

Sudan should unconditionally withdraw its forces from Ethiopian territories

The Ethiopian Border Affairs Committee (EBAC), a non-governmental civic organization that has been closely monitoring the Ethio-Sudan borders for the last 15 years, issued the following statement on 27 December 2020.

EBAC condemns with the strongest possible terms the horrendous crimes of rampant killings, burnings and massive property destruction and looting the Sudanese forces have committed against Ethiopian citizens in recent times.

The unprovoked aggression on the part of the Sudan would be a major impediment to the continued peaceful neighborly relations between the two brotherly countries. To reverse the adverse situation that has been created as a result of the invasion, the Sudanese army should withdraw from Ethiopian territories immediately and try to resolve the differences through dialogue.

It is to be recalled that on December 15, 2020, the Sudanese army crossed the border and occupied areas 20 km to 40 km deep inside Ethiopian territory. From what the Sudanese call al-Fashqa area of what is known to Ethiopians as Guangua Mlash, the Sudanese forces have occupied fertile and rich areas between Humera and Metema, including the sprawling fertile lands that surround Metema, in an aggressive raid unprecedented in the recent past.

What makes the latest Sudanese aggression worrisome is the fact unlike previous raids that were being carried out by local armed militias and a few regular soldiers, the current invasion has been carried out by a mechanized army of the regular Sudanese defense forces.

EBAC believes that the Sudan's unprovoked aggression is prone to go beyond the two countries and destabilize the entire region. Therefore, it would be up to the Sudanese government to desist from its wanton destruction for which it will be held responsible.

It is also worth noting that Sudan's decision not to take part in anything short of border demarcation stands out as a sign of belligerence that, along with its partner Egypt, should quickly revise their stand for the sake of maintaining peace and good neighborliness.

Sudan's intentions drive to use the internal conflict within Ethiopia as a pretext and occupy sovereign Ethiopian territories has saddened the Ethiopian people. EBAC would like to remind that Ethiopia has a dependable defense force capable of protecting the country from any foreign invasion. The EBAC would like to re-iterate that the Ethiopian defense forces are capable of dislodging any invaders from Ethiopian territories, no matter how much they think are entrenched. It is important to note that the Ethiopian defense forces have the power to take back areas occupied by invading army. But this wouldn't be achieved without severing the age-old bond of friendship and brotherhood that had existed between Ethiopia and Sudan. So, the plea is that Sudan should come back to its senses and resort to dialogue to resolve any outstanding issues with Ethiopia.

Accordingly, before things run out of control, we call upon the Government of the Sudan to heed the following major points:

1. Unconditionally withdraw its forces from areas it occupied since December 15, 2020, that include Guangua Milash and the vast fertile area of Delelo,
2. Maintain the status quo of the farmers working on areas like they used to until the joint border commission carries out demarcation in accordance with the 1972 and 2005 joint border commission memorandum of understanding.
3. It is a public secret that Egypt offers full support for Sudan's on and off armed incursions and invasions into sovereign Ethiopian territories. EBAC condemns Egypt's interference in the internal affairs of Ethiopia and demands Cairo to desist from its destructive role of adding fuel to the fire.
4. One of the "evidences" that Sudan always presents is Major Charles Gwynn's unilateral line of delimitation of the 1902 Ethiopia-Britain agreement. The then reigning leader of Ethiopia, Emperor Menelik II, and succeeding Ethiopian leaders have never acknowledged Gwynn's line. Likewise, EBAC reminds respectfully that no present or future leader of Ethiopia acknowledge the unilateral report as mutual and to reach to an agreement accordingly.
5. EBAC appreciates the complex nature of the problem and stands by the side of the Ethiopian government that is trying to resolve the problem in a peaceful and durable way.
6. Ethiopian farmers along the border line have borne the brunt of incessant armed invasions and destruction by the Sudanese army, militias and Janjaweed mercenaries. The Ethiopian government has the duty and responsibility of deploying forces capable of protecting the Ethiopian farmers. In the meantime, EBAC would like to remind the government to extend essential support and services to the farmers who have lost harvests, livestock and agricultural machineries, in general their means of livelihood, to the invading Sudanese forces.

The Ethiopian Border Affairs Committee has utmost conviction that Ethiopia shall overcome all her challenges and embark on its multi-faceted development ventures in the years to come.

The Ethiopian Borders Affairs Committee

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