

# SITUATION REPORT - HORN OF AFRICA & NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

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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.

### **Situation in Sudan (per 25 January)**

- Humanitarian staff members received the first permits to travel to Khartoum in 90 days, states Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). Large numbers of Khartoum residents who do not have means to flee the city have been left without a functioning healthcare system.
- Three days of severe fighting has been reported from Babanusa in West Kordofan, where Rapid Support Forces (RSF) launched a military offence against Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) in order to capture their headquarters.

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

- 516,658 refugees crossed Sudan to South Sudan since the start of the conflict in April 2023 out of which 81% are South Sudanese returnees. However, the majority of the most recent arrivals are Sudanese refugees, amounting to 41% of total arrivals between 6-19 January.
- Plans for new refugee settlements are being made in the Benishangul Gumuz region in Ethiopia amid the increased influx of refugees from Sudan, according to Yasin Ashenafi, head of the local branch of the Ethiopian Refugee and Returnee Service.
- Sudanese refugee children in Chad are experiencing acute hunger, with at least five confirmed casualties from starvation. Diminishing food resources and a decline in humanitarian assistance resulted in malnutrition of refugee children.

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

- An increasing number of people are kidnapped for ransom in the Oromia region of Ethiopia. Victims are tortured until family members pay the ransoms.
- Whereas before, kidnappings were rare and usually politically motivated, they have now become commonplace and are targeting everyone due to the broken economy, states The Guardian.
- The Central Committee meeting of the Prosperity Party, PM Abiy Ahmed's ruling party, has been ongoing since yesterday, to discuss national and party issues.

### **Situation in Tigray (per 25 January)**

- Internally displaced persons in Tigray held a peaceful protest in Mekelle yesterday calling for withdrawal of foreign forces from Tigray so as to be able to safely return to their home.
- All major cities across Tigray, including Shire, Adigrad and Axum, have been organising rallies this week demanding Eritrean and Amhara militias to withdraw from the Tigray region and swift implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement.
- Reports of hundreds of children dying of starvation are coming in from remote areas, while the federal government denies that a famine is imminent, warns Alex de Waal.
- The current signs of starvation are particularly disturbing as the harvest period for Tigray in November means that food should still be plentiful, states De Waal.

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## Situation in Eritrea (per 25 January)

- Eritrea is the worst jailor of journalists on the African continent, states the 2023 report of the Committee to Protect Journalists. It also has some of the longest known cases of imprisonment of journalists around the world, and none have faced any charges.
- Egypt and Ethiopia are in second and third place. All eight journalists imprisoned in Ethiopia were locked up following their coverage of the conflict in Amhara.

## Regional Situation (per 25 January)

- The UN's cholera response in Somalia is being scaled up, as 474 new suspected cases and 9 associated deaths were reported in the second week of January. The driver of the current outbreak is the lack of access to sanitation and safe drinking water for persons displaced by the flooding.
- Tensions between Somalia and Ethiopia over Ethiopia's MoU with Somaliland could lead to escalation in indirect conflicts between forces and proxies of competing sides, warn analysts.
- It is also likely to lead to a freeze in regional counter-terrorism cooperation at a time when al-Shabaab is likely to benefit from anger in the Somali community.

## International Situation (per 25 January)

- The United Arab Emirates (UAE) rejected the accusations of supplying weapons to the RSF. This claim was made earlier this week by the UN report citing "credible" evidence.
- UAE stated that the detected flights described in the report were carrying humanitarian aid. Experts, however, claim that the RSF is heavily dependent on the support of the UAE.
- Germany's Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock had to make an unexpected stopover in Saudi Arabia, after Eritrea denied permission for her plane to fly over en route to Djibouti.
- Baerbock's plans included visits to Djibouti, Kenya and South Sudan in a three-day trip to discuss the war in Sudan.
- Nahla Valji has been appointed as the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Eritrea. Valji has a background in UN programs focused on women, peace and security.
- The European Parliament and the Council reached an agreement on stricter rules to fight human trafficking. The proposal for a revision of the Anti-trafficking Directive had been submitted by the European Commission in December 2022.
- The proposal includes stronger provisions on mandatory referral mechanisms, human trafficking committed through ICTs, stronger governance rules for member states, as well as mandatory annual data collection across EU member states.

## Central Mediterranean Route Situation (per 25 January)

- The EU must make addressing human rights in Egypt a key pillar of its efforts to enhance collaboration on migration control, states Amnesty International.
- Egypt routinely arrests and detains refugees and migrants in cruel and inhumane conditions, as well as deporting them unlawfully without assessment of their protection needs, warns Amnesty.

## Links of interest

- [Sudan: People In Khartoum State Deprived Of Lifesaving Services](#)
- [Brutal fighting continues in W. Kordofan's Babanusa for third day](#)
- [South Sudan: Response to the Sudan Crisis Situation Report No. 25 \(As of 19 January 2024\)](#)
- [ከሱዳን ወደ ቤኒሻንጉል ጉሙዝ እየገቡ ላሉ ስደተኞች ተጨማሪ ጣቢያ ሊቋቋም ነው](#)
- [Ethiopia starvation: Fear of famine in Tigray grows](#)
- ['This is a pandemic': Ethiopia's Oromia region gripped by surge in kidnappings](#)
- [Ethiopian PM Abiy Ahmed on X](#)
- [Ethiopia: IDPs in #Tigray rally for swift withdrawal of occupying forces, safe return home](#)
- [2023 prison census: jailed journalist numbers near record high: Israel imprisonments spike](#)
- [Weekly Cholera/AWD Situation Report - Somalia, Epidemiological Week 2 \(8-14 January 2024\)](#)
- [A Port Deal Puts the Horn of Africa on the Brink](#)
- [UAE denies sending weapons to paramilitary group in Sudan war](#)
- [German government flight woes continue on way to Djibouti](#)
- [Commission welcomes breakthrough political agreement on stronger rules to fight trafficking in human beings](#)
- [Secretary-General appoints Ms. Nahla Valji of Canada as the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Eritrea](#)

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