



[A Border Clash Between Sudan and Ethiopia Kills at Least 20 Troops Amid Tensions in the Disputed Region of al-Fashaga](#)

A recent border clash between Sudan and Ethiopia has killed at least 20 troops and threatened to aggravate relations in the disputed region of al-Fashaga. The deadly incident comes during a year which has seen previous episodes of conflict in the area – a contentious fertile region that has been at the center of longstanding tensions among the two countries because of its economic resources and benefits. Sudan and Ethiopia are already at odds over the latter’s unilateral plans to fill and operate a large hydroelectric dam on the Nile River’s main tributary, and analysts are concerned that this past week’s skirmish in al-Fashaga may further escalate existing tensions as well. Additionally, both are entangled in internal turmoil, as the year-plus Tigray conflict rages on in Ethiopia while Sudan has been dealing with the aftermaths of a recent military coup. Relations between Sudan and Ethiopia have also been strained over the preceding year due to the major refugee crisis that has been created as a result of the Tigray conflict. Now, the latest in the decades-long al-Fashaga strife has elicited worry regarding a potential rise in animosity too.

This is not the first time that the al-Fashaga region has been the cause of violence between Sudan and Ethiopia. The area is largely made up of the Amhara people, an ethnic minority who live throughout Ethiopia and in the contentious territory. For years, the region has been hotly contested while being legally Sudanese, but with a strong Ethiopian cultural influence and the issues there were part of a broader border dispute between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Eritrea, which ultimately resulted in a long war. One of the major problems stems from the fact that the borders were not clear in post-colonial treaties which were vague regarding the descriptions of the exact positions for the boundaries. Back in 2008, the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) held power in Ethiopia, and with the Tigray region being a border area to al-Fashaga, the government decided to reach a “soft border deal” with neighboring Sudan. This allowed for the free movement of people, but the land was to be subject to Sudanese taxes. Some of the Amhara who lived there strongly disagreed with this deal and upon the TPLF losing power in 2018, aimed to no longer abide by the soft border deal of 2008.

Earlier this year, clashes broke out between the two nations killing 90 Sudanese soldiers after an Ethiopian ambush along the border of the al-Fashaga region and Ethiopia. While attempts were made at talks, the rising escalation of the Tigray conflict and the recent coup in Sudan had further promoted the al-Fashaga region into more dispute. Some experts point to the area being a fertile region for growing crops which provide major economic benefits to the two nations that have significant issues in this regard as a critical geopolitical factor as well. Furthermore, Ethiopia has been planning to build a mega dam on the “Blue Nile,” a major waterway that flows into the Nile River. Sudan and Egypt have expressed concern with the dam, saying it will harm each nation’s access to critical water supplies while Ethiopia maintains that the dam is essential to its development.

These circumstances have all contributed to creating the most recent border clash. As both Ethiopia and Sudan grapple internally with notable issues – a conflict in Tigray and a coup in Sudan – the other components including water access, development, and a longstanding geopolitical conflict all have security experts concerned with potential further deterioration.