



ETHIOPIA

WHAT HAPPENED?

Despite a lull in large-scale fighting since late December, the Tigray region's forces continued to clash with fighters in the neighbouring Afar region where the humanitarian toll remained high; meanwhile, the armed conflict in Ethiopia's largest region, Oromia, intensified.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The fragile lull in large-scale fighting between the federal coalition and the Tigray region's forces continues to create an opportunity for dialogue. The parties must seize the moment if they are to **end the hostilities** and move toward greater stability.

DECEMBER TRENDS

The federal government halted its offensive against Tigray forces and called for a ceasefire after the latter announced a retreat. The changing security dynamics offered hopes both parties could engage in negotiations to end the fourteen-month war.

1 ➔ Western Tigray faced airstrikes as aid remained blocked

Fighting near Abala town along the Tigray-Afar border blocked the only available route for humanitarian supplies to Tigray. The UN World Food Programme warned on 14 January that aid operations were "about to grind to a halt" as vital supplies were running out.

The Ethiopian air force reportedly launched a series of airstrikes in Tigray during January. Notably, the aerial bombing of a camp for internally displaced people in the Dedebeit area killed over 50 people on 8 January.

2 ↘ Clashes intensified across the Oromia region

Security forces intensified their offensive against the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) in the Oromia region, with fighting in early to mid-January expanding to the West and East Hararghe Zones, Jimma Zone, Kellelem Wollega Zone and all Shewa Zones surrounding the capital Addis Ababa; the OLA also reported aerial attacks in the East Wollega Zone.

Clashes in late January escalated in the West Guji Zone, with OLA forces reportedly taking control of Torre and Shamole towns.

3 ➔ Authorities lifted the state of emergency, released political prisoners

The federal government announced on 7 January that it would start a national dialogue to address chronic political problems, and released from detention some leaders from the Tigray People's Liberation Front and Oromo Federalist Congress. On 26 January, the government lifted the two-month-old state of emergency, citing an improving security situation.

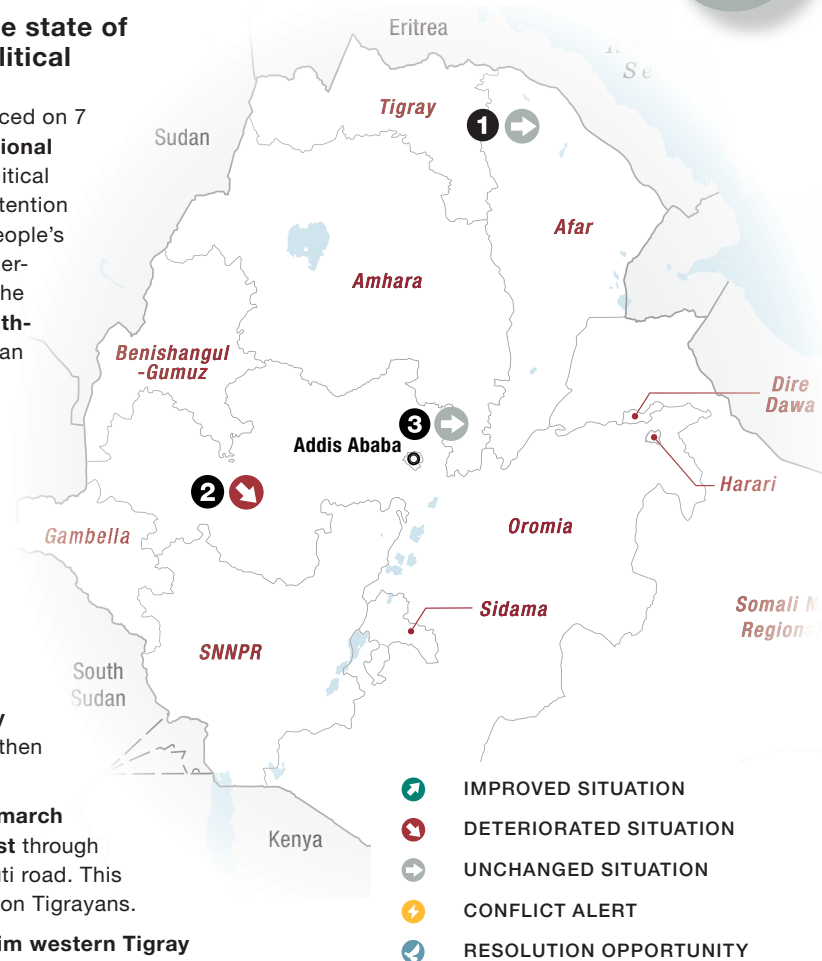
Abdulwahab Mahdi, former leader of the rebel Benishangul-Gumuz People's Liberation Movement, escaped from prison in Asosa city on 5 January; regional officials said he might have crossed into Sudan.

WHAT TO WATCH

The federal coalition might attempt to re-enter Tigray to try to defeat regional forces, and then seek to impose a settlement.

Tigray forces could renew their march toward Addis Ababa or the east through Afar to try and control the Djibouti road. This could lead to increased attacks on Tigrayans.

Tigray forces may seek to reclaim western Tigray (which borders Sudan) from Amhara control with support from Eritrean troops. This could aggravate Addis Ababa-Khartoum tensions.



TRENDS TIMELINE

