

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 120 - 06 April 2021

Europe External Programme with Africa is a Belgium-based Centre of Expertise with in-depth knowledge, publications, and networks, specialised in issues of peace building, refugee protection and resilience in the Horn of Africa. EEPA has published extensively on issues related to 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](#).

Ethiopian Briefing (as per 05 April)

- An Ethiopian briefing on its approach regarding public relations management has been leaked. It discusses various priorities that Ethiopia needs to pursue in order to lessen international pressure.
- In the US they should avoid a new house resolution regarding Tigray “at all costs”, and “it is crucial” to water down the first resolution as much as possible. The need to stop any future US resolution is mentioned multiple times throughout the document.
- The briefing also urges Ethiopian diplomats to more actively engage with their EU and US counterparts to avoid potential future sanctions under the Magnitsky act (both in the EU and US).
- The proposed actions include a more active role for Ethiopian embassies to respond to concern in the US and EU and to mobilizing the diaspora networks to engage with parliamentarians. The networks should push a common goal and be guided by Ethiopian diplomatic missions.
- The briefing also puts forward several talking points; those include the increased humanitarian access, the fact that the UN and other international organisations have confirmed this, and the “notification process” that allows easier access for humanitarian personnel.
- It is important to note that while the UN and other international organisations have said that the situation has improved, it is only marginal and much remains to be done. They have also said that humanitarian access to large parts of Tigray remains often difficult, and sometimes impossible.

Reported Situation in Tigray (as per 05 April)

- TMH broadcasted an interview conducted with a 16-year-old captive Eritrean soldier, Rhodamine Yemane. “I was forcibly taken in December 2020 to a military camp and trained for three months. I entered Tigray with the 22nd division of the Eritrean forces on 16 March 2021,” Rhodamine said.
- “They (Eritrean commanders) told us not to be afraid of Tigrayans saying we will finish the Tigray forces,” said Rhodamine. According to Rhodamine, Eritrean officers have told soldiers being sent that Tigrayan soldiers are ill equipped. They also told them that Tigrayan forces had been defeated, and now it was only a matter of capturing Debretsion Gebremicheal.
- Rhodamine says the logistics of the Eritrean forces such as biscuits, packed meat and green beans mainly comes from the Ethiopian National Defense forces (ENDF) and only bread comes from Eritrea.
- “The Eritrean officers told us that Tigrayans have only built apartments and houses, but we have built minds. Now you see the houses and apartments have been easily destroyed,” said Rhodamine.
- According to Rhodamine, the 53rd division of the Eritrean forces was mainly engaged in looting and destruction in Tigray.
- “For me it was only three days since I came to Tigray and I was not paid my salary. I saw other Eritrean soldiers having Ethiopian Birr in their pockets, but I do not know who gave them,” said Rhodamine
- Rhodamine also said he wants to be reunited with his family. “I miss my mom, my father is in Mekelle with my sister,” added Rhodamine.
- The official Ethiopian foreign ministry twitter account thanked Eritrea for helping to fight against the TPLF. This comes after months of both governments denying that Eritrean troops were in Tigray. The tweets did not mention anything about Eritrean withdrawal.

- Multiple videos have emerged of Amhara militias beating up Oromo people. In one video, 6 people were killed as a result of the scene.
- There is an increasing belief in Tigray that the region should be independent. With a lot of violence being perpetrated against the local population, there is increasing support for independence as admitted by the interim government officials, due to crimes and violence committed against Tigrayans.
- People interviewed by the Financial Times have said that being Ethiopian meant nothing any more, and instead aspire for an independent Tigray. These sentiments will complicate future peace negotiations.
- Reports of two pregnant women have died in delivery in Samre due to lack of health facilities in Tigray.
- The UNHCR has released new data regarding the refugees arriving from Tigray in Sudan. They say 61 thousand have arrived since the start of the conflict. However 45 thousand of those arrived in November and only 1.500 arrived in February.
- According to many refugees the border between both countries has been effectively locked, with people trying to cross, in either direction, being shot at.
- The Oromo Liberation Front issued a statement that they have concrete evidence of Eritrean troops fighting in the Oromia Regional State.
- At least 30 people were killed and more than 50 others were injured in an attack in Haruka area of the Afar regional state.
- African Arguments report says any probe into war crimes committed in the Tigray region that involves the AU or the government's own Human Rights Commission stands little chance of being effective.
- Tigrayan political parties and the ousted President, Debretsion Gebremichael, wouldn't consider a probe into the war led by the AU or Ethiopian Human Rights Commission as legitimate: "They expect that any such effort would be unduly influenced by the Ethiopian government and serve as a way for the state to cover up, rather than expose, war crimes," added the report
- "The Somali Regional State Special Forces carried out the attack in Haruka kebele and more than 30 civilians were shot dead," said Ahmed Hamed, Deputy Police commissioner of the Afar Regional state.
- According to the Afar Regional State Police Commission, two members of the Somali Region State Special Forces have also killed two government employees in Gewane town of Afar.

Reported Situation in the Horn region(as per 05 April)

- Eritrea has announced that it was resuming commercial flights. Only two routes will be served for the time being, one between Asmara and Addis Ababa, another between Asmara and Dubai.
- According to Release International, 35 christians were arrested in Asmara and Asab in March. They were arrested while praying.

Reported International situation (as per 05 April)

- U.S. State Department spokesperson Ned Price said the United States was gravely concerned about the violence in Ethiopia's Tigray region and was looking into the reports of massacres there.
- Price welcomed statements that Eritrean troops would withdraw from Tigray and said withdrawal would be an important step forward in de-escalation in the region.

Disclaimer: All information in this situation report 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@eepe.be any additional information and corrections.

Links of interest

<https://ethiopiainsider.com/2021/2807>

<https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/sudan-eastern-border-ethiopia-emergency-situation-arrivals-update-kassala-gedaref-30>

<https://releaseinternational.org/religious-freedom-hopes-dashed-in-eritrea-as-35-more-christians-arrested/>

<https://africanarguments.org/2021/03/why-the-tigray-investigation-should-be-conducted-by-un-alone/>