

Ethiopia erupts in deadly ethnic violence

At least 18 people killed and scores displaced in clashes between two tribes in the country's south, aid agency says.

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Ethnic clashes in southern Ethiopia have left 18 dead and scores displaced, according to the Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS).

The Ethiopian government, however, told the AFP news agency the situation was under control, saying the spat was over "administrative claims" by the two sides.

Fighting between the Borana and Garri tribes erupted on Thursday in an area about 1.6km from the Kenyan border, over a land dispute, KRCS said in a statement on Sunday.

Bereket Simon, an Ethiopian government spokesman, told the AFP the local authorities "were not able to resolve the claims and counterclaims in a constructive manner so clashes ensued", without giving details on the toll.

Bereket said police had made several arrests.

"Federal police and government have intervened and all the culprits are under control," he said, adding that the situation has now "normalised".

According to the KRCS statement, "at least 18 deaths and 12 injuries had been confirmed" and the conflict has also led to "loss of properties with reports of massive displacements of



KRCS says "more than 10,000 people" among the displaced populations "require urgent humanitarian support" [Reuters]

populations" into neighbouring Kenya.

KRCS says a registration to determine the actual displaced populations was ongoing but said "more than 10,000 people require urgent humanitarian support".

Bereket said the displaced people were expected to return to Ethiopia shortly.

"This is a hiccup which we are going to address and they will be back soon... and will continue to live their normal lives," he said.

Al Jazeera's Peter Greste reporting from Moyale, on the Kenyan border said: "After talking to various refugees it does not seem the people are going anywhere."

Moyale is in Oromia region in Ethiopia. Several pastoral tribes occupy the southern part of the region routinely hit by drought and rely on land for animal grazing.

Red Cross officials told Al Jazeera that the major concerns for refugees were the lack of food and water.

"Nobody here has had any food and they are all saying they are very hungry. A lot of people here have been walking back to their homes risking further attack by the Garri community to try and find what little food maybe remains in their villages."