

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 65 - 24 January 2021

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Reported war situation (as confirmed per 23 January)

- It is reported that Eritrean soldiers, controlling many districts in Irob land, Tigray, kill many Tigrayan young men: “We hear Eritrean soldiers told the local elders and parents that, they have orders to kill all male youth older than 15.”
- It is reported that “there is no telephone, no aid, no electricity, no freedom to movement even locally, no access to any external organization of any kind whatsoever in the border areas with Eritrea. Eritrean forces also denied access to the interim government in Tigray and the Ethiopian army staff to go past Adigrat town.” In Adigrat telephone lines were restored on 20/21 January.
- ATV Asena received credible reports that Eritrean troops brutally killed more than 50 civilians in the areas of Irob and Alitena. For example, in an area named Gamda four members of a family (with an age between 18-25) were murdered. Besides, people are also dying from starvation and there is no communication, electricity, water supply and banks services.
- The Irob of Ethiopia and the Saho of Eritrea are Saho speakers. It is also the case that the Saho in Eritrea face marginalisation starting from the fact that the Eritrean Government refuses to admit the existence of any indigenous people in Eritrea (i.e Kunama, Nara, Saho etc..). In fact in Eritrea in the Saho areas the Eritrean Government has appropriated land. This is a physical appropriation through enclosure over and above the Eritrean 1994 Land Proclamation.
- A delegation of the Catholic church is reaching out to the Catholic Bishop in Adigrat, with a delegation, following a letter of the Cardinal on the dire situation. It is reported that the Catholic Cathedral church of Adigrat in Tigray has been damaged and was looted by Eritrean forces.
- The Catholic delegation reported that a “church compound in the diocese was used as a military command center, even when the parish priests and the Daughters of St. Ann were staying there. The priests and the nuns witnessed heavy fighting.” A nearby Orthodox church, mosque and other church buildings sustained damage.
- A List is published with 29 people (25 names) identified as victims of a massacre on the 5th of January 2021 inside Medhane-Alem church in the districts of Gulomakeda, Zalanbessa. The list includes 5 priests and 4 deacons. The church is located in a village called GueTelo. The brutal massacres are allegedly perpetrated by Eritrean soldiers.
- Hundreds of Somali parents whose sons were sent to Eritrea for military training and sent to fight in Tigray secretly, have been camping in the streets of Mogadishu for the last two days. They demand the government to provide information on where they are. Some of the Somali parents of Somali youths reportedly killed in the Tigray conflict met with Ahmed Moalim Fiqi, Security Minister in Galkayo. They want to know whether their children are dead or alive.
- Eritrean forces guard Mekelle airport, in the capital of Tigray, as security. There is a curfew imposed in Mekelle at night from 18.00 hours.

- People in Tigray are dying from starvation, stated Abraha Desta, Prosperity Party's appointed head of Tigray bureau of social and labour affairs: "While waiting for a comprehensive report, until now 10 in Gulomeked Woreda and 3 children in Adwa have been reported dead from starvation."
- Somali officials and the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) under the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) claimed that 189 al-Shabaab fighters are killed in an operation in southern Somalia by Ugandan soldiers, using attack helicopter gunships. Two mounted weapons and motorbikes were also destroyed in separate fire strikes.
- There has been fire detected on 22/1 near Dansha town, Western Tigray region, where there is still active conflict.

Reported situation in Ethiopia (as confirmed per 23 January)

- Reports of forces backed by Somali regional government attacked Ethiopian federal Police at Mille district, Adaytu Kebelle, Afar region. During the attack, several federal police members were killed and severely wounded.
- The Ethiopian parliament adopts the State of Emergency to the Metekel zone of Benishangul Gumuz region.
- Sudanese State Media (SUNA) quoted Indian Al-Jaili, an official in charge of the Refugee Commission in the Blue Nile State, stating that more than 400 Ethiopian refugees have crossed to the Sudanese borders and reached the Blue Nile State and settled in Yabger, Gezira, Minza, and Al Dim areas. Refugees are displaced due to recent conflict in Benishangul Gumuz, Metekel zone.
- The Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) issues a press release urging the Federal Government and the interim Regional Administration "to devise emergency routes and special mechanisms to provide emergency humanitarian assistance in areas where there is a security threat and to facilitate the provision of services in all areas."

Reported International situation (as confirmed per 23 January)

- The Louisville's Ethiopian community in the US calls for President Biden to add pressure to help end the conflict in Tigray.
- Concern raised that the war in Tigray was pre-planned: "Outlines of a plan were revealed when information was leaked about a meeting held by President Isaias just prior to the outbreak of the war." Eritrean President Isaias "brought together his closest confidantes on the eve of the Tigray war. He said that Eritrea had to accept that it had a small economy and a lengthy Red Sea coast that it cannot patrol on its own. He suggested forming some sort of 'union' with Ethiopia, at least in terms of economic co-operation and maritime security."
- An article on the use of Chinese drones in the war in Tigray from the UAE base in Eritrea, Assab, states: "The UAE supports Ethiopia and dispatched drones to fight the rebels. After the Ethiopian army has seen the power of the pterosaur drone, it is estimated that it will have the idea of buying it. After all, it can have the ability to attack the ground without spending a lot of money (...). UAVs are very attractive to Ethiopia." There is concern that the regional expansion of the war in the Horn is leading to increasing supplies of arms and to regional arms trade including, through mercenaries, and that this will escalate the regional conflict.

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Links of interest

<https://www.catholicsun.org/2021/01/22/ethiopian-church-delegation-massive-damage-looting-in-adigrat-diocese/>
<https://eu.courier-journal.com/story/news/2021/01/22/louisville-ethiopian-community-protests-intervention-tigray/6672311002/>
<https://www.ethiopia-insight.com/2021/01/23/the-peace-that-delivered-total-war-against-tigray/>
<https://www.voanews.com/africa/ugandan-airstrikes-somalia-kill-189-al-shabab-fighters>
<https://eritreahub.org/what-are-the-war-aims-of-ethiopia-eritrea-and-somalia-in-tigray>