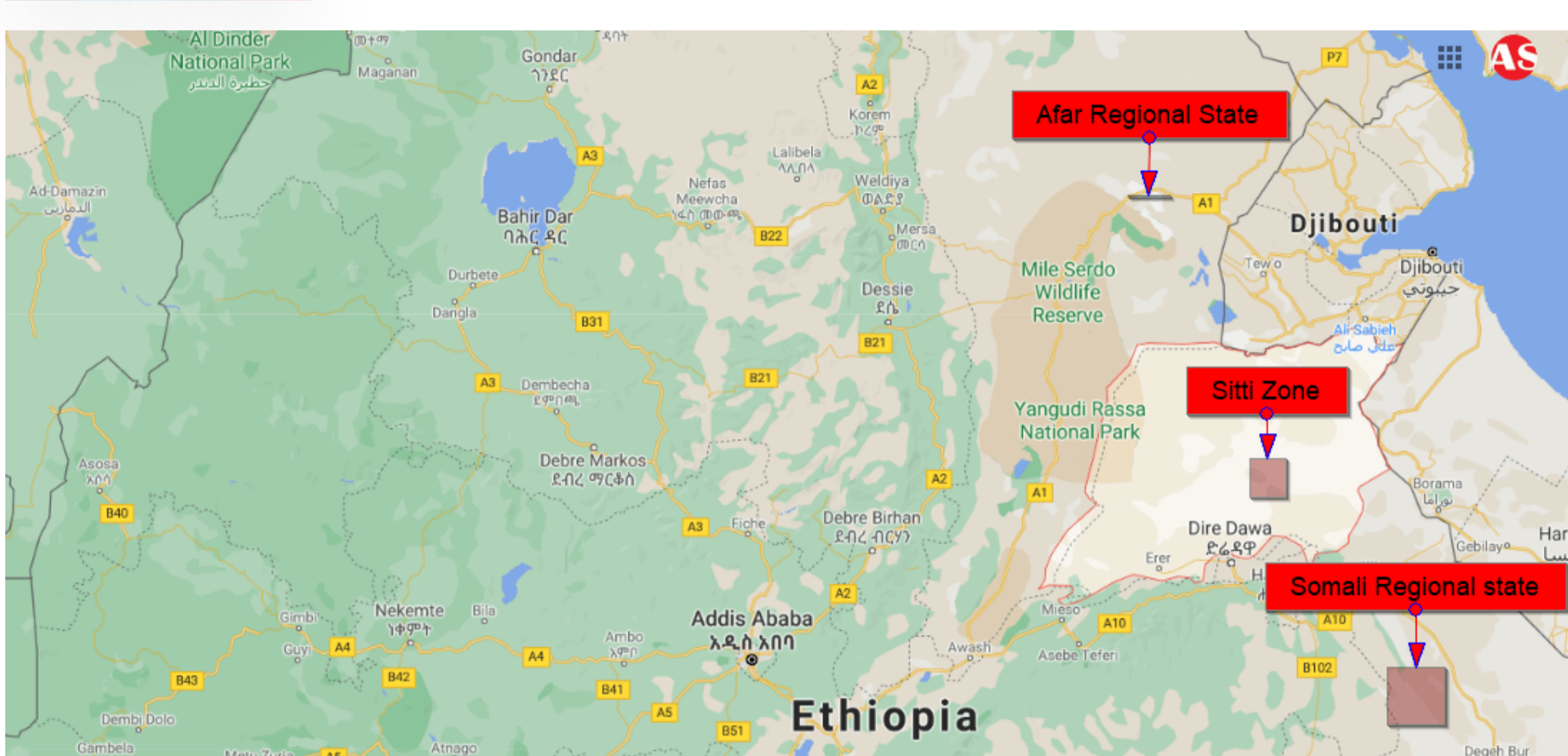


News: At least 27 killed in clashes in the border between Afar, Somali regions

OCTOBER 29, 2020



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Addis Abeba, October 29/2020 – At least 27 people were killed in what the Somali regional state communication affairs bureau said was a clash in the border between Afar and Somali regional states in recent days. Ten of them were killed on October 28, according to the condolences dispatch issued late last night.

The news came amidst conflicting reports from Afar and Somali activists on the nature of the conflict, about which the Afar regional state did not issue a statement as of yet. Both sides blame one another for the conflict, making the process of getting verified information difficult.

Twitter post by Afar Watch (@AfarWatch) from Oct 27, 2020: "17 Afars killed and at least 16 wounded in Afar Region by illegal Issa settlers aided & abated by the Federal Police. Our people are fighting multi-pronged war of Awash river flooding, illegal Issa garbing our territories & the federal government supporting this continued killings"

Afar rights activists also blame the Issa, one of the main Somali sub-clans who depend on nomadic economy, for raiding Afar owned grazing lands and frequent attacks aided by Somali region special forces, accusations Somali region officials frequently deny.

After expressing condolences the statement from Somali region communication affairs bureau said that such acts were happening repeatedly, leading to the loss of lives and property damages and that the regional state was in contact with the federal government and was coordinating urgent humanitarian support to those who were hurt in the conflict.

Addis Standard has learnt that the clashes which claimed the lives of ten yesterday happened in Dan La Helay and Garba-Issa villages, in Western Sitti zone of the Somali regional state.

Twitter post by Mohamed Olad (@oladmohamed) from Oct 26, 2020: "Militias from #Afar region killed & injured scores in #Garbalssa town, Sitti Zone of #Somali region. Since the illegal transfer of three Somali towns & their surrounding a few yrs ago, the constant tormenting of innocent civilians along the Somali-Afar border has become the norm." Includes four photos of injured people and a portrait of the author.

Sitti zone is a flashpoint of repeated clashes between armed groups from both regional states. Clashes were particularly intense following a 2014 agreement to hand over three Kebeles to Afar regional state.

In an extraordinary meeting it held on May 03/2019, in Jigjiga city, the cabinet of Somali Regional State had unilaterally withdrew from the agreement. The cabinet issued a statement that "the regional cabinet has unanimously agreed that the illegal agreement that has transferred the three towns of Garba-Issa, Undufo and Adaytu to the Afar Regional State is an agreement that has no base under the federal constitution while at the same time lacking the will of the same people impacted by the decisions under consideration coupled with a dangerous set of coercion tactics and bad faith as engineered by contrabandists under the cover of Afar Regional state."

Sporadic, yet deadly clashes continued in the area. In an exclusive interview with Addis Standard held in May 2019, Mustefa Muhumed Omer, President of Somali region admitted that "close to 75 people have died on the Somali side and maybe the same number or more have died from Afar side in the last six months." However, Mustefa said discussion between the two regional states were ongoing to "resolve this peacefully and amicably."

Yesterday's statement from Somali region promised an investigation into the deadly clash and the release of a subsequent report to the public. "We are working taking into consideration the keeping of peace and stability between the brotherly people of the two regions," the statement said. AS

Editor's News: this news has been corrected with a clarification letter from Afar Regional state.

WRITTEN BY ADDIS STANDARD

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