

# SITUATION REPORT - HORN OF AFRICA

## No. 506 - 20 December 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.

This is the last Situation report of this calendar year. Publishing will return to the regular schedule in the week of 8 January 2024.

### **Situation in Sudan (per 20 December)**

- Rapid Support Forces (RSF) attacked Wad Madani on 15 December and seized control over the capital of the Al-Jazira state after three days of fierce fighting. Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) have withdrawn.
- Armed groups and citizens reportedly looted markets and banks and aid organisations were forced to suspend their operations as the RSF advanced on the city.
- RSF reportedly looted civilian properties and threatened civilians with sexual abuse against those who do not cooperate with RSF.
- It is estimated that between 250,000 and 300,000 people fled since advancement on Wad Madani started, according to IOM. Many people were forced to flee for the second time as Wad Madani had previously hosted large numbers of internally displaced people fleeing other conflict zones in Sudan.
- Transportation to bring people out of the conflict zone is limited, forcing many to flee on foot. Fuel and transportation costs have soared amid this crisis.
- UNHCR expressed concerns over rising forced displacement across Sudan in relation to the new fighting in Wad Madani but also deepening conflicts in North Darfur and South Darfur. Fighting rekindled in El Fasher, North Darfur, and an aerial attack resulting in deaths was reported in Nyala, South Darfur.
- The President of the Human Rights Council (HRC), Václav Bálek, appointed the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for Sudan which will be represented by three independent members.
- The Fact-Finding Mission will investigate all human rights abuses and violations of international law. The first oral update by the Mission will be presented during the 56th session of the HRC in June-July 2024.
- It is estimated that about 29,250 babies out of 45,000, expected to be delivered in the coming 3 months, will be born in Sudan without adequate medical assistance, according to Save the Children. 65% of mothers will have no access to medical facilities nor any health professionals during their delivery.

### **Situation in Ethiopia (per 20 December)**

- Ethiopia's credit rating was downgraded to 'junk territory' (CC) by Fitch Ratings due to an increasing likelihood of defaulting, after Ethiopia failed to pay the outstanding interest on its \$1 billion Eurobond.
- Internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Oromia currently hosted in a centre in Northern Wollo Zone in the Amhara region were ordered by the local authorities to leave the premises of IDP centre.
- The decision is based on an agreement between Oromia and Amhara regions to assist IDPs to return.
- The IDPs are concerned about their safety and oppose the process of relocation.
- The Orthodox Christian Gishen Debre-Kerbe Mariam Church located in Amhara was shelled by ENDF forces, reports state.
- The African Development Bank (AfDB) will immediately withdraw all international staff members from Ethiopia over assault on two staff members by government security forces. This decision comes after an official complaint submitted to Ethiopian authorities in November was not resolved.

- The CEO of the Turkish drone manufacturer BAYKAR received a medal of honour from Ethiopia, as the first foreigner to receive such a recognition. The medal was given over the role of the drones in the Tigray war.
- During the Tigray war and other Ethiopian wars, civilians were killed in large numbers by drone attacks.

### **Situation in Tigray (per 20 December)**

- A European Parliament delegation urged for withdrawal of Eritrean forces from Tigray during their visit to the region. The delegation led by Isabel Wiseler met with the president of the Tigray Interim Administration, Getachew Reda, on Tuesday.

### **Situation in South Sudan (per 20 December)**

- South Sudan marked the 10th anniversary of the outbreak of civil violence on 15 December.
- On the anniversary, the Embassies of Canada, Norway, the UK, and the US called for South Sudan's leaders to "the steps necessary to hold free, fair, and peaceful elections in December 2024".
- Despite peace pacts which included commitments to hold perpetrators to account, there is still "a near total impunity" for documented violations committed during the conflict, states Amnesty International.
- Two refugees were killed in an attack against a convoy organised by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to transport refugees from Abyei to the Wedweil refugee settlement.
- The refugees were abducted by armed youth and were later found dead.
- Refugees aboard a boat transporting people via the river to Malakal, organised by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), had to be rescued after the boat began taking on water.
- The incidents highlight the security issues for refugees in South Sudan, state IOM and UNHCR.
- Border conflicts killed one person and injured three in the ongoing clashes between Ngok-Dinka of Abyei state and Twic-Dinka of Warrap state, sources report.

### **Regional Situation (per 20 December)**

- Chadian authorities expelled 4 Sudanese diplomats on Saturday with an order to leave the country within 72 hours.
- The decision comes after Sudanese deputy commander of SAF, Lt Gen Yasir El Atta, accused Chad of allowing UAE to supply weapons for RSF through their territory.
- Ethiopia accused Egypt of maintaining "colonial era mentality" and erecting "roadblocks against efforts toward convergence" after the 4th round of trilateral negotiations on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) failed.
- Egypt, in a reaction to the failed talks, held in Addis Ababa between 17-19 December 2023, said that Ethiopia refuses "to accept any of the technical or legal compromise solutions".

### **Links of interest**

- ['Losing hope': Sudan civilians terrified as RSF attacks second-biggest city](#)
- [Sudan conflict: Hundreds of thousands flee al-lazira safe-haven - UN](#)
- [Resistance Committees accuse RSF of looting civilian property in Al-lazirah State](#)
- [Displacement crisis in Sudan deepens as fighting spreads](#)
- [President of Human Rights Council appoints members of new investigative mechanism on Sudan](#)
- [Nearly 30,000 Babies Will Be Born In Sudan Over Next Three Months With No Medical Assistance - Save The Children](#)
- [Fitch downgrades Ethiopia further into junk territory as default looms](#)
- [News: Displaced individuals in Jara IDP center fear uncertain future amidst eviction orders](#)
- [Historical Gishen Debre-Kerbe Mariam Church in Amhara Region shelled with heavy weapons](#)
- [AfDB to withdraw international staff from Ethiopia after assault](#)
- [Turkish Drone Manufacturer CEO Receives Ethiopia's Highest Honor](#)
- [Joint Statement by the Embassies of Canada, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States](#)
- [South Sudanese's justice is delayed, denied for a decade](#)
- [IOM and UNHCR are deeply concerned over the risks faced in relocating refugees and returnees away from border areas](#)
- [Press Statement on the Fourth Round of Negotiation on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam \(GERD\)](#)
- [Egypt says talks over Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam have failed -statement](#)
- [Chad expels four Sudanese diplomats](#)

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