

# 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 23 January)**

- Fighting resumed in El Fasher, North Darfur, on Wednesday as the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) launched an offensive against the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Heavy artillery and fighter jets were reportedly used in the fight, marking the end of a 48-hour ultimatum set by the RSF on Monday.
- RSF issued the 48-hour ultimatum to SAF and its allied militias in El Fasher to surrender and evacuate the city, in exchange of safe passage guarantee and a promise of humane treatment.
- An increase in missing persons, including children and internally displaced persons (IDPs), is reported in Nyala, South Darfur. This is linked to arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances, reports the African Center for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS), calling for independent and transparent investigation.
- Crimes against civilians in Al Jazirah, Darfur, and Khartoum on the basis of ethnicity are committed by both warring factions in Sudan, state NGOs. There are reports of civilians, including children, being abducted, beaten, or killed by forces linked to SAF and RSF in January 2025.
- Pregnant women in the Sharg El Nil area, East Nile state, are facing a dire situation due to the collapsing healthcare system, leading to increased maternal and fetal mortality rates, malnutrition, and psychological distress exacerbated by the ongoing conflict.
- Sudanese officials are actively working to recover stolen artefacts from museums which have suffered extensive looting, with many items reportedly smuggled abroad through South Sudan.
- The situation is exacerbated by the lack of communication from South Sudanese authorities, as well as ongoing plundering of other museums, prompting Sudan to collaborate with Interpol and UNESCO.

### **Situation in South Sudan (per 23 January)**

- South Sudanese authorities have temporarily blocked access to social media platforms for at least 30 days following violent riots triggered by reported killings of South Sudanese nationals in Sudan. Videos depicting the alleged killings were circulated on social media.
- According to authorities, the suspension of social media aims to mitigate the spread of violence and unrest, as recent events have led to significant casualties and property damage in South Sudan.
- The Tumaini peace talks between the South Sudan government and opposition groups resumed on Monday in Nairobi, involving parties that did not sign the 2018 Agreement ending the five-year civil war.

### **Situation in Ethiopia (per 23 January)**

- Thousands of Muslims protested in Mekelle on Tuesday, demanding that schools in Axum comply with court rulings allowing Muslim female students to wear hijabs in classrooms. The protests were organised by the Tigray Islamic Affairs Supreme Council.
- Despite previous legal directives, many students have been denied access to education, protesters state, prompting the rally to advocate for their rights.
- Increasing divisions among senior leadership of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) could threaten the fragile peace in the Tigray region, warned Abune Mathias I, the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church.

- In letters to TPLF Chairman Debretsion Gebremichael and Interim Regional Administration President Getachew Reda, he expressed disappointment over their lack of dialogue.
- The Tigray Interim Administration stated that the government employees have not received salaries of 17 months as the Ethiopian federal government has yet to disburse the rehabilitation budget.
- Recent earthquakes affected approximately 99,000 people and caused extensive damage to local infrastructure across multiple regions in Ethiopia.

### **Regional & International Situation (per 23 January)**

- The appointment of Eritrea's UN Ambassador, Sofia Tesfamariam, as Vice President of UNICEF's Board raised concerns across civil society. Critics state that Tesfamariam's support for the Eritrean regime "contradicts UNICEF's mission [...] but, also threatens to undermine its credibility on the global stage".
- The vice president of UNICEF's Board is elected by board members, and board members are elected by the UN Economic and Social Council from the different regional groups of the Member States.
- The organisation Human Rights Concern – Eritrea called on UNICEF to reconsider this appointment to maintain its commitment to human rights and the welfare of children. An Eritrean journalist launched a petition against the appointment.
- The International Criminal Court (ICC) has issued an arrest warrant for Osama Elmasry Njeem, who is accused of alleged crimes against humanity and war crimes including murder, torture, and sexual violence, at Mitiga Prison in Tripoli, Libya since February 2015.
- Although he was arrested in Italy following the ICC's request, he was unexpectedly released and returned to Libya on Tuesday as the appeals court declared a procedural error in his arrest.

### **Refugee and Migration Situation (per 23 January)**

- Sudanese women face brutal conditions endured at the hands of human traffickers in Libya, including physical abuse and sexual violence. Often families, including small children, are placed in a warehouse run by traffickers, as soon as they cross the border, being subjected to abuse while extorted for money.
- The Dutch National Rapporteur on human trafficking published a report about the severe human rights abuses endured by refugees and migrants in Libya, as part of trafficking for ransom.
- Companies, factories, and businesses in Libya are obliged to regularise the employment status of their workers by the end of January, according to a new policy by the Libya's Anti-Illegal Immigration Service which will particularly affect refugees who do not possess official identification documents.
- Over one million people have fled the ongoing conflict in Sudan to seek refuge in South Sudan. Over 770,000 crossed through the Joda border in the past 21 months, according to IOM and UNHCR data.
- The UK's bureaucratic hurdles make it nearly impossible for individuals in war zones like Sudan and Gaza to reunite with family members in the UK, despite existing provisions meant to facilitate such reunifications. The family reunification policy has been criticised by charities and MPs.

### **Links of interest**

- [Sudanese army launches airstrikes in El Fasher as RSF deadline expires - Sudan Tribune](#)
- [Darfur: A Region Ravaged by Enforced Disappearances](#)
- [Ethnicity-Based Attacks in Aljazeera where Women were Killed, Beaten and Abducted](#)
- [Healthcare collapse threatens pregnant women in Sudan's Sharg El Nil](#)
- [Sudan widens search for stolen artefacts sold abroad - Sudan Tribune](#)
- [South Sudan suspends social media platforms over videos of Sudan killings](#)
- [South Sudan peace talks resume in Nairobi](#)
- [News: Thousands protest in Mekelle against hijab ban in Axum schools, demand enforcement of court ruling](#)
- [News: EOTC Patriarch warns of 'growing divisions' within TPLF leadership, states it undermines 'glimmer of peace'](#)
- [ቃል የተገባው ማቆቃሚያ የባቦንታ ባለመለቀቅ የ17 ወራት ይመዘገባል ለሰላም ለሰላም የተገኘው ክልል ለፓርላማው አሳወቀ](#)
- [Human Rights Concern – Eritrea Condemns Appointment of Eritrea's UN Ambassador, Ms. Sofia Tesfamariam, as VP of UNICEF's Board](#)
- [Review the Appointment of Ms. Sofia Tesfamariam to UNICEF's Board](#)
- [Mensensmokkel vanuit Nederland: Eritreeërs geslagen, ontvoerd en doorverkocht](#)
- [ICC arrest warrant against Osama Elmasry Njeem for alleged crimes against humanity and war crimes](#)
- ['A living hell': Sudanese women face rape and abuse in Libya](#)
- [Migranten als verdienmodel](#)
- [Libya sets deadline for 'undocumented' Sudanese refugees](#)
- [South Sudan hits record one million new arrivals from Sudan crisis](#)
- [Home Office accused of 'blocking' people stuck in war zones from joining family in UK](#)

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