return from trips to Ethiopia.
- The “Charging papers did not name Ethiopia, but accused Lemma of spying for a country where he was previously a citizen, had family ties and had recently visited” says the Washington Post
- “An FBI affidavit also described military activities consistent with those of armed rebels battling allied Ethiopian and Eritrean government soldiers at the time” writes the Washington Post.
- “In August and September of that year, Lemma allegedly transmitted classified national defense information to the official associated with Ethiopia’s intelligence service, including satellite imagery and information related to Eritrean activities in Ethiopia’s Tigray region.” states the Washington Post.
- Lemma was arrested on Aug. 24 2023, and charged on the counts of “conspiracy, and gathering or delivering national defense information”.
- SAF commander Abdel Fattah al-Burhan met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky at Shannon Airport in Ireland. The meeting was unscheduled.
- Zelensky and al-Burhan discussed “common security challenges, namely the activities of illegal armed groups financed by Russia”, Zelensky stated on X.
- This comes after the news of drone strikes allegedly organised by Ukraine special forces against RSF troops became public last week.
- The US Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III is visiting Djibouti and landing in Nairobi, Kenya, today.
- Iran restored diplomatic ties with Djibouti. The ties were severed seven years ago, after Djibouti backed Saudi Arabia over Iran in a conflict over Saudi Arabia’s execution of a Shia cleric.

### Situation in Sudan (per 25 September)

- Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) commander Abdel Fattah al-Burhan states he is ready to negotiate with the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on the condition of their withdrawal from residential areas.
- Violent clashes are reported in Khartoum, Bahri and Omdurman. In Khartoum, fighting particularly centred around the SAF headquarters.
- Sources also reported fighting in Nyala, after RSF attacked the city. The attack was repelled by SAF.

- A weeks-long targeted campaign against members of the Masalit tribe in Darfur killed thousands, including at least 1000 people who are buried in a mass grave in El Geneina, accounts from 120 witnesses supported by satellite images and photographs collected by Reuters state.
- The RSF and Arab militias that attacked the Masalit people referred to them as “slaves”. Mortar fire was specifically directed towards areas where the Masalit live.
- A report by the African Centre for Justice and Peace documents the situation in Nyala, South Darfur, in 2023. The report lists names of civilians reportedly killed and injured in various incidents.
- The report also includes accounts of recruitment of child soldiers by RSF, and accounts of arbitrary arrests, detention and torture by RSF and SAF.
- A rapid gender assessment report by UN Women found that sexual and gender-based violence in Sudan increased significantly since the start of the conflict, particularly in Southern and central Darfur, White Nile, and Khartoum.
- The report also revealed an increased workload for women who were largely taking over the financial planning of the households in addition to their other responsibilities.

### **Refugee Situation (per 25 September)**

- Due to a lack of financial resources, refugees from Sudan who fled to Egypt are forced to return back.
- Refugees who fled to Chad returned back to Sudan due to scarce humanitarian aid in the refugee camp.
- Refugees from Sudan have problems at the border with Egypt due to visa requirements. The prices for issuing a new passport increased to 120,000 Sudanese pounds (approx. €190).

### **Situation in Ethiopia (per 25 September)**

- Ethiopian Deputy PM Demeke Mekonnen stated that there is a need to speed up the implementation of the Pretoria Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in a speech to the General Assembly of the UN.
- The 11th edition of the Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa has been postponed. The meeting was set to be held in Bahir Dar, the capital of the Amhara region.
- Heavy artillery fire from Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) was reported in Lalibela, Amhara region, last week Wednesday.
- Residents stated that the ENDF fired from the outskirts of the city on locations in the forest where Fano militia are thought to be hiding. Witnesses also report many arrests in and around the city.

### **Regional Situation (per 25 September)**

- The second round of negotiations over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, this weekend, and ended without progress.
- The government of Somaliland issued a statement saying that they have no plans for dialogue to discuss unity with Somalia. This comes after President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda agreed on Friday to mediate between Somalia and Somaliland.

### **Links of interest**

[U.S. contractor originally from Ethiopia arrested on espionage charges. Justice Department says](#)

[Zelensky meets with Sudan's military ruler](#)

[Zelensky on X](#)

[Secretary of Defense to Visit Djibouti, Kenya, and Angola](#)

[Iran announces restoration of diplomatic ties with Djibouti after 7-year hiatus](#)

[Sudan war: Army chief Burhan claims he's ready for peace talks](#)

[Continued fighting, rapes, and robberies reported from Sudan](#)

[Shelling and a rain of bullets in Nyala, South Darfur](#)

[How Arab fighters carried out a rolling ethnic massacre in Sudan](#)

[Economic woes force refugees to return to violence-ridden Sudan](#)

[Ethiopia - Deputy Prime Minister Addresses General Debate, 78th Session](#)

[Annual Tana Forum to be held in Bahir Dar city postponed amid escalating conflict](#)

[Ethiopia's Lalibela Rocked By Artillery Fire: Residents](#)

[Second round of negotiations on Ethiopia's mega-dam wrap up](#)

[Breakaway Somaliland says will not discuss unification with Somalia](#)

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