



Situation Update # 13 on Developments in Tigray – Ethiopia

17 November 2020

General

1. As of 1710hrs (ELT) on 17 November, credible reporting indicated fighting in the vicinity of Shire and UN agencies had not been able to contact staff since November 16 in the evening. A statement posted by government affiliated FBC media network on the evening of 17 November, claimed that, “defence forces seized Shire town after destroying difficult trenches located in Adi Nebrid and Adi Daero”. Later in the day, additional credible information indicated that a humanitarian partner was able to briefly contact its staff in Shire at 1700hrs (ELT) and reported that fighting had died down, but it was still not safe. This information cannot be verified by UNDSS.
2. On November 17, reporting indicated fighting between EDF and Tigray Regional Security Forces in Yala Woreda, Fenti Zone, along the Afar regional border with Tigray Region. No further details known.
3. On November 17, government affiliated Ethiopian News Agency reported that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed had stated that the three-day deadline for Tigray Regional Security Forces and affiliated militias to surrender had expired. In a statement on Facebook, the Prime Minister also reportedly stated that, “Following the expiration of this deadline, the final critical act of law enforcement will be done in the coming days.”
4. On 17 November, AFP news agency reported that Tigray Regional President, Debretsion Gebremichael, had told them in an interview that “the government and people of Tigray” would hold their ground, and that, “This campaign cannot be finished. As long as the army of the invaders is in our land, the fight will continue. They cannot keep us silent by military force.”

UNSMS Situation

5. Following the ongoing security forces operations in Addis Ababa, a UN staff member’s residence was reportedly searched on the morning of November 17, in Kirkos Sub-City of Addis Ababa. Security forces found a VHF handheld radio and subsequently detained the staff member despite him explaining that he worked for the UN and produced his UN ID. The staff member was eventually released but the radio was not returned.



6. The situation in Shire is of significant concern. Currently, there are 55 UN critical national staff in the town of Shire, comprising WFP-5, IOM -16 and UNHCR- 34. They have been advised to seek shelter in the safe room at the UNHCR compound if fighting occurred in the town.

7. The second relocation convoy from Mekelle to Semera, with 248 non-UN personnel from 29 member states, arrived in Semera at 0750hrs (ELT) on 17 November from where they were supposed to be airlifted to Addis Ababa. However, following coordination complications, the local police ordered the convoy to proceed to Addis Ababa by road. The convoy is expected in Addis Ababa on 18 November.