



Ethiopia Query Response: Situation in the Amhara Region (January 2022- February 2024)

March 2024 (COI between 1st January 2022 and 1 March 2024)

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A. Explanatory note

Background

This report presents Country of Origin Information (COI) on Ethiopia focusing on issues identified to be of relevance in refugee status determination for Ethiopians nationals affected by the situation in the Amhara region and/or of Amhara ethnicity.

The COI presented in this report is illustrative but not exhaustive of the information available in the public domain, nor is it determinative of any individual human rights or asylum claim. All sources are publicly available and a direct hyperlink has been provided.

A list of sources and databases consulted is also provided in this report, to enable users to conduct further research and source assessments. Research concentrated on events that took place between 1 January 2022 and 1 March 2024. All sources included in this report were accessed in March 2024 and early April 2024.

The following reports, which post-date the cut-off point have been included given that they address issues of relevance for this report:

- Refugees International, [*SCARS OF WAR AND DEPRIVATION An Urgent Call to Reverse Tigray 's Humanitarian Crisis*](#), March 2024
- UNOCHA, [*Ethiopia – Situation Report*](#), 1 March 2024
- Human Rights Watch, [*Ethiopia's Deepening Crackdown on Dissent*](#), 4 March 2024
- New Humanitarian, [*'Horrific' civilian toll as Ethiopia turns to combat drones to quell local insurgencies*](#), 5 March 2024
- Insecurity Insight, [*2020-2024 Ethiopia Education in Danger data*](#), modified 7 March 2024
- Amnesty International, [*Ethiopia: Journalist arrested under state of emergency: Belay Manaye*](#), 14 March 2024
- UNCHR, [*Ethiopia- Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons as of 29 February 2024*](#), 16 March 2024
- Bertelsmann Stiftung, [*BTI 2024 Country Report — Ethiopia*](#), 19 March 2024
- Ethiopia Peace Observatory, [*EPO Monthly Update February 2024: Clashes in Tigray's Disputed Territories Threaten Peace Deal*](#), 19 March 2024
- Addis Standard, [*News: Several civilians killed in series of attacks in Oromo special zone, Amhara region*](#), 20 March 2024
- Insecurity Insight, [*Attacked and Threatened: Health Care at Risk*](#), last updated 20 March 2024
- UNOCHA, [*Ethiopia: National Access Map – As of 18 March 2024*](#), 21 March 2024
- Reporters Without Borders, [*Ethio News, symbol of press freedom's persecution in Ethiopia*](#), 21 March 2024
- Human Rights Watch, [*Ethiopia: Submission to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child*](#), 27 March 2024
- Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [*EPO Weekly Update 26 March*](#), 27 March 2024

It should be noted that the following sources have highlighted the ongoing constraints and limited access to the Amhara region, as well as the limited access to information, resulting in a lack of reporting on the ground:

Freedom House noted in its 2023 Freedom on the Net report covering the period June 2022 - May 2023 that “the government repeatedly restricted connectivity in conflict-affected areas of Amhara and Oromia, which increased the challenges of reporting on human rights violations and enabled the spread of misinformation”.¹

The February 2023 monthly update from the Ethiopian Peace Observatory described the information landscape in Ethiopia as such:

Government pressure, increased polarization, and access constraints for conflict areas have resulted in a more restricted information environment, which varies across the country. The number of distinct media voices and sources has decreased since 2019; journalists have been arrested, deported, and harassed, limiting their ability to provide coverage for both domestic and international audiences; media have increasingly reflected the polarized nature of their audiences; and bias in the coverage of individual events has increased.³ Meanwhile, some regions are ‘media deserts’ without accessible public channels to report on activity. Other regions, including those with active conflicts, have suffered from limited coverage due to media, communication, and electricity blackouts, as well as access constraints linked to security risks.⁴

The overall consequences have been:

1. A lack of thorough and accurate information about political violence and disorder generally across Ethiopia. This leads to insufficient detail about violent events, the parties involved, and their outcomes.
2. A proliferation of biased information, misinformation, and disinformation from sources often located outside conflict zones and outside Ethiopia. In the absence of reliable information, one-sided accounts of conflict omit relevant factors that could legitimize the ‘other side.’ These sources fill information vacuums, generating echo chambers, hate speech, and harassment, which undermines verification efforts and attempts at accurate and objective reporting. This creates broader mistrust of conflict information due to perceptions of misleading biases and a lack of robust triangulation.
3. A need to continue developing the information environment to safeguard press freedom and establish space for unbiased and robust incident documentation.²

³ Declan Walsh, ‘Ethiopia Expels New York Times Reporter,’ New York Times, 20 May 2021; Committee to Protect Journalists, ‘Ethiopia expels Economist correspondent Tom Gardner,’ 16 May 2022

⁴ Associated Press, ‘Ethiopia offers no date for end to blackout in Tigray region,’ 29 November 2022

In its annual report covering events in 2023, Freedom House explained “Very little information is available about counterinsurgency operations and ethnic conflicts in Amhara, Benishangul Gumuz, and

¹ Freedom House, [Freedom on the Net 2023 - Ethiopia](#), 4 October 2023

² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO February 2023 Monthly: Religious Disputes and Government Involvement in Ethiopia](#), 8 March 2023

Oromia. The extent of the human rights abuses and war crimes committed in these areas remains difficult to verify. State media and government statements have bolstered an official narrative that has been challenged by reports of alleged atrocities, sexual violence, and the scale of insecurity”.³ Freedom House further explained that in August 2023, “the federal government declared a state of emergency in the Amhara region, after paramilitary groups joined the decentralized Fano militia and began fighting government forces. Authorities cut internet access”.⁴

With regards to the Gimbi massacre, the Africa Report noted competing narratives over the perpetrators, stating that “The area is off limits to journalists, making it impossible to readily verify competing claims”.⁵

Referencing the same massacre, Human Rights Watch wrote in July 2022 that “communications have hampered real-time reporting on the events”.⁶

The Peace Research Facility of the Rift Valley Institute (RVI) noted in March 2023 that:

It is frequently very difficult to determine which actors are involved in different conflict events, particularly massacres of civilians.¹¹⁷

11 Attackers are often vaguely described in local accounts as speaking a specific language (Oromiffa or Amharic) or belonging to an ‘unidentified armed group’. Following a massacre there are often contrary accounts about whether the attackers were OLA, or a splinter group not under its command, or whether they were instead Amhara ethnic militias, or even impersonators from Oromia’s regional military forces. See also: Ermias Tesfaye, ‘Amhara civilians were massacred in Tole, but questions remain’, *Ethiopia Insight*, 8 July 2022, <https://www.ethiopia-insight.com/2022/07/08/amhara-civilians-were-massacred-in-tole-but-questions-remain/>.

Freedom House noted that “On April 3, 2023, authorities blocked access to mobile data in several major cities in Amhara Region (Gondar, Bahir Dar, and Woldia) after protests erupted in response to the federal government’s decision to dissolve the Amhara regional special forces.³⁵ Mobile data remained inaccessible in cities in Amhara as of May 1, 2023”.⁸ In April 2023 over 300 human rights organizations from 105 countries signed an open letter calling for unfettered access to the internet and digital communications platforms, expressing concern “about the ongoing weaponization of internet shutdowns in Ethiopia, particularly in the regions of Tigray and Amhara. Open, secure, reliable, and

³ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024 – Ethiopia](#), 29 February 2024

⁴ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024 – Ethiopia](#), 29 February 2024

⁵ The Africa Report, [Ethiopia: Inside the Oromia massacre – ‘There were corpses everywhere’](#), 23 June 2022

⁶ Human Rights Watch, [Ethiopia’s Other Conflict: Ethiopia’s Tigray War Overshadows Ongoing Cycles of Violence in Oromia](#), 4 July 2022

⁷ Peace Research Facility and Rift Valley Institute (RVI), [Conflict Trend Analysis: Western Oromia](#), March 2023, pp. 4-5

⁸ Freedom House, [Freedom on the Net 2023 - Ethiopia](#), 4 October 2023

accessible internet is vital to exercising and protecting human rights, as well as ensuring safety during crises and conflicts”.⁹

In August 2023 the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect reported in an atrocity alert that “The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission has reported that civilians and civilian property have been attacked in the fighting, but due to the suspension of telecommunications in many areas, the full scope of the violence remains unclear”.¹⁰

A UNFPA humanitarian response situation report on Ethiopia in August 2023 noted that “Monthly data from Amhara and Benishangul Gumuz regions is not available due to the telecommunication shutdown and ongoing hostilities”.¹¹

Reporters Without Borders reported in same month on Ethiopia clamping down on reporting in Amhara region, noting that:

At least 11 journalists have been arrested by the authorities in a crackdown on coverage of the current tension in northern Ethiopia’s Amhara region.

*[...] The frequency of arrests of journalists in this region – 11 since April – shows that the Ethiopian government’s strategy is to prevent the media from providing impartial coverage of the tensions raging there. Journalists can no longer express criticism or address certain subjects without risking arbitrary arrest.*¹²

In its October 2023 report, the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia stated that “Ethiopia is an acutely complex context to investigate, not least because of multiple and often contradictory allegations from all sides in addition to the commonplace and widespread dissemination of mis- and disinformation, in particular online”¹³ It further noted:

The Commission regrets that, despite the Council’s calls in 2021 and 2022 for unhindered access, it was not able to visit Ethiopia for the purpose of in-country fact-finding. The Commission made repeated requests to the Government for meetings, information, and access to the country to implement its investigative mandate.⁸ The Government of Ethiopia neither responded to nor acknowledged any of these requests after an initial visit of the Commissioners to Addis Ababa in July 2022. The Commission also wrote to the Government of Eritrea about its presence and alleged involvement in violations in Ethiopia. No response was received.⁹¹⁴

⁹ Access Now, [Open letter to the Ethiopian Government: urgently end ongoing internet shutdowns in all regions across the country](#), 27 April 2023

¹⁰ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Atrocity Alert No. 359: Ethiopia, Haiti and Cameroon](#), 9 August 2023

¹¹ UNFPA, [UNFPA Ethiopia Humanitarian Response: Situation Report](#), August 2023, p. 3

¹² Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF), [Ethiopia clamps down on reporting in Amhara region](#), 18 August 2023

¹³ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Comprehensive investigative findings and legal determinations](#), 13 October 2023, paragraph 7

¹⁴ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Comprehensive investigative findings and legal determinations](#), 13 October 2023, paragraph 25

8 Note verbales: HRC/ICHREE/2022/083; HRC/ICHREE/2022/085; HRC/ICHREE/2022/099; HRC/ICHREE/2022/105. 9 Note verbale: HRC/ICHREE/2022/110.

Amnesty International noted in a February 2024 report that “The human rights impact of the conflict in Amhara region has been slow to emerge due to an internet shutdown, partial communications blackouts under the state of emergency, and fear of reprisals by survivors and witnesses”.¹⁵

Freedom House wrote in its annual report on Ethiopia in 2023 that:

Journalists faced arrest and violence in 2023. Over a period of several days in April, eight journalists were arrested, several of whom reported on matters facing ethnic Amhara people. At least three journalists who reported on events in Amhara were arrested in separate incidents in Addis Ababa in August, after a state of emergency had been declared in the Amhara region. One of those individuals had been arrested in April.¹⁶

The Guardian news reported in February 2024 that “Ethiopia’s government bans journalists from travelling to the increasingly lawless Amhara region and has cut its internet”.¹⁷

The New Humanitarian explained that in 2023 “the work of the UN’s human rights commission on Ethiopia was allowed to lapse after no country tabled a proposal to extend its mandate at the UN’s Human Rights Council in October. The body, set up during the 2020-2022 Tigray war, was the only independent probe investigating abuses in Ethiopia”.¹⁸

Also see section [IV.c. Humanitarian access and attacks on humanitarian workers](#) which provides an overview of access constraints during the reporting period.

¹⁵ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: “We thought they would fight with those they came to fight with, not with us.” Extrajudicial executions in Bahir Dar by ENDF soldiers](#), 26 February 2024

¹⁶ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024 - Ethiopia](#), 29 February 2024

¹⁷ The Guardian, [Dozens of civilians killed by Ethiopian state troops in Amhara region, say reports](#), 12 February 2024

¹⁸ New Humanitarian, [‘Horrific’ civilian toll as Ethiopia turns to combat drones to quell local insurgencies](#), 5 March 2024

Disclaimer

This document is intended to be used as a tool to help to identify relevant COI and the COI referred to in this report can be considered by decision makers in assessing asylum applications and appeals. While we strive to be as comprehensive as possible, no amount of research can ever provide an exhaustive picture of the situation. It is therefore important to note that the absence of information should not be taken as evidence that an issue, incident or violation does not exist. **This report is also not a substitute for individualised case-specific research and therefore this document should not be submitted in isolation as evidence to refugee decision-making authorities.** Whilst every attempt has been made to ensure accuracy, the authors accept no responsibility for any errors included in this report.

B. Sources and databases consulted

Not all of the sources listed here have been consulted for each issue addressed in the report. Additional sources to those individually listed were consulted via database searches. This non-exhaustive list is intended to assist in further case-specific research. To find out more about an organisation, view the 'About us' tab of a source's website.

Databases

[Asylos's Research Notes \[subscription only\]](#)

[EUAA COI Portal](#)

[European Country of Origin Information Network \(ECOI\)](#)

[Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada – Responses to Information Requests](#)

[Relief Web](#)

[UNHCR Refworld](#)

Media

[Addis Standard](#)

[African Arguments \(Ethiopia\)](#)

[Africanews](#)

[The Africa Report \(Ethiopia\)](#)

[All Africa](#)

[Al Jazeera](#)

[EthioMedia.com](#)

[Ethiopia Insight](#)

[Ethiopia Observer](#)

[Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio \(ESAT\)](#)

[Inter Press Service](#)

[New Business Ethiopia](#)

[The New Humanitarian \(Ethiopia\)](#)

[The Reporter Ethiopia](#)

Sources

[Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development \(ACTED\) \(Ethiopia\)](#)

[Africa Center for Strategic Studies](#)

[African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes \(ACCORD\)](#)

[African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights](#)

[Bertelsmann Stiftung – BTI Transformation Index](#)

[CIVICUS](#)

[Civil Rights Defenders](#)

[African Studies Centre Leiden](#)

[Afro Barometer](#)

[Amnesty International \(Ethiopia\)](#)
[Armed Conflict Location & Event Date Project \(ACLED\) \(Ethiopia\)](#)
[Article 19](#)
[Assessment Capacities Project \(ACAPS\) \(Ethiopia\)](#)
[Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia \(AHRE\)](#)
[Association for the Prevention of Torture](#)
[Atlantic Council](#)
[Atlas of Torture](#)
[Brookings Institution](#)
[Care International \(Ethiopia\)](#)
[Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#)
[Centre for Security Governance](#)
[Centre for Strategic and International Studies](#)
[Combating Terrorism Center](#)
[Committee to Protect Journalists \(Ethiopia\) \(CPJ\)](#)
[Conciliation Resources](#)
[Council on Foreign Relations](#)
[Ethiopian Human Rights Commission \(EHRC\)](#)
[Ethiopian Human Rights Council \(EHRCO\)](#)
[Ethiopia Peace Observatory \(EPO\)](#)
[Foreign Affairs \(published by Council on Foreign Relations\) \(Ethiopia\)](#)
[Freedom House \(Ethiopia\)](#)
[Famine Early Warning System Network \(Ethiopia\)](#)
[Frontline Defenders](#)
[Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect \(GCR2P\) \(Ethiopia\)](#)
[Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack](#)
[Hands off Cain](#)
[Human Rights Watch](#)
[Insecurity Insight \(Ethiopia\)](#)
[Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa](#)
[Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre \(IDMC\)](#)
[International Bar Association](#)
[International Centre for Prison Studies](#)
[International Commission of Jurists](#)
[International Committee of the Red Cross \(ICRC\) \(Ethiopia\)](#)
[International Crisis Group \(Ethiopia\)](#)
[International Federation for Human Rights \(Africa pages\)](#)
[International Federation of Journalists](#)
[International Freedom of Expression Exchange \(Ethiopia\)](#)
[International Institute for Strategic Studies](#)
[International Organization for Migration Displacement Tracking Matrix \(IOM DTM\) \(Ethiopia\)](#)
[International Rescue Committee \(Ethiopia\)](#)

[IPC Integrated Food Security Phase Classification](#)
[IPI Global Observatory](#)
[Jamestown Foundation](#)
[Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor](#)
[Médecins Sans Frontières \(MSF\)](#)
[Minority Rights Group International](#)
[Oakland Institute](#)
[OECD's Social Institutions & Gender Index \(Ethiopia\)](#)
[Overseas Development Institute \(ODI\)](#)
[Oxfam \(Ethiopia\)](#)
[Peace Women](#)
[Refugees International](#)
[Reporters Without Borders \(Ethiopia\) \(RSF\)](#)
[Right to Education](#)
[Save the Children \(Ethiopia\)](#)
[Security Council Report \(Ethiopia\)](#)
[United Nations Children's Fund \(UNICEF\)](#)
[United Nations Committee Against Torture](#)
[United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#)
[United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women](#)
[United Nations Committee on Enforced Disappearances](#)
[United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child](#)
[United Nations Development Programme \(UNDP\) \(Ethiopia\)](#)
[United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#)
[United Nations Human Rights Council](#)
[United Nations Human Rights Council mandated International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia](#)
[United Nations Human Settlements Programme \(UNHABITAT\)](#)
[United Nations News Centre](#)
[United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(UNOCHA\) \(Northern Ethiopia\)](#)
[United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect](#)
[United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\) \(Ethiopia\)](#)
[United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict](#)
[United Nations Population Fund \(UNPFPA\)](#)
[United Nations Security Council](#)
[United Nations Women](#)
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context](#)
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions](#)
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression](#)

[United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to education](#)

[United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders](#)

[United Nations Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment](#)

[United Nations Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially in women and children](#)

[United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences](#)

[United Nations World Food Programme \(WFP\) \[Publications\]](#)

[United States Aid \(Ethiopia\)](#)

[United States Institute of Peace](#)

[United States Congressional Research Service](#)

[United States Department of State \[Annual human rights report; annual terrorism report; trafficking report, international religious freedom report\] \(USDOS\)](#)

[Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict](#)

[Women's Refugee Commission](#)

[World Bank](#)

[World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#)

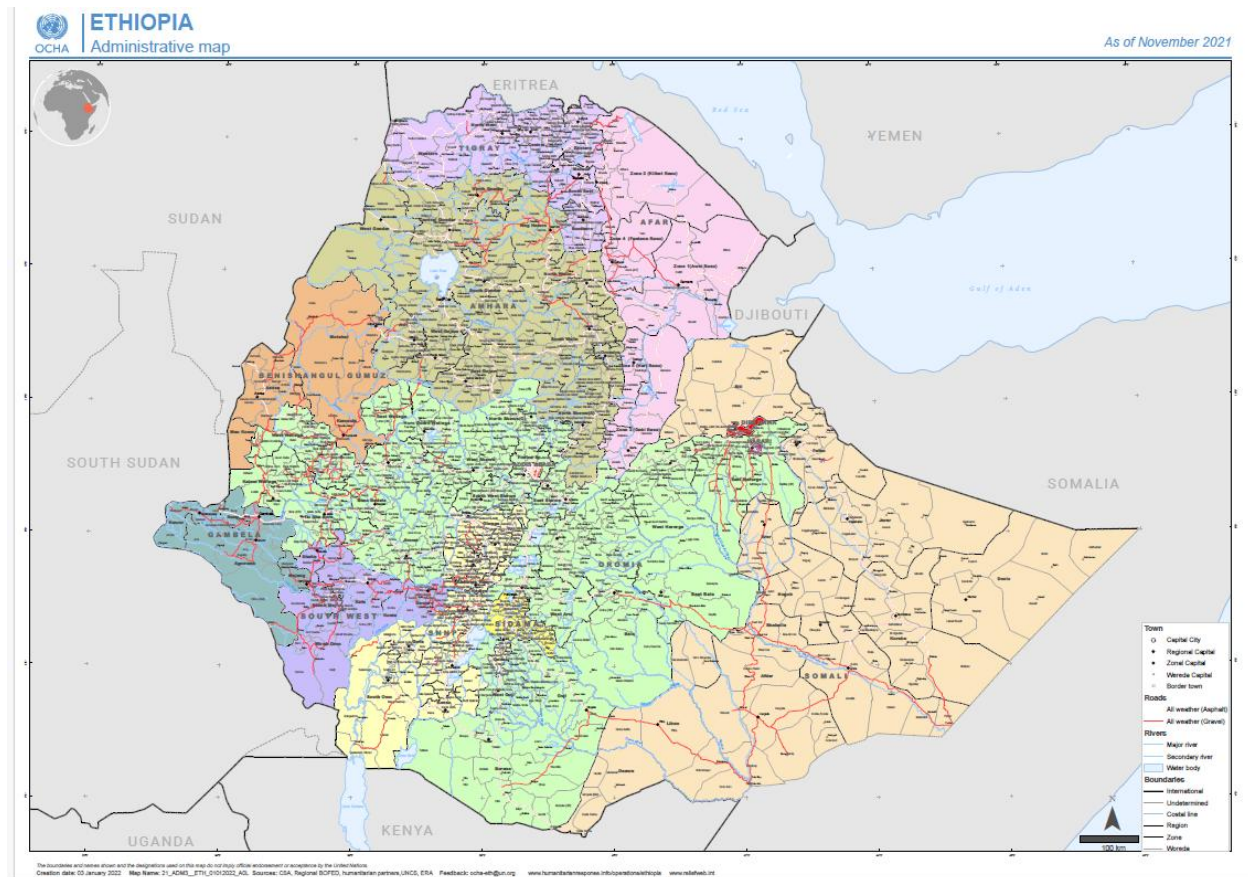
[World Organisation Against Torture \(Ethiopia\)](#)

List of acronyms

ASF	Amhara Regional Police Special Force
CoHA	Cessation of Hostilities Agreement
EDF	Eritrean Defence Forces
EHRC	Ethiopian Human Rights Commission
EHRCO	Ethiopian Human Rights Council
ENDF	Ethiopian National Defence Force
EOTC	Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church
EPO	Ethiopia Peace Observatory
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
GoE	Government of Ethiopia
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
NAMA	National Movement of Amhara
NFI	Non-food items
OLA	Oromo Liberation Army
OLF-Shane	Oromo Liberation Front-Shane(/Shene)
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region
SoE	State of Emergency
TDF	Tigray Defense Forces
TOTC	Tigrayan Orthodox Tawehedo Church
TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Front

I. Background

UNOCHA provided the following administrative map of Ethiopia as of November 2021¹⁹:



An African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) article provided the following geographic information about Amhara:

The Amhara Regional State is located in north-western Ethiopia. The region has an estimated land area of about 170, 000 square kilometres. The region borders Tigray in the north, Afar in the east, Oromia in the south, Benishangul-Gumuz in the southwest and the Sudan to the west (Aynalem, 2018).

Amhara region is divided into eleven zones, and 140 woredas (districts). There are about 3 429 kebeles or neighbourhoods, the smallest administrative units in Ethiopia. 'Decision-making power has recently been decentralised to woreda and thus woredas are responsible for all development activities in their areas. The 11 administrative zones are: North Gondar, South Gondar, West Gojjam, East Gojjam, Awie, Wag Hemra, North Wollo, South Wollo, Oromia special Zone, North Shewa and Bahir Dar City Special Zone (Central Statistical Agency, 2007).²⁰

¹⁹ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia: Administrative map \(As of November 2021\)](#), 3 January 2022

²⁰ ACCORD, [The nexus between shimglina as ADR and the formal criminal justice system: The case of the Amhara regional state, Ethiopia](#), 3 September 2021

The International Crisis Group explained in a November 2023 report that Amhara has a population of around 30 million people.²¹ According to the Congressional Research Service, Amhara is one of Ethiopia's most populous regions, alongside Oromia.²²

In its October 2023 report, the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia stated that:

Amhara is Ethiopia's second largest, and second most populous region, home to more than 23 million people. Geographically, it borders four of Ethiopia's regions, Afar, Benishangul Gumuz, Oromia, and Tigray, and also borders Sudan to the west. Most of its inhabitants are ethnic Amhara, although the region is home to other ethnic minorities, including the Qemant and Agew. Amhara region is also home to a sizeable Oromo population, in particular in the Oromo Special Zone.²³

According to the CIA's World Factbook, the ethnic composition of the country of Ethiopia based on 2022 estimates is "Oromo 35.8%, Amhara 24.1%, Somali 7.2%, Tigray 5.7%, Sidama 4.1%, Guragie 2.6%, Welaita 2.3%, Afar 2.2%, Silte 1.3%, Kefficho 1.2%, other 13.5%".²⁴ Citing data from the 2008 Population Census Commission, Minority Rights Group International noted that "Ethiopia's 11 states have different ethnic compositions: for example, Oromia, Amhara, Tigray and Somali are primarily inhabited by the four largest ethnic groups, namely Oromo (34.5 per cent), Amhara (26.9 per cent), Somali (6.2 per cent) and Tigray (6.1 per cent)".²⁵ As explained by Freedom House, there is a "lack of a complete census, which was scheduled to be completed in 2017 but was repeatedly delayed due to security concerns".²⁶ The International Crisis Group also noted that the Amhara "population is dispersed throughout Ethiopia, and is an ethnic minority in many locations".²⁷

According to a November 2023 commentary published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, "the conflicts in Amhara and Oromia have fueled polarizing ethnic politics that have begun to deteriorate societal relations between Ethiopia's largest ethnic groups".²⁸

The 2022 US Department of State's annual report on religious freedom noted that "A majority of individuals in Tigray are adherents of the TOTC [Tigrayan Orthodox Tawehedo Church] or EOTC [Ethiopian Orthodox Tawehedo church], and those in Amhara are adherents of the EOTC, while Islam is

²¹ International Crisis Group, [Ethiopia's Ominous New War in Amhara](#), 16 November 2023

²² Congressional Research Service, [Ethiopia: In Brief](#), 23 January 2024

²³ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Comprehensive investigative findings and legal determinations](#), 13 October 2023, paragraph 273

²⁴ CIA World Factbook, [Ethiopia Country Summary](#), last updated 27 February 2024 (accessed 1 March 2024), *People and Society*

²⁵ Minority Rights Group International, [Briefing: Access to education and health among minorities and indigenous peoples in Ethiopia](#), 3 February 2022

²⁶ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024 – Ethiopia](#), 29 February 2024

²⁷ International Crisis Group, [Ethiopia's Ominous New War in Amhara](#), 16 November 2023

²⁸ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, [Ethiopia's Fragile Stability Remains at Risk](#), 1 November 2023

most prevalent in Afar, Oromia, and Somali Regions. [...] There were also isolated Beta Israel or “Hidden Jewish” communities in Kechene, outside of Addis Ababa, and Debre Birhan, in Amhara Region ”.²⁹

II. Political situation

a. Involvement of Amharas in the Tigray conflict

Human Rights Watch explained that “The Ethiopian military offensive in Western Tigray that began on November 4, 2020, against forces affiliated with the region's ruling party - the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) - was carried out with the direct support and close coordination of Amhara Special Forces (ASF), Amhara militias, and Fano armed groups from the Amhara region, and in some areas, Eritrean forces”.³⁰ Providing further background information on the Fano, the report noted:

In the Amhara region, “Fano,” an Amhara nationalist movement that was active during the 2016-2018 protests, emerged as an armed informal militia.⁷⁵ Since 2018, government security forces – both at the federal and the regional levels – had largely tolerated violence by Fano.⁷⁶ In 2018 and 2019, Fano, at times with the complicity of Amhara Special Forces (ASF), became responsible for widespread violence, including mass killings and the destruction of property perpetrated against communities of Qimant, an ethnic group in the Amhara region.⁷⁷³¹

75 The term “Fano” historically refers to armed peasants who accompanied imperial armies, without being members. During the 2016-2018 protest movement, Fano was self-described defense groups made up of young people.

76. Amnesty International, “Beyond Law Enforcement, Human Rights Violations by Ethiopian Security Forces in Amhara and Oromia,” May 29, 2020, pp. 35-40, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/2358/2020/en/>. (For example, during the attack on Qimant neighborhood on January 10, 2019, that lasted for 24 hours, a joint operation of Fanos and the Amhara police forces killed Qimant residents and destroyed property. At the same time, the ENDF forces stationed nearby did nothing to stop the attack despite the repeated appeals for rescue by the Qimant community members).

77 “Fano Will Not Lay Down Arms If Demands Are Not Met: Chairman,” Ezega News, March 28, 2020, <https://www.ezega.com/News/NewsDetails/7856/Fano-Will-Not-Lay-Down-Arms-If-Demands-Are-Not-Met-Chairman>; See also Amnesty International, “Beyond Law Enforcement, Human Rights Violations by Ethiopian Security Forces in Amhara and Oromia, May 29, 2020

The Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), a special project launched by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), provided the following background on the ‘Fano’:

‘Fano’ refers to a group of armed youth, generally from Amhara region, who are involved in community protection. The term took on new connotations under the later years of the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) — 2014-2018 — when it became synonymous with an anti-

²⁹ US Department of State, [2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Ethiopia](#), 15 May 2023

³⁰ Human Rights Watch, [“We Will Erase You from This Land” Crimes Against Humanity and Ethnic Cleansing in Ethiopia’s Western Tigray Zone](#), 6 April 2022, II. Laws-of-War Violations During Initial Military Offensive

³¹ Human Rights Watch, [“We Will Erase You from This Land” Crimes Against Humanity and Ethnic Cleansing in Ethiopia’s Western Tigray Zone](#), 6 April 2022, I Background, The Transitional Period, 2018-2020, a. Rise and Role of Informal Militias and Regional Special Forces

government youth movement that led massive non-violent protests and a limited violent insurgency in Amhara region. Prior to the northern Ethiopia conflict, Fano militias expanded substantially, with popular figures rallying groups of fighters around reports of attacks on ethnic Amhara in Oromia and Benshangul/Gumuz regions, and around the territory claims of Raya and Welkait in Tigray region. During the northern Ethiopia conflict, Fano militias were allied with the federal government and given weapons and training, taking and controlling western parts of Tigray region at the outset of the war.³¹ Even prior to the end of the northern Ethiopia conflict — which ended in November 2022 — the relationship between Fano and the federal government began to sour as the government attempted to disarm and demobilize the group.³²

A February 2024 Rift Valley/ Peace Research Facility Briefing Paper provides further background on the Fano by regional faction and reports with regards to Fano-community relations:

Since the outbreak of the conflict, the Fano have mostly only controlled territory for brief periods. Only in a few areas, especially in Gojjam, have Fano maintained territorial control. Because the government rarely delivers services to the population, Fano have taken advantage of this limitation to try and gain more public support by providing security and protection in these areas. Thus far, the Fano groups have not begun exercising formal governance by taking over local administration and delivering services. There is some informal ‘tax’ collection³¹—often collected via checkpoints on major roads—which is frequently coercive.

Initial attempts by the Fano to gain political leverage by taking control over major towns including Gondar, Bahir Dar, Woldiya, Debre Birhan, Shoa-Robit, and Lalibela resulted in civilian deaths, displacement, and the general disruption of everyday life. Furthermore, travel restrictions and alleged forced conscriptions risk eroding public support for the Fano and their broader campaign. In rural areas, the violent confrontation with the ENDF backed by the regional forces has caused civilian casualties and the destruction of property. If the conflict becomes protracted, significantly disrupting daily life, it could cause a decline in support for the insurgency. Also, the non-hierarchical, decentralized nature of the groups, which have generally not operated in a cohesive, coordinated manner, may undermine public confidence.³² When the ENDF seized territories previously controlled by the Fano, civilians faced harassment and imprisonment for supposedly working with the groups. In turn, the Fano took measures against those individuals who collaborated with the ENDF.³³

31 The rates of tax hinge on the wealth of the individuals with the business community paying the largest sums

32 Interview with key informant-I, 20 December 2023.

33 ‘በጥቅምት ወር በታሪካዊቷ የላሊበላ ከተማ የተከሰተው ምንድን ነው?’, BBC Amharic, 27 December 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/amharic/articles/c0ky1rq144lo>.

In its October 2023 report, the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia stated that “Ethiopian government forces during the conflict also included Special Forces, which are nominally responsible to each Ethiopian Regional State Government. Amhara Special Forces and Afar Special Forces were especially implicated in the conflict, owing in large part to their physical presence in regions

³² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO December 2023 Monthly Update: The Fano Insurgency: Main Hurdles to Unifying Fano](#), 19 January 2024

³³ Rift Valley Institute, Ethiopia Peace Research Facility (Atrsaw Necho and Yared Debebe), [Understanding the Fano Insurgency in the Ethiopia Amhara Region](#), February 2024

neighbouring Tigray and where Tigray fighters launched offensives, but there are credible reports of the involvement of Special Forces from other Ethiopian regions as well”.³⁴ The same source further noted:

In April 2023, the Federal Government announced a move to disband the Regional Special Forces, offering their members the option to join the ENDF or the national police or return to civilian life. As noted above, the announcement was met with resistance in Amhara region. Amhara Special Forces and Afar Special Forces often fought or worked alongside a range of unofficial and informal local and ethnic militias, some of significant scale. This is especially the case with Amhara Special Forces which operated alongside Amhara militia, notably fano militia groups, in Western and Southern Tigray.³⁵

By way of background, the Congressional Research Service explained that “The Tigray conflict divided the country and its security forces along ethnic lines. The war set a coalition of forces allied with the federal government—the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF, the military), Eritrea’s military, Amhara state security forces, and ethnic Amhara militia—against an ethnic insurgent force in Tigray known as the Tigray Defense Forces (TDF). The TDF was composed of Tigray state security forces, former soldiers, and civilians, and was led by Tigray state officials and retired military leaders of Tigrayan ethnicity (including a former U.N. peacekeeping force commander and a former head of the military)”.³⁶ The same source further noted:

Under Ethiopia’s constitution, each regional state is authorized to administer a state police force to maintain public order within their state. In the 2000s, state governments used the authority to develop paramilitary forces, which the EPRDF used to help counter insurgencies. Amhara’s force and the Fano fought alongside the Ethiopian and Eritrean militaries in the Tigray conflict, while Tigray’s force became a core element of the TDF. Federal efforts to demobilize the Amhara force in 2023 spurred Fano mobilization against the government. Sporadic clashes between the military and Fano ensued, and the Fano have briefly overtaken several major cities in Amhara. Some local officials have been assassinated, and state authority in some areas has reportedly collapsed.³⁷

An April 2023 monthly update from the EPO described the role of the Amhara regional special forces as follows:

Amhara regional special forces have played a key role in suppressing insurgency attempts within Amhara region, mostly by ethno-nationalist groups seeking greater autonomy. Besides the TPLF, Amhara regional special forces have been engaged in battles against Oromo ethnic militias and OLF-Shane insurgents in Oromia special zone, against Qemant militias near Gondar city, and more recently, against Fano militias in the eastern part of the region. Outside of Amhara region, Amhara regional forces have engaged in clashes in Benshangul/Gumuz region – in Metekel zone where many ethnic Amharas live¹⁵ – along the Sudanese border, and in Tigray region during the northern conflict. Like other regional special forces, Amhara regional special forces have been accused of serious crimes during these anti-insurgency operations. In

³⁴ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Comprehensive investigative findings and legal determinations](#), 13 October 2023, paragraph 91

³⁵ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Comprehensive investigative findings and legal determinations](#), 13 October 2023, paragraph 92

³⁶ Congressional Research Service, [Ethiopia: In Brief](#), 23 January 2024

³⁷ Congressional Research Service, [Ethiopia: In Brief](#), 23 January 2024

December 2021, members of Amhara regional special forces, along with Fano militia members, were filmed extrajudicially killing 30 ethnic Oromo men after accusing them of collaborating with the OLF-Shane.¹⁶ Amhara regional forces and “irregular forces” were targeted specifically in an executive order imposing sanctions on individuals by the United States in September 2021 over their involvement in Tigray.¹⁷

Furthermore, special forces in Amhara region played a critical role in assisting the ENDF North Command Post by capturing and maintaining control of the Amhara ethnic homelands of Welkait Tesegede, Tselemt, Humera, and Raya areas of Tigray region. The special force units worked in close conjunction with ‘Fano’ militias, and both actors have been accused of serious war crimes against ethnic Tigrayans living in Western Tigray zone.¹⁸

In contrast to Fano militias, which are less formally organized and loyal to local organizers, Amhara regional special forces and Amhara state police are commanded by officers loyal to the regional presidency and Amhara Prosperity Party officials. In Amhara region, four different leaders have commanded the special forces since 2018. Brig. Gen. Asaminew Tsige, who was accused of orchestrating the killing of the Amhara regional president, was shot dead by security forces in 2019 during an escape attempt. His position was filled by Deputy Commissioner Biset Getahun, who held the position until July 2021. Brig. Gen. Tefera Mamo led the forces from July 2021 until his release in February 2022. Mamo was later arrested by federal troops in May 2022 in Addis Ababa on terrorism charges.¹⁹ Maj. Gen. Mesele Belete led the force until it was dissolved this month.

Fano is a loose term referring to local militias, often comprised of young men, who are tasked with protecting ethnic Amhara communities. Unlike other ethnic militias in Ethiopia, the Fano in Amhara region are deeply connected and advocate for both a united Ethiopia and the restoration of Amhara governance over traditional Amhara homelands, which includes areas of Western and Southern Tigray zones. The Fano are supported by local communities, and its leadership often includes former members of regional or federal armed forces.

As part of the conflict against the TPLF, regular services were suspended in Amhara region, including the budget, to focus on issues related to war efforts.²⁰ This included the recruitment and arming of ethnic Amharas throughout Ethiopia and in the diaspora, with many of them integrated into Fano militias.²¹ During this time, Fano became more formalized as an organization, announcing provincial commanders and organizational structures. As conflict has abated in the country, ENDF soldiers moving along roadways and towns in Amhara region have engaged in sporadic clashes with Fano militias, evidencing a potential brewing storm.³⁸

15 [Addis Standard, ‘News Analysis: Amhara State deploys its forces to neighboring Benishangul Gumuz state; move follows recent killings of security forces by armed rebels,’ 13 September 2021](#)

16 [BBC, ‘Ethiopia conflict: Looking for clues in video of forgotten massacre,’ 7 November 2022](#)

17 [The White House, ‘Executive Order on Imposing Sanctions on Certain Persons With Respect to the Humanitarian and Human Rights Crisis in Ethiopia,’ 17 September 2021](#)

18 [Amnesty International, “‘We will erase you from this land’: Crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing in Ethiopia’s Western Tigray Zone,’ 6 April 2022](#)

19 [Borkena, ‘Tefera Mamo, abducted Ethiopian General, released,’ 12 June 2022](#)

20 [Addis Standard, ‘Translation of the nine points emergency decree by the Amhara State Council,’ 31 October 2021](#)

21 [Ethiopian Press Agency, ‘Fanos from America enter Dessie for survival struggle,’ 28 October 2021](#)

³⁸ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO April 2023 Monthly: Volatility in Amhara Region While the Rest of the Country Stabilizes](#), 6 May 2023

The International Crisis Group summarised in a November 2023 report that “Amhara militias fought alongside federal troops in the 2020-2022 Tigray war, but that alliance collapsed when the federal government and Tigrayan leaders reached a deal that ended the conflict. As Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed moved to rein in the Amhara militias, relations worsened. Other grievances abound”.³⁹

In its annual report covering events in 2023, Freedom House explained “Since the war in northern Ethiopia began in 2020, Amhara regional forces have taken control of and attempted to annex areas in Western Tigray, with the support of Ethiopian and Eritrean forces. Regional officials and Amhara security forces reportedly ordered the removal of thousands of Tigrayans, while Amhara forces were implicated in an ethnic-cleansing campaign against Tigrayans”.⁴⁰ The same source further noted that “The federal government does not wield control over areas plagued by insecurity, such as parts of Amhara and Oromia. Other areas have been under prolonged states of emergency with heightened military presence and control, including parts of Amhara, Benishangul Gumuz, Gambella, and Oromia”.⁴¹

The Brookings Institution noted that “The Amhara regional government’s special forces sided with federal forces (and the Eritreans) in the 2020-2022 war, as did the Fano. While the Eritreans, with their fratricidal hatred of the Tigrayans, reportedly committed most of the worst atrocities, the Amhara fighters participated in the ethnic cleansing of Western and parts of Southern Tigray — mixed population areas previously part of Amhara (and known respectively as Welkait and Raya) but constitutionally annexed to Tigray in 1991 by the TPLF-dominated government that replaced the Mengistu DERG regime”.⁴²

The Congressional Research Service noted in its January 2024 report on Ethiopia that:

Forces from Amhara reportedly continue to control western Tigray, which ethnic Amhara call Welkait and have sought to annex. They assert a historic claim to the fertile area, which has gold deposits and produces sesame, a lucrative cash crop.⁴⁷ The United Nations estimated that over a million people were forcibly displaced from the area (roughly the size of Connecticut) in 2021, in what the State Department termed ethnic cleansing.⁴⁸ Forced expulsions reportedly continued in 2023, and some reports suggest there have been efforts to destroy evidence of atrocities there.⁴⁹ Federal officials say they plan to hold a referendum on the territory; it remains unclear if they will enforce Amhara forces’ withdrawal, which deters civilian returns but could trigger more fighting.⁴³

47 Chatham House, *Fighting over ‘white gold’: Sesame in Ethiopia and Sudan*, April 4, 2023.

48 State Department, “Reports of Mass Detentions, Killings, and Forced Expulsions in Western Tigray,” December 17, 2021.

49 HRW, “Ethiopia: Ethnic cleansing persists under Tigray truce,” June 1, 2023; and The Economist, “War crimes in Tigray may be covered up or forgotten,” July 9, 2023.

³⁹ International Crisis Group, *Ethiopia’s Ominous New War in Amhara*, 16 November 2023

⁴⁰ Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2024 – Ethiopia*, 29 February 2024

⁴¹ Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2024 – Ethiopia*, 29 February 2024

⁴² Brookings Institution, *Ethiopia’s New Year’s ledger: A controversial new port and domestic challenges*, 16 January 2024

⁴³ Congressional Research Service, *Ethiopia: In Brief*, 23 January 2024

b. Tensions between the Amhara region and the Federal Government

The Brookings Institution described Amhara's involvement in the 2022 Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA), also referred to as the Pretoria agreement:

The November 2022 Pretoria agreement ended one of Ethiopia's bloodiest center-vs.-region wars but set the stage for another. Despite being Addis Ababa's wartime allies and victims of the Tigrayans' summer 2021 march through Amhara (and Afar) territory, the Amhara were not in Pretoria. The Amhara were unhappy that Pretoria left the Tigrayan leadership intact, while Article 10 committed the parties to "resolving issues of contested areas in accordance with the Constitution" rather than blessing Amhara territorial claims. Moreover, Pretoria promised the return of internally displaced peoples, predominantly Tigrayans, expelled from Amhara-occupied areas. The Amhara, part of Abiy's political base, accused Pretoria of ignoring their historic rights and security concerns. Meanwhile, Eritrea dug in, maintaining until today a presence in border areas.

Amhara disgruntlement exploded into crisis in April, when Abiy ordered regional special forces to fold into the federal security services. While Amhara's political leaders remain allied with Addis, the special forces and the Fano rejected integration. Amhara fighters seized cities before federal forces expelled them, including a November battle over Lalibela, the famed rock church city. Hundreds have been killed, including security and political officials. Abiy's military response drove the fighters to the countryside but failed to crush the insurgency; the Fano continues to launch hit-and-run seizures of towns. Eritrea is rumored to pursue a malevolent role against its erstwhile Addis Ababa ally by providing training and arms to Amhara militants.⁴⁴

Amnesty International provided the following background on the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement:

During the war in Tigray region, civilian authorities from the Amhara region, civilians, Fano militia and Amhara police in Western Tigray, with the acquiescence and possible participation of Ethiopian federal forces and the Eritrean Defence Forces, committed a widespread and systematic attack against the Tigrayan civilian population. These ethnic cleansing attacks on the Tigrayan community of the zone, amounted to crimes against humanity and war crimes, as documented by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.¹⁶

After the CoHA on 2 November 2022, between the federal government and TPLF, the alliance between federal forces and Amhara security forces and militia began to crumble. Individuals from Amhara region questioned the CoHA's legitimacy because it did not involve Amhara regional representatives.¹⁷

A few months later, in April 2023, the federal government announced plans to dismantle regional special police forces nationwide and to integrate them into federal forces, including the ENDF and the Federal Police Force. ¹⁸ This was met with opposition in Amhara region, including from a significant section of the regional ruling party, as well as regional security forces. ¹⁹ According to the Ministry of Peace, more than 50% of ASPF members refused to disarm or be integrated and instead defected to join the "Armed Groups" [widely known as Fano].²⁰ Additionally, some opposition political party leaders, and former ENDF members joined Fano.

⁴⁴ Brookings Institution, [Ethiopia's New Year's ledger: A controversial new port and domestic challenges](#), 16 January 2024

On 1 August 2023, the ENDF issued a public warning to a group it addressed as “disturbing the country’s peace in the name of Fano.”²¹ On 2 August 2023, there were clashes between the ENDF and Fano militia, according to a report by Reuters.²² Multiple cities across Amhara region, including parts of Bahir Dar, fell under control of Fano militia.⁴⁵

16 Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, Ethiopia: “We will erase you from this land”: Crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing in Ethiopia’s Western Tigray Zone (Index: AFR 25/5444/2022), 6 April 2022, [amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/5444/2022/en/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/5444/2022/en/)

17 Amhara Page, “የዶክተር ደሳለኝ ጩኔ ሆምጩኔ ያለ የፓርላማ ጥያቄ! እናመሰግናለን ዶ/ር ደሳለኝ”, June 14 2022, [youtube.com/watch?v=mONZqNTdEKg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mONZqNTdEKg); BBC Amharic, “የፋኖ ኃይል በአንድ ዕዝ ሥር አለመሆን ከመንግሥት ጋር ለሚደረግ ድርድር እንቅፋት መሆኑን አምባሳደር ተሾመ ቶጋ ተናገሩ”, 11 December 2023, [bbc.com/amharic/articles/c6px2kwl7xxo](https://www.bbc.com/amharic/articles/c6px2kwl7xxo); BBC Amharic, “የፋኖ ኃይል በአንድ ዕዝ ሥር አለመሆን ከመንግሥት ጋር ለሚደረግ ድርድር እንቅፋት መሆኑን አምባሳደር ተሾመ ቶጋ ተናገሩ”, 16 August 2023, [bbc.com/amharic/articles/c6px2kwl7xxo](https://www.bbc.com/amharic/articles/c6px2kwl7xxo)

18 Reuters, “Ethiopia to Dismantle Regional Special Forces in favor of ‘centralized army’”, 6 April 2023, [reuters.com/world/africa/ethiopia-dismantle-regional-special-forces-favour-centralized-army-2023-04-06/](https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/ethiopia-dismantle-regional-special-forces-favour-centralized-army-2023-04-06/)

19 BBC, “Ethiopia’s Amhara region hit by protests over move to dissolve regional forces”, 10 April 2023, [bbc.com/news/world-africa-65194146](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-65194146)

20 Ethiopia Insider, “ከተበተኑ የአማራ ክልል የልዩ ኃይል አባላት መካከል፤ “አብዛኞቹ” ታጣቂ ቡድኖችን መቀላቀላቸውን የሰለም ሚኒስትሩ ገለጹ”, 15 Aprile 2023; “ከተበተኑ የአማራ ክልል የልዩ ኃይል አባላት መካከል፤ “አብዛኞቹ” ታጣቂ ቡድኖችን መቀላቀላቸውን የሰለም ሚኒስትሩ ገለጹ”, 15 Aprile 2023, ethiopiainsider.com/2023/11795/ - Search(bing.com)

21 Addis Standard, “Army warns to take actions against actors “disturbing peace” in the name of “Fano”; admits members ambushed in Amhara region”, 1 August 2023, [addisstandard.com/news-army-warns-to-take-action-against-actors-disturbing-peace-in-the-name-of-fano-admits-members-ambushed-in-amhara-region/](https://www.addisstandard.com/news-army-warns-to-take-action-against-actors-disturbing-peace-in-the-name-of-fano-admits-members-ambushed-in-amhara-region/)

22 Reuters, “Ethiopian military clashes with militia in Amhara, injuries reported”, 2 August 2023, [reuters.com/world/africa/ethiopian-military-clashes-with-militia-amhara-residents-say-2023-08-02/](https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/ethiopian-military-clashes-with-militia-amhara-residents-say-2023-08-02/)

The International Crisis Group explained with regards to the agreement:

Tensions between Abiy and Amhara elites, who were instrumental in bringing him to power in 2018, have bubbled for years but heated up after the November 2022 deal to end the Tigray war. That conflict pitted federal and Amhara forces, as well as those from the Afar region and soldiers from neighbouring Eritrea, against those commanded by the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF). [...]

The federal government’s 2022 agreement with the TPLF succeeded in stopping the fighting but shattered Abiy’s wartime coalition, alienating large numbers of Amhara and disappointing Eritrea, both of which had invested significant blood and treasure in the federal war effort but did not participate in the peace talks. Many Amhara felt betrayed. They accused Abiy of plotting to hand back to Tigray disputed lands that the Amhara region seized during the war from the TPLF, which had taken administrative control of the territory upon coming to power in the early 1990s. Discord between Abiy and Eritrean leaders, who had forged close ties with Amhara elements during the conflict, added to the unease. [...]

The loss of the common TPLF enemy also brought to the fore acrimony between the Amhara and Oromo – Ethiopia’s two largest ethnic groups, which together form the backbone of Abiy’s ruling coalition.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Amnesty International, *Ethiopia: “We thought they would fight with those they came to fight with, not with us.” Extrajudicial executions in Bahir Dar by ENDF soldiers*, 26 February 2024

⁴⁶ International Crisis Group, *Ethiopia’s Ominous New War in Amhara*, 16 November 2023

The same source further noted that:

Amhara-federal relations soured further in February [2023], when a group of Oromo clergy broke away from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and declared their own rival synod, in part so that they could conduct services in their own language instead of Amharic.¹³ Amhara critics accused Abiy of backing the dissenting Oromo faction as part of a scheme to divide the Church (to them, a treasured institution and a cornerstone of Ethiopian heritage) and the country. The Church's main branch called on the faithful to wear black in silent protest, yielding striking shows of defiance in Addis Ababa (which has a large Amhara population) and major Amhara cities. Hinting at fear of greater unrest, federal authorities responded by restricting the internet in Amhara, a measure they did not lift until late July, and closing two of the five main roads between the region and the capital. Abiy eventually brokered a deal between the two groups of priests, but the tense showdown made many worry that a catastrophic Amhara-Oromo civil war was a distinct possibility.¹⁴

¹³ Hone Mandefro, "How years of tension in Amhara boiled to the surface", African Arguments, 4 August 2023.

¹⁴ The dispute did turn violent, for instance, when security forces in Oromia tried to remove the splinter faction of clerics from Church properties. But these episodes were brief. See, for example, "Addis police says 19 officers injured in confrontation with group gathered in Orthodox church in Oromia special zone; urges refrain from 'actions to disturb peace'", Addis Standard, 7 February 2023.

In a February 2023 report, the International Peace Institute (IPI) Global Observatory noted that:

Concerns over Amhara's armed groups are further complicated by fractures in the allyship between Amhara's various forces and the Ethiopian federal government. While Amhara forces fought alongside the ENDF throughout the war, the priorities of Amhara's militias have not always aligned with regional or national governments. In an attempt to exercise control over increasingly independent Amhara groups, the Ethiopian government carried out mass arrests of militia members and a military leader (among others) in May 2022, exposing fluid alliances but also possibly stoking more mistrust and straining relations.⁴⁷

The Council of Foreign Relations wrote that "The Ethiopian government's April announcement that all regional security forces must integrate into the national military or police forces was always an easier-said-than-done exercise. The wartime coalition that Prime Minister Abiy assembled to fight Tigrayan forces has fallen apart, and peace has not delivered the rewards some were clearly expecting, making the prospect of giving up their leverage decidedly unappealing. With the terms of the Tigray peace still not fully implemented and heavy fighting in the city of Gondar, security remains elusive for many Ethiopians".⁴⁸

According to the November 2023 commentary published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, "Violence erupted in Amhara after the government announced plans to absorb special forces in

⁴⁷ IPI Global Observatory, [After Agreement in Ethiopia's Tigray Region, What Stands in the Way of Lasting Peace?](#) 7 February 2023

⁴⁸ Council on Foreign Relations, [Africa's Multiple Security Crises](#), 7 August 2023

all regions of Ethiopia into the federal security apparatus, a move seen by Amhara elite as undermining their security at a moment when TPLF's demobilization remained incomplete. Tensions had already been rising, as the local political elite blamed the government for ignoring Amhara interests, including the status of contested territories in western and southern Tigray that they believe belong in the Amhara region".⁴⁹

The April 2023 monthly update from the EPO reported that:

The fallout between the federal government – represented by the Amhara branch of the Prosperity Party – and Fano has been long coming. Lack of federal action against the targeting of ethnic Amhara communities in Oromia special zone, Amhara region, as well as in Oromia and Benshangul/Gumuz regions, has driven anger against the federal government and Amhara Prosperity Party. Likewise, the perception that ethnic Oromos are dominating the government has led many Fano members to conclude that the current administration is not willing to protect Amhara interests.²² Fano members who engage in clashes with the forces of another region, or with the federal government are often referred to as 'extremists' by the government.²³ Despite having often fought side-by-side against the TPLF, attempts to disarm Fano militias by Amhara regional special forces loyal to the Amhara Prosperity Party have been met with violence in 2022.

The Amhara Prosperity Party has found itself in an increasingly difficult position over the past few years as the federal government – led by Prosperity Party officials – has been accused by ethno-nationalist organizations of ignoring the killings and displacement of ethnic Amharas and advancing a pro-Oromo agenda.²⁴ Amhara nationalist voices have become increasingly popular as they accuse the government of engaging with the TPLF and the OLF-Shane in peace talks in a way that removes accountability for the wrongs inflicted on Amhara people, and leaving the Amhara region defenseless after disarming the special forces.²⁵ For instance, in April 2021, mass demonstrations were held in all major cities in Amhara region against the increasingly frequent violent attacks and displacement of ethnic Amharas from areas in Oromia, Amhara, and Benshangul/Gumuz regions (for more information, see EPO Weekly: 17-23 April 2021).⁵⁰

²² Henok Abebe, 'Abiy Ahmed's Vengeful Actions towards Amhara: Biting the Hand that Feeds Him,' Borkena, 17 April 2023

²³ Addis Standard, 'News: Oromia State gov't warns 'extremist forces operating in the name of Amhara', infiltrating region and committing 'disgusting acts,' 4 April 2022

²⁴ Al Jazeera, 'Aid group says two workers shot dead in Ethiopia's Amhara region,' 10 April 2023

²⁵ Twitter @cdessalegn, 23 March 2023; Abel Tesfaye, 'As Ethiopian alliances shift, Abiy's anniversary met by Amhara protests and violence,' Ethiopia Insight, 7 April 2023

AP reporting on the 4,500 people arrested in the Amhara region between April and May 2023 noted that:

⁴⁹ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, [Ethiopia's Fragile Stability Remains at Risk](#), 1 November 2023

⁵⁰ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO April 2023 Monthly: Volatility in Amhara Region While the Rest of the Country Stabilizes](#), 6 May 2023

Among those arrested are members of the Amhara militia known as the Fano which was an ally of federal forces when fighting Tigray forces. Fano members, while celebrated in state media, also were accused of some of the war's worst atrocities.

They are now described in state media as an "irregular force," and efforts are underway to disarm some of the fighters.⁵¹

For further information on those arrests, see section [*III c. i. Arrests and detention with the Amhara region*](#).

In August 2023, ACLED issued a factsheet on the situation in Amhara, noting that:

After the government announced controversial plans to integrate regional special forces into other security institutions at the beginning of April 2023, the region has seen increasing unrest and frequent clashes between state forces and Fano and Amharic ethnic militias. The crisis escalated when the federal government ordered the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) to take action against "extremist" elements after an unidentified armed group killed the head of the Amhara Prosperity Party¹ at the end of April.² Fano and Amharic ethnic militias demand that ENDF troops withdraw from the region and they accuse the regional and federal governments of being dominated by ethnic Oromos. Moreover, they demand that Welkait, Tselemt, Humera, and Raya – areas in Tigray region with large Amhara populations – be officially brought under the Amhara regional government.⁵²

1 The Amhara Prosperity Party is one of the 10 factions of the ruling Prosperity Party. It is currently governing the Amhara regional state of Ethiopia.

2 Fana Broadcasting Corporate, 'The Security and Safety Joint Task Force announced that it is taking decisive action against the extremist forces that are trying to take control of regional power by destroying the constitutional system in Amhara region,' 28 April 2023

The same source also provided the following further background:

During and after the northern conflict, tensions grew between Amhara and federal forces around two central issues. First, political deadlocks on the status of Welkait, Humera, Tselemt, and Raya areas, which are officially located within Tigray region but contain many ethnic Amhara communities that seek to be incorporated into Amhara region. While the government indicated its interest in holding a referendum on the issue, opponents of the referendum argue that the TPLF-led government put these areas under Tigray region without consultation with the local population in the 1990s, and that the current administration should therefore make a direct political decision for these areas to be administered by Amhara region.¹¹ The second issue is the overall state of security for Amhara communities in Ethiopia. Government forces did not consistently defend against the TPLF advance in the region during the northern conflict in 2021 and 2022 as the ENDF withdrew from towns and cities in Amhara and Afar. Amhara civilians faced abuses by TPLF forces during the war, and Amhara settlers also faced intermittent violence in Oromia and Benshangul/Gumuz regions [...]. The recent decision to eliminate regional special forces was regarded in Amhara as a threat to the region's ability to protect itself against aggression from other regions. The government has also been accused of engaging in peace talks with the TPLF and the Oromo Liberation

⁵¹ AP news, [Ethiopia's mass arrests show rift with former Amhara allies](#), 3 June 2022

⁵² ACLED, [Fact Sheet: Crisis in Ethiopia's Amhara Region](#), 10 August 2023

Front (OLF)-Shane, a rebel group in Oromia – also known as the Oromo Liberation Army – in a way that will prevent accountability for violence against Amhara communities.⁵³

The International Crisis Group explained in a November 2023 report that:

In what proved to be a critical juncture in April, tens of thousands of Amhara special forces rejected a federal attempt to dissolve and merge them into other units, fleeing into the bush to team up with the Fano militants.¹⁵ The federal decree disbanding regional paramilitaries applied nationwide, but many Amhara believed that it was designed to defang them and leave them exposed in the face of what they view as threats emanating from Oromia, Tigray and, increasingly, the government in Addis Ababa. Some Amhara further argue that the edict was not enforced upon their enemies in Tigray, who have yet to fully demobilise or disarm after the war, or in Oromia, whose regional government they say has received special treatment under Abiy.¹⁶⁵⁴

15 A senior ruling-party official said 60 per cent of the special forces defected. Crisis Group interview, August 2023. The paramilitary force is thought to have been about 30,000 strong before the defections.

16 Crisis Group interviews, Amhara opposition politicians and activists, 2023. One senior opposition figure told Crisis Group that the Amhara rebellion would not have gathered strength if the federal government had not acted to weaken Amhara's security forces. Crisis Group telephone interview, October 2023. While Tigray's leaders handed over some heavy weapons to the federal military, the bulk of their forces have not demobilised. (Some suggest that Abiy shares an interest in letting Tigrayan forces stay mobilised, since they are potential allies against both Amhara and Eritrea.) The federal military chief of staff has said all regional paramilitaries, including in Oromia, have been integrated into other security forces. "Army chief proclaims end of regional special forces 'as of today'", Addis Standard, 15 April 2023. In Oromia, some paramilitaries are still fighting insurgents, alongside federal troops (probably under federal command) and in uniform, but there is no longer an Oromia Special Force structure or commander.

In August 2023, Reuters reported that "Fano, a part-time militia with no formal command structure, backed federal troops in a two-year civil war in the neighbouring Tigray region that ended last November. But the relationship has soured over what some in the region say is a disregard by the national government for Amhara's security".⁵⁵

In its October 2023 report, the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia stated that:

In Amhara in 2023, so-called fano militia have expressed dissatisfaction with 'federalist' or 'ethnic' 'extremism,' and with Amhara stakeholders' exclusion from the CoHA process on Tigray in November 2022.⁷³ Some Amhara politicians are concerned with CoHA provisions which suggest the return of areas of Western and Southern Tigray they claim (respectively Welkaiyt/Tegede/Tselemt and Raya) to the Tigray region.

⁵³ ACLED, [Fact Sheet: Crisis in Ethiopia's Amhara Region](#), 10 August 2023

⁵⁴ International Crisis Group, [Ethiopia's Ominous New War in Amhara](#), 16 November 2023

⁵⁵ Reuters, [Ethiopian military clashes with militia in Amhara, injuries reported](#), 2 August 2023

Dissatisfaction in Amhara was exacerbated in early April 2023, when the federal government announced it would disband regional Special Forces in favour of a centralized army.⁷⁴ Attempts at demobilisation triggered a series of protests among Amhara communities.⁷⁵ Soon after, a campaign of assassinations of regional security and political personnel began with the killing of the head of the ruling party in the region at the end of April 2023.⁷⁶ Since that point the security situation in Amhara Regional State deteriorated. The activities of disparate local fano militia groups reportedly began to coalesce during July 2023 as violence escalated.

In early August 2023 the Federal Government announced a national State of Emergency and placed the Amhara regional State under a Command Post, while reestablishing control of key urban centres. Dissatisfaction amongst Amhara politicians over CoHA as well as other grievances undermined an alliance between the Federal Government and Amhara nationalist groupings. Some of the strongest supporters of the Federal Government during the 2020 to 2022 Tigray conflict became strong critics over the first half of 2023. In August 2023 a senior federal official is reported to have acknowledged that half of Amhara Special Forces members had defected to fano units rather than demobilise.⁷⁷ Over and above these militia, a number of political organisations reportedly also supported the insurgency in Amhara region. They include the Amhara Popular Front, which also has spokespersons in the diaspora. Under the State of Emergency since August 2023, senior officials of the National Movement of Amhara (NAMA) and of the Movement for Ethiopian Social Justice (Ezema) have been arrested in Addis Ababa.⁵⁶

73 The Amharic term fano is one used historically of fighters or patriots in defence of the Christian state during the imperial period: it has a positive connotation in many Amhara areas. Government sources, by contrast, have tended to use the more pejorative term jawisa, bandit or scavenger. See the following section for a more detailed discussion of military actors.

74 Reuters, Ethiopia to dismantle regional special forces in favour of 'centralized army', 6 April 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/ethiopia-dismantle-regional-special-forces-favour-centralizedarmy-2023-04-06/>.

75 Voice of America, Gunfire, Protests in Ethiopia's Amhara Over Plan to Disband Regional Force 9 April 2023, <https://www.voanews.com/a/ethiopia-pm-vows-to-dismantle-regional-military-forces/7042661.html>.

76 Le Monde, Ethiopian PM says senior ruling party member murdered, 27 April 2023, https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/04/27/ethiopian-pm-says-senior-ruling-party-member-murdered_6024613_4.html.

77 Adane Tadesse, 'A reflection on the conflict in Amhara region,' Wilson Centre, 29 September 2023, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/reflection-conflict-amhara-region-ethiopia>

An August 2023 African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) article described:

The situation on the ground remained tense following the GoE's announcement to disband regional Special Forces. The government maintains that change is essential for national unity, however, this plan has faced opposition from Fano, non-state militia with no formal command structure, taking part in a week of violent protests across the region in April 2023. Tensions between the former allies turned into fierce fighting when the GoE ordered the Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) to act against "extremists" following the murder of the head of the Amhara Prosperity Party by an unidentified armed group in early August. The Fano and Amhara ethnic militias, who had been allies in the two-year war

⁵⁶ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [*Comprehensive investigative findings and legal determinations*](#), 13 October 2023, paragraphs 83-85

against the Tigray region, insisted on the withdrawal of ENDF troops from the area, and they also took control of what were termed ‘contested areas’.

The country found itself in such a predicament once again as it failed to address the root causes of conflict across northern Ethiopia. Among others, there are still two main concerns: firstly, the federal government enticed Amhara forces to join forces in seizing Western and Southern Tigray, which many Amhara refer to as Welkayit and Raya, in asserting historical claims to the territories. The troops then forcibly displaced ethnic Tigrayans from their lands, an act labelled as “ethnic cleansing” by the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. Secondly, the overall security situation in Amhara deteriorated during and after the northern conflict with ENDF failing to defend the region from TPLF’s advance in 2021 and 2022. Furthermore, the government failed to protect an influx of ethnic Amhara fleeing intermittent violence in Oromia and Benshangul-Gumuz, compelling the militia to take matters into their own hands.

In light of this prevailing distrust, the recent initiative to integrate security forces from Ethiopia’s 11 regions was seen as an attempt to diminish the Amhara’s capacity to protect itself against aggression from other regions. The GoE has been accused of continued engagement with the TPLF and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) in a way that will counteract accountability for the atrocities committed against the Amhara. While the government denies such claims, it acknowledges that many of the special forces were integrated with the Fano insurgency, bolstering their fighting capabilities. In an escalation of a simmering feud between the two former allies, the Fano have briefly captured two towns – Gondar and Bahir Dar – and the industrial city of Debrebirhan. Several reports of airstrikes in the region led to numerous civilian deaths and mass killings in Finote Selam, Bahir Dar and Shewa Robit. Consequently, Ethiopia’s federal cabinet declared a six-month state of emergency and established a military command post in the Amhara region that reports directly to the Prime Minister following clashes across the Amhara region which has developed into a security crisis.

The Pretoria peace talks brought representatives of the federal government and those of the Tigray leadership to the negotiation table but failed to include concessions to a silent main party – the Amhara region – and that the solution to the problem will require resolving the issues of the contested areas, including the major concern of the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) process. The exclusion of such issues in the negotiation process was met with deep suspicion among the Amhara who criticised the talks for not being all-encompassing, adding yet another layer of complexity to years of ethnic tension. Political deadlocks on the status of Welkayit and Raya, albeit being part of Tigray in constitutional terms, contain many ethnic Amhara communities which the regional administration consider theirs as a fait accompli. The Fano militia is willing to back such claim with force by rejecting any attempts from the federal government to challenge the status quo.⁵⁷

Also in August 2023, the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect reported in an atrocity alert that:

Tensions have been rising in the Amhara region since the federal government announced its plans to integrate regional security forces throughout the country into the police or national army. Violence and protests broke out in the region as many believed the plan would leave Amhara civilians vulnerable to attack from other armed groups. While some members of the Amhara regional forces complied with the plan, others joined the fano, which has been a predominantly Amhara youth-led militia.

Part of the Amhara distrust in the federal government and its integration plan stems from the government’s failure to adequately address long-standing grievances between communities in Ethiopia and prevent the frequent targeting of civilians along ethnic lines. Amhara civilians have been repeatedly

⁵⁷ ACCORD, [Ethiopia’s Amhara region in turmoil](#), 31 August 2023

targeted by armed groups in the neighboring Oromia region. In one incident last June, over 400 Amhara civilians were killed in Tole by the ethnic armed group, the Oromo Liberation Army. Additionally, while Amhara forces and fano militias were allied with the federal government during the conflict in Tigray, some Amharas feel sidelined by the November 2022 cessation of hostilities agreement. Notably, although Amhara forces took control of Western Tigray during the conflict, the federal government has yet to determine the future of the area's administration. Parts of Western Tigray – particularly Tsegede, Tselemt and Wolkait – have been disputed by Amharas and Tigrayans for decades. International human rights organizations found that Amhara militias and Eritrean forces committed ethnic cleansing against Tigrayans in the area during the 2020-2022 conflict and have reported that abuses continue despite the cessation of hostilities agreement.⁵⁸

III. Security situation in the Amhara region

a. Clashes along the Oromia border

This section should also be read against [VI. Treatment of Amharas by non-state actors outside of the Amhara region, b. Oromia.](#)

According to the 2024 Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index which covers the period from 1 February 2021 to 31 January 2023:

Dangerous cleavages along ethnic lines in Ethiopian society have grown wider since 2019. The devastating conflict in Ethiopia's north initially pitted the federal government against the Tigray People's Liberation Front but grew to include all ethnic Tigrayans and later ethnic Amhara as the conflict moved into the Amhara region. Violence in the Oromia region, which targets ethnic Amhara, occurs at regular intervals, with little mitigating action taken by local officials. Tensions between the Amhara and Oromo branches of the ruling party have already resulted in violent episodes.⁵⁹

The International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia stated that "In the third phase of the conflict from November 2021 to August 2022, active fighting between Tigrayan and federal government forces was limited, although there was significant violence in Afar in the early months of the year. During this stalemate in the north, violence in Oromia and in the Oromo area of Amhara was reported to have grown".⁶⁰

The EPO reported that:

⁵⁸ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Atrocity Alert No. 359: Ethiopia, Haiti and Cameroon](#), 9 August 2023

⁵⁹ Bertelsmann Stiftung, [BTI 2024 Country Report — Ethiopia](#), 19 March 2024

⁶⁰ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Comprehensive investigative findings and legal determinations](#), 13 October 2023, paragraph 75

In April 2022, clashes re-ignited along the border areas of North Shewa and Oromia special zones, as competing claims about the actors involved initiated the armed clashes. According to the Efratana Gidem woreda administrator, fighting erupted after the OLF-Shane attacked and killed a farmer in the woreda. This account was refuted by the head of the Jilye Tumuga woreda communication, who blamed Fano militias for shooting at herders in the woreda⁶¹ (for more details on these clashes, see EPO Weekly: 16-22 April 2022).

The Addis Standard reported the following incidents in 2022:

The Oromo Special Zone and the neighboring North Showa Zone of the Amhara regional state is prone to and frequently hit by extreme violence. In July last year, 17 civilians, by local authorities count, were killed, many were also injured and several dozens are displaced and along with severe property damages, including burning of residential quarters.

Two months earlier, in April of same year, Addis Standard reported about a gruesome violence in which dozens of civilians were executed by members of Fano in the area and many more displaced in an area called Kolash which is a border area between Shewa Robit (North Shewa zone) and Wasen Kurkur (Oromo Special zone).⁶²

The Addis Standard reported in January 2023 that:

Residents say dozens of civilians are killed in a renewed violence in Jille Dhumuga district of Oromo Special Zone, in Amhara region, which involved local armed forces and local civilians. Amhara regional state government said this morning that federal police and defense forces have been deployed to the area alongside Amhara special forces to “restore peace and order.”

Several houses are burnt and properties looted and vandalized in the ongoing violence which started on Saturday and has since spread to towns and villages of the neighboring North Shewa Zone including Shewa Robit, as well as Ataye and Jawa towns in Efratana Gidim district.⁶³

In February 2023, UN News reported that “fighting in parts of southern Amhara and neighbouring areas of Oromia region, have led to “significant displacement” in the zones of North Shewa, South Wello and West Gojam, in Amhara. OCHA reports that in those regions of Amhara, “a significant number of houses and private properties have allegedly been burned down and destroyed. Partners are mobilizing food and non-food items such as emergency shelter, amidst road closure and ongoing hostilities”.”⁶⁴

The EPO reported that “Between April and November [2023], the OLA/OLF-Shane and the federal government, along with local Oromo ethnic militias, engaged in battles against Amhara ethnic militias

⁶¹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [Oromo Special Zone and North Showa Zone Conflict](#), last updated 29 September 2023

⁶² Addis Standard, [Analysis: Civilians killed, villages burnt in latest violence in restive Oromo special zone, neighboring North Shewa zone in Amhara region; federal forces deployed](#), 25 January 2023

⁶³ Addis Standard, [Analysis: Civilians killed, villages burnt in latest violence in restive Oromo special zone, neighboring North Shewa zone in Amhara region; federal forces deployed](#), 25 January 2023

⁶⁴ UN News, [Ethiopia: Northern aid access improving but some areas still hard to reach](#), 2 February 2023

(sometimes identified as Fano militia) operating in Oromia region and in the Oromo special zone of Amhara region”.⁶⁵ The same source further described that:

The Oromo public has been exerting pressure to erode the power of Fano militias, which operate in areas of East Wollega and Horo Guduru Wollega zones. Many politicians, along with the local community in Oromia region, viewed the federal government’s alliance with Fano militias during the northern conflict as dangerous, reawakening historical distrust of Ethiopia’s empirical regimes.¹⁰ The federal government’s crackdown on Amhara ethno-nationalists has garnered popularity among ethno-nationalist Oromos, who view the action as evidence that this regime could and would champion the interests of ethnic Oromo. This, interestingly, places the OLA/OLF-Shane in competition with the federal government to be the chief ‘champion’ of Oromo interests.⁶⁶

10 Buli Edjeta, ‘Imperial ambition is the main hurdle to peace in Ethiopia,’ 4 June 2022

The EPO reported the following incidents related to the Oromo Special Zone and North Showa Zone Conflict:

- On 17 April 2023, a group of Amhara militiamen carried out an attack against Oromo civilians in Bate Ardaga kebele, Jilye Tumuga woreda in the Oromo special zone, Amhara. The attack reportedly resulted in the death of at least 10 people, as well as the burning of houses and looting of cattle.
- On 26 April 2023, an unidentified armed group shot at farmers who were heading to their farms in an unspecified area in or around Alala kebele in Eferatana Gidem Woreda, North Shewa zone near the border of Jiliye Timuga Woreda, Oromia special zone. According to witnesses, the shots were fired from Jiliye Timuga Woreda. One person was injured due to the attack.
- Reportedly, around 6 May 2023, Fano militias stopped a transportation bus and killed 17 ethnic Oromo residents of Oromo special zone in Shola Meda – a location near Debre Sina town – in North Shewa zone, Amhara. The militias had identified the victims using their IDs and dragged them out of the bus.
- Reportedly, around 14 June 2023, Fano militias shot and killed an ethnic Oromo around Merhabete in North Shewa, Amhara after dragging him out of a bus. The armed group asked the victim to pay cash in order to be freed. Though he paid, the armed group shot and killed him.
- Reportedly, on 17 June 2023, Fano militias shot and killed an ethnic Oromo youth near Shewa Robit town in North Shewa zone, Amhara while he was traveling from Kemise to Addis Ababa. The reason is unknown.⁶⁷

The August 2023 monthly update from the EPO reported that “By the end of August, armed clashes broke out between Fano militias and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane, as well as between Fano

⁶⁵ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO November 2023 Update: An Evolving Conflict Environment in Oromia](#), 14 December 2023

⁶⁶ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO November 2023 Update: An Evolving Conflict Environment in Oromia](#), 14 December 2023

⁶⁷ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [Oromo Special Zone and North Showa Zone Conflict](#), last updated 29 September 2023

militias and government forces in North Shewa zone of Oromia region, especially in Dera woreda”.⁶⁸ The same source further described:

This woreda is a disputed territory located at the border of Amhara and Oromia regions. Both Amhara and Oromo ethnic groups reside in this area, and for the last two decades, Amhara residents have petitioned for this area to be administered by the Amhara region.⁸ Armed clashes involving ethnic Amhara and Oromo militias have been rare in Dera woreda, although Fano militias have been increasingly linked to attacks against civilians since December 2022, with violence targeting predominantly ethnic Oromos. Previously, the most frequently reported events in North Shewa zone were armed clashes between the OLF-Shane and government security forces, and violence targeting civilians perpetrated by OLF-Shane (see graph below). According to the Amhara Association of America – which advocates for the political and human rights of Amhara people – between January and November 2022, over 70 Amharas were killed, and nearly 60 Amhara civilians were abducted in Dera woreda in seven identity-based attacks by OLF-Shane.⁹ [...]

Another round of political violence was also recorded in western Oromia in the border zones between Amhara and Oromia regions. In August, attacks against civilians perpetrated by Fano militias were reported in Horo Guduru and East Wollega zones, two zones situated near the border between Oromia and Amhara regions.⁶⁹

⁸ Amhara Association of America, ‘AAA Update – November 28, 2022,’ 28 November 2023

⁹ Amhara Association of America, ‘AAA Update – November 28, 2022,’ 28 November 2023

The International Crisis Group explained in a November 2023 report that “The activities of the tens of thousands of irregular fighters known as Fano after the Tigray war also heightened tensions between Amhara and the federal government, as well as with Oromia. Some have clashed with Oromo militants near the Amhara Oromo boundary. Others, along with regular Amhara security forces, received training from and allegedly maintained connections with Eritrea”.⁷⁰ The same source further noted that “Clashes along the boundary have grown more frequent since Abiy took office in 2018, and today many Amhara assert that Abiy (himself from Oromia) is allowing Oromo militants to massacre Amhara civilians in Oromia. Distrust soared when, in February, Amhara politicians said Abiy was siding with Oromo clerics who split off from Ethiopia’s powerful Orthodox Church, a cherished institution among the Amhara and many other Ethiopians. As tensions increased, federal authorities increasingly resorted to blocking roads connecting Amhara with Addis Ababa”.⁷¹ The same source further noted that:

Rights groups have recorded a series of massacres of Amhara in Oromia in recent years, many attributed to the OLA. 42 Amhara figures claim that the regional government is supporting the OLA in such depredations, although no concrete evidence of complicity has emerged”.⁷²

⁴² “Ethiopia: Authorities Must Investigate Massacre of Ethnic Amhara in Tole”, Amnesty International, 21 July 2022

⁶⁸ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO August 2023 Monthly: Conflict in Amhara Region](#), 8 September 2023

⁶⁹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO August 2023 Monthly: Conflict in Amhara Region](#), 8 September 2023

⁷⁰ International Crisis Group, [Ethiopia’s Ominous New War in Amhara](#), 16 November 2023

⁷¹ International Crisis Group, [Ethiopia’s Ominous New War in Amhara](#), 16 November 2023

⁷² International Crisis Group, [Ethiopia’s Ominous New War in Amhara](#), 16 November 2023

Voice of America news, citing the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, reported that in November 2023 “fighters from the Oromo Liberation Army, or OLA, killed 17 people and burned down villages in Benishangul-Gumuz, which borders the Oromia region”.⁷³

In November 2023 Reuters reported that according to residents “at least 30 people were killed in fighting between members of Ethiopia’s two largest ethnic groups, the Oromo and Amhara, in a town in the region’s Oromiya Special Zone”.⁷⁴ Reportedly the clashes were “over farmland in Mesno town in the Oromiya Special Zone, which has a majority Oromo population”.⁷⁵

The Brookings Institution noted in January 2024 that “The Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) — having splintered from the Oromo Liberation Front when the latter disarmed in return for legal recognition — has been accused of multiple attacks and hundreds of casualties in Oromia, primarily in Amhara-majority villages along the Amhara-Oromia regional border. The Fano have allegedly retaliated against Oromo villagers”.⁷⁶

The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect noted in its February 2024 backgrounder on Ethiopia that “Inter-communal and inter-religious violence, particularly between the Amhara and Oromo communities, as well as regional border disputes in other parts of Ethiopia continue. Oromia regional security forces, the ENDF and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) armed group have committed enforced disappearances and attacks on civilians, including ethnic Amharas”.⁷⁷

In March 2024 the Addis Standard reported that “The Oromo Special Zone and the neighboring North Shoa zone of the Amhara region have been a site of violent clashes over the past years involving the Fano militia, government security forces and local armed residents”.⁷⁸ The same source further noted:

Several people have been killed, many others injured in the Oromo special zone of the Amhara region in what local residents described as a series of “coordinated attacks” perpetuated by the Fano militia and uniformed regional police forces.

A total of 27 people were killed, and more than 40 others have been injured in the attacks since 09 March in the Jille Dhumuga district of the zone, according to locals. [...]

The attacks have since spread to several villages in the district resulting in more casualties, burning of homes and destruction and looting of properties, the resident added.⁷⁹

⁷³ VOA, [Over 50 Civilians Killed in Ethiopia Attacks: Rights Body](#), 6 December 2023

⁷⁴ Reuters, [Fighting in Ethiopia’s Amhara region prompts fear for ancient churches](#), 7 November 2023

⁷⁵ Reuters, [Fighting in Ethiopia’s Amhara region prompts fear for ancient churches](#), 7 November 2023

⁷⁶ Brookings Institution, [Ethiopia’s New Year’s ledger: A controversial new port and domestic challenges](#), 16 January 2024

⁷⁷ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Populations at Risk: Ethiopia](#), 29 February 2024, *Background*

⁷⁸ Addis Standard, [News: Several civilians killed in series of attacks in Oromo special zone, Amhara region](#), 20 March 2024

⁷⁹ Addis Standard, [News: Several civilians killed in series of attacks in Oromo special zone, Amhara region](#), 20 March 2024

The EPO reported in its weekly update of 26 March that:

In Amhara region, deadly clashes between Oromo and Amhara ethnic militias continued, with fighting reported in Jilye Tumuga woreda in Oromia special zone and in and around Ataye town in North Shewa zone. ACLED records at least 21 reported fatalities due to a four-day clash from 18 to 21 March in these two areas. Last week's clashes were a continuation of violence that began on 10 March. According to one witness from Oromia special zone, the recent round of conflict erupted after an armed group killed one person, injured two others, and raided cattle in Kolash area in Jilye Tumuga woreda on 10 March.¹ Wider tensions between armed groups in Oromia and Amhara regions often manifest in the form of ethnic conflict in North Shewa and Oromia special zone of Amhara region, with factions loyal to Fano militias and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) — referred to by the government as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane — occasionally involved.⁸⁰

1 Mesfen Arage and Teshaye Damtew, 'What happened in Ataye town and Jilye Tumuga woreda?', VOA Amharic, 21 March 2024

b. Security situation prior to April 2023

This is a non-exhaustive, illustrative overview of the security situation according to the sources consulted.

For a detailed overview of the security situation prior to 2022, see:

International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Comprehensive investigative findings and legal determinations](#), 13 October 2023.

That report from the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia noted that “By the end of December 2021, the federal government had regained control over most areas in Afar and Amhara region”.⁸¹

In February 2022, the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect reported in an atrocity alert that “sporadic, heavy clashes have also continued to erupt along the Amhara and Tigray regional borders, leaving the situation ‘tense and volatile’.”⁸²

The same source noted in a further update that “inter-religious violence recently broke out between Orthodox Christian and Muslim communities in the Amhara region. On 26 April [2022] at least 30 Muslim civilians were killed and more than 100 others injured in Gondar after an attack on a funeral procession by unidentified armed men. In the ensuing violence, individuals looted shops and perpetrated acts of violence targeting mosques. Apparent retaliatory attacks spread to other regions, notably the Southern Nation's Nationalities and People's region where two Orthodox Christian men

⁸⁰ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly Update 26 March](#), 27 March 2024

⁸¹ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Comprehensive investigative findings and legal determinations](#), 13 October 2023, paragraph 271

⁸² Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Atrocity Alert No. 287: Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and Red Hand Day](#), 9 February 2022

were reportedly burned to death and at least five churches destroyed in Silt'e zone".⁸³ Reporting on the same incident, the 2022 US Department of State's annual report on religious freedom noted that:

In April [2022], over 20 Muslims were reportedly killed following three days of violence after the funeral of a Muslim cleric. The violence was reportedly sparked by Muslim youths taking stones from the Orthodox side of the burial ground to decorate the cleric's gravesite on the Islamic side of the graveyard. Subsequently, EOTC [Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo church] and Muslim youths clashed for three days; on the first day of disturbances, rioters reportedly killed three individuals. The Addis Standard reported that the Amhara State Islamic Affairs Council demanded action after the death toll rose to 21. The Islamic social media channel Harun Media blamed the clashes on tensions following anti-Muslim rhetoric from EOTC factions and expressed concerns over an increase of Muslim-owned businesses and Muslims acquiring land in traditionally Orthodox areas of Gondar. The Ethiopia Observer reported that 280 persons were arrested in Gondar in response to the violence. In the days after the attack, the Ethiopia Observer reported a wave of protests, during which protesters damaged and destroyed churches in Silte Zone, SNNP Region, and mosques in Debark Town, Amhara Region.⁸⁴

Reporting on the same incident, Michele Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, stated that:

The inter-religious clashes first reported in Gondar city, in the northern Amhara region on 26 April, reportedly in connection with a land dispute, appear to have quickly spread to towns and cities in multiple other regions, and to the capital Addis Ababa. I understand two mosques were burnt and another two partially destroyed in Gondar. In the apparent retaliatory attacks that followed, two Orthodox Christian men were reportedly burnt to death, another man hacked to death, and five churches burnt down in Silt'e Zone, in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region, located in the southwest of the country. There was further violence on 28 April in Debark town in the Amhara region, and Dire Dawa city in the north-eastern Afar region.

Police have reportedly arrested and detained at least 578 people in at least four cities in connection with the violent clashes.⁸⁵

According to the 2024 Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index which covers the period from 1 February 2021 to 31 January 2023:

Members of Fano, primarily active in the Amhara region, are also challenging the state's monopoly on the use of force in the country. This group played an active role in pushing TDF out of Amhara in 2021. In May 2022, the Amhara regional government began a "law enforcement" operation in the region. As per the regional government, this operation was necessary given the spate of smuggling incidents, shootings and interference in court decisions in the region. As a result, tensions between Fano militias and the government increased. As part of the operation, over 4,500 people were arrested, including journalists, leaders of Fano militias and the former leader of Amhara regional special forces. There were also armed

⁸³ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Atrocity Alert No. 301: Ethiopia, Burkina Faso and China](#), 18 May 2022

⁸⁴ US Department of State, [2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Ethiopia](#), 15 May 2023

⁸⁵ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, [Inter-religious clashes in Ethiopia](#), 7 May 2022

clashes between the two actors as government forces began the operation. Moreover, since November 2022, Amhara ethnic militias residing in western Oromia, who are locally also identified as Fano, have started to challenge the state's monopoly on the use of force in the area. The Oromos and the regional authorities claim that these militias came from the neighboring Amhara region, while Amhara refuted this claim and insisted the militias were established locally to defend fellow residents from OLA attacks, which have been frequent in these areas since 2018.⁸⁶

In July 2022, Insecurity Insight reported that "Protests, mainly in the northern Amhara region, have reportedly led to towns being brought to a standstill at the end of June [2022]".⁸⁷ The same source further described:

Main Stream Media (MSM) and independent Ethiopia media sources claim that ethnic violence is once again increasing. Adding to the continuing tensions is the TPLF demand to regain parts of Western Tigray, which the Amharans currently hold and claim as their ancestral homeland.

- Analysis of reported violence shows very high levels of violence over the past six months in the Oromia region (279 reported incidents) and high levels in Amhara (66) and Afar (60), while reported incidents from Tigray have fallen to 26 - the same level of violence as reported from Benshangul/Gumuz and lower than numbers of reported incidents from SNNP region (34). Any activity can be interpreted as suspicious in such an environment where tensions are high. [...]

The demonstrations in June were triggered by anger at a lack of action over a reported massacre in which it has been claimed that at least 100 Amharans were killed by the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) in the Oromia region. Since then, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and the OLA have exchanged accusations over a "new massacre" (Abiy's twitter comment) on 04 July in Oromia. [...]

Protests began in the capital Addis Ababa on 25 June, and spread to Gondar, and the capital of Amhara, Bahir Dar, by 01 July. Since then, there have been claims that up to 600 people were killed in the 18 June incident in Gimbi Woreda, East Wollega Zone, in Oromia bordering the Benishangul-Gumuz Region – though this has not been verified.⁸⁸

In August 2022 the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect reported in an atrocity alert that "After a five-month-long humanitarian ceasefire that had been in place since March, fighting resumed in northern Ethiopia on 24 August around the town of Kobo in the Amhara region".⁸⁹

A Security Council Report explained in September 2022 that "initially, fighting erupted around the town of Kobo, located near the south-eastern border of Tigray in the Amhara region. Violence then rapidly expanded, with fighting reported in several areas near Tigray's southern border, western Tigray, and in the north of Tigray. Fighting has seen the Tigrayan forces pitted against varying combinations of Ethiopian federal forces, Amhara regional forces, Amhara militias and Eritrean forces".⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Bertelsmann Stiftung, [BTI 2024 Country Report — Ethiopia](#), 19 March 2024

⁸⁷ Insecurity Insight, [Ethiopia Situation Report](#), 18 July 2022

⁸⁸ Insecurity Insight, [Ethiopia Situation Report](#), 18 July 2022

⁸⁹ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Atrocity Alert No. 315: Ethiopia, Libya and International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances](#), 31 August 2022

⁹⁰ Security Council Report, [Ethiopia: Informal Interactive Dialogue](#), 22 September 2022

The Guardian newspaper reporting on the situation in Kobo noted that:

Tigrayan rebel forces have killed dozens of civilians during their latest occupation of a town in the Amhara region, survivors claim. [...]

The alleged killings took place in the town of Kobo, located along the highway to the capital, Addis Ababa. Between 13-15 September, Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) fighters shot dead unarmed civilians they suspected of supporting federal forces and local militias, survivors have told the Guardian.

In one district of Kobo alone, witnesses counted 17 bodies of people killed over two days.

Fighting between Ethiopian federal forces and Tigrayan rebels erupted again in late August, shattering a six-month humanitarian truce. On 4 September the TPLF announced it had captured Kobo but in the past week rebels withdrew from the town amid fierce fighting with federal troops and Amhara militias.

Meanwhile, fighters were killing people and looting in Kobo, residents said.

"It started on Tuesday, 13 September. Before that day the Tigray fighters were intimidating residents, looting, and searching for hidden arms. There was no fighting inside Kobo when they committed the killings. Federal troops had already withdrawn weeks earlier and it was Tigray forces who had fully occupied the town," said Bekalu*, a 47-year-old father of three who fled the town after witnessing the killings.

The extrajudicial executions were carried out during house-to-house searches by the rebels, according to the testimonies of seven survivors.⁹¹

The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect reported in an atrocity alert of January 2023 that:

While progress has been made in Tigray, risks to civilians have escalated in other areas of the country due to recurrent cycles of inter-communal violence. Fighting in and around the town of Jewuha, Amhara region, reportedly broke out on 22 January between members of the Amhara regional special forces and the Oromo Liberation Army, an ethnic Oromo armed group. The initial fighting killed dozens of militants and civilians. Fighting subsequently spread to neighboring towns, causing thousands of people to flee and killing dozens more.⁹²

The International Crisis Group explained:

Over the course of the spring of 2023, Amhara anger at Abiy's government boiled over into armed confrontation. Federal and regional forces faced off against an array of dissenters, led by Fano militias but also including units defecting from the Amhara special forces and emergent rebel groups. Early on, this group mostly mounted street protests and roadblocks, but militants among them also committed violent acts. Gunmen assassinated several local officials, including Girma Yeshitila, head of the Amhara branch of the ruling party, on 27 April.¹⁷⁹³

17 "Joint Task Force says taking 'decisive measures' against 'extremist forces' in Amhara region in wake of official's killing", Addis Standard, 28 April 2023.

⁹¹ The Guardian, [Tigray rebels tortured and killed civilians in renewed fighting, survivors claim](#), 10 October 2022

⁹² Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Atrocity Alert No. 333: Ukraine, Ethiopia and Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory](#), 1 February 2023

⁹³ International Crisis Group, [Ethiopia's Ominous New War in Amhara](#), 16 November 2023

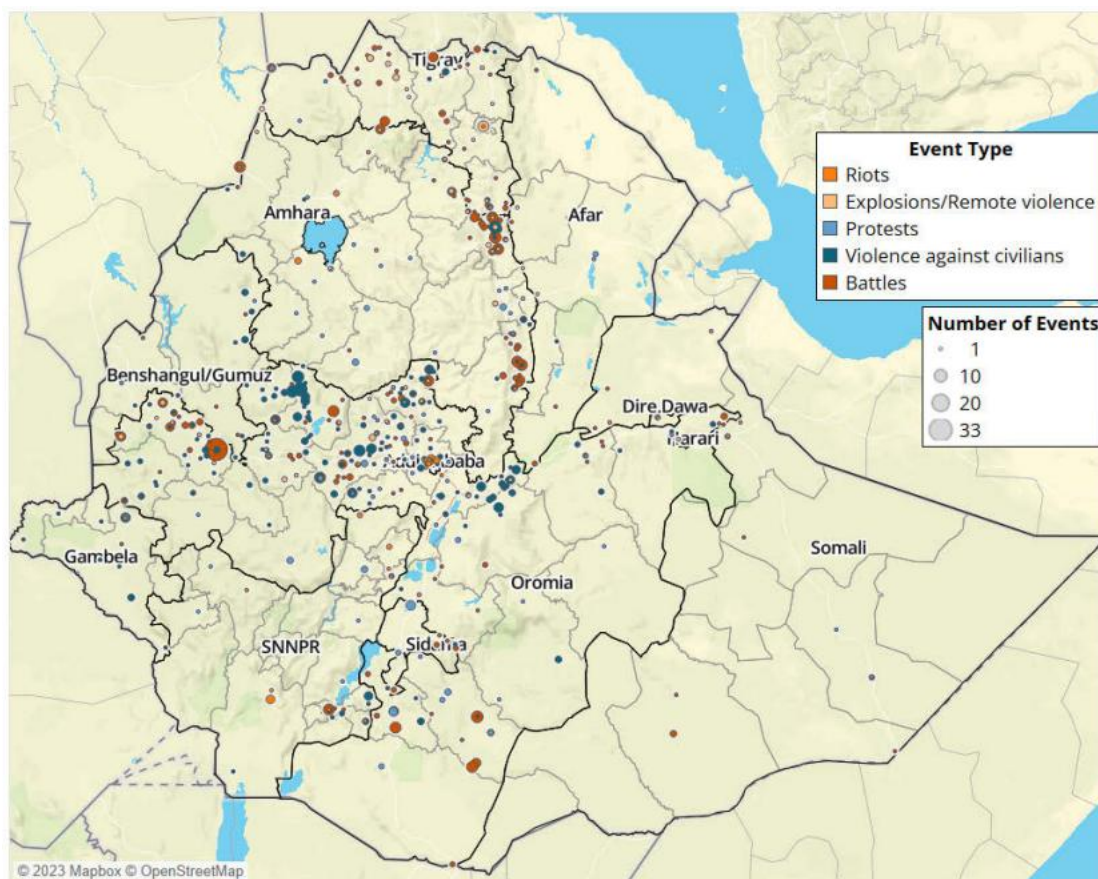
The EPO issued a report of incidents between April 2022 and April 2023 which recorded:

Over the past year, the EPO team has continued to collect data on political disorder throughout Ethiopia in real time, recording a total of 1,140 political violence events and 171 demonstration events. [...]

While political violence in Oromia region accounts for most events recorded during the year, the data also include battles in Tigray, Amhara, and Afar regions, demonstrations in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples region (SNNPR), violence targeting civilians in Benshangul/Gumuz region, and cross-border attacks in Gambela region. [...]

Over the past year, political violence levels were highest in Oromia, Tigray, and Amhara regions. Amhara and Oromia, as well as SNNPR, also registered the highest number of demonstration events. Violence against civilians, the second most common event type after battles, was also common in these regions, with 310 events recorded in Oromia and 37 in Amhara.⁹⁴

It also produced the following infographic depicting 'Disorder Events in Ethiopia (April 2022-23)⁹⁵':



⁹⁴ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Year in Review 2022–2023](#), 19 April 2023

⁹⁵ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Year in Review 2022–2023](#), 19 April 2023

c. Security situation since April 2023

This is a non-exhaustive, illustrative overview of the security situation according to the sources consulted.

The Rift Valley Institute/Peace Research Facility published a conflict trends report for April 2022 to September 2023 which provided a timeline of key security incidents during that period and provided the following overview:

During this period, the Amhara region was affected by six distinct theatres of conflict which have fluctuated in intensity over time. There are several key drivers of conflict in the region, including competing identity-based movements; territorial disputes; political realignments; and the country's ongoing economic woes. In addition, structural factors, such as ethnic federalism and the region's complex security landscape are a key influence on the nature and prevalence of conflict there. [...]

The contest for control over the disputed areas of Wolqayt-Tsegede, Raya and Telemt between the Amhara and Tigray regions—all now under Amhara control—remained active. Due to the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) between the TPLF and the federal government, there was no active fighting during this period, but the disputed areas remain the major point of contention between the two regions. [...]

The dynamics of conflicts in the Amhara region vary depending on the parties involved, the location and type of conflicts. There are numerous armed actors involved, including the ENDF, ASF, Amhara militias, TDF, SAF, and the Eritrean Defence Forces (EDF). Non-state actors such as the Amhara Fano militias, Qimant ethnic armed group, and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), which the regional and federal governments describe as Oromo Liberation Front-Shene, are also among the players in the conflicts in the Amhara region.⁹⁶

The report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, submitted to the UN Human Rights Council, summarised the April 2023 events as follows:

In April 2023, the security situation in Amhara began to deteriorate, following the assassination of the ruling party's regional head. Amid wider and long-standing Amhara grievances against the Federal Government, key Amhara politicians disapproved of the COHA negotiation and strongly opposed a withdrawal of Amhara forces from Western Tigray. By July, local Amhara fano militia groups began to coalesce, boosted by members of the Amhara Special Forces which the Government had attempted to demobilize. A campaign of assassination of senior regional security officials allowed fano or allied militants to enter and control several towns. As in Tigray and Oromia, these Amhara groups also seem to enjoy considerable local support.⁹⁷

The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect noted that:

In April 2023 the government announced plans to integrate regional militia forces into the federal army and police, prompting fears among populations regarding loss of regional autonomy and vulnerability to

⁹⁶ Rift Valley Institute/Peace Research Facility (Artsaw Necho), [Conflict Trends Report](#), October 2023

⁹⁷ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia](#), 14 September 2023, paragraph 16

attacks by other ethnic groups. In the Amhara region, protests against the measure escalated into intense clashes between the fano, an irregular ethnic Amhara militia, and the ENDF, during which the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has documented the targeting of civilians and civilian property. The ENDF have also been accused of killing civilians while searching for fano supporters.⁹⁸

Amnesty International reported in April 2023 that it was “concerned about reports of violations and violence in Amhara, where exchanges of gunfire have been reported in multiple locations, including the killing of two humanitarian workers on 9 April and the mass arrests in the regional and national capital”.⁹⁹ It linked to an Addis Standard article which reported the following incidents:

The security situation in Amhara region is changing fast as civilians in various cities of the region staged protests against the government’s “practical activities” to dissolve the controversial regional state special forces and “reorganize” them into regular regional and federal police as well as the national army.

Clashes broke out between government security forces and civilians as well as between members of the regional special forces and the national army in some cities according to residents.

Residents in Kobo town in the North Wollo zone of Amhara region told Addis Standard that the sound of artillery was heard in the town on Sunday night. Reuters news agency reported that members of the Amhara special forces had fired their weapons into the sky all night in defiance of the decision following massive protests on Sunday in the city of Gondar.

In a statement issued on Sunday, the opposition National Movement of Amhara (NaMA) also claimed that the use of heavy weapons was observed in Raya Kobo and urged that it should stop right away.

According to Reuters, protests were held in at least seven major cities of the region including the capital Bahir Dar, Gondar, Dessie, Woldia etc. Many city entrances and exits were blocked in addition to the demonstrations.¹⁰⁰

The April 2023 monthly update from the EPO found that “Amhara region had the highest number of recorded events and reported fatalities due to political violence last month, with 26 events and 47 reported fatalities. Over 68% of all reported fatalities in the country were recorded in Amhara region. In April, the most common event type was protests, with 33 events. Most of the protests recorded in April were in Amhara region and related to the government’s initiative to dissolve the region’s special forces”.¹⁰¹ The same source further documented that:

In Amhara region, rumors that the federal government intended to disarm the regional special forces sparked clashes between Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) troops and special forces and their allied Fano militias on 6 April, with battles recorded in Gobiye, Kalim, Belago, and Gomata in North Wello zone (see map below). After reports of these armed clashes emerged, the government released an official statement clarifying its plan to integrate all regional special forces into state police, federal police, or the

⁹⁸ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Populations at Risk: Ethiopia](#), 29 February 2024, *Background*

⁹⁹ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: Government should respect the right to peaceful protest and immediately release detained media staff](#), 17 April 2023

¹⁰⁰ Addis Standard, [News Update: Heavy artillery fired in Kobo as protests engulf Amhara region following decision to dissolve regional special forces](#), 10 April 2023

¹⁰¹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO April 2023 Monthly: Volatility in Amhara Region While the Rest of the Country Stabilizes](#), 6 May 2023

ENDF.⁷ This announcement prompted additional armed clashes, riots, and protests throughout Amhara region (for more, see EPO Weekly: 1-7 April 2023 and EPO Weekly: 8-14 April 2023). At least 15 fatalities were recorded in the context of these demonstrations, most as a result of ENDF forces firing on protesters in an attempt to disperse them. However, after a week of instability in the region, violence subsided around 13 April after the government released various explanations regarding the integration plan⁸ and held a traditional conflict resolution meeting with leaders of East Amhara Fano.⁹ The situation intensified yet again on 27 April, when unidentified gunmen ambushed and killed the head of the Amhara Prosperity Party and a member of the party's executive committee along with his security detail and other members of the local administration around Menze Guwaza area in North Shewa zone as they were traveling from Mehal Meda to Debre Birhan.¹⁰¹⁰²

⁷ Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Government Communication Service, 'A statement from the Government Communication Service on current issues,' 6 April 2023

⁸ Amhara Media Corporation, 'There is no specific decision to disarm and disband Amhara special forces,' 9 April 2023; AMC, 'Press statement of Prosperity Party executive member and head of Amhara Prosperity Party office,' 11 April 2023; Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation, 'Interview with the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, General Abebaw Tadesse,' 7 April 2023

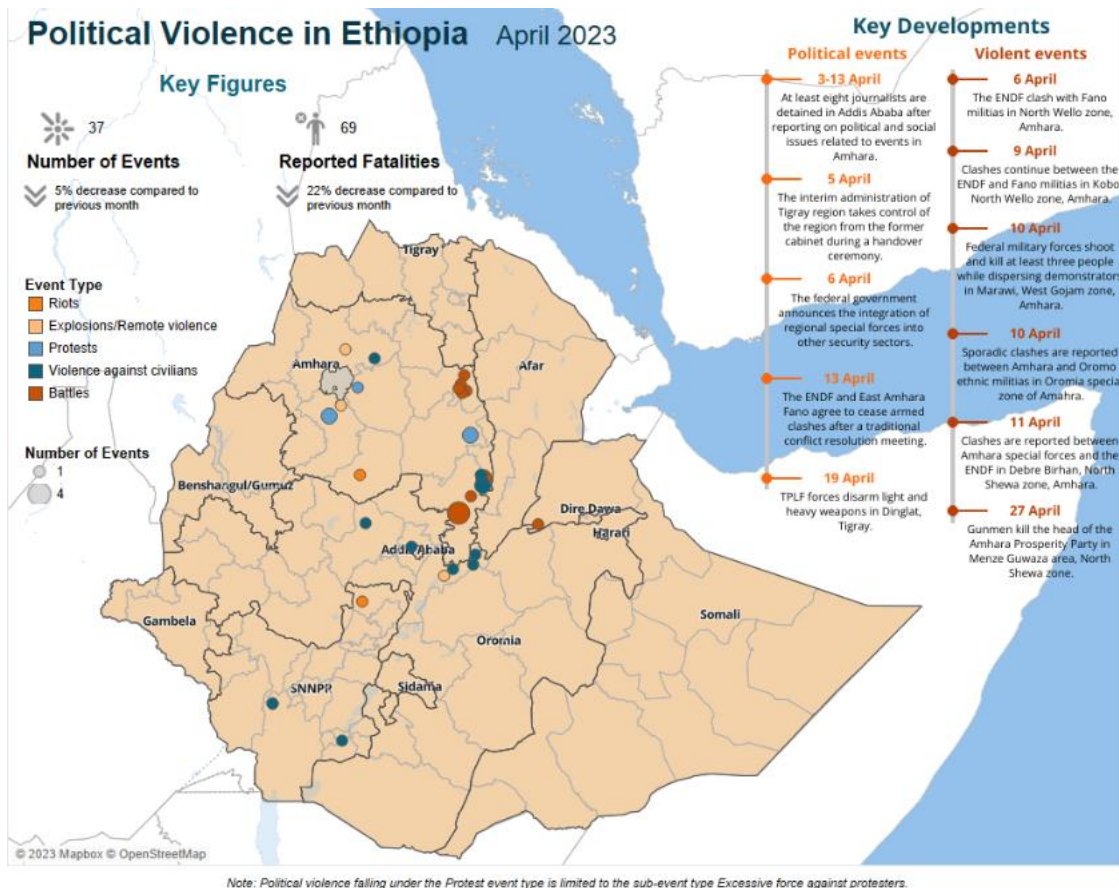
⁹ AMC, 'Armed Fano members in the North Wello zone accepted the government's call for peace and agreed to return to their normal lives,' 13 April 2023

¹⁰ AMC, 'The Amhara Regional Police Commission announced that five more people who were traveling with Mr. Girma Yeshitla have died,' 30 April 2023

The same source also produced the following infographic¹⁰³:

¹⁰² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO April 2023 Monthly: Volatility in Amhara Region While the Rest of the Country Stabilizes](#), 6 May 2023

¹⁰³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO April 2023 Monthly: Volatility in Amhara Region While the Rest of the Country Stabilizes](#), 6 May 2023



The May 2023 monthly update from the EPO reported that “In May, 25 demonstration events were recorded, with nearly half in Amhara region. Most demonstrations in Amhara were connected with the government’s operations targeting ‘extremists.’”¹⁰⁴ The same source also stated that “Violence has hindered election campaigns. Several targeted killings of candidates have been reported (see map below). Ethiopian Citizens for Social Justice (EZEMA) candidates were killed in Bishoftu city (Oromia) and in Ataye (Amhara), while the National Movement of the Amhara (NAMA) candidates were shot and killed in Metema (Amhara) and in Metekel (Benishangul/Gumuz)”.¹⁰⁵

In May 2023, the Addis Standard reported that the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission “confirmed the presence of militarized conflict in parts of North Gonder, North Wollo and North Shewa zones of the regional state, and said that there are exchanges of fire and the presence of attacks supported by heavy weapons involving the federal the defense forces and local armed groups in the Shoa Robit area of North Shewa zone, in Armania, Antsoqia, Gemza and Majete localities. ‘As a result, it has been

¹⁰⁴ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO May 2023 Monthly: Violence Returns to Oromia Despite Attempted Peace Talks](#), 22 June 2023

¹⁰⁵ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO May 2023 Monthly: Violence Returns to Oromia Despite Attempted Peace Talks](#), 22 June 2023

confirmed that there have been deaths, physical and property damage to civilians, and that the road from Desse to Addis Abeba has been closed at various times,' EHRC said".¹⁰⁶

The International Crisis Group explained that:

In April [2023], many Amhara forces refused Abiy's order to disband the regional paramilitaries and took to the bush with their weapons to join Amhara militias known as Fano, which had not demobilised after joining the anti-TPLF fight.

Major clashes then broke out across Amhara in early August, plunging the region into a state of war. After fighting spread to important cities, including the regional capital Bahir Dar, Gondar and Lalibela, which the rebels briefly took over, federal forces succeeded in pushing them out. But the various Fano militias – which lack a central command – regrouped in the countryside, bolstered by paramilitary defectors, and launched new attacks on towns. Even if federal forces can continue to repel these assaults, they will face a gruelling uphill struggle to uproot the insurgents, who have elite backing and strong community ties. At the time of writing, Addis Ababa has made no public effort to engage with the resistance leaders. Fighting continues in various parts of Amhara, ebbing and flowing in intensity, with no resolution in sight".¹⁰⁷

Providing further details, the same source noted:

The Amhara rebellion intensified in the summer months, leading to major clashes in many of the region's biggest cities, including the capital. On 26 July [2023], Fano fighters ambushed a federal army convoy in the West Denbiya district of Central Gondar Zone, killing more than a dozen, including several soldiers.²⁰ Insurgents then stormed major cities, including Lalibela, a UNESCO world heritage site known for its centuries old rock-hewn churches.²¹ Clashes also occurred in Bahir Dar (the regional capital) and near historic Gondar (the seat of Ethiopian emperors from the 17th to the 19th century), as well as around Debre Markos in East Gojjam Zone, close to Debre Berhan in North Shewa Zone and in South Wollo Zone. The insurgent attacks prompted authorities to step up their response. On 3 August, Yilkal Kefale, then Amhara's president, requested federal assistance. The regional government's cooperation with the federal government against the insurgency highlights a key difference between this crisis and the one in Tigray, when the regional government itself led the revolt.²² On 8 August, federal forces began to restore order, quickly pushing the militias from Amhara's largest cities, causing civilian casualties in the process.²³

Addis Ababa also declared a six-month state of emergency on 4 August, focused on Amhara, as it appeared to dig in for a longer fight. [...]

Battles for the towns of Debre Tabor and Debre Markos resumed in the month's final week, with federal troops maintaining control. Their success may have demonstrated that the Amhara movement cannot hold populous urban areas at present, but the rebels also showed signs of resilience, in that they were able to fight for weeks and impose serious costs on the government. As of 29 August, the fighting had killed almost 200 people, UN human rights officials said.²⁸ The UN added that the authorities had arrested more than 1,000 people during the state of emergency. The detainees include prominent figures such as Christian Tadelle, an opposition member of parliament who is one of Abiy's more outspoken

¹⁰⁶ Addis Standard, [News: Rights commission says civilians killed in ongoing military conflict in Amhara region, calls for dialogue](#), 4 May 2023

¹⁰⁷ International Crisis Group, [Ethiopia's Ominous New War in Amhara](#), 16 November 2023

detractors, and Yohannes Buayalew, a senior Amhara official who has criticised government policies. The various groups of militants that are fighting on seem to be mostly uncoordinated, for now. One leader has claimed that local bands are united under an umbrella called the Amhara Fano Popular Movement.²⁹ [...] With Fano and other groups scattered across Amhara, the rebellion is unpredictable, posing major difficulties for any peace efforts. Fighters continue to engage in guerrilla actions such as ambushing army convoys and assassinating local officials.³¹ [...]

The rebels' hit-and-run tactics already suggest that they will present a challenge for the authorities going forward; whether they will coalesce into something more formidable is uncertain. What does seem clear is that popular support for the rebels is increasing.³³ Many see the militias as needed for communal defence, as Oromo militants ambush and kidnap Amhara near Addis Ababa, some of whom are merchants headed to the capital on business. Amhara traders worry that these attacks have made travel unsafe amid a deepening economic crisis.³⁴¹⁰⁸

20 "Amhara region local council admits casualties after confrontations during senior army members' visit to Gorgora resort", Addis Standard, 27 July 2023.

21 "Multiple injuries as Ethiopian military, militia clash in Amhara: Sources", Al Jazeera, 2 August 2023.

22 Many members of the Amhara resistance consider Amhara officials serving at the federal level, the Amhara branch of the ruling party and top regional officials to be subservient to federal authorities and thus unrepresentative of Amhara views.

23 "Ethiopia says Amhara cities 'freed' after days of fighting", Agence France Presse, 10 August 2023 [...]

28 "Ethiopia: Deteriorating human rights situation", press release, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 29 August 2023.

29 This group is led by Colonel Fantahun Mohaba, a defector from the Amhara special forces. A U.S.- based Amhara activist said some Amhara perceive the group to be aligned with Amhara opposition leaders who used to be part of the exiled Ginbot 7 movement, which is also linked to President Isaias. Crisis Group telephone interview, 20 September 2023. [...]

31 An Amhara activist based in Addis Ababa said there are 21 different Fano groups in Amhara. Crisis Group telephone interview, 21 September 2023. [...]

33 While the restrictions on transport and communication in Amhara make assessing public opinion there difficult, there have been several mass protests in the region over the last few years, demonstrating that Amhara grievances are widespread. In addition, several media outlets and former Abiy supporters are openly backing the Fano, again indicating the loss of faith in his government at both the federal and regional levels. See, for example, "'Death sentence': Massacres fuel protests, resentment in Ethiopia", Al Jazeera, 6 July 2022; and "Ethiopia shaken by a new and growing rebellion in Amhara", op. cit

34 "Farmers in Amhara region face setback as fertiliser distribution disruptions compound amidst reignited conflict", Addis Standard, 31 August 2023.

The EPO noted that:

The Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) was deployed to various towns in the region, leading to 15 recorded incidents of armed clashes with Amhara militias, Fano, and members of special forces in at least 12 locations in April and May. At the end of May, the ENDF engaged in a four-day-long clash with militants from the Amhara Popular Front (AFP), which had fortified themselves within the Debre Elias Bihere Betsuan Melka Silase Andent Monastery in Degolma kebele in Debre Elias woreda, East Gojam zone. The government identified the former chairperson of the Balderas Party and journalist, Eskinder Nega, as

¹⁰⁸ International Crisis Group, [Ethiopia's Ominous New War in Amhara](#), 16 November 2023

being primarily responsible and claimed that 200 members of the AFP had been killed during the operation² (for more on the events in Debre Elias, see the EPO Weekly: 27 May-2 June 2023).¹⁰⁹

The July 2023 monthly update from the EPO wrote that “Despite rising political tensions in the past three months, Amhara region continued to trend downward in recorded political violence events throughout June [...]. Following widespread disorder in April after the disarmament of the Amhara regional special forces and clashes associated with an Amhara nationalist militia in May, June only saw limited clashes and some demonstrations. Significantly, despite high tensions over the political direction of the country and grievances against the government in Amhara region, the overall levels of violence are much lower compared to Oromia region”.¹¹⁰ The same source further noted that:

On 19 June, residents of Amanuel town blocked highways and denounced the government’s lax security measures in Oromia region after suspected OLF-Shane members abducted several drivers from the town. One person was killed and four others injured when Amhara state police fired into the crowd. [...] The government’s operations in Amhara region have been an effective, heavy-handed response to Amhara nationalism actors. Despite the unrest and some limited armed clashes as a response to the government crackdown, the situation in Amhara region has stabilized, and violent incidents were less common in June than in either April or May. Arrests, clashes, and the deployment of federal military forces have led to a decrease in reported violent incidents.¹¹¹

The July 2023 monthly update from the EPO reported that:

In July, ACLED records 87 political violence events and 273 reported fatalities in Ethiopia. Most of the political violence centered in Amhara region, where Fano militias and government forces have been clashing since April. Amhara region had the highest number of political violence events in July, with 50 events recorded, followed by Gambela region, with 14. Conversely, Gambela region had the highest number of reported fatalities, with 129 recorded, followed by Amhara region, with 82. In July, the most common event types were battles, with 57 events recorded, and violence against civilians, with 28 events recorded. Over two-thirds of battle events were recorded in Amhara region, of which nearly half were recorded in North Wello zone. [...]

In July, ACLED records a rising number of attacks targeting local officials in Amhara region (see map below), amid overall increasing unrest in the region since April 2023. [...]

The recent wave of attacks targeting local officials in Amhara region began after an unidentified armed group in North Shewa zone killed Girma Yeshitila, the head of the Amhara Prosperity Party, on 27 April (for more, see EPO Weekly: 22-28 April 2023). From May to July, ACLED records 10 major attacks against local officials, with four of the attacks targeting security officials. The increase in this targeted violence prompted several government officials to leave their homes and towns.¹

¹⁰⁹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO June 2023 Monthly: Political Violence Declines in Amhara Region Following Government Crackdown](#), 12 July 2023

¹¹⁰ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO June 2023 Monthly: Political Violence Declines in Amhara Region Following Government Crackdown](#), 12 July 2023

¹¹¹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO June 2023 Monthly: Political Violence Declines in Amhara Region Following Government Crackdown](#), 12 July 2023

Though the perpetrators of most of these attacks have not been identified at the time of writing, it is assumed that they have links with Fano militias and Amhara nationalist groups. [...]

Since April 2023, Amhara region has become one of the most unstable regions in Ethiopia, with nearly 50% more violent events recorded in April to July compared to the four months prior, of which 48% involved Fano and Amhara militias. [...]

Moreover, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission stated that an unidentified number of local officials were killed in August, leading to the collapse of local administration and security force structures in various parts of Amhara region.⁵¹¹²

1 Addis Maleda, 'Reportedly government officials of Shewa Robit town fled to Debre Berhan and Addis Ababa,' 18 July 2023 [...]

5 Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, 'The human rights impact of the armed conflict on civilians in Amhara Regional State,' 14 August 2023

In August 2023, Amnesty International called upon the Ethiopian government to “immediately grant independent investigators and media access to the Amhara region as reports of gross human rights violations emerge following ongoing armed confrontations between the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) and the local armed Fano militia”.¹¹³ It further described “Several media outlets reported that an airstrike on the region this week led to numerous civilian deaths. Amnesty International has also received allegations of mass killings and casualties in Finote Selam, Bahir Dar and Shewa Robit which merit further investigation”.¹¹⁴

In August 2023, Reuters reported that that Ethiopia's military has clashed with fano fighters which it described as “an escalation of a simmering feud between the two former allies that a doctor said had caused more than a dozen injuries” also nothing that “clashes have been reported in several other Amhara towns”.¹¹⁵ Citing the same Reuters article, Human Rights Watch noted in August 2023 that “Since April, the Ethiopian military and militias known as Fano have clashed in towns throughout the Amhara region after the government announced plans to dismantle and integrate all regional special forces in the country. The fighting has intensified in recent weeks, with increased reports of civilian casualties”.¹¹⁶

Also in August 2023, the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect reported in an atrocity alert that:

Since April residents in many towns, including Lalibela, Gondar, Kobo and Debre Birhan have witnessed intermittent intense fighting as both sides fight for control of territory. Populations in the regional capital, Bahir Dar, reported heavy gunfire and military aircraft overhead in some areas. [...]

¹¹² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO July 2023 Monthly: Local Officials Face a Heighted Risk of Attack in Amhara Region](#), 24 August 2023

¹¹³ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: Authorities must grant independent investigators, media unfettered access to Amhara region to probe violations under state of emergency](#), 18 August 2023

¹¹⁴ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: Authorities must grant independent investigators, media unfettered access to Amhara region to probe violations under state of emergency](#), 18 August 2023

¹¹⁵ Reuters, [Ethiopian military clashes with militia in Amhara, injuries reported](#), 2 August 2023

¹¹⁶ Human Rights Watch, [Deepening Crisis in Ethiopia's Amhara Region](#), 9 August 2023

The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission has reported that civilians and civilian property have been attacked in the fighting, but due to the suspension of telecommunications in many areas, the full scope of the violence remains unclear.¹¹⁷

In August 2023, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission recorded that:

EHRC has confirmed that there was heavy fighting in and around cities and towns across the Amhara region, which involved the use of heavy artillery resulting in the deaths and injuries of civilians, as well as damage to property. There have been cases where protestors including civilians who attempted to block roads were killed. Prisons and police stations in the region were broken into, weapons and ammunition were looted, and pre-trial detainees and prisoners escaped. The Amhara regional administration officials at various levels have been the target of attacks, resulting in the temporary collapse of local state structures in many areas and killings of government officials. [...]

In Debre Birhan city, due to heavy fighting in 4 densely populated kebeles between August 6 and 7, 2023, civilians including in a hospital, church, and school as well as residents in their neighborhoods and workers in their workplaces apparently killed due to fragments from heavy artillery or in crossfire. [...]

EHRC has also received credible reports of strikes and shelling including from Debre Birhan, Finote Selam, and Burie resulting in many civilian casualties and damage to residential areas and public spaces. [...]

In Bahir Dar, in many areas of the city civilians were killed on the streets or outside their houses while some youths were specifically targeted for searches and subjected to beatings and killings. There are also credible reports of many civilian casualties and damages to property in various parts of Gondar and extra-judicial killings in Shewa Robit by the security forces, the details of which are yet to be fully investigated and verified.¹¹⁸

In August 2023, ACLED issued a factsheet on the situation in Amhara, noting that:

ACLED records nearly 30 clashes between the ENDF and Fano militias last week, with most concentrated in North Wello and West Gojam zones (see map below). Fano militias managed to take control of some towns and released prisoners.³ Multiple violent demonstrations were also reported during the week, including incidents where demonstrators closed roads in Debre Markos, Demebecha, Bure, and Amanuel towns to obstruct ENDF movements in the region. According to one local official, clashes in East and West Gojam zones erupted when the ENDF began to mobilize toward east Amhara.⁴¹¹⁹

3 Fana Broadcasting Corporate, 'Details provided by the Chairman of the state of emergency proclamation, Mr. Temeseng Tiruneh, regarding the further work of the Proclamation,' 6 August 2023

4 Ethiopian Media Services, 'EMS Eletawi Wed 02 August 2023,' 2 August 2023

The August 2023 monthly update from the EPO reported that:

¹¹⁷ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Atrocity Alert No. 359: Ethiopia, Haiti and Cameroon](#), 9 August 2023

¹¹⁸ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, [The human rights impact of the armed conflict on civilians in Amhara Regional State](#), 14 August 2023

¹¹⁹ ACLED, [Fact Sheet: Crisis in Ethiopia's Amhara Region](#), 10 August 2023

In August, ACLED records 170 political violence events and 541 reported fatalities in Ethiopia. Most of the political violence was recorded in Amhara region, where Fano militias and government forces have been clashing since April.

Amhara region had the highest number of recorded events and reported fatalities due to political violence in August, with 102 events and at least 333 reported fatalities, followed by Oromia region, with 58 events and at least 172 reported fatalities. [...]

In August, the most common event types were battles, with 123 events recorded, and violence against civilians, with 38 events recorded. Most battle events were recorded in Amhara region, followed by Oromia region, where government forces clashed with the OLF-Shane forces. [...]

The regional capital, Bahir Dar, was one of the locations where days-long clashes between the two actors were reported. The conflict in the region is connected to grievances over the lack of action by the government regarding the status of disputed areas at the border of Tigray and Amhara regions and the overall security of ethnic Amharas. [...]

The Amhara region turned into a hotbed of instability in August, with deadly clashes pitting ethnic Fano militias against the ENDF. [...]

By the end of August, armed clashes broke out between Fano militias and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane, as well as between Fano militias and government forces in North Shewa zone of Oromia region, especially in Dera woreda. [...]

Though the ENDF and the command post¹¹ stated that the crisis in the region is under control,¹² armed clashes between Fano militias and ENDF continued through the end of August, especially in western Amhara.¹³¹²⁰

11 Command post is in charge of implementing the terms of the state of emergency proclamation in the region. It consists of various security sectors of the country. The general command post is based in Addis Ababa and has four command posts – west, north-west, central Shewa, and East Amhara command posts. These posts were established with three major tasks – (1) to take operations against the armed group, (2) to communicate with the local people and media to resolve the conflict peacefully, and (3) to strengthen the local government. For more, see [Fana Broadcasting Corporate \(FBC\), 'Details provided by the Chairman of the state of emergency proclamation, Mr. Temeseng Tiruneh, regarding the further work of the Proclamation,' 6 August 2023](#)

12 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) Government Communication Service, 'Current information issued by the General Command Post, Number – three,' 23 August 2023; [Ethiopia Broadcasting Corporation, 'Field Marshal Berhanu Jula stated that the extremist activity has reached a level where it is no longer a threat Etv | Ethiopia | News,' 31 August 2023](#)

13 [Alemnew Mekonen, Shewaye Legese, Hirut Melese, 'The current security situation in the Amhara region and appoints for the regional security sector,' Deutsche Welle Amharic, 4 September 2023](#); [Tamrat Dinsa, Alemnew Mekonen, Negash Mohamed, 'Fighting continued in some location of Amhara region- residents,' DW Amharic, 1 September 2023](#)

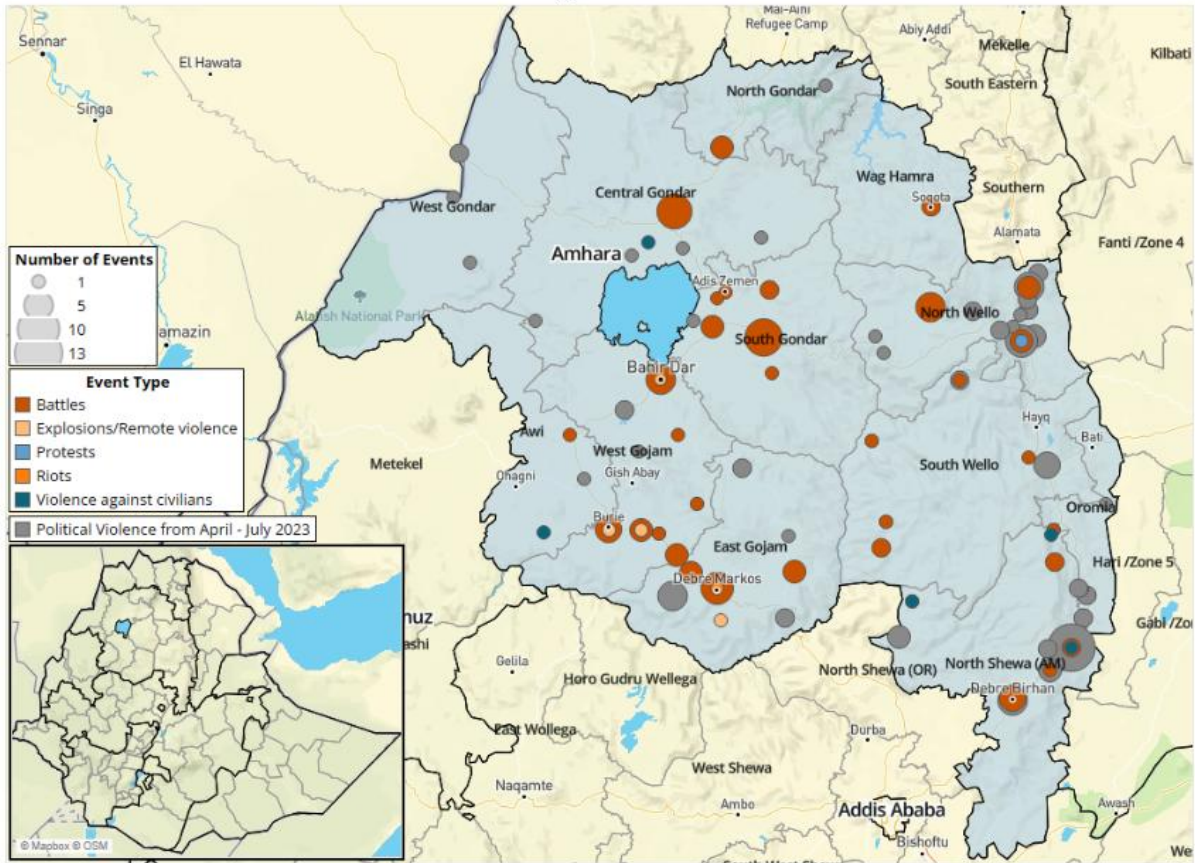
The same source provided the following infographics on the security situation in Amhara in August 2023¹²¹:

¹²⁰ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO August 2023 Monthly: Conflict in Amhara Region](#), 8 September 2023

¹²¹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO August 2023 Monthly: Conflict in Amhara Region](#), 8 September 2023

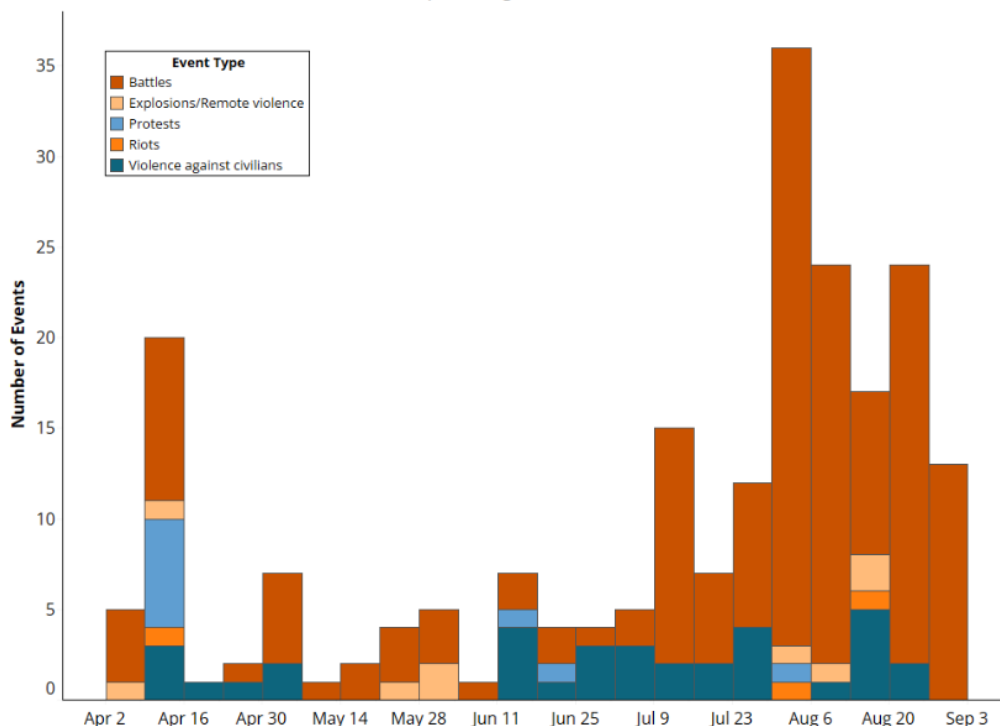
Political Violence in Amhara Region

August 2023



Political Violence in Amhara Region

April - August 2023



Reporting on governance in Amhara, the same source noted that:

The central government responded to the crisis by reshuffling the leadership of Amhara regional institutions. On 25 August, the State Council appointed Arega Kebede as the regional president to improve the region's governance capacity and create new regional leadership after the predecessor resigned from his post. The Council also appointed 12 other officials, including a deputy regional administrator, and established a new regional cabinet.¹ The new regional president is unknown to the political community in Amhara, and he is the fifth regional president since Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed took office in April 2018. Such frequent changes to administrators are observed in politically unstable regions of the country; they are designed to clear the political alliances that the central government believes might underscore the current conflicts, and 'punish' administrators for not keeping the peace. Struggles over local governance are likely behind a string of assassination attempts that recently targeted government and party officials in Amhara. Following the killing of the head of the Amhara Prosperity Party in April, an estimated 13 political and security officials were targeted in armed attacks across the region (for more, see EPO Monthly: July 2023). Several local officials were likewise killed in August, according to the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission.² This forced many local and security officials to leave their homes and towns, creating governance and security vacuums in various locations of Amhara region.³ Furthermore, the State Council agreed to consistent measures for reform in order to bring sustainable peace to the region. Accordingly, the regional government appointed 11 heads of various regional security sectors on 1 September to strengthen regional security.⁴ These officials were tasked with reorganizing the region's security sectors at each administration level.⁵ This indicates that the regional security sector is currently not functioning properly, and requires both a reorganization and potentially new alliances.

Indeed, there are concerns that the former Amhara administrators and security officials were sympathetic to the Fano cause.⁶ The regional president confirmed that the newly organized regional government will work to identify and find solutions for people's grievances.⁷¹²²

1 Sisay Sahilu, 'Amhara region, which is under a state of emergency removed its regional president,' Reporter (Ethiopia), 27 August 2023

2 Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, 'The human rights impact of the armed conflict on civilians in Amhara Regional State,' 14 August 2023

3 Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, 'The human rights impact of the armed conflict on civilians in Amhara Regional State,' 14 August 2023; Addis Maleda, 'Reportedly government officials of Shewa Robit town fled to Debre Berhan and Addis Ababa,' 18 July 2023

4 Amhara Media Corporation (AMC), 'Amhara national government gave appointments to security officials,' 1 September 2023

5 Fana Broadcasting Corporate, 'We will work hard to bring forward leaders who prioritize the peace and security of the region – the Amhara region,' 2 September 2023

6 Ethiopian Media Service (EMS), 'EMS Mereja Mon 31 Jul 2023,' 31 July 2023

7 AMC, "'We will work to identify the basic questions of the people and solve them in order!'" head of government Arega Kebede,' 29 August 2023

Freedom House explained “In August 2023, Addis Ababa declared a six-month state of emergency in Amhara following clashes between government forces and Fano militants. Authorities may ban gatherings and impose curfews under the state of emergency”.¹²³ Furthermore, “Security worsened in Amhara in 2023 after paramilitary groups that had backed the federal government in the Tigray conflict resisted Addis Ababa’s instructions to disband, instead joining the Fano. Major fighting began in Amhara in July, with the militia overrunning major towns in August before federal forces repelled them. The conflict in Amhara has caused significant deaths. At least 26 people in the town of Finote Selam died in an air strike in August. The OHCHR reported that government officials and Prosperity Party members died in two Fano attacks in October”.¹²⁴

In August 2023, Marta Hurtado, spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, noted that “In Amhara region, following a flare-up in clashes between the Ethiopian military and the regional Fano militia, and the declaration of a state of emergency on 4 August, the situation worsened considerably. At least 183 people have been killed in clashes since July, according to information gathered by the UN Human Rights Office”.¹²⁵ The same source further noted that:

The wide-ranging state of emergency gives the authorities broad powers nationwide, to arrest suspects without a court order, impose curfews and ban public gatherings.

We have received reports that more than 1,000 people have been arrested across Ethiopia under this law. Many of those detained were reported to be young people of Amhara ethnic origin suspected of being Fano supporters. Since early August, mass house-to-house searches have reportedly been taking place,

¹²² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO August 2023 Monthly: Conflict in Amhara Region](#), 8 September 2023

¹²³ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024 – Ethiopia](#), 29 February 2024

¹²⁴ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024 – Ethiopia](#), 29 February 2024

¹²⁵ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), [Ethiopia: Deteriorating human rights situation](#), 29 August 2023

and at least three Ethiopian journalists covering the situation in the Amhara region have been detained. Detainees have reportedly been placed in improvised detention centres that lack basic amenities.¹²⁶

The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect reported in an atrocity alert of September 2023 that:

Since 3 September Ethiopian forces have allegedly killed at least 70 civilians in the town of Majete, in Ethiopia's Amhara region. Survivors of the killings said the forces went door-to-door looking for members of the irregular ethnic Amhara "fano" militia and accused civilians of supporting the group with supplies. One witness said the forces questioned her husband about his involvement with the fano, stating, "My husband tried to explain that he is a civilian and begged them not to kill him. But the soldiers did not listen. They shot dead my husband in front of me. Then they said to me to bury him, kicking his dead body as if he was not a human being." Other witnesses reported that the forces looted civilian property, including cattle, during the searches and rounded up young men before executing them. These killings come after the federal government declared a state of emergency in the Amhara region on 4 August following months of escalating tensions and clashes between federal forces and the fano.¹²⁷

Also in September 2023 Insecurity Insight recorded that on "2 September 2023: In Tilili town, Agew Awi zone, Amhara region, an unspecified number of nuns were gang raped by Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) soldiers. Source: Personal Communication".¹²⁸ Furthermore, on "18 September 2023: In Debre Markos city, East Gojam zone, Amhara region, two women were raped by an unidentified group militia. The perpetrator may either be ENDF or Fano militia as they were in conflict with each other in the area. Source: ACLED".¹²⁹

In September 2023, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission reported that:

Information from residents in the Amhara Region, victims, families of victims, and eyewitnesses shows that the conflict has further spread to various woredas of the region and continues to expose civilians to greater risk. Areas affected between August 25 and September 5, 2023, for example, include Debre Markos in East Gojjam Zone, Adet and Merawi in North Gojjam Zone; Debre Tabor in Southern Gondar Zone; Delgi in Central Gondar Zone; Majetie, Shewa Robit and Antsokiya towns in Northern Shoa Zone and the surrounding rural towns/kebeles. Findings from these areas indicate many civilians were killed, physically injured, and their properties destroyed. Families of victims and eyewitness reports also indicate that crossfire or heavy artillery shelling related civilian casualties include people carrying out routine activities such as farm work or walking on streets and even people who were inside their homes. Extrajudicial killings committed by state security forces in the context of armed conflict are extremely concerning. For example, between July 31 and September 9, 2023, widespread extrajudicial killings were committed, particularly in Adet, Debre Markos, Debre Tabor, Jiga, Lemi, Majetie, Merawi, Merto Lemariam, and Shewa Robit towns. Among victims of extrajudicial killings are persons arrested in house-

¹²⁶ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), [Ethiopia: Deteriorating human rights situation](#), 29 August 2023

¹²⁷ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Atrocity Alert No. 364: Ethiopia, Central African Republic and Education Under Attack](#), 15 September 2023

¹²⁸ Insecurity Insight, [Reporting Sexual Violence Monthly News Brief - September 2023](#), 23 October 2023

¹²⁹ Insecurity Insight, [Reporting Sexual Violence Monthly News Brief - September 2023](#), 23 October 2023

to-house searches, unarmed civilians found on the streets during the conflict, persons suspected of hiding weapons, some civilians found outside past curfew hour, and detained combatants/members of the armed group (commonly known as Fano). These findings warrant full investigation by the EHRC and the SoE Inquiry Board.¹³⁰

The September 2023 report from of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, submitted to the UN Human Rights Council, reported that “After earlier moving against the TPLF in Tigray, and the OLA and other opposition in Oromia, the Government has now moved against political opponents in Amhara. In early August, the Federal Government declared a national State of Emergency, placing Amhara under a national Command Post. Fighting has continued in most zones of the region, with large-scale arrests in other areas”.¹³¹

The September 2023 monthly update from the EPO reported that “Amhara region had the most political violence events of any region in April 2023, and then from July to September 2023 since the northern Ethiopia conflict moved into Amhara region in July 2021”.¹³² The same source further noted:

Amhara region currently faces a challenging situation, as shown by the state of emergency declared on 4 August 2023. Over the past month, there have been reports of shelling, airstrikes, and battles in multiple cities and towns across the region. [...]

In September alone, ACLED records 77 battle events and 14 incidents of violence targeting civilians (see map below).¹³³

The report also provided the following infographic¹³⁴:

¹³⁰ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, [Amhara Region: Concerning human rights violations in the context of the armed conflict](#), 18 September 2023

¹³¹ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia](#), 14 September 2023, paragraph 17

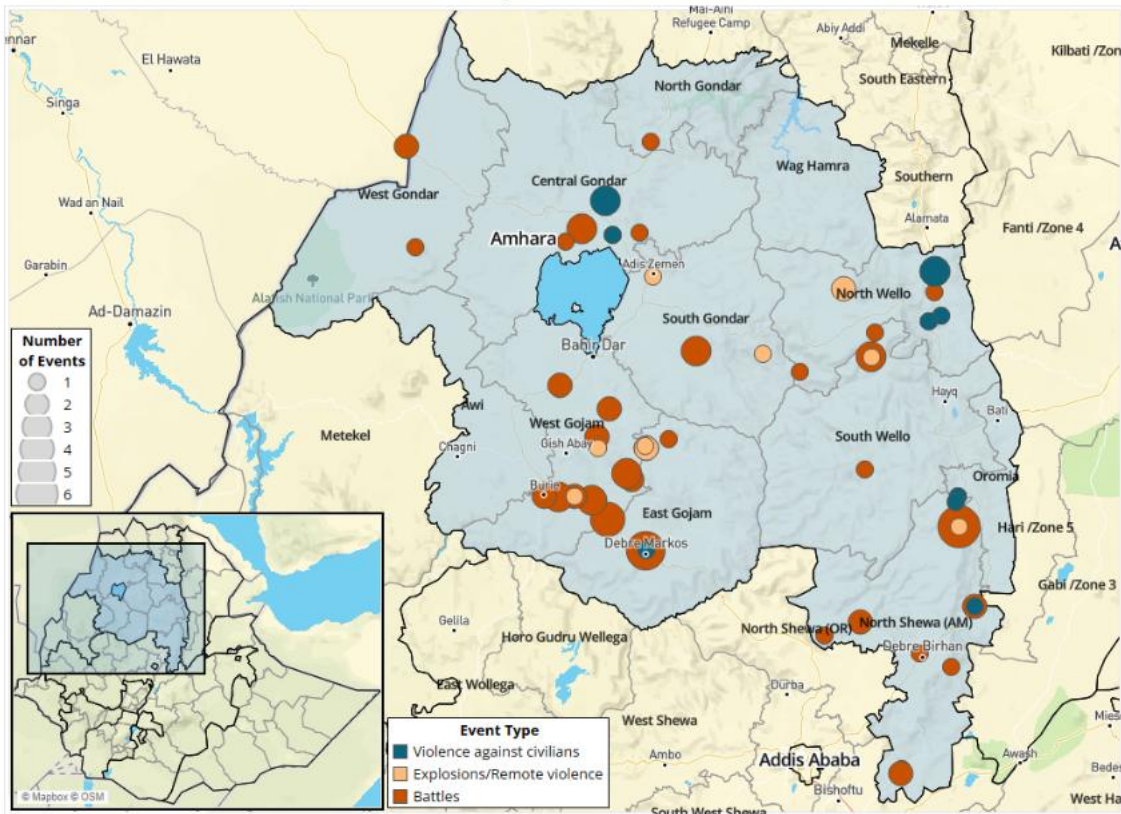
¹³² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO September 2023 Monthly: Multiple Coinciding Conflicts and Ethiopia's Rank in the ACLED Conflict Index](#), 12 October 2023

¹³³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO September 2023 Monthly: Multiple Coinciding Conflicts and Ethiopia's Rank in the ACLED Conflict Index](#), 12 October 2023

¹³⁴ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO September 2023 Monthly: Multiple Coinciding Conflicts and Ethiopia's Rank in the ACLED Conflict Index](#), 12 October 2023

Political Violence in Amhara Region

September 2023



The East African reported that “the Amhara Association of America (AAA), a grouping of ethnic Amhara professionals based in the US says it has sufficient proof the Forces carried out a door-to-door massacre in Majete and the surrounding area in Efrata Gidim Woreda, and North Shewa Zone, killing at least 33 people on September 3”.¹³⁵

An Amnesty International report documented, following an investigation, “how ENDF soldiers extrajudicially executed six civilians in Abune Hara and Lideta neighbourhoods of Kebele 14 area on 8 August 2023. Subsequently, on 10 and 11 October 2023, members of the ENDF extrajudicially executed six men, including at least five civilians and one person who is either civilian or was hors de combat, in the city’s Seba Tamit neighbourhood”.¹³⁶

In October 2023, Reuters noted, citing a report from the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, that:

¹³⁵ East African, [Ethiopia faces new charge of atrocities in Amhara](#), 16 September 2023

¹³⁶ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: “We thought they would fight with those they came to fight with, not with us.” Extrajudicial executions in Bahir Dar by ENDF soldiers](#), 26 February 2024

Dozens of civilians have been killed this month by drone strikes and house-to-house searches in Ethiopia's Amhara region, where authorities have touted security gains since conflict erupted in July, a state-appointed human rights commission said [...].

In one, 12 civilians, including religious students, were killed on Oct. 10 during house-to-house searches by government forces in the town of Adet, the report said. [...]

A week later, a 19-month-old child was among the victims of a drone strike in the town of Berehet Woreda, while another drone strike on Oct. 19 killed eight civilians in Debre Markos, it said.

The report alleges that government forces committed extrajudicial killings against civilians arrested on the streets or in house-to-house searches after accusing them of providing information or weapons to the militiamen.¹³⁷

In October 2023, the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia reported that:

The Commission is receiving regular reports of armed clashes between Government forces and Amhara armed groups, including fano militia, in the context of the state of emergency announced on 4 August 2023, in particular around Gondar, Gojjam, and North Shewa Zone, but with incidents reported in all zones of Amhara. Such clashes are ongoing, and the Commission has received credible information about extrajudicial executions and large-scale detentions, as well as at least one drone strike in West Gojjam Zone. [...] It has received further credible information of at least one drone strike that killed and injured civilians in Finote Selam, Amhara region, in August 2023. [...]

Long-standing and/or ongoing "tensions between groups that are defined along religious or ethnic lines" can trigger conflict or atrocity crimes. The Commission is concerned about ongoing violence against Amhara and Oromo minorities in Amhara and Oromia and regions, respectively, including killings, rape and other forms of sexual violence and destruction of property by the OLA, its affiliates, splinter groups and fano militia. Patterns of violations against ethnic minority communities, including the Irob, Kunama and Qemant, require further investigation. [...]

The situation in Amhara is still evolving, and the Commission has been unable to investigate in detail allegations of human rights violations and abuses that are emerging from the region. However, it has received credible reports of extrajudicial killings and large-scale detentions of Amhara civilians, in addition to at least one Government drone strike that killed and injured civilians. The Commission notes that signs of patterns of violence against civilian populations, or against members of an identifiable group, their property or livelihoods are potential indicators of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population. As such, the Commission strongly urges further independent investigation into the situation in Amhara region.

Of particular concern is the establishment of militarized governance structures linked to the deteriorating situation in Amhara region. Following the announcement of the state of emergency, the government confirmed it would establish a Command Post system in Amhara region. The Commission has found reasonable grounds to believe that the ENDF, EDF, Amhara forces and fano militia have all perpetrated war crimes and crimes against humanity against Tigrayan civilians while Tigray was under the control of a Command Post system. [...]

Since the eruption of the crisis affecting Amhara region, the Commission has received reports of hundreds of armed clashes between Government forces and non-state armed groups in Amhara, believed to be Amhara forces and fano militia. Many of these clashes are reported in or close to heavily populated urban centers or other civilian areas. The Commission has been unable to investigate allegations of alleged

¹³⁷ Reuters, [Conflict in Ethiopia's Amhara kills dozens, rights body says](#), 30 October 2023

human rights and other violations; however, there are clear and ongoing risks to Amhara women, men and children in these areas.¹³⁸

In October 2023, Voice of America news, citing The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, noted that “dozens of civilians have been killed this month by drone strikes and house-to-house searches in Ethiopia's Amhara region”.¹³⁹ It further detailed:

In a new report, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) documented several incidents in which civilians were killed this month.

In one, 12 civilians, including religious students, were killed on Oct. 10 during house-to-house searches by government forces in the town of Adet, the report said.

A week later, a 19-month-old child was among the victims of a drone strike in the town of Berehet Woreda, while another drone strike on Oct. 19 killed eight civilians in Debre Markos, it said.

The report alleges that government forces committed extrajudicial killings against civilians arrested on the streets or in house-to-house searches after accusing them of providing information or weapons to the militiamen.¹⁴⁰

The October 2023 monthly update from the EPO reported that “In Amhara region, Fano militias and government forces have been clashing since August, with 54 events and 203 reported fatalities during October”.¹⁴¹ Moreover, “A report issued by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission in October confirmed the death of many civilians due to government activity in Amhara region, including drone strikes and house-to-house searches”.¹⁴² The same source further described:

For the last two years, there has been no clear path forward for the decision over the status of Western and Southern Tigray zones. The disputed territory officially belongs to Tigray region but has been de facto administered by Amhara region since the start of the conflict in November 2020. Fearing a negative reaction from powerful ethno- nationalist militias in Amhara region, the government has tread carefully around the issue and no official plan for the area has been announced. On 6 November [2023], this changed when the federal government announced a decision that the internally displaced people from “contested areas” in Tigray region would be returned and that the status of these areas would be decided by referendum.¹⁴³

¹³⁸ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [The acute risk of further atrocity crimes in Ethiopia: an analysis](#), 3 October 2023 , paragraphs 6, 24, 36, 39, 40, 42

¹³⁹ VOA, [Conflict In Ethiopia's Amhara Region Kills Dozens, Rights Body Says](#), 30 October 2023

¹⁴⁰ VOA, [Conflict In Ethiopia's Amhara Region Kills Dozens, Rights Body Says](#), 30 October 2023

¹⁴¹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO October 2023 Monthly: Ethiopia's International Relations](#), 22 November 2023

¹⁴² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO October 2023 Monthly: Ethiopia's International Relations](#), 22 November 2023, report cites: [Ethiopia Human Rights Commission, 'Amhara region:- The context of the armed conflict that continued for months and its negative human rights implications,' 30 October 2023](#)

¹⁴³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO October 2023 Monthly: Ethiopia's International Relations](#), 22 November 2023

17 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) Government Communications Service, 'Statement of the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Regarding the first anniversary of the signing of the "Agreement For Lasting Peace through a Permanent Cessation of Hostilities,"' 6 November 2023

Human Rights Watch submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child that:

Children have continued to be impacted in conflict-affected areas, including in the context of a new conflict in the Amhara region between government forces and Fano militia forces, and in the Tigray and Oromia regions.

In the Amhara region, the national Ethiopian Human Rights commission, a state-affiliated body, reported that on October 10, 2023, 12 civilians, including students under the age of 18, were killed by government forces in Adet during house-to-house searches.[5] A week later, a 19-month-old was among the victims of an apparent aerial strike in the town of Berehet Woreda.[6]¹⁴⁴

[5] Dawit Endeshaw, "Conflict in Ethiopia's Amhara kills dozens, rights body says," Reuters, October 30, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/conflict-ethiopias-amhara-kills-dozens-rights-body-says-2023-10-30/> (accessed February 13, 2024); "Amhara region: The context of the armed conflict that continued for months and its negative human rights implications," Ethiopia Human Rights Commission press release, October 30, 2023, <https://ehrc.org/?p=25435> (accessed February 22, 2024).

[6] Dawit Endeshaw, "Conflict in Ethiopia's Amhara kills dozens, rights body says."

In November 2023 the WHO reported with regards to the conflict in Amhara "There are no official data on the number of civilian casualties (both deaths and injured) as a result of the conflict, with estimates far exceeding the 10,000, as well as an unknown number of cases of Sexual Gender Based Violence, including of health workers".¹⁴⁵

In November 2023, BBC News Africa, citing the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, noted that "the Amhara region has seen widespread abuse since fighting began between the army and local militia. It cited executions of civilians and rape attacks, with at least 200 rapes to have been reported since August [2023]".¹⁴⁶

The November 2023 monthly update from the EPO reported that "ACLED records the most political violence in November — 96 events and 279 reported fatalities — in Amhara region. Clashes between Fano militia and government forces, which have been fighting since August, made up 75% of the events in the region".¹⁴⁷

In November 2023, UN Human Rights Office spokesperson Seif Magango stated that:

¹⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch, *Ethiopia: Submission to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child*, 27 March 2024

¹⁴⁵ World Health Organization, *Ethiopia Health Cluster Bulletin (October 2023)*, 2 November 2023

¹⁴⁶ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, *The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission says the Amhara region has seen widespread abuse since fighting began between the army and local militia – BBC News Africa*, 1 November 2023

¹⁴⁷ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), *EPO November 2023 Update: An Evolving Conflict Environment in Oromia*, 14 December 2023

The UN Human Rights Office is troubled by the devastating impact of drone strikes and other violence on the population in the Amhara region as clashes continue between the ENDF and its allies and ethnic Amhara militia known as Fano.

On 6 November, a drone allegedly launched by Government forces struck a primary school in the Wadera district, killing seven people, including three teachers. Reports also suggest Fano militias had occupied some parts of the campus.

Another drone attack hit a bus station in Waber town on 9 November, killing 13 people who were waiting to board a bus. Fano militias were reportedly active in the area and attacking ENDF camps in Debre Markos and other smaller towns in East and West Gojjam zones, when the drone struck. Such attacks amount to arbitrary deprivation of life under international human rights law.

In an earlier incident, six people were killed and 14 others injured when Government forces shelled residential areas in Chuahit town, in Central Gondar Zone on 4 November. Many of the victims were killed in their homes.

In the same context, 21 people, including government and ruling party officials, were killed by Fano militia in two separate incidents in Alem Ber, in South Gondar, and in Jibayt district, in the Awi zone, on 9 and 28 October, respectively.¹⁴⁸

The International Crisis Group explained in a November 2023 report that:

Militants are engaged in hostilities with federal forces in Amhara, the country's second-most populous region. After tensions escalated all year, insurgents briefly seized control of major towns in August. They remain active in much of the countryside.

The fighting in Amhara, while not as bloody as that in Tigray, is deadly serious. The insurgents are contesting federal control in much of the region, posing a challenge to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government and Ethiopia's stability. In August, they briefly captured major towns and, after federal troops beat them back, entrenched themselves in rural areas from which they can still raid urban centres. While the loosely networked militants do not currently threaten Addis Ababa, the federal capital, they command significant popular support.¹⁴⁹

Al Jazeera noted that "Tewodrose Tirfe, chairman of the United States-based advocacy group Amhara Association of America, told Al Jazeera in December [2023] that his organisation has accumulated data on about 70 drone strikes that caused civilian casualties in the Amhara region since May [2023]".¹⁵⁰

The December 2023 monthly update from the EPO reported that since the April 2023 clashes between Fano militias and the ENDF, "the Fano insurgency has flared, dipped, and then risen steadily. Violence patterns of the insurgency have been characterized by the group's decentralized nature — Fano militias spread throughout the country have yet to coalesce into a single movement despite sharing a common name".¹⁵¹ The same source provided the following overview of violence in 2023:

¹⁴⁸ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), [Ethiopia: Violence in Amhara region](#), 17 November 2023

¹⁴⁹ International Crisis Group, [Ethiopia's Ominous New War in Amhara](#), 16 November 2023

¹⁵⁰ Al Jazeera, [Ethiopian forces killed 'at least 45 citizens' in Amhara, rights body says](#), 13 February 2024

¹⁵¹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO December 2023 Monthly Update: The Fano Insurgency: Main Hurdles to Unifying Fano](#), 19 January 2024

Violence flared in Amhara region in April 2023 with the announced disbanding of regional special forces, declining throughout May and June as ENDF forces took control of Amhara region and arrested Fano militia members and supporters. In July, violence rose again as Fano militias began to regroup and better organize (*see graph below*). Violence in the region peaked in August 2023 and has remained at high levels since. In December, 34 battles were recorded between ENDF and Fano militias. The ENDF conducted at least three drone strikes, resulting in an estimated 50 reported fatalities. Political violence in the region led to an estimated 200 reported fatalities in December. In any conflict, fatality information is the most biased and least accurate part of any conflict report. In Amhara region, the rural nature of the conflict environment and some communication difficulties have made confirming reports difficult. Sources in Amhara region, as interviewed by ACLED analysts, suggest that the actual number of fatalities is likely to be much higher than estimated.

Like the OLA/OLF-Shane in Oromia region, the Fano militias have been able to successfully control many rural locations in Amhara region, while in urban areas they generally conduct ambush attacks against ENDF targets and political opponents. The most extreme branch of Fano is thought to have been responsible for a spate of assassinations in Amhara region, including the April 2023 killing of the head of the Amhara Prosperity Party.

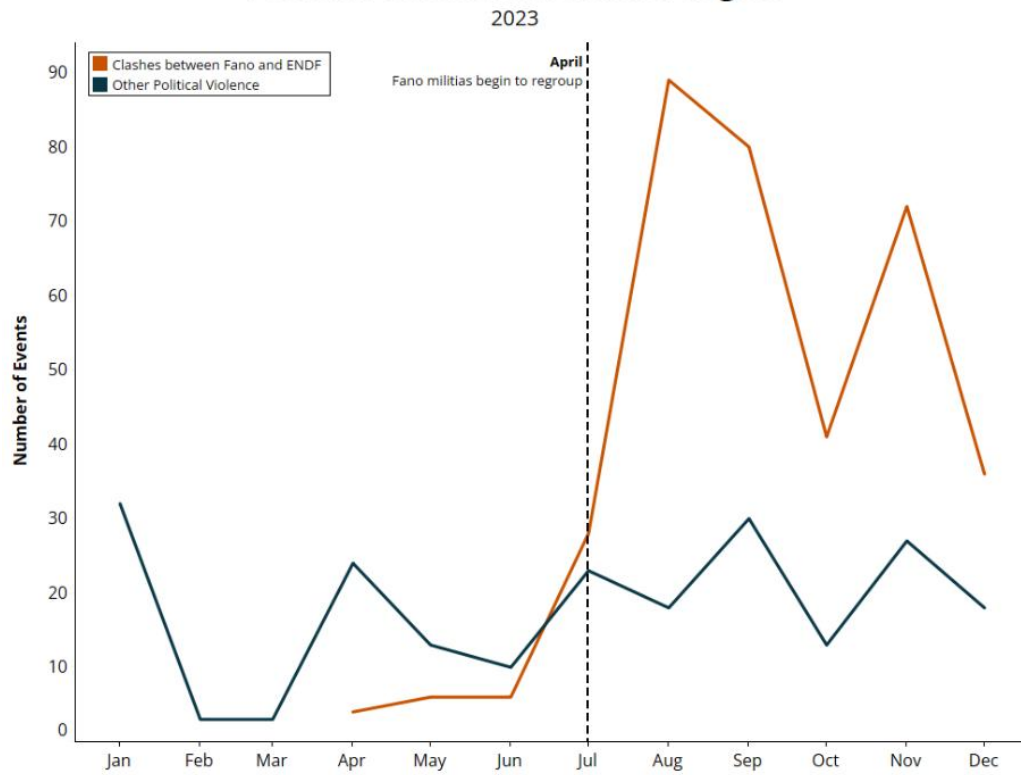
In December, most fighting between Fano militias and government forces was concentrated in Wegeltena kebele in South Wello zone, in Dega Demot kebele in West Gojam zone, and in towns and villages between Shewa Robit and Kombolcha towns in North Shewa zone along the A2 highway.¹⁵²

It also issued the following infographics¹⁵³:

¹⁵² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO December 2023 Monthly Update: The Fano Insurgency: Main Hurdles to Unifying Fano](#), 19 January 2024

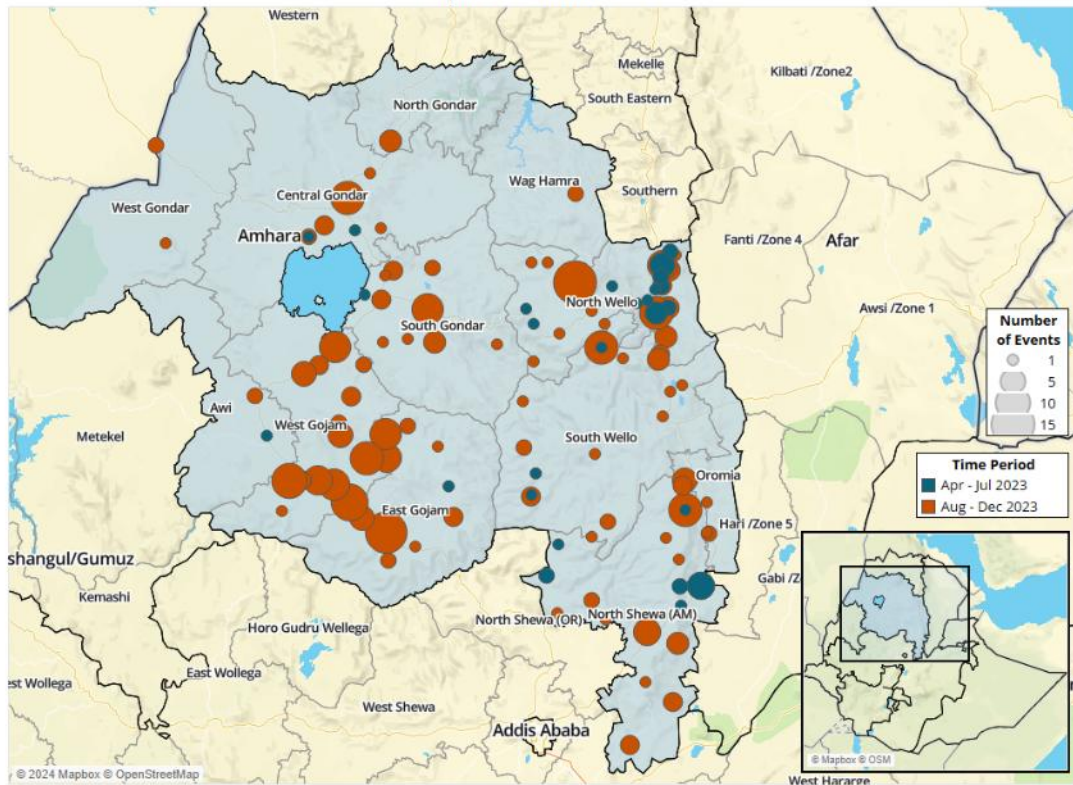
¹⁵³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO December 2023 Monthly Update: The Fano Insurgency: Main Hurdles to Unifying Fano](#), 19 January 2024

Political Violence in Amhara Region



Clashes Between Fano Militias and ENDF in Amhara Region

April - December 2023



The EPO reported that “ACLED records the most political violence in January [2024]— 66 events and 242 reported fatalities — in Amhara region. Clashes between Fano militia and government forces, which have been fighting since August, accounted for 68% of the events in the region”.¹⁵⁴

The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect wrote in an atrocity alert of January 2024 that:

Since fighting broke out in April 2023, scores of civilians have been killed by air and drone strikes, with such attacks intensifying between September and December. On 10 December between 30-40 people were killed in Amahara’s Sayint district. Ethiopian federal forces have also arrested, extrajudicially killed and summarily executed Amhara civilians in their search for fano supporters.¹⁵⁵

Insecurity Insight reported that on 13 January 2024 “In Mankusa town, Jabi Tehnan Woreda, West Gojjam zone, Amhara region, two women were raped by Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) soldiers. Source: Personal Communication”.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly Update January 2024: Ethiopia’s Quest for Sea Access](#), 12 February 2024

¹⁵⁵ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Atrocity Alert No. 380: Myanmar \(Burma\), ICJ Provisional Measures and Ethiopia](#), 31 January 2024

¹⁵⁶ Insecurity Insight, [Two women raped in Amhara region](#), 13 January 2024

Bloomberg, citing the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, noted that “At least 15 others were killed on Jan. 19 in the Berenta district in Amhara’s East Gojjam Zone, and six more died in the Quarit district in West Gojjam Zone on Jan. 15”.¹⁵⁷

Amnesty International noted in February 2024 report that “Since early August [2023], the armed conflict between Fano militias and the ENDF can be classified as a non-international armed conflict due to the intensity of the fighting and the organization of Fano militias fighting against one adversary, the ENDF. Consequently, the conduct of the parties to the conflict is governed by IHL along with international human rights law standards”.¹⁵⁸

The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect reported in an atrocity alert of February 2024 that:

According to the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), at least 66 people were extrajudicially executed in January during a string of attacks by Ethiopian federal forces in the Amhara region. The executions occurred in the context of fighting between the federal government and local Amhara militia known as “fano,” that has been ongoing since April 2023. In one of the deadliest incidents since the violence broke out, at least 45 people were killed, including a child and a pregnant woman, in the town of Merawi, East Gojjam Zone, on 29 January. Reports indicate that federal forces went house to house targeting civilians and accusing them of supporting the fano, who had previously occupied the town. Some witnesses said the attack was revenge for a fano assault earlier that day. The EHRC reported on other incidents in the same area, including a 19 January attack that killed 15 people in Berenta district and another on 15 January that killed six in Quarit district, which neighbors West Gojjam Zone.

These attacks are the latest in a series of abuses by the federal government in Amhara since April. In December between 30-40 people were killed by air and drone strikes in Amhara’s Sayint district. Ethiopian federal forces have also arrested, extrajudicially killed and summarily executed Amhara civilians in their search for fano supporters.

Since August 2023 the Amhara region has been under a federal government-imposed state of emergency. Marking the extension of the state of emergency on 6 February, Ethiopia’s Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said that thousands of people arrested have been “re-educated and released.”¹⁵⁹

On 3 February 2024, the Jerusalem Post reported that “Ethiopian soldiers killed more than 50 civilians this week in a town in the Amhara region during house-to-house searches that followed fighting with a local militia, three residents told Reuters. The reported killings in the town of Merawi appeared to be among the deadliest incidents of the war, which erupted last July between the army and the Fano militia and has resulted in more than 200 deaths, according to UN reports last year”.¹⁶⁰ Reporting on the same incident the BBC noted that “Merawi residents describe several hours of fierce fighting on 29 January between the army and Fano [...] ‘The soldiers were threatening us [and] accusing us of sheltering the Fano and providing them food,’ said another resident, who is adamant the civilian massacre was

¹⁵⁷ Bloomberg, [Extrajudicial Killings Leave 66 Dead in Ethiopia, Group Says](#), 13 February 2024

¹⁵⁸ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: “We thought they would fight with those they came to fight with, not with us.” Extrajudicial executions in Bahir Dar by ENDF soldiers](#), 26 February 2024

¹⁵⁹ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Atrocity Alert No. 383: Ukraine, Haiti and Ethiopia](#), 21 February 2024

¹⁶⁰ Jerusalem Post, [Residents say Ethiopian soldiers kill more than 50 civilians in Amhara town](#), 3 February 2024

revenge for militia attacks on government troops. fighters, followed by house-to-house searches by uniformed Ethiopian security officers”.¹⁶¹

The EPO reported that “ACLED records the most political violence in February [2024]— 100 events and 341 reported fatalities — in Amhara region. Clashes between Fano militia and government forces, which have been fighting since August, accounted for 77% of the events in the region. [...] In February, forces from Amhara and Tigray regions clashed in disputed territories in Southern Tigray zone, Tigray, marking the first confrontation in this location since the northern Ethiopia conflict ended in November 2022”.¹⁶² The same source further described:

This clash erupted a day after the president of the Interim Regional Administration of Tigray indicated that the Tigray forces — which, according to the president, number over 270,000 — were not disarmed as per the Pretoria peace agreement signed in November 2022.¹ While clashes were short and no fatalities were reported, the renewed fighting is a significant development and threatens the peace the Pretoria agreement achieved. [...]

Clashes between Tigray and Amhara forces began on 14 February in Chercher, Raya Bala, and Raya Alamata woredas in Southern Tigray zone, and on 15 February near Alamata and Korem towns before ENDF forces intervened. Clashes renewed on 17 February in Korem town and Ashenge kebele, Ofla woreda, and were again stopped by the intervention of ENDF troops. On the same day, a Red Cross vehicle was damaged by unidentified gunmen near Korem. Finally, on 21 February, fighting briefly reignited in Zatta woreda until ENDF units were able to halt the clashes. [...]

Despite many efforts, the federal government has failed to defuse the situation as it has been unable to enforce the disarmament of fighters from both sides. In February, the TPLF leadership indicated that 270,000 TDF soldiers remained armed.²⁰ On the Amhara region side, former special force soldiers have been reintegrated into local militias, essentially remaining armed and stationed in the same places they were originally serving.²¹ Locally organized militias in the unofficial Welkait, Tsegede, and Humera zone known as ‘Tekeze Defense Forces’ remain fully armed.²²¹⁶³

1 VOA Amharic, ‘Getachew Reda: There is still mistrust between the federal government and the Tigray region,’ 13 February 2024 [...]

20 VOA Amharic, ‘Getachew Reda: There is still mistrust between the federal government and the Tigray region,’ 13 February 2024 [...]

21 Wolkayt Tegedie Setit Humera Zone Communication, ‘The graduation ceremony of former Amhara special forces members who have undergone reform training is being held,’ 20 February 2024

22 Online interview with an Amhara and Welkait activist, ACLED, February 2024

The New Humanitarian reporting on the incidents noted that “The target on 19 February in Ethiopia’s restive Amhara region was an Isuzu truck transporting dozens of civilians, the priest and another witness said. The attack was carried out by a military drone that had been hovering over the area, they added. [...] This arsenal includes Iranian and Chinese drones, but it is Türkiye’s Bayraktar TB2 that Ethiopia has

¹⁶¹ BBC News, [Amhara conflict: Ethiopians massacred in their homes by government troops](#), 13 February 2024

¹⁶² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly Update February 2024: Clashes in Tigray’s Disputed Territories Threaten Peace Deal](#), 19 March 2024

¹⁶³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly Update February 2024: Clashes in Tigray’s Disputed Territories Threaten Peace Deal](#), 19 March 2024

come to rely on most, analysts say. The model is robust, costs a fraction of the US Predator drone, and is easy to operate and maintain”.¹⁶⁴

The New Humanitarian further described that “In the first days of the [end July 2023] rebellion, militiamen known as Fano launched a surprise assault from the countryside to seize control of Amhara’s towns and airports. The military only managed to regain control by deploying tanks and artillery. Since then, Fano forces have retreated to Amhara’s mountainous interior, but they continue to launch raids on towns to steal weapons and release prisoners from police stations. The military, which has scant control over the countryside, appears to be increasingly turning to its fleet of drones to counter them”.¹⁶⁵ It detailed the following drone strikes:

There is mounting concern about the civilian toll in Ethiopia, where drones are being used to put down regional revolts. On 10 December, six days before the Harar Meda air show, drone strikes hit targets in and around the town of Amhara Sayint, in the Amhara region’s South Wollo zone, according to two residents.

Another strike, also against a truck, killed dozens of civilians in August last year in the Amhara town of Finote Selam. Both the UN and the state-appointed Ethiopian Human Rights Commission have documented other drone strikes in the region, including an attack against a school and another on a bus stop.

The deployment of drones in Amhara mirrors their use in Oromia, Ethiopia’s biggest state, where regional and federal security forces have been battling ethno-nationalist militants from the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) since 2018.

Drones have become an integral part of the military’s efforts against the group, which tends to operate in remote areas that are difficult for soldiers to access.

In one of the bloodiest strikes, at least nearly 70 people were killed in a village in Oromia’s West Shewa district in October 2022, according to local media.

More recently, on 25 December, a suspected drone attack hit the grounds of a church in the Horo Guduru Welega zone of Oromia, killing eight people and injuring five others as they collected corn, Reuters reported. [...]

In both regions, most strikes go unreported, according to two Western officials, who also spoke on the condition of anonymity. “It’s very difficult to get reliable information,” said one. “We get reports of schools being hit, whereas the Ethiopian government says they are only targeting specific military targets.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ New Humanitarian, [‘Horrific’ civilian toll as Ethiopia turns to combat drones to quell local insurgencies](#), 5 March 2024

¹⁶⁵ New Humanitarian, [‘Horrific’ civilian toll as Ethiopia turns to combat drones to quell local insurgencies](#), 5 March 2024

¹⁶⁶ New Humanitarian, [‘Horrific’ civilian toll as Ethiopia turns to combat drones to quell local insurgencies](#), 5 March 2024

i. Arrests and detention with the Amhara region

For information on arrests of Amhara outside of the Amhara region, see: [V. a. Arbitrary Arrest and Detention](#).

Insecurity Insight reported that “at the end of May [2022] the government arrested over 4000 Amhara nationalists, including Brigadier General Tefera Mamo, who commanded the Amhara Special Forces during the Tigray conflict. Whilst initial reaction from the Amharan elite was muted over the arrests, protests are now growing against perceived attacks against Amharas, with the opposition party the National Movement of Amhara (NaMA) calling on 25 June for Abiy to explain in Parliament why he was ‘unable to stop the ongoing genocide against the people of Amhara’”.¹⁶⁷ Reuters reported on these same arrests noting that “regional state media reported 4,000 people had been arrested in Amhara - including a prominent general, militia members and journalists. Analysts said it appeared that the central government was trying to reassert its authority over some Amhara factions; the government said the arrests were related to “illegal activities” and possible killings”.¹⁶⁸ AP news citing the Ethiopian Human Rights Council noted that “it’s not known where most detainees in the Amhara region are being held, alleging that many people were subjected to ‘kidnappings’”.¹⁶⁹ AP further noted:

Among those arrested are members of the Amhara militia known as the Fano which was an ally of federal forces when fighting Tigray forces. Fano members, while celebrated in state media, also were accused of some of the war’s worst atrocities.

They are now described in state media as an “irregular force,” and efforts are underway to disarm some of the fighters.¹⁷⁰

For further information, see [II b. Tensions between the Amhara region and the Federal Government](#).

In its annual report covering events in 2022, Freedom House noted “In May [2022], government forces arrested over 4,500 individuals, including journalists and activists, in what was a widespread crackdown in the Amhara region. The crackdown was allegedly intended to disarm and demilitarize the Amhara militia known as the Fano, which had been recruited by the federal government to fight in the Tigray conflict and had likely committed war crimes. The government provided no justification for the arrests, and whether the people arrested in May remained in custody at the end of the year was unclear”.¹⁷¹

According to the 2022 US Department of State Country Report on Human Rights Practices, “In May the government launched what it called a “law enforcement operation,” which targeted journalists and opinion leaders. On May 24, the CPJ reported the arrest of 11 journalists and media workers since May

¹⁶⁷ Insecurity Insight, [Ethiopia Situation Report](#), 18 July 2022

¹⁶⁸ Reuters, [Ethiopia forms body to negotiate with rebellious Tigray forces](#), 14 June 2022

¹⁶⁹ AP news, [Ethiopia’s mass arrests show rift with former Amhara allies](#), 3 June 2022

¹⁷⁰ AP news, [Ethiopia’s mass arrests show rift with former Amhara allies](#), 3 June 2022

¹⁷¹ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2023 – Ethiopia](#), March 2023

19 in Amhara Region and Addis Ababa as part of a broader crackdown. The arrests in May included prominent journalists Gobeze Sisay, Meaza Mohammed, Yayesew Shimelis, and Abebe Bayu, all arrested for the second time in a year”.¹⁷²

Reporters Without Borders noted in May 2022 that “At least nine media employees, including journalists with Nisir International Broadcasting Corporation and Ashara who cover national news on their YouTube channels, were arrested by members of the security forces on 19 and 20 May”.¹⁷³ A further article from the same source noted that:

The arrests began on 19 May in Bahir Dar, the capital of Amhara state, which adjoins Tigray and is Ethiopia’s second most populous region. It was there that federal forces arrested four journalists with the Nisir International Broadcasting Corporation and five with the Ashara YouTube channel in what was called a “law enforcement operation.” They were said to be suspected of supporting Fano, a militia active in Amhara that is seen as a threat by the central government.¹⁷⁴

The June 2022 Protection Cluster explained with regards to the situation for IDPs in Ethiopia in general:

According to EHRC, unlawful detentions continue despite the lifting of the State of Emergency on 15 February 2022. Individuals are often detained due to their perceived affiliation with a party to the conflict and held incommunicado for long periods without formal charges or legal proceedings. In a more recent development, more than 4,500 persons, including journalists and political activists, were arrested in Amhara during May 2022 as part of the Government’s crackdown on Fano militia.

While arbitrary detentions are prevalent, monitoring their occurrence – as well as the fate and condition of those who have been detained – is, however, difficult due to the denial of access and information by the detaining parties or the general insecurity and volatile situation which impede such access.

Those who were arbitrarily detained, abducted or disappeared by security forces or armed groups, and their family members, face the risk of torture and other ill-treatment, including psychological trauma. When the detention is not acknowledged by the detaining party or when detainees are held without contact with the outside world, the families live with the constant worry of not knowing the whereabouts of their loved ones.

Finally, when a family member has been detained, the household may become a single-headed one. The spouse or relatives are forced to raise and support the children and other family members alone. Bearing the related economic burden, they are becoming more vulnerable to poverty and exploitation.¹⁷⁵

In a September 2022 report to the UN Human Rights Committee, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission reported that “Since May 2022, in Amhara Region alone, more than 10,000 people,

¹⁷² US Department of State, [Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 20 March 2023, Section 2. *Respect for Civil Liberties, A. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, INCLUDING FOR MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND OTHER MEDIA, Violence and Harassment*

¹⁷³ Reporters Without Borders, [Wave of arrests of media workers in Ethiopia](#), 24 May 2022

¹⁷⁴ Reporters Without Borders, [Eighteen journalists arrested in Ethiopia, two facing possible death sentence](#), 3 June 2022

¹⁷⁵ Global Protection Cluster, [Protection Analysis Update: June 2022; Ethiopia](#), June 2022

especially members of informal armed forces and many members of opposition political parties were mass-arrested without a court order”.¹⁷⁶

Freedom House noted in its 2023 Freedom on the Net report, covering the period June 2022 to May 2023, that:

After the April 2023 assassination of Girma Yeshitila, the head of the ruling Prosperity Party in Amhara Region, the purported recording of a phone conversation between alleged members of Amhara’s informal Fano militia surfaced online, suggesting that the militia had plotted to murder Girma. The authenticity of the audio, which was posted by an anonymous account and then circulated by government supporters and state-affiliated media, was contested by Amhara activists, who claimed that it was doctored by government authorities as a pretext to prosecute Amhara activists and journalists.⁸³ A fact-checking organization then disputed claims that a digital forensics company had proven the audio to be false and generated using artificial intelligence (AI) tools.⁸⁴ After the release of the audio on social media, 47 suspects, including journalists, were detained on accusations of plotting to overthrow the government (see C3).⁸⁵ Also in April, another recorded phone conversation, allegedly between journalist Meskerem Abera and prominent Amhara physician Wondwosen Assefa, was leaked by government supporters on Twitter; the recording featured criticism of the government, and both individuals were arrested.¹⁷⁷

83 Joe Shanley, “Abiy

84 Hagos Gabreamlek, “Is the alleged Mihret Wodajo phone call recording audio released by the government AI-generated and Fake?” HaqCheck, May 10, 2023, <https://haqcheck.org/is-the-alleged-mihret-wodajo-phone-call-recording-....>

85 “Ethiopia: 47 arrests after killing of prime minister

The Committee to Protect Journalists recorded that on 12 April 2023 “Ethiopian National Defense Force soldiers arrested Dawit, while he was with friends at a hotel in Bahir Dar, the capital of Amhara state. Dawit was transported to the Federal Police detention center in Addis Ababa. In videos published by Arat Kilo before Dawit’s detention, the journalist vehemently criticized Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and spoke out against the disbandment of the Amhara special forces”.¹⁷⁸

In June 2023 the Committee against Torture noted in its Concluding observations on Ethiopia that it was “concerned about consistent reports indicating that, in practice, persons in custody are not routinely afforded all fundamental legal safeguards from the outset of deprivation of liberty, in particular persons detained for terrorism-related offences or during states of emergency, including in the context of the conflict in the regions of Tigray, Afar, Amhara and Oromia”.¹⁷⁹ The same source further noted that:

¹⁷⁶ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, [Report to the United Nations Human Rights Committee on the Implementation of the Provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), September 2022

¹⁷⁷ Freedom House, [Freedom on the Net 2023 - Ethiopia](#), 4 October 2023, paragraph 35

¹⁷⁸ Committee to Protect Journalists, [At least 8 journalists detained amid renewed unrest in Ethiopia](#), 14 April 2023

¹⁷⁹ UN Committee Against Torture, [Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Ethiopia](#), 7 June 2023, paragraph 12

In that respect, it has been reported that: (a) the rights of persons in custody to be informed of the reasons for their arrest, the nature of any charges against them and their right to remain silent are not always respected; (b) access to lawyers is not guaranteed in practice, particularly during the period of investigation; (c) timely access to an independent medical examination is not a standard practice aimed at uncovering signs of torture and ill-treatment; (d) the right to notify a relative or a person of one's choice is often delayed and sometimes denied; (e) registers of persons deprived of liberty, including the details thereof, are not used systematically and consistently at all stages of detention; and (f) arrested persons are often brought before the competent authority well beyond the 48-hour legal time limit under Ethiopian law, leaving suspects vulnerable to an increased risk of torture or ill-treatment. [...]

It is particularly concerned about numerous reports of arrests of journalists, including 39 journalists between June 2021 and June 2022 in Addis Ababa and the regions of Amhara and Oromia, and of prominent journalists critical of the Government during a crackdown on the media between January and May 2022.¹⁸⁰

Freedom House further explained that in August 2023, “the federal government declared a state of emergency in the Amhara region, after paramilitary groups joined the decentralized Fano militia and began fighting government forces. Authorities cut internet access, arrested large numbers of people—including journalists covering events in Amhara—and engaged in extrajudicial killings. A thousand people had been arrested nationwide by late August according to the United Nations”.¹⁸¹

In September 2023, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission reported that:

Beyond the detentions and places of detention officially reported by the SoE Command Post, there is widespread arbitrary detention by state security forces in the context of the SoE particularly in Amhara Region, Addis Ababa and Oromia Region. Such detentions took place, for instance, in Bahir Dar, Debre Tabor, Debre Markos, Finote Selam, Gondar, Kobo, Lalibela, Mekaneselam, and Shewa Robit towns of the Amhara Region; in Sheger city of the Oromia Region; and in Addis Ababa.¹⁸²

The International Crisis Group explained in a November 2023 report that:

Rights organisations, including a UN commission and an Ethiopian state-funded one, accuse the authorities of mass killings of Amhara, including in several airstrikes, and arbitrary detentions.³⁶ The government has stated it is holding suspects in makeshift detention centres, such as schools, in five locations.³⁷ Amhara activists say there have been cholera outbreaks at these sites, which they call “concentration camps”.³⁸¹⁸³

³⁶ The Amhara Association of America, an advocacy group, said federal troops summarily executed seven civilians on 30 August in the Ashifa area near Gish Abay town and at least six more on 21 September in Dangila town in Amhara's Awi Zone. “AAA Confirms Extrajudicial Killing of 7 Amhara Civilians by Abiy Regime Forces on August 30, 2023”,

¹⁸⁰ UN Committee Against Torture, [Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Ethiopia](#), 7 June 2023, paragraphs 12 and 50

¹⁸¹ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024 – Ethiopia](#), 29 February 2024

¹⁸² Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, [Amhara Region: Concerning human rights violations in the context of the armed conflict](#), 18 September 2023

¹⁸³ International Crisis Group, [Ethiopia's Ominous New War in Amhara](#), 16 November 2023

Amhara Association of America, 25 September 2023. A UN human rights commission said it had “received multiple credible reports of violations, including mass arbitrary detention of Amhara civilians”. “Report of the International Commission

of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia”, op. cit. On 18 September, the state-funded Ethiopian Human Rights Commission accused federal security forces of extrajudicial killings and arbitrary detentions, mostly of Amhara and Orthodox Christians. With regard to airstrikes, the conflict mapping organisation ACLED said the federal air force had carried out four drone strikes in the first week of September, killing at least 50 people. “Ethiopian Peace Observatory Weekly: 2-8 September 2023”, ACLED, 13 September 2023.

37 The number of prisoners is contested. The latest government figure is 3,200, while activists claims that tens of thousands have been detained. “Lawyers and witnesses say Ethiopian police have arrested hundreds during state of emergency”, Associated Press, 14 August 2023. “The status of the human rights of the suspects in custody”, Deutsche Welle, 3 September 2016. See also “Actions taken in Amhara region to safeguard constitutional order”, Facebook post by Ethiopian Government Communications Services, 2 November 2023.

38 “Cholera outbreak in concentration camps where thousands of ethnic Amhara detained”, Borkena, 13 September 2023.

The Congressional Research Service noted in a January 2024 report that:

The federal government declared a state of emergency in August 2023, placed Amhara state under military rule, and cut internet access there. The decree gives federal authorities broad powers nationwide. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported weeks later that over 1,000 people, many reportedly ethnic Amhara, had been arrested under the law.⁶²

EHRC has since reported serious human rights violations, including arbitrary detentions and “widespread” extrajudicial executions by security forces, in Amhara.⁶³ OHCHR has echoed these concerns and implicated federal forces in shelling and drone strikes on civilian areas.⁶⁴¹⁸⁴

62 OHCHR, “Ethiopia: Deteriorating human rights situation,” August 29, 2023.

63 EHRC, “The human rights impact of the armed conflict on civilians in Amhara Regional State,” August 14, 2023, and “Amhara Region: Concerning human rights violations in the context of the armed conflict,” September 18, 2023.

64 OHCHR, “Ethiopia: Violence in Amhara region,” November 17, 2023.

Amnesty International noted that the “state of emergency was further renewed on 2 February 2024 for another four months” which placed Amhara “under the control of a command post led by the National Intelligence and Security Services chief, reporting to the Prime Minister”.¹⁸⁵

Amnesty International described in February 2024 that “Since the declaration of the state of emergency in August 2023, Ethiopian media has reported mass arrests in the capital Addis Ababa and in Amhara region. On 6 February 2024, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed confirmed to the House of People’s Representatives that thousands had been detained, and many subsequently released after receiving ‘education’. He also confirmed that hundreds are still in detention under the state of emergency”.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Congressional Research Service, [Ethiopia: In Brief](#), 23 January 2024

¹⁸⁵ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: “We thought they would fight with those they came to fight with, not with us.” Extrajudicial executions in Bahir Dar by ENDF soldiers](#), 26 February 2024

¹⁸⁶ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: Authorities must stop using state of emergency law to silence peaceful dissent](#), 19 February 2024

d. Destruction of civilian infrastructure and homes

This section should be read in conjunction with [IV b Access to Basic Services, Education and Health](#) which also details damage to healthcare facilities.

The International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia provided the following overview of ongoing impacts and consequences following conflict in the Amhara region during 2021:

Conflict worsened the already poor economic situation in Amhara. The situation was compounded for people whose property and businesses were looted or homes destroyed during the fighting – leading to displacement, and dire need of ongoing support and assistance. Poor economic situations especially affect children by interrupting their nutrition and education and placing them at risk of child labour, exploitation, or other violations.¹⁸⁷

The Experts on Ethiopia stated in a separate report that “Tigrayan forces and their allies also engaged in widespread looting of public and private property in Chenna, Dessie, Hayk, Kobo, Lalibela, Sekota, Shewa Robit and Yelen. This included schools, medical facilities, police stations and other civilian buildings”.¹⁸⁸ The same source further noted that “Communities in Tigray, Amhara and Afar suffered extensive looting and destruction of property and want compensation for material and non-material damages to help rebuild their lives”.¹⁸⁹

In March 2022, Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, stated in a briefing covering the period between 22 November 2021 and 28 February 2022 that:

In addition, we have obtained credible reports of, and have ourselves physically observed, severe damage to schools and health facilities in Amhara and Afar regions following Government action against Tigrayan forces. According to assessments by the regional authorities, almost 2 million pupils were affected by the total or partial destruction of schools. In some cases, education has recently resumed.

Health facilities in Amhara and Afar also suffered destruction and looting. The Ministry of Health reported that at least 36 hospitals and over 2,100 other health facilities were partially or completely destroyed by the Tigrayan forces, and subjected to looting.¹⁹⁰

In March 2022, the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect noted that: “Over 5,700 schools and healthcare facilities in Amhara and Afar have been totally or partially destroyed. [...] After the Tigray

¹⁸⁷ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Comprehensive investigative findings and legal determinations](#), 13 October 2023, paragraph 313-314

¹⁸⁸ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia](#), 14 September 2023, paragraph 37

¹⁸⁹ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia](#), 14 September 2023, paragraph 79

¹⁹⁰ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), [Oral Update on the situation of human rights in the Tigray region of Ethiopia and on progress made in the context of the Joint Investigation](#), 7 March 2022

forces' withdrawal, federal and regional government authorities came and began assessing the damage, including loss of goods and income. To date, however, most said they had not received adequate compensation and were struggling financially".¹⁹¹

Reporting on inter-religious clashes in Amhara at the end of April 2022, Michele Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, stated that:

The inter-religious clashes first reported in Gondar city, in the northern Amhara region on 26 April, reportedly in connection with a land dispute, appear to have quickly spread to towns and cities in multiple other regions, and to the capital Addis Ababa. I understand two mosques were burnt and another two partially destroyed in Gondar. In the apparent retaliatory attacks that followed, two Orthodox Christian men were reportedly burnt to death, another man hacked to death, and five churches burnt down in Silt'e Zone, in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region, located in the southwest of the country. There was further violence on 28 April in Debark town in the Amhara region, and Dire Dawa city in the north-eastern Afar region.¹⁹²

Freedom House similarly reported that "In April 2022, Muslim individuals were attacked in Gondar in the Amhara region by heavily armed assailants, resulting in the death of at least 20 civilians, over 150 people were injured, Muslim-owned properties were looted, and religious buildings were destroyed. In what was deemed a retaliatory attack, two Christians were killed and five Orthodox churches were burned in the Silte zone of Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Regions (SNNPR)".¹⁹³

As of June 2022 UNOCHA recorded "in Amhara, 40,500 returnees and non-displaced people remain in temporary shelters or damaged houses ahead of the upcoming rainy season. About 9,000 houses were reportedly (fully or partially) damaged in North Wello, South Wello, North Shewa, Oromia Special Zone. Additional resources are required to reconstruct/repair damaged shelters in affected areas."¹⁹⁴

The August 2022 UNICEF Situation Report noted that "in Amhara, heavy rains have led to flooding and landslides, causing displacement, loss of lives and livelihoods, and damage to infrastructure".¹⁹⁵

Insecurity Insight reported that on "5 October 2022: In Bahir Dar city, Amhara Region, the Robit Health Centre was reportedly set on fire by Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) militants. Sources: Twitter, Facebook".¹⁹⁶

The November 2022 UNICEF Situation Report noted that "in Amhara, over 250,000 IDPs in North Wollo, North Gondar, and South Gondar zones were returned to their place of origin. However, returnees are in urgent need of basic services due to damage or non-functionality of service delivering facilities".¹⁹⁷

¹⁹¹ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Atrocity Alert No. 292: Ukraine, Sudan/South Sudan and Ethiopia](#), 16 March 2022

¹⁹² Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, [Inter-religious clashes in Ethiopia](#), 7 May 2022

¹⁹³ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2023 – Ethiopia](#), March 2023

¹⁹⁴ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia - Northern Ethiopia Humanitarian Update Situation Report, 11 June 2022](#), 11 June 2022

¹⁹⁵ UNICEF, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Situation Report No. 8 August 2022](#), 2022

¹⁹⁶ Insecurity Insight, [Attacks on Health Care Bi-Monthly News Brief: 05-18 October 2022](#), 27 October 2022

According to the 2022 US Department of State Country Report on Human Rights Practices, “there were numerous reports of looting and destruction of infrastructure in Afar, Amhara, and Tigray, including in refugee camps”.¹⁹⁸

UNOCHA reported in January 2023 that in Amhara region “Most of response in return locations in North Wello, North Gondar and Wag Hamra zones in Amhara is still lagging. According to the shelter cluster, nearly 4,000 houses in these areas are fully damaged, with no capacity for repair and reconstruction. Returnees are reported to be living in substandard shelters and with limited response of non-food items and shelters in limited number of areas”.¹⁹⁹

In February 2023, UN News reported that “fighting in parts of southern Amhara and neighbouring areas of Oromia region, have led to “significant displacement” in the zones of North Shewa, South Wello and West Gojam, in Amhara. OCHA reports that in those regions of Amhara, “a significant number of houses and private properties have allegedly been burned down and destroyed. Partners are mobilizing food and non-food items such as emergency shelter, amidst road closure and ongoing hostilities””.²⁰⁰

UNOCHA reported in February 2023 that “The displacement situation in the Amhara region continues to deteriorate, following reported fighting in areas bordering the North Shewa Zone and the Oromia Special Zone on 21 January. Reportedly, a few hundred thousand were reported to be displaced to nearby woredas of North Shewa Zone. A significant number of houses and private properties have allegedly been burned down and destroyed. Partners are mobilizing food and non-food items such as emergency shelter, amidst road closure and ongoing hostilities. This displacement has further deteriorated the humanitarian situation in North Shewa Zone, which requires urgent response”.²⁰¹

Also in February 2023, the International Medical Corps noted that “In Amhara, more than 500 health facilities and 1,706 health posts need to be rehabilitated, renovated and supported with equipment and supplies to be operational”.²⁰²

Insecurity Insight reported that on “14 February 2023: In Jilye Tumuga woreda, Oromia special zone, Amhara region, several health centres, civilian homes, and mosques were burned down by Amhara regional special forces and ethnic Amhara militia men. Source: ACLED”.²⁰³

In April 2023, Save the Children reported on damage to schools in Amhara:

¹⁹⁷ UNICEF, [Humanitarian Situation Report No. 11, November 2022](#), 2022

¹⁹⁸ US Department of State, [Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 20 March 2023, *Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, G. CONFLICT-RELATED ABUSES*

¹⁹⁹ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia - Situation Report, 5 Jan 2023](#), 5 January 2023

²⁰⁰ UN News, [Ethiopia: Northern aid access improving but some areas still hard to reach](#), 2 February 2023

²⁰¹ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia - Situation Report, 2 Feb 2023](#), 3 February 2023

²⁰² International Medical Corps, [Northern Ethiopia Humanitarian Update Situation Report #39 - February 17, 2023](#), 19 February 2023

²⁰³ Insecurity Insight, [Attacks on Health Care Bi-Monthly News Brief: 08-21 February 2023](#), 7 March 2023

Across the country more than 3.5 million children are out of school - or 1 in every 16 children* - in what has been called one of the world's worst education crises. Recent data revealed massive damage to schools across conflict-affected areas of Tigray, Amhara and Afar in northern Ethiopia, according to the latest report from the Ethiopia Education Cluster that comprises the Ministry of Education, Save the Children and UNICEF. The situation is particularly bad in Tigray, where 85% of schools have serious or partial damage, and all public schools remain closed.²⁰⁴

Further in April 2023 Insecurity Insight reported that "09 April 2023: In Abscia, East Belesa woreda, Central Gondar, Amhara region, an unidentified armed group opened gunfire at an ambulance taking a pregnant woman to a health facility, wounding an ambulance driver and a midwife and damaging the ambulance. Source: ACLED".²⁰⁵

In August 2023, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission recorded that:

EHRC has confirmed that there was heavy fighting in and around cities and towns across the Amhara region, which involved the use of heavy artillery resulting in the deaths and injuries of civilians, as well as damage to property. There have been cases where protestors including civilians who attempted to block roads were killed. Prisons and police stations in the region were broken into, weapons and ammunition were looted, and pre-trial detainees and prisoners escaped. The Amhara regional administration officials at various levels have been the target of attacks, resulting in the temporary collapse of local state structures in many areas and killings of government officials. [...]

Access to basic services including electricity, water, banking services, hospitals, schools, telephone and internet services have been disrupted in many areas. Shops have also been closed, and the fighting has forced residents to confine themselves to their homes and prevented from carrying out their daily routines. [...]

EHRC has also received credible reports of strikes and shelling including from Debre Birhan, Finote Selam, and Burie resulting in many civilian casualties and damage to residential areas and public spaces.²⁰⁶

In its annual report covering events in 2023, Human Rights Watch reported that "In August and September, heavy fighting was reported in and around cities and towns throughout the Amhara region, resulting in hundreds killed and injured, including children and refugees, and damage to civilian property and infrastructure such as hospitals".²⁰⁷ The report cited a September 2023 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) article which stated:

Fighting in parts of Ethiopia has left people in urgent need of lifesaving healthcare, water, food, shelter, and protection services. [...]

²⁰⁴ Save the Children, [MORE THAN 2.3 MILLION CHILDREN OUT OF SCHOOL IN NORTHERN ETHIOPIA DESPITE PEACE AGREEMENT](#), 12 April 2023

²⁰⁵ Insecurity Insight, [Attacks on Health Care - Bi-Monthly News Brief \(05 - 18 April 2023\)](#), 3 May 2023

²⁰⁶ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, [The human rights impact of the armed conflict on civilians in Amhara Regional State](#), 14 August 2023

²⁰⁷ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2024 – Ethiopia](#), 11 January 2024

In Amhara, where clashes continue to take place, ambulance services have been severely disrupted while health facilities have become periodically isolated and even unreachable at times. Hospitals are struggling to care for the wounded and critically ill in areas where the security situation is particularly unstable. [...] The fighting in Amhara has also damaged or interrupted critical water supplies. "We have identified five towns today where the population are in urgent need of support. Feres Bet, Bure, Chara, Tilili and Injibara town have all seen their water access disrupted as a result of recent clashes," said Ivano Marati, the ICRC Water and Habitat Coordinator in Ethiopia.²⁰⁸

Insecurity Insight reported that on "19 September 2023: In Finote Selam town, West Gojam, Amhara region, an ambulance belonging to Ethiopian Red Cross Association was reportedly looted by an unidentified armed group from its branch office. Source: ACLED".²⁰⁹

In November 2023, Reuters wrote that "fresh eruption of fighting in northern Ethiopia has raised concerns among residents about the safety of rock-hewn churches in the town of Lalibela dating back to the 12th and 13th centuries".²¹⁰ The same source further noted that "Ethiopian soldiers fired heavy weapons 11 times from locations near the churches in Lalibela, a deacon said, sending damaging shockwaves through one of the subterranean places of worship".²¹¹

Insecurity Insight reported that on 30 November 2023, "In Delanta Primary hospital, Wegel Tena town, Delanta woreda, South Wollo zone, Amhara region, an ambulance was set on fire following heavy shelling of an unidentified origin, killing the driver, laboratory technician and three local residents who were working in the area at the time and injuring a hospital manager. Sources: Amhara America and Amharic VOA".²¹²

The December 2023 monthly update from the EPO reported that:

The likelihood of a lengthy insurgency in Amhara region has serious humanitarian implications. The region is already experiencing difficulties stemming from the destruction of infrastructure that occurred during the northern Ethiopia conflict. Security issues have complicated the transport of aid to needy populations in Amhara and Tigray regions.¹²²¹³

12 Amhara Media Corporation, 'Security problems and humanitarian aid,' 1 January 2024

Amnesty International reported in February 2024 that "Seven months into the conflict, Amhara region has been significantly impacted by the fighting" and noted, citing an Addis Standard article that

²⁰⁸ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), [Responding to urgent humanitarian needs in Amhara and other hard to reach areas in Ethiopia](#), 11 September 2023

²⁰⁹ Insecurity Insight, [Attacks on Health Care - Bi-Monthly News Brief \(20 September - 03 October 2023\)](#), 17 October 2023

²¹⁰ Reuters, [Fighting in Ethiopia's Amhara region prompts fear for ancient churches](#), 7 November 2023

²¹¹ Reuters, [Fighting in Ethiopia's Amhara region prompts fear for ancient churches](#), 7 November 2023

²¹² Insecurity Insight, [Attacks on Health Care; Bi-Monthly News Brief; 13 -26 December 2023](#), 4 January 2024

²¹³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO December 2023 Monthly Update: The Fano Insurgency: Main Hurdles to Unifying Fano](#), 19 January 2024

“Transportation, health and other essential public services are reported to have been heavily interrupted”.²¹⁴

IV. Humanitarian situation in the Amhara region

For the humanitarian situation specific to Amhara IDPs, see section [VII. Internal Displacement of Amharas in Ethiopia](#).

a. Food insecurity

A key message update for Ethiopia in March 2022 from the Famine Early Warnings System Network (FEWS NET) gave the following information:

In Amhara and Afar, food security outcomes continue to be severe, with increasing concern for conditions in Wag Himra, notably among IDPs from Tigray. In Wag Himra, economic and agricultural activities, along with humanitarian assistance delivery, is limited. Additionally, market access is limited, with minimal agricultural activities ongoing. Many poor households are likely facing extreme difficulty accessing food. Levels of acute malnutrition from a Find-and-Treat campaign in February diagnosed 39 percent of screened children under five years of age with GAM [Global Acute Malnutrition]. Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes are likely here, as well as in other *woredas* of Amhara and Afar worst affected by conflict. [...]

In *belg*-receiving areas of northeastern Amhara and Tigray, SNNP, Sidama, and Oromia regions, rainfall has been minimal, and the *belg* season has been delayed by over a month. According to a multi-agency assessment conducted in mid-March in Amhara, only 39 percent of the area planned for *belg* crop planting has so far been seeded, while the NDRMC reported *belg* planting in SNNP, Sidama, and Oromia regions was only 12.5, 4, and 2 percent, respectively, of typical late-March levels. As the window for *belg* planting is soon closing, 2022 *belg* production is anticipated to be significantly below normal. This will drive an atypically long lean season in *belg*-dependent areas. [...]

Across drought and conflict-affected areas of Ethiopia, levels of acute malnutrition are extremely high. Find-and-Treat campaigns have been ongoing since late 2021, starting in Tigray, Afar, and Amhara and expanding in 2022 to additional areas of Amhara, Oromia, and Somali regions. While screening is still ongoing and most screened *woredas* have not been fully assessed, proxy GAM rates in most areas are ‘Critical’ or ‘Extremely Critical.’²¹⁵

In July 2022, Insecurity Insight reported that “According to Rotigliano [UNICEF Representative in Ethiopia], over five million people require aid in Tigray alone, with an additional seven million in Amhara and Afar”.²¹⁶

²¹⁴ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: “We thought they would fight with those they came to fight with, not with us.” Extrajudicial executions in Bahir Dar by ENDF soldiers](#), 26 February 2024

²¹⁵ Famine Early Warnings System Network (FEWS NET), [Sustained, high levels of assistance needed for millions to mitigate extreme food insecurity](#), March 2022

²¹⁶ Insecurity Insight, [Ethiopia Situation Report](#), 18 July 2022

The September 2022 UNICEF Situation Report noted that:

In Amhara the nutrition situation in conflict-affected zones remains dire. Aside from two woredas in North Gondar zone, everywhere in Amhara is classified under nutrition hotspot Priority One, with Wag Hemra, North Wollo, and North Gondar being the most affected. In August 2022 UNICEF supported the treatment of 7,866 children suffering from SAM [Severe Acute Malnutrition], an increase of 18 percent over the previous month and more than 100 percent over August 2021. The current admission rate likely undercounts the true SAM rates in Amhara given that more than 41 percent of health facilities in zones that are contributing most of the SAM caseload in the region are not treating and reporting SAM cases.²¹⁷

The October 2022 UNICEF Situation Report further wrote that:

In Amhara, delayed general food distribution (GFD) and reduced number of people targeted for relief food assistance impacted the nutrition situation, which was dire already. The distributed food does not fulfil the nutrient needs and standards, especially for vulnerable children and PLW [pregnant and lactating women] thus as expected, in September 2022, the admissions of SAM [Severe Acute Malnutrition] children increased by 14.65 per cent compared with the previous month. Similarly, the admission is more than triple as compared to the same period in 2021.²¹⁸

Also in October 2022, UN News reported that “Citing UN World Food Programme (WFP) data, WHO noted that in Amhara and Afar, 19 per cent and 14 per cent of mainly displaced children under five were now food insecure”.²¹⁹

In December 2022, FEWS NET wrote that “Acute malnutrition levels are within the “Critical” and “Extremely Critical” ranges in *woredas* of Wag Hamra and North Wollo Zone in Amhara Region, according to the December Rapid Nutrition Assessment (RNA)”.²²⁰

In a February 2023 Working Paper, UNDP reported that “According to the World Food Programme (WFP), severe drought has caused 7.4 million people to be food insecure in southern and southeastern Ethiopia. In non-drought affected areas, there has also been food insecurity. In Amhara region, 783,909 hectares of food crops, 244,953 hectares of industry/cash crops and 266,852 hectares of export crops have been damaged”.²²¹ The same source further noted with regards to acute malnutrition:

Public Health Emergency Management (PHEM) data show that severe acute malnutrition (SAM) remains part of the top 5 causes of morbidity in 2022 across the 3 regions of Northern Ethiopia. The trends have continued to rise by the week since the beginning of the year 2022 and the caseloads are at least 20% higher as compared to the same reporting time in the previous year. EPHI [Ethiopian Public Health

²¹⁷ UNICEF, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Situation Report No. 9 September 2022](#), 2022

²¹⁸ UNICEF, [Humanitarian Situation Report No. 10, October 2022](#), 2022

²¹⁹ UN News, [Northern Ethiopia facing devastating spike in preventable disease: WHO](#), 28 October 2022

²²⁰ Famine Early Warnings System Network (FEWS NET), [Despite ongoing humanitarian assistance, levels of acute malnutrition and mortality remain high](#), December 2022

²²¹ UNDP, [UNDP Ethiopia Working Paper Series: Crisis, Resilience and Opportunity: Poverty, Human Development, and the Macro-Economy in Ethiopia, 2020-23](#), 13 February 2023

Institute] estimates the proxy GAM [Global Acute Malnutrition] rate for Under-fives in conflict-affected areas in Amhara at 21.3% with SAM rates reaching 5.9%.

Although no comprehensive nutrition surveys have been possible in the three regions, a rapid nutrition assessment conducted in four IDP sites in mid-April 2022 in Tigray revealed U5 GAM rate of 62%, which is critically higher than the emergency threshold of 15%. In Afar, the latest rapid nutrition assessments conducted in 5 IDP camps showed GAM rates reaching 40.7%.

Similarly, the find treat campaigns carried out in the three regions show very high levels of acute malnutrition among PLW with highest rates peaking at 65.3% in Tigray, 50.7% in Afar and 40% in Amhara. Moreover, stable households like civil servants including teachers and health workers have equally become vulnerable due to unavailability of cash for salaries for several months. The cost of food has exponentially increased with reducing spending power of the community thus increasing the number of food-insecure households and minimal yield from farming. 1.6 million children under five years and pregnant and lactating women in Tigray, 1.4 million in Amhara and an 80,000 in Afar are in need malnutrition preventative and treatment interventions.²²²

In July 2023 FEWS NET warned that “large rainfall deficits emerged in July across areas of eastern Tigray, eastern Amhara, and the Rift Valley. Rainfall deficits as of late July are over 25 percent of average and, in some localized areas, over 40 percent”.²²³ The update stated that “With the likelihood of continued below-average rainfall in August and September, crop development is of high concern in eastern Tigray, eastern Amhara, areas along the Rift Valley of Oromia, and SNNPR”.²²⁴

A food security outlook update for Ethiopia in August 2023 from FEWS NET gave the following information:

Localized *meher*-producing in areas of Amhara, along the Rift Valley of Oromia, and SNNPR are also of concern due to deepening rainfall deficits during the *kiremt* rains, as crops are at risk of wilting and dying in September; however, the full impact on food insecurity is not expected to be realized until households deplete their harvest stocks in 2024. In Amhara, a recent uptick in conflict is also disrupting typical livelihood and economic activities. While conflict has increased, active battles are not constant in the region, and as a conflict event subsides, livelihood and economic activities return to near-normal levels. The continuation of conflict, coupled with the rainfall deficits in eastern Amhara, is being closely monitored as there is the potential for even lower production than currently anticipated. [...]

In Amhara, the movement of goods within the region and to Addis is disrupted as conflict or roadblocks occur. For example, trade routes from Addis Ababa to Bahir Dar and Bahir Dar to Gondar were disrupted in August. However, the flow of goods has not been blocked for extended periods. Markets within Amhara are functioning, however, at lower-than-normal levels.²²⁵

²²² UNDP, [UNDP Ethiopia Working Paper Series: Crisis, Resilience and Opportunity: Poverty, Human Development, and the Macro-Economy in Ethiopia, 2020-23](#), 13 February 2023

²²³ Famine Early Warnings System Network (FEWS NET), [Rainfall deficits drive crop production concerns in the center, north, and south](#), July 2023

²²⁴ Famine Early Warnings System Network (FEWS NET), [Rainfall deficits drive crop production concerns in the center, north, and south](#), July 2023

²²⁵ Famine Early Warnings System Network (FEWS NET), [Food security emergency persists across Ethiopia in aftermath of severe shocks](#), August 2023

A UNOCHA situation report for Ethiopia at the beginning of October 2023 noted that:

Drought like conditions persist in Afar, Amhara, Somali and Tigray regions with a severe impact on crop production, livestock health, and households' (HHs) access to water, while malnutrition rates above emergency threshold are reported in parts of Afar and Amhara regions. The desert locust infestation in parts of Afar, Amhara, Somali and Tigray, further aggravates the risk of food insecurity. [...]

Desert Locust (DL) infestation is a major threat to food security in the region. In July 2023, DL were reported in Afar and Tigray, in August 2023, where immature swarms were spotted moving in western Afar near the eastern escarpments of Amhara and Tigray. To date, an area of approximately 230,218 hectares has been surveyed and Desert Locusts have infested about 25,154 hectares in Afar, Amhara, Dire Dawa, Oromia, Somali and Tigray. [...]

The [Amhara] region continues to face an alarming malnutrition crisis with inadequate response to malnutrition (MAM) a major contributor to the high incidence of severe acute malnutrition (SAM) in the region. MAM cases identified through search-and-find efforts lack referral to services, thus undermining the effectiveness of the nutrition response. Nutrition partners report a high Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rate of 21 per cent among children and a staggering 54.6 per percent among pregnant and lactating women (PLW), exceeding the global threshold of 15 per cent. The North Gondar zonal DRMO(2) reports critical GAM rates in four *woredas* as high as 49 and 36 per cent. The Central Gondar Zone reports similar high GAM rates in the four *woredas* of West Belesa, East Belesa, Kinfaz Begela, Wegara, and Tegede. Targeted Supplementary Feeding Program (TSFP) support will resume in 38 *woredas* in October 2023. Limited data coverage and completeness due to the ongoing security situation *could* imply higher GAM rates to what is reported, which underscores the urgency of addressing the nutrition crisis.²²⁶

(2) Disaster Risk Management Office

UNICEF noted in its 2023 mid-year report that:

Despite increased humanitarian access to vulnerable conflict-affected populations in northern Ethiopia since the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) in November 2022, malnutrition rates remain high in Afar, Amhara, and Tigray regions, as people continue to struggle to meet their daily food needs. In Amhara, for example, a recent Nutrition Cluster assessment found rates of global acute malnutrition (GAM) among children under five and pregnant and lactating women (PLW) to be 12 per cent and 19 per cent, respectively.²²⁷

In its end of 2023 Situation Report, UNICEF noted that:

Based on the latest FEWS NET report³, Ethiopia is considered extremely high risk for food insecurity due to its the impact of El Niño-induced weather shocks and sub-national conflicts on agricultural production further to its slow recovery from previous severe shocks. In Tigray, Afar, Amhara, and parts of the Oromia, South Ethiopia and Southwest regions drought is, once again, causing severe suffering for an estimated four million people, including 1.4 million people in Tigray and 1.7 million people in Amhara.²²⁸

²²⁶ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia – Situation Report](#), 9 October 2023

²²⁷ UNICEF, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Situation Report, Mid-Year 2023](#), 2023

²²⁸ UNICEF, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Situation Report \(Northern Ethiopia and Drought Response\), End-of-Year 2023](#), 2023

3 FEWS NET (Ethiopia -Food Security Outlook - October 2023 - May 2024)

A UNOCHA situation report for Ethiopia on the status of the food cluster, updated in December 2023, stated that: “There are concerns of deteriorating food security situation in Amhara and Tigray regions, following indications of drought-like conditions in some zones”.²²⁹

A food security outlook update for Ethiopia in December 2023 from FEWS NET gave the following information:

Although the *meher* harvest is improving access to food for much of the population, Ethiopia remains among FEWS NET’s countries of highest concern amid drought in the conflict-affected north, heightened levels of active conflict in Amhara and Oromia regions, the aftermath of drought and floods in the south and southeast, and persistently poor economic conditions. Levels of acute food insecurity are most severe in the northern and southern regions. Areas of increasing concern include Tigray and northeastern Amhara, where the *meher* harvest failed due to drought and insecurity is restricting household income from labor migration that is typically critical for purchasing food. Additionally, the scale and frequency of planned food assistance is below the level of need. [...]

Clashes between armed groups in northern Amhara and central Oromia continue to cause population displacement, periodically impede market functionality, and disrupt local livelihoods, especially the population’s ability to engage in migratory labor. [...] In Amhara, where the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) and Fano militia have been fighting since August 2023, clashes are concentrated in Shewa, Wello, Gojjam, and South Gondar areas. [...]

In most parts of Amhara and Tigray, feed, pasture, and water are available as normal for livestock; however, in Tigray, northeastern Amhara, and areas of Afar, it is important to note that many livestock died during the 2020-2022 conflict. In northeastern Amhara, the availability of crop residue ensures normal access to livestock feed and water. However, in other areas severely affected by drought, notably the Tekeze River catchment, water scarcity is already a concern, as is the current and future availability of feed. [...]

In *woredas* that are drought-affected, notably those along the Tekeze River catchment both in Tigray and Amhara regions, livestock body conditions are deteriorating, exacerbated by the occurrence of disease. [...]

Levels of acute malnutrition remain of high concern, notably in Afar, Amhara, and Tigray regions. [...]

In the Tekeze River catchment area, several *woredas* in North Gondar and Wag Himra are expected to be in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) due to limited to no harvest resulting from drought and conflict and a limited ability to access income. Neighboring areas of northeastern Amhara are expected to face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes due to production losses associated with conflict and below-average June to September *kiremt* rainfall. Household purchasing power is expected to be lower than normal, associated with high food prices and below-average income.²³⁰

A UNOCHA situation report for Ethiopia at the beginning of January 2024 gave the following updates on droughts and floods across the region and its effect on food security:

²²⁹ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia – Cluster Status: Food](#), last updated 18 December 2023 (accessed 9 April 2024)

²³⁰ Famine Early Warnings System Network (FEWS NET), [Drought-induced crop failure leads to Emergency in conflict-affected north](#), December 2023

Regional authorities in Tigray and Amhara raised the alarm and alerted aid agencies to the severe humanitarian situation resulting from food insecurity and drought as early as mid-November and the end of December 2023. The current severe drought comes at a time when communities in the affected regions are still grappling with the lingering effects of the 2021-2023 drought and the devastating northern conflict (2020-2022) amid poor economic conditions. Erratic rains have impacted their crop and livestock production and slowed down their ability to recover as income from the sale of these plummeted. Scaled-up humanitarian response and resilience building are urgently required for the internally displaced persons (IDPs), vulnerable host communities and the returning IDPs.

Through the recent Multiagency *Meher* seasonal assessment in North Gondar, South Wello, North Shewa, Oromo Special Zone, North Wello, and Wag Hamra zones of Amhara Region, partners found that drought has affected nearly 1.7 million people. The results show that drought conditions in particular had a severe impact on agricultural productivity, exacerbating food insecurity and malnutrition, and resulting in human and livestock losses, which led people to resort to harmful coping mechanisms and displacement. In December, the Amhara authorities⁽¹⁾ alerted aid agencies of 43 *woredas*/ districts in nine zones having been affected by severe drought. Furthermore, 1.03 million⁽²⁾ people lack access to drinking water due to 1,500⁽³⁾ water points that have dried up or require rehabilitation and maintenance. For this reason, and due to damaged croplands, more than 4,000⁽⁴⁾ people have migrated from their home base in Janamora and Telemt of the North Gondar Zone to larger towns. Drought also affects an estimated 2.4 million⁽⁵⁾ livestock without water and feed, causing some 173,600 livestock to migrate while over 86,700 have perished. [...]

Food insecurity is posing a threat to an already dire situation as Amhara, Afar, Tigray, and other regions face very high/critical Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rates beyond the emergency threshold (>15 per cent). [...] An assessment conducted in Janamora and Telemt districts of North Gondar in the Amhara Region revealed a high proxy GAM and SAM [severe acute malnutrition]. [...]

Food insecurity conditions are expected to linger for several months until the next meher/karma harvest season (October - September 2024) in the northern regions of Amhara, Tigray, Afar, and other areas. However, the food response is inadequate to cover the needs of the severely food-insecure people due to funding gaps.²³¹

(1) Amhara Disaster Prevention & Food Security Program Coordination Commission (December 2023)

(2) "Ibid"

(3) "ibid"

(4) "Ibid"

(5) "Ibid"

A UNOCHA response dashboard for Ethiopia between January and December 2023 highlighted that, nationally, there was a 74% gap in funding for the food cluster (i.e. 24% of the need being reached through funding), with 7.8 million people reached in the food response out of 20.1 million people targeted. In Amhara, 51% of the targeted people in need were reached with at least two rounds of food distribution, leaving a gap of 49%.²³²

At the beginning of February 2024, a joint statement was released by the Commissioner of the Ethiopian Disaster Risk Management Commission and the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator

²³¹ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia – Situation Report](#), 10 January 2024

²³² UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Response Dashboard: January to December 2023](#), 1 February 2024, pp. 1-2

in Ethiopia on urgent funding needs for the ongoing response to food insecurity across the northern highlands of Ethiopia stating:

The impact of an El Niño-driven drought is ravaging communities in the highlands of Ethiopia. This global climatic event impacted Ethiopia's summer rains, leading to severe water shortages, dried pastures, and reduced harvest. Millions of lives and livestock are affected, with reports of alarming food insecurity and rising malnutrition.

The drought footprint is being felt across Afar, Amhara, Tigray, Oromia as well as Southern and South West Ethiopia Peoples' Region. Most affected, however, are vulnerable communities in northern Ethiopia that have yet to recover from the 2020-2022 conflict, particularly in localized areas of Amhara, Tigray and Afar where the recent harvest was severely disrupted leaving households with no or limited food stock.

Whilst the situation in many of these areas is already alarming, there is an opportunity to avert a serious humanitarian catastrophe. The Government of Ethiopia and humanitarian partners have undertaken a coordinated multi-sector assessment and analysis of the situation, which concluded that the number of critically food insecure people will continue to grow over the next few months reaching a peak of 10.8 million during the July-September lean season. Malnutrition rates in parts of Afar, Amhara and Tigray and other regions have already surpassed globally recognized crisis thresholds, although the situation is currently not reflective of famine-like conditions.²³³

Reporting in February 2024, the World Food Programme (WFP) published an update on delivery of critical food assistance in Northern Ethiopia, in response to populations affected by drought, flooding and conflict. It stated that:

"WFP is extremely concerned about the deteriorating food security in Northern Ethiopia – where many are already facing severe hunger. Our teams are working at pace to deliver food to them urgently," says Chris Nikoi, WFP Ethiopia's Country Director (ai). "WFP, with our partners, are working tirelessly to reach millions of Ethiopians at risk of hunger in the first quarter of the year to help keep a major humanitarian catastrophe at bay."

- Since resuming food distributions in early December, WFP has delivered food to 1.2 million people in Tigray, Afar, Amhara and Somali regions. WFP is now scaling up to provide life-saving food assistance to 3 million Ethiopians in the coming weeks, of which almost 2 million are in Tigray. [...]
- The Government of Ethiopia's most recent assessment of food security needs projected that 15.8 million people will face hunger and need food assistance in 2024. This includes over 4 million people who are internally displaced and 7.2 million who have high levels of acute food insecurity and need emergency assistance. [...]
- Over half of those needing food assistance are in Amhara and Tigray regions (51 percent). The Government's assessment indicates that 2.3 million people in Amhara region and 2.1 million in Tigray

²³³ Ethiopian Disaster Risk Management Commission and UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Ethiopia, [*Joint Statement by Ambassador Shiferaw Teklemariam, Commissioner of the Ethiopian Disaster Risk Management Commission and Dr. Ramiz Alakbarov, United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Ethiopia on urgent funding needs for the ongoing response to food insecurity across the northern highlands of Ethiopia*](#), 1 February 2024

require emergency food assistance. The need for food assistance remains high as climate change, conflict, and economic shocks all continue to slow the recovery of livelihoods.²³⁴

The same month, the International Committee of the Red Cross similarly stated that “Tigray, Amhara, Afar and Somali Regional State are facing serious food shortages. Scarcity of food and lack of clean water affect the most vulnerable, especially pregnant women and young children”.²³⁵

A food security outlook for Ethiopia for the period February to September 2024 from FEWS NET gave the following information:

Ethiopia remains one of FEWS NET’s countries of highest concern as it faces a third consecutive year of rising food assistance needs. Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes are expected in northern, central, southern, and eastern Ethiopia. The areas of highest concern are in Tigray and northeastern Amhara, followed by western Afar, where populations are increasingly dependent on food assistance and social support mechanisms amid a dearth of other food and income sources. 4.0 million people – primarily those in conflict and drought-affected areas – received food assistance from November to January, but the sheer severity of food consumption deficits and number of people in need have outpaced the impact of the humanitarian response. Proxy acute malnutrition data remained indicative of Critical and Extremely Critical levels over the same time period. In late 2023, limited field reports suggested some occurrences of hunger-related deaths in Tigray. These reports could not be reasonably corroborated; however, concern for such outcomes does exist – not only in Tigray, but also in Amhara and Afar - as an increased risk for elevated mortality is expected when Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes are sustained. The scale-up in assistance since late 2023, however, has likely mitigated the risk of increased mortality to an extent.

Food security conditions are expected to remain dire in the north, where households in Tigray, northeastern Amhara, and western Afar regions have seen conflict erode their livelihoods. This is compounded by significantly below-average to failed *meher* crop production in 2023 due to El Niño-related drought, coupled with very high food prices. In Tigray and Amhara, many poor households have already exhausted their food stocks from the 2023 harvest and migratory labor remains restricted by insecurity [...]. Kilocalorie deficits will widen leading up to the peak of the lean season, which occurs from July to September, and improvement is unlikely prior to the onset of the 2024 *meher* harvest in September. Until then, food assistance and social support will be key to mitigating hunger. Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and Crisis! (IPC Phase 3!) outcomes are expected in the most likely scenario.²³⁶

See the report [here](#) for a full analysis of food security outlooks in the country and region.

FEWS NET produced the following visualization of projected outcomes in areas of Ethiopia for the near term (February to May 2024)²³⁷:

²³⁴ World Food Programme (WFP), [WFP ramps up deliveries of vital food assistance to drought and conflict-affected areas of Ethiopia](#), 6 February 2024

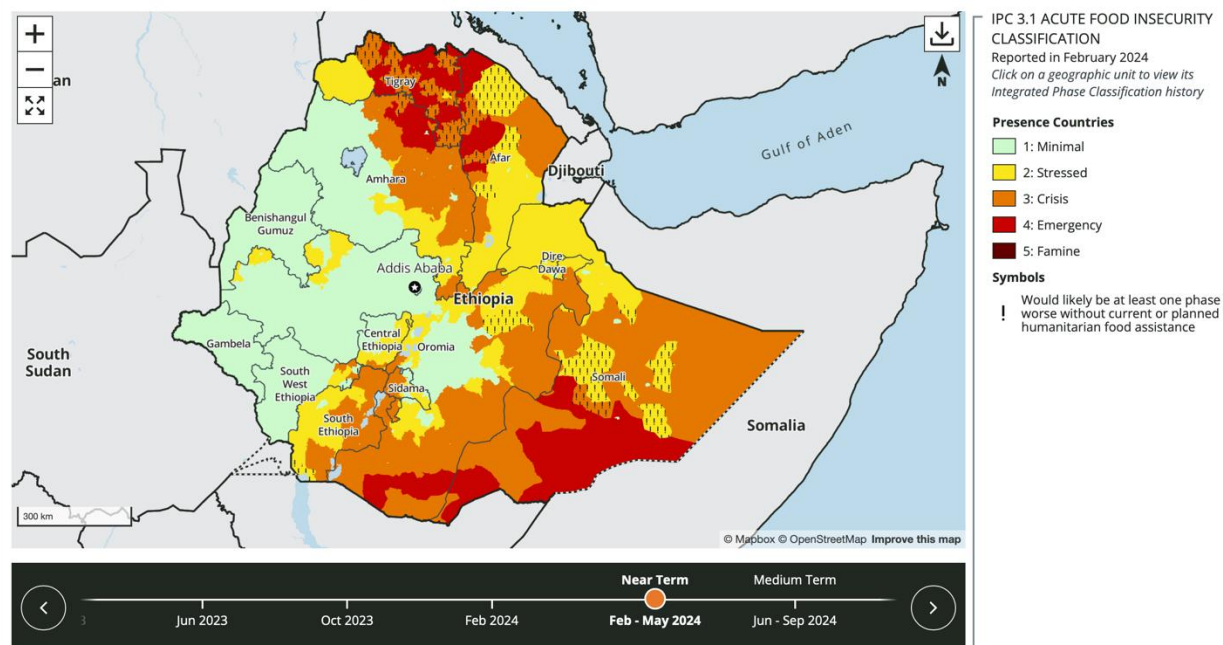
²³⁵ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), [Ethiopia: Health facilities lack supplies amid ongoing violence. Civilians struggle to rebuild livelihoods](#), 20 February 2024

²³⁶ Famine Early Warnings System Network (FEWS NET), [Hunger and acute malnutrition outpace the scale-up of food assistance](#), February 2024

²³⁷ Famine Early Warnings System Network (FEWS NET), [Ethiopia Acute Food Insecurity: February - May 2024 projected outcomes](#), February 2024

Ethiopia Acute Food Insecurity

February - May 2024 projected outcomes



UNOCHA's Ethiopia Humanitarian Needs Overview for 2024, published in February 2024, stated the following on food insecurity:

Ethiopia is facing another new and worsening food security crisis. El Niño weather conditions during the June – August (kiremt) rainy season affected rainfall patterns leading to a new drought in affected areas, including in Afar, Amhara, Tigray, Oromia, northern Somali and southern regions. The below-average rains and other factors have led to a poor harvest and water shortages, affecting millions of lives and livestock, triggering an alarming increase in food insecurity, malnutrition and disease outbreaks, also at a time when general food assistance was paused following reports of aid diversion. The kiremt (meher) harvest feeds some 75-80 per cent of the population. Many of the communities most affected are those that have yet to recover from the 2020-2022 northern Ethiopia conflict. According to FEWS NET [NET Famine Early Warning Systems Network], "households in northern Ethiopia increasingly face extreme hardships accessing food and income which are driving ongoing Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes. Households have limited food stocks resulting from the failure of the 2023 meher harvest, and income-earning activities have yet to recover from recent conflict. [...]"

Some areas in Afar, Amhara, and Tigray regions where SMART surveys have been conducted in 2023 were found to face very high Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rates (measured through weight-for-height) beyond the emergency threshold (>15 per cent). Preliminary results from most recent rapid nutrition assessments conducted in December-January in South Wollo and Central Gondar also confirm very high proxy GAM rates (estimated through MUAC [Middle Upper Arm Circumference] screenings) of >20 per cent among children under 5 and >80 per cent among pregnant and lactating women.²³⁸

²³⁸ UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview: Ethiopia](#), 26 February 2024, pp. 5-6

Overall, the overview recorded 15.8 million people in need of food assistance and security in Ethiopia; within Amhara, it assessed the severity of food security needs in Amhara region as level 5 (from 1 to 5 in levels of severity) in three zones (North Gondar, Wag Hamra, and Central Gondar), level 4 in five zones (South Gondar, North Wello, South Wello, North Shewa, and Oromia), level 3 in one zone (East Gojam), level 1 in five zones (West Gojam, Awi, West Gondar, North Gojam, and Bahir Dar town Admin).²³⁹

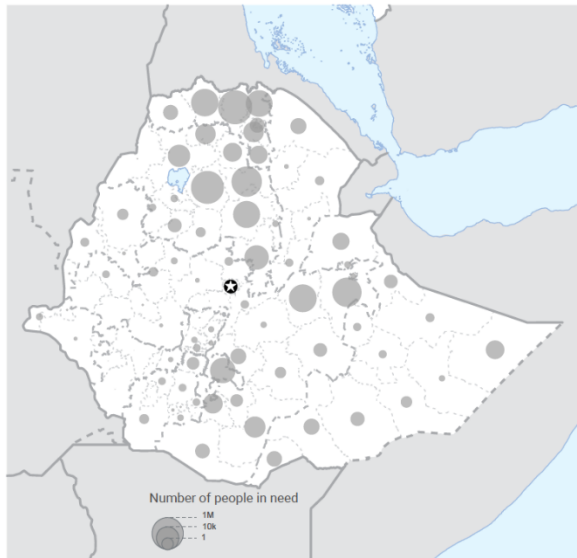
The Guardian news reported in February 2024 that “Last week, Ethiopia’s ombudsman said it had confirmed the starvation deaths of at least 351 people in Tigray and another 21 in the neighbouring Amhara region, which is also racked by drought and instability”.²⁴⁰

The following UNOCHA infographics indicate the geographical spread of food insecurity need and severity in Ethiopia²⁴¹:

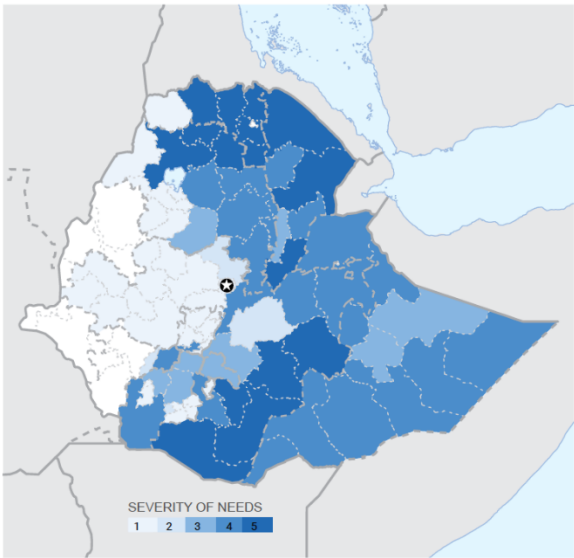
3.4 Food Security

PEOPLE IN NEED	WOMAN	CHILDREN	WITH DISABILITY	IDPS	RETURNING IDPS	RETURNING MIGRANTS	NON-DISPLACED
15.8M	25%	51%	18%	4.0M	1.0M		10.8M

People in need



Severity of needs



A UNOCHA situation report for Ethiopia for the beginning of March 2024 found that, in Amhara:

²³⁹ UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview: Ethiopia](#), 26 February 2024, pp. 27-28

²⁴⁰ The Guardian, [‘At the door of death’: desperation in Ethiopia as hunger crisis deepens](#), 9 February 2024

²⁴¹ UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview: Ethiopia](#), 26 February 2024, p. 43

Assessments identified food (89.8 per cent of assessed sites), shelter (64.8 per cent) and livelihood support (35.2 per cent) as the priority needs.

Meanwhile, the El Niño-induced drought has so far displaced over 1,200 people in two deeply impacted zones of North Gondar and Wag Hamra of the Amhara Region.⁽⁵⁾ At least 2.4 million livestock face shortage of water and feed in seven zones and nearly 175,000 livestock migrated to neighbouring kebeles, in search of water and feed according to the Amhara Public Health Institute.²⁴²

(5) Amhara Public Health Institute's (APHI) emergency report, 17 January 2024.

b. Access to basic services, education and health

This section should be read in conjunction with [III. d. Destruction of Civilian Infrastructure and Homes](#).

In its January 2022 Situation Report, UNICEF reported that “The Amhara regional authorities have identified 11.6 million people in need of relief assistance in Amhara region, out of which 6.7 million are targeted to be reached with humanitarian intervention efforts through the Government and partners. Interruptions of water supply due to power outage, increasing cases of malnutrition among children and mothers, disruptions to learning and teaching continue to be reported in the region”.²⁴³

Insecurity Insight reported in “As last reported on 18 January 2022: In Amhara and Tigray regions, the de-facto blockade on humanitarian aid and medical supplies imposed by the Ethiopian Government has forced hospitals to shut down. Doctors have replaced disinfectants with salt to clean wounds, and reused single-use items, such as gloves, surgical materials and chest drains. Some health facilities cannot provide routine vaccines, and patients are receiving expired medication”.²⁴⁴

The February 2022 UNICEF Situation Report from the same source noted that “In Amhara region, according to the Regional Education Bureau, as of February 2022, over 90 per cent of primary and secondary schools in emergency affected zones have resumed the teaching and learning activities, with over 1.4 million children enrolled back to school”.²⁴⁵

According to the May 2022 Situation Report:

In Amhara, heavy military deployment and law enforcement measures are causing heightened tensions across the region.² Access to basic social services is highly compromised in war affected zones especially in Wag Himra, North Gondar, and North Wollo zones due to public facilities being damaged/looted during the conflict.²⁴⁶

²⁴² UNOCHA, [Ethiopia – Situation Report](#), 1 March 2024

²⁴³ UNICEF, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Situation Report No. 1, January 2022](#), 2022

²⁴⁴ Insecurity Insight, [Attacks on Health Care Bi-Monthly News Brief, 12-25 January 2022](#), 3 February 2022

²⁴⁵ UNICEF, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Situation Report No. 2, February 2022](#), 2022

²⁴⁶ UNICEF, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Situation Report, May 2022](#), 2022

2 According to Regional Disaster Prevention and Food Security Programme Coordination Office (DPFSPCO), in Amhara 11.6 million people are targeted for relief assistance, including an estimated 5.8 million children. Of the 11.6 million people, over 9.9 people, including 5.1 million children and over 300,000 pregnant and lactating women have been directly impacted by the Northern Ethiopia crisis. The office also estimates that over 1.3 million IDPs (both protracted and active emergencies) are found in the region, of which over 94,000 IDPs are in 32 collective sites.

The UNICEF mid-year 2022 Situation Report noted that “In Amhara, over 40 hospitals, 453 health centers, and 1,850 health posts were damaged, while a recent multisectoral rapid assessment in Zone 2 of Afar identified that 75 per cent of health facilities were severely damaged and looted. As a result of the damage to and looting of health facilities, health service access and quality has been highly impacted, and a majority of these health facilities have been providing only emergency and minimum packages of health services”.²⁴⁷

The UN Population Fund reported in August 2022 that “an estimated 10 million in the Amhara region need life-saving health services, including sexual and reproductive support”.²⁴⁸

The September 2022 UNICEF Situation Report noted that “In Amhara, more than 200,000 people in North Wollo and Wag Hemra zones have been newly displaced, bringing the total number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the region to more than 1.1 million. Additionally, in conflict-affected areas of the region, 180 health posts, 39 health centers, and one primary hospital are non-functional, interrupting health services for approximately 340,000 children and PLW. The escalation of conflict has also had a significant negative impact on education services in North Wollo, North and West Gondar, and Wag Hemra, where 625 schools are closed, leaving more than 500,000 children without access to education”.²⁴⁹

A November 2022 Addis Standard article reported that “the Ministry of Health estimated that at least US\$1.4 billion is needed for the restoration of health facilities which are destroyed during the two years long war in Tigray, Afar and Amhara regional state as well as other conflict affected areas across the country”.²⁵⁰ The same source reported that data from the ministry indicated that in Amhara, “At least 40 hospitals, 452 health stations, and 1,728 health posts [...] had been affected by conflicts”.²⁵¹

Médecins Sans Frontières noted in December 2022 that:

In the rural areas of northern Amhara affected by conflict, people have experienced violence, loss of property and assets. They also struggle to access basic services such as healthcare due to disrupted systems. Months of conflict in the region have exhausted people’s coping mechanisms.

²⁴⁷ UNICEF, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Situation Report No.6, Jan-Jun 2022](#), 2022

²⁴⁸ UN Population Fund, [Conflict fuelling sexual violence in northern Ethiopia](#), 2 August 2022

²⁴⁹ UNICEF, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Situation Report No. 9 September 2022](#), 2022

²⁵⁰ Addis Standard, [News: Despite data limitation from Tigray, Ministry estimates \\$1.4 b needed to restore war damaged health facilities across Ethiopia](#), 22 November 2022

²⁵¹ Addis Standard, [News: Despite data limitation from Tigray, Ministry estimates \\$1.4 b needed to restore war damaged health facilities across Ethiopia](#), 22 November 2022

“We see very high needs here,” says Demeke, supervisor for psychosocial services. “Most of our patients are affected by depression, some have lost relatives, or their houses have been destroyed; others might have lost their livelihood.”

A number of patients MSF teams see are victims of violence or may have witnessed traumatic events and are now suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.²⁵²

According to the 2024 Bertelsmann Stiftung’s Transformation Index which covers the period from 1 February 2021 to 31 January 2023:

In 2021 and 2022, there were armed conflicts in different parts of the country. The most conflict-affected areas were the Tigray region, the western part of the Afar region, the northern and eastern parts of the Amhara region, and the western part of Oromia. As a result, basic administrative structures were non-operational in areas controlled by rebel groups. Most administrators and civil servants fled these areas, and institutions were damaged. From July 2021 to November 2022, the federal government could not provide basic administrative structures in the Tigray region.

The same was true for most parts of the Wag Hamera, North Wello and South Wello zones in the Amhara region from July to December 2021. Basic administrative structures have also failed in areas in the Oromia region where OLA members are active, particularly in western Oromia. This, in turn, means the government failed to collect taxes and enforce rules in these areas. Basic services (e.g., schooling, health care, electricity and communication) are either limited or completely shut down.

Furthermore, most rural areas lack water, electricity, health care, schooling, communication and road access. [...]

Ethiopia’s northern conflict between the TPLF and the federal government has had a profound impact on the country’s needs and government capacity. In October 2021, the Amhara regional state suspended regular services, including the budget, due to the conflict. As a result of ongoing clashes, 1.5 million children are reported to be out of school, and the damage to the region’s infrastructure has been immense.²⁵³

In a February 2023 Working Paper, UNDP reported “In Tigray, for example, poverty increased from 27% in 2016 to 45% in 2022, a likely underestimation, given the level of disruption and damage in this region. Equally, other regions in Northern Ethiopia have not been spared from the adverse effects of conflict. Amhara and Afar regions have seen their headcount poverty rate rise to 30%, significantly above the national average, from 26.1% and 23.6%, respectively, in the pre-conflict period. Again, it is possible that these numbers may be undercounting the scale of downside effects”.²⁵⁴ The same source further noted:

There has been extensive damage to health facilities across Northern Ethiopia, from health posts to hospitals, substantially impairing service delivery and putting lives at risk. A survey by the regional health bureau indicates that 90% of Tigray’s 40 hospitals and roughly 1,000 smaller clinics have been damaged. Likewise, in Amhara and Afar regions, more than 2,000 health facilities, including hospitals, health posts and blood banks have been damaged. [...]

²⁵² Médecins Sans Frontières, [Providing medical care to people across Ethiopia](#), 23 December 2022

²⁵³ Bertelsmann Stiftung, [BTI 2024 Country Report — Ethiopia](#), 19 March 2024

²⁵⁴ UNDP, [UNDP Ethiopia Working Paper Series: Crisis, Resilience and Opportunity: Poverty, Human Development, and the Macro-Economy in Ethiopia, 2020-23](#), 13 February 2023

The conflict in Northern Ethiopia has had significant negative effects on Afar, Amhara and Tigray, especially on human development and service delivery¹⁹. Assessments show that there has been significant damage to infrastructure and a wide range of services, whether economic, social or governance-related, disruption of safety nets, and major negative effects on enterprise and employment provision. Furthermore, the conflict has increased existing food security challenges. This means that the number of people that require the support of social protection services including safety nets and protection services have likely grown significantly. Finally, the conflict has resulted in an increase in GBV, sexual exploitation and abuse, and other harmful practices predominantly affecting women and girls. [...] Delivery of essential health services: Essential health services delivery has been hindered in conflict affected areas of Afar, Amhara and Tigray where over 8.3 million people need support. The displacement of health workers and deferred salary payment of healthcare workforce for more than 15 months have resulted in high turnover and inadequate technical expertise. Damage and looting of health facilities have also affected the delivery of essential health services even though documentation of these remains difficult due to active conflict. Limited access to Tigray, Afar (Zone 2) and Amhara (northern parts of Wag Hamra and North Wollo), combined with fuel shortages prevent partners from reaching populations in need, both in health facilities and through mobile health and nutrition teams (MHNTs), leaving the most vulnerable host community members and IPDs at increased risk of preventable disease and death.²⁵⁵

19 In Northern Ethiopia, access to services has been significantly curtailed by damage to/destruction of public infrastructure, in addition to the cessation and collapse of public services as well as disruption of electricity, communications and banking services. Measures imposed in conflict-affected areas due to security considerations can, unfortunately and inadvertently, also have significant implications on access to basic services.

The same source also recorded, citing UNICEF 2022 figures, that in Amhara alone 4,107 schools had been damaged, of which 1,025 were “fully damaged” and 3,082 “partially damaged”.²⁵⁶

According to the 2022 US Department of State Country Report on Human Rights Practices:

On January 6, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) stated that the impact of the conflict on schooling had deprived millions of children of education for over a year in some areas. In Amhara Region, 4,107 schools (3,823 primary and 284 secondary schools), accounting for 42 percent of the schools in the region, were totally or partially damaged and looted, according to an initial assessment by the Ministry of Education and the Regional Education Bureau. In the assessment released in January, more than 1.9 million children, 116,939 teachers, 9,583 school leaders, and 1,941 Zonal and Woreda Education personnel were directly affected.²⁵⁷

A March 2023 UNICEF article reported that “Over 3,000 health centers were damaged or left non-functional due to the conflict in Afar, Amhara and Tigray”.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ UNDP, [UNDP Ethiopia Working Paper Series: Crisis, Resilience and Opportunity: Poverty, Human Development, and the Macro-Economy in Ethiopia, 2020-23](#), 13 February 2023

²⁵⁶ UNDP, [UNDP Ethiopia Working Paper Series: Crisis, Resilience and Opportunity: Poverty, Human Development, and the Macro-Economy in Ethiopia, 2020-23](#), 13 February 2023

²⁵⁷ US Department of State, [Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 20 March 2023, Section 6. *Discrimination and Societal Abuses, Children*

²⁵⁸ UNICEF, [Putting damaged health services for children on the path to recovery](#), 3 March 2023

UNICEF noted in its 2023 mid-year report that “Ongoing intercommunal conflict in Oromia and Amhara has left more than 3 million people displaced and prompted the closure of 780 schools, affecting approximately 900,000 children”.²⁵⁹

A September 2023 report from the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia noted that “the realities of a dismantled health system in Tigray and sparsely available health systems in Afar, Amhara and Oromia further raise serious concerns about undiagnosed and untreated long-term physical consequences of rape and sexual violence and related sexual and reproductive health concerns. These include HIV, sexually transmitted infections, reproductive harms and unwanted pregnancies, which, when discovered have led to a prevalence of unsafe abortions”.²⁶⁰

USAID reported in September 2023 that “The hostilities have disrupted some populations’ access to basic services, humanitarian assistance, and markets and interrupted the June–August meher planting season in the region, likely resulting in a below-average harvest and adversely affecting the food security of populations in parts of Amhara, according to the UN”.²⁶¹

In its October 2023 Situation Update UNOCHA reported that in Amhara “Education needs in the region remain high and largely unmet mainly due to severe lack of funding to the education response as well as due to damages caused by the conflict in the north of the country in 2021-2022 with an estimated over 2,000 schools are either partially or fully damaged. The current situation is affecting the fragile education system, disrupting the back-to-school campaigns and school registration, targeting more than six million children, with more than 3.9 million children unable to register to school yet due to the current situation, with kids at risk of spending a fourth year out of school”.²⁶²

According to a November 2023 commentary published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, “Ethiopia’s struggling economy will require substantial reform to unlock an IMF deal that could help with stability. Humanitarian needs due to conflict and climate shocks are at historic highs, with more than 20 million requiring assistance with food, shelter, medical care, and more”.²⁶³

In November 2023 the WHO reported with regards to the conflict in Amhara:

Severe shortages of medical supplies, particularly for malaria, have been reported from Amhara, in spite of large quantities of drugs shipped by WHO (over 25 MT), UNICEF and other health partners.

²⁵⁹ UNICEF, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Situation Report, Mid-Year 2023](#), 2023

²⁶⁰ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia](#), 14 September 2023, *paragraph 55*

²⁶¹ USAID, [Ethiopia – Northern Ethiopia Crisis](#), 30 September 2023

²⁶² UNOCHA, [Ethiopia - Situation Report, 31 Oct 2023](#), 31 October 2023

²⁶³ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, [Ethiopia’s Fragile Stability Remains at Risk](#), 1 November 2023

Access to health facilities is difficult, but not impossible in 42 out of 181 Amhara woredas. Health partners are supporting with last mile delivery to health facilities in these and other areas, like East and West Gojam.

Surveillance data is missing from these woredas, leaving the Amhara Public Health Institute (APHI) with no information on the status of disease, many of these woredas with historically high incidence of malaria. With only 66% reporting completeness in the Public Health Public Health Emergency Management (PHEM) system, current disease data are underestimates.

Internet has been cut off in the entire region, severely impeding timely reporting of disease data.

APHI is closely monitoring accessibility and functionality of health facilities, with an estimated number of 132 health facilities currently not operational, 123 of them health posts.²⁶⁴

In its end of 2023 Situation Report, UNICEF noted that:

Diseases such as malaria, measles, and cholera further exacerbated an already critical humanitarian situation in 2023. The severe drought caused water sources to dry up, resulted in serious water shortages in Somali, Afar and Oromia which compromised access to clean water, personal hygiene, and sanitation. Since January 2023, there was a significant increase in the spread of malaria across the country, with 3.7 million⁵ recorded cases and 9 deaths. The outbreak in the most affected areas was hindered by insecurity, shortages of supplies, damaged health infrastructure, and limited road access, such as in Oromia and Amhara, which recorded nearly 2 million cases combined.²⁶⁵

5 Public Health Emergency Operations Center (PHEOC), Ethiopia, Weekly Bulletin, 18-24 December 2023 No. 37

According to a December 2023 World Health Organization press release, “17.4 million people across the country are affected by a prolonged El Niño-induced drought, floods, and conflicts” and “the drought's impact in Amhara and Tigray is particularly concerning, with over 5 million people affected by drought-like conditions leading to public health emergencies, escalating risks of negative coping strategies, malnutrition, and zoonotic outbreaks”.²⁶⁶

In its December 2023 Situation Update UNOCHA reported that “While the capacity of health facilities in the region and particularly in Gojam zones to provide basic health services is limited due to the current hostilities that affect the full functionality of the health facilities with reported destruction, lack of essential drugs and testing and treatment kits. [...] Despite access has been heavily affected due to the ongoing hostilities in the region, humanitarian partners continue to transport supplies to the region. However, there remains a huge need for lifesaving assistance (including with essential drugs and blood). Currently, humanitarian actors are engaging with relevant stakeholders to ensure the safe movement of humanitarian supplies to the Gojam zones”.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴ World Health Organization, [Ethiopia Health Cluster Bulletin \(October 2023\)](#), 2 November 2023

²⁶⁵ UNICEF, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Situation Report \(Northern Ethiopia and Drought Response\), End-of-Year 2023](#), 2023

²⁶⁶ World Health Organization, [WHO expresses concern for escalating public health needs in Ethiopia](#), 20 December 2023

²⁶⁷ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia - Situation Report, 1 Dec 2023](#), 1 December 2023

According to a 2024 UNICEF appeal, “The situation in Amhara Region is volatile and complex due to armed conflict between national government forces and Fano militia. Access to affected populations, including nearly 1 million internally displaced people, has been largely limited, and protection concerns and reports of human rights violations are mounting. Basic services, markets and livelihoods have been disrupted and a key farming season missed”.²⁶⁸

USAID reported in January 2024 that “The UN reports that violence has limited the capacity of health facilities to provide basic health services in Amhara due to the destruction of facilities and a lack of essential medicines, testing, and treatment kits”.²⁶⁹ Furthermore, “approximately 1 million people in Amhara lack access to safe drinking water, as at least 1,500 water points have dried as of December 22, according to the UN”.²⁷⁰

According to UNOCHA’s Situation Report of January 2024 “in Amhara alone, more than 2.5 million children remain out of school because of the impact of the Northern Ethiopia conflict (2020-2022) and the ongoing armed hostilities in the region”.²⁷¹

Amnesty International reported in February 2024 that “Seven months into the conflict, Amhara region has been significantly impacted by the fighting” and cited the Amhara Bureau of Education as stating that “two million out of six million students in the region are out of school because of the conflict”.²⁷²

The February 2024 UNOCHA Humanitarian Needs Overview reported that “the fighting in the Amhara Region has damaged 1,478 water facilities, 2,109 health facilities, and 938 schools. Additionally, the economic situation has led to declining health sector spending and rising out-of-pocket costs for healthcare, further limiting access to services”.²⁷³

The same source further noted that “While initiatives are underway by the Oromia and Amhara authorities to resolve hostilities and encourage IDPs to return, the humanitarian conditions remain poor due to lack of access to basic services and continued protection risks. [...] Tigray, Amhara, and Afar bear the highest returning IDP caseloads nationwide. Most returning IDPs were not able to return to their shelter; 42.41 per cent reported this was due to the shelters being wholly damaged, and 32.14 per cent reported it was due to partial damage”.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁸ UNICEF, [Ethiopia Appeal: Humanitarian Action for Children](#), 12 December 2023

²⁶⁹ USAID, [Ethiopia – Complex Emergency, Fact Sheet #1 Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2024](#), 8 January 2024

²⁷⁰ USAID, [Ethiopia – Complex Emergency, Fact Sheet #1 Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2024](#), 8 January 2024

²⁷¹ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia - Situation Report, 10 Jan 2024](#), 10 January 2024

²⁷² Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: “We thought they would fight with those they came to fight with, not with us.” Extrajudicial executions in Bahir Dar by ENDF soldiers](#), 26 February 2024

²⁷³ UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview: Ethiopia](#), 26 February 2024, p. 16

²⁷⁴ UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview: Ethiopia](#), 26 February 2024, p. 32

c. Humanitarian access and attacks on humanitarian workers

The organisation Insecurity Insight, which provides “aid-sector tailored predictive situation analysis on Ethiopia to support aid agencies’ strategic security decision-making”, recorded that between January 2016 and 20 March 2024 in Ethiopia there were 113 reported incidents of violence or threat of violence against health care which had the following effects:

- 128 Health facilities damaged
- 18 Health workers killed
- 42 Health workers kidnapped
- 159 Health workers injured.²⁷⁵

In terms of location, the Insecurity Insight webpage reported that “Health workers have been killed and health facilities looted and destroyed in Tigray, Amhara, and Afar regions”.²⁷⁶ The same source also provides the following datasets which break down incidents by region:

- 2020-2024 ETH Aid Worker KIKA Incident Data²⁷⁷
- 2016-2024 ETH Attacks on Health Care Incident Data²⁷⁸
- 2020-2024 ETH Education in Danger Incident Data.²⁷⁹

According to the 2022 US Department of State Country Report on Human Rights Practices:

As of August, federal, regional, and local government restrictions were a major problem for the humanitarian response in eastern Amhara, particularly in efforts to support IDPs and refugees, many of whom the Amhara regional government suspected of harboring connections to the TPLF. The government reportedly restricted aid at Turk, an IDP camp near South Wello’s Hayk town estimated to hold 3,000 persons, primarily Tigrayan IDPs and Eritrean refugees. The Ethiopian Federal Police operated the camp and reportedly held the Turk residents in inhuman, prison-like conditions with no freedom of movement. Armed guards and barbed wire fencing reportedly prevented IDPs from leaving the camp, even to seek medical treatment. Shelters were heavily overcrowded, and no food, health, humanitarian protection, or nutrition assistance were available inside the camp. This led to widespread food insecurity, lack of treatment for chronic health conditions, and lack of support for survivors of gender-based violence.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁵ Insecurity Insight, [Attacked and Threatened: Health Care at Risk](#), last updated 20 March 2024

²⁷⁶ Insecurity Insight, [Ethiopia](#), undated (accessed 20 March 2024)

²⁷⁷ Insecurity Insight, [2020-2024 Ethiopia Aid Worker KIKA Incident Data](#), modified 21 February 2024

²⁷⁸ Insecurity Insight, [2016-2024 Ethiopia Attacks on Health Care Incident Data](#), modified 24 February 2024

²⁷⁹ Insecurity Insight, [2020-2024 Ethiopia Education in Danger data](#), modified 7 March 2024

²⁸⁰ US Department of State, [Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 20 March 2023, *Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, E. PROTECTION OF REFUGEES*

Insecurity Insight reported on 21 March 2023 that “in Kobo town, Semien Wollo zone, Amhara region, Fano militiamen stole a convoy loaded with medical supplies en route to Tigray’s Mekelle city. Source: Sahan Research”.²⁸¹

UNICEF noted in its Situation Report for April 2023 that “Tension between unidentified armed groups (UAGs) throughout Amhara Region in April led to a deteriorating security environment in which armed clashes prompted further displacement, while movement restrictions across the region limited civilian access to basic social services and constrained the ability of humanitarian organizations to operate”.²⁸²

USAID reported in April 2023 that “Humanitarian access in northern Ethiopia expanded following the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in November 2022, improving relief actors’ ability to deliver emergency assistance to conflict-affected populations. Despite overall access improvements, some areas along the Eritrea–Ethiopia border and northeastern Amhara Region remain difficult to reach. Insecurity and the presence of armed actors continue to impede humanitarian operations and jeopardize the safety of aid workers and civilians in these areas, the UN reports”.²⁸³

In April 2023, the US Catholic Church’s international aid agency reported that two Catholic Relief Services staff members were shot and killed on Easter Sunday in Amhara.²⁸⁴ Reporting on the same incident USAID further noted that “Armed actors shot both aid workers while they were traveling from Amhara back to

Addis Ababa after a work assignment. On the same date, unidentified gunmen reportedly shot at a humanitarian ambulance elsewhere in the region, injuring its driver and a midwife, local media report”.²⁸⁵

On 8 June 2023, Al Jazeera reported that “The United States aid agency USAID has announced it is halting food aid to all of Ethiopia, a month after pausing aid to the war-torn Tigray region, citing illicit diversions”.²⁸⁶ The article further noted that “The Washington Post newspaper cited a report by the Humanitarian Resilience Development Donor Group, which it described as an organization of donors briefed by USAID, that identified “a coordinated and criminal scheme” to divert the aid. The report said the “scheme appears to be orchestrated by federal and regional Government of Ethiopia (GoE) entities, with military units across the country benefitting from humanitarian assistance” and that “significant diversions” had been documented in seven of Ethiopia’s nine regions, according to the Post”.²⁸⁷

²⁸¹ Insecurity Insight, [Medical supplies looted by Fano militia](#), 21 March 2023

²⁸² UNICEF, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Situation Report No. 4 \(Northern Conflict and Drought Responses\)](#), April 2023.

2023

²⁸³ USAID, [Ethiopia Assistance Overview](#), April 2023

²⁸⁴ OSV news, [Two Catholic Relief Services’ Workers Slain In Ethiopia Amid Easter Sunday Unrest](#), 11 April 2023

²⁸⁵ USAID, [Ethiopia – Northern Ethiopia Crisis, Fact Sheet #3 Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2023](#), 3 May 2023

²⁸⁶ Al Jazeera, [USAID says it is halting all food aid to Ethiopia amid diversions](#), 8 June 2023

²⁸⁷ Al Jazeera, [USAID says it is halting all food aid to Ethiopia amid diversions](#), 8 June 2023

In August 2023, the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect reported in an atrocity alert that “Residents in Bahir Dar have also reported that the water system has stopped working while the Director-General of the World Health Organization has said that humanitarian operations are impacted by ongoing violence in the region”.²⁸⁸

The September 2023 UNICEF Situation Report noted that “New and ongoing conflict between government and militia forces in Amhara has limited access to 75% of the region. Despite this, UNICEF continued dispatching critical supplies to partners and ensured last mile distributions”.²⁸⁹ The same source further explained:

The security situation in Amhara Region remained volatile during the month, particularly in West, East and North Gojjam zones, as well as South Gondar, North Wollo, North Shewa, Central Gondar, and Gondar City. These led to declaration of a six-month state of emergency on 3rd August that has limited movement

throughout the region and constrained the humanitarian operating environment. In addition to the closure of access corridors, the state of emergency has prompted a shutdown of internet and mobile phone services throughout the region. These disruptions severely affected the delivery of humanitarian aid, resulting in the suspension of road movement within the region.

Despite ongoing access and security challenges, UNICEF continued to provide lifesaving humanitarian assistance to women and children throughout the region and has established contact with both parties to the conflict to negotiate access and ensure that critical assistance continues to reach vulnerable refugee, internally displaced persons.²⁹⁰

USAID reported in September 2023 that “In response to the violence, multiple humanitarian organizations partially suspended activities in the region in early August, as road closures and the limited availability of cash and fuel supplies impeded humanitarian access and operations. The humanitarian operating environment remained constrained, and the GoE’s restrictions on internet and mobile data remained in place throughout Amhara as of late September, according to the UN and international media. Despite ongoing insecurity, humanitarian operations had gradually resumed in major population centers where violence continued to subside as of September 7, the UN reports”.²⁹¹

A September 2023 USAID map²⁹² detailed humanitarian access across the country:

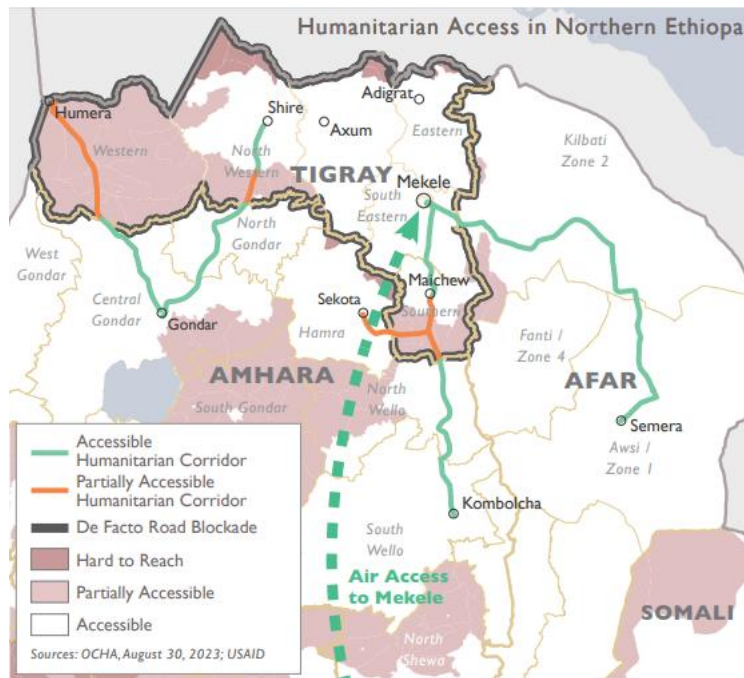
²⁸⁸ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Atrocity Alert No. 359: Ethiopia, Haiti and Cameroon](#), 9 August 2023

²⁸⁹ UNICEF, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Situation Report No. 8, 30 September 2023](#), 2023

²⁹⁰ UNICEF, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Situation Report No. 8, 30 September 2023](#), 2023

²⁹¹ USAID, [Ethiopia – Northern Ethiopia Crisis](#), 30 September 2023

²⁹² USAID, [Northern Ethiopia USG Humanitarian Response to the Crisis](#), 30 September 2023



Insecurity Insight reported that on 12 October 2023 “In Bahir Dar city and special zone, Amhara region, soldiers raided the Tibebe Ghion Hospital, where they dragged six patients from their beds, and executed them. They also fired at hospital staff. Source: Personal Communication”.²⁹³

In its October 2023 Situation Update UNOCHA reported that “The current situation in Amhara remains volatile with hostilities in several areas including in East and West Gojam, North and South Wello, North Shewa, Central and South Gondar zones. The fluid situation complicates movement of humanitarian convoys and personnel and constrains access particularly to rural areas, preventing the expansion of humanitarian interventions to hard-to reach areas. A gradual resumption of humanitarian activities, markets and banks is reported in areas of relative calm in major towns in the region. Mobile data is unavailable throughout the region. The overall operational environment remains restricted, hampering the full resumption of humanitarian activities. All airports in the region are fully functional, with some partners using commercial airlines to mobilize essential supplies to Bahir Dar, the regional capital, and Gondar ”.²⁹⁴

According to November 2023 commentary published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, “Corruption and other governance deficiencies are rampant, as evidenced by a vast aid diversion scheme that led to the halting of U.S. food aid in May—a pause that remains in place, except for assistance to refugees”.²⁹⁵

²⁹³ Insecurity Insight, [Attacks on Health Care - Bi-Monthly News Brief \(18-31 October 2023\)](#), 10 November

²⁹⁴ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia - Situation Report, 31 Oct 2023](#), 31 October 2023

²⁹⁵ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, [Ethiopia's Fragile Stability Remains at Risk](#), 1 November 2023

Insecurity Insight noted that on 30 November 2023 “In Delanta Primary hospital, Wegel Tena town, Delanta woreda, South Wollo zone, Amhara region, an ambulance was set on fire following heavy shelling of an unidentified origin, killing the driver, laboratory technician and three local residents who were working in the area at the time and injuring a hospital manager. Sources: Amhara America and Amharic VOA”.²⁹⁶

The International Crisis Group explained in a November 2023 report that: “Transport to and from the region has been severely restricted since early August, including for humanitarian workers, exacerbating economic woes and disrupting essential public and private services. The government has restricted mobile phone services outside major towns and cut off internet access since 3 August (after restoring it in July)”.²⁹⁷

According to the Congressional Research Service, “The United States, Ethiopia’s largest humanitarian donor, and the World Food Program (WFP) paused food assistance nationwide from June until December 2023 due to aid diversion”.²⁹⁸ Furthermore, it explained in January 2024 that in Amhara “Insecurity has significantly restricted access to parts of the state, including for aid agencies”.²⁹⁹

In its January 2024 Humanitarian Situation Report, UNICEF reported that:

Humanitarian access remains a significant challenge in several conflict-affected regions of Ethiopia. Amhara, Oromia, Somali, Benishangul-Gumuz, and Gambela continue to face access challenges, hindering the timely delivery of humanitarian assistance. Amhara has been in a state of emergency (SOE) since August 2023, and the region is also grappling with the consequences of drought and pest invasions, which have resulted in significant crop losses and limited access to clean drinking water. High malnutrition rates, particularly in drought-affected areas, demand urgent emergency food aid and supplementary feeding for children under five and pregnant/lactating women. Road blockages in Amhara and Oromia have restricted vehicle movement within and between these regions, as well as to other areas like Benishangul Gumuz. These limitations, combined with restricted humanitarian access and the resultant impact on market activities, which, among other things, raises the cost of basic goods and critical staple commodities, pose significant challenges for the affected populations in those regions.³⁰⁰

USAID reported in January 2024 that “Ongoing conflict throughout Amhara and Oromia regions continued to place aid workers and civilians at risk, exacerbate existing humanitarian needs, and restrict the delivery of assistance to vulnerable populations in Ethiopia during late 2023, according to the UN”.³⁰¹

²⁹⁶ Insecurity Insight, [Ambulance Set on Fire in Amhara Region Following Heavy Shelling](#), 30 November 2023

²⁹⁷ International Crisis Group, [Ethiopia’s Ominous New War in Amhara](#), 16 November 2023

²⁹⁸ Congressional Research Service, [Ethiopia: In Brief](#), 23 January 2024

²⁹⁹ Congressional Research Service, [Ethiopia: In Brief](#), 23 January 2024

³⁰⁰ UNICEF, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Situation Report, January 2024](#), 2024

³⁰¹ USAID, [Ethiopia – Complex Emergency, Fact Sheet #1 Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2024](#), 8 January 2024

Reporting in February 2024, the International Committee of the Red Cross noted “In Amhara and Oromia health facilities struggle to assist the wounded and the sick, after supply chains were disrupted by insecurity and movement restrictions”.³⁰²

The Guardian news reported in February 2024 that “Aid workers say the insecurity is impeding the delivery of humanitarian food in the region, where the federal ombudsman says dozens of people have starved to death recently amid a heavy drought and the after-effects of the Tigray war, which spilled into Amhara”.³⁰³

UNOCHA’s Ethiopia Humanitarian Needs Overview for 2024, published in February 2024 noted with regards to humanitarian assistance:

In 2023, the humanitarian access environment in northern Ethiopia improved following the CoHA. With the end of active hostilities, basic service provision slowly resumed with partners able to reach people in need, and most areas becoming accessible, except some bordering Eritrea. Access to the “contested areas” between Tigray and Amhara regions remained restricted, impacting the movement of supplies and aid personnel. Overall, conflicts and insecurity in other parts of the country impacted the ability of the state to deliver basic services such as health, water and sanitation or education.

The number of security incidents impacting aid workers and operations in Ethiopia reduced vis-à-vis previous years, except for Amhara region. In areas affected by conflict, aid partners were not targeted, however, there remained a high risk due to the volatility of the situation and the multiplicity of armed elements involved. [...] Overall, seven aid workers were killed in Ethiopia, five in Amhara, one in Gambella, and one in Afar.³⁰⁴

The same source explained the following context with regards to the distribution of food aid:

Diversion, suspension, and resumption of food aid In April 2023, allegations of food aid diversion came to light in Ethiopia, raising concerns about the principled distribution of humanitarian assistance to those in need. These allegations came at a time when humanitarian needs in the country remained high, with millions of Ethiopians and nearly a million refugees facing the consequences of prolonged conflict, displacement, drought, floods, and disease outbreaks. The country was also emerging from the five consecutive seasons of poor rains, with the March-May 2022 rainy season the driest on record in the last 70 years.

On 3 May 2023, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Food Programme (WFP) announced a pause in the food assistance to the Tigray region. In June, the pause was extended to the whole country after indications of a widespread food aid diversion. However, after extensive negotiations involving the Ethiopian government, the US government, and the humanitarian community, on 14 November 2023,10 USAID announced the resumption of food aid on a trial basis for one year, starting in December 2023. USAID stated that the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) and

³⁰² International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), [Ethiopia: Health facilities lack supplies amid ongoing violence. Civilians struggle to rebuild livelihoods](#), 20 February 2024

³⁰³ The Guardian, [Dozens of civilians killed by Ethiopian state troops in Amhara region, say reports](#), 12 February 2024

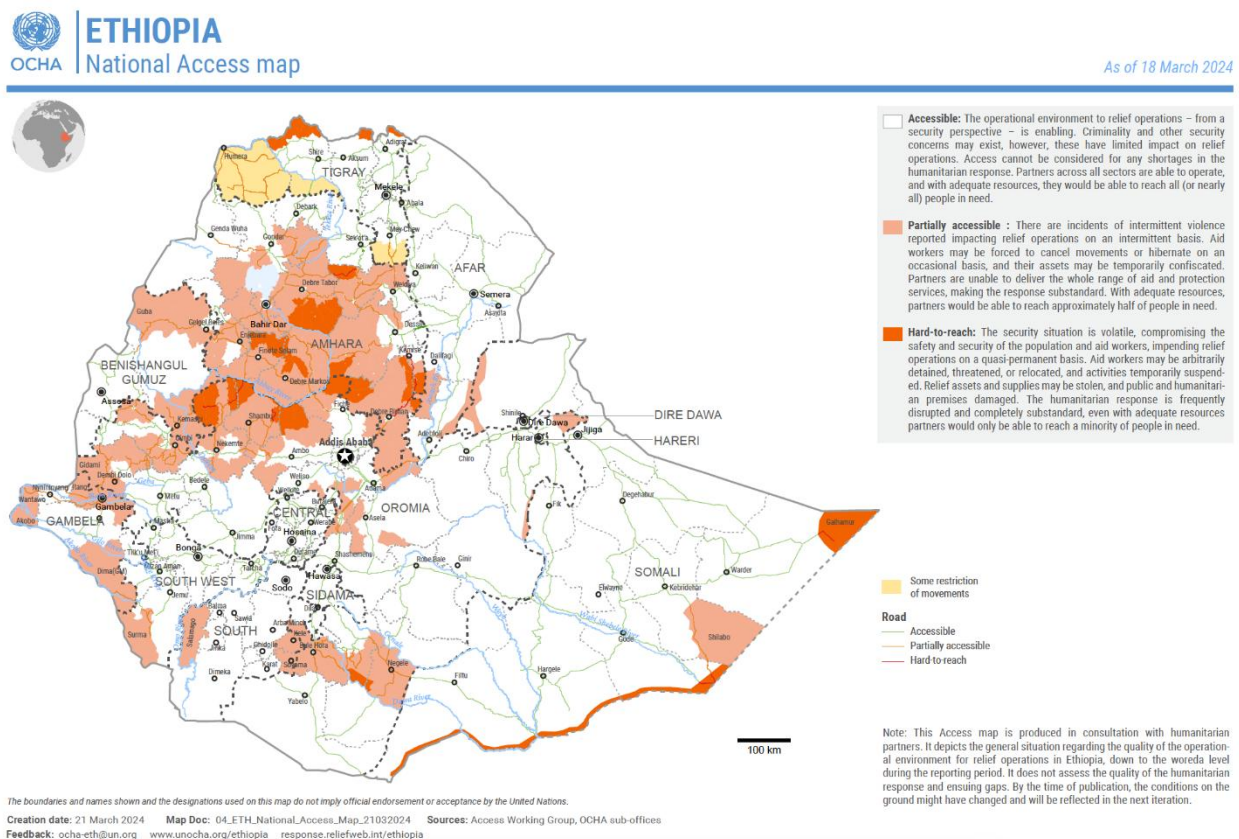
³⁰⁴ UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview: Ethiopia](#), 26 February 2024, p. 22-3

humanitarian partners had implemented widespread and significant reforms in the food assistance structure, prompting the resumption. Given the alleged severity of the food aid diversion and potentially dire implications of the food pause, which might also impact other sectors, the Humanitarian Country Team established an Aid Diversion Task Force (TF). The TF built on the GoE's commitment to collaborate towards a more efficient aid distribution system in Ethiopia and to safeguard future assistance from misuse.

The effects of the food pause were especially severe in areas where there was already a high level of food insecurity and poverty due to drought and conflict. This pushed families into extreme poverty and negatively impacted their ability to recover from previous drought, displacement and conflict. The risk of acute malnutrition increased, mainly for children under five years of age, pregnant and lactating women, and the elderly.³⁰⁵

10 United States Agency For International Development, Office of Press Relations,, USAID Resumes Food Assistance for People Across Ethiopia Following Implementation of Comprehensive Reforms, Tuesday, November 14, 2023 <https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/nov-14-2023-usaid-resumes-food-assistance-people-across-ethiopia-followingimplementation-comprehensive-reforms>

A map provided by UNOCHA as of 18 March 2024 displays the following access constraints³⁰⁶:



³⁰⁵ UNOCHA, *Humanitarian Needs Overview: Ethiopia*, 26 February 2024, p. 16

³⁰⁶ UNOCHA, *Ethiopia: National Access Map – As of 18 March 2024*, 21 March 2024

V. Treatment of Amharas by state actors outside of the Amhara region

a. Arbitrary arrest and detention

A report submitted to the UN Human Rights Committee in March 2022 by the NGO Freedom of Conscience (CAP) in March 2022 Statement, detailed incidents targeting the Amhara community in 2022:

WERABE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS UNDER ATTACK (MARCH - APRIL 2022)

In the second week of March, several mass arrests were conducted in Merkato Kebele 32 forcing large numbers of Amhara youth to flee the area in search of a safe place. Young people were protesting against the government, waving the Ethiopian flag without the star during the Adwa Victory celebration. These young Amharas and others arrested in various parts of Addis Abeba were all detained near a place called Aba Samuel on the outskirts of the capital city. [...]

THE CASE OF JOURNALIST GOBEZE SISAY FROM VOICE OF AMHARA (MAY 2022)

On May 1, 2022, at about 10am, a group of eight armed men in plainclothes stormed Gobeze's residence in the Ayar Babur Sefer neighbourhood of Addis Abeba, the capital. They searched his house without a court warrant. They confiscated his laptop and his phone.

Some of the men were obviously members of the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF). One of them wore an ENDF badge and another mentioned that they were taking him to Tor Hayloch, where the ENDF has a facility. The men held Gobeze for more than a week, blindfolded him and repeatedly questioned him about his critical reporting and affiliations with opposition political groups.

Gobeze was not brought to court or formally charged during his detention. Under the Ethiopian constitution, police must release suspects within 48 hours of their detention or charge them with a crime. This provision of the constitution was violated in his case.

Gobeze is the editor and founder of the privately owned YouTube-based broadcaster Voice of Amhara.

On Voice of Amhara, Gobeze recently covered the killing of ethnic Amharas by rebel groups and the challenges faced by those displaced by Ethiopia's civil war. According to Gobeze, he previously worked as a news presenter with the privately owned Ethiopian Satellite Television (ESAT) broadcaster, and as a reporter and documentarian for Yegna TV, a privately owned YouTube channel.

Gobeze is also the president of the Raya Development and Peace Association, a local civic organization, and is engaged in a civil lawsuit against ESAT for wrongful termination.

On the evening of May 9, the men warned Gobeze to stop his critical reporting or they would detain him again. They then released him near his home.

Authorities at the Addis Ababa Police Commission and the City Peace and Security Administration Bureau denied knowledge of his detention, according to reports. [...]

ARRESTS OF AMHARA JOURNALISTS TEMESGEN DESALEGN AND YAYESEW SHIMELIS (MAY 2022)

On 26 May 2022, around 11 a.m., police officers detained Temesgen Desalegn, chief editor of privately owned Feteh Amharic magazine, from his office in Addis Ababa, according to Ethiopia Insider, and his lawyer Henok Aklilu.

Also on May 26, at around 1:00 p.m., plainclothes police officers arrested Yayesew Shimelis, administrator of the YouTube news channel Ethio Forum, from his home in Addis Ababa.

Both journalists were brought before the Federal First Instance Court, Arada Branch, which granted police an extension of the journalists' custody pending investigation into allegations that they committed crimes against the state.

Police accused Temesgen of inciting violence and public disturbance through alleged unspecified interviews published on YouTube and accused him of working to create discord between the public and the military, according to his lawyer. He told the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) that the accusations were unfounded given that Temesgen had not appeared in a YouTube interview in at least four years.viii

Yayesew was accused of instigating the public to rebel against the government and instigating people of different religious groups against each other, according to one of two people familiar with his case who spoke to CPJix anonymously, citing security concerns. This person said that police alleged that the offenses were committed via interviews that Yayesew published on Ethio Forum and in commentaries he gave in interviews with other outlets, but did not provide specific details.

The media outlets of Temesgen and Yayesew are known for their critical journalism x of Ethiopia's government. They were arrested amid a broader crackdown as authorities carry out what they've termed as a "law enforcement operation" in the Amhara regional state. The operation also included the arrest of an ally-turned-critic of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, Brigadier General Tefera Mamoxi, who was the subject of an exclusive interview xii with Fetehe earlier this year.

Following Temesgen and Yayesews' arrests, police searched the journalists' homes. In Temesgen's home they confiscated copies of Fetehe magazine, five hard drives, a camera, a phone, and a flash disk, according to Tariku's Facebook post and Henok. Police confiscated a book and a flash drive from Yayesew's home, according to one of the two people familiar with his case.

In an interview with BBC Amharic a few days before his arrest, Temesgen said that "security sources" had warned him about his impending arrest, according to a report xiii by the outlet. When asked if there was anything that might lead to his arrest, Temesgen accused the Ethiopian authorities of "turning into a totalitarian dictatorship," saying that they would "suppress the media that could expose [them]."

On Wednesday 25 May, a day before his most recent arrest, Yayesew was convicted of publishing false news in connection with a 2020 case and was sentenced to three months of community service, according to one of the two people familiar with his case.

Both Temesgen and Yayesews have already been previously imprisoned xiv by Ethiopian authorities, as CPJ has documented.

During his detention, Temesgen endured hearing problems from physical abuse. He was beaten up by prison guards when he tried to get close to his brother to be able to hear him during a family visit at the infamous compound of Maekelawi prison.³⁰⁷

i <https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/et/et007en.pdf>

iii <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJhGTA67QI>

iv https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqu_i6CenWs&feature=youtu.be

v <https://bit.ly/3KZkqW6>

vi <https://ethiopiainsider.com/2022/6939/>

vii <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXUFyN9Ys5tiIHgJFQKRJvA>

viii <https://cpj.org/2022/05/journalists-yayesew-shimelis-and-temesgen-desalegn-detained-in-ethiopia/>

ix <https://cpj.org/2022/05/journalists-yayesew-shimelis-and-temesgen-desalegn-detained-in-ethiopia/>

x <https://fetehejournal.com/ፊት/የፌዴራል-የጠቅላይ-ሚኒስትሩ-ጀምበር/>

xi <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/wife-says-ethiopian-general-arrested-after-criticising-government-2022-05-20/>

³⁰⁷ Freedom of Conscience (CAP, Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience), *Statement submitted 136th session Human Rights Committee (10 Oct 2022 - 04 Nov 2022) on Ethiopia: Incidents targeting the Amhara community in 2022*, March 2022, pp.1-2 and 3-5

xii <https://fetehtmagazine.com/ቀያይ-መስመሮች/የጄኔራል-ምስጢሮች-ከብ-ጄ-ተፈራ-ማሞ-ጋር-የ/?fbclid=IwAR3Vp0fROZkLQvvTa4cxvSPQ5dsVg9dUUeB0BnhUj1tybJVBrvmF2kzX5ig>
xiii <https://www.bbc.com/amharic/news-61591369>
xiv <https://cpj.org/data/people/temesghen-desalegn/>

Later the same month, the CPJ reported on another high-profile arrest outside of Amhara, stating that:

On May 21, Ethiopian security officers detained Ethio Nekat Media's Meskerem at Bole International Airport in Addis Ababa as she traveled from Bahir Dar, according to news reports, her lawyer Henok Aklilu, and her husband Fitsum Gebremichael, who spoke with CPJ by phone. Henok told CPJ that Meskerem was detained at Addis Ababa Police Commission and is accused of incitement of public violence through her media appearances, adding that she appeared in court on May 23 and May 24. Her next appearance is scheduled for June 6.

Ethio Nekat Media's coverage features news about Amhara state, a message by Meskerem to an Ethiopian military general appealing to him to side with the Fano militia and the people amid what she described as a "looming crackdown," and a segment in which Meskerem defended the need for the Fano militia in the state.³⁰⁸

In June 2022, the CPJ documented the arrest of journalists Bekalu Alamrew and Meaza Mohammed, adding that:

Both Meaza and Bekalu made critical comments on their respective news channels about the Ethiopian government's "law enforcement operation" in Amhara state, in which at least 4,500 people have been arrested over the last two weeks. Both are detained at Addis Ababa police commission commonly known as Sostegna, according to Henok and Helen. Bekalu is due back in court on June 9 while Meaza is due back on June 6, according to these same sources.³⁰⁹

The weekly summary by the EPO stated that "It was reported that on 15 February 2023, Oromia state police arrested an unspecified number of Orthodox Christians, mostly Amhara and Gurage, in Welete in Sheger city in Oromia region".³¹⁰

Amnesty International noted the following in its annual report covering human rights in Ethiopia in 2022, in reference to the Balderas Party in Ethiopia, founded by the Amharan politician Eskinder Nega in 2019 and later aligned with the National Movement of Amhara:

In March and April, police arrested at least 30 members and leaders of the Balderas for True Democracy, an opposition political party, while they were celebrating public holidays in Addis Ababa. They were released without charge days later. In June, Sintayehu Chekol, a senior leader of Balderas, was arrested in

³⁰⁸ Committee to Protect Journalists, [Ethiopian authorities arrest 11 employees of 4 independent media outlets](#), 24 May 2022

³⁰⁹ Committee to Protect Journalists, [Ethiopia detains journalists Bekalu Alamrew and Meaza Mohammed in ongoing media crackdown](#), 3 June 2022

³¹⁰ ACLED (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project), [EPO \(Ethiopia Peace Observatory\) Weekly: 11-17 February 2023](#), 21 February 2023

Bahir Dar. The court ordered his release on bail, but the police moved him to Addis Ababa, where he was kept in detention and repeatedly moved to different police stations until his release in November.³¹¹

The CPJ documented in April 2023 the detention of journalist Getenet Ashagre, chief editor of the YouTube-based broadcaster The Voice of Amhara, in Addis Ababa that month, adding that “The Voice of Amhara recently covered topics including the vandalism of media outlets in Addis Ababa and the demolition of properties in Oromia regional state”.³¹²

The CPJ reported in April 2023 on the arrest of journalists in Addis Ababa and wider Oromia, for reporting on issues related to Amharas:

Between April 3 and April 13, security personnel in Ethiopia’s capital, Addis Ababa, arrested at least six journalists and allegedly assaulted two while in custody, according to multiple news reports and statements from local rights groups. Two other journalists were arrested in separate incidents in the Amhara and Oromia states. [...]

Abay, Genet, Assefa, and Meskerem mainly report and commentate on political and social issues affecting the Amhara ethnic group, the second-largest in Ethiopia. [...]

The first arrest came on April 3, when two men who identified themselves as National Intelligence and Security Service members approached Yeayeneabeba Gizaw, managing editor of the privately owned magazine Yehabesha Wog, while she was running errands in Addis Ababa and forced her into a waiting vehicle, according to the journalist’s phone interviews with CPJ and privately owned satellite broadcaster Ethiopia Media Service (EMS) and a statement by independent watchdog Ethiopia Human Rights Council. The men drove Yeayeneabeba to an unmarked detention facility in Lebu, an outskirt neighborhood of Addis Ababa, where she was held in a room with nine other women. On April 4, a man and woman questioned her about her work in Oromia state, slapped her face, kicked one of her legs, and accused her of using Yehabesha Wog to defame Oromia state officials and the Addis Ababa mayor.³¹³

CIVICUS discussed in May 2023 the increased targeting of journalists and media outlets in Ethiopia, writing that:

On 7th April 2023, security officers abducted and assaulted journalist Genet Asmamaw from her workplace at the Yeneta Media Office. Prior to her arrest, Genet Asmamaw had interviewed General Tefera Mamo, the former Commander of the Amhara Special Forces, on an issue published on the Yeneta YouTube channel that drew public attention. Authorities accused Genet of inciting violence on social media and other platforms and mobilising young people to overthrow the government following the court session. The court authorised the police to detain Genet for ten days for the purpose of carrying out additional investigations. [...]

On 6th May 2023, Djiboutian authorities and the International Criminal Police Organisation (Interpol) allegedly arrested and renditioned Gobeze, the founder and editor of The Voice of Amhara, a privately-

³¹¹ Amnesty International, [Amnesty International Report 2022/23: The State of the World's Human Rights - Ethiopia 2022](#), 27 March 2023

³¹² Committee to Protect Journalists, [Ethiopian authorities detain journalists Getenet Ashagre and Aragaw Sisay](#), 3 April 2023

³¹³ Committee to Protect Journalists, [At least 8 journalists detained amid renewed unrest in Ethiopia](#), 14 April 2023

owned YouTube-based broadcaster. Prior to his arrest, Gobeze had been reporting on recent unrest in Amhara regional state, following the demobilisation of the Amhara State Special Forces. On 9th May 2023, a court granted police an additional 14 days to hold Gobeze for investigation on accusations of terrorism and leading the media propaganda wing of an unnamed extremist group. However, an Interpol representative stated that the organisation had no information about Gobeze in its databases and noted that it was not authorised to arrest or extradite individuals.³¹⁴

The German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) stated in its August 2023 briefing notes on Ethiopia that: “Reportedly, a massive wave of arrests of ethnic Amhara considered to be linked to the tense security situation, started after the declaration of the state of emergency [in Amhara at the beginning of August 2023], especially in Addis Ababa”.³¹⁵

In August 2023, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission recorded that: “In Addis Ababa city administration, there has been widespread arrest of civilians who are of ethnic Amhara origin, as well as widespread detention of irregular migrants from Eritrean, some of whom might be seeking asylum status in Ethiopia”.³¹⁶

AP News reported in August 2023 that:

The emergency measures [in Amhara] allow authorities to arrest suspects without a warrant, conduct searches and impose curfews. Under a previous state of emergency imposed during the Tigray conflict, tens of thousands of ethnic Tigrayans were rounded up across the country.

This time, “there has been widespread arrest of civilians who are of ethnic Amhara origin,” the rights commission said.

Two lawyers said the emergency measures also appear to be in effect in the capital, Addis Ababa, where suspects are being held at police stations, schools and other makeshift detention centers after being swept off the streets. The lawyers, like others, spoke on condition of anonymity out of fear of retribution. One lawyer said he visited seven schools and police stations last week where “hundreds” of people were held. The other lawyer, citing police sources, said 3,000 people had been arrested in Addis Ababa.

A third lawyer said he encountered several young people last week at police stations and courts in Addis Ababa who had been arrested and accused of having links to the Fano militia.

One man, an ethnic Amhara, said he was picked up off the street last week by plainclothes police officers who overheard him discussing the recent unrest on the phone. He said he was held at a school with hundreds of others before being taken to a police station. He was released on Thursday without any charge.

³¹⁴ CIVICUS Monitor, [Targeting of Journalists and Media Outlets Intensifies as Conflict Escalates](#), 31 May 2023

³¹⁵ German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), [Briefing Notes: Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration](#), 7 August 2023, p. 3

³¹⁶ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, [The human rights impact of the armed conflict on civilians in Amhara Regional State](#), 14 August 2023

Another man said his brother was arrested in Addis Ababa a day before the state of emergency was declared and is being detained at a school with several hundred others. Most of the detainees there are young boys, said the man, who has visited his brother twice.³¹⁷

In August 2023, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) detailed the following with regards to at least eleven journalists arrested by the authorities in Ethiopia in relation to their coverage of conflict and tensions in the Amhara region:

Tallied by RSF since April, the arrests of these 11 journalists in connection with their coverage of the tension follow a previous wave of arrests in May 2022. [...]

Three days after a state of emergency was declared in the Amhara region on 3 August, *Alpha Media* founder and editor Bekalu Alamrew was arrested by the Ethiopian police as he continued his activity of the previous few days, which was to cover clashes between the federal army and local militias. Held ever since, he has not been brought before a judge and has not been told what he is charged with.

Amhara Media Centre YouTube channel director Abay Zewdu has been held ever since 10 August. He was initially arrested in April and spent three weeks in prison in connection with his coverage of political and social issues related to the situation of the Amhara in Ethiopia. Yidnekachew Kebede, the founder of the online *Negari TV* channel, was arrested at his home on the morning of 17 August after covering the recent events in the Amhara region and is currently held at Addis Ababa's 4th police station.

These arrests are part of a broader drive by the authorities to silence critics of the government. Tens of thousands of alleged pro-Amhara activists have been jailed since the start of the year. [...]

In April 2023, the security forces arrested eight journalists who had covered subjects related to the Amhara ethnic group or the conflict in the Amhara region or had denounced government abuses. All, or nearly all, are still being held.

Genet Asmamaw is one of those arrested in April. A reporter for the *Yegna Media* website who covers news developments concerning the Amhara people, she is accused of inciting violence. Her claim that she was mistreated by the police who arrested her on 6 April is corroborated by a recording published by several Ethiopian media outlets.

Meskerem Abera, the founder and editor of *Ethio Nikat Media*, an independent media outlet, has had a similar experience. Arrested at her home on 9 April, she is alleged by the authorities to have funded the Fano, an ethno-nationalist Amhara youth militia. This is the third time she has been detained in a year. Her trial has gone viral throughout the country. When the Ethiopia Insider website published an article on the charges brought against the journalist, the Ethiopian Media Authority – the media regulator – immediately demanded its withdrawal and the police threatened the website with prosecution for publishing false information.

Assefa Adane, the editor of the *Negere Wolkait Media* website, was arrested on 6 April – the same day as Asmamaw – after publishing several reports about the Amhara people. RSF has not been able to confirm whether he is still being held. [...]

Some journalists fled abroad because of threats against them. But even outside the country, journalists have not been safe. Gobeze Sisay, a journalist who helped found *The Voice of Amhara* YouTube channel, was extradited from Djibouti back to Ethiopia on 6 May and was detained in the criminal investigation centre in Addis Ababa. He is accused of terrorism because he allegedly cooperated with extremist forces in the Amhara region with the aim of overthrowing the regional leadership.³¹⁸

³¹⁷ AP News, [Ethiopian airstrike on a town square in the restive Amhara region kills 26, health official says](#), 14 August 2023

³¹⁸ Reporters Without Borders (RSF), [Ethiopia clamps down on reporting in Amhara region](#), 18 August 2023

A press briefing note from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights wrote similarly in August 2023 that:

The wide-ranging state of emergency gives the authorities broad powers nationwide, to arrest suspects without a court order, impose curfews and ban public gatherings.

We have received reports that more than 1,000 people have been arrested across Ethiopia under this law. Many of those detained were reported to be young people of Amhara ethnic origin suspected of being Fano supporters. Since early August, mass house-to-house searches have reportedly been taking place, and at least three Ethiopian journalists covering the situation in the Amhara region have been detained. Detainees have reportedly been placed in improvised detention centres that lack basic amenities.³¹⁹

In September 2023, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reported again on the arrests of journalists of Amhara ethnicity or reporting on Amhara issues outside of the region:

Abay Zewdu, chief editor of the YouTube-based broadcaster Amara Media Center (AMC), was arrested in the capital Addis Ababa on August 10 and transferred to Awash Arba military facility on August 21, according to a report by the online outlet Roha Media, a statement by the statutory watchdog Ethiopia Human Rights Commission (ERHC), and his sister Zoma Zewdu. [...]

Yidnekachew Kebede, founder and editor of YouTube-based outlet Negari TV, was arrested on August 17 and appeared in court in Addis Ababa's Ketema Sub-City on August 21, where the police accused him of aiding "anti-peace elements" and producing video content "with the intent of provoking violence," his lawyer Henok Aklilu told CPJ. On September 1, Yidnekachew returned to court and was released on bail of 6,000 birr (US\$108) without charge, Henok said. [...]

Prior to Abay's detention, AMC had extensively covered the Amhara crisis, including a report in which he described it as a freedom struggle, various interviews with civilians in Amhara state about the impact of the fighting, and interviews with Fano militiamen. [...]

Yidnekachew had published posts on Facebook criticizing the emergency declaration and decrying detention of political activists and civilians. The most recent video published by Yidnekachew's outlet, Negari TV, included an interview with Abay in which they discussed the persecution of ethnic Amharas and the government's failure to protect civilians.³²⁰

A report released by the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia in September 2023 wrote that: "Across the country in 2023, it recorded large-scale arbitrary detentions (especially but not only of Amharas)".³²¹

CIVICUS noted in September 2023 that "On 25th August 2023, police in Addis Ababa detained Fekadu Mahtemework, the editor-in-chief of the weekly Ghion magazine, under the state of emergency decree.

³¹⁹ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), [Ethiopia: Deteriorating human rights situation](#), 29 August 2023

³²⁰ Committee to Protect Journalists, [Three more journalists arrested under Ethiopia's state of emergency](#), 6 September 2023, p. 2

³²¹ UN Human Rights Council - International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia](#), 14 September 2023

Prior to his arrest, the journalist had published reports and a commentary on the conflict in Amhara and the declaration of the state of emergency. On 4th September 2023, Fekadu was released without charge”.³²²

CIVICUS also observed in September 2023 that “The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission has also noted extensive arbitrary arrests in Amhara and the neighbouring Oromia region, and in Addis Ababa, the capital. Those arrested overwhelmingly come from the Amhara ethnic group, the target of previous mass arrest campaigns”.³²³

As of 1 December 2023, the CPJ recorded in their annual census eight journalists imprisoned in Ethiopia, having been arrested during the year after reporting on the Amhara region, including Abay Zewdu of Amara Media Center (AMC), Bekalu Alamrew of Alpha Media, Belay Manaye of Ethio News, Genet Asmamaw of Yegna Media, Gobeze Sisay of The Voice of Amhara, Meskerem Abera of Ethio Nikat Media, and Tewodros Zerfu of Yegna TV and Menelik Television.³²⁴

In March 2024, Human Rights Watch wrote on crackdowns on dissent and increasing arbitrary arrest in Ethiopia, writing that the authorities had recently arrested “Christian Tadele, a member of parliament and critic of the government’s actions in the Amhara region, and Dessalegn Chanie, another outspoken Amhara opposition lawmaker”.³²⁵

Amnesty International called for the release in March 2024 of journalist Belay Manaye:

On 13 November 2023, Belay Manaye, co- founder and presenter of Ethio News, a YouTube based news channel, was arrested in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia’s capital, by a group of uniformed police officers and other security personnel dressed in civilian clothing. To date, he has not been questioned or informed of the reason for his arrest and detention, although it is believed to be in connection to his reporting on the conflict in Amhara. Under the state of emergency, the Ethiopian government has arbitrarily arrested seven other journalists in response to the conflict in the Amhara region and released few. The Ethiopian authorities must immediately and unconditionally release Belay Manaye and the two other journalists who have been detained in connection to their work under the state of emergency.³²⁶

In March 2024, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) wrote that “At least six journalists are currently detained in connection with their coverage of the conflict in the Amhara region, including three who have not been charged, according to RSF’s tally”.³²⁷

³²² CIVICUS Monitor, [Ethiopian Police Crack Down on Opposition Leaders and Protesters](#), 29 September 2023

³²³ CIVICUS Lens, [Ethiopia: No Peace, No Justice](#), 21 September 2023

³²⁴ Committee to Protect Journalists, [8 Journalists Imprisoned in Ethiopia](#), 1 December 2023

³²⁵ Human Rights Watch, [Ethiopia’s Deepening Crackdown on Dissent](#), 4 March 2024

³²⁶ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: Journalist arrested under state of emergency: Belay Manaye](#), 14 March 2024

³²⁷ Reporters Without Borders (RSF), [Ethio News, symbol of press freedom’s persecution in Ethiopia](#), 21 March 2024

b. Violence

In its annual report covering events in 2022, Freedom House noted “In June 2022, police attacked students at Addis Ababa University protesting ongoing ethnic violence against Amhara communities in the Wollega region”.³²⁸

The US Department of State reported in its report on religious freedom in 2022, published in May 2023, that, in Ethiopia:

In January, Oromia police reportedly shot and killed three persons and injured 10 at the Keraneyo Mehanealem Church, an EOTC church in Woybela Mariam in Oromia Region, during an Epiphany parade. Violence between EOTC and non-EOTC followers during the procession was allegedly due to EOTC parishioners’ use of Amhara flags, which do not feature a star, unlike the official flag of Ethiopia. Non-Amhara and non-EOTC adherents viewed starless flags as representing imperialist rule and Amhara ethnonationalism.³²⁹

c. Forced displacement/eviction

This section should be read in conjunction with [VII. Internal displacement of Amharas in Ethiopia](#).

According to an article in the Addis Standard in February 2022 on the displacement of Amhara civilians from western Oromia:

Displaced by months-long violence and persecution, hundreds of civilian members of the Amhara community who lived in Wollega zone, Oromia regional state, are seeking refuge in Addis Abeba; hundreds more have been made to relocate in Arsi zone, Oromia regional state, an investigation by *Addis Standard* reveals.

Since the last week January this year, *Addis Standard* followed the story of members of the Amhara community who sought refuge in two separate churches in the capital Addis Abeba. At the time a group of IDPs was sheltered in St. Estifanos Church in Kirkos sub-city, near the city’s Meskel square, while another group was sheltered in St. Michael’s church in Yeka sub-city. [...]

In the last week of January, a total of 107 IDPs, 30 of which are children arrived at St. Estifanos Church in Addis Abeba, [Deutsche Welle Amharic reported](#). Some of the IDPs who arrived in the capital still don’t know the whereabouts of their families according to the report. The IDPs said that unidentified gunmen were indiscriminately attacking religious institutions and residents. The IDPs complained that their repeated pleas to the local authorities fell on deaf ears.

Another interviewee said the attacks began in June last year and that Oromia special forces and national defense forces had been deployed in August the same year, but were not able to fend off the attacks. “When we saw the massacre of government forces, we couldn’t stay any longer,” he said.

Addis Standard found out that the IDPs did not stay at the church for more than 3 days and their reason for coming to the capital was to “ask the Oromia regional government for a solution.” By the time *Addis*

³²⁸ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2023 – Ethiopia](#), March 2023

³²⁹ US Department of State, [2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Ethiopia](#), 15 May 2023

Standard visited the church, the IDPs were being loaded on a bus escorted by the police and officials from the city administration. The IDPs were very apprehensive about speaking to the media and the police were seen preventing Addis Abeba city residents who brought donations from talking to the IDPs. [...]

Desta, who spoke to *Addis Stanard* days after the 107 IDPs were taken away from St. Estifanos church by buses said that the group of IDPs came to Addis Abeba from the Arsi zone where they were staying since May last year. He introduced himself as the ‘representative’ of the IDPs and recalled that the 107 IDPs from the Arsi zone arrived at Estifanos church, Addis Ababa to report concerns regarding their displacement.

“Our original home places were Homa Galesa and Qeru kebeles in Abe Dunguru Woreda of Horo Guduru Wollega zone. We fled attacks by OLA/*Shanee* in May 2021. Many were killed and injured while properties, including houses and churches, worth millions of ETB were destroyed. We, therefore, fled to the Arsi zone and settled in Merti Woreda. We stayed at St. Medhanielem church in Gologota kebele,” he narrated. [...]

Eyasu Mulugeta, another member of the IDP community said that neither the Oromia regional government nor any other government bodies offered them help for the past 9 months. “Gologota Medhanielem church and the local residents have greatly been helpful in providing food, clothes, and shelter,” he noted. Desta and Eyasu both said that the Oromo Liberation Army (referred to by government officials as *Shanee*) targeted them because of their identities. [...]

Birara Getanew was born in South Gondar *Taj Gayint* woreda and has been a resident of the Sibu Sire woreda in the East Wollega zone since 1985. He remembers his life in Bekojima Kebele as “harmonious”. He explained that ethnically targeted attacks started the previous year. “Most of our relatives were killed, properties were destroyed,” he said.

He went on to narrate an onslaught that started on the dawn of October 16 last year. “The OLA killed sixty-nine people and displaced many others. Some of us came to Addis Abeba on October 20 and ended up here just outside the compound of Yeka Michael Church.” [...]

According to Birara, members of the Amhara community have been displaced from the 22 kebeles of Sibu Sire woreda. He speculated, “The woreda administration has left the area so the regional government must have known about the situation when official communication from the area discontinued.” He also accused local officials of proposing ideas to the community to go back to where they came from. “The area isn’t safe yet. The government knows very well that there is a security threat in the area. It has been a year since the road from Bahir Dar to Nekemt was blocked,” he continued, “We’re not going back home. Our properties and houses were turned to ashes. We’ve lost many of our loved ones. There are still many people being kidnapped. We demand a temporary shelter here in Addis Abeba until things get back to normal.”³³⁰

The EPO explained in March 2022 with reference to OLF-Shane, that “As part of the conflict, thousands of ethnic Amhara civilians have been killed and displaced by attacks carried out by the group. As instability has increased, Amhara militias formed in the Oromia region have fought back against attempts at displacement, attacking ethnic Oromo residents and destroying housing”.³³¹ For further information, see section [II. a. Clashes along the Oromia border](#).

Following the June 2022 massacre in Tole, Oromia, a press release by OHCHR stated that:

³³⁰ Addis Standard, [In-depth analysis: Displaced by months-long violence, hundreds of Amhara community members from western Oromia seek refuge in Addis Abeba and Arsi zone](#), 21 February 2022

³³¹ Ethiopian Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: January 2022](#), 2 March 2022

The UN Human Rights Office has spoken to witnesses who report that at around 9am local time on 18 June a group of armed individuals descended on the village of Tole, with a predominantly Amhara population, and reportedly began shooting randomly, leaving hundreds dead - most of them women and children – and forcing at least 2,000 others to flee from their homes. The armed individuals also reportedly burned down several houses during the four-hour assault.

“I am horrified by the senseless killing as well as the forced displacement of the local population in the attack on Tole village,” Bachelet said.³³²

The Africa Report reported in June 2022, that “local officials said that violence in Oromia’s East Wellega zone had uprooted close to 130,000 people”.³³³

BBC News reported in December 2022 that “To compound the crisis, the [OLA] rebels have also been accused of killing hundreds of civilians - many of them farmers - from the Amhara ethnic group, which fears that the OLA wants to drive them out of Oromia, with thousands now living in camps in Amhara”.³³⁴

VI. Treatment of Amharas by non-state actors outside of the Amhara region

The report submitted to the UN Human Rights Committee in March 2022 by the NGO Freedom of Conscience (CAP) detailing incidents targeting the Amhara community in 2022, including:

WERABE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS UNDER ATTACK (MARCH - APRIL 2022)

[...] On April 5, Werabe University students protested to denounce the religiously motivated attack on Christian students.

On April 28, Christian students were attacked and murdered by religious extremists in Werabe, Silte zone. Over 30 Amhara students were severely injured and some of them were in life threatening condition. Three others lost their life on the spot in the attack.³³⁵

The EPO reported on events in June 2022, stating that: “On 27 June, OLF-Shane and GLF [Gambela Liberation Front] militants also raided two farm camps owned by ethnic Amhara investors in Mera kebele in Itang special woreda in Gambela region and abducted 80 daily wage laborers”.³³⁶

In August 2023, ACLED produced a fact sheet on the crisis for Amhara region and Amharan civilians across Ethiopia, stating that:

³³² UN OHCHR, [Bachelet urges prompt investigation into killings in western Ethiopia](#), 23 June 2022

³³³ The Africa Report, [Ethiopia: Inside the Oromia massacre – ‘There were corpses everywhere’](#), 23 June 2022

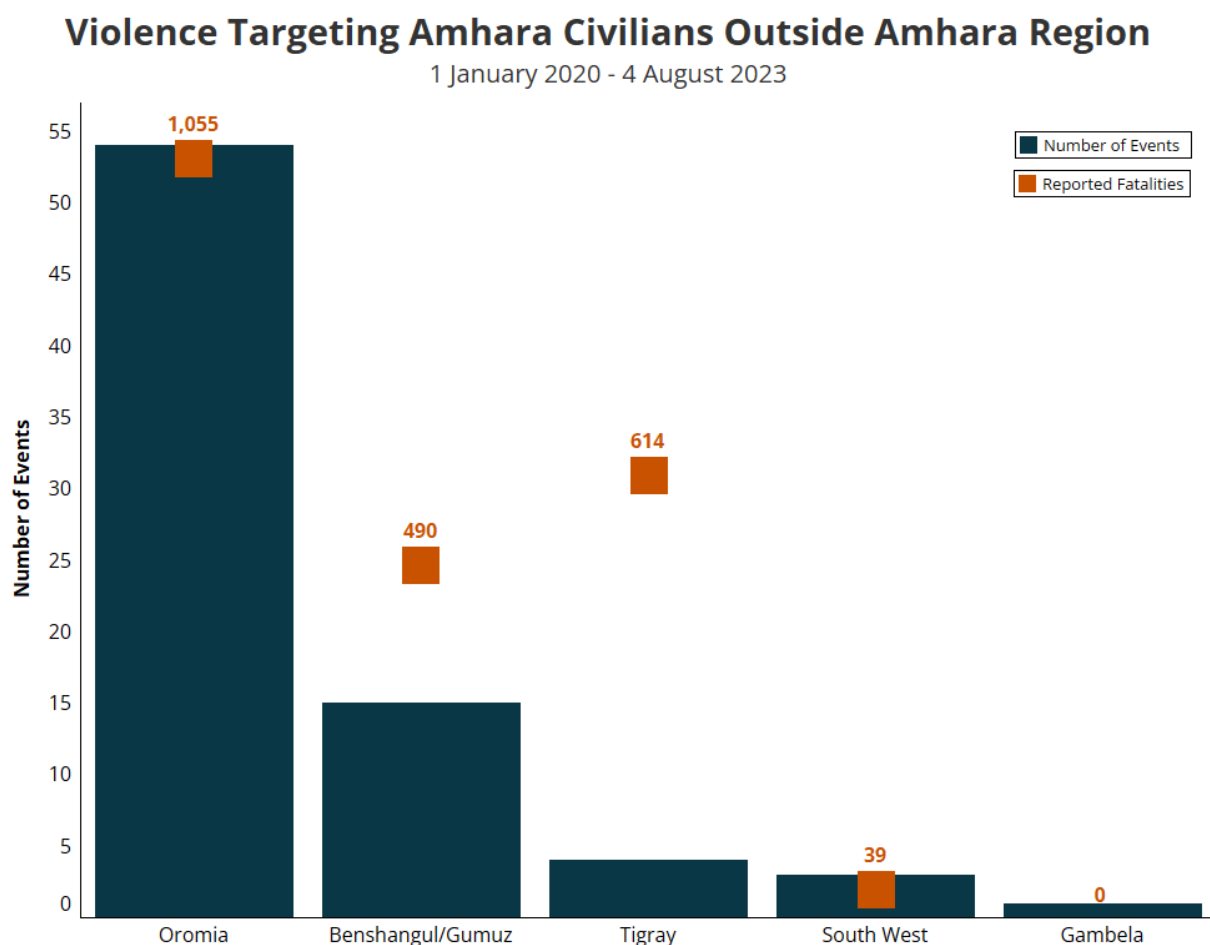
³³⁴ BBC News, [Ethiopia’s PM sees OLA rebellion grow in his own backyard](#), 18 December 2022

³³⁵ Freedom of Conscience (CAP, Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience), [Statement submitted 136th session Human Rights Committee \(10 Oct 2022 - 04 Nov 2022\) on Ethiopia: Incidents targeting the Amhara community in 2022](#), March 2022, p. 1

³³⁶ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: June 2022](#), 26 July 2022

The second issue is the overall state of security for Amhara communities in Ethiopia. Government forces did not consistently defend against the TPLF advance in the region during the northern conflict in 2021 and 2022 as the ENDF withdrew from towns and cities in Amhara and Afar. Amhara civilians faced abuses by TPLF forces during the war, and Amhara settlers also faced intermittent violence in Oromia and Benshangul/Gumuz regions (*see graph below*).³³⁷

The report also produced the following graph on violence targeting Amhara civilians outside of the Amhara region between January 2020 and August 2023 but it didn't indicate the perpetrators of violence³³⁸:



The International Crisis Group explained in a November 2023 report that:

The rebels' hit-and-run tactics already suggest that they will present a challenge for the authorities going forward; whether they will coalesce into something more formidable is uncertain. What does seem clear

³³⁷ ACLED, [Fact Sheet: Crisis in Ethiopia's Amhara Region](#), 10 August 2023

³³⁸ ACLED, [Fact Sheet: Crisis in Ethiopia's Amhara Region](#), 10 August 2023

is that popular support for the rebels is increasing.³³⁹ Many see the militias as needed for communal defence, as Oromo militants ambush and kidnap Amhara near Addis Ababa, some of whom are merchants headed to the capital on business. Amhara traders worry that these attacks have made travel unsafe amid a deepening economic crisis.³⁴⁰

³⁴ “Farmers in Amhara region face setback as fertiliser distribution disruptions compound amidst reignited conflict”, Addis Standard, 31 August 2023.

The Congressional Research Service noted in its January 2024 report on Ethiopia that “The government, rebels, and members of the Amhara, Oromo, and Gumuz ethnic communities have traded allegations over who is responsible. Some attacks seem to target ethnic Amhara; Amhara militia have also been accused of attacks”.³⁴⁰

The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect noted in its February 2024 backgrounder on Ethiopia that “Inter-communal and inter-religious violence, particularly between the Amhara and Oromo communities, as well as regional border disputes in other parts of Ethiopia continue. Oromia regional security forces, the ENDF and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) armed group have committed enforced disappearances and attacks on civilians, including ethnic Amharas”.³⁴¹

a. Benishangul-Gumuz

An atrocity alert from the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect in March 2022 explained that:

Inter-communal tensions and ethnically-motivated attacks have been rising throughout Ethiopia since 2018, particularly in Metekel Zone. Cycles of ethnic violence in Metekel Zone have resulted in at least 1,000 fatalities since 2018, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project. Unnamed armed groups typically perpetrate the attacks, however, local ethnic Gumuz militias and other ethnic militias have at times been responsible. Ethnic Amhara and Agew civilians are frequently targeted, as well as indigenous Shinasha people. Responding to the recurrent violence, the federal government declared a state of emergency in Metekel Zone on 23 January and took over security in the area.³⁴²

An analysis of conflict in Ethiopia’s Benishangul-Gumuz regional state, particularly Metekel zone, covering May to November 2022, by the Peace Research Facility of the Rift Valley Institute (RVI), noted that:

- In the first half of 2022, fighting between local armed groups and regional and federal forces and allied militias escalated. This included the targeting of civilian populations, including so-called non-indigenous

³³⁹ International Crisis Group, [Ethiopia’s Ominous New War in Amhara](#), 16 November 2023

³⁴⁰ Congressional Research Service, [Ethiopia: In Brief](#), 23 January 2024

³⁴¹ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Populations at Risk: Ethiopia](#), 29 February 2024, *Background*

³⁴² Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Atrocity Alert No. 292: Ukraine, Sudan/South Sudan and Ethiopia](#), 16 March 2022

communities – mainly Amhara and Oromo – by the BPLA [Benishangul People's Liberation Army] and Gumuz militias, and indigenous populations (mostly Gumuz, Berta and Shinasha) by OLA and Amhara Fano militias.

- The root causes of the conflict in the region, which has affected all three of its zones (Metekel, Assosa and Kamashi), relates to the threat that indigenous communities – principally Gumuz and Berta – have felt from Amhara and Oromo incomers to the region, particularly regarding their political rights under the ethnic-federal system. [...]

The OLA has often targeted the Shinasha and Amhara communities as there is a strong feeling among the Oromo that the deployment of Amhara special forces and Fano militias was supported by the Shinasha elite and politicians in Benishangul-Gumuz.³⁴³

The EPO reported on events in June 2022, stating that the Gimbi massacre against ethnic Amhara civilians “also spread to the nearby Sene kebele in Bolo Jingafoy (Miziga) woreda in Kamashi zone in Benshangul/Gumuz region where hundreds of civilians were reported killed”.³⁴⁴

In January 2023, Human Rights Watch noted the following with regards to attacks against Amharas in Oromia “On June 18, heavily armed gunmen killed about 400 Amhara civilians, many women and children and destroyed homes and businesses in villages in West Wellega Zone, in Oromia, and in neighboring Benishangul-Gumuz region”.³⁴⁵

The February 2023 monthly update from the EPO explained that:

Ethnic Amharas who have settled in Benshangul/Gumuz’s Metekel zone are politically marginalized in Benshangul/Gumuz region due to the Ethiopian constitution’s ethno-federalist tenets.²⁸ While violence targeting ethnic Amhara civilians in Benshangul/Gumuz is well-documented by Amharic media outlets in the country, violence targeting members of Indigenous groups is not well-covered in national media, creating an imbalance of reporting and greater potential for bias.³⁴⁶

²⁸ Tsegaye Birhanu, ‘Ethiopia: Is Metekel the next battleground after Tigray,’ *Awash Post*, 24 August 2021

The May 2023 monthly update from the EPO reported electoral candidates from the National Movement of the Amhara (NAMA) candidates being shot and killed in Metekel (Benshangul/Gumuz).³⁴⁷

b. Oromia

³⁴³ Peace Research Facility and Rift Valley Institute (RVI), [Conflict Trend Analysis: Benishangul-Gumuz](#), December 2022, pp. 1 and 5-6

³⁴⁴ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: June 2022](#), 26 July 2022

³⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2023: Events of 2022 - Ethiopia](#), 12 January 2023

³⁴⁶ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO February 2023 Monthly: Religious Disputes and Government Involvement in Ethiopia](#), 8 March 2023

³⁴⁷ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO May 2023 Monthly: Violence Returns to Oromia Despite Attempted Peace Talks](#), 22 June 2023

For information specific to the massacres in Oromia see section [VI b. i. Gimbi massacre and VI.b.ii. Kellem Wollega massacre](#).

This section should also be read against section [II. a. Clashes along the Oromia border](#).

According to the EPO's monthly report for March 2022, "On 17 March, the OLF-Shane killed eight Amhara civilians, including a priest, in Endode kebele Gida Ayana woreda in East Wollega zone".³⁴⁸

The EPO noted in June 2022 that "Hundreds of Orthodox Christians – most of whom are ethnic Amharas – have been killed in rural areas of Oromia region during attacks by communal militias and the OLF-Shane since 2019".³⁴⁹

The EPO reported on events in June 2022, assessing that:

From April 2018 to June 2022, out of 391 recorded violence against civilians events in Oromia region, the OLF-Shane was involved in 112 events, with over 1,000 reported fatalities. One-third of these attacks targeted Amhara civilians resulting in around 750 reported fatalities – nearly 70% of all reported fatalities from violence against civilians involving the OLF-Shane. The highest numbers of deaths were recorded in West Wollega, East Wollega, and Horo Guduru Wollega zones, respectively. These three zones host large communities of ethnic Amharas who were resettled to these areas from Wello areas of Amhara region during the 1980s drought in Ethiopia (Kassa Belay, 2004; Dessalegn Rahmato, 2003). Thousands of people have been internally displaced from these zones since 2018 because of frequent attacks. Many are still trapped within these zones as the roads are closed due to the ongoing clashes. Reports indicate that thousands of ethnic Amhara internally displaced persons (IDPs) from western Oromia are taking refuge in Amhara region. For instance, more than 29,000 IDPs from western Oromia were reported to be taking shelter in South Wello zone (Bisrat Radio, 29 March 2022).³⁵⁰

A report by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to the UN Human Rights Committee on the Implementation of the Provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in September 2022 referred to the "death of 3 Amharas by the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA- aka Shane) on August 29, 2022, at Horo Gudru Wollega zone".³⁵¹

The weekly summary by the Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO) for 24-30 September 2022 noted that:

OLF-Shane attacks on ethnic Amhara civilians also spread to Amuru woreda on 25 September 2022 (DW Amharic, 28 September 2022). Many people, including those who fled to other areas, stated that the OLF-Shane is attacking ethnic Amhara civilians in this woreda and the surrounding Amuru woreda. The current estimate is that hundreds of civilians have been killed in these attacks (Amhara Media Corporation, 29

³⁴⁸ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: March 2022](#), 23 April 2022

³⁴⁹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: April-May 2022](#), 15 June 2022

³⁵⁰ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: June 2022](#), 26 July 2022

³⁵¹ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), [Report to the United Nations Human Rights Committee on the Implementation of the Provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), 23 September 2022, p.

September 2022; DW Amharic, 29 September 2022; DW Amharic, 28 September 2022). The OLF-Shane denied involvement in these incidents (BBC Afaan Oromoo, 3 October 2022). [...]

For the past three years, civilians have been victims of attacks by the OLF-Shane in all Wollega areas – East Wollega, West Wollega, and Horo Guduru Wollega zones [...]. Amhara civilians are specifically targeted. These three zones host large communities of ethnic Amharas who were resettled to these areas from Wello areas of Amhara region during the 1980s drought in Ethiopia (Kassa Belay, 2004; Dessalegn Rahmato, 2003). ACLED data show that such attacks became more frequent throughout 2021 and 2022. Tensions between the government and Amhara communities are rising due to the failure of the government to protect civilians in these areas.³⁵²

Africa Confidential noted in November 2022 that “In West Shoa and Eastern Wollega, west of Addis Ababa, clashes between Oromos and Amharas, and massacres of civilians, have become frequent”.³⁵³

The EPO reported in early November 2022 that “On 4 November, the ethnic Amhara residents of Tole kebele in Gimbi woreda reportedly left the area in fear of being attacked by the OLF-Shane again when government forces left the area. According to the Ethiopian Human Rights Council, more than 1,800 households fled this area with the escort of the federal police (Borkena, 11 November 2022)”.³⁵⁴

The EPO reported in late November 2022 on violence in East Wollega zone in Oromia:

In Kiremu woreda in East Wollega zone of Oromia region, four days of violence spanning from 18 November to 21 November were reported, with a high number of fatalities confirmed by multiple sources. According to reports, armed clashes began on 18 November when Amhara ethnic militias (identified as Fano) ambushed Oromia regional special forces in Tenkara area of the woreda. The regional special forces were transporting Amhara prisoners accused of cattle raiding and other criminal activities to Nekemte town. According to one Amhara witness interviewed by Deutsche Welle (DW) Amharic, the ethnic Amharas residing in this area did not trust the security forces because, reportedly, the security forces had released Oromo prisoners who were accused of similar crimes and were instead only transporting ethnic Amhara prisoners to Nekemte. Clashes continued until 21 November. More than 50 people, including government security forces, were reported killed due to these armed clashes. Thousands of Amharas fled the area to the neighboring Amhara region and accused government forces of ethnic-based attacks (DW Amharic, 24 November 2022).

The recent violence in Kiremu, East Wollega zone, has sparked a number of narratives. According to the Amhara Association of America (AAA), on 18 November, Oromia regional special forces shot and killed 13 unarmed civilians who were demanding that ethnic Amhara prisoners be prosecuted at the woreda level and not transferred to Nekemte. Violence continued for a second day, when Oromia special forces shot and killed at least eight ethnic Amhara civilians on the morning of 19 November (AAA, 20 November 2022). The AAA makes no mention of armed clashes or Fano militias.³⁵⁵

³⁵² ACLED (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project), EPO (Ethiopia Peace Observatory) Weekly: 24-30 September 2022, 15 October 2022

³⁵³ Africa Confidential, Addis Ababa and Tigray sign an uneasy truce, 3 November 2022

³⁵⁴ ACLED (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project), EPO (Ethiopia Peace Observatory) Weekly: 5-11 November 2022, 15 November 2022

³⁵⁵ ACLED (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project), EPO (Ethiopia Peace Observatory) Weekly: 19-25 November 2022, 29 November 2022

It reported again in December 2022 that:

Fighting was reported in Gutin town in East Wollega zone, where Amhara ethnic militias clashed with Oromia regional special forces on 3 and 4 December. At least 34 people were reportedly killed during the clashes. The number of fatalities is likely much higher. Local Amhara residents accused the members of Oromia regional special forces of initiating the attack on Amhara ethnic militias, which were formed with the government's authorization to protect the local Amhara community. The Oromo residents of Gutin town and the local officials blame the Amhara ethnic militias, identifying them as Fano, for initiating the new round of violence in Gutin (VOA Amharic, 7 December 2022; BBC Amharic, 5 December 2022; DW Amharic, 6 December 2022). The federal government deployed the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) to the town on 5 December to calm the situation (DW Amharic, 6 December 2022). Nonetheless, clashes reportedly reignited between Oromo regional special forces and Amhara militias in the town on 8 December.

Violence also continued in Kiremu woreda in East Wollega zone, located 70 kilometers to the north of Gutin, with the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane reportedly attacking Amhara civilians in Haro Addis Alem Endo town. OLF-Shane Spokesperson Odaa Tarbii denied the accusation that OLF-Shane forces were attacking civilians (VOA Amharic, 7 December 2022). The group reportedly carried out another attack targeting Amhara civilians in Okey (Bokeye) in the same *woreda* [...].

Due to the intensified violence in the region, thousands of people, both ethnic Amhara and Oromo civilians, have been internally displaced.³⁵⁶

With reference to a report on abuses in the Oromia region by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission in early December 2022, the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect wrote in December 2022 that:

The report found that hundreds of civilians have been killed and at least 100,000 displaced over the last five months amidst fighting between different configurations of armed groups, including the Oromo Liberation army (OLA) – an ethnic Oromo armed group – and ethnic Amhara “Fano” militias, with federal and Oromia regional security forces. In some rural areas, villages and towns have been partially or completely destroyed. The report determined that government forces were responsible for air strikes on civilian areas and extrajudicial killings of civilians perceived to be supportive of armed groups. Armed groups also targeted populations on the basis of their ethnicity. [...]

From 29-31 August at least 60 people were killed in ethnic-based attacks and reprisals between ethnic Amhara and Oromo around the town of Obora.³⁵⁷

With relation to hostilities in Oromia, the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) stated in its December 2022 briefing notes on Ethiopia that “The Oromo Liberation Front (OLA-Shane)

³⁵⁶ ACLED (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project), [EPO \(Ethiopia Peace Observatory\) Weekly: 3-9 December 2022](#), 14 December 2022

³⁵⁷ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Atrocity Alert No. 329: Nigeria, Myanmar \(Burma\) and Ethiopia](#), 14 December 2022

are alleged to be targeting Amharic civilians in attacks. OLA-Shane representatives have rejected these accusations”.³⁵⁸

In its annual report on the human rights situation in 2022 Human Rights Watch noted that: “Fighting intensified between Ethiopian government forces and the OLA [Oromo Liberation Army] in early November, with civilian casualties reported due to fighting and airstrikes. In western Oromia there were reports of fighters from the Amhara region operating in Zone. The UN reported that the violence in the area led to a drastic increase in internal displacement and the destruction of infrastructure”.³⁵⁹

Amnesty International recorded in its annual report covering human rights in Ethiopia in 2022 that:

On 30 and 31 August, Amhara Fano forces attacked Agamsa, a town in Horo Guduru, killing at least 60 Oromo civilians. In September, hundreds of Oromo and Amhara civilians of three districts in Horo Guduru were killed, allegedly in retaliatory attacks, again by Amhara Fano militias and OLA forces.³⁶⁰

An analysis of conflict in Western Oromia state, covering July to December 2022, by the Peace Research Facility of the Rift Valley Institute (RVI), indicated the following happened in September to December 2022: “Attacks on civilians following OLA take-over of Jardega Jarte; killings of Amharas and Oromoa blamed on OLA and Fanos”.³⁶¹ The same source gave the following information, although not clearly differentiating between Amhara and Oromo civilians:

Amhara and Oromo civilians have repeatedly been subject to ethnic attacks, some of which can be characterized as massacres. The most recent incidents in the zone include:

- 15 October: A massacre in Kiremu district, where dozens of residents were reportedly killed in four villages (Gudina Jiregna, Cheffe Soruma, Burka Soruma and Nachino), and scores fled from nineteen kebeles fearing further attacks,
- 6 November: An evangelical church in Galo, Sasiga of East Wollega reported that more than ten of its members were killed on their way to prayer on Sunday.
- Early December 2022: Fighting in Anger Gute, Gutin (Gidda woreda) claimed hundreds of lives and caused severe property destruction, with both Amhara and Oromo activists accusing each side – OLA ‘Shene’ or Amhara ‘Fanos’ – of the killings, before regional and federal troops arrived.³⁶²

Freedom House’s annual report on Ethiopia, covering 2022, observed that: “Oromo militants also targeted Amhara civilians in Oromia”.³⁶³

³⁵⁸ German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), [Briefing Notes: Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration](#), 19 December 2022, p. 3

³⁵⁹ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2023: Events of 2022 - Ethiopia](#), 12 January 2023

³⁶⁰ Amnesty International, [Amnesty International Report 2022/23: The State of the World's Human Rights - Ethiopia 2022](#), 27 March 2023

³⁶¹ Peace Research Facility and Rift Valley Institute (RVI), [Conflict Trend Analysis: Western Oromia](#), March 2023, p. 4

³⁶² Peace Research Facility and Rift Valley Institute (RVI), [Conflict Trend Analysis: Western Oromia](#), March 2023, p. 9

³⁶³ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2023 - Ethiopia](#), 13 April 2023

The EU's 2023 annual report on human rights and democracy, covering 2022, commented on Ethiopia that: "There are reports of significant human rights violations by all parties, not least the targeting by the OLA of Amharic speakers (or perceived Amharic speakers) living in the Oromia region".³⁶⁴

The EPO reported in January 2023 that:

Throughout December, political violence continued at elevated levels in Oromia region, with areas inhabited by ethnic Amhara residents the most affected by violence and displacement. [...]

In Oromia, the OLF [Oromo Liberation Front]-Shane was involved in nine violence against civilian events while Amhara ethnic militias and Fano militias were involved in seven. Some Amharas in Kiremu and Angar Gutin areas in East Wollega zone accused the OLF-Shane and Oromia regional special forces of targeting ethnic Amhara civilians, while some Oromos accused Amhara and Fano militias of attacking ethnic Oromo civilians.¹ [...]

Conflict in Angar Gutin and Kiremu areas of Oromia region is rooted in territorial disputes that go back decades. Spontaneous and government-sponsored immigration of Amhara farmers seeking better land and employment opportunities led to a large population of ethnic Amharas being settled in the area, which brought on intermittent conflicts with their ethnic Oromo neighbors over land resources.² Clashes in the area have renewed since April 2021, with fighting escalating in November and December 2022. As a result, people displaced by the violence fled to nearby towns in Amhara, Oromia, and Benshangul/Gumuz, putting pressure on local resources. As of 30 December, up to 14,000 new internally displaced people had arrived in Amhara region from Oromia as a result of the ongoing violence in Oromia.³³⁶⁵

¹ VOA Amharic, 7 December 2022; BBC Amharic, 5 December 2022; DW Amharic, 5 December 2022

² Teferra, 18 May 2010

³ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 5 January 2023

The Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) for 2024, covering the period from 1 February 2021 to 31 January 2023, stated that "millions of ethnic Amhara civilians have fled from the Oromia region to the Amhara region due to ethnic-based violence in the former".³⁶⁶ It noted further that "Ethnic Amhara residing in the Oromia region, the Benshangul/Gumuz region and parts of Ethiopia's south encounter widespread violence"³⁶⁷ and that "Violence in the Oromia region, which targets ethnic Amhara, occurs at regular intervals, with little mitigating action taken by local officials".³⁶⁸ The report added that "Local governments regularly face accusations of either ignoring or participating in violence against minority residents, while also neglecting the needs of impoverished individuals within these communities".³⁶⁹

The New Humanitarian observed in a January 2023 article on conflict in Oromia that:

³⁶⁴ European Union, EEAS - European External Action Service, [EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World: 2022 Country Updates](#), 31 July 2023, p. 108

³⁶⁵ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO December 2022 Monthly: Conflict Expands in Oromia Region](#), 12 January 2023

³⁶⁶ Bertelsmann Stiftung, [BTI 2024 Country Report Ethiopia](#), 19 March 2024, p. 17

³⁶⁷ Bertelsmann Stiftung, [BTI 2024 Country Report Ethiopia](#), 19 March 2024, p. 27

³⁶⁸ Bertelsmann Stiftung, [BTI 2024 Country Report Ethiopia](#), 19 March 2024, pp. 37-38

³⁶⁹ Bertelsmann Stiftung, [BTI 2024 Country Report Ethiopia](#), 19 March 2024 p.27

The OLA are accused of atrocities too. The Amhara Association of America (AAA), an advocacy group, claims the rebels, Oromo youth, and Oromia security forces killed 27 Amhara civilians in Kिरामु between late November and mid-December.

Overall, the AAA estimates that at least 1,566 Amhara civilians were killed in Oromia last year. This includes a massacre in Gimbi district in June that saw Oromo-speaking gunmen – identified by residents as OLA – kill hundreds of Amharas.³⁷⁰

The weekly summary by the EPO for 7-13 January 2023 stated that “On 11 January, an unidentified armed group conducted attacks on civilians, targeting mostly Amhara civilians, in Haro Addis Alem area in Kiremu woreda”.³⁷¹

The February 2023 monthly update from the EPO listed the following violent events for that month:

2 February: The OLF-Shane attacks IDP centers in ano town in East Wollega zone, Oromia, reportedly killing at least 50 people. Security forces, assumed to be ENDF members, kill eight youths in Ano town in East Wollega zone, Oromia.

4 February At least eight people are killed due to violence in connection with the EOTC dispute in Shashemene town, Oromia. [...]

7 February The OLF-Shane attacks civilians and kills eight ethnic Amhara civilians in Genet sefer in Golgota Gebere Mahiber, Oromia.³⁷²

The May 2023 monthly update from the EPO reported that “Several targeted killings of candidates have been reported,” documenting that Ethiopian Citizens for Social Justice (EZEMA) candidates were killed in Bishoftu city (Oromia) and National Movement of the Amhara (NAMA) candidates shot and killed in Metekel (Benshangul/Gumuz).³⁷³

The New Humanitarian noted in an August 2023 article that “In western Oromia, Amhara farmers have been massacred by the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), which says it is fighting for greater autonomy for the Oromo”.³⁷⁴ Human Rights Watch noted in its annual 2023 report, that “Reports of attacks against the population in Oromia, including Oromo and Amhara communities, continued through August”.³⁷⁵

³⁷⁰ The New Humanitarian, [As violence subsides in Tigray, Ethiopia's Oromia conflict flares](#), 12 January 2023

³⁷¹ ACLED (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project), [EPO \(Ethiopia Peace Observatory\) Weekly: 7-13 January 2023](#), 17 January 2023

³⁷² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO February 2023 Monthly: Religious Disputes and Government Involvement in Ethiopia](#), 8 March 2023

³⁷³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO May 2023 Monthly: Violence Returns to Oromia Despite Attempted Peace Talks](#), 22 June 2023

³⁷⁴ The New Humanitarian, [Ethiopia shaken by a new and growing rebellion in Amhara](#), 15 August 2023

³⁷⁵ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2024: Events of 2023 - Ethiopia](#), 11 January 2024

BBC News reported in August 2023 that “The OLA has been accused of widespread atrocities against Amharas in Oromia, raising fears that it wants to drive them out of the region. The OLA denies targeting Amharas”.³⁷⁶

The UN International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia released an analysis in October 2023 on the risk of further atrocities in Ethiopia, writing that:

Other non-state armed groups in Ethiopia also have a record of committing serious violations. This includes Tigray forces, who are responsible for war crimes against Amhara and Afar civilians during the conflict. The Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), its affiliates and splinter groups, as well as *fano* militia have also been implicated in serious abuses against Amhara and Oromo women, men and children in Oromia and Amhara regions.

[...] the Commission is concerned about the presence of the Oromo Liberation Army, its affiliates and splinter groups, as well as *fano* militia in Oromia and Amhara regions, where they are implicated in attacks on Amhara and Oromo communities, respectively. The Commission has documented killings, rape and sexual violence, looting and destruction of property leading to large-scale displacement. Their ongoing presence means that internally displaced persons are often fearful of returning to their homes. The situation is exacerbated by a lack of trust in the ability and willingness of Government institutions to protect returning communities.³⁷⁷

In another October 2023 report, the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia stated that:

The Commission spoke to direct witnesses of attacks against Amhara communities in Horo Guduru Wollega, West Wollega, East Wollega, and West Shewa zones in Oromia, who told the Commission that members of armed groups, who they identified as OLA, killed ethnic Amhara civilians, committed rape and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls, destroyed property, and looted houses between November 2020 and February 2023. [...]

The accounts collected by the Commission include killings, burning of homes and looting of property. The Commission is concerned that in several instances, government or regional security forces withdrew from an area just prior to attacks, leaving communities – both Amhara and Oromo – unprotected.³⁷⁸

In November 2023, the International Crisis Group, in a report on conflict in the Amhara region, wrote that: “today many Amhara assert that Abiy (himself from Oromia) is allowing Oromo militants to massacre Amhara civilians in Oromia”.³⁷⁹

The EPO reported at the beginning of December 2023 the following events in November:

³⁷⁶ BBC News, [Why Ethiopia's Amhara militiamen are battling the army](#), 16 August 2023

³⁷⁷ UN Human Rights Council - International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [The acute risk of further atrocity crimes in Ethiopia: an analysis](#), 3 October 2023, pp. 3 and 5

³⁷⁸ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Comprehensive investigative findings and legal determinations](#), 13 October 2023, paragraphs 396 and 398

³⁷⁹ International Crisis Group, [Ethiopia's Ominous New War in Amhara](#), 16 November 2023

Between 24 and 27 November, unidentified armed men killed at least 36 civilians in Lemu and Sole Digalu kebeles in Shirka woreda in Arsi zone.³⁸⁰ The victims were primarily Orthodox Christians and ethnic Amhara. The head of the Oromia Communication Bureau blamed the attacks on the OLA/OLF-Shane, a claim denied by the spokesperson of the OLA/OLF-Shane.³⁸¹ In a statement, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church denounced the killings and expressed frustration over “silence by the Assembly of Ethiopian Religious Institutions” regarding the attacks.³⁸² The Assembly was established to advocate for all religious institutions and prevent attacks against them. Similarly, in Kellem Wollega zone, Gidami woreda, the bodies of nine members of Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus were found after their reported abduction by an unidentified armed group three days earlier. Some sources reported allegations that the ENDF was responsible for the killings in Gidami woreda.³⁸³ In the meantime, the Evangelical Church accused an unidentified group of committing these killings and asked the government to bring the perpetrators to justice.³⁸⁴

³⁸⁰ Reuters, ‘Ethiopia’s Oromiya region accuses OLA rebels of killing ‘many’ people,’ 2 December 2023

³⁸¹ Addis Standard, ‘News: 45 believers killed in two separate attacks in Arsi and Kellem Wollega zones, Oromia region,’ 1 December 2023

³⁸² DW Amharic, ‘Tuesday’s December 5, 2023 World News,’ 5 December 2023

³⁸³ Addis Standard, ‘News: 45 believers killed in two separate attacks in Arsi and Kellem Wollega zones, Oromia region,’ 1 December 2023

³⁸⁴ Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, ‘A statement from the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus regarding the killing of its members in Gidami woreda in Kellem Wollega zone,’ 5 December 2023

The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect noted in its February 2024 backgrounder on Ethiopia that “Amharas in Oromia are also particularly vulnerable to attacks by the OLA. The targeting of civilians based on their identity may amount to crimes against humanity.”³⁸¹

The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect noted in its February 2024 backgrounder on Ethiopia that “Inter-communal and inter-religious violence, particularly between the Amhara and Oromo communities, as well as regional border disputes in other parts of Ethiopia continue. Oromia regional security forces, the ENDF and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) armed group have committed enforced disappearances and attacks on civilians, including ethnic Amharas.”³⁸² The piece added: “Civilians in Oromia remain at heightened risk of atrocities due to fighting between OLA militants and the ENDF. Amharas in Oromia are also particularly vulnerable to attacks by the OLA.”³⁸³

i. Massacres

1. Gimbi massacre – June 2022

Following the massacre in Tole, Oromia, a press release by OHCHR stated that:

³⁸⁰ Ethiopian Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 25 November-1 December 2023](#), 6 December 2023

³⁸¹ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Populations at Risk: Ethiopia](#), 29 February 2024, *Background*

³⁸² Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Populations at Risk: Ethiopia](#), 29 February 2024, *Background*

³⁸³ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Populations at Risk: Ethiopia](#), 29 February 2024, *Background*

The UN Human Rights Office has spoken to witnesses who report that at around 9am local time on 18 June a group of armed individuals descended on the village of Tole, with a predominantly Amhara population, and reportedly began shooting randomly, leaving hundreds dead - most of them women and children – and forcing at least 2,000 others to flee from their homes. The armed individuals also reportedly burned down several houses during the four-hour assault.

“I am horrified by the senseless killing as well as the forced displacement of the local population in the attack on Tole village,” Bachelet said. [...]

An unspecified number of people are reported to have been abducted during the attack and their whereabouts remain unknown.³⁸⁴

The EPO reported in June 2022 on the Tole massacre:

On 18 June, members of the OLF-Shane were accused of shooting and killing at least 200 people, mostly ethnic Amharas, in Gutu, Cherkosa, Silsaw, Begene, Chakaw sefer, and Hayaew areas in Tole kebele in Gimbi woreda in West Wollega zone, which lies along the A4 highway connecting Gimbi and Nekemte towns ([AP News, 19 June 2022](#)). According to more recent reports, the attack also spread to the nearby Se kebele in Bolo Jingafof (Miziga) woreda in Kamashi zone in Benshangul/Gumuz region ([DW Amharic, 27 June 2022](#)). More than 3,000 people were internally displaced as a result, and have taken shelter in Arjo Gutedu and Ephrem towns ([VOA Amharic, 25 June 2022](#); [DW Amharic, 20 June 2022](#)). The West Wollega Zone Administration and Security Office stated that an unidentified number of people suspected of providing information to the rebel group and guiding the group to conduct the attack were arrested and are under investigation ([VOA Amharic, 25 June 2022](#)).

Some reports indicate that the number of fatalities may total over 500 and that the victims included women and children. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) pointed out that clashes between government forces and OLF-Shane militants had resulted in “severe casualties, injuries, and damage to property,” and called on the government to take the necessary precautions to prevent further attacks against civilians ([EHRC, 19 June 2022](#)). OLF-Shane’s official Spokesperson, Odaa Tarbii, denied the involvement of OLF-Shane forces and called for “an independent investigation” ([OLA Public Relations, 20 June 2022](#)). Accusations have also been levelled against the government. According to the Amhara Association of America (AAA), the recent attacks occurred with the support of the Oromia region government officials ([Al Jazeera, 25 June 2022](#)).

Although details about the attack are still under investigation, it is important to note that the massacre occurred in the context of intensified fighting between government and OLF-Shane forces, including on the day of the incident ([AP News, 19 June 2022](#)). A few days before the Tole attack, OLF-Shane forces attacked Gimbi town and its environs as part of a coordinated show of strength that also included attacks on Gambela and Dembi Dolo cities ([Addis Standard, 14 June 2022](#)). These are the first major attacks by the group on important urban centers. Intensified clashes between government and OLF-Shane forces were also reported in Tole shortly before the attack ([AP News, 25 June 2022](#)). In a speech published by BBC Afan Oromo, OLF-Shane Commander-in-Chief, Jaal Marroo, indicated that his forces had attacked these areas to disprove the government’s claim that it had neutralized the OLF-Shane following large-scale military operations in April ([BBC Afan Oromo, 24 June 2022](#); [Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation, 9 April 2022](#)).

³⁸⁴ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), [Bachelet urges prompt investigation into killings in western Ethiopia](#), 23 June 2022

Clashes between Oromo and Amhara community members have been on a rise over the past two years, especially in areas of western Oromia ([Ethiopia Insight, 1 June 2022](#)). As the security situation has deteriorated due to ongoing fighting between OLF-Shane and government forces, incidents of targeted violence against ethnic Amharas in Oromia region have also increased. ACLED records nearly 50 incidents of violence targeting civilians, with at least 630 fatalities among ethnic Amhara civilians, in Oromia region since 1 April 2018. [...]

As a result of the attack, tension in the country has increased, and the relationship between ethnic Amhara and Oromo communities, already at a historic low, has worsened.³⁸⁵

The Guardian reported in June 2022 that:

Witnesses in [Ethiopia](#) said on Sunday that more than 200 ethnic Amhara have been killed in an attack in the country's Oromia region and are blaming a rebel group, which denies it.

It is one of the deadliest such attacks in recent memory as ethnic tensions continue in Africa's second most populous country.

"I have counted 230 bodies. I am afraid this is the deadliest attack against civilians we have seen in our lifetime," Abdul-Seid Tahir, a resident of Gimbi county, told the Associated Press after barely escaping the attack on Saturday. "We are burying them in mass graves, and we are still collecting bodies. Federal army units have now arrived, but we fear that the attacks could continue if they leave."

Shambel, another witness who gave only his first name over fears for his safety, said the local Amhara community was desperately seeking to be relocated "before another round of mass killings happen". [...]

Both witnesses blamed the Oromo Liberation Army for the attacks. In a statement, the Oromia regional government also blamed the OLA, saying the rebels had attacked "after being unable to resist the operations launched by [federal] security forces".

An OLA spokesperson, Odaa Tarbii, denied the allegations. "The attack you are referring to was committed by the regime's military and local militia as they retreated from their camp in Gimbi following our recent offensive," he said in a message to the AP.

"They escaped to an area called Tole, where they attacked the local population and destroyed their property as retaliation for their perceived support for the OLA. Our fighters had not even reached that area when the attacks took place."

Ethiopia is experiencing widespread ethnic tensions in several regions, most of them over historical grievances and political tensions. The Amhara people, the second-largest ethnic group among Ethiopia's more than 110 million population, have been targeted frequently in regions like Oromia.³⁸⁶

Similarly, BBC News reported the same month that:

Eyewitnesses to an outbreak of ethnic violence in western Ethiopia have told the BBC that they were left helpless during attacks, which resulted in the deaths of more than 250 people. [...]

The victims are said to be ethnic Amharas killed by Oromo rebels.

The Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) has denied responsibility and said the government's "retreating soldiers" were behind the attacks. A spokesperson further blamed a militia group formed by the Oromia regional government.

³⁸⁵ ACLED (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project), [EPO \(Ethiopia Peace Observatory\) Weekly: 18-24 June 2022](#), 29 June 2022

³⁸⁶ The Guardian, [Ethiopia: more than 200 Amhara people killed in attack blamed on rebels](#), 19 June 2022

According to witnesses, the attacks happened in six small farming villages in Gimbi district, western Oromia. [...]

An advocacy group, the Amhara Association of America, puts the death toll at 378 and says it has identified 176 victims by name.

Another witness told the BBC that in addition to those killed on the spot, some were abducted by the attackers.

"After they took them, they killed them in the woods. Fifty bodies were found in place in the forest," he said.

"They went into the houses of Amharic speakers and began killing," he continued.

In the village of Gutu eight people were killed after their houses were set ablaze and another 35 people were also buried in the village, and in the village of Silsaw 102 people were buried, he added.³⁸⁷

Al Jazeera presented the following testimonies:

"My entire family is killed. No one was spared," witness Abdu Hassen, who lives nearby, told DPA news agency by phone.

"I am hearing some 300 bodies are recovered so far. But collecting the bodies hasn't started in two villages so it could be much higher." [...]

The Amhara people, the second-largest ethnic group among Ethiopia's more than 110 million people, have been targeted frequently in regions like Oromia.

Speaking to Al Jazeera from the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, independent journalist Samuel Getachew said attacks against minorities were becoming more frequent in the East African country.

"They [Amharas] have asked to be moved to a safer area, perhaps within their own region of Amhara. The government has said they are listening but no action has been taken. Once again, this kind of killing has become the norm," Samuel said.

The Ethiopian journalist said the region has become off-limit due to government restrictions, with the Ethiopian government preventing media people from speaking to OLA rebels declaring them as "terrorists".³⁸⁸

On the same massacre, the Africa Report further detailed that:

Oromo-speaking gunmen massacred hundreds of unarmed civilians in Ethiopia's Oromia region on 18 June - part of a broader cycle of ethnic-based killings in the country's western periphery, whose victims have been Oromo, Amhara, Gumuz and Sinaasha.

Ahmed was heading to a local market when he heard gunfire ring out from his village in the Gimbi district of Ethiopia's Oromia region on Saturday, 18 June. After the shooting died down, he says, he returned to find dozens of bodies scattered among the burnt-out houses.

"There were corpses everywhere," he told *The Africa Report*. "I saw 60 people in one grave. In another, I helped to bury 12 people. We only finished burying all the bodies on Tuesday."

Another witness, Mohammed, said that armed men had passed through his village of Tole several days before the attack, threatening ethnic Amhara, Ethiopia's second largest group, who are a minority in the Oromia region. Many Amhara arrived in the area in the 1980s and 1990s under resettlement programmes.

³⁸⁷ BBC News, [Ethiopia violence in Oromia: 'Villages full of dead bodies'](#), 20 June 2022

³⁸⁸ Al Jazeera, [More than 100 killed in Ethiopia's Oromia region: Witnesses](#), 20 June 2022

“They passed through this village warning us, saying, ‘We will kill you guys from Wollo when we come back,’” said Mohammed. Wollo is an area in the Amhara region where he and many of his neighbours originally come from. “We were scared, and then it happened. They said they don’t want to hear Amharic speakers in their land.”

A third witness put the death toll at around 435, which could not be verified. “God rescued me. I was not inside the village, but my family members were killed,” he said. “We have been burying the bodies for days.”

All three men blamed Afaan Oromoo-speaking militants for the attack. They referred to them as Shene, a nickname for the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), an insurgent group that has been accused of human rights abuses while fighting Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed’s government.

Two of the three witnesses accused local officials of colluding with the gunmen. One said: “The administration was a part of it, because when we called for defence, no one responded. They said there is no conflict.” The second said the militants “spoke Oromo, they are Shene, they just came with the woreda (district) and zonal officials.”

The OLA denies responsibility for the killings, claiming they were perpetrated by a government-backed militia group called “Gachana Sirna”. “There is no political or military objective, none whatsoever, that our army would generate by targeting innocent civilians,” the group said in a joint statement with the Oromo Liberation Front, a nationalist organisation promoting self-determination for the Oromo people.

A later statement by the two groups claimed government forces – allegedly disguised in wigs to impersonate OLA fighters – were responsible. The area is off limits to journalists, making it impossible to readily verify competing claims.³⁸⁹

The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect wrote on the same massacre in its weekly atrocity updates:

On 18 June hundreds of ethnic Amharas in the town of Tole, West Wollega Zone, in the Oromia region, were killed in one of the deadliest attacks against civilians in Ethiopia outside of the war in the northern Tigray region. The estimated casualty figures range from 260 to over 500, with some witnesses saying bodies are still being uncovered more than a week later.

Witnesses have blamed the massacre on members of the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) – a breakaway ethnic Oromo armed group that has previously been accused of widespread abuses against minority ethnic groups. According to eyewitness testimony, the group entered the town and fired indiscriminately, killing primarily women, children and the elderly. Some victims were reportedly killed while sheltering in a mosque. The assailants also burned down homes and abducted civilians. The OLA denied these accusations and blamed government forces and local militia.

The massacre occurred in an area where there is an ongoing insurgency by the OLA. The group has increased its attacks in the Oromia region against ethnic Amhara communities since 2018, killing hundreds of civilians. Some of these attacks may amount to crimes against humanity. Meanwhile, the government’s counterinsurgency campaign against the OLA has been characterized by accusations of human rights violations and abuses.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁹ The Africa Report, [Ethiopia: Inside the Oromia massacre – ‘There were corpses everywhere’](#), 23 June 2022

³⁹⁰ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Atrocity Alert No. 306: Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of the Congo and North Korea](#), 29 June 2022

The non-profit organisation based in the United States, the Amhara Association of America, produced a report in early July 2022 on the Gimbi massacre of 18 June that year, based on interviews with eyewitnesses and victims' families. The report numbers at least 554 Amhara civilians across ten villages in Tole Kebele and names 455 of the deceased.³⁹¹ It describes the following:

The targets of the massacre were ethnic Amharas only. The massacre in most villages lasted 7 hours from morning (8:30 a.m. local time) to the mid-afternoon (3:30 p.m. local time) while some villages such as Begene and Karakore saw extended hours of mass killing that lasted until 5:00 p.m. local time.

Perpetrators used heavy machineguns and shot victims but, in some cases, used machetes to execute survivors. And at least 13 people were killed by being burned alive. In at least two cases, pregnant women had their wombs cut open with a knife at which point, the assailants cut out the fetuses which they would chop into pieces with the victim watching and finally, slitting her throat. There were also several incidences of mass executions. In one case, over 55 people including 53 women and children were mass executed in a forest located in Chefie village. In a similar case, 14 women and children were shot to death in a vacant home located in Silsaw village. There was also a mass execution of 48 people (mostly women and children) who were killed all at once on the property of a site of worship known as Jafar Mosque located in Silsaw village. In many cases, entire families were killed at once, sometimes including over 10 members of a single family. Many of the victims were buried in mass graves located in the same place they were killed. In addition to physical injuries, many properties and residential homes were entirely burned down and completely looted leaving nothing of value behind. [...]

According to eyewitnesses, the large-scale massacre was primarily perpetrated by OLA militants with collaboration from local ethnic Oromo residents. According to one witness the heavily armed OLA militias and local Oromo residents flooded all ten villages at once within minutes. The attackers split up into groups for each village and the operation began in a highly coordinated manner. The local Oromo residents coordinated with OLA militias in guiding them, helping to locate hiding points, and looting properties such as shop materials, and farm animals. The local Oromo collaborators also took machete and intermittently knives to finish off victims who appeared to survive the gunshot wounds. One source spoke about participation of the locals saying *"Those we were living together with them in peace times had attacked us."* [...] Multiple sources have heard OLA militia calling for indiscriminate killing of Amharas. [...]

According to AAA's sources, the massacre was enabled, sanctioned, and supported by regional and federal government authorities. Firstly, the local government militia who were guarding the area left the area a few days before the attack, effectively inviting OLA militants to come and attack unchallenged. One source informed AAA that the Gimbi Woreda Administration (which also covers Tole Kebele) were informed that OLA militias had been approaching the kebele. In response, the woreda administration relocated stationed security forces to Dedesa camp leaving the Amhara residents defenseless. There were also concerning details which suggest conflict of interest and possible coordination between officials and OLA. [...] Second, on the day of the attack, telecommunications, internet and phone coverage in the area was shut down (note the national telecommunications service provider, Ethio Telecom is owned and operated by the state), effectively denying victims any opportunity to alert the world about their plight. Thirdly, federal (national defense forces) and regional (Oromia Special Forces) forces were not deployed throughout the 9-hour long attack but returned to the area after the killings and threatened survivors not

³⁹¹ The Amhara Association of America, [*"It Seems Like The Whole Population Is Killed": An Interim Report on the June 18th, 2022 Amhara Massacre in the Tole Kebele, Gimbi Woreda, WestWollega Zone of Ethiopia's Oromia Region by Oromo Liberation Army \(OLA\) militants*](#), 3 July 2022, pp. 2, 16-32

to record the burial process and the mass graves because it could potentially incite outrage against the government.³⁹²

Human Rights Watch stated in July 2022 that:

Most recently, on Jun. 18, 2022, armed attackers brazenly attacked Amharas, and killed dozens if not hundreds, including many women, children, and older people in Gimbi district in western Oromia, forcing at least 4,800 people to flee. Survivors speaking to the media accused the Oromo Liberation Army of the attacks, though it has denied responsibility. While communications have hampered real-time reporting on the events, according to the UN, the attack followed fighting between armed groups and security forces in the area.³⁹³

Al Jazeera wrote on protests and resentment in Ethiopia following the Gimbi massacre in June 2022:

Mass protests brought towns in Ethiopia's northern Amhara region to a standstill last week as demonstrators, largely university students, took their frustration to the streets over the June 18 massacre of hundreds of civilians by rebel fighters.

[...] Protesters denounced the killings and criticised the government's inability to curb worsening ethnic violence. [...]

In the tragedy that triggered the protest, armed men killed hundreds of people two weeks ago in the Gimbi district of Oromia, some 380km west of Addis Ababa. The victims all belonged to the Amhara, Ethiopia's second-largest ethnic group, and witnesses say killings began in the morning and continued unabated until the rebels left at about 4pm that day.

Weeks later, bereaved father Abdu Ahmed said he remains broken over the loss of his teenage daughters Hayat and Birtukan. "They shot at everyone, even children and the elderly," he told Al Jazeera over the phone. "What kind of madman targets defenceless girls?"

"I've personally lost count of the number of bodies I've buried," Ali Said, a survivor told Al Jazeera. "Many died from gunshots or in the fire, but I've discovered bodies that were hacked to death as well." [...]

At a press conference on Thursday, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's spokeswoman Billene Seyoum told reporters that the death toll currently stands at 338 and that fighters from the OLA (Oromo Liberation Army) carried out the massacre. [...]

Tedros Tirfe, chairman of the US-based Amhara Association of America group, believes that frustration among Ethiopians and the ethnic Amhara in particular, has peaked.

"Abiy demonstrated his obliviousness to the plight of Amhara early on by deeming the growing Amhara movement a problem," he told Al Jazeera. "His negligence, incapacity and complicity in these massacres have been denounced by Amharas repeatedly. Youths are protesting demanding for PM Abiy's resignation and protection for Amharas outside of the Amhara region." [...]

Six survivors of the massacre in Gimbi told Al Jazeera that members of a local government force tasked with protecting the area suddenly departed unannounced on either June 16 or 17, leaving residents defenceless. They returned hours after the rampage had ended.

³⁹² The Amhara Association of America, [*"It Seems Like The Whole Population Is Killed": An Interim Report on the June 18th, 2022 Amhara Massacre in the Tole Kebele, Gimbi Woreda, WestWollega Zone of Ethiopia's Oromia Region by Oromo Liberation Army \(OLA\) militants*](#), 3 July 2022, pp. 1-3, 11-12

³⁹³ Human Rights Watch, [*Ethiopia's Other Conflict: Ethiopia's Tigray War Overshadows Ongoing Cycles of Violence in Oromia*](#), 4 July 2022

“There is no explanation for why [government soldiers] left,” Ali Said said. “Even if they left, there are other security forces nearby. But no one came to our aid.”

This has fueled claims by activists that officials in Oromia cooperate with rebel groups keen on cleansing the region of its ethnic minorities.³⁹⁴

Ethiopia Insight released a report in July 2022 on questions remaining over the massacre in Tole, writing that:

Reportedly, Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) rebels killed hundreds of Amhara civilians on 18 June in Tole, a *kebele* in Gimbi Wereda of Oromia’s West Wellega Zone.

Yet that account is disputed by OLA, Oromo activists, close observers, and now a ruling party lawmaker.

The first report of the massacre was streamed live by Amhara Media Center (AMC), a private outlet that focuses on Amhara rights, on 18 June at around 3:30 pm.

According to its report, the attack started at 8:30 am in five neighborhoods in Tole Kebele and two neighborhoods in the bordering areas of the Benishangul-Gumuz region.

A purported Tole resident told AMC that over 6,000 Amhara residents fled into the forest, that many were killed, and that the OLA burned at least 500 houses.

The AMC report alleges Oromia and local security forces left the area two days before and local officials left a day before the massacre and on the morning of it.

At 6 pm, an AMC journalist, Melkam Molla, reported that 71 Amharas, including women and children, had been killed. The reported death toll has since significantly risen.

While all sides agree that a massacre took place, theories abound as to who is responsible.

The federal government accuses OLA exclusively, while many Amhara activists say federal and Oromia regional government forces were either incompetent, complicit, or somehow worked with OLA on the attack.

On the other hand, OLA accuses a local militia formed by the Oromia government.

Another theory is that the OLA is ill-disciplined, its leaders cannot effectively control their forces, and some OLA fighters operating autonomously committed the massacre in retaliation after Amhara villagers fired on them. [...]

According to Oromia’s government, OLA committed the Tole massacre when it retreated following its inability to stand against government security forces in the area. [...]

On 30 June, Abiy’s spokesperson, Billene Seyoum, said OLA fighters carried out the attack in Tole and told reporters the death toll stood at 338.

In a brief press release on 19 June, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), a legally autonomous federal institution, said that the attacks were committed by OLA militants and that it was related to the armed conflict in the area between OLA and government forces.

Similarly, on 20 June, the Federal Government Communication Services said that OLA turned against civilians while retreating after sustaining heavy losses on the battlefield during its 14 June attacks on Gambella, Dembi Dollo, and Gimbi. [...]

OLA denies committing the massacre. Instead, it accuses a state-backed militia.

Odaa Tarbii, OLA’s spokesperson, told VOA Afaan Oromo that government forces fled from Gimbi town following the OLA offensive there and then traveled 50 kilometers to Tole village.

“We don’t know why they did it, but the government militants are the ones that attacked the Oromo civilians displaced from Wello and resettled in Tole,” he said. [...]

³⁹⁴ Al Jazeera, [‘Death sentence’: Massacres fuel protests, resentment in Ethiopia](#), 6 July 2022

OLA said the government committed the attack in Tole to shift attention from massacres of Oromos in Gambella and elsewhere, and also to discredit the OLA in the eyes of Ethiopians and the international community, so justifying its military tactics and denying OLA a seat at the table of planned peace talks. [...] The Amhara Association of America (AAA), a lobbying organization, reports at least 554 Amhara civilians were killed in ten villages and named 455 of the victims.

Others say that the number of fatalities in Tole has reached over 1,500 or 1,600.

AAA alleges OLA works with Oromia officials, and accuses Oromia Prosperity Party members of either allowing the massacre to happen or organizing it.

It accused OLA while also maintaining the killings were “enabled, sanctioned, and supported by regional and federal government authorities.”

As evidence, it claimed local government militia guarding the area left a few days prior to the attack, that internet and phone coverage was shut down in the locale at the time of the incident, and that when state militia returned to the area after the killings, they threatened survivors and told them not to record the burial process or the mass graves.

The lobby group claims the intensity and scale of massacres against Amharas have escalated since Abiy came to power in 2018 because he “allowed the OLA to return to Ethiopia,” giving them a base to recruit and train.

AAA claims that, in 2021 alone, 1,688 people were killed in OLA attacks, which it says are committed with official support. [...]

On the other hand, rather than directly implicating government officials, the opposition National Movement of Amhara (NaMA) expressed outrage at their negligence.³⁹⁵

Amnesty International reported in July 2022 that:

The Ethiopian authorities must urgently launch an impartial investigation into the summary killing of over 400 Amhara residents of Tole Kebele in Oromia region on 18 June, Amnesty International said today.

Hundreds of people were killed and scores injured in an attack that survivors and victims’ family members say was committed by the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA). [...]

In addition to the mass killing of Amhara residents, OLA fighters also burned homes and looted cattle, cash and cereals from houses. [...]

“This is not the first time that ethnic Amhara residents have been attacked in Oromia region. The Ethiopian government must protect ethnic Amhara in Oromia from unlawful killings and other human rights abuses,” said Deprose Muchena. [...]

Amnesty International has previously documented attacks on ethnic Amhara, allegedly carried out by OLA forces. However, OLA officials repeatedly rejected allegations of abuses by their forces including the attack in Tole and instead blame government forces.³⁹⁶

Another press release by Amnesty International in July 2022 recounted the following survivor testimonies:

Twenty-two from one family dead

³⁹⁵ Ethiopia Insight, [Amhara civilians were massacred in Tole, but questions remain](#), 8 July 2022

³⁹⁶ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: Authorities must investigate massacre of ethnic Amhara in Tole](#), 21 July 2022

The attack began at around 9am on 18 June after many adults in the area had left home to work on farms or take care of other business, according to nine witnesses who told Amnesty they were in Tole or on the outskirts of the area as the attack unfolded.

Witnesses said OLA forces surrounded villages before a gunshot signaled the start of the attack. Most of those who had stayed behind in the villages were mothers and children who were unable to flee the attackers.

All the witnesses that Amnesty interviewed said they lost multiple relatives in the massacre, most of whom were women and children.

Jamila*, who survived the attack after sustaining bullet wounds, told Amnesty:

“I was on the farm ploughing around 9am when they suddenly came and attacked us.

“They hit me with bullets, and they slaughtered my husband. I was lying among six dead bodies until I was rescued. They slaughtered my husband with banga. The others were killed with banga and bullet.”

Hussein*, a 64-year-old relative of victims in the attack, told Amnesty he lost 22 children and grandchildren. He said he ran for his life when the shooting started, as the women and children stayed at home assuming they would be spared.

He said:

“They killed 42 people at one place. There was only one adult male among them, the rest were women and children. We found their bodies piled up at one place. Among those dead were newborns. [Twenty-two] of them are my children and grandchildren. One of my daughters died with her five children, the other one with four, the other with five, the other with two children, one newlywed daughter and one boy.”

Jemal*, a local administration official, lost his three children and his wife, who was seven months pregnant.

He said:

“As I was searching [for] them on the street and [in] the bushes... I found 28 dead bodies in addition to my wife and children. I found them in the compound of the Silsaw Mosque.”

He added: “At Chekorsa [neighborhood], 104 people were killed. Only five of them are male adults. The rest are women and children. At Silsaw neighborhood, 112 people were killed... many of the victims were children, even newborns and toddlers.” He said their bodies were riddled with bullets.

Abdi*, a resident who was on his farm when the attack happened, said:

“My farm is a bit far and I couldn’t return home since the attackers blocked the route to the village. I was watching from a nearby hill. The attack started around 8:30am and continued until around 3pm in our village. In other villages they stayed until 4 and 5pm.”

According to witnesses, some residents who stayed in the villages were armed, but they were outnumbered by the OLA fighters and unable to defend themselves. Most of those killed were unarmed women and children.

Witnesses said they knew the attackers were OLA fighters because of their distinctive long braided hair, their military camouflage, and because they spoke the Oromiffa language. They also said that the OLA had operated in the area for at least four years.

A local administrative official interviewed by Amnesty said at least 450 people were killed in the attack. [...]

In addition to the mass killing of Amhara residents, OLA fighters also burned homes and looted cattle, cash and cereals from houses.

Dawud* said he witnessed OLA forces attacking his neighbour:

“They also torched the house of my neighbour while the family with his children and grandchildren and others were inside (12 people in total). One of them was seven months pregnant and was with her two children. They were buried in the compound since they were completely charred.”

Another witness, Abdi*, said the attackers looted four oxen and ETB 70,000 cash (approximately £1,100) from his home. [...]

According to a local official interviewed by Amnesty, the attack was immediately reported to district officials, who said they were unable to respond because the road was closed.

Government forces did not intervene during the five-hour period in which the perpetrators killed residents and burned and pillaged homes in Tole, according to nine witnesses. Gimbi town, where the local district administration is based just 49kms away from Tole by road.

Residents said government forces arrived hours after OLA fighters had left; survivors were already collecting the bodies of their relatives.³⁹⁷

The EPO reported on events in June 2022, stating that:

ACLED data show a surge in the number of reported fatalities in June 2022, with over 40% of these fatalities resulting from two high-fatality attacks targeting ethnic Amhara civilians. On 18 June, members of the OLF-Shane allegedly killed at least 338 people, mostly ethnic Amhara civilians, in Gutu, Cherkosa, Silsaw, Begene, Chakaw sefer, and Hayaew areas in Tole kebele in Gimbi woreda in West Wollega zone in Oromia [...]. The attack also spread to the nearby Sene kebele in Bolo Jingafoy (Miziga) woreda in Kamashi zone in Benshangul/Gumuz region where hundreds of civilians were reported killed. Some reports indicate that the number of fatalities may total over 500 and that the victims included women and children. The OLF-Shane denied the involvement of its forces and called for “an independent investigation” (OLA Public Relations, 20 June 2022). The recent massacre in Tole kebele in West Wollega is the deadliest attack against ethnic Amhara civilians in Oromia, and the second deadliest in the country.³⁹⁸

CIVICUS observed in July 2022, with regards to the 18 June massacre, that “Some estimates put the number of dead at over 500, but with a communications blackout and a severely constrained press, it is difficult to verify reports”.³⁹⁹

Human Rights Watch reported the following in August 2022:

An armed group killed several hundred Amhara civilians in western Oromia in June 2022 while Ethiopian security forces did little to protect them, Human Rights Watch said today. Nearly three months later, the Ethiopian government has failed to provide adequate shelter or meaningfully address the serious health and protection concerns of surviving residents.

For eight hours on June 18, heavily armed assailants shot and killed about 400 Amhara civilians, including many women and children, in villages in Tole and Sene *kebeles* (wards). The unidentified assailants also burned and destroyed hundreds of homes and businesses, and looted livestock and other property. Satellite imagery analysis corroborated the burning of at least five villages and the destruction of

³⁹⁷ Amnesty International UK, [Press release: Ethiopia: 'Horrific' massacre of 400 ethnic Amhara must be investigated immediately](#), 21 July 2022

³⁹⁸ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: June 2022](#), 26 July 2022

³⁹⁹ CIVICUS Lens, [Ethiopia: Peace Desperately Needed](#), 26 July 2022

approximately 480 structures. Despite warnings, government security forces stationed nearby did not arrive until hours after the attack. [...]

Survivors from Tole and Sene said that fear of continued attacks in the area, and insufficient protection and humanitarian support was forcing many residents to leave Oromia. [...]

Unidentified armed assailants have also been implicated in killings, abductions, destruction of homes, and mass displacements of ethnic Amhara communities. Residents of Tole kebele in western Oromia said that OLA [Oromo Liberation Army] fighters in the neighboring hills for the past three years have abducted people and demanded ransom.⁴⁰⁰

Human Rights Watch reported in August 2022 that: “An armed group killed several hundred Amhara civilians in western Oromia in June 2022 while Ethiopian security forces did little to protect them”.⁴⁰¹

The report of the UN International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia in October 2022 wrote that “Reliable information reports three large-scale killings in Oromiya in the period June–August 2022. In the first incident, on 18 June 2022, the Oromo Liberation Army appears to have attacked several towns and villages in West Wollega Zone, killing hundreds of people of mainly Amhara ethnicity. Homes and businesses were allegedly burned to the ground and livestock and other property looted”.⁴⁰²

In January 2023, Human Rights Watch noted the following with regards to attacks against Amharas in Oromia:

In western Oromia, fighting between government forces and armed groups resulted in serious abuses committed by all sides. [...]

On June 14, government forces clashed with Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and Gambella Liberation Front armed groups in the Gambella regional capital. [...]

Parts of Oromia experienced protracted fighting due to government operations against the OLA. On June 18, heavily armed gunmen killed about 400 Amhara civilians, many women and children and destroyed homes and businesses in villages in West Wellega Zone, in Oromia, and in neighboring Benishangul-Gumuz region.⁴⁰³

Amnesty International referenced in its annual report covering human rights in Ethiopia in 2022 that: “in June, at least 400 Amhara civilians, mainly women and children, were summarily killed during a five-hour attack in the Tole locality of West Wellega Zone, allegedly by Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) forces. Security forces near the area and local authorities failed to intervene to stop the attack”.⁴⁰⁴

The UK Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office’s annual human rights report, covering events of 2022, wrote that: “In Oromia, fighting between the government and the Oromo Liberation Army

⁴⁰⁰ Human Rights Watch, [Ethiopia: Civilians in Western Oromia Left Unprotected](#), 31 August 2022

⁴⁰¹ Human Rights Watch, [Ethiopia: Civilians in Western Oromia Left Unprotected](#), 31 August 2022

⁴⁰² UN Human Rights Council - International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia](#), 5 October 2022, p. 15

⁴⁰³ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2023: Events of 2022 - Ethiopia](#), 12 January 2023

⁴⁰⁴ Amnesty International, [Amnesty International Report 2022/23: The State of the World's Human Rights - Ethiopia 2022](#), 27 March 2023

(OLA), and between the OLA and the Amharan militia has led to many civilian deaths, including the massacre of over 200 of Amhara ethnicity in Gimbi town in June”.⁴⁰⁵

2. Kellem Wollega massacre – July 2022

BBC News reported in July 2022 on a new round of attacks against Amhara civilians in Oromio region, stating that:

This is the second such attack in a little over two weeks - the last left more than 300 dead. Villages inhabited by members of the Amhara community were targeted, witnesses have told the BBC. Ethiopia has seen a rise in ethnic violence in recent years and it seems things are worsening. In a statement on Twitter, Prime Minister Abiy vowed to "eliminate" the armed group, the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), which he blamed for the violence. The group has not yet responded to the accusation. The violence began around dawn on Monday in Hawa Gelan, a district in the west of the Oromia region, and continued for at least three hours, witnesses have said. Men, women, children and the elderly were killed indiscriminately as their houses were set on fire, forcing survivors to shelter in mosques, the witnesses added.⁴⁰⁶

Al Jazeera also documented the following:

Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has accused a rebel group of carrying out a "new massacre" of civilians in the western Oromia state. [...]
"Citizens living in the Qellem Wollega zone of Oromia state have been massacred," he said, without giving details. [...]
Abiy's office did not provide death figures and it was not possible to verify the information as access to Oromia is restricted. The region where the killings took place was also under a communications blackout. [...]
The United States-based Amhara Association of America (AAA) told the AFP news agency that Monday's attack targeted Amhara in a village in the Hawa Gelan district of Qellem Wollega. It said phone communication into the remote area has been cut since midday. One survivor told the Amhara Media Corporation, a state-run regional outlet, that "nobody came to our rescue".
"They [the attackers] have left and bodies are now being picked up, so far 300 [bodies] have been collected," the survivor said. "But it's still early, there are many others whose whereabouts we don't know." [...]
The AAA, quoting sources on the ground, told The Associated Press news agency that it believes 150 to 160 people might have been killed in the attacks.⁴⁰⁷

CNN reported that:

⁴⁰⁵ UK Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office, [Human Rights & Democracy: The 2022 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office Report](#), 13 July 2023, p. 61

⁴⁰⁶ BBC News, [Ethiopia violence in Oromia: PM Abiy Ahmed calls attack a massacre](#), 5 July 2022

⁴⁰⁷ Al Jazeera, [Ethiopia's Abiy reports new civilian killings in Oromia](#), 5 July 2022

The incident appears to be an ethnically targeted attack, according to a statement from the state-appointed Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC). This is the second attack against civilians in the Oromia region in under a month.

The EHRC says the populations of the villages of Mender 20 and Mender 21 in Hawa Gelan in Oromia's Kellem Wollega Zone are "primarily of Amhara ethnic origin" and that residents are hiding elsewhere despite security forces having reached the area.⁴⁰⁸

With regards to the same massacre, the EPO wrote that:

Last week, violence against civilians continued in Oromia region. However, no armed clashes were reported in the region. On 4 July, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF-Shane) attacked civilians and reportedly killed at least 150 people, mostly ethnic Amhara civilians, and injured over 45 others in Mender 20 in Lemlem kebele in Hawa Galan woreda in Kellem Wollega zone [...]. The group also abducted an unidentified number of people and looted and damaged the residents' properties. The rebel group denied responsibility and accused local government militias of perpetrating the attack ([DW Amharic, 5 July 2022](#)). The next day, OLF-Shane militants allegedly killed three and wounded two farmers in Dano Tulto kebele in Amaro special woreda in Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples region (SNNPR). The armed group also looted an unspecified number of cattle. The rebel group denied the allegation that it was behind the attack ([VOA Amharic, 6 July 2022](#)).⁴⁰⁹

Following the Gimbi massacre in June 2022, Human Rights Watch reported in August 2022 that "Less than two weeks later, the media reported that armed groups attacked predominantly Amhara civilians in Hawa Gelan district, Kellem Wellega Zone, killing scores".⁴¹⁰

The report of the UN International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia in October 2022 wrote that: "Reliable information reports three large-scale killings in Oromiya in the period June–August 2022. [...] In the second incident, on 4 July 2022, the Oromo Liberation Army also appears to have attacked villages in Lemlem Kebelle in Qelem Wollega Zone, killing more than 100 civilians, mostly ethnic Amhara, and injuring dozens of others".⁴¹¹

The German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) stated in its January 2023 briefing notes summary on Ethiopia in July to December 2022 that:

According to eyewitnesses, dozens of civilians, mostly women and children, were killed in an attack by an armed militia in the West Welega Zone in Oromia Regional State on 04.07.22. Prime Minister Abiy confirmed the attack but did not give casualty figures. The victims were mainly from the Amhara ethnic group. Abiy spoke of a massacre and accused the Oromo Liberation Front (OLA-Shane). Only a fortnight ago, a similar incident had occurred in the same region in which more than 300 people lost their lives. The

⁴⁰⁸ CNN, [Ethiopian Prime Minister and rebel group blame each other for apparent civilian massacre](#), 6 July 2022

⁴⁰⁹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 2-8 July 2022](#), 13 July 2022

⁴¹⁰ Human Rights Watch, [Ethiopia: Civilians in Western Oromia Left Unprotected](#), 31 August 2022

⁴¹¹ UN Human Rights Council - International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia](#), 5 October 2022, p. 15

authorities held the OLA responsible for that incident as well (cf. BN of 20.06.22), accusations the OLA denies.⁴¹²

In January 2023, Human Rights Watch wrote that “on July 4 [2022], assailants attacked Amhara civilians in Kellem Wellega Zone in Oromia, killing scores”.⁴¹³

Amnesty International noted in its annual report covering human rights in Ethiopia in 2022 that, in July, “attacks on Amhara residents in Qelem Wellega Zone, allegedly by OLA forces who targeted hundreds of ethnic Amhara residents, were also reported”.⁴¹⁴

VII. Internal displacement of Amharas in Ethiopia

For the general humanitarian situation in Amhara region, see [IV.Humanitarian situation in the Amhara region](#).

Note that sources do not necessarily report on the home area or ethnicity of IDPs. As documented by the following sources, the majority of IDPs in Amhara are reported not to originate from that region, but may be of Amhara ethnicity. Information has been sought on the situation of Amharas outside of the Amhara region.

Overview

As of June 2022 UNOCHA recorded that the majority of IDPs in Amhara are people from other regions outside of Amharas (ethnicity not specified):

Meanwhile in Amhara, IDPs continue to suffer from overcrowded and sub-standard living conditions in IDP sites, while reports of new arrivals are received. Overall, there are an estimated 1.3 million IDPs across the region, the majority in protracted displacement from Oromia and other regions. For instance, in Debre Birhan, currently hosting more than 20,000 IDPs, there are reports of a continuous IDP influx from Oromia Region due to insecurity.⁴¹⁵

The EPO reported in June 2022 that “Reports indicate that thousands of ethnic Amhara internally displaced persons (IDPs) from western Oromia are taking refuge in Amhara region. For instance, more than 29,000 IDPs from western Oromia were reported to be taking shelter in South Wello zone (Bisrat Radio, 29 March 2022)”.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹² German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), [Briefing Notes: Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration: Ethiopia – July-December 2022](#), 1 January 2023, p. 1

⁴¹³ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2023: Events of 2022 - Ethiopia](#), 12 January 2023

⁴¹⁴ Amnesty International, [Amnesty International Report 2022/23: The State of the World's Human Rights - Ethiopia 2022](#), 27 March 2023

⁴¹⁵ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia - Northern Ethiopia Humanitarian Update Situation Report, 11 June 2022](#), 11 June 2022

⁴¹⁶ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: June 2022](#), 26 July 2022

UNOCHA reported in February 2023, without specifying ethnicity, that “North Shewa, South Wello and West Gojam zones in Amhara continue to receive an influx of IDPs from Oromia, reportedly tallying to hundreds of thousands of people to date. Separately, about 41,000 recent migrants who returned to Ethiopia and are residing in South and North Wollo zones of Amhara require livelihood assistance”.⁴¹⁷

In December 2023 IOM published its National Displacement report covering August -September 2023 which recorded the following information about displacement in Amhara, but did not report on the origin or ethnicity of IDPs:

An estimated 18,335 households comprising 66,153 IDPs were identified in 88 accessible sites in Amhara region. Due to insecurity, which broke out in the region during data collection, the team was only able to assess 13.8% of planned locations in the region. In the previous round 33 (November 2022 - June 2023), Amhara region hosted an estimated 436,805 IDPs. The 88 sites covered in this round were in parts of Awii, North Shewa, North Wollo, Oromia, South Wollo, Special Woreda and Woldiya City Administration zones. In the previous round these sites hosted an estimated 63,722 IDPs, which is fairly consistent with the figure from this round 34. Insecurity prevented data collection in parts of Awii, Bahir Dar, Central Gonder, East Gojam, North Gonder, North Shewa, North Wollo, Oromia, South Gonder, South Wollo, Wag Himra, WestGojam and West Gonder zones. The regional total should therefore be higher.

Conflict was the primary reason for displacement in 86 sites hosting an estimated 65,141 IDPs (97.7% of the sites assessed), followed by flooding which was reported as the primary reason for displacement in 2 sites hosting an estimated 1,012 IDPs (2.3%). The majority of IDPs assessed were residing with host communities (70 of the 88 sites assessed, or 79.6%), followed by collective centers (15.9%) and planned camps/ sites (4.5%). This is in line with the settlement types assessed in the previous round of data collection.

The most reported need in the region was food, which was reported in 79 of the 88 sites (89.8%). This is followed by shelter (57 of the sites, 64.8%) and livelihood support (31 of the sites, 35.2%)**. The majority of the IDPs in the region have been displaced for 1-2 years prior to the assessment (58.6%), followed by up to 1 year (27.3%), 3-4 years (13%) and more than 5 years (1.1%).⁴¹⁸

Reporting on returns to Amhara the same IOM report noted that:

An estimated 94,957 households comprising 389,937 returning IDPs were identified in 371 accessible villages in Amhara region. Due to insecurity, which broke out in the region during data collection, the team was only able to assess 31.3% of planned locations in the region. In the previous round 33 (November 2022 - June 2023), Amhara region hosted an estimated 1,422,074 returning IDPs.

The accessible villages were in North Shewa, Oromia, South Wollo and North Wollo zones. Only looking at the villages assessed in both rounds, there was an increase of an estimated 20,765 returning IDPs. Insecurity prevented data collection in Awii, Central Gonder, North Gonder, parts of North Shewa, parts of North Wollo, parts of Oromia, South Gonder, parts of South Wollo, Wag Himra, West Gojam and West Gonder zones. The regional total should therefore be higher.

⁴¹⁷ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia - Situation Report, 2 Feb 2023](#), 3 February 2023

⁴¹⁸ IOM, [Ethiopia — National Displacement Report 17 \(August - September 2023\)](#), 20 December 2023, p.14

Conflict was the primary cause of initial displacement reported by returning IDPs in all villages assessed. All assessed villages (100%) reported that the majority of returning IDPs have returned to their own shelter, which was owned by the returning IDPs prior to displacement.

All the returning IDPs (100%) arrived to the villages more than 6 months prior to the assessment.

The most reported livelihoods of returning IDPs in the region at the time of the assessment were farming (212 of the villages assessed, 57.1%), petty trade (91 villages, 24.5%) and daily labor (47 villages, 12.7%). When asked about food and nutrition, the top 3 coping mechanisms reported during food scarcity** were reduced meals (334 of the villages assessed, 90%), loans (332 villages, 89.5%) and selling of livestock (161 villages, 43.4%).⁴¹⁹

In its February 2024 Update on Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in Ethiopia, UNHCR recorded 3,459,881 IDPs and 2,530,101 IDP returnees.⁴²⁰ It detailed the IDP Top 3 zones of origin as North Western (Tigray): 324,497 (9%) Liban (Somali): 233,055 (7%) West Guji (Oromia): 229,202 (7%), but did not provide further breakdowns of IDP origins or detail ethnicities of the IDPs.⁴²¹ It recorded that as of 29 February 2024 Amhara hosted 66,153 IDPs and 389,937 IDP returnees.⁴²²

a. Freedom of movement

As explained above, note that sources do not report on the ethnicity of IDPs, and the situation of IDPs in Amhara does not necessarily relate to the situation of Amhara IDPs.

Within Amhara

The Global Protection Cluster reported that in September 2022, “Police in Debre Birhan were accused of mistreating and beating IDPs in China site following a violent protest in the town in which the IDPs participated. Two IDPs at Jarri Turkish site were also shot and injured while trying to escape from the camp by defying off-camp movement restrictions imposed by the Federal Police”.⁴²³ The same source further noted that:

Amhara - IDPs who had fled Welleh and Tirkit camps due to fighting and were relocated to Sekota town, WagHimra, have been returned to the camps by the authorities. So far 5,167 individuals have returned to Welleh and 5,768 to Tirkit. Some IDPs are however reluctant to return to the camps, and protection partners are monitoring their situation to establish the reasons of their reluctance. It is assumed that some IDPs are still traumatised by the fighting that arose in the camps that resulted in killings and injuries of some of them.⁴²⁴

⁴¹⁹ IOM, [Ethiopia — National Displacement Report 17 \(August - September 2023\)](#), 20 December 2023, p.31

⁴²⁰ UNCHR, [Ethiopia- Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons as of 29 February 2024](#), 16 March 2024

⁴²¹ UNCHR, [Ethiopia- Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons as of 29 February 2024](#), 16 March 2024

⁴²² UNCHR, [Ethiopia- Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons as of 29 February 2024](#), 16 March 2024

⁴²³ Global Protection Cluster, [Protection Cluster Ethiopia: Monthly Protection Overview – September 2022](#), 28 October 2022

⁴²⁴ Global Protection Cluster, [Protection Cluster Ethiopia: Monthly Protection Overview – September 2022](#), 28 October 2022

The August 2022 UNICEF Situation Report noted that “In Amhara, movement restrictions and curfews have been imposed in most woredas of North Wollo, North Gondar, and Wag Himra zones”.⁴²⁵

In March 2024 Refugees International reported that “In Amhara, for example, thousands of IDPs from Oromia and Benishangul Gumuz regions have been without food. Others were recently threatened to be forcibly returned to Oromia”.⁴²⁶ The report cited an Addis Standard article on this point which further explained “recent mandate from local authorities has brought distress to the thousands of individuals seeking shelter at the Jara Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) center in the Northern Wollo Zone of the Amhara region”.⁴²⁷ It further noted:

The center, currently housing thousands of IDPs seeking refuge from the ongoing conflict in the Oromia region, now faces a new crisis as local authorities have issued a stern directive demanding that these already vulnerable individuals vacate the premises quickly, once again subjecting them to a state of uncertainty.

Since 2018, more than 10,000 individuals have sought refuge in the Jara camp after fleeing from various zones of the Oromia region, particularly the East Welega Zone, due to ongoing conflicts.

The recent decision by regional authorities is based on an agreement between the Amhara and Oromia regions to facilitate the return of displaced individuals to their hometowns. Yirga Sisay, the head of the Prosperity Party office in Amhara, recently stated that IDPs residing in the region will gradually return to their places of origin based on the agreement reached between officials of the Amhara and Oromia regional administrations.

According to authorities, the plan is to relocate these individuals to an IDP center in Debre Birhan city first and then to their native homelands in the Oromia region. However, the displaced population is uncertain about potential relocation to areas that may still encounter problems, as expressed by some affected individuals.⁴²⁸

Outside of Amhara

According to the 2022 US Department of State Country Report on Human Rights Practices, “On August 11, local rights group the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) called on the government to respect citizens’ freedom of movement, following reports of passengers from eastern Amhara Region being denied entrance to the outskirts of Addis Ababa”.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁵ UNICEF, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Situation Report No. 8 August 2022](#), 2022

⁴²⁶ Refugees International, [SCARS OF WAR AND DEPRIVATION An Urgent Call to Reverse Tigray 's Humanitarian Crisis](#), March 2024

⁴²⁷ Addis Standard, [News: Displaced individuals in Jara IDP center fear uncertain future amidst eviction orders](#), 20 December 2023

⁴²⁸ Addis Standard, [News: Displaced individuals in Jara IDP center fear uncertain future amidst eviction orders](#), 20 December 2023

⁴²⁹ US Department of State, [Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 20 March 2023, Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, D. FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT AND THE RIGHT TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY

In October 2022, the OHCHR reported that “The protracted armed conflict in the Tigray, Afar and Amhara regions of Ethiopia have heightened risks of trafficking for sexual exploitation as a form of sexual violence in conflict”, citing UN Experts as stating that “We are alarmed by reports of refugee and internally displaced women and girls in the Tigray, Afar, and Amhara regions being abducted while attempting to move to safer places [...] We are concerned at the risks of trafficking, in particular for purposes of sexual exploitation, including sexual slavery”.⁴³⁰

Insecurity Insight reported between 2 and 4 February 2023 that “In Ana town, Gobu Seyu woreda, East Wollega zone, Oromia region, a large number of gunmen dressed in military uniforms of the Oromo Liberation Front launched an invasion, during which they attacked an IDP camp, killing at least 42 people, mainly of Amhara ethnicity, including women and children. Eight youths were subsequently killed as federal security forces recaptured the town. Source: Addis Standard”.⁴³¹

The International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia noted in its October 2023 report:

Since the signing of CoHA between the federal government and TPLF in the north, conflict between OLA and ENDF, allied with Oromia regional government forces, appears to have escalated again, including in the four Wollega zones, in Guji, in Borana, and in some parts of West Shewa. In December 2022, UN OCHA described the security situation in Oromia as ‘fast deteriorating.’⁷⁰ An initial week of talks in Tanzania between OLA and the Federal Government failed in April 2023, with government counterinsurgency operations relaunched in May 2023. Meanwhile reports of violence leading to deaths and displacement of Amharas and Oromos have continued.^{71”}⁴³²

⁷⁰ UN OCHA, Ethiopia – Situation update, 15 December 2022.

⁷¹ ACLED, 29 September 2023, <https://epo.acleddata.com/western-oromia-conflict/>

Amnesty International described that “On 2 February 2024, Ethiopia’s House of People’s Representatives endorsed an extension of the state of emergency, which came into force in August 2023 amid escalating violence in Amhara region between government forces and Fano militia. During the last six months, the nationwide state of emergency has given authorities sweeping powers to arrest suspects without a court warrant, impose curfews, restrict the right to freedom of movement, and ban public assemblies or associations”.⁴³³

b. Access to land and housing

⁴³⁰ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) News, [Ethiopia: Critical moment to strengthen fight against trafficking in the Tigray, Afar, and Amhara](#), 3 October 2022

⁴³¹ Insecurity Insight, [Protection in Danger Monthly News Brief - February 2023](#), 21 March 2023

⁴³² International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Comprehensive investigative findings and legal determinations](#), 13 October 2023, paragraph 82

⁴³³ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: Authorities must stop using state of emergency law to silence peaceful dissent](#), 19 February 2024

As explained above, note that sources do not report on the ethnicity of IDPs, and the situation of IDPs in Amhara does not necessarily relate to the situation of Amhara IDPs.

General

As of June 2022 UNOCHA recorded with regards to emergency shelter and non-food needs that “Adequate shelters and NFIs for IDPs living in highly congested sites and facing substandard living conditions across northern Ethiopia”.⁴³⁴

The February 2024 UNOCHA Humanitarian Needs Overview reported with regards to housing in IDP camps:

According to the latest DTM, the living conditions in the assessed IDP sites continue to be inadequate and unsafe. In 42.1 per cent of assessed sites, none of the households are living in individual household shelters.

Vulnerable population groups, especially women and girls, are the most likely to be negatively affected by lack of privacy and security due to the lack of adequate individual household shelters and lighting. In addition, people with difficulties seeing, hearing, walking, communicating, and understanding (for reasons other than the language spoken) face multiple difficulties in relation to their shelters. In addition, in 32.78 per cent of assessed sites, the IDPs reported they were living in shelters that did not protect inhabitants from the weather. Furthermore, as per DTM data also shows that 40.1 per cent of IDPs have limited access to emergency shelter kits (e.g., plastic sheets or rope), which raises a concern in terms of protection against health and other risks.

Crowded conditions in IDP camps with often a shortage of latrines and water facilities, provide the ideal environment for the emergence and spread of infectious diseases.

A lack of government capacity to conduct surveillance for the rapid detection of disease outbreaks is shifting responsibility to humanitarian partners amid funding shortages. Moreover, malnutrition and increasing outbreaks of diseases such as malaria, cholera and measles are worsening the situation in different parts of the country. Similarly, the heavy rains and flash floods have negatively affected IDPs with the destruction of their shelter, loss of cattle, and an increased risk in the in the spreading cholera outbreak.⁴³⁵

The same source noted with regards to the housing situation for returning IDPs in general, including to Amhara:

The situation of returning IDPs in Ethiopia remains complex and challenging. The number of IDPs returning to their home regions has increased in recent months. While initiatives are underway by the Oromia and Amhara authorities to resolve hostilities and encourage IDPs to return, the humanitarian conditions remain poor due to lack of access to basic services and continued protection risks. As of October 2023, over 2.5 million returning IDPs were dispersed across the 2,702 villages assessed by IOM. However, the actual caseload may be higher due to inaccessibility caused by insecurity and environmental

⁴³⁴ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia - Northern Ethiopia Humanitarian Update Situation Report, 11 June 2022](#), 11 June 2022

⁴³⁵ UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview: Ethiopia](#), 26 February 2024, p. 31

factors in various regions. Tigray, Amhara, and Afar bear the highest returning IDP caseloads nationwide. Most returning IDPs were not able to return to their shelter; 42.41 per cent reported this was due to the shelters being wholly damaged, and 32.14 per cent reported it was due to partial damage. Those who successfully return face significant obstacles in rebuilding their lives. Many returning IDPs have limited access to basic services, loss of livelihoods, and lack of resources. This leaves them struggling to access food, water, shelter, and healthcare, and often resorting to negative coping mechanisms (including child marriage, child labor, begging, and transactional sex especially in the case of vulnerable categories such as women and girls, children, older people, and persons with disabilities. Returns can be further complicated by the presence of explosive remnants of war (ERW), and by disputes related to house, land and property rights. GBV among returning IDPs is a significant concern, faced with return to locations where social protection mechanisms are disrupted, they have no access to continue the GBV care continuum, they are left exposed to further GBV risks, sexual exploitation and abuse and forced into negative coping mechanisms.⁴³⁶

Within Amhara

This section should be read in conjunction with [III. d. Destruction of Civilian Infrastructure and Homes](#).

As of June 2022 UNOCHA recorded “in Amhara, IDPs continue to suffer from overcrowded and sub-standard living conditions in IDP sites, while reports of new arrivals are received”.⁴³⁷

The Global Protection Cluster reported that in September 2022, “In all the IDP sites OHCHR monitored in August, lack of access to adequate food remains a major problem affecting communities facing a humanitarian crisis. Malnutrition is commonplace in most IDP sites, notably Debre Birhan (Amhara) and Guji (Oromia). [...] In addition, the amount of food distributed to households is inadequate, mostly consisting of grains and not including other cooking ingredients such as oil required to prepare meals”.⁴³⁸

In March 2023, UNOCHA reported that “Population displacements have reached a new high in Amhara, since January 2023 leaving 169,686 people displaced in four woredas of Oromia Special Zone (Wello) and 213,000 in five woredas of North Shewa Zone”.⁴³⁹ The report further noted with regards to Amhara that:

According to authorities, tens of thousands of families are in critical need of shelter and non-food-item (NFI) assistance. While an estimated 20,000 people have received about 3,000 quintals of food in North Shewa, the majority in the two zones still require support, including water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), as well as food, shelter and non-food items and protection services.

⁴³⁶ UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview: Ethiopia](#), 26 February 2024, p. 32

⁴³⁷ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia - Northern Ethiopia Humanitarian Update Situation Report, 11 June 2022](#), 11 June 2022

⁴³⁸ Global Protection Cluster, [Protection Cluster Ethiopia: Monthly Protection Overview – September 2022](#), 28 October 2022

⁴³⁹ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia - Situation Report, 20 Mar 2023](#), 20 March 2023

The Jara IDP site in North Wello Zone, Amhara continues to receive more displaced people (now at 8,000 people). Response with water, food and basic health and nutrition assistance remains limited in partner number and scale of assistance. In addition, intercommunal fighting had built up near the site early February. Alternative site options as well as a scale-up of humanitarian assistance are required. Similarly, further support is needed for IDPs in other parts of Amhara.

In Wag Hamra Zone, partners have commenced humanitarian assistance in Beltarf village, Abergele woreda, whereby more than 550 households (HHs) consisting of IDPs and host community are presumed to have access to clean and safe water from a borehole rehabilitated in February. Complementarily Wag Hamra zonal authorities have commenced the return of 1,200 IDPs to accessible kebeles, including Saqa and 03-Debre Birhan, in Abergele Woreda as of 15 February 2023. Return facilitation including support to return voluntariness, transportation, shelter rehabilitation and reconstruction, agriculture, and adequate public services remain as key areas for intervention in return areas. It is noted, however, that further returns are on hold until adequate return responses are prepared. Food, NFI, cash support, functional social services are identified as critical conditions pre and post return.⁴⁴⁰

The April 2023 UNOCHA Situation Report noted that:

About 175,000 people (IDPs and returning IDPs) in four woredas of Oromia Special Zone, Amhara, are in urgent need of humanitarian support as identified in a mid-March Multi-Cluster Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA). Several driving factors in recent years, including locust outbreak, drought, and conflict have contributed to the erosion of the local livelihood base of the zone's population and, therefore directly affecting the food security context, both in availability and accessibility.

Following the January 2023 conflict those displaced were left without production (food) and those who returned to their localities required food assistance due to their level of food insecurity. Food assistance was provided on the onset of the recent conflict. Some areas including Chefa Robit Woreda have not been reached at all. While people have been surviving on handouts from communities, a total of 1,067.29 MT of food/45 days is needed to feed IDPs in camps until they can produce food for themselves. While critical needs include water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), shelter, protection and nonfood item (NFI) assistance. The absence of Targeted Supplementary Feeding Programme (TSFP) service and essential health and nutrition services, is increasing the vulnerability of children and pregnant and lactating women to higher levels of malnutrition. More than 350,000 IDPs in the North Shewa Zone are also estimated to require similar assistance.⁴⁴¹

The August 2023 UNOCHA Situation Report recorded that "IDPs living within IDP sites, particularly in South Wello, Amhara, require maintenance and support to settle in or find other options, such as communal facilities or rental support, to decongest the existing camps".⁴⁴²

In March 2024 Refugees International reported that "Ethiopia hosts 4.38 million internally displaced people (IDPs) – one of the highest IDP populations in the world. Some 1 million of those IDPs are in Tigray. While some have been able to return in the wake of the COHA, many are still displaced and living with family, in schools, and in some cases, camp-like settlements. Most of these locations are crowded,

⁴⁴⁰ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia - Situation Report, 20 Mar 2023](#), 20 March 2023

⁴⁴¹ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia - Situation Report, 03 Apr 2023](#), 3 April 2023

⁴⁴² UNOCHA, [Ethiopia - Situation Report, 4 Aug 2023](#), 4 August 2023

unsanitary, and unsafe. Most IDPs that Refugees International spoke with insist that they hope to return home someday. Yet damaged infrastructure, a lack of services, and ongoing insecurity – particularly in western and southern Tigray where Eritrean and Amhara forces are still present – make that unlikely anytime soon”.⁴⁴³

In its March 2024 Situation Report, UNOCHA recorded that in Amhara:

At least half of the IDPs in the region are not receiving humanitarian assistance for lack of Government and partners’ resource capacities and insecurity. There is delay and shortages of general food distribution (GFD) in IDP sites in North Gondar, North Wello, Wag Hamra, South Wello, Central Gondar and North Shewa zones, where nutrition support is being provided through mobile health and nutrition teams (MHNTs). The shelter situation of IDPs is precarious considering some 8,000 households in Abergele district (Wag Hamra) are living amongst host communities or in public buildings (mostly in damaged homes, rented houses, host family homes and in open compounds of host families with no shelter).

In Debre Berhan, over 23,000 IDPs reside in three camps and close to 7,700 IDPs live outside camps. While partners are providing shelter and rental support, it is not nearly enough. In addition to shelter, priority needs are food (currently at irregular distribution) and non-food items (sleeping mats and blankets, considering the cold weather in Debre Berhan).⁴⁴⁴

Outside of Amhara

Limited information was found amongst the sources consulted specifically on the housing situation for Amhara IDPs in other regions of Ethiopia.

In May 2023 the Amhara Association of America issued a report on Home Demolitions and Forced Evictions of Amharas in the Newly Established Sheger City Administration of the Oromia Region which included amongst its summary of findings that:

- Tens of thousands houses of non-Oromo ethnic groups (most of whom are belonging to the Amhara ethnic group) were demolished in the newly-established Sheger City Administration of Oromia Region. For instance, over 9,300 houses belonging to non-Oromo owners (most belonging to Amhara owners) were demolished in Jemo Terara Medihanialem, Fanuel Church, Haji Anba, Enku Gabriel, Lideta, Lencho Sefer, Anfo-Mariam, Ertu Teklehaymanot, and Gorsebe areas of the newly established Sheger City Administration alone.
- There were killings, infliction of bodily injury, arrests and enforced disappearances of those opposing the forced eviction. In this regard, although the exact number of civilians killed throughout the eviction period is not yet known, at least three individuals were killed between January 1-30, 2023 and many more thereafter. Several others were injured, arrested and be victims of enforced disappearance.

⁴⁴³ Refugees International, [SCARS OF WAR AND DEPRIVATION An Urgent Call to Reverse Tigray 's Humanitarian Crisis](#), March 2024

⁴⁴⁴ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Situation Report, 1 Mar 2024](#), 1 March 2024

- Hundreds of thousands of people have been forced to fled from their homes, became homeless and live in dire conditions either in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, streets, the rubbles of their homes or low-level rented houses. Thousands of other non-Oromo ethnic residents (especially Amharas) remain under threat of further forced evictions.⁴⁴⁵

c. Access to livelihoods

For information on the humanitarian situation in Amhara in general, see: [IV b. Access to Basic Services, Education and Health](#)

As explained above, note that sources do not report on the ethnicity of IDPs, and the situation of IDPs in Amhara does not necessarily relate to the situation of Amhara IDPs.

General

The June 2022 Protection Cluster explained with regards to the situation for IDPs in Ethiopia in general:

IDPs arrive at displacement locations traumatized, exhausted, at times physically injured or having experienced separation from family members, loss of homes, documentation and other belongings. At the points of arrival, they often have to deal with limited to no essential services and livelihood opportunities; a harsh reality which increases their exposure to protection risks and possible tension with host communities. Children are particularly affected, representing a very high proportion of the overall IDP population.⁴⁴⁶

The February 2024 UNOCHA Humanitarian Needs Overview reported that “For those living in IDP camps, the loss of assets, property, and livelihood sources, coupled with challenges in the camps, creates psychological, social, and economic problems for both males and females”.⁴⁴⁷

Within Amhara

Citing the IOM in April 2022, ACAPS noted that “In Amhara, returning IDPs rely on loans and family support, temporarily migrate in search of food and services, reduce meals, eat wild plants, sell livestock,

⁴⁴⁵ Amhara Association of America, [Report on Home Demolitions and Forced Evictions of Amharas in the Newly Established Sheger City Administration of the Oromia Region: A City that Denies Amhara Existence in their Homeland of Ethiopia](#), 14 May 2023

⁴⁴⁶ Global Protection Cluster, [Protection Analysis Update: June 2022; Ethiopia](#), June 2022

⁴⁴⁷ UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview: Ethiopia](#), 26 February 2024, p. 43

and receive food aid as coping mechanisms (IOM 09/04/2022)".⁴⁴⁸ The same source cited UNHCR as reporting that "As in Tigray, there are protection concerns related to negative coping mechanisms. Reports indicate that early marriage and dropping out of school are common among displaced boys and girls in Afar and Amhara (Protection Cluster/UNHCR 06/05/2022)".⁴⁴⁹

In October 2022, The Ethiopian Reporter noted that "Currently, there is no clear legal framework and public institution that is mandated with IDPs' support, security, and providing lasting solutions, according to a new report compiled on IDPs by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission".⁴⁵⁰ The same source further wrote that "A number of IDP sites lack security protection and are exposed to various security threats. Rape, unaccounted crimes, and lack of support are rampant in IDP sites, according to the report. Facilitation of support and human rights protection is also nascent in IDP sites".⁴⁵¹

The World Food Programme noted in November 2022 that "The situation in conflict-affected areas in Amhara and Afar also remains dire. While market supplies are reportedly improving as trade routes open in Amhara, households' ability to purchase food remains limited. In Afar, the large-scale loss of livestock has resulted in extremely low access to income and food (FEWS NET, 2022)".⁴⁵²

The July 2023 UNOCHA Situation report recorded that "As of June 2023, the number of IDPs in Amhara compounds to 580,0000 people across 15 woredas/ districts according to regional government data. Data also indicates that previously support was made for the return of more than 360,000 people to North Gondar, North Wello, Wag Hamra and Oromo Special zones. Primary needs for food, shelter, NFIs, as well as health, education, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services remain amid insufficient humanitarian response, including due to limited partner capacities, for returnees and conflict affected communities in those return areas".⁴⁵³ The same source further noted:

Moreover, continuous attention needs to be given to IDPs within camp settings, and living amongst host communities, and those who cannot return to their homes soon due to insecurity or fragile humanitarian contexts in their places of origin such as the over 23,100 IDPs in Zone 2 of Afar Region, or to those who remain in displacement for various reasons. For example, in Dabat IDP site, North Gondar Zone (Amhara), the humanitarian response gap has over 1,300 IDPs (close to 800 of whom are children) in urgent need of food/cash assistance, as rations from early this year are depleting and mothers' resort to negative coping mechanisms, such as begging, to feed their children. [...]

⁴⁴⁸ ACAPS, [Thematic Report: Northern Ethiopia: two years into the crisis](#), 3 November 2022

⁴⁴⁹ ACAPS, [Thematic Report: Northern Ethiopia: two years into the crisis](#), 3 November 2022

⁴⁵⁰ The Ethiopian Reporter, [Institutional vacuum leaves IDPs in disarray](#), 30 October 2022

⁴⁵¹ The Ethiopian Reporter, [Institutional vacuum leaves IDPs in disarray](#), 30 October 2022

⁴⁵² WFP, FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, [Monitoring food security in food crisis countries with conflict situations; A joint FAO/WFP update for the members of the United Nations Security Council; November 2022; Issue No 11](#), November 2022

⁴⁵³ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia - Situation Report, 27 Jul 2023](#), 25 July 2023

A key issue in several regions is with regards to people living in protracted internal displacement and their host communities. They are some of the most vulnerable as they often cannot access basic services, education, and health care, and they face barriers to stable housing and sustainable livelihoods.⁴⁵⁴

In August 2023, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission recorded that:

Humanitarian assistance to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the Amhara region has been interrupted due to the conflict and the blocking of roads. The deteriorating security situation and interruption of services have placed refugees and asylum-seekers in Northern Gondar Zone, Dabat Woreda, in a situation of heightened vulnerability, and exacerbated protection concerns.

In Debre Birhan city, due to heavy fighting in 4 densely populated kebeles between August 6 and 7, 2023, civilians including in a hospital, church, and school as well as residents in their neighborhoods and workers in their workplaces apparently killed due to fragments from heavy artillery or in crossfire. IDPs in Debre Birhan are also at risk of being caught in the crossfires, particularly those in what is commonly known as the China IDPs site near Kebele 8 which hosts close to 13,000 people.⁴⁵⁵

In its October 2023 Situation Update UNOCHA reported that in Amhara “The needs of about 591,857 internally displaced people (IDPs) in the region, including 90,322 IDPs in North Shewa Zone and Debre Birhan town, remain largely unmet. An estimated 250,000 IDPs in western Amhara zones have not been assisted except for two food distribution in 2022. Displacement sites are reported to have deplorable living conditions with high risk of health outbreaks, particularly amid cholera and malaria cases. Partners are still assessing the toll of the current situation in the region including information on any new displacement”.⁴⁵⁶

In its December 2023 Situation Update UNOCHA reported that “the assessment findings indicate limited lifesaving multi-sectoral response for over 600,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 360,000 returnees in the region, requiring urgent assistance including health, WASH, nutrition (MAM(2) support), and NFIs to meet immediate lifesaving needs and support to rebuild resilience”.⁴⁵⁷

In its March 2024 Situation Report, UNOCHA recorded that “In Amhara, an estimated 66,153 displaced people/18,335 households were identified in 88 sites between August and September 2023. Hostilities were the primary reason for displacement (98 per cent of sites assessed), while only 2 per cent was due to flooding. Assessments identified food (89.8 per cent of assessed sites), shelter (64.8 per cent) and livelihood support (35.2 per cent) as the priority needs”.⁴⁵⁸

Outside of Amhara

⁴⁵⁴ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia - Situation Report, 27 Jul 2023](#), 25 July 2023

⁴⁵⁵ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, [The human rights impact of the armed conflict on civilians in Amhara Regional State](#), 14 August 2023

⁴⁵⁶ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia - Situation Report, 31 Oct 2023](#), 31 October 2023

⁴⁵⁷ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia - Situation Report, 1 Dec 2023](#), 1 December 2023

⁴⁵⁸ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Situation Report, 1 Mar 2024](#), 1 March 2024

The July 2023 UNOCHA Situation report recorded that:

A key issue in several regions is with regards to people living in protracted internal displacement and their host communities. They are some of the most vulnerable as they often cannot access basic services, education, and health care, and they face barriers to stable housing and sustainable livelihoods.

For instance, displaced due to violence and insecurity, people in Horo Guduru, East, West, and Kellem Wellega zones in Oromia remain without humanitarian assistance due to limited access, resources, and active partners operating in the area due to lack of resources. Reportedly, over 13,800 people displaced in 2021 and 2022 (after returns) due to insecurity in Gobu Sayo and Wayu Tuka woredas in East Wellega Zone of Oromia, are currently sheltered among host communities. IDPs do not have access to daily basic services or livelihood activities and their movement is restricted within camps and towns due to threats of armed group movements beyond their domicile. Food assistance, NFIs, and health services are among their primary concerns.⁴⁵⁹

According to a December 2023 World Health Organization press release, “Oromia is experiencing new displacements, and in contrast returns by people previously displaced(3). Recent hostilities in West Gojam, Amhara, have led to the displacement of about 4,000 people to Horo Guduru Wellega Zone since 10 November. Lifesaving humanitarian assistance to the displaced is urgent, including ESNFI, food assistance, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), health and protection. The regional DRMC distributed a reported 9 MT of maize so far and regional level clusters and partners (limited in number) have been alerted to mobilize response”.⁴⁶⁰

In its March 2024 Situation Report, UNOCHA recorded with regards to returns from Amhara to Oromia (without specifying the ethnicity of people affected) that:

As part of the national IDP rehabilitation and recovery plan, Government-facilitated returns of IDPs from the Amhara Region to their areas of origin in Oromia have begun as of 18 February 2024. About 1,530 people (416 households) out of a planned 4,100 IDPs have so far been relocated from Debre Berhan and South Wello zones (Amhara) to temporary sites in East Wollega, West Wollega and West Shewa zones (Oromia) as of 26 February. Implementation of returns have, however, been reported to face some challenges with regards to ensuring compliance to international IDP return principles. The humanitarian community has had multiple engagements with Government counterparts at federal and regional levels to constructively engage in and support the Government in a returns process that is in line with international standards”.⁴⁶¹

d. Discrimination experienced by IDPs

As explained above, note that sources do not report on the ethnicity of IDPs, and the situation of IDPs in Amhara does not necessarily relate to the situation of Amhara IDPs.

⁴⁵⁹ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia - Situation Report, 27 Jul 2023](#), 25 July 2023

⁴⁶⁰ World Health Organization, [WHO expresses concern for escalating public health needs in Ethiopia](#), 20 December 2023

⁴⁶¹ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Situation Report, 1 Mar 2024](#), 1 March 2024

General

In December 2022 the UN Human Rights Committee expressed concern “about the continuing prevalence of trafficking in persons, particularly in migrants and internally displaced persons, forced labour, child labour and sexual exploitation of children”.⁴⁶²

UNOCHA’s Ethiopia Humanitarian Needs Overview for 2024, published in February 2024 noted that “The convergence of multiple crises has disproportionately affected communities, including vulnerable groups such as women, children, young people, IDPs, refugees, older people, and persons with disabilities, leading to increased demands on humanitarian and social service systems. These crises have worsened well-being and exposed more people to vulnerability, as evidenced by food insecurity, acute malnutrition in children and women, and survival strategies like child labor, child marriage, begging, and engaging in transactional sex”.⁴⁶³ The same source further noted that “In IDP camps, psychological and healthcare services, and legal support services are limited”.⁴⁶⁴

IDP access to healthcare in Amhara

The Global Protection Cluster reported that in September 2022, “There is a wide gap in free or affordable health care services provision for IDPs in all the areas visited by OHCHR in the August. There is particularly a pressing need for essential medicine in locations monitored in Tigray, Afar, Oromia, and Amhara regions, as well as Dire Dawa. [...] Lack of proper GBV management mechanism and tailored protection services for disabled women and girls in Debre Birhan (Amhara) were the major challenges identified confronting IDP women and girls”.⁴⁶⁵

In a February 2023 Working Paper, UNDP reported with regards to the delivery of essential health services:

Essential health services delivery has been hindered in conflict affected areas of Afar, Amhara and Tigray where over 8.3 million people need support. The displacement of health workers and deferred salary payment of healthcare workforce for more than 15 months have resulted in high turnover and inadequate technical expertise. Damage and looting of health facilities have also affected the delivery of essential health services even though documentation of these remains difficult due to active conflict. Limited access to Tigray, Afar (Zone 2) and Amhara (northern parts of Wag Hamra and North Wollo), combined with fuel shortages prevent partners from reaching populations in need, both in health facilities and

⁴⁶² UN Human Rights Committee, [Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Ethiopia \[CCPR/C/ETH/CO/2\]](#), 7 December 2022

⁴⁶³ UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview: Ethiopia](#), 26 February 2024, p. 22-3

⁴⁶⁴ UNOCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview: Ethiopia](#), 26 February 2024, p. 30

⁴⁶⁵ Global Protection Cluster, [Protection Cluster Ethiopia: Monthly Protection Overview – September 2022](#), 28 October 2022

through mobile health and nutrition teams (MHNTs), leaving the most vulnerable host community members and IPDs at increased risk of preventable disease and death.⁴⁶⁶

In its December 2023 Situation Update UNOCHA reported that “While the capacity of health facilities in the region and particularly in Gojam zones to provide basic health services is limited due to the current hostilities that affect the full functionality of the health facilities with reported destruction, lack of essential drugs and testing and treatment kits. The Gojam zone hosts 30 per cent of the IDP population in the region and the inability to provide health services may increase their vulnerability. Hence, scaling up humanitarian response in the Gojam zones remains critical”.⁴⁶⁷

USAID reported in January 2024 that “The UN reports that violence has limited the capacity of health facilities to provide basic health services in Amhara due to the destruction of facilities and a lack of essential medicines, testing, and treatment kits. Amhara’s East Gojam and West Gojam zones, which host approximately 30 percent of the region’s IDP population, face a particular shortage of health services, increasing the vulnerability of IDP populations. Additionally, internet access remained intermittent throughout Amhara as of late December due to the conflict, impeding communication between health actors and restricting routine immunization efforts as disease outbreaks increased, according to the Health Cluster ”.⁴⁶⁸

IDP access to education, particularly in Amhara

Reporting on regional inequalities in education, Minority Rights Group International noted in a 2022 report that “Millions of Ethiopian children are out of school, amounting to 14.4 per cent of the primary school age population as of 2015: 911,879 boys and 1,394,680 girls. Poverty, geographical distance and the fact that many children work or are responsible for household chores all contribute to this shortfall. Furthermore, because of traditional gender norms and expectations, many girls in particular are unable to attend school. The large numbers of displaced and refugee children in Ethiopia also face additional barriers to accessing education. UNICEF operates programmes to provide education to children in these challenging humanitarian contexts”.⁴⁶⁹

The Global Protection Cluster reported that in September 2022, “Children affected by displacement in Somali, Gondar (Amhara), and Debre Birhan (Amhara) have continued to face challenges in accessing education because of restrictions in movement, and families’ lack of money to cover school expenses.

⁴⁶⁶ UNDP, [UNDP Ethiopia Working Paper Series: Crisis, Resilience and Opportunity: Poverty, Human Development, and the Macro-Economy in Ethiopia, 2020-23](#), 13 February 2023

⁴⁶⁷ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia - Situation Report, 1 Dec 2023](#), 1 December 2023

⁴⁶⁸ USAID, [Ethiopia – Complex Emergency, Fact Sheet #1 Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2024](#), 8 January 2024

⁴⁶⁹ Minority Rights Group International, [Briefing: Access to education and health among minorities and indigenous peoples in Ethiopia](#), 3 February 2022

Moreover, the schools available for IDPs in Debre Birhan, Amhara do not cater for the special needs of children with disabilities”.⁴⁷⁰

In a February 2023 Working Paper, UNDP reported with regards to education:

The shocks, including the war and the drought, have had a major negative impact on schooling and learning. These are likely to have both immediate and medium – to long-term effects on children and, more broadly, on human development, socialisation, productivity and output. Overall, 4.2 million children (36% of them girls) and 200,000 teachers and education staff have experienced the effects of conflict. Many schools have been damaged in Northern Ethiopia (Table 2). The greatest impacts are in Amhara and Tigray. Based on the Ministry of Education’s (MoE) data, more than 9,000 schools are either fully or partially damaged requiring reconstruction or rehabilitation to ensure children have access to a safe and protective learning environment. Education activities are affected also by the occupation of schools by IDPs and, in some cases, armed groups, rendering these schools inaccessible for children and teachers. Thousands of people have fled their areas of origin and are straining the capacity of already overwhelmed host community schools as available schools and supplies are not able to cater to both host community children and children that are IDPs. Children in significant parts of Northern Ethiopia, are now faced with losing 2-3 years of schooling from the combined effects of shocks; the cognitive losses arising from this situation are likely to be considerable and, worryingly, increasingly irreversible.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁷⁰ Global Protection Cluster, [Protection Cluster Ethiopia: Monthly Protection Overview – September 2022](#), 28 October 2022

⁴⁷¹ UNDP, [UNDP Ethiopia Working Paper Series: Crisis, Resilience and Opportunity: Poverty, Human Development, and the Macro-Economy in Ethiopia, 2020-23](#), 13 February 2023