

News: Ten members of one family killed in heavy machine gun attack in Afar state

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Women and children running away from militarized conflict in Afar regional state Picture: screenshot from a video reporting by arte TV

Addis Abeba, – Humo Ibrahim, a resident of the Afar region bordering Tigray, where the ongoing fighting in northern Ethiopia has escalated, is deeply saddened by the loss of his wife and five children in a recent military attack. Residents and volunteers from the area told BBC Amharic that 10 members of a single family were killed and 13 others were injured in a heavy gun battle on Tuesday night, 15 February. Humo and his ten family who were killed in the attack were living in Ada, a small town in the Afar regional state.

The father, who lost his entire family, is in a state of shock. “He is neither eating nor been able to cope with the sudden catastrophe. Religious leaders are comforting him”

Yassin

The BBC Amharic quoted Yassin Kedir, a close relative of Humo and a resident of Semera, the capital of Afar region, that the town was located 15 kilometers from Berhale. He also said that all relatives of the victims' family were in deep mourning. It was indicated that among the family members fleeing the attack were five children, a mother, a grandmother, a mother's brother, and a niece.

Humo's had previously been displaced and was able to save his family. The father, who lost his entire family, is in a state of shock. "He is neither eating nor been able to cope with the sudden catastrophe. Religious leaders are comforting him," Yassin said.

According to the media efforts made to contact Homo Ibrahim remained futile, and his relatives say he is not speaking to anyone because of his grief. It was on the next day, he was informed of the deaths of the family members, as heavy fighting was still going on in the area and there was no telephone or transportation service.

According to Yassin, the information about the dead came from the wounded and displaced, while 13 others injured in the attack are being treated at Dubti Hospital. He described the area as a war zone, adding that the attack happened when the victims and other residents were fleeing the fighting on their way from Berhale to a desert area called Dodom. The attack took place about five kilometers from the town of Ada, just a short distance from a river known as Ala. Witnesses say it around a well-known hot spring Godaya, located between Tigray and Afar, and where people go to for healing. "The attack may have taken place while they were resting," Yassin speculates. "It was carried out with heavy artillery fire. Some of the wounded lost their limbs," he said, adding that the victims were buried at the scene.

After the breakout of the war in Tigray and the subsequent spread of conflicts to the Afar and Amhara regions, it seemed to have subsided for a while, but hostilities have been ongoing for some time in the areas bordering Afar and Tigray.

Heavy weapon assisted fighting is taking place in the Afar region at the moment, with regional and federal authorities blaming the TPLF forces for the attacks. The Afar Regional State said in a statement released two weeks ago that the aim of Tigrayan forces' attack was to seize control of the Ethio-Djibouti corridor by capturing Sardo.

The report recalled that that Tigrayan forces had taken control of Abala, Magalle, Erebti, Koneba and Berahle woredas. Officials in the Afar region told the media a week ago that more than 350,000 people had been displaced by the fighting in the region.

According to Sadak, a volunteer who is assisting and coordinating residents and displaced people in the war zones, the war is still intensifying and the number of displaced people is increasing. "Those in Afdera and Kuri woredas are able to get out, but those who couldn't get out are still in the war zone," said the volunteer. The volunteer also said that there were mothers in the desert who had given birth without help and that women, including infants, were in dire circumstances.

Tigrayan authorities had previously admitted entering parts of Afar and controls certain areas in what they said was a response to repeated attacks by Afar special forces and Eritrean army. Residents said the fighting in Afar State did not involve the federal army and it was between Afar Special Forces and Tigrayan forces; witnesses say due to firepower imbalances, heavy attacks were meted out "on the people".

The federal government has not yet commented on the war in the Afar region; Earlier, the National Security Council said it would take necessary actions against the attacks from the TPLF. AS

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