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Briefing Notes Summary

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Ethiopia – July to December 2024

31 December 2024

01 July 2024

Journalists released from prison

Reporters Without Borders reported the release of three journalists who had been arrested in Amhara during the state of emergency and detained for between seven and ten months. Other media professionals who reported on incidents during the conflict in Amhara continue to remain in custody. During the state of emergency that lasted from August 2023 to June 2024, also numerous civilians were arrested without any charges being brought.¹

Short-term redeployment of Ethiopian troops to Somalia

According to reports, the Ethiopian government sent troops from the Ethiopian National Defence Forces to the Somali region of Hiraaan on 22.06.24 to fend off attacks by the terrorist group al-Shabaab. The troops were withdrawn a few days later. Ethiopia has already deployed up to 10,000 soldiers in Somalia under the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) and bilateral agreements. Somali government representatives categorised the current troop deployment as an illegal border crossing that caused confrontations with local security forces. Since the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Ethiopia and the autonomous region of Somaliland, which is intended to give Ethiopia access to the Red Sea in return for the recognition of Somaliland's independence, relations between Ethiopia and Somalia have been tense. The Somalia central government classified the memorandum as a threat to its own sovereignty and adopted a law voiding the MoU. At the end of May 2024, the Somali government stated that it expected the total withdrawal of Ethiopian troops by the end of 2024. The withdrawal of ATMIS troops and the handover of security tasks to national Somali security forces is currently taking place in several phases. The mission is due to be completed by the end of 2024, however, there are indications of a delay. The African Union Security Council has also announced plans for a follow-up mission.²

08 July 2024

HRW report: Attack on medical facilities in Amhara

A report by HRW states that Ethiopian security forces attacked medical staff, patients and healthcare facilities in a way that can be categorised as war crimes. Since the beginning of the fighting between Ethiopian forces and the Fano militia in the Amhara region in August 2023, allegedly medical facilities in at least 13 towns have been attacked. The current security situation is severely restricting medical care and humanitarian aid. At least nine aid organisation staff are said to have been killed so far. International humanitarian law prohibits attacks on civilians and protects healthcare facilities, their staff and patients.³

22 July 2024

Increase in kidnappings

The number of kidnappings for ransom has increased in Ethiopia. The Oromia region is most affected. At the beginning of July 24, dozens of bus travellers, most of them students, were kidnapped by unknown persons near Garba Guracha (Oromia). Subsequently, a total of Birr 700,000 (approx. EUR 11,230; as at 22.07.24) in ransom was demanded from relatives. Witnesses testified that more than a hundred people are still missing. Members of the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) which is active in the region, are suspected to be behind the abductions. Mass abductions of this kind have occurred repeatedly in recent years.⁴

Restriction of freedom of expression and assembly

According to reports, the Ethiopian government has dissolved at least 1,504 civil society organisations in recent weeks because they had not submitted their legally required annual reports. Human rights organisations see this as a massive restriction of freedom of expression and assembly because it is considered as arbitrary measures by government.⁵

26 August 2024

Attack by gunmen in southern Ethiopia

Between 17.08. and 20.08.24, 14 people, including at least five civilians, were reportedly killed in an armed attack in Segen District (Konso Zone, South Ethiopia Regional State). The unknown assailants reportedly attacked government employees and civilians, looted and partially destroyed the police station, the municipal administration, the local hospital and the tax office. After the Ethiopian defence forces arrived, the attackers withdrew. The region already experienced several clashes in the past.⁶

Aid organisation staff member killed

Reportedly, UN OCHA confirmed the death of Yared Melese, who worked for the Action for Social Development and Environmental Protection Organisation and was kidnapped on 22.07.24. Melese was initially abducted by unknown persons in North Wello Zone, Amhara, after which a ransom was demanded. Most recently, the number of kidnappings increased significantly in Amhara and Oromia (cf. BN of 22.07.24). By now eight employees of aid organisations have been killed and another 14 were kidnapped in 2024, according to OCHA.⁷

09 September 2024

Opposition members released from prison

According to official information, seven members of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) were released on 03.09.24 after spending more than four years in prison. Reportedly, they were released on bail. The OLF declared that the imprisonment of its members was "unjust" and for political reasons. Human rights organisations had repeatedly called for the release of the opposition members in the past.⁸

23 September 2024

Renewed fighting in Amhara

According to media reports, at least nine people were killed and more than 30 injured in renewed fighting between the Fano militia and Ethiopian army units. These victims include both soldiers and civilians. The fighting broke out on 16.09.24 in the two towns of Debark and Dabat in the Amhara region and continued until the following day. According to unconfirmed reports, there was also fighting in the regional capital of Gondar.⁹

07 October 2024

Violent clashes and mass arrests in Amhara

It has been reported that at least 20 civilians were killed in violent clashes between government troops and the Fano militia near Gondar (Amhara region) on 03.10.24. In addition, hundreds of people with alleged links to Fano have been arrested since 28.09.24 in various towns and villages in Amhara. Many of those arrested were not brought before a court within 48 hours, as is actually prescribed by law. Human rights organisations have described the arrests as an arbitrary means of repression. The arrests and clashes took place in the course of a large-scale military offensive against Fano by the Ethiopian and regional armed forces. According to reports in the media, the employed measures also included actions against suspected Fano supporters, including arrests of academics and business people.¹⁰

14 October 2024

New president appointed

Taye Aske-Selassie Amde was officially appointed as Ethiopia's new president on 07.10.24. He succeeded the country's first female president, Sahle-Work Zewde, after a six-year tenure. Taye's previous posts included that of UN ambassador in New York and he had served as Ethiopia's foreign minister since February 2024. There have been reports in the media of discord between Sahle-Work and the incumbent prime minister, Abiy Ahmed. The head of state assumes a largely representative role, while it is the prime minister who wields political power. Taye has already expressed a willingness to enter into dialogue at national and international level and has announced that Ethiopia will play an active role in efforts to bring peace to the Horn of Africa.¹¹

21 October 2024

Fighting in Oromia claims lives

It has been reported that seven civilians were killed in Sadika Karsa, Robe Didea District (Arsi Zone) on 10.10.24. Eight civilians are still missing. Witnesses have reported that government troops were searching for members of the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA). Hostilities between government troops and OLA rebels have been ongoing for some years. Such clashes regularly claim lives and displace civilians.¹²

Air strikes in Amhara

According to local media, the armed clashes are continuing in Amhara (cf. BN of 23.09. and 07.10.24). Government troops reportedly attacked Fano militias in the first half of October 2024, in particular from the air, in parts of Amhara, including Gercheche, Merawi, North Mecha, South Mecha and Achefer (Gojjam province, Metekel zone). Dozens of people, including many children, are said to have been killed and schools destroyed in drone attacks. No precise details are available regarding the timing of the attacks and the numbers of victims. One source speaks of up to 100 dead.¹³

28 October 2024

Drone attacks in Amhara

At least 18 people, including a number of children, were reportedly killed in several drone attacks in Shoa, Gojjam and Gondar on 22.10., 25.10. and 26.10.24. The attacks were aimed at Fano militias in the Amhara region. They nevertheless resulted in a series of civilian casualties, with a primary school most recently being hit, according to eye-witness reports. The government has yet to comment on the latest incidents.¹⁴

11 November 2024

Attacks in Oromia and Amhara

The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission reported on 07.11.24 that it intended to investigate the killing of dozens of people in Oromia. 48 people are said to have been killed and others abducted in an attack by the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) in the North Shewa district. A district official is believed to be among the dead. It is unclear whether the other fatalities were civilians. The OLA, a break-away faction from the Oromo Liberation Front, has been responsible for increasing numbers of attacks in the region since 2018 (cf. BN of 21.10.24).

50 people, including women and children, were reportedly killed in a number of drone attacks on Achefer woreda (North Gojam Zone, Amhara) on 05.11.24. The attacks targeted a busy area with markets, schools and healthcare facilities. Local residents have reported that the territory is under the control of government forces. The latter have yet to comment on the incidents. The drone attacks are being linked to the current fighting against Fano militias in Amhara.¹⁵

16 December 2024

Air strikes in Amhara

Approximately 50 civilians are reported to have been killed in a drone attack in Zibst, North Wollo Zone, at the end of November 2024. The attack targeted a vehicle in a busy market district which was carrying numerous market visitors. The Ethiopian government's heavy air raids against the Fano militia have been ongoing for over a year and repeatedly hit civilian targets. Information regarding the date of the attack varies between 19.11. and 28.11.24.¹⁶

Forced recruitment of minors in Oromia

Recent findings by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission reveal serious human rights violations in Oromia. Minors, including eleven and fourteen year-olds, are reported to have been conscripted by regional militias. Forced recruitment is said to have taken place in Adama, Bishoftu, Jimma and Shahashemene, for example. According to the Commission's report, in some instances children are seized on their way to or from school and transported to recruitment centres. In addition, family members are said to have been coerced into paying between ETB 20,000 and 100,000 (approx. EUR 150 to 760 as per 10.12.24) to buy back their children's liberty.¹⁷

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Briefing Notes
BN-Redaktion@bamf.bund.de

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