

African Union Praises Eritrea, Djibouti Border Mediation

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The African Union has welcomed an agreement between Eritrea and Djibouti that calls on Qatar to mediate their long-standing border dispute.

AU chief executive Jean Ping said Tuesday that he hoped the talks would have a positive impact on the overall situation in the Horn of Africa, especially in Somalia.

Qatar's news agency said Monday that Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki and Djibouti's President Ismail Omar Guelleh had signed the mediation deal.

It reported that Eritrean troops had already withdrawn from at least one disputed area as a result of the agreement.

Djibouti and Eritrea both claim Ras Doumeira, an area on the Red Sea coast. The dispute came to a head in 2008 when more than 35 people were killed during three days of fighting.

The U.N. Security Council blamed Eritrea for the fighting, and has repeatedly called on the country to withdraw its troops to their previous positions.

The U.N. imposed sanctions on Eritrea last year for refusing to resolve its dispute with Djibouti and for allegedly backing insurgent groups in Somalia.

Oil-rich Qatar has made efforts to mediate in various conflicts recently, most notably the war between Sudan's government and rebels in the Darfur region.