

Situation Report EEPA HORN No. 31 - 20 December

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Regional dimension (as confirmed per 20 December)

- IGAD to meet Sunday 20 Dec in Addis Ababa, chaired by Sudan PM Hamdok. Today a meeting was held in Djibouti between Djibouti PM Kamil Mohamed, Somalia Pres Farmaajo and VP Mabior of South Sudan.

Military situation (as confirmed per 20 December)

- Tension between Ethiopia and Sudan is increasing. Sudan has sent more troops, including Rapid Support Forces, and equipment to the border area. Support from the Bani Amer and al-Habb tribes in the states of Kassala and Gedaref, including food supplies and finances. Talks with Ethiopia have stopped.
- A report based on testimonials of three Egyptian officials and one European diplomat indicates that the UAE used its base in Assab (Eritrea) to launch drones strikes against Tigray. The investigative platform Bellingcat confirmed the presence of Chinese-produced drones at the UAE's military base in Assab, Eritrea.
- Egyptian officials are reportedly concerned about strengthening ties between the UAE and Israel. They fear that both countries will collaborate in the construction of an alternative to the Suez canal starting from Haifa in Israel.
- Egypt is reportedly encouraging Sudan to support the TPLF in Tigray. It wants to strengthen a joint position in relation to negotiations on the GERD Dam, which impacts both countries downstream.
- Sudan has reportedly captured Eritrean soldiers dressed in Amhara militia uniforms fighting along the Sudan border alongside Amhara special forces.
- A foreign diplomat has stated that "thousands" of Eritrean soldiers are engaged in Tigray. Two diplomats stated that Eritrean troops entered Ethiopia through three northern border towns: Zalambessa, Rama and Badme.
- Killings occurred in Edaga Hamus, a small town in Tigray. Eritrean soldiers reportedly killed approximately 150 civilians, including a priest and women seeking refuge in a church, located 4 km to the west of Marieam Dengelat. The town and some rural villages (Maimegelta, Dengelat, Tsa'a and Hangoda) are under the control of Eritrean forces. The military is slaughtering the animals. People are starving to death.
- Eritrean soldiers were in Mekelle (Tigray), according to a resident and two diplomats receiving information from the ground. They state that some soldiers were wearing Eritrean uniforms, whilst others wore Ethiopian uniforms but "spoke Tigrinya with an Eritrean accent and drove trucks without license plates."
- There are multiple reports that the Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) are looting property from the Sur Company and transporting the loot to Addis Ababa.

- A deacon and 15 civilians were killed by Eritrean and ENDF soldiers in Adigrat while trying to protect the Addis Pharmaceutical Factory from looting.

International dimension (as confirmed per 20 December)

- US Senators Booker (D-NJ) and Young (R-IN) released a joint statement on the conflict in Ethiopia: “The conflict in Ethiopia remains far from over, despite Prime Minister Abiy’s claim that military operations are complete. We are deeply concerned by reports of Eritrean refugees in Tigray being killed, abducted and forcibly returned to Eritrea by Eritrean forces, as well as disturbing reports that some trying to reach safer areas are being prevented from leaving.” They also noted that “the internationalisation of the conflict is a threat to US interests” and called on Ethiopia to abide by its commitments.
- Cameron Hudson, a former director for African affairs at the US National Security Council, stated that there is division in the U.S. government on speaking publicly about Eritrea’s involvement in Tigray, due to strategic and tactical considerations.
- An analyst believes that Eritrean President Isaias is weak and when the TPLF is removed, Eritrean generals will remove Isaias, leading to “integration” of Eritrean and Ethiopia, giving Ethiopia access to a seaport.
- The EU has stated that Tigray is on the edge of a humanitarian catastrophe which risks destabilizing the whole neighbourhood. The EU increased humanitarian funding for the area by €23.7 million on Saturday. EU humanitarian assistance will go to organisations in Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan.
- UN deputy spokesperson for SG Antonio Guterres, has stated that many people in the region have not received any assistance, and that deliveries by some agencies have been limited. The UN continues to “call for immediate and unfettered access to all areas where people have been affected by the fighting.”

Reported situation in Tigray (as confirmed per 20 December)

- Police and TPLF absence has led to lawlessness in Mekelle. Youth especially targeted by ENDF soldiers.
- Electricity and phone lines intermittently working in Mekelle, but not in most areas in Tigray. The Internet is still down.
- Civil servants were ordered back to work by the provisional government in Tigray but few report to work.
- The UN reports that many Tigray people have no access to food, water, cash, power and telecommunications.
- Catholic Bishop Tesfaselassie Medhin of Adigrat has been reported safe in his residence.
- The Apostolic Nuncio to Ethiopia, Archbishop Antoine Camilleri, expressed “solidarity with Bishop Medhin who was missing in the assembly because of the situation in his diocese where the war is hard hit.”

Reported situation in Ethiopia (as confirmed per 20 December)

- Ethnic profiling of Tigray continues. A prominent Tigrayan activist and lawyer living in Addis Ababa, was detained on Saturday by Ethiopian police. A former TV Tigray employee and several priests of Tigrayan ethnic origins were also reportedly arrested. Another Tigrayan, an Ethiopian Airlines employee was arrested last week

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Links of interest

<https://www.booker.senate.gov/news/press/booker-young-joint-bipartisan-statement-regarding-the-conflict-in-ethiopia>
<https://africa.cgtv.com/2020/12/19/many-people-in-ethiopia-tigray-have-not-received-assistance-un-spokesman/>
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<https://www.reuters.com/article/ethiopia-conflict-eritrea-idUSKBN281OX>
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