

## ETHIOPIA SITUATION (TIGRAY REGION)

19-24 November 2020



Ethiopian refugees, fleeing clashes in the country's northern Tigray region, cross the border into Hamdayet, Sudan, over the Tekeze river.

### Key Developments

- On Saturday 21 November, the African Union announced it has named Joaquim Chissano, former President of Mozambique, Ellen-Johnson Sirleaf, former President of Liberia, and Kgalema Motlanthe, former President of the Republic of South Africa, as Special Envoys to mediate and to create conditions for a conducive dialogue.
- UNHCR remains deeply concerned for the safety and security of all civilians in Tigray including the 100,000 Eritrean refugees located in four refugee camps in the region.
- Refugee numbers continue to rise with 4,751 people crossing into Sudan over the weekend of 21-22 November, bringing the total new arrivals to over 41,000 since early November.
- Increased aid is reaching refugees as more deliveries of supplies arrive at the border including food, medical supplies and ready to use therapeutic and supplementary food.
- From 17-18 November, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator together with UNHCR and UN agencies' country representatives undertook a mission to the border area to meet government officials and assess the response and how to speed up delivery.

## Overview

Total New Arrivals  
From Ethiopia <sup>1</sup>



**41,193**

Individuals

<sup>1</sup> Since 7<sup>th</sup> of November 2020.

Per State

Kassala **28,182** (68%)  
(Hamdayet)

Gedaref **12,309** (30%)  
(Ludgi, Abderafi)

Blue Nile **702** (2%)  
(Algazira, Yagolo, Yabisher)

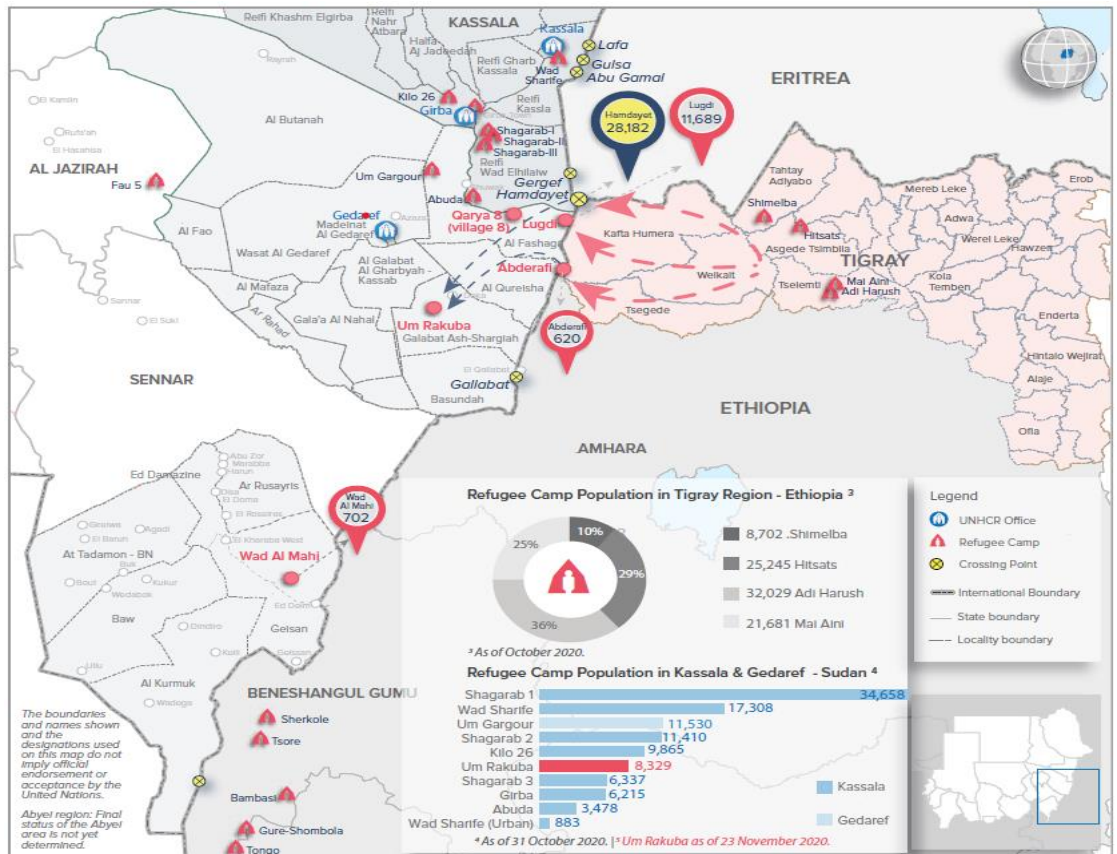
Arrivals  
average per day <sup>2</sup>  
(since 10<sup>th</sup> Nov)

**2,931**

<sup>2</sup> Arrivals average since  
beginning of Nov 2,423.

As the conflict continues to expand across the Tigray region, the ability to provide humanitarian services to 100,000 Eritrean refugees, and to growing numbers of internally displaced, remains severely constrained.

As of 23 November, 41,193 Ethiopians had crossed into East Sudan. The rate of new arrivals that had reached an average of 4,000 per day decreased to just 2,000 per day on 19 and 20 November. However, over the weekend, rates increased again with 3,111 arriving on Saturday and 1,640 on Sunday 22 November. The majority continue to cross at Hamdayet border point (27,533) in Kassala state, Lugdi border point and Abderaf border point in Gederaf state (12,042). No new arrivals are reported in Blue Nile State (702).



## UNHCR Response

### Ethiopia

UNHCR and other humanitarian actors continue to be largely unable to provide essential assistance and services inside the Tigray region. Reports indicate the number of internally displaced is growing. There is minimal information about the status of the nearly 100,000 Eritrean refugees located in four refugee camps in the region. Since 16 November, UNHCR has had very limited communication with staff due to the major communication blackout in place.

There are concerns that ongoing hostilities will drastically affect the services in the Eritrean refugee camps if access is not gained soon, including availability of water and essential medicines. The two months food rations distributed at the beginning of October are due to run out by the end of November.

UNHCR and other UN agencies continue to call for all parties to the conflict to protect displaced civilians and respect the safety of humanitarian staff. There is an urgent need for unimpeded and immediate humanitarian access to reach people in need in the Tigray region.

False information about UNHCR and its staff has been circulated on social media, causing UNHCR to issue several statements urging all those who share information or images on social media to act in a responsible manner and verify sources to help prevent the spread of misinformation.

## Sudan

Refugees from the Tigray region continue to stream into Sudan reaching 41,193 by 23 November, arriving to Hamdayet in Kassala State, and in Lugdi and Abderafi in Gedaref State. Sudan's Commissioner of Refugees (COR) is registering the new arrivals at household level.

The remote border areas are still heavily congested with overall poor living conditions despite the aid provided.

As of late 23 November, 8,329 people have been relocated over the course of the week to Um Rakuba on a journey that takes an entire day by bus. Assessment of the new site Tenetba at Fau 5 is underway. Plans are being made to relocate 60 Eritrean refugees who arrived with the Ethiopian population to Shagarab refugee camp.

As of 18 November, UNHCR protection desks established next to registration facilities have identified and referred 158 refugees with specific needs including pregnant women and lactating mothers; separated children and the elderly.

Nutritional screenings of children underway at the border sites and Um Rakuba have identified 17 severely acute malnourished (SAM), 678 were moderately acute malnourished (MAM) and 908 were at risk of malnutrition while 46 pregnant and 56 lactating women were identified as malnourished. More and more food, core relief items medical and nutritional supplies have reached the border areas and construction of temporary shelters is ongoing.

UNHCR and protection partners are increasing their protection monitoring on the ground. SGBV cases are receiving counselling with support from UNFPA. There are reports of family separations. Many refugees have expressed reluctance to leave the border points, some because they are still searching for missing family members. The Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS) along with ICRC are setting up a mechanism for family tracing.

**Lugdi in Gedaref State:** Refugees arriving at Lugdi continue to be transported by the Sudanese government to Village 8 further away from the border. There are now some 11,000 people at the site and UNHCR has received approval by the government to set up a reception area to facilitate registration. While refugees at Lugdi may eventually be relocated to refugee settlements, immediate improvements to the site are required. UNHCR and Sudan Red Cross (SRC) continue site planning and have begun to allocate plots to families, as



Ethiopian refugees, fleeing clashes in the country's Tigray region, rest and cook meals near UNHCR's Hamdayet border reception centre after crossing into Sudan.

well as providing shelter kits and building materials. Refugee volunteers are supporting vulnerable families requiring assistance to build their shelter.

Distribution of core relief items (blankets, plastic sheets, mats, soap) to the new arrivals continues. ZOA International Sudan (ZOA) provided 300 hygiene kits. UNHCR, SRC, and the State Council for Child Welfare (SCCW) conducted a vulnerability assessment to identify persons with specific needs and separated children.

An emergency clinic run by a group of refugee health staff from Ethiopia is being supported by the Ministry of Health and UNHCR; more medical supplies have recently arrived. MSF has conducted a needs assessment of the health clinic to identify gaps in medical supplies and equipment. At a nearby MoH Primary Health Care Clinic (PHCC), Mercy Corps (MC) is supporting with staffing, pharmaceuticals and basic equipment. The clinic receives on average 80 patients a day. SRCS and a team of volunteers continue to conduct nutritional screenings (MUAC) and has referred children with acute malnutrition to a newly establish community-based management of acute malnutrition (CMAM) centre, which is currently treating 40 children with supplies and technical support provided by UNICEF.

WFP continues distributing one-month dry rations to some 6,400 of the most vulnerable people at the site along with High Energy Biscuits as needs continue to be immense. WES constructed three water bladders, and Tawaki has constructed 68 latrines, both with the support of UNICEF. SRC and UNCHR constructed 10 shower rooms, while United Peace Organization (UPO) is rehabilitating 12 latrines and two showers. UPO also conducted a hygiene promotion campaign for 1,000 refugees. MoH, SRC conducted a session for 80 refugees about preventative measures against COVID-19.

UNHCR protection teams continue to identify persons with specific needs at Village 8. SSCW with the support of UNICEF have provided relevant child protection supplies and kits.

**Hamdayet in Kassala State:** There are currently some 20,000 people at Hamdayet transit centre including those who have moved further into Hamdayet town and staying with host communities. Some refugees to remain at the border point in hope to return home soon and in order to wait for other family members who may have gotten lost along the way.

At the transit centre, hot meals are being provided by Muslim Aid with the support of WFP food and kitchen utensils, but it is still not enough for the number of people. WFP continues to provide High Energy Biscuits to the refugees upon arrival and prior to relocation to Um Rakuba camp. UNHCR through COR continues to distribute core relief items including blankets, mats, jerry cans and other items upon arrival at the reception centre. Water is trucked into the reception centre and to the existing water treatment that needs rehabilitation. WES with the support of UNICEF constructed four bladders to support the site. Water supplies are chlorinated using tablets delivered by Ministry of Health who also provided six cartons of water purification tablets. With water quantities still insufficient, people are resorting to the use of the Tikeze river for multiple purposes, which is a major health concern. Meanwhile, Tawaki supported by UNICEF constructed 30 latrines and MSF began constructing drop hole communal latrines.



The distribution of core relief items including blankets, mats, jerry cans and other items upon arrival to Hamdayet reception centre.

Two state-run health clinics continue to provide health services. 482 medical consultations have been undergone including one referral to a secondary health care facility in Shagarab camp. 154 children have been vaccinated against polio and measles with vaccines that have been supplied by UNICEF to the Ministry of Health; the process is ongoing. Nutritional screenings and supplies of Ready-to-Use Therapeutic food and

Ready-to-Use Supplementary Food have arrived for malnourished children. Medecines Sans Frontieres Holland (MSF) provided some 500 dignity kits which are being distributed. UNFPA mobile clinic is operating to support with reproductive health activities.

COVID-19 screenings are in place at the registration centre including screening of temperature, symptoms and contact tracing of suspected cases. Health teams are working to establish isolation areas for potential cases. Social distancing of two metres are in place at the registration centre. Distribution of soap continues with handwashing taps available.

UNHCR protection teams continue to identify persons with specific needs, at Hamdayet, 76 people including pregnant women, people with disabilities, unaccompanied children and other vulnerable people were referred to specialized protection services.

UNHCR has started awareness campaigns in the market areas of Hamdayet to ensure refugees are receiving critical information on the importance of registering and how it serves as a vital link to access protection and relief services while in the country of asylum. The awareness campaigns also inform refugees on the movement of convoys from Hamdayet to Um Rakuba camp.

**Um Rakuba camp:** The site requires major infrastructure work.

UNHCR and the Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS) continue site planning and demarcating for 600 shelter sites. Emergency shelters are being constructed while waiting for the arrival of shelter kits. Some refugees are sleeping in communal shelters and in the open area at the registration centre upon arrival as they wait for shelters. Refugees have received core relief items at the border points/transit sites prior to their relocation to the camp.

SRCS has finalized the construction of 60 latrines. UNICEF has installed two water bladders with clean water trucked in by UNHCR.

Muslim Aid is providing two hot meals per day with the support of WFP food and kitchen utensils but finding it difficult to keep up with increasing numbers.

Mercy Corps and MSF are running the health facilities on site including delivery of medicines and medical supplies.

**Tenetba site:** The Sudanese government identified a new site in Tenetba, near Fau 5, a former Ethiopian refugee camp that lies between Khartoum and Kassala. An initial site assessment was conducted by the local authorities, COR and UNHCR. Results are pending.

## Djibouti

There are still no new arrivals reported in Djibouti. However, UNHCR and the Government registered 55 Ethiopians of Tigray origin who were stranded after returning from Yemen. They have been relocated to Holl Holl camp. Ethiopian refugees fleeing due to the conflict in Tigray will be granted prima facie refugee status as agreed by the government, while other Ethiopian asylum seekers will continue to have their claims considered on an individual basis. Contingency plans and preparedness activities are being finalized following a multi-agency mission to the border last week.

## Eritrea

Reports of refugees arriving remain unconfirmed as access to the border areas is restricted. Under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator, UNHCR will continue to request access. General contingency and response plans are being finalized.

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### Contacts

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