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ETHIOPIA: AT LEAST 100 DEAD IN LATEST SURGE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST ETHNIC MINORITIES

Responding to the horrifying killing of at least 100 people by armed assailants in Ethiopia's Benishangul -Gumuz Region on the morning of 23 December, Netsanet Belay, Research and Advocacy Director of Amnesty International, said: Amnesty International said:

"This brutal attack against Amhara, Oromo and Shinasha residents of villages in Benishangul-Gumuz underscores the urgent need for the Ethiopian government to act to stop violence against ethnic minorities.

"Amnesty International independently interviewed via phone five survivors of the attack and one official from Bulen District, all of whom described how armed members of the ethnic Gumuz community attacked houses of people from the Amhara, Oromo and Shinasha communities starting from around 5 am this morning. Perpetrators set homes alight and stabbed and shot people.

"At least 100 deaths have been reported so far. With dozens still unaccounted for and homes still ablaze, the death toll is likely to rise and there must be an urgent investigation into this horrendous attack. Perpetrators must be brought to justice and the Ethiopian authorities must make clear that this kind of violence will not be tolerated.

"While Amnesty international is unable to verify identities of the perpetrators, this attack appears to be the latest targeting of people of ethnic minorities in the area. Since September 2020, there have been successive waves of violence targeting the ethnic Amhara, Shinasha, Oromo and Agew residents of Benishangul-Gumuz Region.

"In September, armed people carried out multiple attacks on ethnic Amhara and Agew residents of Benishangul Region, killing at least 45 people and displacing thousands. Today's attack came less than 24 hours after the Ethiopian Prime Minister discussed security and reconciliation efforts in the Benishangul-Gumuz Region - efforts which have been undermined by this massacre."

According to the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, at least 34 Amhara and Agew people were killed by armed Gumuz forces while traveling by bus in Dibate District of Benishangul-Gumuz Region in November 2020. The armed assailants refer to the non-Gumuz ethnic minority communities as 'Qey' (literally translated as 'red'), in apparent reference to their fair skin colour.

Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed was in Metekel town on 22 December to discuss with regional officials how to resolve repeated violence targeting ethnic minorities in the region, who are perceived as 'settlers' by members of the ethnic Gumuz community.