

Ethiopia Information Alert: Amhara

This document provides an analysis of the current situation and the implications for aid agencies.
Vigil Insight Report 6: 8 August 2021

SUMMARY The Tigray Defense Forces (TDF) captured the UNESCO World Heritage Site town of Lalibela (a highly revered Ethiopian Christian icon) in Amhara on 5 August and rejected calls to leave the Amhara and Afar regions. In response, the Ethiopian government warned that it could "deploy the entire defensive capability of the state" if the TDF did not reciprocate its "humanitarian overtures"; in other words, its current ceasefire. Meanwhile an Amhara regional official stated on 7 August that it would launch an offensive following the TDF's capture of Lalibela.



ANALYSIS

- The Amhara regional forces are a mixture of militia and Special Forces, and whilst the Special Forces unit is battle hardened, they do not have the fire or manpower to take on the more numerically stronger and strategically placed TDF on their own. Meanwhile the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) is still recovering from its withdrawal from Mekelle - both in manpower and equipment.
- The declaration by the Amhara regional government appears to have been taken in addition to the Ethiopian Government statement on 6 August. If the Amhara regional forces do move against the TDF it is **LIKELY** to be a localised push. The ENDF may offer air strike support - a capability that the TDF do not have. However, the shooting down of one of the ENDF Hercules transport aircraft by the TDF in June, will **LIKELY** make the ENDF cautious about providing close air support - particularly to allied irregular forces who are not working together with their own troops. The ENDF is **UNLIKELY** to move fully in support of the Amhara forces against the TDF, as they are still rebuilding their ground troops, and have just finished a recruiting campaign. They are more **LIKELY** to move against the TDF at the end of the growing season (September) which is three weeks to a month away and ties in with their original ceasefire end date.
- The TDF's move to take Lalibela appears to be either a move to secure the B22 east-west road as an alternative supply route from Sudan or an effort to move and take the B22-A2 junction at Weldiya to prevent any northward push by the ENDF towards Mekelle (or both). If it's the latter, the TDF will fight hard for it. If it is the former, they may be slightly less determined if they meet fierce resistance.



MITIGATION

- Avoid staff movement in the vicinity of Lalibela town and surrounding area if possible;
- Maintain strict communication and security protocols;
- Use personnel protective equipment in the area, where possible.

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Data: Available on HDX

Situation Report: 02 August

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