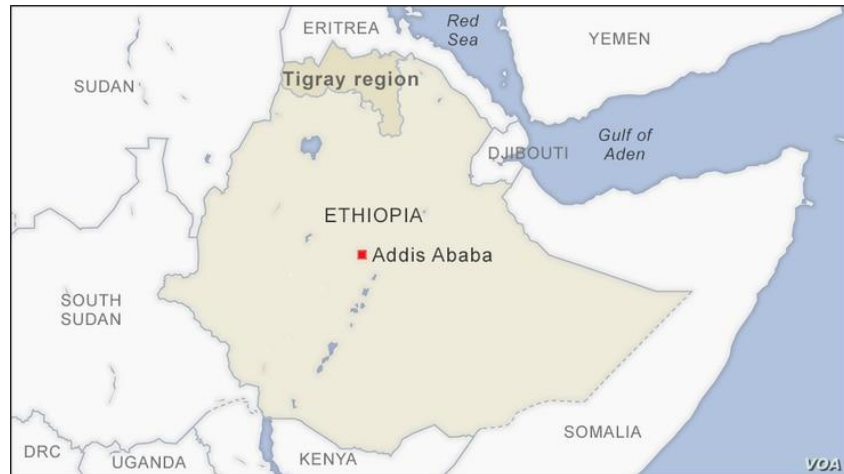


Security Advisory - Ethiopia

Tensions remain high in Ethiopia, with reports emerging on 6 November that additional federal military personnel were deployed to the northern Tigray Region on Friday, as clashes with regional security forces have continued for a third day.

Defence chiefs have confirmed that units around the country had been mobilized for the operations in Tigray Region, though currently it remains unclear how many have been deployed to the north-western region of the country. The announcement comes despite calls from multiple countries as well as the UN and EU for a de-escalation in the region following the sudden outbreak of hostilities between 3 - 4 November.



The initial clashes in the region occurred overnight Tuesday - Wednesday and were focused around the main bases used by Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)-aligned forces in the northwest of the region, notably in the areas of Danshesha, Humer and Kekar. Clashes were also reported outside the regional capital Mekele, where TPLF-aligned forces launched an attack on federal military bases on 3 November, a move that triggered the offensive. However by Friday 6 November, fighting shifted into the western areas of the border between the regions of Tigray and Amhara, particularly around the town of Abdurafi, close to the border with neighbouring Sudan. Unverified reports indicate fresh fighting in the north-east of the Tigray region. On Thursday 5 November, reports also indicated that fighter aircraft were reported to have been operating over and around Mekele, though it currently remains unclear whether any airstrikes were carried out.

CONTEXT

On 4 November, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed announced that he had ordered a military offensive in the Tigray region after he accused security forces aligned with the regional TPLF of attacking Ethiopian National Defence Forces' (ENDF) positions in the state. The operations comes after two years of rising tensions between the TPLF and the federal government in Addis Ababa amidst claims that the Tigray Region was being marginalized by the prime minister's sweeping reforms. Prior to that, the TPLF had dominated the government before the appointment of Abiy as prime minister in 2018. Tensions however escalated significantly in September 2020 when the TPLF staged their own regional elections in the Tigray region in defiance of a move by the federal government to suspend national elections due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Shortly after the election, the federal government declared the vote illegal while in early October, the upper house of Ethiopia's parliament voted to withhold budgetary subsidies to Tigray. With tensions rising significantly, on 3 November, regional authorities issued a statement, accusing Addis Ababa of planning a war in the Tigray region.

TRAVEL ADVISORY

The situation across the Tigray region remains fluid and the security situation could deteriorate with little notice. Further security operations and clashes are likely in the Tigray region in the near term and disruptions

to transportation and communications services are ongoing. There is also a realistic possibility of civilian harm in major flashpoint areas.

A six-month state of emergency has been declared in the Tigray region in response to recent attacks. As of Friday 6 November communications across the Tigray region, including Internet and mobile phone networks, remain blocked, effectively limiting information on the military operations occurring in the region. Overland travel restrictions have also been reported in Mekele, where local authorities have banned civilian vehicles from the roads. Similar restrictions are likely to be imposed in other areas of the Tigray region. Airspace over the region also remains closed as of Friday and flights to Mekel (MQX), Shire (SHC), and Axum (AXU) remain suspended, though those from Gondar (GDQ) resumed on 5 November.

Neighbouring Sudan on 5 November closed its border with Ethiopia in the wake of violence erupting in the Tigray region. Authorities in Kassala state disclosed that the closure is intended to stop any potential entry of fighters into Sudan. It currently remains unclear when the border will re-open.

MS RISK ADVISORY: Anyone currently in the Tigray region is advised to closely monitor the situation and to remain vigilant at all times. You should closely monitor the local media for information on the evolving situation and you should remain aware of ongoing security operations and militant activity. Expect a heightened security presence in several areas. You should carry identification documents with you at all times, avoid large gatherings, protests and demonstrations as they may turn violent with little or no notice, and adhere to all instructions issued by the local authorities and their home governments. Anyone in the Tigray region and planning to travel via the closed airports is advised to monitor the situation, confirm flights itineraries, review contingency and evacuation plans and remain vigilant.

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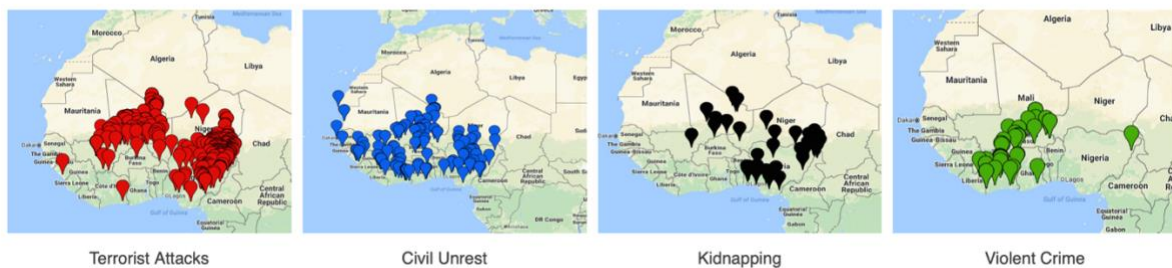
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