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Ethiopia Query Response: The Human Rights Situation in Oromia (May 2022 - May 2024)

August 2024 (COI between 1st May 2022 and 31st May 2024)

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Contents

Contents	3
A. Explanatory note	5
B. Sources and databases consulted	7
List of acronyms	11
I. Background	12
a. Limitations on information and access	12
II. Overview of Oromia region	17
a. Geographical and demographic information	17
b. Political context	21
i. In general	21
ii. Oromo Liberation Front	25
1. Oromo Liberation Army/OLF-Shene	26
iii. Other Oromo political parties and linked parties	35
III. Security situation	36
a. May to November 2022	36
b. November 2022 to May 2024	44
c. Violence between armed groups and the government in Oromia	55
d. Intercommunal violence	75
i. Violence between OLA/Fano	78
ii. Civilian massacres	85
e. Peace talks	93
f. Situation in the Oromia Special Zone in Amhara region	105
IV. Human rights situation	114
a. Arbitrary arrest and detention	115
i. Arrest and detention of Oromos in Oromia	117
ii. Arrest and detention of Oromos outside of Oromia	134
iii. Torture and inhumane treatment of Oromos	136

b.	Killings	142
i.	Extrajudicial killings by state actors	142
ii.	Extrajudicial killings by non-state actors	159
c.	Forced evictions and destruction of property	171
d.	Restrictions on freedom of movement in Oromia.....	176
e.	Gender-based violence (GBV)	179
i.	Conflict-related sexual violence.....	181
ii.	Domestic violence.....	184
iii.	Female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C).....	186
f.	Situation of journalists and human rights defenders	188
g.	Situation of political opponents.....	194
V.	Humanitarian situation	197
a.	Humanitarian access.....	197
b.	Food insecurity.....	203
c.	Access to basic services, education, and health care	210
VI.	Internal displacement of Oromos within Ethiopia.....	217

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 Oromia region and/or of Oromo 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 1st May 2022 and 31st May 2024. All sources included in this report were accessed between June 2024 and August 2024.

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

- UN General Assembly, [*UN Security Council: Children and armed conflict; Report of the Secretary-General \[A/78/842-S/2024/384\]*](#), 3 June 2024
- OCHA, [*Ethiopia - Situation Report*](#), 10 June 2024
- Front Line Defenders, [*Concern at increasing crackdown on civil society in Ethiopia following threats against the Ethiopian Human Rights Council Organization \(EHRCO\)*](#), 10 June 2024
- UNHCR Ethiopia, [*PROTECTION AND SOLUTIONS MONITORING \(PSM\) | Report #11 | Oromia Region \(East, West and Kellem Wollega\) December 2023*](#), 12 June 2024
- OHCHR, [*Update on the human rights situation in Ethiopia in 2023*](#), 14 June 2024
- EPO, [*EPO Monthly Update | May 2024 - Ethiopia's national dialogue faces high expectations and criticism*](#), 14 June 2024
- UNHCR Ethiopia, [*Statistics Refugees and Internally Displaced People \(IDPs\) -May 2024*](#), 20 June 2024
- US Department of State (USDOS), [*2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Ethiopia*](#), 24 June 2024
- US Department of State (USDOS), [*2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Ethiopia*](#), 26 June 2024
- OCHA, [*Ethiopia Humanitarian Snapshot May 2024*](#), 4 July 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 \(WFP\)](#)

[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
GLF	Gambela Liberation Front
GoE	Government of Ethiopia
HSNN	Holy Synod of Oromia Nations and Nationalities
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
KII	Key informant interviews
NFI	Non-food items
OFC	Oromo Federalist Congress
OLA	Oromo Liberation Army
OLF-Shane	Oromo Liberation Front-Shane(/Shene)
OLLAA	Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association [Note: According to its website, the Oromo Legacy Leadership & Advocacy Association is a non profit, non partisan, organization that seeks to serve the socio-cultural needs of the Oromo people around the world. See OLLAA website , <i>About OLLA</i> [Last time accessed: 10.08.24]
OSG	Oromia Support Group [Note: The OSG ' About us ' section of its website describes the organisation as a “not-for-profit nongovernmental and nonpolitical organisation that promotes human rights”. It explains that its reports numbered 46-49 were based on information sought from refugees in Kenya, Somaliland, Djibouti and South Africa, whilst reports numbered 50 and above document “abuses under the current Ethiopian government”.]
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region
SoE	State of Emergency
TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Front
UAGs	Unidentified armed groups

I. Background

a. Limitations on information and access

The Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA)¹ observed humanitarian access limitations and data gaps within a report in August 2022 on food security in Oromia stating:

[...] OLLAA is gravely concerned that the official reports regarding the humanitarian situation inside Oromia may be significantly underestimating the true extent of humanitarian need throughout the region. [...]

Given the fact that humanitarian access has been cut off to multiple parts of Oromia due to security concerns, it seems likely that organizations tasked with calculating humanitarian needs cannot accurately assess the extent of need in these areas.²

Within a report on drone strikes killing civilians in Oromia in October 2022, Addis Standard observed that: “Communication blockades in areas where government forces are engaged in fighting with the rebels makes witness accounts hard to come by”.³

The same month, following an attack on civilians blamed on Fano militants in East Wollega zone of Oromia, Addis Standard noted that they had “contacted the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) for further details about the attack. The Commission said that although it had received information on the matter it was difficulty in verifying and obtaining accurate information due to the lack of network in the area”.⁴

AP News commented in December 2022 that “With telecommunications often cut and residents often fearing retaliation if they speak out, the death toll in the violence in Oromia is unknown”.⁵

A December 2022 New Lines investigation on drone strikes on civilian areas in Ethiopia stated that:

Verifying the claims and counterclaims from Oromia is often complex, as insecurity, communications shutdowns and war-induced road closures render much of the region inaccessible. Journalists are barred from traveling to rebel-held areas and have been punished for doing so.

¹ Oromo Legacy Leadership & Advocacy Association is a non profit, non partisan, organization that seeks to serve the socio-cultural needs of the Oromo people around the world. See [OLLAA website](#), *About OLLA* [Last time accessed: 10.08.24]

² Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Death By Starvation: An Update on the Humanitarian Situation inside Oromia](#), 3 August 2022

³ Addis Standard, [News: Residents say drone strike killed dozens of civilians in West Shewa, Oromia region; OLF, OFC condemn relentless airstrikes across Oromia](#), 25 October 2022

⁴ Addis Standard, [News: At least 30 people killed in an attacks blamed on “Fano militants” in East Wollega zone of Oromia region: local official](#), 22 October 2022

⁵ AP News, [As Tigray calms, Ethiopia sees growing conflict in Oromia](#), 14 December 2022

As with the war in Tigray, journalists have relied on satellite imagery and leaked footage from the region to unearth facts about allegations.⁶

Human Rights Watch reported in its annual report covering 2022 that “Federal authorities [...] sporadically cut services in parts of Oromia facing insecurity, hampering real-time reporting”.⁷

Similarly, in its annual human rights report for Ethiopia in 2022, USDOS wrote that “On July 4, internet and telephone communications were shut down in Kellem Wollega, Oromia Region, as Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed tweeted about the killing of hundreds of civilians allegedly by the OLA. The Amhara Association of America claimed internet and telephone communication was shut down following a similar attack on civilians in Jardega Jarte, Horo Guduru Wollega, Oromia Region, by armed groups on September 24”.⁸ It added that “Government officials were particularly sensitive to any investigation or reporting connected to the continuing conflict in the northern part of the country or relating to Oromia and Benishangul-Gumuz Regions, where allegations of human rights violations and abuses remained uninvestigated”.⁹

Freedom House noted in its 2023 Freedom on the Net report, covering the period June 2022 to 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”.¹⁰ It further commented:

Amid an escalation in violence involving federal forces, the rebel Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), and Amhara regional forces, Ethiopian authorities imposed a communications blackout in the Kellem Wollega area of western Oromia in July 2022, sporadically restricted connectivity in Oromia during the coverage period, and blocked access to mobile data in several cities in Amhara in April 2023 [...]. [...]

Kellem Wollega suffered another communications and internet blackout in July 2022.³² Authorities reportedly continued to sporadically restrict connectivity in conflict-affected areas in Oromia during the coverage period,³³ though the number and duration of these restrictions could not be verified.³⁴¹¹

32 “Ethiopia’s Abiy reports new civilian killings in Oromia,” Al Jazeera, July 5, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/7/5/new-killings-in-ethiopias-romia>.

33 World Report 2023: Ethiopia,” Human Rights Watch, accessed September 27, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/ethiopia>.

34 Open letter to the Ethiopian Government: urgently end ongoing internet shutdowns in all regions across the country,” Access Now, April 27, 2023, <https://www.accessnow.org/press-release/open-letter-to-the-ethiopian-go...>

⁶ New Lines Magazine, [Evidence of Drone Strikes Inside Civilian Areas in Ethiopia](#), 26 December 2022

⁷ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2023: Events of 2023](#), 12 January 2023, p. 220

⁸ US Department of State (USDOS), [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 20 March 2023

⁹ US Department of State (USDOS), [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 20 March 2023

¹⁰ Freedom House, [Freedom on the Net 2023 - Ethiopia](#), 4 October 2023

¹¹ Freedom House, [Freedom on the Net 2023 - Ethiopia](#), 4 October 2023

The February 2023 monthly update from the Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), a special project launched by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 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.¹²

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

The same report added the following information specific to Oromia:

The information space in Oromia region is significantly different from that in Tigray region. Oromia’s geographic placement at the center of Ethiopia renders information blackout attempts less effective. Rather, bias is a more pressing issue in the Oromia information landscape. While fatality counts are the most biased feature of conflict event data generally, actor attribution is also widely disputed for the conflicts in Oromia. Various narratives regarding the violence in East Wollega zone in Oromia, as well as in North Shewa and Oromia special zones in Amhara region, are prime examples of this contestation. [...] One reason for the difficulties in actor attribution in Oromia is the fluid nature of the armed groups involved in the violence. The OLF-Shane is fraught with factionalism. In some cases, splinter groups, criminal gangs, and ethnic Oromo youth carry out violence, claiming to be members of the OLF-Shane without having official links to the group. Similarly, Fano militias, also involved in violence in Oromia, lack

¹² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), *EPO February 2023 Monthly: Religious Disputes and Government Involvement in Ethiopia*, 8 March 2023

an official command structure, and defining the boundaries of who Fano militias are can be challenging [...].¹³

ACLED published an article in May 2023 explaining how it sources its information in Ethiopia; among discussion of the different sources and news networks it reviews, it noted “The greatest sourcing challenge is overcoming the country’s tightly-controlled media environment. The absence of free and independent media, the routine arrest of journalists and reporters, as well as repressive legislation have limited the media’s ability to report from across the country – particularly from areas where armed insurgencies and government opposition are strongest”.¹⁴

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.¹¹¹⁵

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/>.

A September 2023 report from the UN International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE), focusing on events between November 2020 and November 2022, remarked that “Access to Western Oromia remains extremely restricted, imposing constraints on access to information”.¹⁶

In its October 2023 report, the ICHREE further stated “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”.¹⁷ It added:

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

¹³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [*EPO February 2023 Monthly: Religious Disputes and Government Involvement in Ethiopia*](#), 8 March 2023

¹⁴ ACLED, [*How does ACLED source events in Ethiopia?*](#), 2 March 2023

¹⁵ Peace Research Facility and Rift Valley Institute (RVI), [*Conflict Trend Analysis: Western Oromia*](#), March 2023, pp. 4-5

¹⁶ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE), [*Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia*](#), 14 September 2023, paragraph 15

¹⁷ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE), [*Comprehensive investigative findings and legal determinations*](#), 13 October 2023, paragraph 7

wrote to the Government of Eritrea about its presence and alleged involvement in violations in Ethiopia. No response was received.¹⁸

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.

Another analysis by the ICHREE in October 2023, covering the risk of further atrocities in Ethiopia, observed that “Interviewees in Oromia region, in particular Western Oromia, also describe frequent temporary interruptions to internet and telecommunication”.¹⁹

Human Rights Watch reported in its annual report covering 2023 “In early February, authorities restricted access to social media platforms after protests broke out in the Oromia region following tensions in the Ethiopian Orthodox church. Authorities disrupted mobile internet at least twice as fighting intensified in the Amhara region”.²⁰

The report of the Secretary-General on Conflict-related sexual violence covering 2023 noted that in addition to the mandate of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia being discontinued in October 2023, “the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, established to investigate violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in the Tigray region, ended in May 2023, without the issuance of a report. Diminished regional and international monitoring of such violations is a cause for concern in a context characterized by identity-based tensions fuelled by hate speech”.²¹

In its annual report covering events in 2023, Freedom House explained that “Very little information is available about counterinsurgency operations and ethnic conflicts in Amhara, Benishangul Gumuz, and 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”.²²

USDOS reported in its human rights report for 2023 in Ethiopia that “In response to recurrent killings of civilians in western Oromia and other areas of the country, the government reportedly blocked communications, making it difficult for media to report and verify information for human rights organizations”.²³

¹⁸ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE), [Comprehensive investigative findings and legal determinations](#), 13 October 2023, *paragraph 25*

¹⁹ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE), [The acute risk of further atrocity crimes in Ethiopia: an analysis](#), 3 October 2023, p. 6

²⁰ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2024: Events of 2023](#), 11 January 2024, pp. 218-219

²¹ UN Security Council, [Conflict-related sexual violence; Report of the Secretary-General \[S/2024/292\]](#), 4 April 2024, *paragraph 82*

²² Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024 – Ethiopia](#), 29 February 2024

²³ US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 23 April 2024

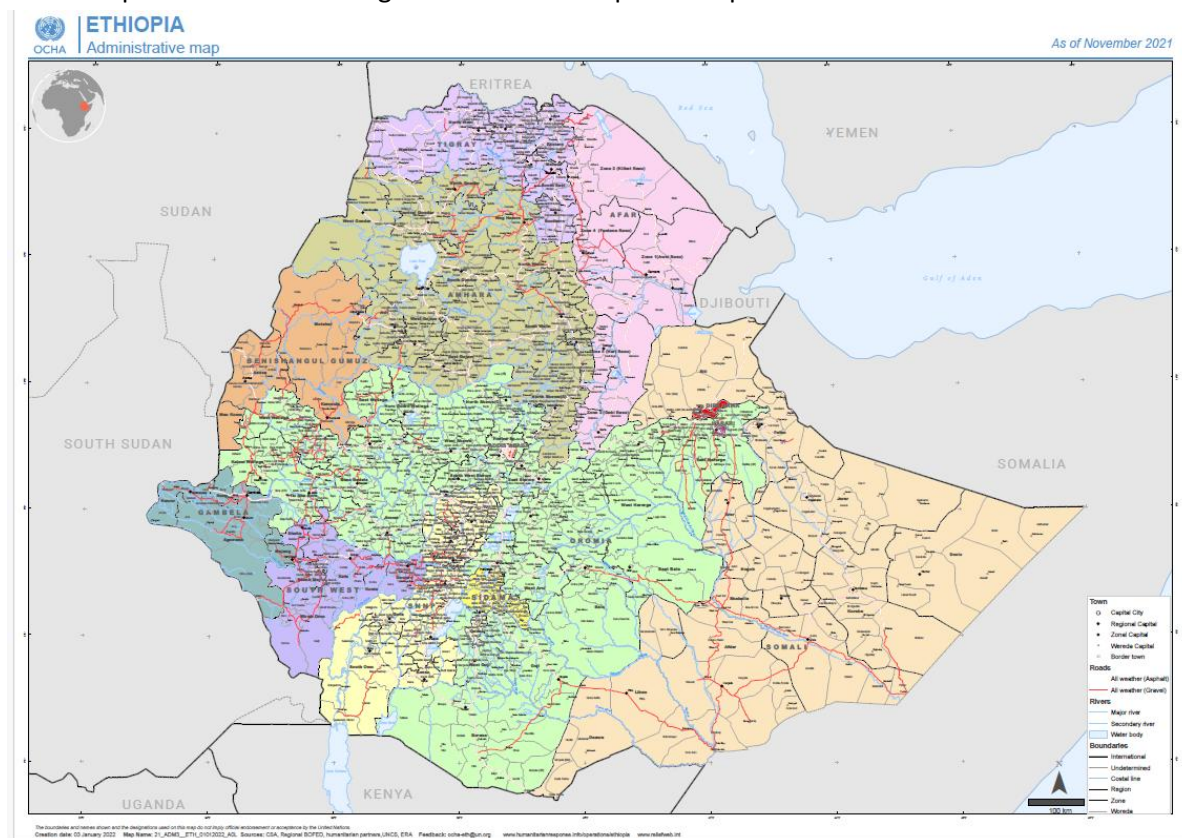
The US Congressional Research Service produced a brief on Ethiopia in January 2024, writing with reference to Oromia that “Conflict-affected areas face communications blackouts, and access by journalists and human rights monitors is restricted, resulting in limited media coverage and contested narratives”.²⁴

Also see section [V. Humanitarian situation, a. Humanitarian access](#) which provides an overview of access constraints during the reporting period.

II. Overview of Oromia region

a. Geographical and demographic information

UNOCHA provided the following administrative map of Ethiopia as of November 2021²⁵:



An UNICEF Regional Brief published in June 2022 described that in Oromia there are twenty administrative zones, eight town administrations, 287 woredas and 46 towns and provided the following general overview:

²⁴ US Congressional Research Service, [Ethiopia: In Brief](#), 23 January 2024, p. 7

²⁵ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia: Administrative map \(As of November 2021\)](#), 3 January 2022

Oromia is the largest region in Ethiopia and shares its borders with all regions of Ethiopia except Tigray. The projected total population of Oromia is about 33.69 million¹, over 85 per cent of which live in rural areas. Oromia is often referred to as the ‘bread-basket’ of the country as the majority of the population is engaged in agriculture with its crop production accounting for roughly 50 per cent of total national production. Coffee and khat (a mild stimulant) are the main cash crops produced in the Oromia region. In addition to agricultural production, people in pastoral and agro-pastoral areas rely on livestock and livestock products for their subsistence and as a source of income.²⁶

1 Central Statistics Agency (CSA) 2017 projection based on 2007 census

In its October 2023 report covering the situation between 2020 and 2022, the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia stated that:

Oromia is the largest of Ethiopia’s regions, home to an estimated 35 million people, more than 90 per cent living in rural areas.¹⁵⁰²⁷

150 UNHCR, Oromia Region Information Brochure, June 2021.

The Ethiopian Human Rights Committee (EHRC) summarised in their March 2024 national inquiry into persons deprived of liberty that “The region is organized into city administrations and zones. The zones in Oromia are Arsi, West Arsi, Bale, East Bale, Borena, East Borena, Buno Bedele, Guji, West Guji, East Hararghe, West Hararghe, Jimma, Ilu Abba Bor, East Shewa, North Shewa, Southwest Shewa, West Shewa, East Wollega, Horo Guduru Wollega, Kelam Wollega, and West Wollega”.²⁸

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%, Welayita 2.3%, Afar 2.2%, Silte 1.3%, Kefficho 1.2%, other 13.5%”.²⁹ 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).³⁰

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”.³¹ USDOS’s annual report on

²⁶ UNICEF, [Regional Situation Analysis of Children and Women Regional briefs 2022: Oromia](#), June 2022

²⁷ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Comprehensive investigative findings and legal determinations](#), 13 October 2023, paragraph 351

²⁸ Ethiopian Human Rights Committee (EHRC), [National Inquiry into Persons Deprived of Liberty](#), 26 March 2024, p. 80

²⁹ CIA World Factbook, [Ethiopia Country Summary](#), last updated 26 June 2024 (accessed 1 July 2024), *People and Society*

³⁰ Minority Rights Group International, [Briefing: Access to education and health among minorities and indigenous peoples in Ethiopia](#), 3 February 2022

³¹ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024 – Ethiopia](#), 29 February 2024

human rights in Ethiopia in 2023 confirmed “According to the most recent census, conducted in 2007, the country had more than 80 ethnic groups, of which the Oromo, at approximately 34 percent of the population, was the largest. An updated census was controversial; one was slated for 2019 but was postponed indefinitely”.³²

An article by the organisation World Beyond War noted that “The Oromia region of Ethiopia is the most highly populated of Ethiopia’s twelve regions. It is centrally located and surrounds Ethiopia’s capital city, Addis Ababa”.³³ Further, it remarked: “The majority of civilians living inside the Oromia region are from the Oromo ethnic group, although members of all of Ethiopia’s 90 other ethnic groups are found in the region. The Oromos comprise the single largest ethnic group in Ethiopia. However, despite their size, they have faced a long history of persecution at the hands of multiple Ethiopian governments”.³⁴

The 2022 USDOS annual report on religious freedom noted that “Islam is most prevalent in Afar, Oromia, and Somali Regions” and that “Protestant churches have the most adherents in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People’s (SNNP) Region and Gambella Region, and in parts of Oromia Region”.³⁵ It further set out:

Waaqeffanna – a monotheist Indigenous religion in Oromia Region – reportedly continued to grow (estimates are unclear and range from 300,000 to over a million adherents) on university campuses and among the Oromo community; its belief system is unique to the Oromo culture. The Rastafarian community numbers approximately 1,000, and its members primarily reside in Addis Ababa and the town of Shashemene in Oromia Region. Rastafarianism has roots in the EOTC [Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church] and uses the EOTC Bible.³⁶

The Peace Research Facility of the Rift Valley Institute (RVI) produced a brief in March 2023 on religion and politics in Ethiopia, making the following observations on religion in Oromia:

The regional distribution of Protestants in Ethiopia is uneven. The vast majority live in the south and west, particularly in Gambella (70.1 per cent), (the former) Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples’ Region (55.5 per cent) and the West Wellega Zone (59.5 per cent) and Guji Zone (56.1 per cent) in the Oromia region. It is also more of a rural than an urban phenomenon. [...]

Ethnic nationalism is another context in which traditional religions play a significant role. The most important one here is Oromo religion, in particular with its annual thanksgiving festival of Irreecha. This festival has attained a significant political dimension in the context of the Oromo protests [...]. Pentecostals have openly preached against the ritual, but the more ethno-nationalist minded among them attended despite the official proscription of their churches. [...] Abiy Ahmed, however, has embraced and welcomed the celebrations openly, despite the political cost among his own Pentecostal constituency, which considers them to be ‘pagan’. [...]

³² US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 23 April 2024

³³ World Beyond War, [Oromia: Ethiopia’s War in the Shadows](#), 14 February 2024

³⁴ World Beyond War, [Oromia: Ethiopia’s War in the Shadows](#), 14 February 2024

³⁵ US Department of State (USDOS), [2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Ethiopia](#), 15 May 2023

³⁶ US Department of State (USDOS), [2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Ethiopia](#), 15 May 2023

Protestant missionaries [...] have preoccupied themselves with Islam from the first missionary endeavours onward, often understanding their work as an effort to contain the spread of Islam among the Oromo.³⁷

It went on to explain tensions and violence around a split in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC):

On 22 January 2023, three Orthodox Archbishops led by Abuna Sawiros announced the constitution of a new Orthodox Synod in Oromia, and the ordination of 26 new Bishops without the consent of the Holy Synod of the EOTC. The schismatics were excommunicated on January 26 and accused of illegal ordination. Following this strong reaction, the Holy Synod called on Orthodox believers throughout the country to publicly demonstrate their support for a united church. Abuna Sawiros maintained that the split was a consequence of the fact that Oromo were under-represented in positions of powers within the EOTC and that the church did support the use of Oromo language in praying, preaching and religious teaching. These conditions, he lamented, led many Oromo Orthodox Christians to convert to other faiths. On 4 February, when a Bishop appointed by the schismatics was expected to enter the church of St. Michael in Shashamane, large crowds of Orthodox Christians loyal to the official Synod gathered in the area attempting to occupy the church. Ethiopian security forces killed at least eight people in their attempt to disperse the crowd. There were multiple reports of violence towards Ethiopian Orthodox clergy and believers in different areas of the country, which led to increasing concerns about Abiy's inaction in protecting citizens as well as accusations that he actively supported the schism.

An agreement to resolve the crisis was reached on 15 February, resulting in the reunification of the two Synods. Some have questioned whether the rapprochement was a consequence of church diplomacy or of a direct involvement of Abiy responding to Orthodox mass-mobilization. As the schismatics sought forgiveness, the Holy Synod made significant concessions, committing, for instance, to promoting the use of the Oromo language in church services and activities in Oromia, allocating more economic resources to those churches, and opening more theological colleges and training centres in which local clergy can be taught in the Oromo language. The schismatic Archbishops will be allowed to return to their original dioceses retaining their old title, while the bishops they ordained will return to their former rank, but the Holy Synod will consider confirming their promotion whenever possible.³⁸

An article in the Washington Post on divisions in Ethiopia's church also explained in April 2023 that:

Oromia accounts for around a third of Ethiopia's 120 million citizens, although many are Muslim, evangelical or Protestant rather than Orthodox. Only a small fraction of active Orthodox bishops are Oromo, which Hailemichael [Tadesse Kefeni, a spokesman for the church's breakaway Oromo faction] reflects the historical political marginalization of his community. Others argue it's because so many Oromo belong to different faiths.

Few services are held in the Afaan Oromo language, because few Oromo priests and deacons are being trained, and the lack of Afaan Oromo services was driving people away from the Orthodox church toward Protestant churches, Hailemichael said.³⁹

³⁷ Peace Research Facility and Rift Valley Institute (RVI), [Briefing Paper: Religion, Politics and the State in Ethiopia](#), March 2023, pp. 5-8

³⁸ Peace Research Facility and Rift Valley Institute (RVI), [Briefing Paper: Religion, Politics and the State in Ethiopia](#), March 2023, pp. 3-4

³⁹ The Washington Post, [Divisions in Ethiopia's ancient church pose new threat to war-weary country](#), 12 April 2023

The 2023 USDOS report on religious freedom reported religious tensions in Ethiopia, noting that “In May, the Oromia regional government reportedly demolished approximately 20 mosques in addition to numerous residences in the newly established Sheger City that it considered illegal constructions. The Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council (EIASC) stated it had appealed to Prime Minister Abiy after the Oromia regional government failed to hear its grievances and continued with the demolitions”.⁴⁰

b. Political context

i. In general

The New Humanitarian observed in a January 2023 news feature on conflict in the Oromia region that “Activists claim the Oromo remain insufficiently represented at the highest levels of government and business, despite comprising Ethiopia’s largest ethnic group. Other flashpoints include border disputes with Amhara, allegations of land grabs, and the status of Addis Ababa”.⁴¹

A commentary on prospects for peace in Ethiopia by the German Institute for International and Security Affairs gave the following context on the position of Oromos in Ethiopia, as of March 2023:

Although they are the largest ethnic group in the country, accounting for about one-third of the population, Oromos have never had a leading role in Ethiopia’s history. Large parts of today’s Oromia state only became part of the Ethiopian empire in the second half of the 19th century. Abiy himself comes from Oromia, where he worked in the regional government. However, many young people who were drivers of the pre-2018 reform protests see Abiy’s unitarism as a return to accommodation with Amharic-style centralism.⁴²

It further remarked “In Ethiopia’s most populous states, Oromia and Amhara, ethno-nationalist forces have gained ground in recent years, fighting partly against the state and also against each other. Abiy’s power base is crumbling as a result of these fault lines, and no alternative centre of power has emerged”.⁴³

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”.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Ethiopia](#), 26 June 2024

⁴¹ The New Humanitarian, [As violence subsides in Tigray, Ethiopia’s Oromia conflict flares](#), 12 January 2023

⁴² Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) (German Institute for International and Security Affairs), Gerrit Kurtz, [SWP Comment, No. 14 March 2023: Sustaining Peace in Ethiopia](#), March 2023, p. 5

⁴³ Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) (German Institute for International and Security Affairs), Gerrit Kurtz, [SWP Comment, No. 14 March 2023: Sustaining Peace in Ethiopia](#), March 2023, p. 2

⁴⁴ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, [Ethiopia’s Fragile Stability Remains at Risk](#), 1 November 2023

The 2024 Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index covering the period from 1 February 2021 to 31 January 2023 noted that "political enclaves exist within the ethno-nationalist political forces of each region of Ethiopia. Through the laws written in the constitution, they can leverage both the constitution and charged political sentiment to undermine attempts by the government to de-ethnicize the governance structure. This is an especially salient issue when it comes to disputed territory and even the status of the capital city, Addis Ababa, which is surrounded by the Oromia regional state".⁴⁵

It added the following context:

To prevent the country from breaking into many different ethnically-based countries, Ethiopia has existed as a centralized state, with the federal government depriving ethnic representatives of their demands for greater autonomy in order to preserve Ethiopia's territorial integrity. Like previous regimes, the balance at the center between regions has also become a significant issue for Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. He is accused by various pan-Ethiopian groups of pursuing ethno-nationalist agendas to benefit ethnic Oromos, while at the same time facing accusations from those advocating for Oromo autocracy of promoting an anti-Oromo agenda. In fact, Abiy was swept into office by youth movements in both the Oromo and Amhara regions and is now threatened by the very forces that placed him there.⁴⁶

The report further noted "ongoing power struggles between the Oromo and Amhara branches of the Prosperity Party are yet to be determined and represent the most dangerous political threat to Ethiopia's existence. While Amhara politicians vie for a pan-Ethiopian identity for the state, Oromo politicians within Abiy's government lean toward a strengthening of ethno-nationalism".⁴⁷

The International Crisis Group explained, with regards to the 2022 Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA)—also referred to as the Pretoria agreement—that "The loss of the common TPLF [Tigray People's Liberation Front] 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".⁴⁸ It added that:

Oromia, a majority-Oromo region, lies south of Amhara, and political leaders from the two communities have long been rivals. 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.⁴⁹

The report further explained:

⁴⁵ Bertelsmann Stiftung, [BTI 2024 Country Report — Ethiopia](#), 19 March 2024

⁴⁶ Bertelsmann Stiftung, [BTI 2024 Country Report — Ethiopia](#), 19 March 2024

⁴⁷ Bertelsmann Stiftung, [BTI 2024 Country Report — Ethiopia](#), 19 March 2024

⁴⁸ International Crisis Group, [Ethiopia's Ominous New War in Amhara](#), 16 November 2023

⁴⁹ International Crisis Group, [Ethiopia's Ominous New War in Amhara](#), 16 November 2023

Many Amhara are leery of Oromo nationalists who demand that the government double down on ethno-national devolution. As their population is dispersed throughout Ethiopia, and is an ethnic minority in many locations, Amhara often say they would have the most to lose in that scenario. Many Amhara thus rallied behind Abiy's pan-Ethiopian rhetoric and sided with him in opposing Tigray's leaders, against whom, as noted, they also harboured longstanding political and territorial grievances. Now, however, they say Abiy is pushing Oromo interests, including by turning a blind eye to Oromo militants' attacks on Amhara and by failing to stand up to Oromo claims on Addis Ababa, where there is a sizeable Amhara population.⁵ Meanwhile, Oromo nationalists tend to see Amhara actions as attempts to restore Amhara dominance under the guise of promoting national unity.⁵⁰

5 Addis Ababa is run by an administration answering to the federal government. Oromo nationalists believe either that Oromia should administer the city or that Oromia should reap much greater benefits from proximity to Ethiopia's commercial centre, as a clause in the constitution implies it should. Many Amhara and Addis Ababa residents resist what they see as increasing efforts by Oromo elites to control the city's politics and economy. According to the last census, carried out in 2007, Amhara constitute 47 per cent of Addis Ababa's population and about 27 per cent of the national population. Many Amhara dispute the validity of this and previous censuses, which they say were manipulated to undercount them.

The report described Oromo-Amhara worsening of relations in February 2023 further as such:

Amhara-federal relations soured further in February, 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. [...]

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 [...]

Perhaps the most inflamed issues, and risk of greater combustion, lie between the Amhara and Oromo elites. Well before this latest Amhara war, clashes between Fano elements and Oromo militants had been escalating in areas near the Amhara-Oromia boundary. Many Amhara accuse the federal government and Abiy-aligned regional Oromia authorities of complicity in attacks on Amhara civilians.⁴¹ 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. Regardless of whether they think Abiy himself endorses the OLA's misdeeds, many Amhara have lost faith that the Ethiopian state under Abiy will protect them.

Meanwhile, Abiy's relations with Oromia's various opposition factions are hardly in a good place. Even though he has returned to relying heavily on his Oromo base, having lost most Amhara support, he has far from a free hand in the region. His rough-and-tumble methods of sidelining rival Oromo politicians since his rise to power have helped make Oromia a hotbed of grievance, where many still see the Ethiopian state as a historical foe suppressing Oromo self-rule. Abiy's government and the allied Oromo regional administration have also been unable to quell the OLA rebellion, though the two sides have made progress in peace talks (with those close to the discussions expressing increasing optimism about chances

⁵⁰ International Crisis Group, [Ethiopia's Ominous New War in Amhara](#), 16 November 2023

of a deal).⁴³ Thus, Abiy faces significant political opposition in Oromia, especially from Oromo nationalists, even as many Amhara accuse the prime minister of acting in Oromo interests.⁵¹

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. [...]

41 Crisis Group interviews, Amhara politicians and activists, 2023. [...]

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

Government-OLA talks in Dar es Salaam, the Tanzanian capital, restarted in late October. The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, a Geneva-based mediation organisation, helped start the negotiation track earlier this year. Officials from the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Kenya, Norway and the U.S. are all involved. Sources close to the negotiations say there are signs of a power-sharing compromise taking shape. Crisis Group interviews, October and November 2023. Higher-level talks involving senior leaders from both sides started in November.

In its annual report covering events in 2023, Freedom House set out that:

Since 1991, political parties in Ethiopia have primarily been based on ethnicity. However, upon coming to office, Abiy has advocated a message of national unity and expressed disagreement with the enduring legacies of ethnic politics. In recent years, alliances between major political factions have realigned, with Tigrayan and Oromo parties urging for more decentralized power to ethnically defined regions, and other political parties generally favoring nonethnically defined federalism and a greater unifying role for the federal government.⁵²

At the beginning of January 2024, Ethiopia Insight provided the following political context on the violence in Oromia:

While the Oromo opposition is somewhat divided on whether to support the armed insurgency and what exactly self-determination should entail, they agree the crisis in Oromia is driven by successive Ethiopian regimes violently suppressing Oromo autonomy.

After the “fake” federalism of the Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) era, when a ruling coalition controlled by the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) made all the decisions from the center, Oromo nationalists believe self-rule has deteriorated further under Abiy Ahmed and his Prosperity Party, the EPRDF’s successor.

To add to the woes, after the EPRDF system began to disintegrate in 2018, the clash between Amhara nationalists, who view imperial Ethiopia as a relatively benign, modernizing construct, and Oromo nationalists, who want to deconstruct that empire-state, has heated up, complicating the Oromia conflict, and exacerbating civilian suffering. [...]

Additionally—in what Oromo and other ethno-nationalists view as an attempt to centralize power but supporters cast as an attempt to narrow the splits between Ethiopia’s communities—he merged almost all of the EPRDF parties and their allies into the Prosperity Party in 2019, despite opposition from within his party, the rebranded Oromo Democracy Party (ODP). The TPLF was the only one to reject the consolidation outright.

⁵¹ International Crisis Group, [Ethiopia’s Ominous New War in Amhara](#), 16 November 2023

⁵² Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024 – Ethiopia](#), 29 February 2024

The merger was considered by a swath of Oromos, especially activists and intellectuals, as Abiy's attempt to establish a unitary system. Even Lemma Megersa, the *de facto* leader of Team Lemma, resisted it, leading to Abiy sidelining him. [...]

The failure of the transition is best viewed through the failure to successfully reintegrate the OLF, the standard bearer of Oromo nationalism, into competitive politics.

Rather than allow the OLF and the OFC [Oromo Federalist Congress] to compete fairly in elections, Abiy's government shut them out of power after nominally inviting them back to compete. An armed wing of the OLF, the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), then went its own way and pursued military resistance.⁵³

The International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in May 2024 "In rare visit to rebel stronghold of western Oromia, PM Abiy 8 May attended pro-govt rally in Nekemte town, East Wollega, in attempt to shore up Oromo support amid deepening unpopularity and OLA insurgency".⁵⁴

ii. Oromo Liberation Front

In October 2022, the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) commented that "The Oromo Liberation Front remains active in western and southern Oromia and large parts of the region sit outside the government's effective control".⁵⁵

As per research published in February 2023 by the Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, Landinfo:

As of today, OLF and OLA appears to have merged again and publish joint press releases under the name OLF-OLA High Command (Oromo Liberation Front - Oromo Liberation Army 2023).

OLF has undergone many divisions throughout history, but was relatively united when the party returned to Ethiopia in 2018. The political party OLF is today characterised by internal power struggle and is divided into several factions. The party's vice-chairman Ararso Biqila is said to have taken power in the party, which has been considered by many as an infiltration attempt by the PP. Former OLF leaders, such as Dima Nago and Lencho Bati, have left OLF for PP (academic source B, email February 2023). The OLF is now a wing-cut party. It is kept under scrutiny by the authorities, and the fact that key leaders have left the party and moved to the PP, according to the academic source B (e-mail, February 2023), means that the party is ineffective today.⁵⁶

The May 2023 monthly update from the EPO reported that:

⁵³ Ethiopia Insight, [Peace in Ethiopia's Oromia will only come through genuine self-rule](#), 8 January 2024

⁵⁴ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), May 2024

⁵⁵ United States Institute of Peace (USIP), [Ethiopia's civil war is raging. How can it get on track toward peace?](#), 18 October 2022

⁵⁶ Landinfo, [Report: Ethiopia, Armed conflict and political opposition in Oromia](#), 24 February 2023, p. 10

Ill-treatment and continued illegal detentions of OLF leaders cause many OLF-Shane (OLA) members to suspect that the government will not hold up its end of the bargain should a disarmament agreement be reached.⁵⁷

12 Addis Standard, 'News: OLF warns transgression of international conventions after senior officials go missing from police custody,' 11 May 2023

Addis Standard reported in May 2024 on discussions between Mike Hammer, the US Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, and opposition party leaders regarding Oromia, including Merera Gudina, the chairperson of the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), and Dawud Ibsa, the leader of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). It wrote that “Merera disclosed that the recent assassination of Batte Urgessa, a political officer of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), was also a topic of discussion. Merera cited Hammer, expressing shock at “Batte’s murder and the detention of his family members””. It also noted that:

Lemi Gemechu, OLF spokesperson, posted on X (formerly Twitter) that Hammer also held talks with the OLF Chairman, Dawud Ibsa, chairperson of the OLF, at the United States Embassy in Addis Abeba. [...] According to the tweet, the OLF Chairperson asked “for an immediate and unconditional release of OLF leaders who were unlawfully held in prison for years, the re-opening of OLF offices with unfettered access throughout Oromia, and the release of all political prisoners throughout the country.”⁵⁸

1. Oromo Liberation Army/OLF-Shene

For information on violence conducted in the context of hostilities between the OLA/OLF-Shene and government forces, see *III Security situation*, [c. Violence between armed groups and the government in Oromia](#).

By way of summary, the Ethiopian Human Rights Committee gave the following background to the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) in a March 2024 report:

Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), also known as Shane, is an armed movement emerged after the 2018 political reform in Ethiopia. As part of the reform, the House of Peoples’ Representatives removed the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and other armed groups from terrorist list on 5 July 2018. The OLF ended its armed struggle and registered as a political party to compete in elections peacefully for political power. However, some OLF fighters rejected the demobilization and reintegration process and decided to continue armed movement, calling their armed group OLA.

Shane and Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) formed military alliance during the conflict in the northern Ethiopia and the House of Peoples’ Representatives designated them as terrorist organizations on 6 May 2021.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO May 2023 Monthly: Violence Returns to Oromia Despite Attempted Peace Talks](#), 22 June 2023

⁵⁸ Addis Standard, [News: US Special Envoy Mike Hammer meets with Oromo opposition leaders, discusses political challenges](#), 14 May 2024

The weekly update for 16 to 22 July 2022 from the EPO discussed Al Shabaab activity in Oromia:

A statement released by the Somali regional state last week made an attempt to link the clashes with Al Shabaab and the security situation in the rest of the country in what appears to be a bid for public support. In this statement, government officials claimed that Al Shabaab militants “wanted to join the OLF-Shane in the bordering Oromia region,” an interesting claim given that the two groups have completely different motives and no history of operating together ([Somali Regional State Communication Bureau, 23 July 2022](#)).⁶⁰

The German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) stated in its early October 2022 briefing notes on Ethiopia that “The OLA was formerly the armed wing of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). After the OLF signed a peace accord with the Ethiopian government in January 2019, the majority of OLA fighters backed demobilisation. Some OLA factions – such as OLA Shane – continued the armed struggle for an independent Oromia, however. Hostilities are concentrated first and foremost in the west and south of the regional state”.⁶¹

The International Crisis Group’s CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in November 2022 with regards to Oromia “OLA now controls over a dozen districts in East and West Wollega zones”.⁶²

A monthly update for November 2022 from the EPO remarked that:

The OLF-Shane does not have the capacity, or the military equipment, to challenge the ENDF directly as the TPLF has done over the past two years. Additionally, while the OLF-Shane may enjoy a limited degree of support among the population, it does not have the internal and international political resources that the TPLF carefully curated over its 27 years in power. Despite the formation of the United Front of Ethiopian Federalist and Confederalist Forces in November 2021, with the OLF-Shane and the TPLF being key members, no joint operations have occurred since, and the link between the two forces appears to have disintegrated with the TPLF’s retreat from Oromia special zone in Amhara region later in the same year. Thus, the likelihood of the OLF-Shane being able to engage in a conflict on the scale of that witnessed in the north is very low.⁶³

In December 2022, BBC News reported on escalations of conflict in Oromia and the role of the OLA:

The OLA are increasingly projecting themselves as the champions of Oromo nationalism, gaining publicity in opposition-linked media outlets that, just a few years ago, treated them as marginal players in Ethiopian politics. [...]

⁵⁹ Ethiopian Human Rights Committee (EHRC), [National Inquiry into Persons Deprived of Liberty](#), 26 March 2024, p. 80

⁶⁰ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 16-22 July 2022](#), 27 July 2022

⁶¹ German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), [Briefing Notes: Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration](#), 10 October 2022, pp. 6-7

⁶² International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), November 2022

⁶³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: November 2022](#), 7 December 2022

A clear demonstration of the growing strength of the OLA came in November [2022], when its fighters stormed Nekemte, a strategically important town with roads leading to Mr Abiy's home village, the capital, Addis Ababa, and a newly built mega dam that is vital to Ethiopia's electricity needs. [...]

UK-based Ethiopia analyst Mebratu Kelecha warned that the atrocities could backfire on the government in the battle for the hearts and minds of Oromos - the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia which propelled Mr Abiy to power in 2018. [...]

"Not only can the OLA use this as a propaganda tactic to recruit militants, but it can also use it to gain support from the local population and expand their poor supplies [of basic necessities]," Mr Mebratu said. Focusing mainly on guerrilla warfare from its forest hideouts in western Oromia, the OLA's rebellion reflects the deep fissures in Ethiopian society - the second-largest country in Africa with a population of more than 100 million that is split into myriad ethnic groups that are constantly competing for land and power.

Each of them are fiercely proud of their identities, and hold on to their culture and language, though the language of the Amharas - the historic rulers of Ethiopia - is the working language of Ethiopia.

Mr Abiy has attempted to forge a national identity and to get political parties to abandon their ethnic allegiances, but his efforts have been fiercely resisted, not least by the OLA, which advocates "self-determination" for Oromia.

Though it has never clearly spelled out what this means, its critics fear that it wants to break up Ethiopia by getting Oromia to secede.

With unemployment stubbornly high, opposition parties suppressed and Mr Abiy's failure to address demands such as declaring Afaan Oromoo a working language alongside Amharic, there is growing sympathy, if not support, for the OLA, especially among young people, though Mr Davison cautioned against over-estimating its strength.

"In the past few years, it has managed to expand its area of activities and number of fighters amidst the government's repression of legal Oromo opposition parties," he said. "Yet the movement has not got in a position to be a threat to the authority of the regional government, let alone the federal government."

The number of OLA fighters is unclear, but it is unlikely to be huge as it wages what Mr Mebratu describes as "fast-paced, small-scale operations to undermine state power through prolonged, low-intensity confrontation".

To finance its operations, it has also been accused of emptying banks of cash and kidnapping for ransom.⁶⁴

International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch tracker noted "OLA 23 Jan [2023] published manifesto spelling out its vision and goals; announcement follows late-Dec govt decision to rule out negotiations with OLA, citing group's lack of 'purpose and leadership'".⁶⁵

The 2024 Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index covering the period from 1 February 2021 to 31 January 2023 set out the following background on the OLA:

The group is active in Kellem Wollega, Horo Guduru Wollega, East Wollega, West Wollega, West Shewa, East Shewa, North Shewa, East Guji and Guji zones in Oromia. The OLA managed to gain control of some rural areas within these zones. For instance, as per the National Security Council press statement released

⁶⁴ BBC News, [Ethiopia's PM sees OLA rebellion grow in his own backyard](#), 18 December 2022

⁶⁵ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), January 2023

on August 8, 2022, the OLA controlled 1,739 kebeles (the lower administration level in Ethiopia) in Oromia. However, it is unclear when the group gained control of these kebeles. Since September 2022, the OLA group has challenged the state's monopoly on the use of force in Oromia. For instance, in November 2022, the OLA managed to control 11 out of 21 woredas in the East Wollega zone and took control of large amounts of rural territory in the West Wollega zone, including most of the kebeles within the Gimbi woreda.⁶⁶

The index added "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".⁶⁷

The New Humanitarian remarked in a January 2023 news feature on conflict in the Oromia region that "Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) rebels were previously confined to the fringes of western and southern Oromia, Ethiopia's largest region. But analysts say the Tigray war created a security vacuum that has helped the OLA expand its long-running insurgency".⁶⁸ It added "The OLA feeds off grievances among the Oromo, Ethiopia's largest ethnic group. They account for around 40% of the population but claim a history of oppression. Resentment has festered further [sic] under current Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who is himself an Oromo".⁶⁹ By way of further background, the report explained:

The OLA is not a new group. It was formed in the 1970s as the armed wing of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). The rebels fought the communist Derg regime, and maintained a low-level insurgency against the Tigray People's Liberation Front-dominated regime that came after.

In 2018, the OLF signed a peace deal with Abiy's government that saw it invited back from exile in Eritrea. But a band of hardline OLA commanders held out, choosing to continue their guerrilla campaign rather than disarm.

Oromo anger at Abiy has aided their cause. Abiy rode to power on a wave of mass Oromo-led protests and his early reforms created "an exaggerated expectation from the youth that all their problems would be solved", said an analyst of Oromo politics.

The OLA got a further boost in 2020 following the murder by unknown individuals of Hachalu Hundessa, an Oromo pop icon. After Hachalu's death triggered protests in Oromia, the state cracked down and arrested prominent Oromo figures.

"The major influx of young people into the OLA happened after Hachalu's death," said the analyst of Oromo politics. "People were angry and the OLA was portrayed as the champion of the Oromo cause."⁷⁰

The report analysed the level of threat of the OLA to the state as such:

⁶⁶ Bertelsmann Stiftung, [BTI 2024 Country Report — Ethiopia](#), 19 March 2024

⁶⁷ Bertelsmann Stiftung, [BTI 2024 Country Report — Ethiopia](#), 19 March 2024

⁶⁸ The New Humanitarian, [As violence subsides in Tigray, Ethiopia's Oromia conflict flares](#), 12 January 2023

⁶⁹ The New Humanitarian, [As violence subsides in Tigray, Ethiopia's Oromia conflict flares](#), 12 January 2023

⁷⁰ The New Humanitarian, [As violence subsides in Tigray, Ethiopia's Oromia conflict flares](#), 12 January 2023

Though the OLA is gaining strength, its political and military structure is murky. The group is led by a veteran bush fighter known as Jaal Marroo, but it lacks command and control and has voiced no political agenda beyond claiming to fight for the Oromo people.

It is not clear how many fighters are in its ranks, and the rebels are thought to lack heavy weaponry. Analysts therefore caution against overstating its strength and ability to threaten Addis Ababa.

"The OLA does not come close to being what the [Tigrayan rebels are] fighting-wise," said another analyst, who has deep knowledge of Oromo issues but also did not want to be named. "I don't think they will ever be in a position to walk into Addis one day; we are talking about guys with AK47s."⁷¹

The February 2023 monthly update from the EPO commented on the "fluid nature" of armed groups involved in the violence in Oromia and remarked that "The OLF-Shane is fraught with factionalism. In some cases, splinter groups, criminal gangs, and ethnic Oromo youth carry out violence, claiming to be members of the OLF-Shane without having official links to the group".⁷²

As per research published in February 2023 by the Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, Landinfo:

According to academic source B (Ethiopia seminar organised by the EUAA, June 2022) exists many unanswered questions about OLA's ideological foundations and objectives. The group's ideology is based on the concept of "blisumma" (freedom), but the group is not characterized by a comprehensive political thought or clear aims, according to the source.

In January 2023, the OLF/OLA published a manifesto in which they explained their goals and means. In the manifesto it states, among other things, that OLF/OLA fights against political exclusion, economic exploitation, and sociocultural marginalisation of the Oromos. According to OLF/OLA, armed struggle is the only remaining means to "free ourselves from the ravages of tyranny and rebuild our humanity and identity, which have been shattered through a century of degradation and dehumanisation". However, OLF/OLA states that they are open to negotiations with the Ethiopian state (Oromo Liberation Front - Oromo Liberation Army 2023). [...]

International organisation A (meeting in Addis Ababa, November 2022) claims that the OLA has the largest demographic base in Ethiopia to recruit from, as the Oromos make up the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia. A diplomatic source (e-mail, November 2022) states that the OLA today will be able to mobilise hundreds, potentially thousands of fighters in limited periods in the areas where they are strongest, mainly in West and Kellem Wellega, but at the same time, the diplomatic source stresses that this is uncertain. OLA has recently recruited people who were previously associated with the Qeerroo movement.¹⁰ According to academic source B, the recruits are poorly trained and equipped.

An Ethiopian civil society organisation (meeting in Addis Ababa, November 2022) stated that it was challenging to quantify the number of OLA fighters, since in some areas the OLA is mixed with the population and cannot be clearly distinguished from it.

The OLA mainly targets regional and federal government officials and security forces, but there is also evidence that the group has attacked non-government officials, including ethnic minorities in Oromia.

⁷¹ The New Humanitarian, [As violence subsides in Tigray, Ethiopia's Oromia conflict flares](#), 12 January 2023

⁷² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO February 2023 Monthly: Religious Disputes and Government Involvement in Ethiopia](#), 8 March 2023

Further, there is little verifiable information about OLA's structure. The group is led by Commander Jaal Marroo. According to academic source B (Ethiopia seminar organised by the EUAA, June 2022), the structure of OLA is decentralised and fragmented, and the command structures are unclear. The individual groups are built up around military leaders, and the degree of coordination between them is unclear. It is also unclear to what extent the individual groups receive orders from an superior leadership, or whether they operate alone. The OLA is said to have conducted a "general assembly" in West Wellega in the summer of 2022 (Oromo Liberation Front — Oromo Liberation Army 2023; diplomatic source, email November 2022), in which they established OLF-OLA High Command. This indicates a certain degree of coordination between the groups. Joint training camps and so-called graduation ceremonies after completing military training are also a sign of coordination.

The dividing lines between the OLA and various criminal gangs and rogue elements are unclear (diplomatic source, e-mail November 2022). The existence of several different groups calling themselves OLA is also referred to by OLA itself.⁷³

10 Qeerroo is an oromo-based youth movement that played an important role in the protest against the EPRDF from around 2014, ending with a regime change in 2018 (see Landinfo 2021b, p. 14-15 for more information). According to academic source B (Ethiopia seminar organised by the EUAA, June 2022), the qeerroo movement has more or less disappeared from the political scene, and no longer organises protests. Some who were previously active in the movement have been recruited (coopted) for positions in the local administration or have received other benefits as a reward for loyalty to the government. Others have chosen to stay out of politics, while an unknown number have chosen to join the OLA, especially after the OFC and Jawar Mohammed, whom many qeerroo perceived as a leader, have kept a low profile the last years.

A March 2023 commentary on prospects for peace in Ethiopia by the German Institute for International and Security Affairs summarised the background of the OLA as such "Operating at the end of Oromia's nationalist spectrum is the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), an armed group that split from the decades-old Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in 2018. The OLF signed a peace agreement with Abiy's government in 2018 that the OLA subsequently rejected. In 2021, the OLA allied itself with the TPLF".⁷⁴

The Peace Research Facility of the RVI wrote in a briefing in March 2023 that:

The dynamics of the conflicts in western Oromia vary depending on the actors involved and their geographic location. The broad faultlines of the conflict are between OLA, Amhara ethnic militias and government forces (and their affiliates) in a struggle over territorial and administrative control of parts of the region, differing positions vis-a-vis the Ethiopian federation (split between unitarian, federal and secessionist ideologies), as well as over national and regional power – particularly between the Amhara and Oromo constituents [...].¹⁰ [...]

With respect to the motivations of different groups, Amhara nationalists and activists claim that their regional or ethnic militias are fighting to defend Amhara communities, and regional territories or ancestral lands from attacks by OLA. Federal, Amhara and Oromo regional communication bureaus routinely accuse 'OLF Shene' of attacking civilians and luring Oromo youths (*qeerroo*) into their fight. Oromo nationalists and activists, including the OLA's high command and spokespersons,¹³ maintain that

⁷³ Landinfo, [Report: Ethiopia, Armed conflict and political opposition in Oromia](#), 24 February 2023, pp. 11-12

⁷⁴ Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) (German Institute for International and Security Affairs), Gerrit Kurtz, [SWP Comment, No. 14 March 2023: Sustaining Peace in Ethiopia](#), March 2023, p. 5

their fight is not directed against any ethnic group but mainly against the central government, its unitarian ideology¹⁴ (sometimes referred to as *ethiopiawinet*) and a repressive administrative system in Oromia that, according to their recently published political manifesto, violates ‘the Oromo people’s right to self-determination’.¹⁵ Attacks against civilians, they repeatedly claim, are perpetrated by Amhara regional Special Forces, ethnic militias (‘Fanos’), or even Oromia’s own regional Special Forces. All parties to the conflict thus operate in a polarized environment where periodic attacks and revenge- attacks against civilians are normalized and rarely independently investigated, while perpetrators can act with impunity as long as they are not identified and penalized. [...]

Over the last two years, many districts of western Oromia were placed under military command – a localized de facto state of emergency – during the counter-offensives against OLA forces in what the government, repeating the narrative applied in the Tigray war, called a law enforcement operation. [...]

The structure of the OLA itself is highly decentralized and is organized into multiple, semi-autonomous regional commands. The western command under OLA Commander-in-Chief Jaal Marroo Diriba is the most significant, but a similar structure exists for the southern command under Deputy Commander Gemechu Aboye, and the central regional command under Sagni Negassa. The regional structures and hierarchies are however relatively clandestine and are only loosely connected to and directed by a so-called ‘OLF-OLA High Command’.²² While other splinter groups claim to represent or to be affiliated with the OLA, the high command spokesperson, Odaa Tarbii, believed to be based abroad, routinely denies such associations. For example, one breakaway group – often referred to as Shene mootummaa under the command of former OLF member Fekade Abdisa – operates in the rural areas of East Wollega and Horo Guduru, apparently outside of OLA’s command structure. It has been accused of carrying out atrocities under OLA’s name to divide the Oromo opposition and, for this reason, some of the group’s supporters and advocates have sought to distance themselves from it.⁷⁵

10 T. Østebø and K. Tronvoll, ‘Interpreting contemporary Oromo politics in Ethiopia: an ethnographic approach’, *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 14/4 (2020), 613–632 [...]

13 OLA’s international spokesperson is Odaa Tarbii: <https://twitter.com/OdaaTarbiiWBO>

14 Unitarism refers to an emphasis on the national unity of the Ethiopian nation and its diverse peoples. Counter to those forces favouring a multinational or multiethnic federation (up to and including the right to secession), the unitarian ideology – applied by Abiy Ahmed’s Prosperity Party – aims to build a unified nation-state with a central government that foregrounds one common national identity over that of multiple other ethnic identities. See also: Asebe Regassa, ‘Self-Determination, Multinational Federalism and an Emerging Threat in Ethiopia: A Decolonial Approach’, *Northeast African Studies*, 21/2 (2021): 57–82.

15 OLF-OLA High Command, ‘A Brief Political Manifesto: From Armed Struggle to the Prospects for Peace’, 23 January 2023, <https://www.olf-olahq.org/post/announcing-the-oromo-liberation-army-s-brief-political-manifesto> [...]

22 The OLF-OLA high command releases its press statements here: <https://www.olf-olahq.org/news>.

According to an April 2023 Reuters article “The OLA is an outlawed splinter group of the Oromo Liberation Front, a formerly banned opposition party that returned from exile after Abiy took office in 2018. The group's grievances are rooted in the alleged marginalisation of the Oromo people and neglect by the federal government”.⁷⁶ The article also noted that “OLA objected to being referred to as “Shene”, saying the name misrepresented its ‘identity and objectives’”.⁷⁷ It clarified that “The fighting between

⁷⁵ Peace Research Facility and Rift Valley Institute (RVI), *Conflict Trend Analysis: Western Oromia*, March 2023, pp. 4-7

⁷⁶ Reuters, *Ethiopia to begin negotiations with OLA rebel group*, 24 April 2023

⁷⁷ Reuters, *Ethiopia to begin negotiations with OLA rebel group*, 24 April 2023

the OLA and the federal government is separate from the fighting in Tigray, but the OLA forged an alliance with the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in 2021".⁷⁸

The same month, Africa Intelligence explained that:

Given the size of the Oromia region - the largest in the country in terms of surface area and population - and its history, the OLA is indeed widely dispersed throughout Ethiopia. The organisation was born in 2018 from the split of several OLF cadres who refused to lay down their arms, sceptical of the promises of peace made by Abiy, who had just come to power.

The OLA is structured into four regional commands: north, south, east and west. Their leaders form the central high command under the leadership of Jaal Marro. His deputy is the doyen of the high command, the southern zone commander Gammachuu Abboyee, who has been a member of the organisation since the early 2000s.

In its manifesto, the OLA explains its geographical spread by its commitment to "protect" the Oromo people from "the actions of the Ethiopian security forces". While the core operations of the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF) and the federal security apparatus are mainly concentrated in the predominantly Christian west, notably because of ethnic tensions with neighbouring Amhara militias, the areas of tension are numerous and even spill over into Kenya (AI, 08/12/22).⁷⁹

The German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) stated in its May 2023 briefing notes on Ethiopia that "Since 2019, the government has been persecuting members and suspected supporters of the OLA. Expert observers estimate their strength at a few thousand men but consider them too poorly organised and armed to pose a real threat to the Ethiopian government".⁸⁰

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".⁸¹

At the beginning of January 2024, Ethiopia Insight provided the following political context on the violence in Oromia and the relationship between the OLA and the OLF:

Despite the intensified counterinsurgency operations by government forces, the OLA has continued growing in strength and is currently active throughout much of Oromia.²⁶ [...]

The government has not been shy to condemn "OLF-Shene", as it calls the OLA, and has justified or neglected ethnic-based attacks by Amhara militants against Oromo civilians, regional security forces, and local government officials.²⁸ [...]

⁷⁸ Reuters, [Ethiopia to begin negotiations with OLA rebel group](#), 24 April 2023

⁷⁹ Africa Intelligence, [OLA and Addis open preliminary talks in climate of mistrust](#), 27 March 2023

⁸⁰ German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), [Briefing Notes: Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration](#), 8 May 2023, p. 4

⁸¹ Brookings Institution, [Ethiopia's New Year's ledger: A controversial new port and domestic challenges](#), 16 January 2024

From the perspective of Oromo nationalists, the violence is mainly caused by threats and moves to annex parts of Oromia into Amhara, as has been the case in Benishangul-Gumuz and Tigray as well. [...]

Following the split between OLA and OLF in April 2019, Amhara “Fano” militias armed themselves. Since then, attacks against Oromo civilians have intensified in parts of Oromia bounded by the Blue Nile and areas in East Shewa Zone around the A1 highway that connects Ethiopia to Djibouti, Somalia, and Somaliland.

Fano leaders and Amhara activists, claiming ownership of these areas that include the entire Wollega and Shewa zones, called for Amhara people to arm themselves and “reclaim their ancestral lands.”³⁴ [...]

Oromo nationalists say that the threats and attacks against them, the hostility towards Oromo nationalism by successive regimes, and unaddressed demands since the 1960s to respect the autonomy and self-determination of the Oromo people are the root causes of the current crisis. [...]

While the OLA, OLF, and OFC all support multinational federalism and share a common goal of securing Oromia’s autonomy, they have differences about what this means and how it should be achieved, either through armed resistance or electoral politics.

According to the OLF, its objective is to exercise the Oromos’ inalienable right to national self-determination, to terminate over a century of oppression and exploitation, and to form, where possible, a political union with other nations on the basis of equality, democracy, respect for mutual interests, and the principle of voluntary association. [...]

According to its manifesto, the OLA resorted to armed struggle because it is the sole means left to free the Oromo people from “the ravages of tyranny” and rebuild their humanity and identity that it claims have been pulverized by over a century of cultural degradation and dehumanization.

The debate over whether to try and form an independent Oromia nation-state or democratize the current Ethiopian federation has been at the heart of Oromo politics.

In recent years, given the current state of affairs, the idea of Oromia’s exit from Ethiopia’s federation has been gaining wider support among Oromo elites and political activists.

Many, especially Ethiopianists and western leaders, are vehemently opposed to secession and the current constitution.⁴³ Ethiopian nationalists blame the conflicts in Ethiopia on the country’s ethno-territorial federal structure and ethnic nationalism.⁴⁴

However, even before the adoption of ethnic-based federalism in the early 1990s, when the country was ruled by a succession of unitary systems, nationalism among Ethiopia’s constituent nations was the driving force behind popular uprisings that brought about regime changes in Ethiopia.

Despite its perceived drawbacks and limitations, it’s too early to criticize or praise Ethiopia’s federal structure and the constitution, due to the EPRDF’s failure to properly implement its provisions.⁸²

26 Despite the government’s intensified offensive, the OLA has continued to expand its reach since 2019 by recruiting new members and controlling towns and *weredas* in Oromia. Over the past few years, the OLA graduated thousands of newly trained recruits, airing the ceremonies online. [...]

28 The attacks have primarily targeted four Oromia zones on the border with Amhara, namely East Wollega, Horo Guduru Wollega, West Shewa, and East Shewa Zones, and the Oromo Special Zone in Amhara. On 28 November, Amhara militants killed eleven members of Oromia police forces and the chief judge of the *wereda*. Earlier that month, Amhara militants attacked and displaced Oromo residents out of the villages and kebeles of the entire Kiremu Wereda of East Wollega Zone. The attack resulted in the deaths of hundreds and displacement of tens of thousands. According to an Amhara lobby group, Amhara residents clashed with Oromia security forces after a decision was rendered for Amhara detainees who were accused of participating in violence to be tried at the zonal level, and Oromia security forces tried to move them from Kiremu town to the East Wollega Zone capital, Nekemte town. [...]

⁸² Ethiopia Insight, [Peace in Ethiopia’s Oromia will only come through genuine self-rule](#), 8 January 2024

43 Under Article 39 of the Ethiopian Constitution, the nations, nationalities, and people of Ethiopia have the right to self-determination, including secession.

44 Scholars like Kasahun Mellese accuse Ethiopia's ethnic-based federation of creating intense ethnic rivalries for resources. He criticizes the current constitution, claiming that grievances that can be resolved administratively become questions that involve identity, due to its provisions. Mahmood Mamdani is also highly critical of Ethiopia's federal system and has recommended the country adopt a form of federalism in which regional boundaries and groups rights are not tied to ethno-territorial settlement patterns. Critics of Ethiopia's federal system typically avoid mentioning the underlying cause for the adoption of this kind of federalism. Another perspective holds that conflicts resulting from the lack of autonomy and self-determination can be blamed on the failure to implement the constitution's provisions.

Reuters noted in February 2024 that "Ethiopia's government has designated the OLA a terrorist organisation – a label that the United States and United Nations have not applied to the group".⁸³

The June 2024 OHCHR report covering the situation in 2023 and incidents in 2024 thus far detailed that "In Oromia region, violations and abuses including killings, destruction of property, rape, and abductions were allegedly committed by the OLA in the context of its ongoing fighting with Government forces (ENDF, Federal Police, Oromia Police, Oromia Special Forces, and state affiliated militia). In 2023, 188 incidents of human rights violations and abuses impacting 1,488 victims in the region were documented. In January 2024 alone, at least 11 persons were killed, all of which were attributed to OLA. Victims attributable to Government forces were killed as a result of gunshots and bombardments, while OLA-attributed victims were killed mainly due to gunshots. Some victims were also caught in crossfire between Government forces and OLA or militias".⁸⁴

iii. Other Oromo political parties and linked parties

An article in June 2022 by the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) on armed conflict in Ethiopia remarked that "While some Oromos in the opposition support the OLA's armed resistance, others endorse the conciliatory approach Jawar [Mohammed] and Bekele Gerba of the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) have adopted since they were released from prison in January".⁸⁵

In June 2022, Ethiopia Insight wrote that "The Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and the allied Gambella Liberation Front (GLF) attacked government targets early Tuesday morning in the capital of Gambella region, with the OLA also launching raids on Oromia towns," adding that "The Gambella incident is also notable as it was the first joint operation by the OLA and GLF".⁸⁶

⁸³ Reuters, [In Ethiopia, a secret committee orders killings and arrests to crush rebels](#), 23 February 2024

⁸⁴ OHCHR, [Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia](#), June 2024, paragraph 40

⁸⁵ African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), [Lasting peace remains elusive in Ethiopia despite progress towards peace talks to end the armed conflict](#), 23 June 2022

⁸⁶ Ethiopia Insight, [Oromia carnage spreads to Gambella](#), 19 June 2022

According to research in February 2023 by Landinfo, “OFC has had a great appeal to young people in Oromia as an alternative to OLF. However, the party has kept a low profile since Jawar Mohammed and other imprisoned OFC leaders were released from prison in January 2022”.⁸⁷

At the beginning of January 2024, Ethiopia Insight wrote:

The OFC’s version of self-determination is for the Oromo people to have their rights respected, to determine their own affairs, and administer their land. Its leaders aim to do so by democratizing and retaining the current structure of the Ethiopian federation.⁴²

OFC leaders believe in peaceful struggle and maintain a firm conviction that, if political power can be obtained democratically, there will be no armed conflict. According to a statement by the OFC, it has been doing its level best to defend and expand democracy and true multinational federalism in Ethiopia all along. [...]

42 The OFC, the other main opposition party after the OLF, is headed by Merera Gudina. According to its political program, the OFC aims to struggle in a peaceful and lawful manner for the respect of the human, political, and democratic rights of the Oromo people; to struggle for the respect of the Oromo peoples’ economic and social rights; and to struggle to bring about a genuine democratic system in the country.⁸⁸

The EPO noted in its summary of November 2023 that:

[...] the OLA/OLF-Shane has lost a key ally in the Gambela Liberation Front (GLF), which conducted joint attacks with the OLA/OLF-Shane in Gambela city in June 2022 [...]. In April, the GLF leadership announced its decision to withdraw from armed struggle, committing hundreds of fighters to rehabilitation camps.¹¹⁸⁹

11 Negasa Desalegn, Tamirat Dinsa, and Negash Mohamed, ‘It was announced that the Gambela Liberation Front has completely withdrawn from the armed struggle,’ Deutsche Welle Amharic, 26 April 2023

III. Security situation

a. May to November 2022

By way of introduction, the Peace Research Facility of the RVI gave the following summary of security events in 2022:

Since 2019, western Oromia has been the site of insurgencies, counter-insurgencies and cross-border attacks, leading to hundreds of deaths and thousands of people displaced. These conflicts are mostly, but

⁸⁷ Landinfo, [Report: Ethiopia, Armed conflict and political opposition in Oromia](#), 24 February 2023, p. 10

⁸⁸ Ethiopia Insight, [Peace in Ethiopia’s Oromia will only come through genuine self-rule](#), 8 January 2024

⁸⁹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO November 2023 Update: An Evolving Conflict Environment in Oromia](#), 14 December 2023

not exclusively, related to the activities of the OLA and militia forces from the Amhara and Benishangul-Gumuz regions. [...]

The political tensions that led to the conflicts in western Oromia go beyond the mismanaged disarmament agreement. A plethora of different political and armed actors have been involved – not only limited to different factions of the OLA, the Ethiopian federal and Oromia regional governments and their respective military forces, but also neighbouring ethnic militias, particularly from the Amhara and Benishangul-Gumuz regions.⁶

[...] during the second half of 2022 [...] the OLA made significant military advances in western Oromia, gaining partial control over West Wollega and Kellem Wollega zones, parts of East Wollega zone (Limu Gelila, Ebantu, Gidda Ayana and Haro Limu districts) and south-west Oromia (Chewaka and Dabo Hana districts of Buno Bedelle Zone) and two districts of Illubabor zone (Darimu and Mako). [...]

[...] the conflict situation in western Oromia is complex with several different armed actors operating in the area. This includes, conventional armed forces – the Oromia and Amhara Special Forces, federal police and ENDF – plus non-state actors, such as the OLA ('OLF Shene') and Amhara ethnic militias ('Fano') whose motives and allegiances are more difficult to determine. The government has also armed civilians in some areas as a means to enable community self-protection, but such a tactic can simply promote revenge attacks by poorly trained and un-coordinated vigilante groups.²¹⁹⁰

6 Tsegaye Bihanu, 'Conflict Trend Analysis, Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State: May–November 2022', Conflict Trends Analysis, Peace Research Facility, Rift Valley Institute, <https://riftvalley.net/publication/conflict-trends-analysis-benishangul-gumuz-regional-state-ethiopia> [...]

21 'Regarding the humanitarian crisis caused by attacks on civilians in various areas of the Oromia region' (title transl. by ed. from Amharic), Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, 7 December 2022

In its mid-year update on Ethiopia as part of its '10 conflicts to worry about in 2022' series, ACLED wrote that "Insurgencies in Oromia, Benshangul/Gumuz, and Gambela regions have continued, challenging the regional governments and spreading federal security resources thin. In June, the OLA/OLF-Shane attacked Gimbi, Gambela, and Dembi Dolo, only weeks after the government claimed that it had neutralized the OLA/OLF-Shane following large-scale military operations in April".⁹¹

The weekly update for 16 to 22 July 2022 from the EPO discussed Al Shabaab activity in Oromia:

[...] heightened Al Shabaab activity might play into the government's favor both internally and externally. Ethiopia's federal government is facing internal pressure for its failure to properly address security concerns in Oromia and Tigray regions, and it needs a way to swing public support back into its favor. [...] A statement released by the Somali regional state last week made an attempt to link the clashes with Al Shabaab and the security situation in the rest of the country in what appears to be a bid for public support. In this statement, government officials claimed that Al Shabaab militants "wanted to join the OLF-Shane in the bordering Oromia region," an interesting claim given that the two groups have

⁹⁰ Peace Research Facility and Rift Valley Institute (RVI), [Conflict Trend Analysis: Western Oromia](#), March 2023, pp. 3-4, 6-7

⁹¹ ACLED, [10 Conflicts to Worry About in 2022: Ethiopia – Mid-Year Update - Multiple Complications Threaten to Result in a Dangerous Re-escalation](#), 15 August 2022

completely different motives and no history of operating together ([Somali Regional State Communication Bureau, 23 July 2022](#)).⁹²

EPO's update the following week remarked "Activity involving IS [Islamic State] affiliates is sometimes reported in Bale zone of Oromia region, although it is often a very local phenomenon and the group's actual connection to IS is unclear".⁹³

The Oromia Support Group⁹⁴ noted in August 2022 that "Forced conscription to government forces and the drift of Qeerroo members and others to join OLA has further exacerbated the humanitarian crisis".⁹⁵

In an October 2022 report, the international Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia noted 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. 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.

While finalizing the present report, the Commission learned of a third incident, in late August 2022, in which dozens of ethnic Oromo appear to have been killed in western Oromiya. It also received reports of attacks against Oromo civilians by numerous perpetrators, including the Ethiopian National Defence Forces, Amhara militias and Oromiya Special Forces. Further investigation into these incidents, and into the wider situation of communities in Oromiya, is recommended.⁹⁶

In August 2022, the Oromia Support Group published a report for presentation to the UN Commission of Enquiry into Ethiopia. It stated that "In a 27 June [2022] Press Conference, leaders of Oromia and Amhara Regions announced their common goal of eliminating OLA. Following this pact, heavily armed military convoys of the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF) and other forces have entered Oromia in different directions from Amhara Regional State, according to the OLF on 4 July".⁹⁷

⁹² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 16-22 July 2022](#), 27 July 2022

⁹³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 23-29 July 2022](#), 3 August 2022

⁹⁴ The OSG 'About us' section of its website describes the organisation as a "not-for-profit nongovernmental and nonpolitical organisation that promotes human rights". It explains that its reports numbered 46-49 were based on information sought from refugees in Kenya, Somaliland, Djibouti and South Africa, whilst reports numbered 50 and above document "abuses under the current Ethiopian government".

⁹⁵ Oromia Support Group (OSG), [REPORT 60: Death, destruction and detention in Oromia Disinformation: a hate crime and a tool of abuse](#), 2 August 2022, p. 13

⁹⁶ 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, para 103-104

⁹⁷ Oromia Support Group (OSG), [REPORT 60: Death, destruction and detention in Oromia Disinformation: a hate crime and a tool of abuse](#), 2 August 2022, p. 4

The Ethiopian Protection Cluster's overview for September 2022 remarked that "During the reporting period, the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and Security Forces have continued to pose a security threat to the inhabitants of Wollega and Guji".⁹⁸

BBC News wrote in December 2022 that "A clear demonstration of the growing strength of the OLA came in November [2022], when its fighters stormed Nekemte, a strategically important town with roads leading to Mr Abiy's home village, the capital, Addis Ababa, and a newly built mega dam that is vital to Ethiopia's electricity needs".⁹⁹

Addis Standard released an analysis in October 2022 on reports of mass detention and forced conscription in Oromia, writing that:

Residents of East Hararghe and West Hararghe in eastern Oromia who spoke with Addis Standard say communities are reeling from a fresh wave of conscription of the youth into the military, mass arrest, the snatching young people at checkpoints, and hunting young men and women door to door.

However, officials of the Zonal police and local administration who spoke with *Addis Standard* denied the accusations. [...]

Following last year's call by the federal government on citizens to join the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF), eye witnesses and opposition parties have decried widespread forced conscription in various places. However, the federal government repeatedly maintained that thousands of youth have joined the ENDF voluntarily. [...]

Biniam (name changed for the safety reasons) is a resident of Harar, said he has witnessed multiple incidents of security forces forcing youth including under-age children to join the military. He claims forced conscription includes children as young as 13 years old.

"The children are being abducted. The majority of the children being abducted are members of the Oromo community. Some are also members of communities from Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's regional state. They [security forces] break into houses and abduct children. They pick them, throw them on trucks and drive them to police stations and concentration camps. The majority of the victims are daily laborer children aged between 13 to 15," Biniam explained.

Biniam also says people who want their loved ones back have to pay a ransom. "The government forces detain children and youth and request a ransom. For instance, they detained the husband of a woman who delivered a baby just two months before his detention, and requested the wife [to pay] 20,000 Ethiopian Birr for his return." The security forces recruit the detainees as soldiers if the families of the detainee fail to pay the amount of money requested as ransom, according to Biniam.

Even though the focus is on daily laborers, it did not spare schoolchildren, "They have started hunting for school children. They have abducted some school children. Fathers are watchful of their kids; they are afraid to send children to school alone. They are taking their kids to school and waiting at the gate of the school to take them back home. Families are resenting it and are disappointed by this action," Biniam added. [...]

But other residents in the area corroborate Biniam's account. Henok (name changed) is one such resident of Kombolcha district in East Hararghe Zone of Oromia, who spoke to *Addis Standard* on conditions of anonymity says: "for example, there are seven checkpoints in the small town of Ejersa Rafu alone. They

⁹⁸ Protection Cluster, [Monthly Protection Overview – September 2022](#), 28 October 2022, p. 1

⁹⁹ BBC News, [Ethiopia's PM sees OLA rebellion grow in his own backyard](#), 18 December 2022

[security forces] stop residents at every checkpoint and capture some of the people by creating false allegations, and take them to the concentration camps. There are few lucky detainees who have managed to escape captivity by jumping over the fence. However, the majority is still in detention. Some families of the detainees do not know the whereabouts of their children as they have been denied the right to visit them,” Henok says.

According to him, sometimes the detention follows a tip from the militia and irregular armed militants (also known as Gaachana Sirnaa). [...]

Henok also recounts moments of detentions as violent and aggressive. “The security forces will never explain why someone is being detained. They grab and throw them into a vehicle. They will kick, beat and capture those who attempt to defend themselves. They also intimidate victims’ families if they attempt to look for the whereabouts of the children”.

A third eyewitness who is a resident of Fedis district in West Haraghe zone, says mass arrest and forced recruitment are common in the area. “We are aware that at least 600 children and youth are in detention centers in our district. The families of the detainees know little about their children. We have heard that the detainees are being recruited as soldiers to fight the battle between [TPLF] and the government. For instance, there is a family who learned that their son who was abducted by these security forces died in the fighting. We have never experienced such a tragedy. The worst thing is the detainees are neither well trained nor informed”.¹⁰⁰

Ethiopia Insight similarly wrote in November 2022 that:

Mass conscription of youth into the military to fight in the northern war was put in place last year, and, to a lesser extent, has continued this year.

Thousands of youth from Arsi, West Arsi, Bale, and East Bale, as well as other parts of Oromia, were rounded up and sent to training camps across the region, then sent to the war front, which at the time had expanded into Amhara region.

Most of their families have not heard from them since. Some were able to flee but were unable to return home for fear of retaliation from security forces.

“The regional government uses whatever excuse they want to crack down on the youth and justify their conscription...One day it is Islamist extremists, the next day it is OLA,” said a youth who escaped from a conscription camp a few months ago.

He described being taken to a training center outside of Shashamane, 188 kilometers west of Bale-Robe, before escaping. “When we arrived at the camps, they told us that serving Ethiopia was preferable to staying at home or joining the OLA,” the 19-year-old stated.

The Oromia government has long denied the conscription of youth. It again denied these allegations when residents of the East and West Hararghe zones, which border East Bale Zone, accused it of conscripting youth for military service.¹⁰¹

In its annual human rights report for Ethiopia in 2022, USDOS wrote that: “According to an October media report, the government forcibly recruited child soldiers from southern Oromia to fight against the

¹⁰⁰ Addis Standard, [Analysis: Eastern Oromia residents agonize from fresh mass detention, forced conscription; zonal officials deny multiple accounts](#), 13 October 2022

¹⁰¹ Ethiopia Insight, [Oromia’s Bale is facing a multi-layered crisis](#), 23 November 2022

TPLF. The government repeatedly denied the allegations of forced recruitment, maintaining youth of legal age joined security forces voluntarily”.¹⁰²

The Peace Research Facility of the RVI gave the following summary of security events in 2022:

- In the second half of 2022, the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) temporarily expanded its control over rural districts and towns in the west and southwest of Oromia. This was partly possible due to a security vacuum resulting from the Ethiopian National Defense Forces’ (ENDF) involvement in the Tigray war.
- In the latter part of 2022, particularly following the signing of the cessation of hostilities with the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) in early November [2022], government forces intensified their counteroffensive in the Oromia region, causing the OLA to retreat from previously held districts and towns into rural areas of western and central Oromia.
- The retreat of the OLA has led to a spillover of the conflict into Benishangul-Gumuz region, further adding to its cross-regional dynamics, which had already seen Amhara Fano militias and OLA deploying to protect their own ethnic communities who live as minorities in neighbouring regional states.
- The OLA’s insurgency, as well as recurrent Fano and OLA militia incursions across the Oromia- Amhara borderlands, and finally the government’s late-year counteroffensive in western Oromio led to multiple massacres and revenge attacks on both Oromo and Amhara communities.¹⁰³

The EPO stated in its annual review of 2022 that “political violence in Oromia region accounts for most events recorded during the year”.¹⁰⁴

Over the past year, political violence levels were highest in Oromia, Tigray, and Amhara regions. Amhara and Oromia, as well as SNNPR [Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region], 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. In 2022, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane2 was the most active group in Ethiopia, meaning they were involved in more events than any other actor, followed by the Ethiopian National Defense Force.¹⁰⁵

2 Also known as the Oromo Liberation Army

In its annual report covering events in 2022, Freedom House remarked “Some areas plagued by insecurity remain out of the control of the government—such as parts of Oromia—while others have been under prolonged states of emergency, with heightened military presence and control, including parts of Oromia, Amhara, and Benishangul Gumuz”.¹⁰⁶

The Peace Research Facility of the RVI recounted in March 2023 the shifts being seen towards the end of 2022 that:

¹⁰² US Department of State (USDOS), [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 20 March 2023

¹⁰³ Peace Research Facility and Rift Valley Institute (RVI), [Conflict Trend Analysis: Western Oromia](#), March 2023, p. 1

¹⁰⁴ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Year in Review: 2022–2023](#), 19 April 2023, p. 4

¹⁰⁵ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Year in Review: 2022–2023](#), 19 April 2023, p. 5

¹⁰⁶ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2023 – Ethiopia](#), March 2023

Up to now, the conflict in Western Oromia has mostly been focused on four zones – East Wollega, Horu Guduru Wollega, Kellem Wollega and West Wollega. More recently however, following a government counterinsurgency in the second half of 2022, the OLA was increasingly forced to retreat from towns and villages in these areas and is now mainly present in rural areas and forests across central Oromia, particularly East and West Shewa, North Shewa, parts of South West Shewa, and also West Guji zones.²⁹ [...]

The presence of multiple operatives in East Wollega and Horo Guduru Zones [...] adds to the complexity of the conflict. Beyond the regional and federal forces, in both zones there are unaccountable actors that are hard to identify, including OLA splinter groups, various Amhara Fano forces (most operating autonomously or under a loosely decentralized command structure), as well as armed civilians often comprised of local farmers and youths. Furthermore, as the EHRC has reported, civilians in districts with some of the deadliest attacks – including in Agamsa, Jardega Jarte, Amuru and Kirumu areas – have been left unprotected by regional and federal forces. This has resulted in civilians arming themselves and combatants committing atrocities with impunity. The Wollega zone regional border-crossings are largely uncontrolled, allowing Oromo and Amhara ethnic forces unhindered access across regional borders.¹⁰⁷

29 The federal government has had most difficulty with its operations against OLA in North and West Shewa zones, which are extremely rural and afford the rebels with opportunities to escape federal government forces in forests, particularly in Gindberet woreda, West Shewa. Extensive cave systems in the Mogor area of North Shewa are also, reportedly, being used by OLA groups to hideout and shelter.

The same report wrote on prospects for peace as such:

During 2022, the conflict in western Oromia escalated to its greatest intensity since it began in 2019. Neither the OLA nor federal government until recently voiced an interest in peace negotiations. In April and November 2022 Oromia's head of the Communication Affairs Bureau, Hailu Adugna, vowed to fight rather than negotiate with 'extremist groups' in West Oromia, referring to 'OLF Shane' and 'Fano' Amhara militias.³⁶ At the end of 2022, after the signing of the cessation of hostilities between the federal government and the TPLF, the federal government redoubled its military offensive against the OLA, and the group became strategically isolated by the TPLF's decision to end its armed struggle. In mid-December, a group of representatives from the Oromia region wrote a letter to the Prime Minister's Office demanding that a peace deal, akin to the one with the TPLF, be negotiated between the Ethiopian government and the OLA.³⁷ However, with the military threat of the OLA, and the resources needed to fight them significantly less than was the case during the high-point of the Tigray conflict, there is less incentive for the federal government to do so. PM Abiy Ahmed is also wary of further damaging relations with the Amhara region³⁸ – already under pressure due to perceived concessions made to the TPLF as part of the cessation of hostilities – by demanding an end to the cross-border attacks by Amhara Special Forces and Fanos against Oromo communities in the Oromia–Amhara borderlands.¹⁰⁸

36 Natnael Fite, 'Oromia state doubles down on accusations against Amhara extremist group for causing damage', Addis Standard, 12 April 2022, <https://addisstandard.com/news-romia-state-doubles-down-on-accusations-against-amhara-extremist-group-for-causing-damage/>; 'Oromia region announces that it will not negotiate with guerrillas operating in the region', (title transl. by ed. from Amharic), VOA News Amharic, 28 November 2022, <https://amharic.voanews.com/a/6853576.html>

¹⁰⁷ Peace Research Facility and Rift Valley Institute (RVI), [Conflict Trend Analysis: Western Oromia](#), March 2023, p. 8

¹⁰⁸ Peace Research Facility and Rift Valley Institute (RVI), [Conflict Trend Analysis: Western Oromia](#), March 2023, p.

37 'Lawmakers from Oromia region request Tigray peace deal redo between govt, OLA armed group', Addis Standard, 13 December 2022, <https://addisstandard.com/news-lawmakers-from-oromia-region-request-tigray-peace-deal-redo-between-govt-ola-armed-group>

38 Tom Gardner, 'Ethiopia's new rift: Amhara vs Abiy', Africa Report, 2 June 2022, <https://www.theafricareport.com/210237/ethiopias-new-rift-amhara-vs-abiy/>.

The report of the UN Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict covering 2022 noted that:

The United Nations verified 270 grave violations against 187 children (93 boys, 39 girls, 55 sex unknown), between the age of 2 months and 17 years, including 1 boy who was the victim of multiple violations. The information does not represent the full scale of violations against children, as verification depends on many factors. A much larger number of allegations of recruitment and use was received and is under verification. [...]

The killing (66) and maiming (107) of 173 children (85 boys, 33 girls, 55 sex unknown) was attributed to unidentified perpetrators (132) (including as a result of explosive ordnance (58)), the Eritrean Defence Forces (16), the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (10), joint operations by the Ethiopian National Defence Forces and the Eritrean Defence Forces (7), Tigrayan forces (3), joint operations by the Ethiopian National Defence Forces and Amhara Special Force (2), joint operations by the Ethiopian National Defence Forces and Afar Special Force (2) and Oromo Liberation Front-Shene (1) in the states or regions of Tigray (162), Amhara (5), Afar (3), Oromiya (2) and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (1).¹⁰⁹

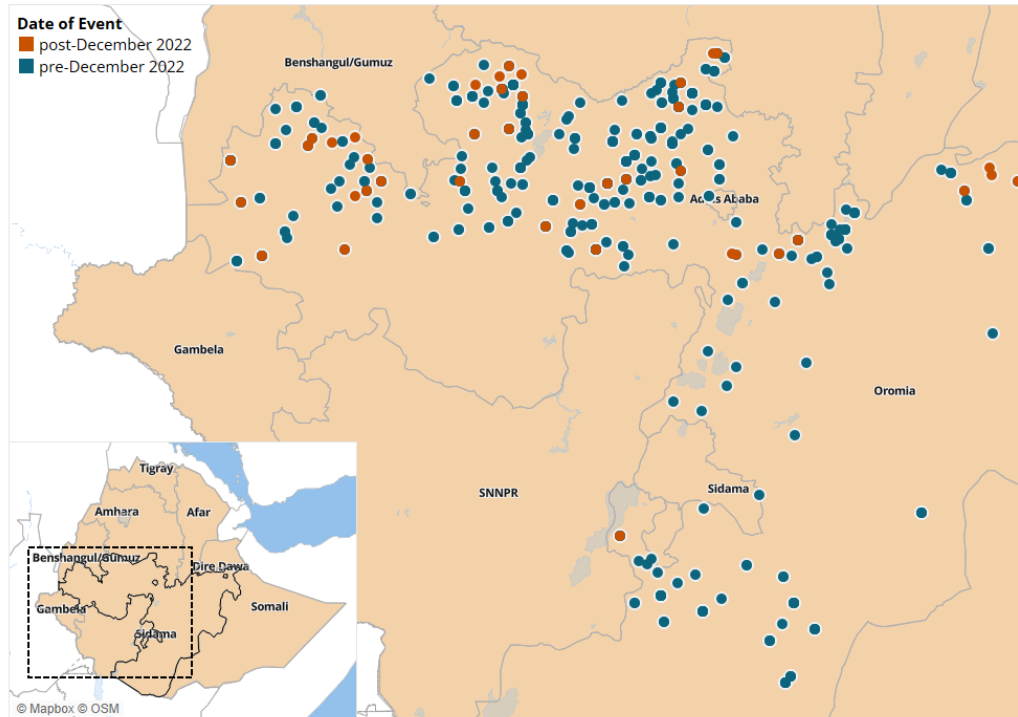
The December 2022 update from the EPO report produced the following map of political violence in Oromia for 2022¹¹⁰:

¹⁰⁹ UN General Assembly, [*UN Security Council: Children and armed conflict; Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 5 June 2023, paragraphs 247 and 249

¹¹⁰ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [*EPO December 2022 Monthly: Conflict Expands in Oromia Region*](#), 12 January 2023

Political Violence in Oromia Region

(1 January 2022 - 31 December 2022)



b. November 2022 to May 2024

In December 2022, Addis Standard reported on a new report by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) on human rights violations against civilians in Ethiopia:

Civilians are caught in crossfire and subjected to alarming crimes amounting to “grave violation of human rights” in the escalating attacks and militarized clashes in different parts of Oromia region in a span of five months, a new report by the government’s Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) said. [...]

In addition to the context of the conflicts in which the killings, displacement, injuries, looting, environmental destruction and human rights violations happen, civilians are also subjected to abuses in instances including when the armed forces or government security forces control given areas. [...]

Equally, in areas under the control of armed groups, kidnappings, killings, robberies, other violations, including extortion are inflicted on the local residents and the community to suffer no less than the conflicts and attacks, the report said.¹¹¹

An article published at the start of December 2022 by The Reporter on the situation in Oromia wrote:

¹¹¹ Addis Standard, [News Analysis: Civilians subjected to “grave violation of human rights” in clashes, attacks by armed groups, gov’t security forces operating in Oromia – EHRC](#), 8 December 2022

There has been an increase in attacks on foreign investors. Foreign expats and locals working in factories have been kidnapped and narrowly escaped deaths. The government has labeled the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) a terrorist organization, but kidnappings of manufacturing workers allegedly by the group continue to occur less than 100 kilometres from Addis Ababa.

Workers employed by Dangote Cement are the most recent victims. It happened to the workers at the state-owned Mugher Cement, too; the company's deputy head was kidnapped on his way to Addis Ababa, and only after he paid a million birr to the armed men who held him ransom did he get released. A truck on its way to the capital was attacked a few weeks ago by armed men apparently working under OLA orders who had taken control of the Hawasaa Express Road.¹¹²

It added that "Officials of Oromia report that eight of 20 Oromia's zones are currently threatened by security issues, and that there is no assurance of safety in the remaining zones, even though they are generally considered to be safe".¹¹³

In December 2022, BBC News reported on escalations of conflict in Oromia:

In the latest sign of the deep crisis that has engulfed Ethiopia, conflict in the vast Oromia region - the heartland of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed - is escalating as political and ethnic tensions explode.

It has seen Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) rebels raid towns that were once out of their reach, and hold "graduation ceremonies" to boast of new recruits, while the government has responded with troop reinforcements and drone strikes as it rules out talks to end the crisis.

Adding to the dangerous cocktail, much-feared militias from the rival Amhara ethnic group are widely believed to have crossed into Oromia to fight the rebels.¹¹⁴

The December 2022 update from the EPO confirmed this, writing:

The violence in Oromia is escalating and expanding geographically (see map below), with new areas of conflict in the northwest of Oromia region adding to sustained conflict in the south and west of the region. Armed clashes began to surge again in November after a relative calm in September and October last year, with ACLED recording 87 battle events between November and December 2022. The armed clashes involved the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF), Oromia regional special forces, the OLF-Shane, and Amhara ethnic militias. Armed clashes between armed factions in Oromia have been recorded in East Wollega, Horo Guduro Wollega, Kellem Wollega, North Shewa, South West Shewa, West Hararghe, West Shewa, and West Wollega zones in December. The clashes have resulted in at least 137 reported fatalities. [...]

The most serious violence resulting in roughly 38% of reported fatalities for the month occurred within the first eight days of December in Angar Gutin and Kiremu. These towns are located along Highway 32, which connects Nekemte city, Oromia, to Bure town, Amhara.¹¹⁵

¹¹² The Reporter Ethiopia, [Oromia in dire straits](#), 3 December 2022

¹¹³ The Reporter Ethiopia, [Oromia in dire straits](#), 3 December 2022

¹¹⁴ BBC News, [Ethiopia's PM sees OLA rebellion grow in his own backyard](#), 18 December 2022

¹¹⁵ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO December 2022 Monthly: Conflict Expands in Oromia Region](#), 12 January 2023

The monthly update also stated “News of the attacks and displacement of ethnic Oromo and Amhara civilians from the area sparked demonstrations by university students throughout the country. In December [2022], 35 demonstration events have been recorded in Addis Ababa, Amhara, Dire Dawa, Gambela, Oromia, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples (SNNP), Somali, and South West regions”.¹¹⁶

A UNOCHA situation report for December 2022 wrote that:

In Oromia Region, the security situation is fast deteriorating, particularly in western Oromia. According to reports from local authorities, hundreds of thousands of civilians have been uprooted from their homes and social infrastructure have been destroyed. Essential services, including electricity, mobile network, health facilities, banks and markets are not functional in conflict-affected western Oromia. The affected population are not only taking refuge in better-off areas within Oromia, but also crossing the border into Amhara Region in large numbers after a three to five days journey on foot. More than 10,000 people were reportedly displaced in the first half of December 2022 alone according to local authorities.¹¹⁷

EPO’s weekly update for 14 to 20 January 2023 added “in Oromia region, between 13 to 16 January, Somali ethnic militias clashed with Oromo ethnic militias in Tulu Guled, Fefem, Chafe Badu, Merar, and Hosale kebeles in Chinaksen woreda in East Hararge zone. Due to these clashes, three militiamen were killed, and eight others were wounded”.¹¹⁸

The New Humanitarian, in a January 2023 news feature on conflict in the Oromia region, remarked:

Until recently, the OLA mostly conducted small-scale hit-and-run operations. It has raided banks and conducted kidnappings to fund operations that include targeted assassinations against government officials and police officers.

The conflict has gone mostly unnoticed outside of Ethiopia amid heavy focus on the northern Tigray war, which has killed hundreds of thousands of people and dominated headlines about the country for the past two years.

[...] Oromia has morphed into Ethiopia’s “most volatile region”, according to ACLED, a conflict monitoring group.

Violence is spreading to rural areas not far from the capital, Addis Ababa, and “the conflict is more or less engulfing the whole of the Oromo nation,” Merera Gudina, the chairman of the opposition Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) party, told The New Humanitarian.

In western Oromia, the OLA is now controlling territory and pulling off increasingly complex attacks. And whereas it previously turned down new volunteers due to limited training capacity, it now holds big graduation ceremonies for recruits.

In recent months, there has been a flare-up in OLA attacks that may be linked to the Tigray peace deal, said a diplomat in Addis Ababa, who requested anonymity to preserve working relations with authorities.

¹¹⁶ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO December 2022 Monthly: Conflict Expands in Oromia Region](#), 12 January 2023

¹¹⁷ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Situation Report](#), 15 December 2022

¹¹⁸ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 14-20 January 2023](#), 24 January 2023

“The OLA are stepping up their operations and expanding their control over some areas to score propaganda points before battle-hardened federal troops redeploy from the north,” the diplomat said.¹¹⁹

In its January 2023 Situation Update UNOCHA reported that “The security situation in Oromia Region remains highly volatile with devastating humanitarian consequences. Hundreds of thousands of people continue to be uprooted from their homestead in western Oromia, including across the border to Amhara Region [...]. The displaced people largely remain without assistance due to access challenges. In addition, resumed intercommunal violence between bordering woredas of Sidama Region and Guji zone of Oromia Region uprooted more than 5000 people over the past three weeks”.¹²⁰

According to the 2024 Bertelsmann Stiftung’s Transformation Index, covering the period from 1 February 2021 to 31 January 2023, “an insurgency led by the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) gained momentum in western and southern parts of the Oromia region”.¹²¹ It added that the insurgency “continued to expand, drawing in more actors and exacerbating existing political divisions”.¹²² The same source noted that “an insurgency led by the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) gained momentum in western and southern parts of the Oromia region”.¹²³ It added that “the insurgency in Oromia continued to expand, drawing in more actors and exacerbating existing political divisions”.¹²⁴

The International Crisis Group’s CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in February 2023:

After three archbishops in Oromia late Jan formed breakaway synod, accusing Holy Synod in Addis Ababa of discrimination, Abiy 1 Feb instructed his ministers not to get involved. Abiy’s remarks angered Holy Synod and its mostly Amhara supporters, who viewed him as condoning breakaway faction. Some 4 Feb protested in Oromia’s Shashemene town (West Arsi Zone); violence escalated as demonstrators clashed with Oromia regional special forces backed by breakaway faction, leaving around eight dead. Church same day called for nationwide protests, raising fears of more violence, but called them off after Church leaders 10 Feb met with Abiy. Two factions 15 Feb agreed to resolve disagreement peacefully.¹²⁵

Addis Standard wrote that “In February [2023], *Addis Standard* reported that people who were internally displaced following deadly attacks in Kiremu and Gida Ayana districts of East Wollega zone in November last year [2022] and have since been living in IDP shelters in the small Gida town were hesitant to return home citing lingering insecurity despite officials urging them otherwise”.¹²⁶

¹¹⁹ The New Humanitarian, [As violence subsides in Tigray, Ethiopia’s Oromia conflict flares](#), 12 January 2023

¹²⁰ OCHA, [Ethiopia Situation Report](#), 18 January 2023

¹²¹ Bertelsmann Stiftung, [BTI 2024 Country Report — Ethiopia](#), 19 March 2024

¹²² Bertelsmann Stiftung, [BTI 2024 Country Report — Ethiopia](#), 19 March 2024

¹²³ Bertelsmann Stiftung, [BTI 2024 Country Report — Ethiopia](#), 19 March 2024

¹²⁴ Bertelsmann Stiftung, [BTI 2024 Country Report — Ethiopia](#), 19 March 2024

¹²⁵ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), February 2023

¹²⁶ Addis Standard, [News: Militants kill at least five, wound several people in renewed attacks in Western Oromia](#), 10 June 2023

The March 2023 update from the EPO reported that “violence in Oromia region has also appeared in the south and east, despite an ongoing insurgency by the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane in the region’s west”.¹²⁷ The update did further note, however, that:

Fundamental political differences on the country’s future persist between Oromo and Amhara politicians and have also flared tensions in the communities. However, there are some indications that the violence these tensions manifest between ethnic militias has decreased over the past two months. Intense violence between Oromo and Amhara communities in East Wollega and Horo Guduro Wollega zones in Oromia that occurred in December 2022 and January 2023 have cooled, with no political violence events involving Amhara militias being reported in February, and four events in March [...]. On 1 March, representatives from Amhara and Oromia regional governments met to discuss joint security issues, culminating in a joint statement indicating that a “common solution had been reached.”¹²⁸

10 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Communication Service, ‘Work is being done to solve the joint problems in the Amhara and Oromia regions,’ 1 March 2023

The March 2023 commentary on prospects for peace in Ethiopia by the German Institute for International and Security Affairs observed that:

The OLA is probably too small, fragmented and ill-equipped to conquer larger cities or even Addis Ababa, even though it sometimes fights up to 25 kilometres from the capital [...]. The larger consequence of their actions is the climate of insecurity in an economically important region of the country. The German ambassador to Ethiopia, for example, has already expressed his concerns about attacks on investors in Oromia. Ethiopia’s main supply links with the port of Djibouti also run through Oromia. If the conflict between armed groups of Amhara and Oromia escalates, this could have serious consequences for the unity and governability of Ethiopia.¹²⁹

According to the April 2023 update from the EPO:

On 6 April, the Ethiopian government declared its intention to incorporate regional special forces from each region of the country into different branches of the security sector as part of an integration plan.⁴ Ethiopia’s constitution allows regional states the right to “establish and administer a state police force, and to maintain public order and peace within the State.”⁵ Special forces were created with the purpose of countering insurgencies within their respective regional borders. They have, however, expanded and become controversial as they have engaged in violence against civilians and in border disputes. According to ACLED data, 18% of all recorded violence targeting civilian events since 2018 involve regional special forces.

¹²⁷ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO March 2023 Monthly: Political Violence Trends Decline Amid Opportunities for Peace](#), 5 April 2023

¹²⁸ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO March 2023 Monthly: Political Violence Trends Decline Amid Opportunities for Peace](#), 5 April 2023

¹²⁹ Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) (Institute for International and Security Affairs), Gerrit Kurtz, [SWP Comment, No. 14 March 2023: Sustaining Peace in Ethiopia](#), March 2023, p. 6

Regional authorities in Somali, Oromia, and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples region (SNNPR) announced plans to follow the federal government's directive, and have begun the process of integration with limited public reaction.¹³⁰

4 [Addis Standard, 'News: Army Chief proclaims end of regional special forces "as of today," 15 April 2023](#)

5 [Constitute Project, 'Ethiopia's Constitution of 1994,' p.16](#)

6 [Addis Standard, 'NewsAlert: Somali state cabinet unanimously approves government's plan to dissolve, reintegrate regional special forces,' 10 April 2023; VOA Amharic, 'Oromia region has announced that it has stopped the deployment of special forces,' 13 April 2023](#)

Human Rights Watch stated in its annual report covering 2023 that "The government relaunched its counterinsurgency campaign against the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) in May after the collapse of peace talks in April".¹³¹

In June 2023, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) published a food security outlook update on Ethiopia, focusing on the impact of conflict, drought, and flooding, stating that:

In Oromia, a brief decrease in the intensity of the conflict was exhibited in April [2023], after the announcement of the peace talks between the Ethiopian government and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA). However, conflict sharply increased in May and June after the talks ended with no agreement. The persistent movement of armed forces in central and western areas of Oromia is driving increasing tensions in affected and neighboring areas. In May/June, OLA attacks resumed, inflaming an already tense and precarious situation.¹³²

Similarly, the September 2023 report from the ICHREE summarised that "After the COHA [Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA) in Pretoria on 2 November 2022], hostilities in Oromia, ongoing between the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and ENDF since early 2019, re-escalated. Violence has grown in the four Wollega zones, Guji, Borana and in parts of West Shewa. Initial negotiations between the Federal Government and the OLA collapsed in April 2023, and the Government relaunched counter-insurgency operations in May 2023".¹³³

USDOS's annual report on human rights in Ethiopia in 2023 stated "In September [2023] media reported a resurgence of an ethnic conflict in the borders of the Somali and Oromia regions" with the conflict affecting Koloji IDP camp in Babile district.¹³⁴

The EPO's monthly update for October 2023 observed:

¹³⁰ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO April 2023 Monthly: Volatility in Amhara Region While the Rest of the Country Stabilizes](#), 6 May 2023

¹³¹ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2024: Events of 2023](#), 11 January 2024, p. 217

¹³² The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), [Lasting, severe impacts of conflict and drought leave millions struggling to cope: June 2023 – January 2024](#), June 2023

¹³³ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia](#), 14 September 2023, paragraph 15

¹³⁴ US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 23 April 2024

In Oromia region, violence has declined, most likely related to the federal government's security resources becoming tied up in Amhara region. In a speech, the insurgent group OLF-Shane/OLA's leader, Jaal Marroo, asked fellow fighters for "patience" as the group made additional preparations for another round of fighting.⁸ This indicates instability in Oromia region and another round of armed clashes is likely to erupt again in the absence of an effective peace process.¹³⁵

8 Oromia National Media, 'Jaal Marroo Dirribaa, commander-in-chief of the OLF-OLA, Speech to Newly Graduated Trainees,' 24 September 2023

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace summarised in November 2023 that:

The Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) insurgency continues to destabilize increasingly large portions of Oromia [...]. This violence also distracts from the deeper drivers of instability, which include intra-Oromo political competition and grievances of political and economic marginalization. The conflicts in Amhara and Oromia have fueled polarizing ethnic politics that have begun to deteriorate societal relations between Ethiopia's largest ethnic groups.¹³⁶

In December 2023, the EPO remarked that:

One of the most significant changes since the end of the first round of peace talks, held in April and May 2023, was to the forces the federal government uses to combat the OLA/OLF-Shane insurgency. Before the peace talks, the Oromo regional special forces — created to fight insurgencies — were the primary force engaged in battles with the OLA/OLF-Shane in Oromia region. In early April 2023, the Ethiopian government announced the dissolution of the country's regional special forces. By 13 April, it was announced that the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) and federal police had taken over security duties in Oromia⁸ [...].

After an unsuccessful conclusion to the first round of peace talks (which concluded on 3 May), the ENDF became more active in Oromia region, resulting in a sharp increase in reported battle events and violence against civilians. Although operations against the OLA/OLF-Shane by the ENDF increased as the year progressed [...], there is no evidence to suggest that the involvement of the ENDF in lieu of the Oromia regional special forces has resulted in a weaker OLA/OLF-Shane.¹³⁷

8 VOA Amharic, 'Oromia region has announced a halt in the deployment of special forces,' 13 April 2023

The same update highlighted 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 (sometimes identified as Fano militia) operating in Oromia region and in the Oromo special zone of Amhara region".¹³⁸

¹³⁵ EPO, [EPO October 2023 Monthly: Ethiopia's International Relations](#), 22 November 2023

¹³⁶ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, [Ethiopia's Fragile Stability Remains at Risk](#), 1 November 2023

¹³⁷ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO November 2023 Update: An Evolving Conflict Environment in Oromia](#), 14 December 2023

¹³⁸ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO November 2023 Update: An Evolving Conflict Environment in Oromia](#), 14 December 2023

In December 2023, FEWS NET commented that “In Oromia, where the ENDF is engaged in hostilities with the Oromo Liberation Front-Shane and various Fano militias, areas of conflict have shifted away from Wollega Zone to North Shewa, East Shea, Arsi, South West Shewa, and West Shewa zones”.¹³⁹

In its annual report covering events in 2023, Freedom House explained 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”.¹⁴⁰ It also wrote that “An ongoing government campaign to suppress armed opposition groups in Oromia has led to repeated clashes. [...] Incidents of large-scale, ethnically motivated killings have occurred in Oromia, perpetrated by Amhara militias, the OLA, Oromia regional forces, and federal forces”.¹⁴¹

The EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World for 2023 stated that “Throughout 2023, but with varying intensity, government and Regional Security Forces clashed with the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and other armed groups claiming their names”.¹⁴²

The report of the UN Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict covering 2023 noted that:

The United Nations verified 253 grave violations against 198 children (112 boys, 52 girls, 34 sex unknown), including 1 child who was a victim of multiple violations. Most violations were verified in Tigray (140), Amhara (38) and Oromia (34). In addition, 12 violations that occurred in previous years were verified. The information does not represent the full scale of violations against children, and over 880 allegations of grave violations are under verification. [...]

The killing (36) and maiming (133) of 169 children (103 boys, 32 girls, 34 sex unknown) was attributed to unidentified perpetrators (157), the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (4), Fano (4), Oromo Liberation Army/Front-Shene (2), the Eritrean Defence Forces (1) and Somali special forces (1). Most children (150) were killed and maimed as a result of explosive ordnance. [...]

The abduction of 12 children (9 boys, 3 girls) by the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (8), Oromia Special Forces (3) and the Eritrean Defence Forces (1) was verified.¹⁴³

USDOS’s annual report on human rights in Ethiopia in 2023 stated “During the year, government counterinsurgency campaigns against [...] the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) in Oromia [...] continued, with numerous reports of unlawful killings, including killings of civilians”.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), [Drought-induced crop failure leads to Emergency in conflict-affected north](#), December 2023

¹⁴⁰ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024 – Ethiopia](#), 29 February 2024

¹⁴¹ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024 – Ethiopia](#), 29 February 2024

¹⁴² European Union, [EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World](#), 24 May 2024, p. 100

¹⁴³ UN General Assembly, [UN Security Council: Children and armed conflict; Report of the Secretary-General \[A/78/842-S/2024/384\]](#), 3 June 2024, paras 257 and 259

¹⁴⁴ US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 23 April 2024

The 2023 USDOS report on trafficking in Ethiopia noted that “Reports allege non-state armed groups may have recruited or used children in Tigray, Amhara, and Oromia”.¹⁴⁵

In its annual report covering 2023, Amnesty International wrote on Ethiopia that “Fighting escalated in the Oromia region, after peace talks between the Oromo Liberation Army and the government failed for the second time, affecting civilians in the region”.¹⁴⁶

The June 2024 OHCHR report covering the situation in 2023 and incidents in 2024 thus far detailed that:

Despite significant improvements in the human rights situation in Tigray, since the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA), Ethiopia continued generally to face a challenging human rights situation in 2023, with Amhara and Oromia most affected by violent clashes and conflicts. Arbitrary deprivations of the right to life, physical integrity, arbitrary arrests and detention, sexual violence, breaches of freedoms of association, expression, of movement, as well as abductions and enforced disappearances were recorded. The most common violations included arbitrary arrests and detentions, followed by killings of civilians, torture, enforced disappearances, and attacks on civilian property following the state of emergency declared on 4 August 2023. These violations and abuses severely impacted the socio-economic rights of the population, especially those affected by violence.¹⁴⁷

The same source further described:

The failure of the peace negotiations resulted in increased killings and injuries of civilians, abductions, destruction of civilian property, CRSV [Conflict-related Sexual Violence], new mass displacement, shutdown of telecommunications, movement restrictions impeding humanitarian activities, more heavy militarization of Oromia region by the Government of Ethiopia and a flare-up of Oromo-Amhara targeted ethnic fighting. The situation in Oromia underscores the need for urgent dialogue to resolve the conflict, which continues to take a heavy toll on people.¹⁴⁸

It further recorded:

In 2023, 594 incidents during which human rights violations and abuses occurred, impacting 8,253 victims (3,169 men, 343 women and the rest unidentified) were recorded. In addition, OHCHR also documented nine incidents that caused the forced or arbitrary displacement of 42,864 victims in 2023.

These statistics (594 of incidents) indicate an increase of 55.9 percent in the incidents of violations and abuses in 2023, compared to 2022, when 381 incidents were recorded. However, more victims were registered in 2022, a total of 18,834, which compared to 8,253 in 2023, constituting a decrease of 56.1 percent.⁴ This decrease in number of victims in 2023 is largely attributed to the end of hostilities in Tigray and fewer attacks against civilians by armed groups, notably in Oromia in 2023. [...]

In conflict-affected-areas, 141 cases of injuries were recorded, affecting 796 civilians (including 53 women). Out of these, 370 civilians (including 34 women) were in the Amhara region, with Oromia and

¹⁴⁵ US Department of State (USDOS), [2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Ethiopia](#), 24 June 2024

¹⁴⁶ Amnesty International, [The State of the World's Human Rights: April 2024](#), 23 April 2024, p. 167

¹⁴⁷ OHCHR, [Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia](#), June 2024, paragraph 2

¹⁴⁸ OHCHR, [Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia](#), June 2024, paragraph 42

Tigray regions recording 203 (4 women) and 17 (2 women) respectively. The injury of civilians in Amhara was linked to the fighting between the ENDF, Amhara Regional forces on one side and Fano militia on the other, which escalated during the reporting period.¹⁴⁹

4 In 2022, OHCHR recorded 2,576 killed, 1,288 injured, 221 tortured or subjected to ill-treatment, 82 victims of CRSV, 14,595 arbitrary arrests, 11 enforced disappearances, and 61 abductions.

USAID reported in a complex emergency fact sheet for Ethiopia at the beginning of January 2024 that “The majority of violent events took place in Amhara—where clashes between the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) and Fano militia have remained ongoing since August—and Oromia, where the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) continues to clash with the ENDF and Fano militia”.¹⁵⁰

A January 2024 Guardian article on Oromia reported on increased kidnapping in the region:

Until recently kidnappings were rare outside OLA’s strongholds in western Oromia. When they did occur, they were targeted. The main victims were [...] police officers, government officials or their relatives, and the aims were generally political rather than financial.

Now, kidnapping for ransom has become commonplace. Abductions take place not far from Addis Ababa, as the OLA’s insurgency spreads to new areas, and target anyone. [...]

The OLA rebels deny using kidnapping to fund for their insurgency, but the group is loosely organised and local units often act independently of their commanders.

Jonah Wedekind, an independent researcher, said there are strong indications that some OLA factions have turned to kidnapping as a way of raising cash, but bandits motivated simply by financial gain may also be engaging in the practice. [...]

“Some armed actors perceive the OLA to be efficiently raising capital through these attacks and might be copying them,” says Wedekind. “And this is part of the wider problem: the conflict reflects the economy breaking down, and people don’t have jobs, so this is what they turn to.”¹⁵¹

The US Congressional Research Service produced a brief on Ethiopia in January 2024, noting that the “Ethiopian government faces insurgencies in its two most populous regions, Oromia and Amhara, and heightened ethno-political tensions create an unpredictable security situation”.¹⁵²

Insecurity Insight reported in a monthly news brief on ‘education in danger’ that “13 February 2024: At a checkpoint in Gute town, Wayu Tuka, East Wellega, Oromia region, a teacher was shot and wounded when suspected Oromia regional security forces opened fire on a bus transporting students and teachers of Nekemte University while they were travelling to Adama for an educational tour. The bus was accused of not stopping at the checkpoint.* Source: ACLED”.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ OHCHR, [Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia](#), June 2024, paragraphs 14-15 and 22

¹⁵⁰ USAID, [Ethiopia – Complex Emergency; Fact Sheet #1 Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2024](#), 8 January 2024, p. 2

¹⁵¹ The Guardian, [‘This is a pandemic’: Ethiopia’s Oromia region gripped by surge in kidnappings](#), 23 January 2024

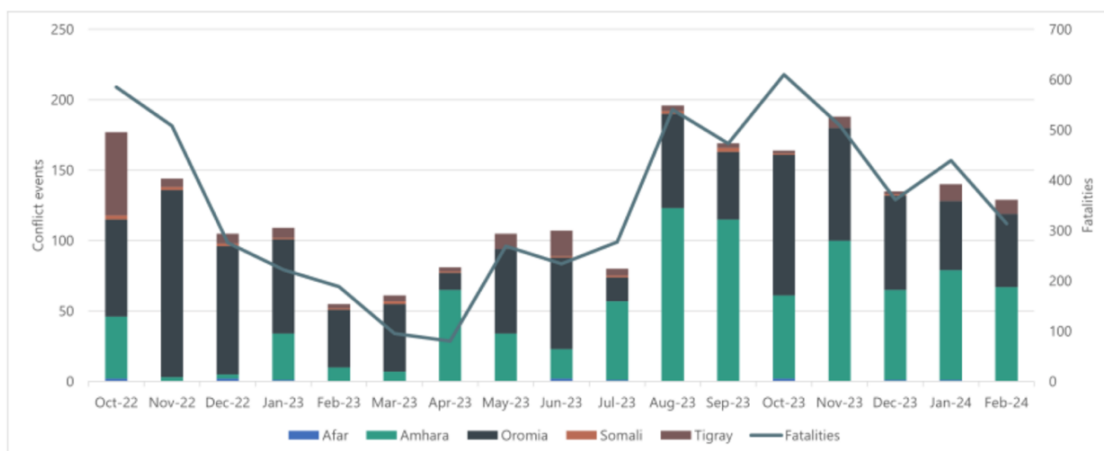
¹⁵² US Congressional Research Service, [Ethiopia: In Brief](#), 23 January 2024

¹⁵³ Insecurity Insight, [Education in Danger: Monthly News Brief – February 2024](#), February 2024, p. 1

In February 2024, FEWS Net reported in its food security outlook for February to September 2024 that “Conflict in 2023, and moving into 2024, has been concentrated in Amhara and Oromia” and produced the below figures accordingly, based on ACLED data¹⁵⁴:

Figure 3

Trends in conflict in key regions in Ethiopia from Oct. 2022 to mid-Feb. 2024

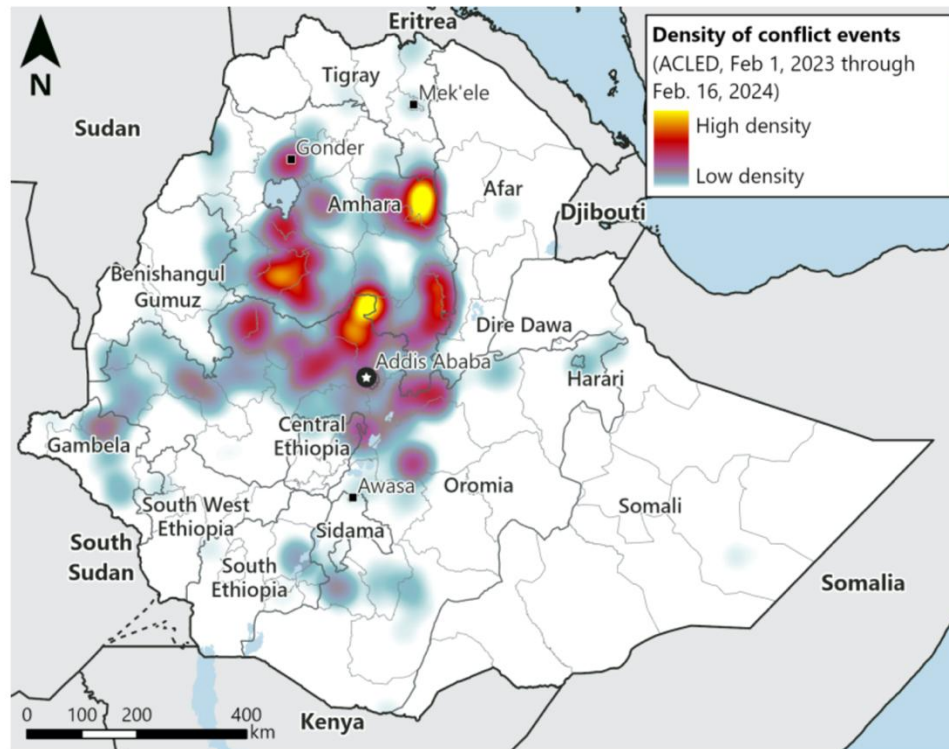


Source: ACLED

¹⁵⁴ The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), [Hunger and acute malnutrition outpace the scale-up of food assistance](#), February 2024

Figure 4

Density of conflict in Ethiopia from Feb. 1 to Feb. 16, 2024



Source: ACLED

The EPO's monthly update for April 2024 remarked that "ACLED records the most political violence in April — 72 events and 247 reported fatalities — in Oromia region".¹⁵⁵ It further noted "While the government has managed to keep the OLA/OLF-Shane from controlling any major cities in Oromia region, its influence in rural areas has led to widespread insecurity and economic difficulties".¹⁵⁶

c. Violence between armed groups and the government in Oromia

For further information on civilian casualties owing to this violence, see section [IV. Human rights situation, b, Killings, i Extrajudicial killings by state actors](#).

According to the EPO's weekly update from 23 April to 6 May 2022:

For the past two weeks, armed clashes between the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane and government forces continued in Oromia region. The OLF-Shane clashed with ENDF and Oromia regional special forces in Guji (Gumi Idalo woreda and around Wadera town), West Guji (Suro Berguda and Gelana woredas),

¹⁵⁵ EPO, [EPO Monthly Update | April 2024 - Abiy Ahmed's Sixth Year](#), 13 May 2024

¹⁵⁶ EPO, [EPO Monthly Update | April 2024 - Abiy Ahmed's Sixth Year](#), 13 May 2024

Horo Guduru (Abay Chomen, Ababo, and Guduru woredas), East Wollega (Ibantu woreda), West Wollega (Begi and Mana Sibru woredas), West Shewa (Ejere-Addis Alem woreda and Bustilo Dhera), South West Shewa (Ameya woreda), and East Shewa zones (Fentale woreda).¹⁵⁷

The International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in May 2022 "In Oromia region, conflict continued between federal and regional forces, and Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) in West Arsi, West Hararghe, Guji, West Shewa and North Shewa zones; at least 30 civilians killed during month. OLA 18 May claimed attack on military camp in Sululta town, 13km from capital Addis Ababa, said 16 soldiers killed. Military 21 May said it killed 44 OLA rebels and captured five in Worejarso district of North Shewa Zone".¹⁵⁸

The monthly update for April and May 2022 from the EPO recounted that:

In both April and May, the battles event type had the highest number of events, with the majority of these events – 37 out of 61 in April and 25 out of 34 in May – recorded in Oromia region [...]. In April, ACLED recorded 35 battle events between OLF-Shane and government forces. In May, all recorded 25 battle events in Oromia region were between OLF-Shane and government forces across various zones. In both months, armed clash events were recorded in East Shewa, Guji, North Shewa, Horo Guduru, South West Shewa, West Arsi, West Guji, and West Shewa zones. In Borena and East and West Wollega zones, armed clash events were only recorded in April, while in East Hararge, Finfine Special, and West Hararge zones, they were only recorded in May.¹⁵⁹

The weekly update for 4 to 10 June 2022 from the EPO set out the following armed clashes between the OLA and the government forces and Fano and the government forces, in both Oromia and Gambela:

Armed clashes between Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane and government forces continued in Oromia region. Last week, five armed clash events between these actors were recorded. All these armed clashes occurred in Guji zone. In this zone, the two parties clashed in Mormora kebele in Gora Adola woreda, Abulo kebele in Adola woreda, Wadara town in Wadara woreda, and Melka Guba kebele in Gumi Ildalo woreda. Meanwhile, last week, the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) announced that it had conducted a military operation against OLF-Shane rebels in Likiti kebele in Gudetu Kondole woreda in West Wollega zone. The ENDF claimed to have fully liberated the village following the fighting that resulted in killing eight OLF-Shane members and capturing 15 members of the group (FDRE Defense Force, 10 June 2022). Several weapons and properties of the group were also seized.

On 6 June, Fano militias clashed with federal police forces in an unspecified location in the zone, resulting in an unknown number of fatalities, including among the members of the federal police. Clashes erupted after Fano militias refused the resettlement of internally displaced persons (IDPs) who had been previously displaced from the area. [...]

In the morning of 14 June 2022, fighting erupted in Gambela city as well as Gimbi and Dembi Dolo towns of western Oromia.³ According to the regional governments of Oromia and Gambela, the attacks were a coordinated effort by the OLF-Shane and GLF. As of Tuesday evening (in Ethiopia), fighting had concluded.

¹⁵⁷ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 23 April – 6 May 2022](#), 11 May 2022

¹⁵⁸ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), May 2022

¹⁵⁹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: April-May 2022](#), 15 June 2022

According to the OLF-Shane – also known as the Oromo Liberation Army-OLA – spokesperson, the operation in Gambela had resulted in the capture of “weapons depots in the city” ([Twitter @OdaaTarbiiWBOi, 14 June 2022](#)). The Gambela regional government also announced that fighting in the city had subsided and that government forces were working to “eradicate the militant group” ([Gambella Regional Gov’t Press Secretariat Office, 14 June 2022](#)). Clashes in Dembi Dolo and Gimbi had also concluded after several hours of intense gunfire between the two armed groups and government security forces ([BBC Amharic, 14 June 2022](#)).

The most recent bout of fighting caught many by surprise. First, the clashes follow a two-month long effort by the government to reduce the capacity of the OLF-Shane, which they claim to have accomplished ([Office of the Prime Minister – Ethiopia, 14 June 2022](#)). According to the Oromia regional government, the OLF-Shane was “no longer a national threat” ([Ethiopia Broadcasting Corporation, 22 May 2022](#)). Secondly, the GLF had not been active in violent conflict previously, and Gambela region has been a relatively peaceful region overall.

Despite this effort, the most recent armed clashes in Dembi Dolo, Gimbi, and Gambela prove that the OLF-Shane remains a serious threat to the government and that recent military operations have not succeeded in reducing their capacity. In addition, this most recent operation in Gambela and the two towns in Oromia is the first major “joint” operation by the two rebel groups, although there had been several meetings and coordinated trainings held between them in the past ([OLA Communique, 31 October 2021](#)).¹⁶⁰

The International Crisis Group’s CrisisWatch tracker similarly recounted in June 2022:

Ethnic violence escalated in Oromia region amid ongoing fighting between Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and govt forces, notably in West, East and Kellem Wollega Zones, East and West Guji Zones, and West Arsi Zone. Regional govt and Ethiopian Human Rights Commission accused OLA fighters of 18 June killing hundreds of ethnic Amhara civilians in Gimbi district of West Wollega Zone; OLA denied responsibility and blamed govt. Violence spilled into neighbouring Gambella region, where OLA and Gambella Liberation Front rebels 14 June attacked govt forces in regional capital Gambella; 40 including 28 rebels reportedly killed.¹⁶¹

EPO’s weekly update for 25 June to 1 July 2022 wrote that:

From 26 June to 1 July, the OLF-Shane clashed with Oromia regional special forces and kebele communal militias in Hamuma Gindo (Racho/Erob Gebeya) kebele in Dera woreda in North Shewa zone. On the first day of the clashes, 13 militants, including a military commander of the rebel group, were reportedly killed. In response, the OLF-Shane started to target civilians in Hamuma Gindo, Ginde Berbere, and Babu Dire kebeles of Dera woreda after they found out that their military commander was killed by local militiamen. [...] In Oromia region, armed clashes were also recorded in Bite Daba kebele in Bora woreda in East Shewa zone, Bilo and Gobe villages in Bila Seyo woreda in East Wollega zone, Melka Guba and Bulbul kebeles in Gumi Idalo woreda in Guji zone, Dawa Dimtu kebele in Melka Soda woreda in West Guji zone, Haro Goba kebele in Mida Kegn woreda in West Shewa zone, and Tenze kebele in Begi woreda in West Wollega zone. The OLF-Shane claimed to have killed over 20 government soldiers during the armed clashes in Melka

¹⁶⁰ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 4-10 June 2022](#), 15 June 2022

¹⁶¹ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), June 2022

Guba and Bulbul kebeles in Gumi Idalo woreda in Guji zone. Meanwhile, the government claimed to have killed 45 members of the rebel group and captured two militants with several weapons.¹⁶²

The monthly update for June 2022 from the EPO observed that:

The highest number of battle events was recorded in Oromia region, with 54 recorded events. Except for one battle event, the rest involved OLF-Shane and government forces – i.e. the ENDF, Oromia regional special forces, Oromia state police, federal police, and kebele militias. The highest number of these battle events were recorded in Guji, North Shewa, West Shewa, and West Wollega zones. Armed clashes were also recorded in Arsi, East Shewa, East Wollega, Finfine special, Kellem Wollega, and West Wollega zones. The OLF-Shane was also involved in armed clashes outside Oromia region. On 14 June, members of the Gambela Liberation Front (GLF) and OLF-Shane clashed with the ENDF, federal police, and Gambela regional special forces in Gambela city in Gambela region. At least 40 people, including 11 members of government security forces and two civilians, were reportedly killed during the clashes, with over 36 security forces and three civilians also getting injured. After retaking full control of the city, government forces assumed to be Gambela regional special forces shot and killed at least 10 civilians in the city. The killings occurred as government forces conducted a home-to-home search for GLF and OLF-Shane members believed to be hiding in the city. Reportedly, many of those killed were ethnic Oromos who were accused of being associated with the OLF-Shane [...]. On 27 June, OLF-Shane and GLF 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. The OLF-Shane's Commander-in-Chief, Jaal Marroo, indicated that his forces had attacked these areas to refute the government's claim that it had neutralized the OLF-Shane following large-scale military operations in April ([BBC Afan Oromo, 24 June 2022](#)). Moreover, the OLF-Shane clashed with the ENDF in Bonfo in Dibate woreda, and in Bulan woreda in Metekel zone in Benshangul/Gumuz region. The ENDF claimed to have destroyed a training center used by the rebel group in Bonfo Kebele, killing 43 members of the group and taking control of four villages in Dibate and Bulan woredas. The OLF-Shane had been in control of these areas for over three years.¹⁶³

The update also reported “After the recent killings in Tole kebele, tensions in the country have escalated again over the past month. The Federal Security and Safety Joint Task Force stated that ENDF, federal police, and Oromia regional special forces undertook joint military operations from 14 June to 14 July 2022 against the OLF-Shane, killing more than 153 members of the rebel group and capturing over 900 members of the group”.¹⁶⁴

The International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in July 2022 “In second large-scale attack against ethnic Amharas in Oromia region in two weeks, armed group 4 July targeted ethnic Amhara villages in Kellem Wollega Zone, killing at least 150. PM Abiy accused Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) of “massacre”, vowed to “eliminate” group, while OLA denied responsibility and blamed govt. [...] Fighting between govt forces and OLA reported during month in Degem and Dera districts in Oromia's North Shewa Zone”.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 25 June – 1 July 2022](#), 6 July 2022

¹⁶³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: June 2022](#), 26 July 2022

¹⁶⁴ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: June 2022](#), 26 July 2022

¹⁶⁵ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), July 2022

It gave the following update the next month “Conflict in Oromia region between security forces and Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) persisted, notably in North and West Shewa Zones, and East, West and Kellem Wollega Zones. Fighting from 4 Aug [2022] also occurred in normally peaceful Buno Bedele Zone. Authorities 6 Aug captured senior OLA commander in Ethiopia-Kenya border town, Moyale; earlier in month, authorities arrested intelligence officer in Borena Zone on suspicion of working with OLA, hinting at growing collaboration between OLA rebels and local officials”.¹⁶⁶

The ICHREE wrote that “In the third phase of the conflict from November 2021 to August 2022, active fighting between Tigrayan and federal government forces was limited [...]. During this stalemate in the north, violence in Oromia and in the Oromo area of Amhara was reported to have grown”.¹⁶⁷

With regards to drone strikes in Oromia, the same source noted:

Fighting between the OLA and ENDF escalated in October and November 2022, in particular in Western Oromia. The Ethiopian government began launching aerial attacks using drones, including in areas under reported OLA control. Access to Western Oromia, in particular Kellem Wollega, West Wollega, and Horu Goduru Wollega, is to date extremely restricted, including for journalists and humanitarian workers, while telecommunications coverage is subject to regular interruptions. As a result, access to information about the situation there is extremely challenging. However, the Commission was able to verify three separate incidents in which civilians were killed or injured: in Adere Wama, East Wollega on 21 October 2022; in Bila, East Wollega Zone on 2 November 2022; and Mendi town, West Wollega on 9 November 2022.¹⁶⁸

The same source noted with regards to escalating violence between Oromos and Amharas:

The Commission is deeply disturbed by increasing violence between Oromos and Amharas, in particular ethnic armed groups. The Commission gathered information about incidents since November 2020 where large numbers of Amhara Oromo women, men, and children were killed by non-state armed groups, at times in reprisal for attacks against the other community. Witnesses implicated OLA, fano, and other militias in these attacks.

However, the proliferation of armed groups in these areas, including splinter groups, means that establishing responsibility is extremely challenging. The situation is exacerbated by restrictions on journalists and independent monitors accessing the area. [...]

Similarly, the Commission also interviewed direct witnesses of attacks against Oromo communities in Horu Guduru and West Shewa Zones between July 2021 and September 2022, and received credible information about attacks in West Wollega, East Wollega, Horo Guduru, Jimma, and West Shewa Zones between July 2021 and September 2022. This included killings, rape and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls, burning of property and crops, as well as looting, including livestock; they implicated fano militia. The Commission also received credible reports of attacks against Oromo communities, again implicating fano militia, in the Oromo Special Zone, Amhara region.

¹⁶⁶ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), August 2022

¹⁶⁷ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Comprehensive investigative findings and legal determinations](#), 13 October 2023, paragraph 75

¹⁶⁸ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Comprehensive investigative findings and legal determinations](#), 13 October 2023, paragraph 387

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. The Commission calls for further, independent investigations into such incidents.¹⁶⁹

In September 2022, The International Crisis Group remarked “Clashes in Oromia region between security forces and Oromo Liberation Army continued throughout month in North, East, West Shewa, Kellem, West Wollega, East Guji, Illu Aba Bora and Buno Bedele Zones”.¹⁷⁰

A weekly update for 17-23 September 2022 from the EPO wrote that:

After a brief respite, fighting between Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane and government forces re-erupted in Oromia region last week. OLF-Shane and government forces – assumedly ENDF and Oromia regional special forces – clashed in South West Shewa, West Shewa, Guji, Arsi, East Wollega, and Horo Guduru Wollega zones [...]. The OLF-Shane reportedly attacked an ENDF military camp in Melka Guba in Guji zone; ambushed convoys carrying government forces – again presumedly ENDF and Oromia regional special forces – near Anole Statue in Merti woreda in Arsi zone and Chali Jima kebele in Bila Seyo woreda in East Wollega zone (OMN, 22 September 2022).¹⁷¹

The following week, it noted that in Boset woreda in East Shewa zone, “OLF-Shane was reported to have regained control of 11 camps in the agriculture center” but that “The situation in Horo Guduru Wollega zone is still unclear due to a break in communication networks; some reports indicate that the OLF-Shane regained control of Jardega Jarte woreda on 25 September”.¹⁷²

The monthly update for September 2022 from the EPO wrote that “By the end of the month, it was reported that OLF-Shane forces managed to take control of Jardega Jarte woreda in Horo Guduru Wollega zone. This area has been experiencing frequent attacks against civilians by both the OLF-Shane and Amhara and Fano militias. Since 22 September [...] armed clashes between OLF-Shane and government forces have been reported in Jardega Jarte and Amuru woredas”.¹⁷³

According to the EPO’s weekly update from 1 to 7 October 2022 “Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane and government forces clashed in Babo Gambela woreda in West Wollega zone and unspecified locations in Guji zone”.¹⁷⁴

The German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) remarked in its early October 2022 briefing notes on Ethiopia that there were “reports of fighting between OLA Shane and regional security

¹⁶⁹ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Comprehensive investigative findings and legal determinations](#), 13 October 2023, paragraphs 395-398

¹⁷⁰ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), September 2022

¹⁷¹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 17-23 September 2022](#), 28 September 2022

¹⁷² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 24 – 30 September 2022](#), 4 October 2022

¹⁷³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: September 2022](#), 5 October 2022

¹⁷⁴ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 1 – 7 October 2022](#), 12 October 2022

forces in the Guji zone in southern Oromia, following an attack by the OLA on a military camp of the Ethiopian armed forces (Ethiopian National Defense Forces, ENDF). OLA claims it launched the attack in revenge for ENDF killing an OLA commander on 23.09.22".¹⁷⁵

The monthly update for the whole of October 2022 from the EPO summarised that "ACLED recorded 11 battle events involving OLF-Shane and government forces in East Shewa, Guji, West Shewa, and West Wollega zones (see map below). In October, multiple strikes, which are rare in the region, by the ENDF allegedly targeting the OLF-Shane were also reported in Oromia. These drone strikes were recorded in West Shewa, East Wollega, West Wollega, and East Shewa zone".¹⁷⁶ It added that "In Oromia region, government forces clashed with OLF-Shane fighters throughout October, with OLF-Shane forces claiming to have gained limited territory in rural locations of West Wollega zone".¹⁷⁷

Ethiopia Insight commented in November 2022 on the situation in Bale zone in Oromia:

Baliyos accuse the Oromia government of using its fight against Khawarja—an Islamist militant group the government claims is linked to al-Shabaab and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA)—as a cover for its continued crackdown.

Since last year, there have been sporadic clashes between members of OLA and regional special forces in different districts of the Bale and East Bale zones, particularly in the Dallo Mena district. Last month, residents accused regional security forces of torching the homes of families suspected of supporting OLA in the area.¹⁷⁸

The International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in November 2022 with regards to Oromia:

Fighting between federal and Oromia security forces and Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) rebels intensified. Notably, federal air force early Nov launched three drone strikes in West Wollega Zone, killing 55. OLA fighters 6 Nov entered Nekemte town (East Wollega Zone) where they clashed with security forces, looted two banks, released over 120 prisoners from "Abiy regime's torture camps" and abducted officials. OLA now controls over a dozen districts in East and West Wollega zones.¹⁷⁹

EPO's update for the same month remarked:

ACLED records a rise in organized political violence in Oromia region, reaching an all-time high in November. At the beginning of the month, OLF-Shane forces launched unprecedented attacks against urban centers, including the towns of Mendi in West Wollega zone, Nekemte in East Wollega zone, and Gundo Meskel in North Shewa zone [...]. In Nekemte town, OLF-Shane forces temporarily seized control of an Oromia regional special forces base and prison, freeing prisoners and taking weapons (Addis Standard,

¹⁷⁵ German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), [Briefing Notes: Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration](#), 10 October 2022, pp. 6-7

¹⁷⁶ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: October 2022](#), 9 November 2022

¹⁷⁷ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: October 2022](#), 9 November 2022

¹⁷⁸ Ethiopia Insight, [Oromia's Bale is facing a multi-layered crisis](#), 23 November 2022

¹⁷⁹ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), November 2022

9 November 2022). Shortly afterward, OLF-Shane forces controlled Mendi town for a period of six to seven days, after which government forces retook control on 10 November. OLF-Shane fighters reportedly burned houses and looted banks in Gundo Meskel in North Shewa zone before retreating. It was reported that out of 21 woredas in East Wollega zone, the armed group regained control of 11 woredas within the first two weeks of November (Ethiopian Reporter, 6 November 2022). By the end of the month, the ENDF reportedly managed to regain control of some of these woredas (EMS, 19 November 2022). [...]

During the month, the OLF-Shane also took control of large amounts of rural territory in West Wollega zone, including “almost all 32 kebeles in Gimbi woreda” (Ethiopian Reporter, 6 November 2022). Re-ignited battles were likewise reported in West Guji zone between OLF-Shane militants and local militias, with the OLF-Shane maintaining control of Liben, Jidola, Wadera, and other kebeles in Guji zone. [...]

On 29 November, Amhara forces – presumably Amhara ethnic militia members – clashed with Oromia regional special forces in Kiremu and killed at least 11 people, including 10 regional special forces and a local administrative authority, identified to be a Kiremu District Court judge. A day earlier, an unidentified armed group reportedly shot and killed more than 100 people sheltering in a school due to the ongoing violence in Kiremu woreda. Earlier, on 18 November, Oromia regional special forces transporting ethnic Amhara prisoners from Kiremu woreda in East Wollega zone to Nekemte town for trial were attacked by Fano militias, sparking four days of intense violence with a high number of reported fatalities, including among Amhara civilians [...].¹⁸⁰

It also stated that the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane “engaged in clashes with the Ethiopian Republican Guards after it ambushed the Guards’ military vehicle patrolling around Metehara town in East Shewa zone. Events involving the Republican Guards are rare, especially in the Metahara area, making this event significant”.¹⁸¹ It added that “the Ethiopian Air Force continued drone strikes against OLF-Shane positions in the region. Last week, multiple drone strikes were conducted in Kombolcha in Guduru woreda in Horo Guduru zone and Faji Ejerssa kebele in Wara Jarso woreda in North Shewa zone”.¹⁸²

In December 2022, Addis Standard reported on a new Amharic-language report by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) on human rights violations against civilians in Ethiopia:

Civilians are caught in crossfire and subjected to alarming crimes amounting to “grave violation of human rights” in the escalating attacks and militarized clashes in different parts of Oromia region in a span of [the last] five months, a new report by the government’s Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) said. The worsening crisis in Oromia region is due in most part to attacks by armed groups operating in the region, including by armed militia crossing over from the neighboring Amhara regional state [...]. In many of these areas covered by the report, EHRC said that government security forces, as well as the local residents who have been armed by the government to defend themselves, and those who have also come from other regions and armed groups that are commonly said to be Amhara militants, and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), commonly known as *OLF/Shene* operate in the areas. “These armed groups and the government’s security forces have been fighting each other at different times, and due to their

¹⁸⁰ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: November 2022](#), 7 December 2022

¹⁸¹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 26 November – 2 December 2022](#), 6 December 2022

¹⁸² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 26 November – 2 December 2022](#), 6 December 2022

separate attacks at other times, many civilians have been killed, injured, displaced and property destroyed, and some villages or rural towns have been completely or partially destroyed.”¹⁸³

AP News reported in a December 2022 article that:

Ethiopian security forces, Oromo insurgents and Amhara militia are all battling each other in Oromia, Ethiopia’s largest region, said William Davison, an analyst with the International Crisis Group.

“Amid an intensifying government struggle against the rebels, all three have targeted civilians, particularly ethnic Amhara, which has led to an increase in violence by Amhara militia claiming to be defending their communities,” he said. [...]

Last week, the government-appointed Ethiopian Human Rights Commission said “hundreds” of people had been killed in a “gruesome manner” in the past four months across 10 zones in the Oromia region, and it confirmed the presence of government forces, Amhara militia and the OLA in areas where repeated killings occur.¹⁸⁴

The same month, BBC News also wrote on escalations of conflict in Oromia:

In the latest sign of the deep crisis that has engulfed Ethiopia, conflict in the vast Oromia region - the heartland of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed - is escalating as political and ethnic tensions explode.

It has seen Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) rebels raid towns that were once out of their reach, and hold "graduation ceremonies" to boast of new recruits, while the government has responded with troop reinforcements and drone strikes as it rules out talks to end the crisis. [...]

A clear demonstration of the growing strength of the OLA came in November, when its fighters stormed Nekemte, a strategically important town with roads leading to Mr Abiy's home village, the capital, Addis Ababa, and a newly built mega dam that is vital to Ethiopia's electricity needs.

The government did not comment on the Nekemte attack, just as it does not on most other attacks, while the OLA said it had freed "political prisoners" from the town's jail.

Residents told the BBC that gun-battles between government troops and the rebels had claimed the lives of civilians, though they could not give an exact number as casualty figures are not collated. [...]

In Goro, a mere 100km (62 miles) from Addis Ababa, rebels overran government troops and then forced young boys, hiding in their homes, to come out and help carry their wounded away, locals told the BBC.

As the boys were doing that, they were hit by a drone strike, which killed them and some of the rebels.¹⁸⁵

A December 2022 New Lines investigation on drone strikes on civilian areas in Ethiopia stated that:

Initially a lower-scale insurgency, fighting in Oromia has over the past three years escalated into a war of attrition that has seen atrocities, mass displacement of civilians and control of territory change hands repeatedly. [...]

Bogged down by fighting across northern Ethiopia, government forces have made little progress in the west of the country. The launch of a much-hyped “final” offensive by the Ethiopian military earlier this year has failed to yield the rebels’ capitulation. [...]

¹⁸³ Addis Standard, [News Analysis: Civilians subjected to “grave violation of human rights” in clashes, attacks by armed groups, gov’t security forces operating in Oromia – EHRC](#), 8 December 2022

¹⁸⁴ AP News, [As Tigray calms, Ethiopia sees growing conflict in Oromia](#), 14 December 2022

¹⁸⁵ BBC News, [Ethiopia’s PM sees OLA rebellion grow in his own backyard](#), 18 December 2022

In October, Ethiopia began ramping up its aerial campaign targeting rebel-held parts of Oromia with drone strikes, in response to OLA advances across the region's Western Shewa district. [...]

"The targeting of civilians in aerial bombardments highlights the sort of war tactics the [Ethiopian] regime has chosen to pursue," said Etana Habte, an analyst of Ethiopian affairs and assistant professor of history at James Madison University in Virginia.

"As the OLA has engaged in guerrilla warfare and government forces have been unable to defeat them as of yet, [the Ethiopian military] is apparently convinced that hitting the civilian population, perceived to be supporting and hosting the OLA, is the best approach."¹⁸⁶

The International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch tracker stated that "clashes 3-4 Dec between Fano and Oromia regional special forces around Gutin town in East Wollega killed dozens and displaced thousands; Oromo residents and officials blamed Fano, while Amhara residents said Oromia Special Police initiated attacks".¹⁸⁷

The monthly update for December 2022 from the EPO remarked:

[...] the federal government announced renewed military action against the OLF-Shane, with new deployments in Guji, West Guji, and Borena zones of Oromia region.¹⁶¹⁸⁸

16 [Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation, 28 December 2022](#); [Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation, 2 January 2023](#)

Human Rights Watch said in its annual report covering 2022 that "Parts of Oromia experienced protracted fighting due to government operations against the OLA. [...] Fighting intensified between Ethiopian government forces and the OLA 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".¹⁸⁹

USDOS similarly wrote, in its annual human rights report for Ethiopia in 2022, that "During the year, a government counterinsurgency campaign against the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) in Oromia and Benishangul-Gumuz Regions continued with numerous reports of abuse and killings of civilians".¹⁹⁰ It also added that "Sporadic but deadly clashes occurred in the border area [...] between Oromia and Somali Regions".¹⁹¹

The New Humanitarian, in a January 2023 news feature on conflict in the Oromia region, recounted the following developments:

¹⁸⁶ New Lines Magazine, [Evidence of Drone Strikes Inside Civilian Areas in Ethiopia](#), 26 December 2022

¹⁸⁷ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), December 2022

¹⁸⁸ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO December 2022 Monthly: Conflict Expands in Oromia Region](#), 12 January 2023

¹⁸⁹ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2023: Events of 2023](#), 12 January 2023, p. 219

¹⁹⁰ US Department of State (USDOS), [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 20 March 2023

¹⁹¹ US Department of State (USDOS), [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 20 March 2023

In western Oromia, the OLA is now controlling territory and pulling off increasingly complex attacks. And whereas it previously turned down new volunteers due to limited training capacity, it now holds big graduation ceremonies for recruits.

In recent months, there has been a flare-up in OLA attacks that may be linked to the Tigray peace deal, said a diplomat in Addis Ababa, who requested anonymity to preserve working relations with authorities.

“The OLA are stepping up their operations and expanding their control over some areas to score propaganda points before battle-hardened federal troops redeploy from the north,” the diplomat said.

Several Oromia residents who spoke to The New Humanitarian described deadly OLA raids in recent months. Naol from Nekemte – an urban hub centred on a major road junction – said it was dawn when he awoke to the sound of gunshots.

He said he spent six hours lying on the floor of his home as the OLA clashed with security forces. When he went outside, he saw the bodies of three people caught in the crossfire. “I had never heard gunshots before that day,” Naol said.

Nekemte residents said hundreds of OLA fighters took part in the November attack. Their target appeared to be local jails and police stations, where the rebels stole weapons and claimed to have released an unknown number of prisoners.

The regional government's clumsy counterinsurgency strategy has made the conflict worse. Poorly trained soldiers have abused communities accused of harbouring rebels, while federal airstrikes have killed scores of civilians, rights investigators say.¹⁹²

BAMF wrote in its early January 2023 briefing notes on Ethiopia that:

The Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF) announced on 03.01.2023 that it will be launching a renewed military operation against the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA-Shane) in southern Oromia. They say several villages that have been under OLA control for years have already been liberated. The Oromia regional state government has also threatened OLA with an "organized law enforcement operation". The coordinated action by the security forces will focus on the zones of West and East Guji and Borana.¹⁹³

A few days later, BAMF said again that “Local sources report that the Ethiopian armed forces have moved large parts of their units from Tigray to Oromia in a bid to strengthen the military offensive against the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA-Shane). Heavy fighting has reportedly occurred time and again in the south (East Guji) and west (Horo Gudru Wollega and West Shewa) of the regional state (cf. BN of 09.01.23)”.¹⁹⁴

The same month, the International Crisis Group wrote “Federal forces 2 Jan [2023] announced renewed military campaigns against Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) amid ongoing fighting in number of zones in central, western and southern Oromia. Amhara militia involvement continued to complicate situation. Although OLA largely conducts rural operations, group 7 Jan launched second major attack in urban area

¹⁹² The New Humanitarian, [As violence subsides in Tigray, Ethiopia's Oromia conflict flares](#), 12 January 2023

¹⁹³ German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), [Briefing Notes: Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration](#), 9 January 2023, p. 4

¹⁹⁴ German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), [Briefing Notes: Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration](#), 16 January 2023, p. 4

since Nov, breaking into prison in Bule Hora town (West Guji Zone), killing five guards and freeing over 480 inmates”.¹⁹⁵

The weekly update for 4 to 10 March 2023 from the EPO wrote that “In eastern Oromia, government forces reportedly killed 20 Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane militants as a result of military operations carried out during the week in Degdegela woreda, East Shewa zone”.¹⁹⁶

The International Crisis Group’s CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in March 2023 “Conflict between OLA and security forces continued in Oromia region throughout March, with fighting occurring in West and East Wollega Zones, North and East Shewa Zones, and Kamashi and Metekel Zones in Benishangul-Gumuz region. Yet Abiy 28 March renewed hope for peace talks by announcing formation of committee to negotiate with OLA, which same day reported that there are ‘positive signs peace talks... will take place’”.¹⁹⁷

The International Crisis Group’s CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in April 2023 “In positive step toward ending long-running OLA insurgency, PM Abiy 23 April announced peace talks with group starting 25 April in Tanzania; OLA same day confirmed news, saying federal govt had accepted its demands for third-party mediator. Fighting between security forces and OLA continued, however”.¹⁹⁸

The May 2023 monthly update from the EPO reflected in detail on the month, following the peace talks of April that year:

After a relative drop in events between January and April 2023, events involving the OLF-Shane – also known as the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) – rose sharply in May, returning to violence levels comparable to those throughout 2022 (*see graph below*). Despite both government and OLF-Shane representatives stating that they would be willing to meet for future peace talks, a rising number of battles in May has upended a temporary lull in the fighting between the two sides, casting doubts that a ceasefire deal might be reached anytime soon. [...]

Several reasons may contribute to a second rise in violence associated with the OLF-Shane. Negotiation settlements are an arduous process,¹ as the government and OLF-Shane both will likely have internal difficulties arriving at a unified consensual decision to settle. While both sides are facing pressure and fatigue, they also have strong incentives to continue to explore the weaknesses of the other in order to gain a stronger negotiating position. [...]

In the month of May, ACLED records OLF-Shane’s involvement in 42 political violence events, 29 of which were battles with government forces. This constitutes a substantial increase as the OLF-Shane was only involved in one battle event the entire month prior. Interestingly, the group also engaged in several battles outside of areas with previously-recorded OLF-Shane activity, marking a geographic shift. Previously, OLF-Shane activity had concentrated in the west and south of the country. Only sporadic instances of clashes previously occurred in East Shewa zone, where many significant attacks and battles

¹⁹⁵ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), January 2023

¹⁹⁶ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 4 – 10 March 2023](#), 15 March 2023

¹⁹⁷ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), March 2023

¹⁹⁸ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), April 2023

occurred during the month of May (*see map below*). Some of these clashes resulted in the release of OLF-Shane-associated prisoners in multiple locations, including Bishoftu, Welenchiti, and Bokoji towns. [...]

Battles began in several areas with unprecedented OLF-Shane activity shortly after both delegations returned from peace talks in Tanzania on 3 May.² A few days later, on 6 May, suspected OLF-Shane forces attacked and killed seven people, including woreda Prosperity Party Head Omer Lemma from Afar region in Welenchiti town, East Shewa zone. OLF-Shane forces clashed with federal military troops in Adami Tulu, East Shewa zone, the next day. On 15 May, OLF-Shane gunmen attacked a police station in Bishoftu town, killing at least four officers and releasing prisoners. Finally, on 20 May, suspected OLF-Shane forces attacked the kebele militia in Bekoji town, Arsi zone, sparking clashes that resulted in four reported fatalities.

OLF-Shane representatives accuse the government that attacking its positions – including areas in East Shewa zone – breaches the “understanding” reached in Tanzania to de-escalate armed clashes during the negotiation period.³¹⁹⁹

1 Sema Hande Ogutcu-Fu, ‘Outside the Battlefield: In-Group Political Dynamics of Civil Conflict Negotiations and Settlements,’ *Political Research Quarterly*, 11 July 2016

2 Giulia Paravicini, ‘First round of peace talks between Ethiopia and Oromo rebels ends without deal’, 3 May 2023

3 OLF-OLA, ‘Regarding Peace Talks and the Regime’s Recent Offensives (OLF-OLA Press Release),’ 15 May 2023

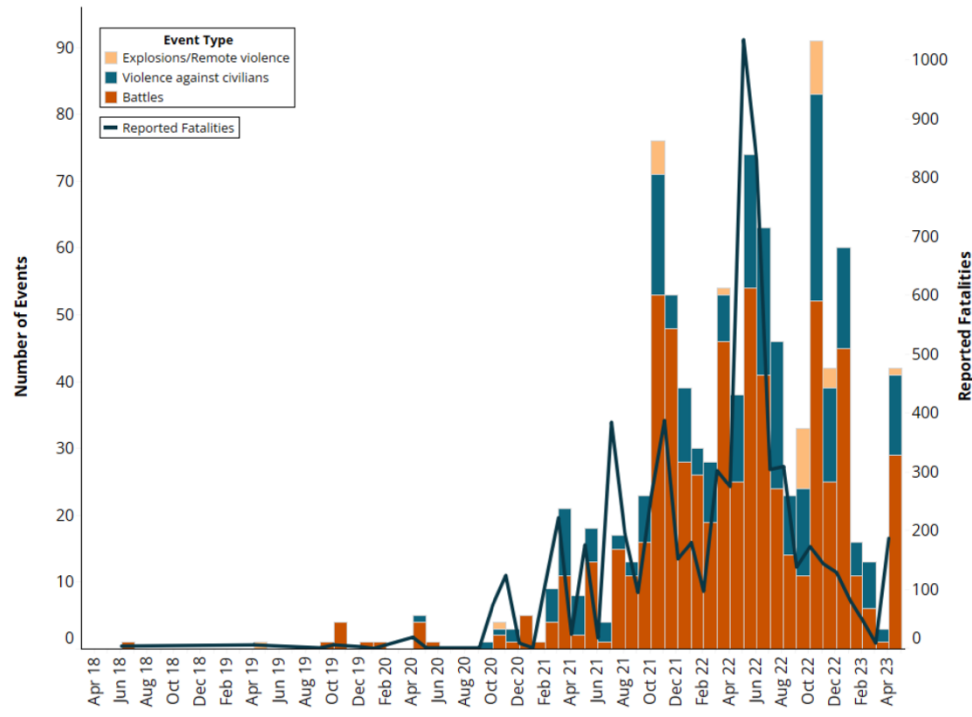
The following two graphs were also produced by the EPO to reflect political violence involving OLF-Shane up to and within May 2023²⁰⁰:

¹⁹⁹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO May 2023 Monthly: Violence Returns to Oromia Despite Attempted Peace Talks](#), 22 June 2023

²⁰⁰ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO May 2023 Monthly: Violence Returns to Oromia Despite Attempted Peace Talks](#), 22 June 2023

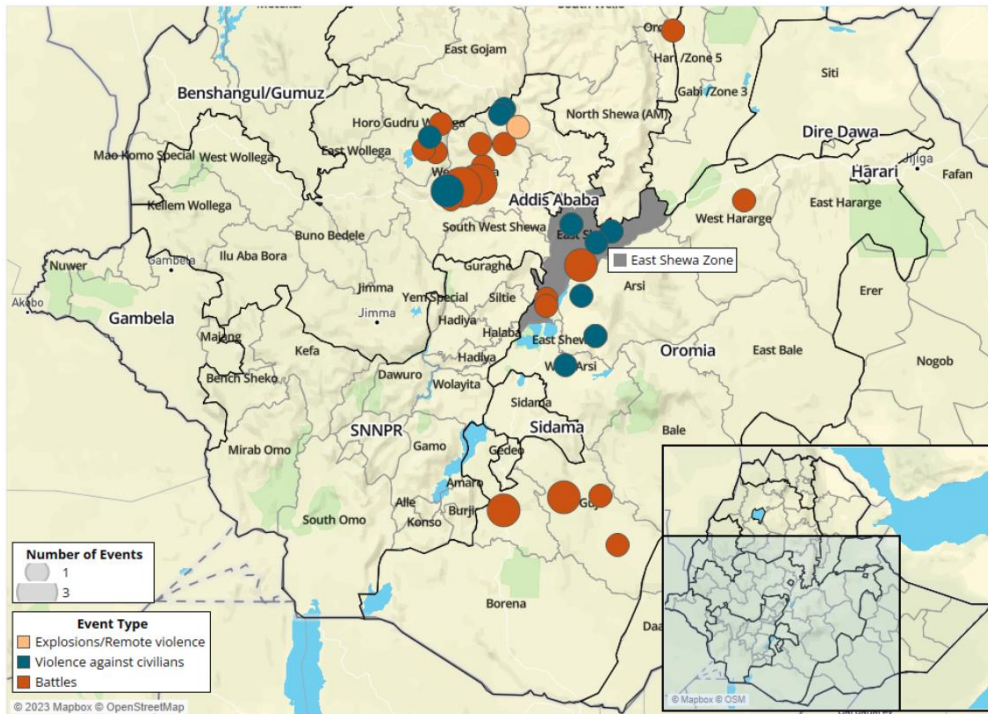
Political Violence Involving the OLF-Shane

1 April 2018 - 31 May 2023



Political Violence Involving the OLF-Shane

May 2023



Similarly, the International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in May 2023 "Peace talks between govt and Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) that began 25 April in Tanzania ended 3 May without agreement as sides failed to reach consensus on key political issues [...]. [...] OLA 17 May accused govt of launching "all-out offensive" after talks concluded, with fighting reported in East and West Shewa Zones (centre), Horo Guduru, East and West Wollega Zones (west), and parts of southern Oromia".²⁰¹

BAMF reiterated in its May 2023 briefing notes on Ethiopia that "According to local media, the new fighting is the most intense in recent months, with the The East Welega, West Welega and Horo Gudru Welega zones particularly affected. Eyewitnesses report that local civilians have been forced to join the security forces or to supply the troops with food".²⁰²

According to the EPO's weekly update for 20 – 26 May 2023 "Notably, the OLF-Shane continued a trend of new activity in towns where previously there had been no OLF-Shane activity recorded. Most attacks appeared to have the goal of releasing prisoners associated with the group".²⁰³

The EPO's monthly update for June 2023 wrote "Oromia region had the highest number of recorded events and reported fatalities due to political violence in June, with 55 events and at least 182 reported fatalities. Oromia region also had the highest number of violence targeting local administrators incidents in the country, with the majority – three out of five – reportedly perpetrated by the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane".²⁰⁴

The International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in June 2023 "Hostilities between Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and military continued at high intensity; month also saw clashes between Amhara Fano militia and govt forces".²⁰⁵

It then commented in July 2023 that "Fighting raged in Oromia between govt forces and Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) following failed talks in May, with sides stepping up operations in bid to strengthen their respective negotiating positions should talks resume. Hostilities notably occurred in West Hararghe and Arsi zones, where OLA operations have been rare".²⁰⁶

In August 2023, it wrote again "Heavy clashes between govt and Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) continued in Oromia, with civilians again targeted. Notably, residents in West Shewa Zone's Chobi

²⁰¹ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), May 2023

²⁰² German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), [Briefing Notes: Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration](#), 22 May 2023, p. 3

²⁰³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 20-26 May 2023](#), 1 June 2023

²⁰⁴ EPO, [EPO June 2023 Monthly: Political Violence Declines in Amhara Region Following Government Crackdown](#), 12 July 2023

²⁰⁵ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), June 2023

²⁰⁶ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), July 2023

district 16 Aug accused govt troops of killing at least 12 civilians during anti-insurgent operations; OLA fighters 17 Aug attacked police station in West Guji, killing local official”.²⁰⁷

The EPO’s monthly update for August 2023 reported “58 events and at least 172 reported fatalities” in Oromia, noting that “Most of the reported fatalities in Oromia region stemmed from clashes between government forces and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane and Fano militias”.²⁰⁸

For the week of 2 to 8 September 2023, it wrote that “The ENDF stated that an unidentified number of OLF-Shane members were captured with their weapons after members of the Republican Guard unit conducted an operation against the insurgent group in Horo Guduru Wollega and East Wollega zones”.²⁰⁹

The International Crisis Group’s CrisisWatch September 2023 update stated “Hostilities between Oromo Liberation Army and federal forces continued, notably in East Wollega, Horo Guduru Wollega and North Shewa zones. Oromia President Shimelis Abdisa 11 Sept said govt was committed to “silencing guns... through peaceful means”, though no talks have occurred since first round of negotiations ended early May”.²¹⁰

Its update in October 2023 documented “Clashes between federal forces and Amhara nationalist militia known as Fano occurred in [...] Oromia region’s North Shewa Zone. Indications mid Oct surfaced that military is planning final offensive to ‘eliminate’ Fano, though rebellion’s decentralised structure will likely complicate efforts”.²¹¹ The same update added that “Clashes between govt forces and Oromo Liberation Army continued throughout Oct. Govt drone strikes 7-8 Oct in Horo Guduru Wollega Zone killed at least twelve”.²¹²

Addis Standard reported on drone strikes by government forces in West Oromia on 7 and 9 October 2023, remarking that one resident from the Kombolcha district “explained that the intensifying conflict between the OLA and government troops disrupted telephone and electricity services in the area”.²¹³

Later that year, the EPO reported again 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 (sometimes identified as Fano militia) operating in Oromia region and in the Oromo special zone of Amhara region”.²¹⁴ The same source further described that:

²⁰⁷ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), August 2023

²⁰⁸ EPO, [EPO August 2023 Monthly: Conflict in Amhara Region](#), 8 September 2023

²⁰⁹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 2 – 8 September 2023](#), 13 September 2023

²¹⁰ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), September 2023

²¹¹ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), October 2023

²¹² International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), October 2023

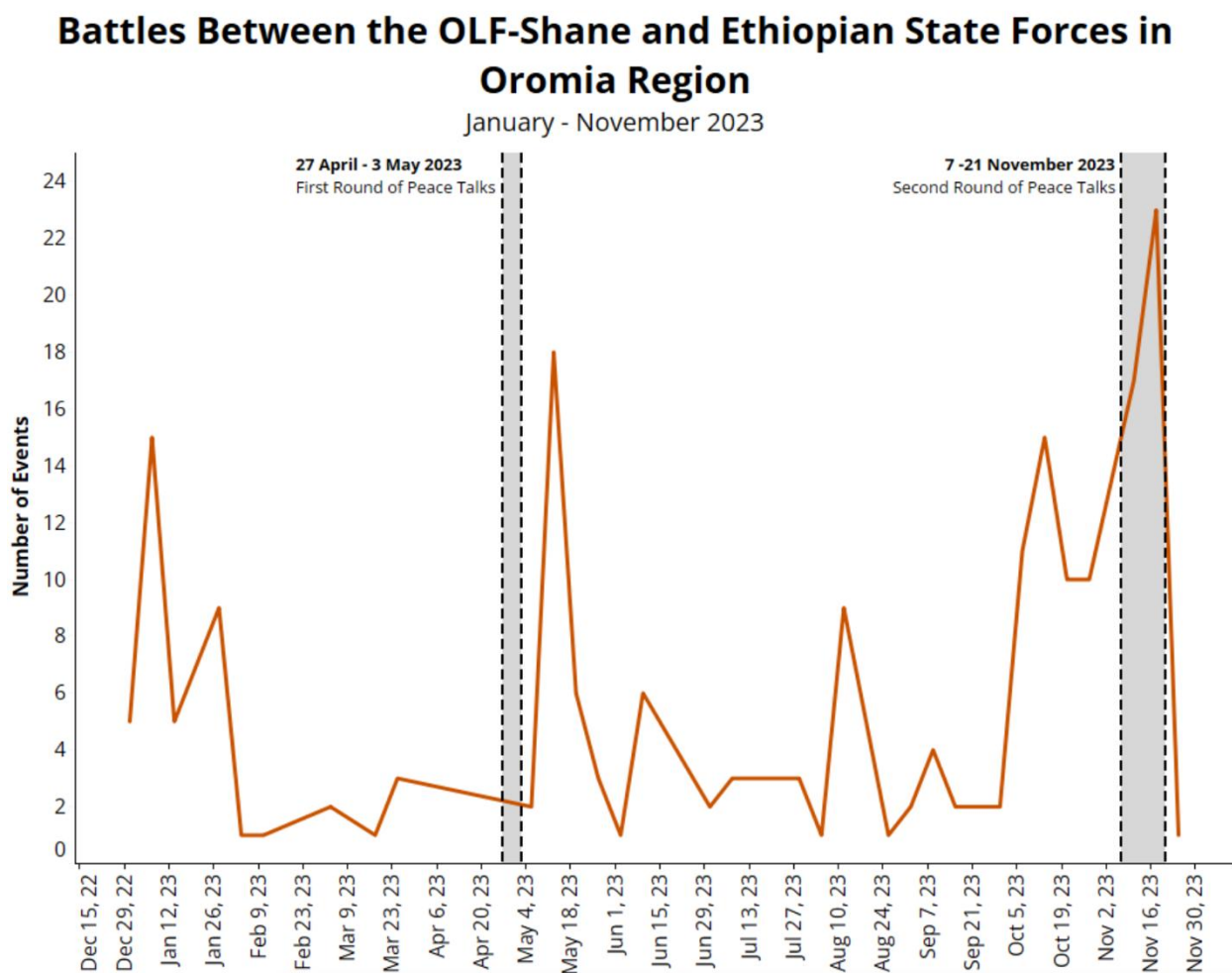
²¹³ Addis Standard, [News: Drone attacks coinciding with Irreechaa result in a dozen of fatalities in West Oromia](#), 13 October 2023

²¹⁴ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO November 2023 Update: An Evolving Conflict Environment in Oromia](#), 14 December 2023

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.²¹⁵

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

The same report produced the following graph²¹⁶:



²¹⁵ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO November 2023 Update: An Evolving Conflict Environment in Oromia](#), 14 December 2023, pp. 4-5

²¹⁶ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO November 2023 Update: An Evolving Conflict Environment in Oromia](#), 14 December 2023, pp. 4-5

The ICHREE's analysis in October 2023 on the risk of further atrocities in Ethiopia wrote that "in Oromia, notably Western Oromia, the Commission has documented the use of airstrikes, in particular drone strikes, as part of the counter-insurgency strategy against the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA)".²¹⁷

The EPO's monthly update for October 2023 wrote "ACLED records most political violence – 93 events and 419 reported fatalities – in Oromia region, where the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane clashed with government forces and Fano militias".²¹⁸

For November 2023, it recounted that "The second-highest level of political violence — with 74 events and 189 reported fatalities — was recorded in Oromia region, where the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) — referred to by the government as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane — clashed with government forces and Fano militias".²¹⁹

The EHRC stated in their March 2024 national inquiry into persons deprived of liberty, with reference to incidents between November 2020 and November 2023, that "Armed conflicts between OLA and government security forces were frequent in Wollega zones, which commonly resulted in several human rights abuses".²²⁰

The EPO's monthly update for December 2023 wrote "The most political violence in December — with 62 events and 148 reported fatalities — was recorded in Oromia region, where the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) — referred to by the government as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane — clashed with government forces".²²¹

The EPO also published its yearly review in December 2023, covering 3 November 2022 to 2 November 2023 and writing that "Oromia region registered the majority of political violence events - 609 events".²²² It specified "zones where most battle events were recorded: (5) North Shewa, (6) West Shewa, (7) West Wollega, and (8) East Wollega".²²³

Addis Standard reported the same month on a drone strike "on Full Gospel Church located in Baro village of Kombolcha district [which] claimed eight lives and left three injured".²²⁴ It noted that "An

²¹⁷ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [The acute risk of further atrocity crimes in Ethiopia: an analysis](#), 3 October 2023, p. 3

²¹⁸ EPO, [EPO October 2023 Monthly: Ethiopia's International Relations](#), 22 November 2023

²¹⁹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO November 2023 Update: An Evolving Conflict Environment in Oromia](#), 14 December 2023

²²⁰ Ethiopian Human Rights Committee (EHRC), [National Inquiry into Persons Deprived of Liberty](#), 26 March 2024, p. 81

²²¹ EPO, [EPO December 2023 Monthly | The Fano Insurgency: Main Hurdles to Unifying Fano](#), 19 January 2024

²²² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [Beyond the Headlines: Ethiopia One Year After the Northern Conflict](#), 1 December 2023

²²³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [Beyond the Headlines: Ethiopia One Year After the Northern Conflict](#), 1 December 2023

²²⁴ Addis Standard, [News: Drone strike in Oromia's Kombolcha district results in eight deaths, three injuries](#), 26 December 2023

additional testimony from a resident of Baro village confirmed the drone attack on the Full Gospel Church, resulting in the deaths of several worshippers. The informant described the situation in the district as being characterized by “intense hostilities” between OLA combatants and government troops, which have been ongoing since Tuesday morning”.²²⁵

The June 2024 OHCHR report covering the situation in 2023 and incidents in 2024 thus far described that “in the Oromia region, fighting raged between Oromia Liberation Army (OLA) and Government forces (ENDF, Oromia Regional Police, including Oromia Regional Special Forces, and state affiliated militia). Despite several documented instances where perpetrators had been brought to justice, the lack of progress on accountability and redress for victims remained a concern”.²²⁶ The same report further documented:

The situation in Oromia region also continued to be of concern, where 366 were killed (including 46 women) in 2023 as fighting continued between Government forces and Oromia Liberation Army (OLA). In addition, inter-ethnic clashes between Amhara and Oromia militias, and Oromia and Somali groups, also led to casualties. For instance, OHCHR documented the killing of 29 people (1 woman, 28 men) and injury of 84 men as a result of the intercommunal violence between the Somali and Oromo communities (Geri and Jarson clans).²²⁷

The same source detailed that “In Oromia region, violations and abuses including killings, destruction of property, rape, and abductions were allegedly committed by the OLA in the context of its ongoing fighting with Government forces (ENDF, Federal Police, Oromia Police, Oromia Special Forces, and state affiliated militia). In 2023, 188 incidents of human rights violations and abuses impacting 1,488 victims in the region were documented. In January 2024 alone, at least 11 persons were killed, all of which were attributed to OLA. Victims attributable to Government forces were killed as a result of gunshots and bombardments, while OLA-attributed victims were killed mainly due to gunshots. Some victims were also caught in crossfire between Government forces and OLA or militias”.²²⁸

The International Crisis Group’s CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in January 2024 “Insurgency in Oromia region pitting govt forces against Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) continued. Notably, security forces 12 Jan conducted drone strike in Horo Guduru Wollega Zone, killing four”.²²⁹

It wrote in February 2024 that “Counterinsurgency operation against Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) that was launched late Jan continued, with federal forces 10 Feb claiming to have killed 70 OLA members in Oromia’s West Shewa zone; 20 Feb reportedly killed around 50 fighters, including four leaders, in North Shewa zone”.²³⁰

²²⁵ Addis Standard, [News: Drone strike in Oromia’s Kombolcha district results in eight deaths, three injuries](#), 26 December 2023

²²⁶ OHCHR, [Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia](#), June 2024, paragraph 11

²²⁷ OHCHR, [Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia](#), June 2024, paragraph 2

²²⁸ OHCHR, [Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia](#), June 2024, paragraph 40

²²⁹ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), January 2024

²³⁰ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), February 2024

FEWS Net reported in its food security outlook published in February 2024 for February – September 2024 the following:

In Oromia, the intensity of conflict associated with the Oromia Liberation Army (OLA) has declined. Previously, OLA-related conflict occurred mainly in the four Wollega zones, but more recently the geographic area has shifted, and political violence is reportedly concentrated in North Shewa, West Shewa, and East Shewa zones. In January [2024], the OLA started an “economic siege” on Addis Ababa through market strikes and a transportation blockade. This “siege” only lasted about a week, and had minimal impact on market functionality. In the Wollega zones, the impact of conflict is limited; however, as conflict is concentrated in the Shewa zones, movement of the population is somewhat limited and conflict can temporarily impact market function.²³¹

The International Crisis Group remarked in March 2024 that “Govt-insurgent clashes continued in Oromia region. OLA 4 March reportedly made gains in Gelana district, West Guji Zone, forcing hundreds to flee to South Ethiopia People’s Region. In significant shift, govt reportedly planned to redeploy troops from Oromia to Amhara, suggesting it views latter conflict as more pressing”.²³²

The EPO’s annual report covering April 2023 to April 2024 wrote that “Since the end of the northern Ethiopia conflict in November 2022, most political violence in the country has been recorded in Amhara and Oromia regions”.²³³ It added that “Violence against civilians, the second-most common event type after battles, was also frequent in these regions, with 291 events recorded in Oromia”.²³⁴

The International Crisis Group’s CrisisWatch tracker wrote in April 2024 “Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) militants 4 April attacked Amaye Woreda, West Shewa Zone, killing twelve Amhara civilians. Govt forces same day killed twenty civilians in Tole Woreda, South West Shewa Zone, accusing them of links to OLA. Govt attempted to weaken OLA by: calling on fighters to surrender and reintegrate; attempting to exploit alleged divisions in OLA leadership; and training local militias”.²³⁵

The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect noted in its backgrounder on Ethiopia, last updated 31 May 2024, that “Clashes between the ENDF and OLA also escalated throughout March, particularly in West Guji zone”.²³⁶ It added that “In the Amhara and Oromia regions, civilians remain at heightened risk of atrocities due to fighting between ethnic militias and the ENDF’s retaliation on local communities”.²³⁷

In May 2024, the International Crisis Group’s CrisisWatch tracker stated “Federal forces conducted operations against Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) in East Wollega, West Wollega, Horo Guduru Wollega,

²³¹ The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), [Hunger and acute malnutrition outpace the scale-up of food assistance](#), February 2024

²³² International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), March 2024

²³³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Year in Review: 2023-2024](#), 29 April 2024, p. 3

²³⁴ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Year in Review: 2023-2024](#), 29 April 2024, p. 6

²³⁵ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), April 2024

²³⁶ International Crisis Group, [Populations at Risk: Ethiopia](#), last updated 31 May 2024 [accessed 30 June 2024]

²³⁷ International Crisis Group, [Populations at Risk: Ethiopia](#), last updated 31 May 2024 [accessed 30 June 2024]

West Shewa, Arsi, West Arsi and East Borena zones. Notably, regional broadcaster 2 May reported joint operation by federal and regional security forces in East Borena; Addis Ababa claimed to have inflicted heavy OLA casualties”.²³⁸

The EPO’s monthly update for the whole of May 2024 indicated that “Battles and violence against civilians were the two most common event types from 1 to 24 May, with 96 and 41 events, respectively. Most of these events were linked with the ongoing conflict between government and insurgent forces in the Amhara and Oromia regions”.²³⁹

d. Intercommunal violence

A June 2022 Protection Cluster protection analysis update for Ethiopia remarked that “Intercommunal clashes over border disputes and competition over resources have been reported, for example, between West Guji/Oromo [...] peoples along the Oromia-Sidama regional border; [...] and in Amhara region between [...] ethnic Oromo and ethnic Amhara communities in North Shewa and Oromia special zone”.²⁴⁰

According to the EPO’s weekly update from 23 to 29 July 2022 “on 18 July, it was reported that Somali ethnic militiamen from Somali region had attacked Oromo civilians in Guradamole woreda, forcing residents to flee”.²⁴¹

The following week, it noted that “it was reported that non-Oromo students organized and beat Oromo students in the University of Bonga in Bonga town in Kefa zone in South West Ethiopia Peoples region”.²⁴²

Ethiopia Insight wrote in November 2022 that:

Bale is home to several communities. The Arsi, one of the largest Oromo clan confederations, and Gura, a major clan confederation with Oromo and Somali ancestry, are two of its indigenous peoples. Historically, the two communities co-existed peacefully, though they occasionally clashed over land and resources. Violent conflicts erupted once again earlier this month, though the exact number of people killed in the clashes is unknown. While residents blame the renewed clashes on the deteriorating humanitarian situation, they suspect political factors—such as agitation by the Somali regional government to incorporate parts of East Bale Zone into its region—may also be at play.

²³⁸ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), May 2024

²³⁹ EPO, [EPO Monthly Update | May 2024 - Ethiopia’s national dialogue faces high expectations and criticism](#), 14 June 2024

²⁴⁰ Ethiopia Protection Cluster, [Protection Analysis Update: Ethiopia](#), June 2022, p. 6

²⁴¹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 23-29 July 2022](#), 3 August 2022

²⁴² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 30 July – 5 August 2022](#), 10 August 2022

Terje Østebø, author of *Islam, Ethnicity, and Conflict in Ethiopia: The Bale Insurgency, 1963-1970*, believes that the pastoralist way of life of both communities is a factor behind the conflict. However, he, like many residents, thinks that the worsening humanitarian situation could be the spark that renewed the clashes.

“We have long co-existed and intermarried with the Arsi. We fought alongside the Arsi during Menelik II’s expansion campaign and the Bale Revolt,” said Ali Ayale, a Grra businessman. “It is not in our best interests to fight with the Arsi, but something is driving the youth toward violent confrontation,” he added.

According to Ali, elders from both communities are working to resolve the conflict through traditional conflict resolution methods. While he believes that political factors are exacerbating the situation, he believes that drought and resource competition could be the catalyst of violent conflict.

“The Gura are our brothers both by blood and faith. It’s just some bad elements who are using the worsening situation in East Bale to re-open old wounds,” Awol Dula, a religious teacher agreed.

“Someone is benefiting from this conflict, and it is not the Arsi or the Gura,” Awol believes, adding, “I will let others decide who they think benefits from our infighting.”

So far, the response by federal and regional security forces has been limited. Many residents blame the federal government for the resurgence of tensions between the communities.

“I do not have evidence to confirm or deny the federal government’s involvement,” Ostebo says. “However, it is well-documented that the EPRDF regime has fostered hostility between the two communities. We don’t know if this is the case here, but we cannot dismiss people’s concerns.”²⁴³

The same month, the EPO wrote that:

Conflict in Oromia is complex, and as an increasingly diverse set of actors – like militias from Amhara region – deepen their involvement, the conflict has intensified and expanded beyond local contexts. As the OLF-Shane has taken control of more territory, insecurity in the region has led to the flaring up of communal conflict in ethnically diverse areas, like those that border Amhara region. [...]

There are hundreds of ethnic Amhara communities – large and small – throughout western Oromia in both rural and urban settings. As the conflict in Oromia intensifies, it is likely that inter-ethnic violence affecting these communities will likewise increase.²⁴⁴

The International Crisis Group’s reported in December 2022 that “Deteriorating situation heightened Oromo-Amhara tensions elsewhere, notably in capital Addis Ababa, where several disputes related to display of Oromia flag and singing of Oromia anthem in public schools led to protests early Nov [2022] in several schools”.²⁴⁵

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. [...] 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”.²⁴⁶

²⁴³ Ethiopia Insight, [Oromia’s Bale is facing a multi-layered crisis](#), 23 November 2022

²⁴⁴ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: November 2022](#), 7 December 2022

²⁴⁵ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), December 21/022

²⁴⁶ Bertelsmann Stiftung, [BTI 2024 Country Report — Ethiopia](#), 19 March 2024

The weekly update for 4 to 10 March 2023 from the EPO remarked that “violence against ethnic Oromo civilians was reported along the Oromia/Somali regional borders in the context of a disputed well. [...] Recently, heightened tensions continued in the area after three ethnic Somalis were killed in January [2023] by Oromo ethnic militias demonstrating against the building of a water well”.²⁴⁷ From the 11 to 17 March 2023, EPO wrote again that “clashes were reported between Somali and Oromo ethnic militias on the Oromia/Somali border near the town of Tulu Guled in East Hararghe zone on 11 and 12 March, reportedly resulting in the deaths of seven people [...]. Clashes over grazing areas and water points in this area have been common in the past, and although the area has been relatively peaceful over the past few years, conflict has reemerged since January”.²⁴⁸

The Peace Research Facility of the RVI observed the same month that:

Welcoming the ‘Mekelle–Finfinnee peace making process’ and calling for a containment of the war with OLA through negotiations, the Oromo opposition politician Jawaar Mohammed warned that Abiy’s Oromo-led government’s rapprochement with the TPLF could enhance an Amhara ‘sense of exclusion’, resulting in further deterioration of the already strained Oromo-Amhara relations.³⁹²⁴⁹

39 Jawaar Mohammed, ‘Let’s avoid a Deja Vu’, Facebook, 11 January 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/215693/posts/pfbid0y8xnLmpjAePBHMYVHXzany5EXUfrf9Yj1r877AuHa4ksESE89bDBHJJdpoyZj6FEI/?mibextid=cr9u03>.

In March 2023, the OLLAA wrote on rising tensions between two Oromo groups:

OLLAA is alarmed by reports of escalating tensions between communities in the Guji and Borana zones of Oromia following the announcement by the Oromia regional government that they would be restructuring the Oromia region and creating a new zone, called the East Borana zone. Since that announcement was made, there have been protests throughout the Guji zone by residents who felt they were not consulted by relevant authorities during the decision-making process. Unfortunately, tensions between the Borana Oromos and Guji Oromos appear to be rising in recent weeks related to the redistricting, and there have been numerous posts circulating on social media calling for violence in recent days. These social media users are calling for attacks on vehicles passing through their respective areas, and attacks on anyone who refers to the headquarter of East Borana as Nagelle Borana.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 4 – 10 March 2023](#), 15 March 2023

²⁴⁸ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 11 – 17 March 2023](#), 22 March 2023

²⁴⁹ Peace Research Facility and Rift Valley Institute (RVI), [Conflict Trend Analysis: Western Oromia](#), March 2023, p. 10

²⁵⁰ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [OLLAA Alarmed at Escalating Tensions in Guji and Borana](#), 31 March 2023

In April 2023, the OLLAA wrote that “It has also been reported that Oromo students at the Debre Tabor University in the Amhara region were attacked and beaten by Amhara students who were protesting against the decision to disarm the Amhara special forces”.²⁵¹

VOA News wrote in July 2023 on tensions and violence in the Oromia region commenting that:

More recently, Amhara and Oromo militias have been targeting each other's neighborhoods, one example of Ethiopia's long-simmering ethnic conflicts.

Amanuel Adinew, executive director at the Center for Development and Capacity Building, which works in Oromia, said the conflicts have created mistrust in the community.

"The state of anarchy created around these areas of conflict is behind increasing levels of cruelty. It has eroded the trust that people had in one another," Amanuel said.²⁵²

The June 2024 OHCHR report covering the situation in 2023 and incidents in 2024 thus far described:

The situation in Oromia region also continued to be of concern, where 366 were killed (including 46 women) in 2023 as fighting continued between Government forces and Oromia Liberation Army (OLA). In addition, inter-ethnic clashes between Amhara and Oromia militias, and Oromia and Somali groups, also led to casualties. For instance, OHCHR documented the killing of 29 people (1 woman, 28 men) and injury of 84 men as a result of the intercommunal violence between the Somali and Oromo communities (Geri and Jarson clans).²⁵³

The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect noted in its backgrounder on Ethiopia, last updated 31 May 2024, 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”.²⁵⁴

i. Violence between OLA/Fano

See also IV. Human rights situation, b. Killings, *ii. Extrajudicial killings by non-state actors*.

A weekly update for 17 – 23 September 2022 from the EPO wrote that “From 22 to 23 September, the OLF-Shane and kebele militias clashed in kebele 01 in Jardega Jarte town in Horo Guduru Wollega zone after the OLF-Shane began attacking civilians in the area. The government released a press statement indicating that the OLF-Shane attacked civilians and kebele militias in Horo Guduru Wollega zone after government forces killed one of the rebel group’s commanders on 23 September (FDRE Government Communication Service, 24 September 2022)”.²⁵⁵

²⁵¹ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [OLLAA Alarmed by Disturbing Rhetoric From Amhara Community](#), 12 April 2023

²⁵² VOA News, [Rights Body Calls for Action in Ethiopia's Oromia Region](#), 21 July 2023

²⁵³ OHCHR, [Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia](#), June 2024, paragraph 2

²⁵⁴ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Populations at Risk: Ethiopia](#), last updated 31 May 2024 [accessed 30 June 2024]

²⁵⁵ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 17-23 September 2022](#), 28 September 2022

Another 8 to 14 October 2022 update from the EPO stated “Amhara and Oromo ethnic militias clashed in Haro Ayana kebele in Gida Ayana woreda. Reports of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane regaining control of three woredas – Liben Chukala, Dugda, and Bora woredas – in East Shewa zone also emerged last week”.²⁵⁶

The update for the whole of October 2022 from the EPO documented that “Fighting between Oromo militias, some allied with the OLF-Shane, and Amhara militias continued along regional border areas in northwest Oromia”.²⁵⁷

Their update for November 2022 continued:

As the OLF-Shane’s influence has increased and the presence of security forces has become less consistent, communal violence has also surged. In November, violence intensified in the northern parts of East Wollega and Horo Guduru Wollega zones, as battles were fought between Amhara ethnic militiamen and associated Fano militias against Oromia regional special forces. Violence involving ethnic Amhara militias in these areas of Oromia has worsened significantly over the past year and reached a critical level, with high numbers of displaced civilians of Oromo and Amhara ethnicities reported ([VOA Amharic, 24 November 2022](#); [VOA Amharic, 23 November 2022](#)). [...]

These clashes have worsened significantly since Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed took power, and limited but regular clashes between Oromo and Amhara ethnic militias occur, often accompanied by mass displacements of civilians ([VOA, 23 November 2022](#)). As these local conflicts over farmland and resources have intensified, they have drawn the involvement of other groups. Forced displacement of Amharas from farmlands in Oromia has prompted the formation of Amhara militias – sometimes identified as Fano who traveled from Amhara region – in response ([Curate Oromia, 17 October 2022](#)). [...]

Attacks by Fano militias against Oromo civilians were widely reported days prior to clashes in Kiremu in Alibo town in Jarte Jardega woreda in Horo Guduru Wollega zone, located around 20 kilometers to the east of Kiremu woreda ([BBC Afan Oromo, 19 November 2022](#)). The OLF-Shane has responded to similar events in the past and confirmed that it was actively involved in clashes against Amhara militias, including Fano militias, stating that it “drove back an earlier contingent of Amhara regional militia that committed heinous killings and attempted to stir ethnic conflict” ([Ethiopia Insight, 1 June 2022](#)).²⁵⁸

The commentary on prospects for peace in Ethiopia by the German Institute for International and Security Affairs wrote “After various phases of ups and downs, violence escalated again in November 2022, with clashes between the OLA and Fano militias and regular ENDF units, in addition to attacks on civilian infrastructure. Oromos are concerned that the Fano could occupy land that they consider Amharic, just as they did in Tigray. Land conflicts between Oromos and Amhara are thus politicised by

²⁵⁶ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 8 – 14 October 2022](#), 18 October 2022

²⁵⁷ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: October 2022](#), 9 November 2022

²⁵⁸ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: November 2022](#), 7 December 2022

armed groups from both sides. Hundreds of thousands of people have already fled from Oromia to Amhara”.²⁵⁹

According to the EPO’s weekly update from 26 November to 2 December 2022, “The OLF-Shane also clashed with kebele militias in Ginde Berbere, Hamuma Gindo, Babu Dire, Becho, and Harbu kebeles in Dera woreda in North Shewa zone. It was reported that the group took control of all these areas except Ginde Berbere”.²⁶⁰

The EPO weekly update for 3 to 9 December 2022 wrote:

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.²⁶¹

The International Crisis Group’s noted in December 2022 that “Fighting raged in western Oromia as Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) expanded operations and Amhara militias known as Fano deepened their involvement; all actors targeted civilians. Hostilities occurred throughout month in Horo Guduru Zone, East, Kellem and West Wollega Zones and South West and East Shewa Zones”.²⁶²

EPO reported on increased political violence in Oromia in November and December 2022, writing that:

Oromo residents and officials identify perpetrators of the violence as Amhara militiamen, also known as Fano, coming from Bure in Amhara region and attacking local Oromo administrators.¹⁰ Likewise, Oromo ethno-nationalist political entities like the OLF have denounced the ‘encroachment’ of Amhara paramilitary forces into Oromo territory.¹¹ The OLF-Shane spokesperson, Odaa Tarbi, denied that OLF-Shane – also known as the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) – forces were attacking Amhara civilians in the area but confirmed the group’s involvement in the clashes against Amhara Fano militias.¹²²⁶³

¹⁰ [VOA Amharic, 7 December 2022](#)

²⁵⁹ Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) (German Institute for International and Security Affairs), Gerrit Kurtz, [SWP Comment, No. 14 March 2023: Sustaining Peace in Ethiopia](#), March 2023, p. 6

²⁶⁰ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 26 November – 2 December 2022](#), 6 December 2022

²⁶¹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 3 – December 2022](#), 14 December 2022

²⁶² International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), December 2022

²⁶³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO December 2022 Monthly: Conflict Expands in Oromia Region](#), 12 January 2023

¹¹ [Addis Standard, 9 December 2022](#)

¹² [VOA Amharic, 7 December 2022](#)

In December 2022, BBC News reported on the escalation of conflict in Oromia:

In the latest sign of the deep crisis that has engulfed Ethiopia, conflict in the vast Oromia region - the heartland of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed - is escalating as political and ethnic tensions explode.

It has seen Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) rebels raid towns that were once out of their reach, and hold "graduation ceremonies" to boast of new recruits [...].

Adding to the dangerous cocktail, much-feared militias from the rival Amhara ethnic group are widely believed to have crossed into Oromia to fight the rebels. [...]

While Amhara militias - referred to as Fano - are said to have entered Oromia to defend their ethnic group. They too have been accused of committing atrocities - including raiding around five towns in various districts in western Oromia. [...]

Many local Oromos believe the Fano militias are on a land expansion campaign aimed at redrawing the internal boundaries of Ethiopia.

They worry that a situation similar to Tigray could develop, where the militias joined the fight against Tigrayan forces at the start of the conflict there in November 2020 and helped the Amhara regional government seize agriculturally rich western Tigray.

But Amharas deny that the Fano have crossed into Oromia, saying their militias were trained by the Oromia government to defend their communities after four years of attacks by the OLA.

Many Amharas, as well as Oromos who support Mr Abiy, are deeply suspicious of the OLA and TPLF, pointing out that the two joined forces and advanced towards Addis Ababa last year in a failed bid to seize power.²⁶⁴

With regards to security in Oromia, the International Crisis Group noted in January 2023 that "Amhara militia involvement continued to complicate situation".²⁶⁵

The 2024 Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index covering the period from 1 February 2021 to 31 January 2023 gave the following background on the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and Fano in Oromia:

In the Oromia region, the OLA challenges the state's monopoly on the use of force. The group is active in Kellem Wollega, Horo Guduru Wollega, East Wollega, West Wollega, West Shewa, East Shewa, North Shewa, East Guji and Guji zones in Oromia. The OLA managed to gain control of some rural areas within these zones. [...]

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 2018.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ BBC News, [Ethiopia's PM sees OLA rebellion grow in his own backyard](#), 18 December 2022

²⁶⁵ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), January 2023

²⁶⁶ Bertelsmann Stiftung, [BTI 2024 Country Report — Ethiopia](#), 19 March 2024

VOA News wrote in July 2023 on tensions and violence in the Oromia region, commenting that:

A former resident and teacher in the Horo Guduru Welega Zone, who wanted to remain anonymous, said school has been disrupted for the past two years where he used to live.

"I have taught for a long time there — for 26 years," he said. "But because of the security problems there, I left. I am now in Addis Ababa. Even the way we left was in special circumstances, we walked 90 kilometers on foot — those of us who were able to leave."

The resident said that the attacks are being carried out by militias, known as Fano, from the neighboring Amhara region.

"We know very well that it's the armed fighters, Fano. They are the ones stealing, killing and displacing people," he said. "Everyone knows this, including government bodies. They are creating major problems."

In April, federal government orders to integrate Amhara special forces, including Fano, into the federal military or the police triggered widespread protests.

More recently, Amhara and Oromo militias have been targeting each other's neighborhoods, one example of Ethiopia's long-simmering ethnic conflicts.²⁶⁷

The International Crisis Group stated in August 2023 with regards to the Oromia region "Fano continued to mount attacks and abduct residents".²⁶⁸

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 militias and government forces in North Shewa zone of Oromia region, especially in Dera woreda".²⁶⁹ 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.²⁷⁰

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

It went on to state that:

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. In western Oromia, both Oromo and Amhara residents have been attacked by

²⁶⁷ VOA News, [Rights Body Calls for Action in Ethiopia's Oromia Region](#), 21 July 2023

²⁶⁸ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), August 2023

²⁶⁹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO August 2023 Monthly: Conflict in Amhara Region](#), 8 September 2023

²⁷⁰ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO August 2023 Monthly: Conflict in Amhara Region](#), 8 September 2023

various groups, mainly the OLF-Shane, Amhara ethnic militias, and Fano militias. In this area, Amhara ethnic militias have been more active since 2021 and Fano militias began to attack civilians in 2022 [...].²⁷¹

In November 2023, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) submitted a statement for the 77th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights on the human rights situation in Ethiopia stating "Communities in different parts of Oromia regional state have been devastated by repeated militant attacks, which have led to killings, widespread theft, destruction, and displacement. These attacks have continued in the past months and have disrupted daily life, leaving many residents without access to essential services such as medical care and education".²⁷²

In December 2023, the EPO summarised the following: "In November, ACLED records 44 battles involving the OLA/OLF-Shane in Oromia, resulting in an estimated 91 reported fatalities. Violence decreased significantly, albeit temporarily, between 4 and 10 November, while the parties were in negotiations. As talks have failed and no future negotiations have been scheduled, violence is expected to rise again to match levels that persisted throughout 2022".²⁷³

The same report produced the following graph²⁷⁴:

²⁷¹ EPO, [EPO August 2023 Monthly: Conflict in Amhara Region](#), 8 September 2023

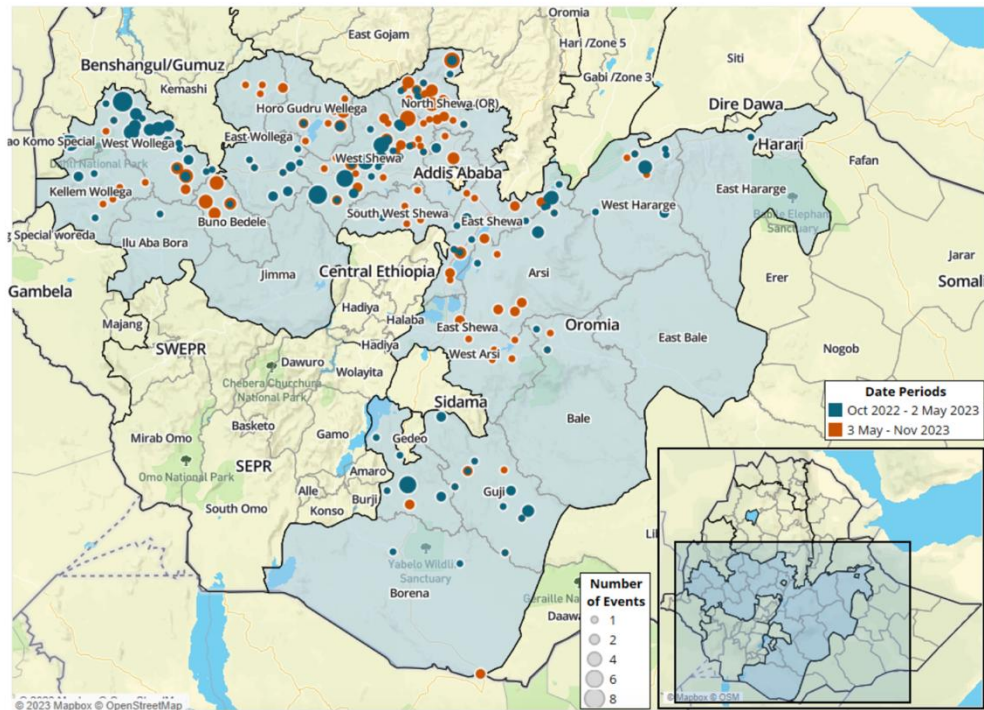
²⁷² Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), [Statement of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission \(EHRC\) \(Affiliate Status No. 18\): AGENDA ITEM 3 - Human Rights Situation in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 77th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights \(20 October – 9 November 2023\)](#), 1 November 2023, p. 8

²⁷³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO November 2023 Update: An Evolving Conflict Environment in Oromia](#), 14 December 2023

²⁷⁴ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO November 2023 Update: An Evolving Conflict Environment in Oromia](#), 14 December 2023, pp. 4-5

Political Violence in Oromia Region Involving the OLA/OLF-Shane

October 2022 - November 2023



The International Crisis Group explained, in an article on war in Amhara, 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.²⁷⁵ Some have clashed with Oromo militants near the Amhara-Oromo boundary.

11 Fano is an Amharic term that means “the people who have joined the struggle”. It originally came to prominence in reference to Ethiopians who formed the armed resistance to Italy’s occupation from 1936 to 1941. Of late, it has been used to describe anti-government protesters, insurgents and militia members from Amhara region.

The EHRC stated in their March 2024 national inquiry into persons deprived of liberty, with reference to incidents between November 2020 and November 2023, that “Armed conflicts between OLA and Amhara militants from the neighboring Gojam zones of Amhara Region also resulted in human rights abuses. East Gojam is bordered in the south by Horo Guduru Wollega, while West Gojam is bordered in the south by East Wollega and Horo Guduru Wollega zones. EHRC released several reports of human rights abuses by OLA and Amhara militants in Wollega zones, including attacks based on ethnic identity. OLA attacked ethnic Amharas, while Amhara militants attacked ethnic Oromos”.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁵ International Crisis Group, [Ethiopia’s Ominous New War in Amhara](#), 16 November 2023

²⁷⁶ Ethiopian Human Rights Committee (EHRC), [National Inquiry into Persons Deprived of Liberty](#), 26 March 2024, p.

The International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in March 2024 "Clashes between Oromo and Amhara ethnic militias 9-21 March in Amhara's Oromo Special Zone and North Shewa Zone killed 27. Deteriorating security crippled economic activity".²⁷⁷

ii. Civilian massacres

For an overview of the massacres of Amhara civilians in Oromo, including the June 2022 Gimbi massacre and July 2022 Kellem Wollega massacre, see ARC's recent [Query Response: Situation in the Amhara region](#) (April 2024), 'VI. Treatment of Amharas by non-state actors outside of the Amhara region; b. Oromia'. This query response focuses on the massacres of Oromo civilians in Oromia.

See also [IV. Human rights situation, b. Killings](#).

In July 2022, the OLLAA reported on a massacre in Yaya Haro, a village in Degam Woreda in the North Shewa Zone of Oromia, in May 2022.²⁷⁸ With reference to the experiences of Chala, a Yaya Haro native and a volunteer at OLLAA, it wrote:

On May 17-18, 2022, Yaya Haro endured the worst offense yet: an open attack on the entire village. Prior to this event, the aggression by government forces had been focused on a few suspects at a time. But in the face of continuing frustration and lack of success in hunting down the OLA members in the area, the soldiers turned their ire upon the people of Yaya Haro. While exact numbers of casualties are difficult to pin down due to government control of media coverage, Chala's direct connection to this village allows us some of the details.

Several of his former schoolmates and friends were killed in the May attack, and his aunt's house was burned down. Per his knowledge, more than half of the fifty or so buildings in town were burned along with the fields of the farmers in the village. It is this aspect of the atrocity that poses the largest scale hardship on the people already endured active violence; killing civilians and burning houses is a horror many people cannot even imagine living through, but after those horrible moments so many from Yaya Haro were left without food or a source of income. This dual problem of nutrition and economics has implications far beyond the once picturesque landscape of the North Shewa Zone.²⁷⁹

In August, the Oromia Support Group noted that "in Warra Jarso, as in Gambella on 14 June, when at least 17 Oromo were rounded up and shot dead, the criterion for selection for execution was being Oromo – speaking the Oromo language, Afaan Oromo".²⁸⁰

In August 2022, the OLLAA reported that:

²⁷⁷ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), March 2024

²⁷⁸ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Invisible Atrocities](#), 22 July 2022

²⁷⁹ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Invisible Atrocities](#), 22 July 2022

²⁸⁰ Oromia Support Group (OSG), [REPORT 60: Death, destruction and detention in Oromia Disinformation: a hate crime and a tool of abuse](#), 2 August 2022, p. 15

On August 30, 2022, it was reported that Amhara militias and *Fano* had crossed the border and began attacking the residents of Agamsa town, Amuruu district, Horo Guduru Wollega zone, Oromia region. According to this report, at least 50 people died in this attack, and the city was completely destroyed. The report also claims this is the latest in a series of attacks perpetrated throughout the district, and that 16 of the 21 villages in the district are now completely controlled by Amhara militias and *fano*.

OLLAA's staff has spoken to the families of two victims of this attack, and were able to confirm that this attack on Agamsa town took place, leading to the mass destruction of property and civilian casualties. OLLAA's community liaison board (ATF) also met with diaspora US-based Oromo community leaders on 8/30/22. They confirmed they could not locate or know where their family members were. Our sources further allege that the residents of the town were forced to flee their homes following the attack [...].²⁸¹

The International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in September 2022 "Ethiopian Human Rights Commission 6 Sept confirmed massacre of over 60 civilians 29-31 Aug in Horo Guduru Wollega Zone; report said "armed militia from Amhara", likely militias known as *Fano*, perpetrated violence".²⁸²

In September 2022, Africa News also wrote on reports of the massacre of 60 people in late August in Ethiopia's Oromia region:

The EHRC, a statutorily independent public institution, said in a statement that it had "learned from residents and officials that in two days of attacks, more than 60 people were killed, more than 70 injured and homes and livestock looted.

More than 20,000 people were displaced by the attacks, which targeted several communities in the Amuru woreda (district) in the Horo-Gudru administrative area between August 29 and 31, "after the security forces deployed in the area left for another location," EHRC reported.

The EHRC said the attacks were carried out by armed men from localities in the district or neighboring Amhara region after three members of the Amhara community were killed by the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) in an operation by the Oromo rebel group active in the area.

Two residents of an affected locality accused Amhara militiamen of committing the killings and claimed that around 100 people were killed.

The regional authorities had blamed the OLA, an organization classified as a terrorist, which they have been fighting with federal forces since 2018.

Conflicts, including territorial ones, have pitted Oromo and Amhara - the two largest ethnolinguistic groups in Ethiopia, which has more than 80 - in several border areas between the two regions of Oromia and Amhara.²⁸³

The OLLAA reported again in October 2022 on a further incident, noting that:

[...] the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) recently reported that 120 civilians had been killed by members of *Fano* from October 1-14. On October 22, 2022, the Addis Standard released a report detailing a series

²⁸¹ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Attack on Civilians in Agamsa Town](#), 31 August 2022

²⁸² International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), September 2022

²⁸³ Africa News, [More than 60 dead in Ethiopian massacre - human rights commission](#), 7 September 2022

of attacks against civilians inside the East Wollega zone of Oromia. According to this report, at least 30 civilians had died and 50 homes were burned down when Amhara militias (*Fano*) attacked residents of four villages in Kiremu district on October 15th. One resident claimed that everyone who lived in Gudina Jiregna village was displaced as a result of this attack, and that Ethiopian security forces who were present failed to respond to the violence. In addition, it has been reported that another attack was carried out by Amhara militias against civilians in Sasigga District, West Wollega zone, on October 19, 2022.²⁸⁴

Following the same attack on civilians blamed on Fano militants in East Wollega zone of Oromia in October 2022, Addis Standard reported:

Fikadu Hunde, administrator of Kiremu district, told the VOA that at least 30 people were killed in the attack in four villages in Kiremu district, in East Wollega zone of Oromia regional state by armed Fano militants. the attacks took place last week, on 15 October in which more than 50 houses were also burned, according to the local official. [...]

Fikadu referred to the perpetrators as, “Fanno militants” who were organized in the name of Amhara community in the area; some of whom lived there and some of whom came from Horro Guduru zone, he said, adding that the victims include an elderly as old as 75 years old. The perpetrators used “illegal and unauthorized weapons” in the attacks in four villages: “Gudina Jiregna, Cheffe Soruma, Burka Soruma and Nachino villages in Kiremu district. A total of 30 people, 29 men and one woman, were killed in the attack,” the local official said. [...]

The resident said the attackers were “armed Amhara militants who came from the Amhara region, where they get training” and further described the attackers as those “who grew up among us and speak our language. They know the village, they went there [to the Amhara Region] and get trained and came back fully armed.”

“Everyone from Gudina Jiregna village is completely displaced,” the witness said, adding that the reason for the attack was to “displace these people from their land and take the land” and “destroy Shane” (a reference to the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) which know by the government as OLF/Shane). “But it is not Shane that they are killing but the civilians,” the resident added.

The witness also claimed that government security forces were in the town but refused to take immediate action. “The government security forces were in town. When we asked why they kept quiet, the answer was ‘we were told to stay in the city and wait for Shane not to enter, but we have not been ordered about any other thing.’”

Dr. Diriba Abdenna, a resident of Nekemte city, the capital of East Wollega zone, also told the VOA that he lost his father in the attack. “I lost my 85-year-old father, Abdenna Duressa. Those who could have fled, but my father could not escape. He was shot dead while sitting at the door. Six people from the village, including him, were killed. They killed many elders who could not escape. All those who died in that village are like family to us. We are now sitting in Nakemte together in mourning. Our people died while the government security forces were in the city.”

The militants also burned more than 50 houses and looted cattle, said district administrator Fikadu Hunde, adding that the government security forces were moved elsewhere for work during the attack, which made it hard for them to counter the attack.²⁸⁵

²⁸⁴ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Drone Attacks and Violence Across Western Oromia](#), 25 October 2022

²⁸⁵ Addis Standard, [News: At least 30 people killed in an attacks blamed on “Fano militants” in East Wollega zone of Oromia region: local official](#), 22 October 2022

According to the EPO's weekly update from 24 to 30 September 2022:

Moreover, there are reports that Amhara ethnic militias clashed with the OLF-Shane in Horo Guduru zone and attacked civilians, mainly Oromos, in Jardega Jarte woreda ([DW Amharic, 29 September 2022](#)). On 25 September, attacks on civilians were reported in Gobu Siba, Obora, Haro Gudina, Welkite, and Rigete kebeles in Amuru woreda. It is unclear who was behind these attacks ([DW Amharic, 28 September 2022](#)). Some witnesses, however, blamed Amhara and Fano militias for the attack in Gobu Siba kebele, and said that over 35 civilians, mostly ethnic Oromos, were killed in the attack ([DW Amharic, 26 September 2022](#); [OMN, 25 September 2022](#)). Meanwhile, another witness stated that the OLF-Shane entered the kebele and killed at least five ethnic Amhara civilians ([DW Amharic, 26 September 2022](#)).²⁸⁶

According to the EPO's weekly update from 1 to 7 October 2022 "On 3 October, Somali ethnic militiamen opened gunfire on civilians and killed an unknown number of people in Habrona kebele in Gura Damole woreda in Bale zone".²⁸⁷

An 'atrocities alert' from the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect in December 2022 commented on the massacres of civilians in the Oromia region in the second half of 2022, writing that "This includes an attack that residents attributed to Fano militias from 25-29 November in Kiremu district in East Wollega Zone, which left dozens dead and displaced approximately 350,000 people. Additional attacks allegedly took place in the same area from 3-4 December".²⁸⁸

AP News wrote in December 2022 in an article that:

One witness in the region's Kiremu district said his father and cousin were among at least 34 people killed since Nov. 24. He blamed soldiers under the control of the Oromia regional government, saying he saw their uniforms.

"It all started with a confrontation between a single local militia and members of the Oromia special forces," he said. "The special forces killed the militia who was a member of the Amhara community, and then a week-long killing followed." He estimated that hundreds of people have since fled the area.

An ethnic Oromo resident of Kiremu, however, accused an Amhara armed group known as the Fano of attacking and killing civilians and said he had seen more than a dozen bodies and buried four of them on Nov. 29.

"This militia group is killing our people, burning villages and looting everything we own," Dhugassa Feyissa told the AP. "They shoot at anyone they find ... be it public servants, police officers or teachers." [...]

The deputy administrator of the Gidda Ayanna district, which also has seen some of Oromia's worst violence in recent weeks, also blamed the Amhara Fano fighters.

"Civilians in our area are being killed, displaced and looted. This group is heavily armed, so it is no match for farmers who are defenseless," Getahun Tolera said, noting that his district now hosts some 31,000 people who fled nearby districts. "We are still going house-to-house and discovering bodies." [...]

²⁸⁶ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 24 – 30 September 2022](#), 4 October 2022

²⁸⁷ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 1 – 7 October 2022](#), 12 October 2022

²⁸⁸ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Atrocities Alert No. 329: Nigeria, Myanmar \(Burma\) and Ethiopia](#), 14 December 2022

Last week, the government-appointed Ethiopian Human Rights Commission said “hundreds” of people had been killed in a “gruesome manner” in the past four months across 10 zones in the Oromia region, and it confirmed the presence of government forces, Amhara militia and the OLA in areas where repeated killings occur.

“The deliberate attacks against civilians in these areas are made based on ethnicity and political views ... with the assertion that one supports one group over the other,” the commission said, urging the federal government to take urgent action. [...]

Another prominent political figure, Oromo opposition politician Jawar Mohammed, earlier this month asserted that at least 350 people had been killed and over 400,000 displaced “just in the last 48 hours” in the KIRAMU, HORO GUDURU, KUYU and WARA JARSO areas of Oromia.²⁸⁹

Similarly, BBC News reported on escalations of conflict in Oromia:

While Amhara militias - referred to as Fano - are said to have entered Oromia to defend their ethnic group. They too have been accused of committing atrocities - including raiding around five towns in various districts in western Oromia.

An Oromo government official said that in the KIRAMU district alone, the militias had killed 244 Oromo civilians, burnt 568 homes and stolen 25,000 cattle.

A leading academic, Hasan Yusuf, said that he had lost eight members of his family in Angar Gute town in November, with other reports suggesting that judges and civil servants have also been killed by the militias. [...]

Many local Oromos believe the Fano militias are on a land expansion campaign aimed at redrawing the internal boundaries of Ethiopia. [...]

But Amharas deny that the Fano have crossed into Oromia, saying their militias were trained by the Oromia government to defend their communities after four years of attacks by the OLA.²⁹⁰

In December 2022, OLLAA wrote that:

A gruesome [video](#) (Explicit Content Warning) began circulating on social media this morning showing several members of the Amhara militia, *Fano*, speaking in front of the decapitated heads of individuals from Jardega Jarte, Horo Guduru Wollega zone, they claimed were “Shane.” This is just one of the multiple reports of violent acts being perpetrated by Fano throughout western Oromia in the past few weeks. For example, OLLAA’s sources have also reported that “allied forces,” including Fano, extrajudicially executed 20 civilians in Hanger Gutin, East Wollega zone, on December 4. Hasan Yusuf, the President of Wollega University, made a [Facebook post](#) claiming that 8 of his relatives were killed in this attack. On November 25 and 29, 2022, residents [reported](#) that Fano killed several individuals during attacks in Kiremu District, East Wollega zone, including a Kiremu District Court judge. The Gida Ayana district government’s communication’s office issued a [statement](#) claiming that the entire population of 19 villages in Kiremu had been displaced due to the violence. Sources on the ground have also reported to OLLAA that multiple civilians were killed in another attack perpetrated by Fano in Agamsa town, Horo Guduru Wollega zone, on November 29. Another source reported that Amhara militias had recently attacked civilians and burned down their homes in Bosat, East Shewa zone. Although estimates of the

²⁸⁹ AP News, [As Tigray calms, Ethiopia sees growing conflict in Oromia](#), 14 December 2022

²⁹⁰ BBC News, [Ethiopia’s PM sees OLA rebellion grow in his own backyard](#), 18 December 2022

number of individuals killed in these attacks vary, and telecommunications shutdowns in the zones makes it difficult to get a true picture of the extent of the violence, it is clear that they have led to deaths of numerous citizens and mass displacement. On December 3, 2022, Jawar Mohammed tweeted that at least 350 civilians were killed and 400,000 had been displaced over the past 48 hours due to violence in the East Wollega, Horo Guduru Wollega, and North Shewa zones.²⁹¹

The Peace Research Facility of the RVI noted the following relevant incidents across the different zones in the Oromia region in 2022 in a briefing in March 2023:

EAST WOLLEGA

[...] The most recent incidents in the zone include:

- 15 October [2022]: 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 [2022]: 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.

HORO GUDURU WOLLEGA

[...] Recent incidents in Horo Guduru Wollega zone include:

- August 30-31, 2022: More than 50 civilians were killed during a massacre in Agamsa (Amuru woreda) and approximately 20,000 were temporarily displaced in attacks allegedly by Fano militias in the absence of Oromo regional and federal forces.
- September - December 2022: Several attacks on civilians took place in Jardega Jarte. Oromo regional and Amhara forces were allegedly involved in fighting in the Jardega Jarte, where OLA was thought to have operated and received support from local civilians.²⁹²

Addis Standard reported in June 2023 on attacks by Amhara militia in Amuru district of Horo Guduru Wollega zone of Oromia:

Armed militants described as members of the irregular Fano militia killed at least five people, injured dozens in a new attack in Amuru district of Horo Guduru Wollega zone of the Oromia regional states, residents told *Addis Standard*.

According to a resident of Agamsa town in Amuru district who asked for his name to be concealed for safety reasons, the attack on Wednesday, 07 June destroyed properties, and houses were burned and looted in the town and the surrounding rural villages. [...]

More than ten civilians injured during the attack have been taken to a local hospital for treatment according to the resident.²⁹³

²⁹¹ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Gruesome Attacks Throughout Western and Central Oromia](#), 5 December 2022

²⁹² Peace Research Facility and Rift Valley Institute (RVI), [Conflict Trend Analysis: Western Oromia](#), March 2023, pp. 8-10

²⁹³ Addis Standard, [News: Militants kill at least five, wound several people in renewed attacks in Western Oromia](#), 10 June 2023

Addis Standard reported in August 2023 on the deaths of civilians in an attack in Kiremu, East Wollega, by Fano militia:

Eight civilians have been killed, 13 injured and 15 went missing following a fresh attack on 16 June, carried out by the irregular Fano militia in the village of Wasti, in Kiremu district of East Wollega zone, in Western Oromia, residents told *Addis Standard*.

A resident of Kiremu who asked not to be named for safety reasons shared the names of the deceased and those who were injured with *Addis Standard*, noting that the perpetrators crossed the border from neighboring Amhara region. [...]

"They carried out the attack at dawn while many people were sleeping," one of the two residents who is from *Jirma Dongoro* said. [...]

On 07 June, armed militants described as members of the irregular Fano militia killed at least five people, injured dozens in Amuru district of Horo Guduru Wollega zone of the Oromia regional states, *Addis Standard* reported.²⁹⁴

In August 2023, Addis Standard reported on the killing of civilians allegedly by government forces in Chobi, Oromia, earlier that month:

Government forces deployed to Chobi district of West Shoa zone, Oromia region to fight the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) have allegedly killed at least twelve civilians and wounded four others, residents told Addis Standard. Some of the victims were shot dead while they were in their houses, while others were killed on the road on the morning of 10 August, 2023 in two villages namely Qoricha Koticha and Hofu Bake of the district.

A resident of Hofu Bake village who said two of his brothers were killed in the attack told Addis Standard that the killing was perpetrated by government troops stationed in the village "campaigning to eliminate OLA". The resident said the killing did not distinguish between age and gender, adding that an 11 year old child and a 70 year old elderly man were among the victims.

Another resident who fled the attack to neighboring Jalduu district said besides those killed and wounded, five women and 20 other men were abducted by government forces and taken to an unknown location. The resident noted that his wife and one of his sons are among the abducted.

According to the two residents, among the dead are four members of the same family; Gurmu Jifara, Tasfaye Jifara, Abarra Jifara and Abishu Jifara. Abishu succumbed to his injury later, while others were killed on the spot.

The two major Oromo opposition parties, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) have both denounced the killings which they described as "heinous and indiscriminate". In separate statements released on 12 and 13 August respectively, both parties vehemently criticized the government's "dry the ocean, to eliminate the fishes" approach, targeting the civilian population in order to annihilate the OLA armed group.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁴ Addis Standard, [News: Eight killed, 13 injured in fresh attack in Kiremu, East Wollega, local admin accuses "extremist group" from Amhara region](#), 3 August 2023

²⁹⁵ Addis Standard, [News: At least 12 civilians killed in Chobi, Oromia region, residents and opposition parties accuse gov't forces of indiscriminate attack](#), 15 August 2023

In September 2023, the OLLAA reported on attacks on civilians in Gida Ayyana, writing that:

On September 15, a reliable source confirmed to OLLAA that Amhara Fano had killed over 30 people in the Gida Ayyana district in the East Wallaga zone of the Oromia region of Ethiopia. This attack appears to be ethnically motivated. The tragic, deadly killing started on September 14th, when a disgruntled ethnic Amhara member of the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) deserted, left his base, and engaged in rampant killings. His first victims were an Oromo farmer and his family. He also killed two local militias that stopped to ask who he was and what he was doing in the area.

The following day, on September 15, Amhara Fano stopped three minivans traveling from Naqamte to Gida Ayyana in Gara Dicho. This stop resulted in the killings of the male travelers, plus rapes and injuries of unknown numbers. That same evening, outraged residents took to the streets to Potests in Gida Ayyana [sic]. Despite public outcry, the Ethiopian Government has not yet released an official statement.²⁹⁶

The International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in December 2023 "Oromo-Amhara tensions triggered more attacks on civilians. Notably, suspected Fano militants 12 Dec attacked civilians in Horo Guduru Wollega Zone, killing at least thirteen; Oromo militants, possibly OLA, 24 Nov-4 Dec attacked Orthodox Christians and mostly Amhara civilians in Arsi Zone, killing around 40".²⁹⁷

Reuters wrote in December 2023 on reports of a drone strike on a church in Oromia:

An aerial strike on the grounds of a church in Ethiopia's Oromiya region killed eight people and injured five as they collected corn, two witnesses and an opposition political party said.

Government spokesperson Legesse Tulu dismissed the accounts of the air strike as "an absolute lie". [...]

The compound of the Baro Full Gospel Church in the Horo Gudru Wellega zone, around 200 km northwest of the capital Addis Ababa, was attacked on Monday morning, when people were gathering to collect corn from a field, witnesses said. [...]

The OLF also blamed Monday's deaths on a drone strike.²⁹⁸

In March 2024, the New Humanitarian published a report on the civilian toll of drone strikes in Ethiopia, noting that:

Drones have become an integral part of the military's efforts against the [OLA], 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. [...]

²⁹⁶ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [OLLAA Condemn Amhara Fano Attack Against Civilian in Gida Ayyana](#), 15 September 2023

²⁹⁷ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), December 2023

²⁹⁸ Reuters, [Aerial strike on Ethiopia church grounds kills eight – witnesses](#), 28 December 2023

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.”

In December, army chief Birhanu Jula made a rare admission about Ethiopia’s use of drones, but he denied they targeted civilians. [...]

Yet human rights experts say Ethiopia is using drones indiscriminately and in remote places where there is little oversight.

Suad Nur, a campaigner with Amnesty International, said the Ethiopian military’s use of drones is part of a broader pattern of impunity that characterises conflicts in the country.

Nur noted that government troops have been accused of extra-judicial killings, beatings, and looting in Amhara, Oromia, Tigray, and elsewhere in Ethiopia.²⁹⁹

e. Peace talks

According to the EPO’s weekly update from 23 April to 6 May 2022, “In Oromia region, Abbaa Gadaas, who traditionally managed local conflicts, have been unable to resolve inter-communal clashes or the larger conflict between the OLF-Shane and the government of Oromia region”.³⁰⁰

The monthly update for November 2022 from the EPO commented that:

The OLF-Shane leadership does not appear to have the motivation to engage in a peace dialogue. In a recent statement, the OLF-Shane blamed the government for an escalation in the conflict and rejected mediation efforts by traditional leaders reportedly sent by the government ([Twitter @OdaaTarbiiWBO, 29 November 2022](#)). Likewise, Ethiopian government officials have expressed their reluctance to negotiate with the OLF-Shane based on the lack of a singular representative political or military command structure ([EBC, 30 November 2022](#)).³⁰¹

An article published at the start of December 2022 by The Reporter on the situation in Oromia wrote:

Jawar Mohammed, activist-turned-opposition figure, is among who urged all the warring parties to sit for negotiation. “Just as in the North, the cause of the civil war in Oromia is a political difference and it will only be resolved when leaders agree to sit around the table in order to discuss and bargain mutually acceptable compromise,” he said.

His party comrade, Mulatu Gemechu, senior leader of Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), in which Jawar is a member, shares his view. “Despite the fact that four years have gone by with no success in bringing peace to the region, unfortunately, government officials believe they can end the security situation as they possess a military advantage over the militants,” said Multau, who believes peace, compromise, and settlement is the only way to end the security crisis in the region.

²⁹⁹ The New Humanitarian, [‘Horrific’ civilian toll as Ethiopia turns to combat drones to quell local insurgencies](#), 5 March 2024

³⁰⁰ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 23 April – 6 May 2022](#), 11 May 2022

³⁰¹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: November 2022](#), 7 December 2022

Even after creating an umbrella of parties in Oromia and pressuring all the warring groups to come to the negotiating table, Jawar and his colleagues failed in their attempts to broker peace between the government and the OLA. Officials are intent on trying to use internal divisions within OLA as an excuse to reject any dialogue with the group, which is now thought to be led by not only Jal Marro but also Jal Gemechu and Jal Segni in the region's south and center.

"There may be disagreements within the OLA, but it shouldn't be used as a reason to avoid peace talks with them. They have supporters, no matter how lofty or unattainable their goals may be," said Lemi Sime, a political commentator and a conflict resolution expert.

Abiy discussed the government's position on OLA and the ongoing war against its combatants during his latest appearance before the Parliament. Since there is "no central command and ungovernable for its own leaders," it is difficult to sit down and negotiate with the combatants, the PM said. He reiterated his administration's stance, saying, "The door to a negotiated settlement remains open." This stands in sharp contrast to what the Oromia Regional Government's official said earlier this week.

Oromia Region's Senior Official, Hailu Adugna, firmly rejected the proposal to sit for negotiation and vowed that law enforcement measures would continue to be taken against the rebels, whom he blamed for destabilizing the country through atrocities and other types of destruction. "It's not possible to negotiate with outlaws," he remarked.

Peace talks between the OLA, the federal army, and regional state security have been ruled out by the Oromia regional state on the grounds that the OLA has "no chain of command and divided along regionalism," and "is unorganized and lacks purpose and leadership organization," claims that the OLA's international spokesperson has refuted.³⁰²

The monthly update for December 2022 from the EPO noted that:

On 5 December, lawmakers from Oromia addressed a letter to the federal government, requesting that the ongoing peace process in Tigray region be replicated in Oromia region, and that the federal government negotiate with OLF-Shane forces.¹⁴ The Central Committee of the ruling Prosperity Party stated early in the month that it had attempted "peaceful strategies" to resolve the conflict with the OLF-Shane but chose to prioritize military solutions when "the group continued to attack civilians."¹⁵

Meanwhile, the federal government announced renewed military action against the OLF-Shane, with new deployments in Guji, West Guji, and Borena zones of Oromia region.¹⁶ This came a month after federal authorities stated they would not negotiate with the OLF-Shane given a "lack of a singular representative political or military command structure."¹⁷ The OLF-Shane had likewise announced it would only enter into negotiations with the federal government through a neutral, third-state actor, and that any negotiations through the "regime's cadres – whatever elderly title they carry for the day – will not work."¹⁸

Importantly, the clashes in Angar Gutin and Kiremu put the federal government in a difficult position. Political entities from Oromo and Amhara regions have demanded that the federal government step in on their behalf, risking the delicate balance struck between the Oromo and Amhara branches of the Prosperity Party [...].

In Oromia, the ways in which peace might be attained are unclear. National Dialogue commissioners began the selection of participants and agendas in December, despite serious concerns from the public over lacking clarity surrounding the selection process.¹⁹ Should peace talks be attempted through the

³⁰² The Reporter Ethiopia, [Oromia in dire straits](#), 3 December 2022

National Dialogue, addressing issues of justice and past harms by all violent actors will be key to achieving a lasting solution.³⁰³

14 [AllAfrica](#), 13 December 2022; [Ethiopia Insider](#), 8 December 2022

15 [Amhara Media Corporation](#), 7 December 2022

16 [Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation](#), 28 December 2022; [Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation](#), 2 January 2023

17 [Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation](#), 30 November 2022; [Addis Standard](#), 29 November 2022

18 [Twitter @OdaaTarbiiWBO](#), 29 November 2022

19 [Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation](#), 31 December 2022; [Addis Standard](#), 4 February 2022

In December 2022, BBC News reported on escalations of conflict in Oromia:

In the latest sign of the deep crisis that has engulfed Ethiopia, conflict in the vast Oromia region - the heartland of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed - is escalating as political and ethnic tensions explode.

It has seen Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) rebels raid towns that were once out of their reach, and hold "graduation ceremonies" to boast of new recruits, while the government has responded with troop reinforcements and drone strikes as it rules out talks to end the crisis. [...]

As for the OLA, it appears to have escalated its hit-and-run operations while also declaring that it was willing to enter into talks with Mr Abiy's government.

The government has rejected its overtures, describing it as a "terrorist" movement with "no clear chain of command and political agenda".

But in a sign of growing pressure for it to change its stance, dozens of Oromo lawmakers from Mr Abiy's ruling party have taken the unprecedented step of calling for talks.

One of them, Buzayehu Degefa, told the BBC that the peace initiative in Tigray needed to be "replicated in Oromia", while Oromo activists have also appealed to the international community to step in to help end what they call Ethiopia's "forgotten war".³⁰⁴

The International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in January 2023 "OLA 23 Jan published manifesto spelling out its vision and goals; announcement follows late-Dec govt decision to rule out negotiations with OLA, citing group's lack of 'purpose and leadership'".³⁰⁵

EPO's weekly update for 14 to 20 January 2023 remarked:

The Ethiopian government communication minister stated last week that the government is taking "all-inclusive measures" – both political and military measures – against the OLF-Shane in Oromia region to bring more stability in the region as well as in the neighboring regions.² According to the minister, the government is ready to reintegrate those members of the group who surrender peacefully into society, and will take military action against those who refuse to accept the government's call to surrender. The minister blamed the OLF-Shane for the failure of previous attempts to resolve the conflict peacefully. In November, Oromia regional officials stated that they would not negotiate with the OLF-Shane due to its lacking of a "chain of command" and "divisions along regionalism," also pointing out that the group is

³⁰³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO December 2022 Monthly: Conflict Expands in Oromia Region](#), 12 January 2023

³⁰⁴ BBC News, [Ethiopia's PM sees OLA rebellion grow in his own backyard](#), 18 December 2022

³⁰⁵ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), January 2023

“unorganized and lacks purpose and leadership organization.”³ In response, the OLF-Shane announced that it would only enter into negotiations with the federal government through a neutral, third-state actor, and that any negotiations through the “regime’s cadres – whatever elderly title they carry for the day – will not work.”⁴

² [EBC, 18 January 2023](#)

³ [Addis Standard, 29 November 2022](#)

⁴ [Twitter @OdaaTarbiiWBO, 29 November 2022](#)

International Crisis Group commented in February 2023 that “While fighting in Oromia between govt forces and OLA continued, sides indicated growing interest in truce. Reports emerged of informal indirect talks between OLA and Abiy. Oromia President Shimelis Abdissa 17 Feb urged OLA to negotiate; OLA following day expressed readiness for talks but said request lacked ‘clarity’”.³⁰⁷

The weekly update for 11 – 17 February 2023 from the EPO observed:

On 17 February, the Oromia regional president made an unprecedented call for the “OLF-Shane to peacefully end hostilities and start negotiations” during the fourth ordinary meeting of the Oromia Regional Council in Adama town.⁷ Previously, the government had stated it was unwilling to negotiate with the OLF-Shane [...]. The OLA welcomed the call for peace but listed preconditions for joining the negotiations, asking, among other things, that the negotiations be led and guaranteed by international actors and that the negotiations be conducted directly with the federal government and not the Oromia regional government.⁸ A few days before the call for peace negotiations, some influential ethnic Oromo diaspora organizations indicated their support for peace efforts and requested that the government pursue negotiations.⁹³⁰⁸

⁷ [OBN Afaan Oromoo, ‘Oromia Regional President Mr. Shimelis Abdissa makes a call for reconciliation with the OLF-Shane,’ 17 February 2023](#)

⁸ [Oromo Liberation Army, ‘Regarding the call for peace made by the regional government of Oromia,’ 18 February 2023](#)

⁹ [Deutsche Welle Amharic, ‘A call for a peace option for the Oromia conflict,’ 15 February 2023](#)

AP News reported in March 2023 on accounts of attempted peace talks between the OLA and the Ethiopian government:

Ethiopia’s prime minister said Tuesday his administration is attempting talks with an outlawed rebel group operating mainly in the restive Oromia region.

Abiy Ahmed’s comments to lawmakers on outreach to the Oromo Liberation Army came amid efforts to replicate a peace process conducted for the conflict based in the northern Tigray region that saw an agreement signed in November to end the fighting.

³⁰⁶ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 14-20 January 2023](#), 24 January 2023

³⁰⁷ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), February 2023

³⁰⁸ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 11 – 17 February 2023](#), 21 February 2023

“The government has a high level of interest to resolve this conflict (with OLA) in peaceful terms. Not only interest, but also a committee entrusted with the task of leading the peace process has been set up,” the prime minister said, adding he hopes Ethiopians will support the process.

“More than 10 attempts and contacts were made with the (OLA). The problem so far is that there is no centralized group so every unit has different ideas and positions ... the committee is leading the talks and we will see the result together.”

A spokesman for the rebel group, Odaa Tarbii, told The Associated Press that the prime minister’s comments were “untimely and inconsistent with reality. The 10 attempts he referred to were not genuine attempts to contact the OLA leadership. Instead, the regime deployed various committees of local mediators to contact individual OLA officers and try to convince them to surrender.”

The spokesman added that the OLA is ready for dialogue but has made it clear that “an international third-party mediator will be required to ensure the success of any possible peace agreement” and “there are positive signs” that such talks will occur. [...]

In recent weeks, the Oromia regional government has expressed interest in talking with the rebel group.³⁰⁹

The International Crisis Group’s CrisisWatch tracker stated in March 2023 that “Abiy 28 March renewed hope for peace talks by announcing formation of committee to negotiate with OLA, which same day reported that there are ‘positive signs peace talks... will take place’”.³¹⁰

The March 2023 monthly update from the EPO reported on peace processes in Oromia as such:

Peace processes in Oromia region have not progressed as much as in Tigray, although a reduction in violence over the past two months suggests that there could be an opportunity to bring the warring parties to the negotiation table. On 5 December, lawmakers from Oromia addressed a letter to the federal government, requesting that the ongoing peace process in Tigray region be replicated in Oromia region, and that the federal government negotiate with the OLF-Shane.⁷ A similar letter was sent to the African Union, urging the organization to “intervene and negotiate to reach an agreement.”⁸ Attempts to send local elders to negotiate with the group have thus far failed. In a statement released on 28 March, OLF-Shane (also known as Oromo Liberation Army) leaders denounced government attempts at negotiation as disingenuous and reiterated their insistence that an international third party mediate any talks that should occur.⁹³¹¹

⁷ BBC Afaan Oromo, ‘The reconciliation that was held in Tigray should be held in Oromia so that the Oromo people can rest’ – Members of Parliament,’ 13 March 2023

⁸ Addis Standard, ‘News: Lawmakers from Oromia urge AU to “intervene and negotiate” to end conflict in Oromia, repeat call for warring parties,’ 20 March 2023

⁹ Oromo Liberation Army, ‘Regarding recent remarks made by Abiy Ahmed concerning peace talks,’ 28 March 2023

The same update commented “the peace process in Oromia region is officially non-existent. Despite both parties indicating an increased willingness to negotiate, political differences and unwillingness to

³⁰⁹ AP News, [Ethiopia’s PM announces outreach to rebel group in Oromia](#), 28 March 2023

³¹⁰ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), March 2023

³¹¹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO March 2023 Monthly: Political Violence Trends Decline Amid Opportunities for Peace](#), 5 April 2023

compromise on even basic political arrangements means the road ahead will be long and difficult. While a reduction of violence in March is a positive development, the recent assassination of the head of the ruling Prosperity Party office in Nekemte on 30 March [2023] does not bode well".³¹²

A March 2023 commentary on prospects for peace in Ethiopia by the German Institute for International and Security Affairs set out the following:

[...] the peace process in the north could also serve as a model for Oromia. Around 80 members of parliament from Abiy's party in Oromia have already called on him to enter into peace negotiations with the OLA. The government has so far rejected negotiations, citing the fragmented leadership structure of the OLA, which – like the TPLF – is listed as a terrorist group. More recently, however, Abiy has shown himself to be more open to negotiations. [...]

One answer to the polarisation in society can possibly be provided by the national dialogue that the government initiated with the establishment of a commission in December 2021. For this to be effective, opposition forces – not least the TPLF and parties from Oromia – would have to participate. So far, many perceive the process as being too one-sided and dominated by the government. In addition, the government would have to stop restricting access to media.³¹³

Africa News, with AP News, reported on the development of the peace talks in April 2023:

Ethiopia's federal government and a rebel group from the country's Oromia region opened peace talks on Tuesday in the Tanzanian island archipelago of Zanzibar, according to a spokesperson for the militants.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed announced the talks with the Oromo Liberation Army, or OLA, on Sunday at an event to celebrate a cease-fire, signed in November, with another rebel group from the northern Tigray region.

Odaa Tarbii, the OLA's spokesperson, told The Associated Press that the Oromia talks began on Tuesday morning and are expected to last until Thursday.

"I want to clarify these are preliminary talks meant to pave the way for comprehensive negotiations in the very near future," Odaa said. "The focus, for now, is confidence building and clarifying positions."

This week's talks are being mediated by Norway and Kenya, according to Odaa. He said the European Union, the United States and a regional bloc known as IGAD are expected to be "part of the process going forward" if they are successful. [...]

The government's negotiating team in Zanzibar includes Justice Minister Gedion Timotheos and Redwan Hussein, the prime minister's national security adviser, according to the Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association, a U.S.-based civic group. [...]

Abiy announced the formation of a "committee" to open talks with the OLA while addressing parliament late last month.³¹⁴

³¹² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO March 2023 Monthly: Political Violence Trends Decline Amid Opportunities for Peace](#), 5 April 2023

³¹³ Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) (German Institute for International and Security Affairs), Gerrit Kurtz, [SWP Comment, No. 14 March 2023: Sustaining Peace in Ethiopia](#), March 2023, p. 6

³¹⁴ Africa News, [Ethiopian gov't and Oromo rebel group begin talks in Zanzibar](#), 26 April 2023

The International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch also noted the same month "In positive step toward ending long-running OLA insurgency, PM Abiy 23 April [2023] announced peace talks with group starting 25 April in Tanzania; OLA same day confirmed news, saying federal govt had accepted its demands for third-party mediator".³¹⁵

The April 2023 monthly update from the EPO reported that:

[...] peace talks with various armed groups throughout the country appear to be progressing with the promise of results. During the last week of April, recently announced peace talks between the government and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) – known by the government and locals¹ as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane – officially started in Tanzania.² It is likely that peace talks may have begun much earlier, as ACLED data indicate events involving the OLF-Shane have dropped sharply after a spike in November and December 2022.³¹⁶

1 Oromos use the Afaan Oromo abbreviation of the group ABO (Adda Bilisummaa Oromoo) while others identify the group as Shane.

2 Charles Kombe, 'Peace Talks Between Ethiopian Government, OLA Continue in Tanzania,' Voice of America, 27 April 2023

At the end of April 2023, Africa Intelligence wrote an in-depth article on preliminary talks between the OLA and Ethiopian federal government, commenting that:

One of the Oromo Liberation Army's main preconditions for opening discussions with the federal government was that a non-Ethiopian third-party mediator be involved, and that demand has now been met. On Tuesday under the good offices of Kenya and with the logistical support of Norway, representatives of the armed Oromo movement attended a preliminary dialogue session with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's envoys on the Tanzanian island of Zanzibar.

The main architect of these exchanges, which are due to last a month, is Kenyan ambassador Mohamed Ali Guyo. Since the end of March, he has been the head of the task force for the Red Sea and the Gulf of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

On the Ethiopian side, the delegation includes Abiy's security adviser Redwan Hussein, Justice Minister Gedion Timothewos, the head of military intelligence General Demesew Amenu, and a representative of the Oromia Security and Administration Bureau. The OLA delegation is made up of six Oromos, all from the diaspora, including Mohamed Hassan, a historian at Georgia State University, Taha Abdi, a Minneapolis-based healthcare practitioner, and Hanover-based pastor Banti Ujulu Tesso.

These talks will likely be focused on preconditions for later substantive discussions. But there was friction even before two sides sat down together, with the rebels taking exception to Abiy's statement pointedly omitting any reference to the Oromo Liberation Army and instead using the pejorative term "Oneg Shene".

The armed conflict between government forces and the OLA that broke out in 2018 (AI, 03/10/22) has been matched by a war of words. Abiy, who regularly refers to the Oromo rebel movement as "disorganised", has so far refused to give it the recognition it seeks. This disregard was especially evident

³¹⁵ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), April 2023

³¹⁶ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO April 2023 Monthly: Volatility in Amhara Region While the Rest of the Country Stabilizes](#), 6 May 2023

last November, when Addis Ababa signed a peace accord with the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), with which the OLA forged an alliance in 2021. The Ethiopian central government has repeatedly justified the difference in treatment between the two groups, accusing the OLA of not having clear political demands.

In January, the OLA responded by publishing a 14-page manifesto setting out its demands for political self-determination, economic sovereignty and protecting Oromo social and cultural rights from the hegemony of the Ethiopian state. In the text, OLA leader Kumsa Diriba, better known by his nom de guerre Jaal Marro, denies having perpetrated ethnic attacks and calls for the implementation of inclusive measures, some of which could be discussed in Arusha.

Due to a lack of trust, internal mediation attempts have so far failed. On 16 February, the Oromia Regional State president, Shimelis Abdisa, called on the OLA to participate in peace talks. In parallel to this call, which was supported by the ruling Prosperity Party (PP), a regional committee was set up to monitor the issue.

This committee includes members of the PP party in Oromia, members of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF, of which the OLA is an outlawed splinter group), the Abba Gada council, and religious leaders. But the OLA accused the Abba Gada, who are elders in the Oromo culture, of being hand-picked by the government.

In the absence of tangible progress, parliamentarians took up the issue earlier this year. Questioned in the House of Representatives at the end of March, the prime minister once again justified himself by criticising the OLA for its lack of unity.³¹⁷

The International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in May 2023:

Peace talks between govt and Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) that began 25 April in Tanzania ended 3 May without agreement as sides failed to reach consensus on key political issues: OLA demanded greater political role in Oromia region, proposing power-sharing arrangement via transitional administration until next election; govt rejected proposition, which would threaten power of Oromo ruling elites, instead insisting on rebels' disarmament. OLA 17 May accused govt of launching "all-out offensive" after talks concluded, with fighting reported in East and West Shewa Zones (centre), Horo Guduru, East and West Wollega Zones (west), and parts of southern Oromia.³¹⁸

Ethiopia Insight wrote in May 2023 on incompatible demands between the two sides:

Though both sides said the first round of negotiations were positive, the government wasn't willing to accede to OLA's demand for a transitional administration in Oromia. OLA leaders say forming a transitional government is necessary to ensure fair elections and Oromo self-determination.

Given the fragility of his coalition, Abiy may consider a transitional government risky, as Oromia is a key constituency and power-sharing would weaken the regional hold of his Prosperity Party there.

Conversely, OLA will not be keen to accept the continued presence of the 170 Prosperity Party members from Oromia in the federal parliament as this would leave the ruling party in control of its fate. [...]

Another key sticking point, OLA leaders reject government calls for its disarmament before a political agreement is reached.

³¹⁷ Africa Intelligence, [OLA and Addis open preliminary talks in climate of mistrust](#), 27 March 2023

³¹⁸ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), May 2023

The Oromo analyst *Ethiopia Insight* interviewed worries that the parties are too far apart. “The government is so adamant on sticking to its position, and OLA is not ready for immediate disarmament,” he said.³¹⁹

The May 2023 monthly update from the EPO reported that:

A second round of peace talks, should it occur, is likely to take place in a difficult political environment in Ethiopia. Questions over the country’s constitution, the role of ethnicity, and the future of ethno-federalism are all points of contention between the OLF-Shane and the federal government; the latter of which is struggling to redefine its own relationship with ethno-federalism. The OLA released a political manifesto in January 2023 clarifying that the group remained dedicated to the Oromo people’s “self-determination,” Oromia’s “economic sovereignty,” and the “socio-cultural rights” of the Oromo people.¹⁰ While not completely incompatible with the current government, changes to the country’s constitution that reduce or eliminate ethno-federalism will bring the political agendas of the warring parties further apart.

Most concerning is that neither side views the other as a credible negotiation partner due to historical interactions that have led to poorly executed disarmament processes and a general lack of trust that the other will act on agreed decisions.¹¹ Ill-treatment and continued illegal detentions of OLF leaders cause many OLF-Shane (OLA) members to suspect that the government will not hold up its end of the bargain should a disarmament agreement be reached.¹² On the other side, Ethiopian government officials have expressed reluctance to negotiate with the OLF-Shane based on the lack of a singular representative political or military command structure.¹³ Despite some willingness from the regional government, conditions for traditional peacebuilding options or a negotiated settlement have changed little over the past year [...].

External partners have been involved in the peace process, working both at the top level with representatives in Tanzania and with local groups. A two-day conference, supported by the United States Agency for International Development Energy Security Project and held in Ambo city on 12 and 13 May, brought together traditional leaders and university professors, as well as mid-level government officials in an effort to promote peaceful dialogue between members of Oromia’s civil society.¹⁴ While certainly a positive step, OLF-Shane representatives were not involved, and outcomes did not go beyond the dialogue objectives of the conference. [...]

Neither government nor OLF-Shane representatives have ruled out the possibility of a second round of peace talks, despite an increase in violence over the past month. Both sides remain verbally committed to a ‘peaceful’ solution but have continued attacking one another. Importantly, neither side appears to be able to gain control over the security situation in parts of Oromia region, exposing civilian populations to opportunistic crime and economic hardship, heightening the cost of the conflict. OLF-Shane’s operations in new areas of East Shewa zone could indicate that the group is further expanding in Oromia region, or it could be an attempt to pressure the government into additional peace talks.³²⁰

10 OLF-OLA, ‘A Brief Political Manifesto: From Armed Struggle to the Prospect of Peace,’ 23 January 2023

11 Dean G. Pruitt, ‘Whither Ripeness Theory?,’ Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University

³¹⁹ Ethiopia Insight, [‘Oromia peace prospects dimmed by renewed fighting,’](#) 24 May 2023

³²⁰ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [‘EPO May 2023 Monthly: Violence Returns to Oromia Despite Attempted Peace Talks,’](#) 22 June 2023

12 [Addis Standard, 'News: OLF warns transgression of international conventions after senior officials go missing from police custody,' 11 May 2023](#)

13 [Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation, 'What challenges did the Ethiopian National Consultative Commission face? Etv | Ethiopia | News,' 29 November 2022](#)

14 [Addis Standard, 'News: Communities urge continuous engagement between government, Oromo Liberation Army to end war in Oromia,' 13 May 2023](#)

AP News reported in November 2023 on the latest peace talks between Ethiopia's government and the OLF, writing that:

The latest round of peace talks between Ethiopia's federal government and a militant group waging a long-running conflict in the country's Oromia region have broken up in Tanzania without an agreement, both sides said Tuesday.

The Oromo Liberation Army says it is fighting for greater determination for the Oromo, Ethiopia's largest ethnic group, who have long claimed being marginalized. [...]

A previous round of talks between the OLA and Ethiopian officials in Tanzania earlier this year also failed. Redwan Hussein, the prime minister's national security advisor, blamed the "intransigence" of the OLA for the latest failure.

"The obstructive approach and unrealistic demands of the other party are the principal reasons why these talks could not succeed," Redwan wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

An OLA statement accused Ethiopia's government of trying to co-opt its leadership "rather than beginning to address fundamental problems that underlie the country's seemingly insurmountable security and political challenges."³²¹

Addis Standard also reported on the failure of peace talks on 21 November 2023:

The federal government made the official announcement late tonight that the talks that were taking place in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania ended without agreement. It came after days of on and off reports of stalemate over key substantive issues in the peace talks, which kicked off in off with senior military officials of the two sides.

"This round of talk has been held in Dar es Salaam Tanzania. The FDRE Government, throughout these talks has primarily been motivated by its desire to silence the guns and to put an end to the horrific harm and destruction," Redwan Hussein, national security adviser to prime minister Abiy Ahmed, who has been part of the talks representing the government, posted on X.

According to well placed diplomatic sources who spoke to *Addis Standard* today, the two sides failed to pass a stalemate that intensified since yesterday "over matters of significance."

The OLF side tabled proposals to negotiate "a substantial shift in governance", including demands for arrangements of "inclusive governance and embrace of all political parties in Oromia", whereas the government's side focused on arrangements with OLA alone, similar in substance to the Pretoria Cessation of Hostilities Agreement signed between the government and the TPLF in November last year, the sources further said.

But according to Redwan the "talks have come to an end without an agreement" due to "the intransigence of the other party."

³²¹ AP News, [Latest peace talks between Ethiopia's government and Oromo militants break up without an agreement](#), 21 November 2023

The OLA in its part confirmed that the talks have collapsed and blamed “the Ethiopian government was only interested in co-optation of the leadership of the OLA rather than beginning to address the fundamental problems that underlie the country’s seemingly insurmountable security and political challenges.”

In a statement it just released, the group further said “the OLF-OLA involved its highest leadership in this round of the talks. To pave the path for addressing the main demands of our people, the OLF-OLA tabled a series of inclusive proposals from Zanzibar to Dares Salaam to negotiate a space for a meaningful change in the governance of the Oromia region.”

“A historical opportunity to take a leap in the right direction has been lost because of Ethiopian government [failure] to course correct,” the statement said.

he two sides have been engaged in talks Since 07 November 2023, with General Getachew Gudina, Head of Military Intelligence of the federal defense forces, and his deputy, Major General Demis Amenu representing the government, while Kumsa Diriba a.k.a Jaal Marroo, OLA Commander and Gemechu Regassa a.k.a Jaal Gemechu Aboye, OLA deputy commander and Southern Command chief as well as Ejersu Urgessa, and Jiregna Gudata represented OLA.

Redwan Hussein and Gedion Timothewos (PhD), minister of Justice, joined the talks following “positive progress” that led both parties to transition into addressing substantive issues. [...]

The talks were preceded by a series of meetings over the previous weeks between the federal and Oromia regional state government senior officials on the one hand, and two members representing the OLA who were engaged in renewed “political dialogue.”

The U.S through a delegation led by Ambassador Mike Hammer, Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, the Executive Secretary of Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and senior diplomats representing the governments of Kenya and Norway have played a key role in mediating and facilitating the second round talks which ended without an agreement.³²²

In December 2023, the Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA) published an open letter along with twenty-two other Oromo organisations to the Ethiopian government calling to resume the stalled peace talks, which included:

We welcomed the news that a second round of talks in Dar es Salaam between GoE and the OLA after the first round of engagement ended without agreement last May. We were encouraged by reports that high-level military officers of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) and the OLA high-command were in attendance because their participation signaled that a peace deal was in the offing.

Needless to state that the second round of talks, once again, failed to produce an agreement despite the support of regional and international facilitators. In statements issued after the talks collapsed, both sides accused each other for the unsuccessful talks in Dar es Salaam. The OLA stated that the government was interested only in co-opting OLA leaders rather than addressing the fundamental problems that underlie the country’s security and political challenges, while the government’s side cited the OLA’s intransigence, obstruction and “unrealistic demands” as causes for the failure to reach a deal.

The stated issues contradict media reports in the early phase of the talks that the discussions were “going very well” and that “both the sides are optimistic of a deal.” This sentiment is reflected in the OLA statement that it had “tabled a series of inclusive proposals” and the GoE official’s account that the

³²² Addis Standard, [Updated: Gov’t, OLA second round talks in Tanzania end without agreement, again](#), 21 November 2023

government has tried to be as flexible and accommodating as possible on both substantive and procedural matters.³²³

With regards to the OLA insurgency, a Brookings commentary on domestic challenges facing Ethiopia in January 2024 stated:

As with the Amhara and Tigrayans, Abiy turned to the military for counterinsurgency. But in 2023, he also approved two rounds of talks in Tanzania with the OLA. Encouraged by the sub-regional Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the United States, Norway, and others, the talks focused on the age-old Ethiopian question of federal powers vs. regional autonomy and OLA participation in federal institutions. The November round ended amid mutual recriminations. Addis Ababa seemed particularly thin-skinned to criticism, given the arrest of Abiy's state minister for peace after the latter blamed the government for the talks' failure.³²⁴

A viewpoint article in The Reporter in February 2024 discussed the reasons for the failure of the peace talks in 2018 and 2023 as such:

No signed document: A clear roadmap is central to post-conflict recovery and a pillar of any peace agreement. [...]

Competing factions within the Oromo Liberation Front: The emergence of new factions has historically been the party's weak point. Less than eight months after returning to Ethiopia, one Oromo Liberation Front faction and the army wing released a statement stating that the Oromo Liberation Army had separated from the front.

Over time, the Oromo Liberation Front has splintered into at least eight different groups. These include the Oromo Liberation Army, the Oromo Liberation Front, a secret grouping known as Abba Torbe and Oromo Democratic Front, which denounces the use of violence.

The extent to which the Oromo Liberation Front controls its armed wing is unclear. According to the Life and Peace Institute, an international peacebuilding lobby, it is difficult for the government to identify OLF combatants...there is no clear definition between members, fighters and supporters.

The divisions within the Oromo political elite and the history of competition among the Oromo opposition forces point to the failed peace effort.

Lack of political goodwill: It appears that although the moment might have appeared ripe for a peace agreement in 2018, neither party was ready for such an agreement. The government tried to exercise strong control from the center and was reluctant to manage conflict peacefully with the Oromo Liberation Front.

The peace agreement was short-lived largely due to the absence of open and genuine commitments by both sides. The absence of a democratic ethos on both sides also weakened the agreement.

Unclear demands: The Oromo Liberation Front's political options have not been clear and consistent. It's not clear at any given time whether their demand is substantial autonomy for the Oromo people within an Ethiopian federation or an independent sovereign Oromo state. The strategy swings wildly between a political solution and an armed struggle.

³²³ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [An Open Letter to Call upon the Government of Ethiopia and the Oromo Liberation Army and the Mediators to Resume the Stalled Peace Talks with Resolve and Recommitment](#), 4 December 2023

³²⁴ Brookings, [Ethiopia's New Year's ledger: A controversial new port and domestic challenges](#), 16 January 2024

Difficult environment to pursue peace

Following the 2018 Asmara peace agreement, the internal political intricacies of Ethiopia drastically deteriorated. The democratic reform and euphoria brought by Abiy Ahmed, which included him winning the 2019 Nobel peace prize, soon faded.

One of the factors that made Ethiopia less stable after the peace agreement was the postponement of elections, partly due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The government's decision to delay the election was considered a power grab and an unconstitutional term extension. It was rejected by most opposition parties and it led to the war with the Tigray regional government.

Ethiopia has since descended into civil war with ethnically motivated killings, religious conflict and displacement throughout the country. These constraints weaken the Ethiopian government's ability to implement any peace agreement. It's the setting in which a new round of peace talks in Tanzania was also doomed to fail.³²⁵

The EPO's monthly update for April 2024 wrote that:

The government has hinged a lot on the upcoming national dialogue, designed to bring the country's populations back into some common political understanding, but the process has been slow, and critical stakeholders, like the Oromo Liberation Front party, may not participate, as they claim the process is dominated and handcrafted by the government.¹⁰³²⁶

10 Sisay Sahilu, 'The historical responsibility of the National Dialogue Commission and the concerns behind its implementation, The Reporter, 5 May 2024 Wazema Radio, 'Attempts to reconcile the 13 political parties that defected from the national dialogue platform have so far failed,' 27 March 2023; Seyum Getu, Shewaye Legesse, and Azeb Tadesse, 'The opinion of politicians on the proposed national dialogue,' DW Amharic, 10 February 2022.

With regards to national dialogue for peace, for its May 2024 monthly update, EPO reported again that:

Armed groups, including Fano militias and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) — referred to by the government as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane — have been invited to participate but have refused based on accusations that the government unfairly owns the process.² Many in Ethiopia and in communities abroad have denounced the upcoming dialogue as little more than a government charade designed to placate domestic unrest and please international backers.³³²⁷

2 VOA Amharic, 'The Oromo Liberation Army and the Amhara Fano said, "We have not been called for peace,"' 8 May 2024

3 Amhara Association of America, 'Joint statement by international Amhara civic organizations on the sham national dialogue process undertaken by the Abiy regime in Ethiopia,' 30 April 2024

f. Situation in the Oromia Special Zone in Amhara region

For an overview of the treatment of Amhara civilians in this region, see ARC's recent [Query Response: Situation in the Amhara region](#) (April 2024).

³²⁵ The Reporter, [Reasons why Ethiopia-Oromo rebels peace pacts have failed](#), 24 February 2024

³²⁶ EPO, [EPO Monthly Update | May 2024 - Ethiopia's national dialogue faces high expectations and criticism](#), 14 June 2024

³²⁷ The Reporter, [Reasons why Ethiopia-Oromo rebels peace pacts have failed](#), 24 February 2024

By way of background, the EPO's summary page on the Oromia special zone and North Shewa zone, last updated in September 2023, writes:

Oromia special zone and North Shewa zone are neighboring zones in Amhara region. The Oromia special zone in Amhara was founded as a response to pressure from the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which had been demanding autonomy for the Oromo-speaking population during the early transition period from 1991 to 1992.¹ Due to its status as a special zone, political leaders in Oromia special zone in Amhara region have exercised considerable autonomy since its creation in 1995. Under special zone provisions in Ethiopian law, ethnic Oromo inhabitants administer the zone despite falling within Amhara region boundaries – often placing them in direct contestation with Amhara regional authorities.² As an important location along the A2 highway, the area is subject to historical claims by the Amhara, Oromo, and Afar ethnic groups. These competing claims over the territory and its administration by ethnic Oromos, under Amhara region, have been drivers of regular conflict. Conflict between ethnic Oromo and Afar pastoralists over grazing land is also frequent.

Since 2018, several rounds of violence have erupted in the area, resulting in the destruction of infrastructure, displacement of civilians, and loss of life [...]. With the recent rise in ethno-nationalism and opening of political space after the removal of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) as leader of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), clashes have occurred between some Oromo ethnic militias and Amhara special forces responsible for security in areas surrounding the zone. This fighting has coincided with dangerous divisions between the Oromo and Amhara wings of the ruling Prosperity Party (PP). Pushed by local ethno-nationalist movements, Amhara and Oromo political entities have accused each other of instigating the conflict.

Conflict in the area worsened in 2021 and 2022 due to the expanding ethnic friction that raised tensions countrywide, an incursion by the TPLF, and the alignment of local ethnic Oromo militias with OLF-Shane militants. [...]

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.

Recent Developments

- 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.
- 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, 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.
- 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.
- 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.³²⁸

1 Sarah Vaughan, 'Ethnicity and Power in Ethiopia,' University of Edinburgh Doctoral Thesis, July 2003, p.240

2 Angela Raven-Robert, 'Special zones and special histories: conflict and collaboration in Northern Shewa,' Ethiopia Insight, 21 May 2021

The weekly update for 25 June to 1 July 2022 from the EPO wrote that "In Amhara region, on 29 June, Amhara regional special forces, the regional state police, and local militiamen clashed with an unidentified armed group near Bati town in Oromia special zone. At least three government soldiers were reported killed".³²⁹

In July 2022, OLLAA wrote that:

According to reports from [OMN](#) and [Ogaadenia media](#), on July 10, 2022, Amhara militias (*fano*) and other Amhara militants launched an attack against civilians in Bate village, Jile Dhumuga district, in the Wollo Oromia Special zone of the Amhara region. Following this attack, the OLA issued a [statement](#) in which they claimed that Amhara militias and members of the Amhara Regional Special Police were behind this recent attack on civilians, and also reported that regional security forces had been denying wounded civilians access to medical treatment.

OLLAA's staff has received a credible report from a source on the ground regarding the attack on civilians in the Wollo Oromia Special zone. According to our source, who is a resident of the area, the conflict began on July 10th when residents of the North Shewa zone crossed over to Jile Dhumuga and attempted to steal herds of cattle from local farmers. At around 4pm, members of the Amhara special forces, Fano, and other Amhara militias began shooting individuals and shelling the homes of farmers in the area. Our source reported that at least 14 civilians died in this attack and 27 were injured during this attack, which lasted through July 11th.³³⁰

The International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update a few days later "In Amhara region, clashes 10-12 July erupted between armed militia, possibly OLA, and govt forces at border of North Shewa and Oromia Special Zones; at least 25 killed".³³¹

EPO confirmed this in its weekly update for 9 to 15 July 2022:

[...] armed clashes erupted again at the border of North Shewa and Oromia special zones in Amhara region. From 10 to 12 July, government forces and suspected OLF-Shane militants clashed in Berha Silase, Arso Amboa (Zembo), and Wayena kebeles near Ataye town in Eferatana Gidem woreda in North Shewa, and Bete kebele in Jilye Tumuga woreda in Oromia special zone. Regional special forces and federal forces

³²⁸ EPO, [Oromia Special Zone and North Shewa Zone Conflict](#), last updated 29 September 2023 [accessed 30 June 2024]

³²⁹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 25 June – 1 July 2022](#), 6 July 2022

³³⁰ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Attack Against Civilians Reported in Jile Dhumuga District, Wollo Oromia Special Zone](#), 12 July 2022

³³¹ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), July 2022

entered the area to control the armed clashes. At least six people and 19 members of security forces were reportedly killed. Additionally, on 14 July, Fano and Amhara ethnic militias reportedly clashed with Oromo ethnic militiamen in Bate Ardaga kebele in Jilye Tumuga woreda. An unidentified number of people were forced to flee the affected areas due to these clashes. To bring stability to the area, Jilye Tumuga woreda authorities reinstated a night curfew and other restrictions on 11 July (Jilye Tumuga Woreda Administration Communication, 11 July 2022).

The cause of the renewed fighting is disputed among residents of the area. Residents in North Shewa zone accuse OLF-Shane gunmen of being involved, and of initiating the clashes. In contrast, residents of Oromia special zone blame government forces who allegedly attempted to take farmers' cattle using force (VOA Amharic, 13 July 2022). Other reports indicate that the fighting erupted after cattle were released into farmlands. One report stated that the armed clashes were initiated after six armed people wearing government security forces' uniforms shot and killed a farmer working in the field (Ethiopian Reporter, 13 July 2022).

Clashes in this area are frequent due to territorial and administrative disputes. Due to its status as a special zone, political leaders in Oromia special zone of Amhara region have exercised a great deal of autonomy since its creation in 1995. Under Ethiopian law, despite falling under Amhara region's boundaries, the zone is administered with special provisions for its ethnic Oromo inhabitants, which often place them in direct contestation with Amhara regional authorities. Ethnic Oromos, many of whom are pastoralists, often come into conflict over water and pasture resources with ethnic Amhara and Afar residents in the area. The alleged involvement of the OLF-Shane also complicates the matter. Previous accusations that the group was operating in the area were denied by both the Oromia regional government and the group's spokesperson (BBC Amharic, 24 March 2021). This claim was later reversed as TPLF forces advanced southward into Oromia special zone, when a sudden and short-lived "joint operation" was declared (Reuters, 1 November 2021). A substantial link between the Oromo armed groups operating in this area and the commanders of the OLF-Shane are doubtful given previous denials and geographic restrictions of movement. While some militant links could exist, it is more likely that these Oromo groups self-identify with the OLF-Shane and its political goals of Oromo autonomy and control of historic land [...].³³²

Addis Standard reported in January 2023 on violence in the Oromo special zone, giving the following details:

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 Efiratana Gidim district.

In belated statement, released today, the Amhara Regional state government said the violence flared up following an attack perpetrated against members of Amhara special forces and federal police forces stationed in Jawa kebele of Efiratana Gidim district of North Shewa zone on Sunday 21 January at around 3PM by "anti-peace forces" operating in the area. The regional government said that the perpetrators,

³³² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), EPO Weekly: 9-15 July 2022, 20 July 2022

referred throughout the statement as “anti-peace forces”, also carried out attacks against civilians in both North Shewa and Oromo special zones.

But residents of Senbete town, one of the hardest hit places located in Jille Dhumuga district of the Oromo special zone, said local armed forces who are carrying heavy weapons carried out the attacks against civilian populations starting Saturday 20 January.

“They carry DShk [heavy Russian weapon] with which they burnt farmers’ houses and properties in it. They indiscriminately kill civilian. They are carrying out these activities in almost all villages and towns in the district [Jille Dhumuga],” a resident who asked to be anonymous told *Addis Standard*.

The resident said the attacks which started on Saturday has continued until Tuesday leaving many dead and forcing locals to flee their homes. [...]

He said the attackers are militants of armed group operating in Amhara Region known as *Fano*. Another resident however said the attackers carry heavy weapons that belong to the regional special force adding that they also travel on vehicles owned by the regional government. [...]

In contradiction to the residents account, as well as several other reports on local media alleging the involvement of members of the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) however, the statement by the Amhara regional state government blamed “anti-peace forces” without detailing who these forces are, adding that both civilians and members of the regional special forces were killed during the attacks. It also admitted that “there were continued efforts by these anti-peace forces to make the violence look like identity based,” violence.³³³

The weekly update for 21 to 27 January 2023 from the EPO also described an escalation of violence:

Violence erupted at the border of North Shewa and Oromia special zones in Amhara region last week, resulting in days of violence and at least 98 reported fatalities. According to a local administrator in Oromia special zone, on 20 January, Amhara regional special forces shot and killed seven ethnic Oromo youths in Muti Fata village (identified as Jawaab by some sources), near Senbete in Jille Timuga woreda, following a disagreement and accusation that they were connected with the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane.² The next day, Oromo gunmen suspected to have links with the OLF-Shane attacked Jewaha Negeso kebele in Eferatana Gidem woreda, North Shewa zone. Clashes between the group and state security forces and their affiliated forces lasted for two days and reportedly resulted in the killings of at least 28 members of Amhara regional special forces and six members of the federal police.³ On 23 January, the conflict expanded to neighboring areas. In Oromia special zone, armed clashes between armed factions were recorded in Senebet, Majete, Chire, Chefa Robit, and around Kemise town, while in North Shewa zone, armed clashes were recorded in Ataye and Shewa Robit towns and their surrounding areas, as well as Balchit, Mesino Hagere Mariam kebele, Chekchek Kebele, Jewaha Negeso kebele, and Kewet (*see map below*). The fighting continued until 25 January. According to the administrator of Jille Timuga woreda, 98 civilians were killed, and 155 people were injured in Oromia special zone alone. Additionally, around 1,930 houses were damaged due to violence in the area last week.⁴

[...] The full picture of the most recent round of violence at the border of North Shewa and Oromia special zones in Amhara remains incomplete due to reporting delays, but initial estimates indicate that hundreds of thousands of civilians were forced to flee their homes.¹¹ The main road connecting Addis Ababa to

³³³ 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

Dessie (A2 highway) was closed for days. Reports indicate that the violence has since subsided and the area is currently calm.³³⁴

2 [BBC Afaan Oromo, 24 January 2023](#)

3 [Ethiopian Reporter, 25 January 2023](#)

4 [DW Amharic, 28 January 2023](#) [...]

11 [VOA Amharic, 30 January 2023](#)

12 [VOA Amharic, 30 January 2023](#)

The same month, the OLLAA wrote that:

It has been reported that on January 20, 2023, Amhara regional forces, alongside members of the Amhara militia group known as *Fano*, opened fire on Oromo civilians located in Jille Dhumuga, in the Wollo Oromia Special zone of the Amhara region, killing at least 7 civilians. Since that time, reports have been circulating on social media regarding continued violence in the area, including one video showing a home being burned down while the individuals said, “Burn Oromos’ property!”, and a graphic photograph showing the bodies of Oromo civilians who had reportedly been killed in the zone. On January 24, 2023, the Oromo Liberation Front issued a statement on the recent attacks in Jille Dhumuga district, which claimed that the Amhara regional government had coordinated and led the attacks with the support of Fano. They also claimed that at least 63 civilians had been killed as a result of the attacks and that thousands of civilians were forced to flee their homes. Finally, they reported that 16 Oromo civilians had been extrajudicially killed when they were traveling from Finfine to Wollo after security forces saw their ID cards and identified them as Oromos.³³⁵

In June 2023, the OLLAA also released a report on the treatment of Wollo Oromo in the special zone in the Amhara in January 2023, commenting that:

January 2023 was one of the most tragic times for Wollo community as the Amhara special forces and Fanno jointly attacked the zone. [...]

OLA released a 76-name list of the civilian victims who were killed in that same attack.²⁹ Reuters reported the killing of 18 members of Oromo ethnic groups at one location.³⁰ A document informally obtained from government officials confirms the deaths of 189 due to several attacks launched since 2022. According to the document, 29 people were from Artuma Fursi, 16 from Chafa Robit, 125 from Jile Dhumuga, and 19 from Sanbate town. The Amharic version of the document is annexed to this report. Another incident took place in April 2023, when Amhara special forces and Fanno militias attacked the Wollo community in protest of the federal government's plan to dismantle regional special forces and to include them in the National Defense Forces (ENDF). It was during this time that Fanno publicly mutilated a farmer by the name of Amme Aliyi. His mutilated body was taken by Fanno members to Shewa Robit to be displayed as a trophy.³¹ As seen in a video from Oromia Media Network, several members of Fanno were chanting about how Fanno killed what they call Oneg-Shane (an offensive name given by the Ethiopian government to OLA).³² [...]

³³⁴ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 21 – 27 January 2023](#), 31 January 2023

³³⁵ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Attack on Civilians in Wollo Oromia Special Zone](#), 24 January 2023

According to the document OLLAA obtained from government officials, over 63,782 people were displaced from their homes in Jile Dhumuga district during the 21-26 January 2023 coordinated attack by Amahara Special Forces and Fanno militias. [...] Many houses were burned to the ground, and therefore, these internally displaced persons (IDPs) were left with nothing to return to.³³⁶

29 OLF- OLA report see (18 mentioned above) <https://www.olf-olahq.org/post/ethnic-cleansing-underway-in-wollo-against-oromo-civilians>

30 Reuters news report (see 21 mentioned above) <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/eighteen-killed-clashes-between-ethiopias-oromo-amhara-groups-2021-04-19>.

31 OLLAA Humans of Oromia report April 25 2023, available at: <https://ollaa.org/amme-aliyi-killed-in-wollo/>

32 OMN news report available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1Q4CJbV_aU.

Addis Standard commented on 7 February 2023 on a confrontation in the Oromia special zone:

The Addis Abeba Police said that “19 police leaders and officers sustained serious and light injuries” during a confrontation on Monday with a group of people who gathered at St. Lideta of the Orthodox Church, located in Philidoro, a location bordering Addis Abeba city and Oromia Regional State Special Zone Surrounding Finnfine. [...]

According to the statement from Addis Abeba Police issued last night, in the morning of Monday 06 February, “illegal acts of disrupting peaceful activities” were observed in Addis Abeba and Oromia Special Zone border area commonly known as Philidoro.

Those gathered at the Church of St. Lideta in the Oromia Special Zone who came to the area from Addis Abeba “tried to create a security problem by blocking the road with rocks”. They group was demanding the release of people detained in the Oromia region. “The police urged them to open the blocked road, but they refused,” the statement claimed.

“In addition to the police, religious leaders of the church and other youths explained that no one was arrested and help the security forces to open the road; although they tried their best with advises and reprimands, the group who gathered did not want to move from the place and to open the road,” the statement further said of the confrontation.

It was during this confrontation that the Police said 19 police leaders and members sustained serious and light injuries by stones thrown by those “who were openly or covertly inciting and participating in the conflict.”³³⁷

Insecurity Insight wrote 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”.³³⁸

The weekly update for 11 to 17 February 2023 from the EPO stated that “In Amhara region, Amhara regional special forces and Amhara ethnic militia burned several civilian houses, health centers, and

³³⁶ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [*The Endangered Enclave: Systematic Ethnic Cleansing of Wollo Oromo in Amhara Regional State of Ethiopia*](#), 22 June 2023, pp. 2, 10-13

³³⁷ Addis Standard, [*News: 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”*](#), 7 February 2023

³³⁸ Insecurity Insight, [*Attacks on Health Care Bi-Monthly News Brief: 08-21 February 2023*](#), 7 March 2023

mosques in Wesen Kurkur kebele in Jilye Tumuga woreda, Oromia special zone. Several residents were forced to flee their homes”.³³⁹

In March 2023, the Protection Cluster and UNHCR’s commented that: “The DRMO [Disaster Risk Management Office] in Debre Behan reported 303,110 new IDPs while in Kemisse (Oromo special zone), local authorities shared a total of 164,269 individuals who have been displaced due to armed clashes and violence in the Oromo Special zone and surroundings. Reportedly, the humanitarian situation is dire as no assistance is provided so far”.³⁴⁰

In April 2023, the OLLAA wrote that “Recent reporting by OMN indicates that Amhara regional forces launched an attack on residents of Jilee Dhumuga district, in the Wollo Oromia Special zone on April 10, leading to the death of five Oromo civilians”.³⁴¹

For the week of 15 to 21 April 2023, EPO reported that “On 17 April, Amhara ethnic militiamen carried out an attack on Oromo civilians in Bate Ardaga kebele in Jilye Tumuga woreda in Oromia special zone, Amhara region. The attack resulted in the deaths of at least 10 people, as well as the burning of houses and looting of cattle”.³⁴²

It reported again the following week that on 26 May, “government forces – assumed to be ENDF and Amhara regional state police forces – clashed with the OLF-Shane in Melka Didu kebele, Dewa Harewa woreda in Oromia special zone. The regional police commission claimed to have killed one member of the OLF-Shane, wounded another, and captured two OLF-Shane commanders”.³⁴³

The Peace Research Facility of the RVI noted in November 2023 that “Ethnic and religious aspirations have played a significant role in driving tensions and conflicts, as different groups such as the [...] Oromo living in Oromo Special Zone of the Amhara region seek recognition, representation, and autonomy”.³⁴⁴ It added that “Balancing popular consent, language, administrative feasibility, and historical factors in the implementation of ethnic federalism has been a challenge, which has contributed to tensions and conflicts, such as in the [...] Oromo Special Zone areas”.³⁴⁵

It further wrote that:

³³⁹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 11 – 17 February 2023](#), 21 February 2023

³⁴⁰ Protection Cluster and UNHCR, [Situation Update on Northern Ethiopia Emergency](#), 1 March 2023

³⁴¹ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [OLLAA Alarmed by Disturbing Rhetoric From Amhara Community](#), 12 April 2023

³⁴² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 15 – 21 April 2023](#), 26 April 2023

³⁴³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 20-26 May 2023](#), 1 June 2023

³⁴⁴ Peace Research Facility and Rift Valley Institute (RVI), [Conflict Trend Analysis: Amhara region](#), November 2023, p. 2

³⁴⁵ Peace Research Facility and Rift Valley Institute (RVI), [Conflict Trend Analysis: Amhara region](#), November 2023, p. 4

The Oromo community in the Amhara region has been exercising self-rule in the Oromo Special Zone since the early 1990s. Until recently, interactions between the Oromo and Amhara in the special zone and the nearby Amhara zones have been peaceful. The conflict has become more prevalent in the past few years, with the Oromos and Amharas perceiving increasing threats from each other. The Amhara wanted to protect their minorities within the Oromia zone and to control the threat of Oromo nationalism in their region, whereas the Oromo sensed a growing incursion of the Amhara into their territory.³⁴⁶

On 7 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”.³⁴⁷ Reportedly the clashes were “over farmland in Mesno town in the Oromiya Special Zone, which has a majority Oromo population”.³⁴⁸

The same day, Addis Standard also reported that:

More than 18 people were killed during recent clashes between the Fano militia and armed residents of Artuma Fursi district in the Oromo Special Zone of the Amhara region, residents told *Addis Standard*.

More than 30 others were wounded in the day-long fighting on Sunday, 05 November 2023, a resident said, adding that ten of them with serious injuries were sent to Desse referral hospital. The resident, who asked not to be named, said the militiamen came from Majate town in Efrata and Gidim district of the neighboring North Shoa zone in the region.

“There was heavy fighting in three villages of the district [Artuma Fursi] on Sunday since the morning. Three days earlier [on 02 November] they [the Fano militiamen] came and killed our man. On Sunday, they attacked again and the people started to fight back. More than 18 people were killed,” the resident conveyed. [...]

Another resident from Chokorso village in the district, who also requested not to be named, corroborated to *Addis Standard* the accounts of the first resident, confirming the death of more than 18 people during the Sunday attack. Unknown number of the militiamen who crossed over from Majate were also killed, the informant said.

“They [the Fano] want revenge on our people, although their fight is with the government. They claim an Oromo government is fighting them, and they resent us [the Oromos] for that,” the resident noted, asserting that such attacks have been perpetrated more than ten times in the past.³⁴⁹

In February 2024, the OLLAA reported that it had uncovered that “eight civilians en route to Kemise were taken out of the bus and murdered by Amhara Fano militia in the Oromia Special Zone of the Amhara region. According to the *Addis Standard*, three women were returning to their families after working as maids in the Middle East, while another was a local teacher”.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁶ Peace Research Facility and Rift Valley Institute (RVI), [Conflict Trend Analysis: Amhara region](#), November 2023, pp. 13-14

³⁴⁷ Reuters, [Fighting in Ethiopia's Amhara region prompts fear for ancient churches](#), 7 November 2023

³⁴⁸ Reuters, [Fighting in Ethiopia's Amhara region prompts fear for ancient churches](#), 7 November 2023

³⁴⁹ Addis Standard, [News: Clashes between militiamen and armed residents left at least 18 killed in Oromo special zone, Amhara region](#), 7 November 2023

³⁵⁰ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Disturbing Video Reveals Ethiopian National Defense Force's Alleged Abuses of Minors-Urgent Call for International Attention](#), 27 February 2024

Addis Standard observed on 20 March 2024 that:

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” perpetrated 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.

A resident of the district’s Kolashi village, who requested anonymity, told Addis Standard that the first attack in the village on 09 March 2024 left one person dead, and two others injured.

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.

According to the resident, 27 people have been killed over a span of 10 days since 09 March across multiple villages, while 40 others survived injuries. Women, children, and elderly people are reported to be among the victims. [...]

A villager from Karra Abba Karcho, one of the villages affected by the attacks, told Addis Standard that several people including members of the same family have been killed in villages such as Kolashi, Nanoftu, Wesen Kurkur and Balchi.

The villager alleged that the attacks are aimed at displacing ethnic Oromo residents. “They threaten us to leave saying that the land belongs to the Amhara and it shouldn’t be called the Oromo special zone,” he said.³⁵¹

Similarly, according to the EPO’s weekly update for 26 March 2024:

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.³⁵²

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

IV. Human rights situation

³⁵¹ Addis Standard, [News: Several civilians killed in series of attacks in Oromo special zone, Amhara region](#), 20 March 2024

³⁵² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 26 May 2024](#), 27 May 2024

For an overview of the treatment of Amhara civilians in Oromia, see ARC's recent [Query Response: Situation in the Amhara region](#) (April 2024), 'V. Treatment of Amharas by state actors outside of the Amhara region'

a. Arbitrary arrest and detention

See also IV. Human rights situation, [h. Situation of journalists and human rights defenders](#) and [i. Situation of political opponents](#).

Sources do not always document the location of arbitrary arrests and detention of (perceived) Oromos as detailed by the following illustrative sources.

Human Rights Watch noted in July 2022 that "opposition politicians from the Oromo Liberation Front remain in detention despite multiple judicial orders instructing they be released on bail".³⁵³

Research in February 2023 by Landinfo on treatment of political opposition in Oromia stated that:

The arrests are taking place, as far as Landinfo has been able to establish, both of targeted persons with real or assumed links to the OLA, or more arbitrarily, through mass arrests of what the authorities perceive as a sympathetic local population in areas where the security forces are in active armed conflict with the OLA. According to Amnesty, there are many reasons why someone is seen as an OLF supporter, and therefore a potential OLA supporter and a threat to the authorities, and the threshold may seem low. According to Amnesty, in some cases it may be enough for a person to be present in an area where OLA is present, or for the authorities to fail to find a specific suspect and therefore resort to arbitrary detentions or mass detentions of the local population.³⁵⁴

The May 2023 monthly update from the EPO reported that:

Ill-treatment and continued illegal detentions of OLF leaders cause many OLF-Shane (OLA) members to suspect that the government will not hold up its end of the bargain should a disarmament agreement be reached.³⁵⁵

12 Addis Standard, 'News: OLF warns transgression of international conventions after senior officials go missing from police custody,' 11 May 2023

The September 2023 report from the ICHREE, focusing on events between November 2020 and November 2022, wrote that:

³⁵³ Human Right Watch, [Ethiopia's Other Conflict: Ethiopia's Tigray War Overshadows Ongoing Cycles of Violence in Oromia](#), 4 July 2022

³⁵⁴ Landinfo, [Report: Ethiopia, Armed conflict and political opposition in Oromia](#), 24 February 2023, p. 21

³⁵⁵ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO May 2023 Monthly: Violence Returns to Oromia Despite Attempted Peace Talks](#), 22 June 2023

The Commission further uncovered a pattern of arrest and detention of Oromo civilians, in particular men, accused of having links with the OLA. Detentions documented between November 2020 and February 2023 were perpetrated primarily by the federal or regional police, Oromia Special Forces and at times the ENDF and were accompanied by torture and ill-treatment. Violations are ongoing. Family members of suspected OLA fighters were also targeted for arrest and detention – including women who experienced sexual violence.³⁵⁶

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”.³⁵⁷ The same source further noted that:

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.³⁵⁸

The same source noted with regards to conditions of detention in general in Ethiopia that:

While acknowledging the steps taken by the State party to improve conditions in places of detention, such as the closure of substandard detention centres, the construction of additional detention facilities and the increased budget for the provision of essential services, the Committee remains concerned at reports indicating overcrowding in some prisons, particularly following the armed conflict, and poor material conditions of detention in places of deprivation of liberty, in particular insalubrity and inadequate hygiene, lack of ventilation, the poor quality and insufficient quantity of the food and water provided and limited recreational or educational activities to foster rehabilitation. Furthermore, the limited access to quality health care, including mental health care, in particular for pregnant women and women held in detention with their children, and the lack of trained and qualified prison staff, including medical staff, remain serious problems in the prison system. The Committee is also concerned at reports indicating the prevalence of violence in prisons, including violence perpetrated by prison staff against detainees and inter-prisoner violence and sexual abuse, and the practice of detaining pretrial detainees with convicted prisoners and children with adults (arts. 2, 11 and 16). [...]

³⁵⁶ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia](#), 14 September 2023, paragraph 41

³⁵⁷ UN Committee Against Torture, [Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Ethiopia](#), 7 June 2023, paragraph 12

³⁵⁸ UN Committee Against Torture, [Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Ethiopia](#), 7 June 2023, paragraph 12

The Committee is concerned about the reported high number of deaths, including violent deaths, occurring in places of detention. It regrets that the State party did not submit complete statistical information for the entire period under review. It also regrets the lack of information on the outcomes of the investigations carried out, on specific measures taken to prevent the recurrence of similar cases and on any cases in which compensation might have been awarded to the relatives of the deceased (arts. 2, 11, 12 and 16).³⁵⁹

In November 2023, the EHRC submitted a statement for the 77th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights on the human rights situation in Ethiopia. It wrote that "There has been an increase in the number of enforced disappearances and incommunicado detentions by state security forces, particularly in Addis Ababa city, Amhara and Oromia regional states".³⁶⁰

The June 2024 OHCHR report covering the situation in 2023 and incidents in 2024 thus far detailed that:

Arbitrary arrests and detention by Government forces continued in some regions throughout 2023, especially in the latter part of the year. Ninety-three incidents of mass detentions during which 5,411 individuals (including 101 women) were arbitrarily deprived of liberty, were recorded. Of these, 4,879 were arrested following the declaration of the SoE on 4 August 2023 and 1,132 were released by the end of 2023.

According to article 3 of the SoE proclamation, the SoE is applicable in all parts of Ethiopia where activities endangering the security of the country prevail.⁸ The arrested persons were often initially detained in police detention centers and later transferred to ENDF detention camps. Official detention centers for the SoE were established in four places in the Amhara region - in Central Gondar Zone, South Wollo Zone, North Shewa Zone and in Bahir Dar city, as well as the Awash 40 detention center in Afar region. Meanwhile, infighting between two factions of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in early 2023 led to the arrest of at least 130 persons between February and June 2023 in Addis Ababa, Oromia, and Amhara regions.³⁶¹

i. Arrest and detention of Oromos in Oromia

This section should be read in conjunction with [iii Torture and inhumane treatment of Oromos](#).

Sources do not always explicitly report on the (perceived) ethnicity of people subject to arbitrary arrests and detention in Oromia.

In its annual report on human rights in 2022, Amnesty International observed in Ethiopia that:

³⁵⁹ UN Committee Against Torture, [Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Ethiopia](#), 7 June 2023, paragraphs 34 and 36

³⁶⁰ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), [Statement of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission \(EHRC\) \(Affiliate Status No. 18\): AGENDA ITEM 3 - Human Rights Situation in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 77th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights \(20 October – 9 November 2023\)](#), 1 November 2023, p. 6

³⁶¹ OHCHR, [Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia](#), June 2024, paragraph 20

Following an order by the Federal Supreme Court in May [2022], the police released Colonel Gemechu Ayana, another senior OLF official, who had been detained for nearly two years on terrorism charges. Dawud Ibsa, the OLF chair, was released from house arrest in March after the National Election Board of Ethiopia demanded his release. He had been under house arrest since May 2021.³⁶²

The report added: “The right to freedom of expression was significantly eroded, with authorities arresting at least 29 journalists and media workers in Tigray, Addis Ababa, Amhara and Oromia”.³⁶³

In June 2022, the OLLAA reported that “A five-year-old girl from Belanbal kebele of Goro Dola woreda, west Guji, Oromia, is being held and tortured at an Ethiopian National Defense Force prison”.³⁶⁴ It further explained:

On Saturday, June 4, 2022, Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF) traveled to the local school in Belanbal kebele, where five-year-old Biftu Jemal Birbirs was studying. According to witnesses near the scene, the ENDF forces targeted the girl in order to intimidate her father, Jemal Birbirs, who they believed was a fighter for the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and had been unable to locate. According to reports by OMN, ENDF forces hoped that by imprisoning his daughter, they could force him to return, thus allowing the ENDF to arrest or kill him. [...] They then took her to the Goro Dola Administration Office, where she remains detained to this day.³⁶⁵

The monthly update for August 2022 from the EPO wrote that “At the beginning of the month, government security forces arrested 35 people in Lelise kebele in Gida Ayana woreda in East Wollega zone over suspicion of having links with the OLF-Shane rebel group. On 21 August, residents of Guder town in West Shewa zone blocked the main road with stones and wood and condemned the arbitrary arrest of youths in the town”.³⁶⁶

The Oromia Support Group recorded the following:

The Oromia Global Forum received names of 518 imprisoned in 2022 [...]. Oromia Human Rights Defenders (OHRD) listed another 12 from three kebeles in Guliso district, West Wallega [...]. Over one thousand (1046) detainees, including 138 in Bale and 139 in Hararge zones in eastern Oromia [...] were named and listed by a network of informants reporting to OSG in Belgium on 12 May [...] and separate information was received via OSG Australia and directly to OSG UK about detentions in Arsi and West Arsi [...].

³⁶² Amnesty International, [Amnesty International Report 2022/23: The state of the world's human rights](#), 27 March 2023, p. 163

³⁶³ Amnesty International, [Amnesty International Report 2022/23: The state of the world's human rights](#), 27 March 2023, p. 164

³⁶⁴ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Five-Year-Old Girl Arrested, Tortured by ENDF Because of Father's Ties to the OLA](#), 21 June 2022

³⁶⁵ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Five-Year-Old Girl Arrested, Tortured by ENDF Because of Father's Ties to the OLA](#), 21 June 2022

³⁶⁶ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: August 2022](#), 16 September 2022

Gadado, a network of reporters whose information is collated in Norway, reported on 11 July that about 713 were detained in Kemise ‘for their Oromo-ness alone’ including farmers, artists, clergymen, teachers and members of the Qubee generation. In the Abba Gadaa Hall, where many were detained ‘45 are still there . . . where they killed them, covered them with dust and hid them.’ Families of detainees are too destitute to provide food.

Twenty of those detained in Bate were taken at the funeral of 70 yr-old woman, Zeyne Muhe, who was killed when ‘Amhara special force indiscriminately fired on farmers under the pretext that the farmers fed Shane’ following clashes with OLA a few days before.³⁶⁷

In August 2022, the OLLAA reported on a new report by the EHRC on detention around Oromia noting that:

On August 1, 2022, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) presented findings from their monitoring of 126 police stations and 27 prisons across Oromia, where thousands of Oromos remain detained. The EHRC reported that the prisons were overcrowded, unsanitary, and did not provide access to adequate medical services. They also reported on a pattern of rights violations experienced by prisoners, including the fact that:

“It is becoming common to detain people who have been acquitted by the court, whose investigation records have been closed or who have been released on bail, the arrest of family members instead of other people suspected of crimes is widely seen in many police stations, the suspects are beaten to confess to the crimes they are suspected of or the crimes they commit while they are in custody.”

They also reported that individuals “who are arrested due to current affairs”, likely referring to those individuals who have been arrested as part of the military operation inside Oromia, not being recorded in the prison’s registers, that they, “are not brought to court within the time prescribed by the law or they are not presented in court at all,” and are not told the reason for their arrest in “certain police stations.” Finally, they report that, in areas with “security problems”, people are arrested based on orders from “security councils.”

The EHRC has also been monitoring the detention of OLF leaders inside Oromia, and in May 2022, called for their immediate release, citing the fact that they were “detained without due process.” Following this report, on June 18, the Burayu District Court ordered the release of 4 senior OLF leaders: Mikael Boran, Dawid Abdeta, Lemi Begna, and Gada Gabisa. These prisoners had all previously received a court order granting their release on bail, which the Oromia police had refused to obey. Unfortunately, these four defendants remain detained to this day, and when their lawyer was questioned about next steps in their case, he responded, “There is nothing left in the courts. The court and the prosecutor acquitted them. The problem is with the Police.”

OLLAA takes note of the EHRC’s findings, which align with reports we have received from Oromo political prisoners and their families about the failure of the Ethiopian government to protect the rights of Oromo prisoners.³⁶⁸

Writing on the same report, Addis Standard noted, with regards to police station in Oromia regional state, that:

³⁶⁷ Oromia Support Group (OSG), [REPORT 60: Death, destruction and detention in Oromia Disinformation: a hate crime and a tool of abuse](#), 2 August 2022, pp. 8-9

³⁶⁸ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [EHRC Reveals Violations of Oromo Prisoners’ Rights](#), 2 August 2022

The report confirmed that several OLF leaders and members are “detained without due process.” It had asked for the immediate release of all detainees held without due process and for the Oromia state to investigate its security officers and officials who beat prisoners and hold them to account, as well as offer compensations to be offered to the detainees. The chief commissioner of EHRC, Daniel Bekele (PhD), had said: “Because OLF party leaders have been illegally detained for a long time and they should be released immediately and compensated for the damages they sustained.”³⁶⁹

In its October 2023 report, covering events between 2020 and 2022, the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia reported on arrest and detentions of Oromos (note that where incidents predate the reporting period for this report they have not been included here):

The Commission found a pattern of arrest and detention of Oromo civilians, in particular men, accused of having links with OLA or of supporting or sharing information with the group. Others were detained in connection with anti-Government protests. Detentions between November 2020 and February 2023 were perpetrated primarily by the federal or regional police, Oromia Special Forces, and at times ENDF. The Commission documented detentions of men and women in East Wollega, West Wollega, Kellem Wollega, East Borana, East Haraghe, and Jimma Zones. It also documented one detention of a child, a 16-year-old boy, in Kellem Wollega. In some instances, men and women were targeted for arrest or detained during searches of their houses, in others, they were detained after clashes between OLA and Government forces in the surrounding area. While arrest and detention of Oromos accused of links with OLA predate the Commission’s mandate, the Government’s designation of OLA as a “terrorist” organization in May 2021 only served to further such arrests. As of September 2023, the designation of OLA as a “terrorist” organization remains in effect. [...]

The Commission also found arbitrary arrests and detentions, and torture and ill treatment in detention, in East Borana Zone [...]

The Commission documented arrests and detentions of both men and women, although men appear to be targeted and accused of links with OLA. Other gendered dimensions and/or impacts of arrest and detention in Oromia, included the targeting of female relatives for their connection with detained males or threats, harassment, and intimidation by government security forces. [...]

While the majority of the cases were of individuals accused of links with OLA, the Commission found two instances where women and men were arrested and accused of other anti-government activities, including protests. According to human rights defenders and civil society activists working on Oromia, such detentions are common. [...]

Based on its investigation, the Commission believes that sexual violence in detention – and in Oromia more generally – is seriously underreported. Civil society organizations working on Oromia explained that speaking about sexual violence is taboo, and survivors fear further reprisals if they report it.³⁷⁰

Reporting on the impacts of arbitrary arrests the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia noted:

³⁶⁹ Addis Standard, [News: Major gaps remain in human rights conditions in Oromia’s prisons, correctional facilities, notes Ethiopian Human Rights Commission](#), 2 August 2022

³⁷⁰ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Comprehensive investigative findings and legal determinations](#), 13 October 2023, paragraphs 369-383

[...] preexisting structures of discrimination and gender-stereotyping in Ethiopia mean that female family members suffered increased insecurity, additional financial burdens and obstacles accessing essential services and resources when their male relatives were detained. The impacts of gender inequality are clearly not confined to one specific region or violation, and further investigation is recommended. [...] Arbitrary arrests and detentions have ongoing impacts. The fear and risk of death, arrest, and detention has forced many young Oromos to flee Ethiopia in recent years. Interviewees who had fled Oromia and were living in neighbouring countries as refugees explained they felt they had no choice but to leave Ethiopia. For many, this meant leaving behind relatives and loved ones. Keeping in touch with family in Oromia is an additional struggle given the poor availability of reliable internet access and other communications tools, a situation compounded by frequent government-imposed internet blackouts. For those who do escape, they face further risks and uncertainty. Several explained that they were struggling to support themselves and faced challenges to obtain outside support or to register as refugees.³⁷¹

In its annual human rights report for Ethiopia in 2022, USDOS wrote that “On August 1, the EHRC released a report based on a review of 126 police stations and 27 correction centers in Oromia that identified increasing trends of security forces holding detainees without charges, beating detainees, and arresting family members in lieu of suspects at large”.³⁷² It further stated that:

In investigations in Oromia, Gambella, Benishangul-Gumuz, and Addis Ababa, the EHRC found many detainees had been arrested without court orders or formal investigations, and many had not been brought before court within the time the law prescribed. In addition, the EHRC reported many police stations held suspects whose charges were dropped or who should have been released in accordance with court orders. In some cases, children reportedly were held in detention on suspicion of involvement in criminal activity, contrary to the law requiring their release on unconditional bail.³⁷³

Furthermore, it remarked that there “There were also several reports of detentions of prominent Oromo figures. For example, on September 29 [2022], Oromia regional state security forces reportedly detained prominent Oromo scholar Alemayehu Diro and released him in late October”.³⁷⁴

In a September 2022 report to the UN Human Rights Committee, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission reported that “Since July 11, 2020, leaders and members of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) have been repeatedly detained in Oromia Region. Moreover, in Oromia Region, there are individuals who were detained for two years without being charged. The police failed to bring detainees to court on their adjournment date without sufficient grounds”.³⁷⁵

According to the EPO’s weekly update from 24 to 30 September 2022:

³⁷¹ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Comprehensive investigative findings and legal determinations](#), 13 October 2023, paragraphs 385-386

³⁷² US Department of State (USDOS), [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 20 March 2023

³⁷³ US Department of State (USDOS), [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 20 March 2023

³⁷⁴ US Department of State (USDOS), [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 20 March 2023

³⁷⁵ 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, p. 9

Government forces arrested more than 1,000 people in seven woredas of West Guji zone. The arrestees were accused of supporting the OLF-Shane “logistically” by “sending their children to become members of the OLF-Shane” and having links with the OLF-Shane ([ESAT, 28 September 2022](#)). The Adama town Security and Administration Office announced that the federal police, Oromia regional special forces, and regional state police arrested 33 members of the OLF-Shane and Abba Torbe – a group allegedly affiliated with the OLF-Shane – and 49 members of the TPLF in Adama town in East Shewa zone over suspicion of “planning to incite violence and disturb Meskel and Irreecha celebrations” ([Addis Maleda, 29 September 2022](#)).³⁷⁶

In November 2022, Addis Standard reported on the arrest of three Supreme Court judges in the Oromia region after they granted bail to six security personnel of the opposition political party leader noting that:

Police in Adama, East Shoa zone of the Oromia Regional State, detained three judges of the Oromia Supreme Court, Eastern Criminal Division, without due process of the law, an informant who is close to the matter but asked to remain anonymous told *Addis Standard*.

The Judges Dessaleny Lammii, Mohamed Jimaa and Abdiisaa Waqjiraa were detained on Friday, 04 October around 02:40 PM local time from their offices located inside the court premises; they were detained by members of local police of the Adama city, an a source close to the matter told *Addis Standard*.

Speaking on conditions of anonymity, the source said that the police have accused the judges of being suspected of terrorism-related offenses. However their detention came shortly after the judges ruled the release on bail of six security personnel of opposition leader Jawar Mohammed. They were arrested in October this year during the weekend of the Irreecha celebrations and remain in detention since.³⁷⁷

In December 2022, BBC News reporting on escalations of conflict in Oromia wrote that the military have “been accused of detaining people for lengthy periods without trial, including the relatives of youths who have joined the OLA”.³⁷⁸

In its annual report on human rights in 2022, Amnesty International observed in Ethiopia that:

The government continued to unlawfully detain Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) senior leaders Michael Boran, Kenesa Ayana, Geda Aoljira, Dawit Abdeta, Lemi Benya, Geda Gebisa and Abdi Regassa. They had been in detention since 2020, despite multiple court orders for their release. [...] The right to freedom of expression was significantly eroded, with authorities arresting at least 29 journalists and media workers in Tigray, Addis Ababa, Amhara and Oromia”.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁶ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 24 – 30 September 2022](#), 4 October 2022

³⁷⁷ Addis Standard, [News: Outcry over arrest of three Oromia Supreme Court judges after allowing bail to Jawar Mohammed’s security detail](#), 5 November 2022

³⁷⁸ BBC News, [Ethiopia’s PM sees OLA rebellion grow in his own backyard](#), 18 December 2022

³⁷⁹ Amnesty International, [Amnesty International Report 2022/23: The state of the world’s human rights](#), 27 March 2023, p. 164

The 2022 US Department of State's annual report on religious freedom observed that "Some contacts described Waaqeffanna as being such a strong part of Oromo ethnonationalist identity that Oromo police targeted and accused them of associating with the outlawed Oromo Liberation Army insurgent group".³⁸⁰

Human Rights Watch reported in its annual report covering 2023 that "On January 5, Ethiopian police arrested and forcibly disappeared for several hours four Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) staff members—three human rights staff members, Daniel Tesfaye, Bezuayehu Wondimu, and Bereket Daniel, and their driver Nahom Husen—who were investigating cases of forced evictions outside Addis Ababa. On January 12, an Oromia court released the four staff on bail".³⁸¹ It further added that "Ethiopian authorities continued to arbitrarily detain seven Oromo Liberation Front figures held since 2020 despite multiple judicial orders directing their release".³⁸²

The weekly update for 11 – 17 February 2023 from the EPO wrote that "Government security forces – assumed to be members of Oromia regional special forces – also arrested several youths in Alaga Dureti kebele in Jeju woreda in Arsi zone after accusing them of supporting the OLF-Shane".³⁸³

In March 2023, the OLLAA reported that:

On February 27, 2023, the Oromia regional government announced that it would be restructuring the Oromia region, which would lead to the creation of a new zone, called "East Borana." This new zone would be made up of 10 districts that were formally part of the Borana, Guji, and Bale zones. Since the announcement was made, there have been ongoing protests throughout the Guji zone, particularly because residents feel they were not consulted by relevant bodies during the decision-making process. There have been reports of abuses and the excessive use of force by Ethiopian security forces since the protests began. One resident told reporters that, "Four people were shot and three died in the Bore district. I also have information that one person was hospitalized after being beaten by police in Adola Wayu district. Many have been arrested." OLLAA's staff has spoken to credible sources on the ground who have confirmed that multiple protesters have been arrested and that they have heard reports of similar protests in the Bale zone.³⁸⁴

The EHRC stated in the Oromia chapter in its March 2024 national inquiry into persons deprived of liberty that: "Arresting and detaining relatives of suspects until the suspects appear before the police are types of unlawful and arbitrary arrest and detention in Oromia Region. The EHRC monitored detention centres across Oromia and received diverse testimonies about the practice of arresting family members of suspects in some areas [...]. The EHRC documented the practice of arresting and detaining

³⁸⁰ US Department of State (USDOS), [2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Ethiopia](#), 15 May 2023

³⁸¹ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2024: Events of 2023](#), 11 January 2024, p. 218

³⁸² Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2024: Events of 2023](#), 11 January 2024, p. 219

³⁸³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 11 – 17 February 2023](#), 21 February 2023

³⁸⁴ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Deaths of Protesters in the Guji Zone](#), 6 March 2023

family members in lieu of suspects in several zones of Oromia Region”.³⁸⁵ The report goes on to discuss a public hearing in Adama from 24 to 26 April 2023 with the following cases:

Fifteen victims and two witnesses participated in the public hearing. Ten victims and witnesses testified in public, while the remaining testified in a confidential hearing. The victim and witnesses were from Shaggar City (Burayu), Jimma Zone (Limmu Kosa Woreda and Jimma City Administration), Bale Zone (Agarfa and Batu Woredas), Ilu Abba Bor Zone (Darimu and Metu Towns), and East Shewa Zone (Adama City Administration). Haadha Siinqees, Abbaa Gadaas, religious leaders and representatives of civil society organizations participated in the public hearing. [...]

The testimonies of victims and witnesses alleged arbitrary deprivation of liberty and violations of the rights of persons deprived of liberty. [...]

All victims and witnesses testified that they were arrested without a court warrant and were not brought to a court as prescribed by law. Some victims were kept in Special Forces Camp (Adami Tullu and Jido Kombolcha Woreda, Batu town), National Defense Force Camp (Metu Town, Ilu Abba Bor Zone) and informal detention facility (Jimma City, Jimma Zone). It was reported that a victim from Adami Tullu and Jido Kombolcha Woreda (East Shewa Zone) was arrested “by the order of the City Mayor” as he was suspected of collaborating with OLA (Shane). He stated that he was suspected because “he was doing his job very well without any challenge” in an area where OLA operated. He noted that he was arrested and taken to Special Force Camp, kept in detention for three days without any criminal charges.

A victim from Shaggar City (Melka Nono Sub city also known as Ashewa Meda) testified that a police officer from Woreda 2 Police Station arrested her on 24 June 2022 without arrest warrant. She noted that she was never brought before a court and was released on 31 August 2022 with EHRC’s intervention.

Two witnesses from Agarfa Woreda (Bale Zone) testified that their sons were arrested on 29 December 2022 without an arrest warrant. One of the witnesses said that he was arrested on 28 December 2022 by the Woreda police in order to force his son to surrender to the police custody. [...]

A victim from Metu Town (Ilu Abba Bor Zone) said that he was arrested on 20 August 2022 by the police without arrest warrant and he was kept in Metu Town Police Station for two hours and then he was transferred to the Special Forces camp, where he was detained for three months without any criminal charge and trial, before he was transferred back to Metu Police Station. He believed that he was arrested because he came to Metu Town from Wollega Zone, although the police did not inform him of the reason of his arrest.

One of the victims said that he was arrested because of his OLF membership. He said that he was arrested at Burayu Police Station when he went to visit members of the political party who were detained at the police station. He noted that even though he asked the arresting police officer for an arrest warrant, the police officer replied that “the uniform he is wearing is enough to make the arrest”. Although the reason of his arrest was not communicated to him formally, he added that the police told him that his arrest was ordered by the “higher authority”. He also testified that there were political party members detained with him who were transferred to Oromia Special Force training camp called Awash Shone after two months of detention at Burayu Police station. He explained that there were more than 10 Jimma University lecturers among the transferred detainees, who were again transferred to Gelan Police station on 27 May 2022. [...]

A victim from Burayu town testified that he was arrested [...] on 17 May 2022 for hiding weapons and a member of OLA in his house.

³⁸⁵ Ethiopian Human Rights Committee (EHRC), [National Inquiry into Persons Deprived of Liberty](#), 26 March 2024, pp. 81-82

Three victims from Metu town (Ilu Abba Bor Zone) testified that they were subjected to repeated arrests and detentions. The first victim from Metu testified that he was arrested seventeen times since 2018, and his last arrest was on 12 October 2022 by the order of the Zonal Security Council. He added that the detention period ranged from one day to seven months. He noted that he was arrested by the Special Force and the regular police, and was detained in Metu Police station, and in Special Force camps at Awash Bishole and Darimu Birbir.

The second victim from Metu said that he was arrested five times since 2018. [...] The fourth time was in March 2022 at Metu Police station for two months. He noted that he was never brought before a court in all of the four arrests and detentions. On his fifth arrest, he was detained in July 2022 for three months and one week. Even though a court ordered his release, the police refused to release him immediately and detained him for an additional week. [...]

Victims and witnesses alleged violations of their right to be brought before a court within 48 hours of their arrest. Thirteen victims and two witnesses said that they were subjected to prolonged detention without appearing before a court, without a criminal charge, a trial or a conviction. A victim from Burayu (Shaggar City) testified that he was arrested and detained four times for a total of two months and three weeks without appearing before a court, without a criminal charge and a trial. The first time, he was released from detention after paying the police officer a bribe of Birr 10,000. The second time, he was released after other detainees and himself contributed and paid a bribe of Birr 50,000 to the police. The fourth time, he was released in September 2022 after his uncle bribed the police.

A witness from Agarfa Woreda (Bale Zone) testified that his 17-year-old child was detained for one year and 21 days at Agarfa Police Station without appearing in court; and that the police refused to release his son despite a court order. Another witness from the same woreda testified that his son was detained for more than a year without any criminal charge; that he obtained, after several struggles, a court order to bring his son before a court, but the police refused; and that the police kept his son in custody for more than one year although the court granted application for bail.

A victim from Adami Tullu and Jido Kombolcha Woreda (East Showa Zone) stated that he had never appeared before a court although he was transferred from the Special Force Camp to a police detention center. According to him, when he requested the police to take him to the court, the police refused, saying, “Shanes have no right to appear in court”.

A victim from Metu town (Ilu Abba Bor Zone) said that he was arrested seventeen times; that there were no criminal charges brought against him except once; and that the court dismissed the charge and ordered his release on bail for Birr 2,000 when he was brought before the court.

Another victim from Metu town who was detained in the Special Forces camp for three months, stated that he applied to a court to be released on bail when he was transferred from the camp to a police station. However, even though the court ordered his release for a bail bond of Birr 2,000, which he paid the amount, the police detained him for an additional month despite four court orders.³⁸⁶

The same report chapter added summaries of testimonies from representatives of civil society organizations and community leaders:

Ethiopian Human Rights Council

A representative of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) stated that enforced disappearance on the ground of political opinions, as long as six years in one case, was one of the major problems in

³⁸⁶ Ethiopian Human Rights Committee (EHRC), [National Inquiry into Persons Deprived of Liberty](#), 26 March 2024, pp. 83-87

Oromia. He said that law enforcement agents arrested individuals who were not criminal suspects by orders of command post and prevented them from meeting their families and religious leaders; that they detained mothers with children in conditions not favorable to them; that they kept in custody individuals arrested during the state of emergency even after expiry of the state of emergency without any charge; and that they disobeyed court orders to release individuals on bail.

Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa

A representative from Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa (HRLHA) explained that individuals were arrested in Oromia Region, on the ground of the so-called current affairs, for coming from places of active violent conflict, or when security council ordered, or when related to a suspect or in connection to assassination of Hachalu Hundesa by members of Gachana Sirna and other law enforcement agents. He noted that security agents took detainees from their place of detention and killed them in Horo Guduru Wollega, Guji and West Guji zones. The representative mentioned forced disappearances, torture, incommunicado detention, refusal to execute court orders to release detainees on bail, and corruption in law enforcement agencies as some of the problems in Oromia Region. [...]

Abbaa Gadaas took turns to explain situations of arrested persons in Oromia. One *Abbaa Gadaa* said that the lower level of government officials disobeyed the law; that regular and special police forces arrested individuals and committed violations in the last four years; that it was unreasonable to expect people to obey the law, when the law enforcement bodies themselves disobeyed it; that government officials retaliated against individuals and institutions; that the number of arrests, detentions and incidents of violence were higher during the state of emergency; and that anyone with a gun may commit crimes he or she wished. Highly frustrated, he stated that Oromos were killing one another.

Another *Abbaa Gadaa* said that there was more serious suffering and violences than those described by the victims and witnesses in the public hearing. He added that law enforcement agents conducted mass arrests and indiscriminate killings of innocent individuals against the legal procedures. He said that courts had no power as the police decided everything.³⁸⁷

In July 2023, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission released its annual human rights situation report (covering the period of June 2022 to July 2023), the executive summary of which is available in English noting that:

In Addis Ababa, Oromia, and Amhara regions in particular several instances which the Commission has found to constitute enforced disappearances have been reported. Often the victims of the act were detained by government security forces in plain clothes or in uniforms. [...]

In Addis Ababa for instance, although they have later been transferred to a federal official place of detention, several detainees held in *incommunicado* detention and/or forcibly disappeared since May 2023 were reported to have been kept in a former special forces military camp in Oromia region commonly known as “Gelan”, while others remain forcibly disappeared until the publication of this report. [...]

[...] in Oromia region, victims of enforced disappearances include opposition political party members, as in the case of members of the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). Many members were arrested by regional security forces including by the regional police force.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁷ Ethiopian Human Rights Committee (EHRC), [National Inquiry into Persons Deprived of Liberty](#), 26 March 2024, pp. 95-96

³⁸⁸ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), [Executive Summary: Ethiopia Annual Human Rights Situation Report \(June 2022 – June 2023\)](#), 12 July 2023, pp. 3-4

The report also added that “In Oromia region in particular, arbitrary and/or unlawful detention for security reasons, frequent mass arrests; failure to bring detainees before a court within the prescribed period; denial of the right to bail; and prolonged detention including some with alleged links to armed groups detained for as long as one year in police stations are some of the issues that require immediate attention”.³⁸⁹

The same month, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission wrote that:

Beyond the detentions and places of detention officially reported by the SoE [State of Emergency] 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, Mekaneselem, and Shewa Robit towns of the Amhara Region; in Sheger city of the Oromia Region; and in Addis Ababa.³⁹⁰

The September 2023 report from the ICHREE noted that:

In the face of increased violence, in Oromia and Amhara, command posts were established in Western and Southern Oromia from early 2019, comprised of local militia, Oromia Special Forces, ENDF, federal police and Oromia regional police. The Commission’s investigation found that although claimed to have been officially lifted, command posts continue to operate in some areas of Oromia. Witnesses from Western Oromia described ongoing arbitrary restrictions on freedom of movement, including curfews, denial of access to healthcare, shootings of unarmed residents and arbitrary arrest and detention.³⁹¹

The OLLAA published a report in October 2023 on human rights violations in East Arsi Zone which wrote that, according to a local informant, “A 50-year-old woman, Shukri Umer, and her two-year-old daughter were subjected to arrest in the East Arsi Zone Shirka district on the pretext that her husband and son were members of the OLA”.³⁹² It also stated that:

Arbitrary arrest and detention are prevalent in Merti Woreda. Government security forces often arrest civilians based on allegations of them either being members or supporters of OLA fighters in the area. Once Oromo community members have been arbitrarily detained, their rights to a fair and public hearing are not observed by the authorities. Many of the claims against these prisoners were never presented in court, and no criminal charges were formally brought against them.

³⁸⁹ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), [Executive Summary: Ethiopia Annual Human Rights Situation Report \(June 2022 – June 2023\)](#), 12 July 2023, p. 7

³⁹⁰ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, [Amhara Region: Concerning human rights violations in the context of the armed conflict](#), 18 September 2023

³⁹¹ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia](#), 14 September 2023, paragraph 59

³⁹² Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Human Rights Violations: The Case of East Arsi Zone](#), 20 October 2023

Soldiers camp at what was once a private college, renamed 'Chilalo,' is where detainees are arrested and brutally tortured. However, this is not a formal detention center under the police administration of the town; no investigations of the abuses nor compensation for the victims have taken place.³⁹³

Insecurity Insight reported in a monthly news brief on 'education in danger' that "Around 13 December 2023: In Dollo town, Kellem wollega, Oromia region, government security forces beat and arrested an unspecified number of students and teachers of Dembi Dolo University after entering the university. The university stopped teaching and learning following a strike by students against what they called 'arrest and harassment' by government security forces.* Source: ACLED".³⁹⁴ The ethnicity of the arrestees was not reported upon.

Amnesty International stated in a news article concerning the silencing of peaceful dissent in Ethiopia that "Taye Denda, the former state minister of peace and a member of the Oromia regional council, was arrested on 12 December 2023, days after criticizing the prime minister over atrocities in Ethiopia saying, "you are an evil man who plays with blood".³⁹⁵

In January 2024, the Guardian produced an article on a surge of kidnappings in Ethiopia's Oromia region, adding that: "Peace talks between the OLA and the government failed in November. A spike in rebel attacks across Oromia followed. The government's response to the insurgency has been ham-fisted, characterised by arbitrary arrests and unlawful killings, according to the state-appointed human rights commission".³⁹⁶

An article by World Beyond War in February 2024 commented that:

Oromo civilians also routinely face arbitrary arrests and detentions. At times, these arrests are justified by claims that the victim has provided support to the OLA or has a family member who is suspected of joining the OLA. In some cases, children have been detained based on suspicion that their family members are in the OLA. In other cases, Oromo civilians have been arrested because of their connection to opposition Oromo political parties, including the OLF and the OFC, or because they are otherwise perceived as being Oromo nationalists. As recently reported by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, civilians are often subjected to further human rights violations once detained, including ill-treatment and the denial of their due process and fair trial rights. It has become a common practice inside Oromia for prison officials to refuse to release detainees, despite a court order for their release.³⁹⁷

USDOS's annual report on human rights in Ethiopia in 2023 wrote:

³⁹³ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Human Rights Violations: The Case of East Arsi Zone](#), 20 October 2023

³⁹⁴ Insecurity Insight, [Education in Danger Monthly News Brief – December 2023](#), December 2023, p. 2

³⁹⁵ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: Authorities must stop using state of emergency law to silence peaceful dissent](#), 19 February 2024

³⁹⁶ The Guardian, [‘This is a pandemic’: Ethiopia’s Oromia region gripped by surge in kidnappings](#), 23 January 2024

³⁹⁷ World Beyond War, [Oromia: Ethiopia’s War in the Shadows](#), 14 February 2024

The government reportedly detained thousands of ethnic Amhara and Oromo after the August 4 State of Emergency, converting warehouses, schools, youth centers, private residences, and other makeshift facilities to house the growing detainee population, according to media reports.

On February 15, the EHRC reported police in Addis Ababa and Oromia arbitrarily detained journalists and numerous members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) after authorities canceled a protest called by two opposing groups within the EOTC. News network BBC reported government security forces on February 4 used excessive force against followers of the main church, resulting in extrajudicial killings, beatings, harassment, and arbitrary arrests. In investigations in Oromia, Amhara, and Addis Ababa, the EHRC found many detainees had been arrested without court orders or formal investigations, and many had not been brought before court within the time the law prescribed. In addition, the EHRC reported many police stations held suspects whose charges were dropped or who should have been released in accordance with court orders. In some cases, children reportedly were held in detention on suspicion of involvement in criminal activity, contrary to the law requiring their release on unconditional bail.³⁹⁸

It added:

The government reportedly detained thousands of ethnic Amhara and Oromo after the August 4 state of emergency, and there were reports many detainees were held in inhuman and at times life-threatening conditions and subjected to torture.

On September 18, ICHREE stated it had uncovered widespread arrests and detentions of Oromo civilians accused of having links with the OLA. The detentions documented between 2020 and February 2023 were perpetrated primarily by the federal or regional police, Oromia Special Forces, and at times the ENDF, and were accompanied by torture and mistreatment. Family members of suspected OLA fighters were also targeted for arrest and detention – including women who experienced sexual violence while in custody.³⁹⁹

The 2023 USDOS report on religious freedom noted that “Waaqeffanna – an Indigenous religion in Oromia Region unique to Oromo culture – reportedly continued to grow on university campuses and among the Oromo population. Some sources said Oromo police targeted and accused Waaqeffanna adherents of associating with the outlawed Oromo Liberation Army insurgent group”.⁴⁰⁰

Abductions

According to the EPO’s weekly update from 26 November to 2 December 2022:

On 27 November, the OLF-Shane opened fire at public transport vehicles in Doni Tebel (Doni) and Foki towns in East Shewa zone. Two people were reportedly killed, and 11 others were injured. The group also abducted an unidentified number of people who were traveling from Doni town to Foki town after attending a weekly market in the area. Additionally, on 30 November, the OLF-Shane reportedly abducted around 30 employees of the Dangote cement factory near Muger town in Adda Berga woreda in West

³⁹⁸ US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 23 April 2024

³⁹⁹ US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 23 April 2024

⁴⁰⁰ US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Ethiopia](#), 26 June 2024

Shewa zone, after stopping and dragging them out of a company service bus. The abductees were on their way to a mineral extraction site. The group released the employees who work as janitors and took the remaining 17 employees to an unknown location. The abducted employees were released over the weekend after paying up to 500,000 birr (around \$9,400) ([BBC Amharic, 6 December 2022](#)). Further, it was reported that the OLF-Shane abducted an unidentified number of civilians from the surrounding areas of Metehara, including foreigners who work at an unknown company in Welenchiti, and has been holding them in Dubicha Dembel area in Metehara in Boset woreda in East Shewa zone ([ESAT, 29 November 2022](#)).⁴⁰¹

With regards to the week of 3 to 9 December 2022, EPO commented “Amhara militiamen – assumed to be members of the Fano militia – [...] also burned several homes and looted civilian properties. Two days later, four truck drivers were abducted by the OLF-Shane in Gebre Guracha area in North Shewa zone while traveling to Addis Ababa. The group burned three of the trucks, and asked for up to three million birr (around \$56,200) as ransom to release the drivers”.⁴⁰²

The weekly update for 11 – 17 February 2023 from the EPO wrote that “members of the OLF-Shane abducted an unspecified number of civilians traveling from Adama city, East Shewa zone, to Abomsa, Arsi zone, and from Abomsa to an unidentified location after stopping their vehicles in an area near Abomsa”.⁴⁰³

The International Crisis Group remarked in April 2023 that “OLA continued kidnapping civilians”.⁴⁰⁴ It then gave the following update in June 2023 on Oromia “Kidnappings also continued; notably, gunmen 24 June abducted around 50 people in Ali Doro area (North Shewa Zone), demanding ransom”.⁴⁰⁵ In July 2023, it wrote “Month also saw OLA, as well as unaffiliated bandits, increase kidnappings for ransom”.⁴⁰⁶

USDOS’s annual report on human rights in Ethiopia in 2023 wrote:

Throughout the year media reported increased incidents of kidnapping of civilians by armed groups including by the OLA for ransom and other reasons. On May 29, VOA Amharic spoke with truck drivers who said between mid-April and the end of May, unidentified gunmen killed five drivers and their assistants after they were kidnapped by unidentified gunmen, even though family members paid the demanded ransom.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰¹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 26 November – 2 December 2022](#), 6 December 2022

⁴⁰² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 3 – December 2022](#), 14 December 2022

⁴⁰³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 11 – 17 February 2023](#), 21 February 2023

⁴⁰⁴ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), April 2023

⁴⁰⁵ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), June 2023

⁴⁰⁶ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), July 2023

⁴⁰⁷ US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 23 April 2024

From the week of 2 to 8 September 2023, EPO reported that “On 2 September, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane abducted an unknown number of civilians who were traveling to a market in Gundo Meskel in Dera woreda, North Shewa zone”.⁴⁰⁸

The OLLAA’s report in October 2023 on human rights violations in East Arsi Zone discussed the following instances of abductions:

According to residents of the area, for over a year, the road that runs from the Town (Abomsa) to Adama City has become dangerous to travel. They state that armed groups are everywhere in the jungle, trying to stop cars and to abduct/kidnap travelers. These armed groups will only release their hostages for ransom, and there are even circumstances where they kill the victims, including murdering individuals against whom they have a personal grudge. According to the report by Oromia Media Network, these forces are asking for a ransom of a minimum of 200,000 and up to millions of Birr. Some of the incidents that have taken place on this road are detailed below:

- On 19 August 2023, three people who were traveling on this road were killed by these armed forces and a university student who traveled to the area for summer vacation was seriously injured. These include Getachew Gonfa (driver of public transport), his assistant, and Muhammad (a trader). As per the informant, armed forces ordered the driver (Getachew) to stop the car; however, knowing that these forces would kidnap everyone in the car, he refused and kept moving. However, another soldier of this group fired at the driver and the other two, all of whom died at the scene.
- On 28th August 2023, these forces stopped a car traveling from Adama City to Abomsa Town, close to the town called Bole and ordered three civil servants to get out of the car. Fearing the situation, a passenger called Fikadu, who held a management role in the Upper Awash Agro Industry Enterprise, started to try to negotiate with these forces. In response, they killed him. Two of the three civil servants fled to Bole Town. The security forces however captured and tortured the third – a civil servant of Abomsa Town named Muhammad Aman. Later that day, they sent his dead body to Abomsa Town. Muhammad was traveling back home after receiving his Master’s degree from Harambe University in Adama City. He was both a husband and father.
- At the same place, these armed men stopped a car and kidnapped an entire group of travelers, except for five women and some men with children. According to the informant, one of the travelers, a diabetic, was unable to move for long distances. He was forcibly taken along with the others.
- On 29th June 2023, two cars were stopped and their passengers kidnapped. According to the OMN report, a similar incident occurred on 26th September 2023. Some of the passengers were freed, but the troops are still holding onto individuals they believe have families who can pay the ransom.
- In the month of August 2023, these armed men kidnapped the vice manager of Sodere Resort at night from his home and asked for a ransom of five (5) million Birr from his family. His family has paid some amount of money from the total ransom asked by these forces. However, these forces couldn’t connect the family with their disappeared loved one. Therefore, the family is not sure whether he is alive or dead.⁴⁰⁹

The news site Borkena reported in October 2023 in kidnappings in the Oromia region, writing that:

⁴⁰⁸ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 2 – 8 September 2023](#), 13 September 2023

⁴⁰⁹ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Human Rights Violations: The Case of East Arsi Zone](#), 20 October 2023

In the latest string of kidnapping stories in the Oromia region of Ethiopia, eleven employees of the Ethiopian Institute of Debre Zeit Agricultural Research Center are facing the same fate.

Ethiopian Media Service (EMS), based in the Diaspora, spoke to the director of the Institute, Dr. Dagne, who confirmed the story.

It occurred on Tuesday this week in the Alem Tena area of the Oromia region. The kidnappers are described as “unidentified.” [...]

Kidnapping has become a common practice in the Oromia region of Ethiopia. Almost all of the kidnappings so far turned out to be a Ransome case and What the Ethiopian government calls OLF Shane (the group calls itself Oromo Liberation Army) is behind it.

Only two weeks ago, Six Ethiopian Electric Power (EEP) employees were kidnapped by the same group in the Aluto Langano where they were working on a geothermal project. The group demanded 10 million birr ransom to set the kidnappees free which EEP declined to pay. The organization has not disclosed if its employees are released.

In a related development, there is unconfirmed news that Several Chinese workers were kidnapped in the region this week.⁴¹⁰

The International Crisis Group’s CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in October 2023 “Kidnappings-for-ransom continued to rise. Notably, suspected OLA militants 3 Oct abducted nine civilians from Sululta city, demanding 300,000 birr (approx \$5,500) per victim; 19 Oct abducted unknown number of Chinese nationals”.⁴¹¹

USDOS’s annual report on human rights in Ethiopia in 2023 stated “There were also numerous reports of enforced disappearance by both security forces and armed militia groups in relation to conflicts in Amhara and Oromia regions and elsewhere”.⁴¹² Moreover, “the EHRC in July stated it was investigating at least seven cases of enforced disappearance in the Oromia Region, including a resident of Gobu Seyo district in West Wollega Zone, whose whereabouts was unknown after police claimed to have transferred him to a detention center in the town of Nekemte on June 16”.⁴¹³

In January 2024, the Guardian produced an article on a surge of kidnappings in Ethiopia’s Oromia region, writing that:

The gunmen came for Alemetu when she was sleeping. They marched her out of her home in Ethiopia’s Oromia region and took her to a disused school in the countryside, where she was held hostage for four weeks.

About 40 fighters were living at the school, although hundreds of men passed through. Alemetu, who was pregnant when she was taken, said her captors beat her with a horsewhip. On one occasion, she was tied up and suspended upside down from a tree for several hours, an ordeal that left deep psychological and physical scars.

⁴¹⁰ Borkena, [Ethiopia: eleven employees working for a research institute reportedly kidnapped in Oromia](#), 20 October 2023

⁴¹¹ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), October 2023

⁴¹² US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 23 April 2024

⁴¹³ US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 23 April 2024

She was released only after her family paid a ransom of 110,000 birr (£1,530), a huge sum in rural Ethiopia, which they raised by selling livestock and borrowing from friends.

When Alemetu was kidnapped, the family was already struggling to pay a 90,000 birr ransom for her uncle, a farmer, who was held for 15 days in a separate abduction. The family is now destitute.

"It is very rare to find a family in our area who has not been affected by kidnapping," says Alemetu. "The government has no control."

Alemetu identified her kidnappers as insurgents from the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), a rebel group that has been fighting Ethiopia's government since 2018. [...]

After Alemetu was released, the fighters burned down her home. She believes she was targeted because her husband took a job at a local government office. "Even if you just pay taxes, the fighters will attack you," she says.

Kidnapping has been a persistent threat for years in Oromia, a region that runs through the heart of Ethiopia and surrounds the capital, Addis Ababa. Until recently kidnappings were rare outside OLA's strongholds in western Oromia. When they did occur, they were targeted. The main victims were like Alemetu: police officers, government officials or their relatives, and the aims were generally political rather than financial.

Now, kidnapping for ransom has become commonplace. Abductions take place not far from Addis Ababa, as the OLA's insurgency spreads to new areas, and target anyone.

On 28 December, gunmen killed eight people and abducted 10 others near the town of Metehara, 100km (60 miles) east of Addis Ababa, as they returned from a religious festival. In October, agricultural researchers were abducted while doing field work near the town of Alem Tena, 60km south of the capital. In July, 63 bus passengers were taken by militants 100km from Addis Ababa.

Foreign-owned companies are also targets: in October, several Chinese citizens working for a cement factory were abducted in Oromia's North Shewa area, while in January last year gunmen kidnapped 20 workers at another cement factory owned by Nigerian billionaire Aliko Dangote.

The road linking Addis Ababa to Djibouti's port, Ethiopia's main trade artery, has become a kidnapping hotspot in the past 18 months.

The manager of a foreign-owned farm in Oromia, who declined to be named, said the surge in kidnappings was putting off international investors. Local business people who had recently sold their crops and were known to have significant amounts of cash in their bank accounts were initially targeted, he says.

"But it has escalated into something much more widespread, affecting a much wider range of individuals, to the point where all our senior staff are targets," the farm manager says. "We can't get any of them to our site, it's too risky."

He claimed several foreign companies had paid ransoms to free staff. [...]

In November, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council said "abductees often endure torture, cruel treatment, and detainment under inhumane conditions, constituting severe crimes against human dignity". [...]

"I'm too scared to leave Addis Ababa," says a lecturer at the city's university, whose cousin and brother-in-law were recently kidnapped for ransom in separate incidents in Oromia. [...]

The Guardian interviewed four people who recently paid ransoms to free relatives. All declined to be named for fear of retaliation by the kidnappers. This fear means most abductions go unreported, but civil society activists believe thousands of people have been kidnapped in recent years.

The interviewees paid ransoms of between 20,000 birr (£280) to 500,000 birr (£7,000) to free their relatives and often managed to negotiate the price. "They ask according to your wealth," says one man. He paid 125,000 birr to free his father, who was abducted from his home in North Shewa.

Another man says abductors demanded “a staggering 2 million birr” (£28,000) after kidnapping his brother and other passengers from a bus travelling through Oromia’s West Shewa in June. After lengthy negotiations, the family paid 100,000 birr.

“This is a pandemic,” says the man. “Kidnapping is happening everywhere. The rebels have made it a way of life because it’s easy money for them.”

The OLA rebels deny using kidnapping to fund for their insurgency, but the group is loosely organised and local units often act independently of their commanders.

Jonah Wedekind, an independent researcher, said there are strong indications that some OLA factions have turned to kidnapping as a way of raising cash, but bandits motivated simply by financial gain may also be engaging in the practice. [...]

“Some armed actors perceive the OLA to be efficiently raising capital through these attacks and might be copying them,” says Wedekind. “And this is part of the wider problem: the conflict reflects the economy breaking down, and people don’t have jobs, so this is what they turn to.”

Peace talks between the OLA and the government failed in November. A spike in rebel attacks across Oromia followed. [...]

Alemetu did not go to the police after she was released, fearful they would accuse her of funding terrorists because her family paid a ransom. Instead, she simply packed up her remaining belongings and left her village. “I am afraid of both sides,” she says.⁴¹⁴

ii. Arrest and detention of Oromos outside of Oromia

Sources do not always explicitly report on the (perceived) ethnicity of people subject to arbitrary arrests and detention outside Oromia, but rather highlight their (perceived) link to Oromo political groups.

In July 2022, Borkena reported on the mass arrest of “terrorists” in Addis Ababa, writing that “1500 individuals are arrested in the capital over alleged terrorist activity in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa. In an interview with FM Addis 97.1, Adanech Abiebie, Addis Ababa’s Mayor, said different groups linked to “Shane” (that is how the government calls the military wing of the Oromo Liberation Front which calls itself Oromo Liberation Army) and Woyane (TPLF) have been attempting to carry out terrorist activities”.⁴¹⁵ It added that “There had been cases, in recent times, where the government has been accused of crackdown on dissenting voices under the guise of fighting ‘terrorist activities’”.⁴¹⁶

In August 2022, the OLLAA reported that:

OLLAA has received credible reports from the Addis Standard and Oromia 11 regarding the arbitrary arrest and subsequent disappearance of Henok Dejene.

Henok Dejene is a career civil servant and a father to three children. He and his family live in Finfinne, where he works to advance the development of Oromoo culture and norms through the organization he co-founded, the Finfinne Renaissance Association.

⁴¹⁴ The Guardian, [‘This is a pandemic’: Ethiopia’s Oromia region gripped by surge in kidnappings](#), 23 January 2024

⁴¹⁵ Borkena, [Ethiopia : Addis Ababa Mayor says 1500 “terrorists” arrested in the capital](#), 23 July 2022

⁴¹⁶ Borkena, [Ethiopia : Addis Ababa Mayor says 1500 “terrorists” arrested in the capital](#), 23 July 2022

Unfortunately, on 10 July 2022, Henok Dejene joined the long list of Oromoo advocates and activists detained or otherwise harassed by government officials. According to his wife, Mrs. Hiwot, on that day, two visitors dressed in civilian clothing approached their home; when asked who they were, the visitors showed identification that proved them to be government security officials. At this time, these officials remanded Mr. Henok into custody without giving any legal justification to the detained or to his family. Following his arrest, Mr. Henok was taken to the police station near Adwa Bridge in Finfinne. The government officials then returned to the family home, accompanied by several police officers, and began to search the premises. While conducting this search, the officers found an Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) flag—which was logged as an Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) flag by the police—and a photograph of notable Oromoo rights activist Jawar Mohammed. Both of these items were taken by the security officials. Mr. Henok was then transferred to the police station in Yeka Woreda 07 and his family was told he was scheduled to appear before the Lideta Court on July 12, 2022, however, he was not brought to court on that date. When his family went to the police station the following day, they were told that he had been taken to Abba Samuel Prison the previous evening. Upon arriving at Abba Samuel prison, his family was told that he had been taken to Awash 7. Awash is a detention facility located just over 200km from his home in Finfinne and the court before which he was supposed to appear. Currently, Mr. Henok's whereabouts are unknown to his family and colleagues.⁴¹⁷

The Oromia Support Group (OSG) recorded the following:

Over one thousand (1046) detainees, including [...] 86 on Metekel, Benishangul-Gumuz Region, were named and listed by a network of informants reporting to OSG in Belgium on 12 May [...] and separate information was received via OSG Australia and directly to OSG UK about detentions in [...] Wollo [...]. [...] Over 1546 Oromo are detained in Wollo, the Oromia zone in Amhara Region, according to reports received on 30 June, 1 and 11 July [...]. The authors wrote that among the detainees at least 316 were being held in 'unknown places' and there were detained an 'additional 657 individuals who are religion teachers, Qubee teachers and artists.' The reports claimed 'Our sources are from the prisons themselves.'⁴¹⁸

In its annual human rights report for Ethiopia in 2022, USDOS wrote that "On September 23, security forces in Addis Ababa detained Oromo anthropologist and researcher Gemechu Megersa for a day before releasing him with a notice to report back to the police when needed".⁴¹⁹

According to the EPO's weekly update from 26 November to 2 December 2022, "on 1 December, due to a dispute over whether to display the Oromia region flag or not in Amha Desta (Entoto Amba) secondary school in Shuro Meda area in woreda 1 in Gulele Kifle Ketema in Addis Ababa, unrest erupted. Two children were injured, and an unidentified number of students were arrested".⁴²⁰ The update did not specify the ethnicity of those arrested, however.

⁴¹⁷ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [The Disappearance of Henok Dejene](#), 2 August 2022

⁴¹⁸ Oromia Support Group (OSG), [REPORT 60: Death, destruction and detention in Oromia Disinformation: a hate crime and a tool of abuse](#), 2 August 2022, pp. 8-9

⁴¹⁹ US Department of State (USDOS), [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 20 March 2023

⁴²⁰ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 26 November – 2 December 2022](#), 6 December 2022

This was also highlighted (although again not reporting on ethnicity) in the EHRC's annual human rights situation report (covering the period of June 2022 to July 2023), the executive summary of which is available in English, noting that:

In some cases, children were also subjected to arbitrary detention. In Addis Ababa for instance, elementary and high school students were arrested in mass following protests and clashes that took place in certain public schools in connection with the introduction of the Oromia regional flag hoisting and singing of the Oromia regional anthem in public schools offering Afaan Oromo language courses. The students were placed in adult detention places often lacking adequate facilities. In January 2023, hundreds of people were subjected to arbitrary and unlawful arrest and detention in Addis Ababa in connection with incidents involving the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church; in February 2023 in connection with incidents that followed the Adwa Victory Day celebrations; and in June 2023 in connection with the demolition of mosques in the recently established Sheger City.⁴²¹

Although not specifying ethnicity, USDOS's annual report on human rights in Ethiopia in 2023 wrote:

On June 1, the EHRC reported security forces in Addis Ababa arrested several Islamic community members around Anwar Mosque for peacefully demonstrating against the demolition of at least 19 mosques deemed "illegal" by the Oromia regional government in Sheger City. Media reported Addis Ababa police cracked down on a May 27 protest within the premises and the surrounding area of the mosque, resulting in two killed and more than 40 injured, and many more arbitrarily detained.⁴²²

It also wrote "The EHRC stated on May 26 police had arrested more than 140 individuals alleging participation in 'violent demonstrations' against the demolition of mosques in Sheger City of Oromia at the Grand Anwar Mosque in Addis Ababa".⁴²³

iii. Torture and inhumane treatment of Oromos

In June 2022, the OLLAA reported on the detention of a five-year-old girl from Belanbal kebele of Goro Dola woreda, west Guji, Oromia noting:

On Saturday, June 4, 2022, Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF) traveled to the local school in Belanbal kebele, where five-year-old Biftu Jemal Birbirs was studying. According to witnesses near the scene, the ENDF forces targeted the girl in order to intimidate her father, Jemal Birbirs, who they believed was a fighter for the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and had been unable to locate. [...] Upon arresting her, the ENDF reportedly began beating her, and a witness claimed that they were striking the girl and saying "We can do anything to her until her father comes back." [...] Witnesses allege that Biftu has continued to face physical assaults while in custody.⁴²⁴

⁴²¹ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), [Executive Summary: Ethiopia Annual Human Rights Situation Report \(June 2022 – June 2023\)](#), 12 July 2023, pp. 3-4

⁴²² US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 23 April 2024

⁴²³ US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 23 April 2024

The OLLAA observed in information submitted to the Committee Against Torture in March 2023, with reference to a report by the EHRC in August 2022, that:

[...] a common type of violation perpetrated in prisons and police stations across Oromia includes the practice by security forces of beating suspects in order to coerce them to confess to crimes.⁴²⁵

398 ኢሰመኮ በኦሮሚያ ክልል በሚገኙ ፖሊስ ጣቢያዎች እና ማረሚያ ቤቶች የከትሏል ግኝቶች ላይ ከባለድርሻ አካላት ጋር በበሽፍቱ ከተማ ውይይት ሊደረግ፣ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (Aug. 1, 2022), <https://ehrc.org/ኢሰመኮ-በኦሮሚያ-ክልል-በሚገኙ-ፖሊስ-ጣቢያ/>; Fraol Bersissa, *Major gaps remain in human rights conditions in Oromia's prisons, correctional facilities, notes Ethiopian Human Rights Commission*, Addis Standard (Aug. 2, 2022), <https://addisstandard.com/news-major-gaps-remain-in-human-rights-conditions-in-oromias-prisons-correctional-facilities-notes-ethiopian-human-rights-commission/>

In its annual human rights report for Ethiopia for 2022, USDOS wrote that “During the year the EHRC observed prison centers and police stations in Gambella, Addis Ababa, Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz, and other parts of the country, where it found problems related to hygiene, food supply, access to health and education, and inhuman treatment of prisoners. On August 1, the EHRC released a report based on a review of 126 police stations and 27 correction centers in Oromia that identified increasing trends of security forces holding detainees without charges, beating detainees, and arresting family members in lieu of suspects at large”.⁴²⁶

In its October 2023 report, covering events between 2020 and 2022, the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia reported on arrest and detentions of Oromos (note that where incidents predate the reporting period for this report they have not been included here):

Detentions were often accompanied by severe beatings, kicking, and other forms of physical violence. [...] Another man, also detained in Nejo police station, said that he had faced pressure from local authorities, including OSF, to work with the government. When he refused, they accused him of being OLA and of transferring money to the group. Eventually he was arrested on 15 October 2022 and taken to a Nejo police station, where he was subjected to harsh conditions of detention:

“It was extremely hot and [the cell] had no windows. They used to beat detainees including me. We were taken out of the cell at night. They usually took us by the neck saying, ‘We will hang and kill you.’ They beat us with wooden sticks, and some other times with electric wire. Sometimes, they hand-cuffed us and took us outside just for beating.” He told the Commission that one of the male detainees, whom he knew by name, was killed while in detention. He further explained that, during his time in detention, he was never brought before a court. He escaped in April 2023 after family members bribed a police officer and fled Ethiopia; however his wife and children remain in the country, and he is only able to speak to them sporadically.

⁴²⁴ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Five-Year-Old Girl Arrested, Tortured by ENDF Because of Father's Ties to the OLA](#), 21 June 2022

⁴²⁵ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Information on Ethiopia for Consideration by the Committee against Torture at its 76th session \(17 April to 12 May 2023\)](#), 13 March 2023, p. 6

⁴²⁶ US Department of State (USDOS), [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 20 March 2023

A 16-year-old boy who was detained by Oromia Special Forces in Kellem Wollega in February 2023 was also tortured using electric cables. The boy was detained in February 2023, accused of being a member of OLA and having weapons in his house. Oromia Special Force soldiers detained him along with another boy for around two weeks in a military camp, during which time they would beat and interrogate the two boys. He recalled:

“Every day they would question us about firearms. Our hands were always tied at the back. Whenever I responded that I did not know about any firearms, they would hang me up suspending me over the ground. Then they would beat me with wires. [An OSF Commander] administered the beatings or gave instructions to other soldiers to beat us. During the beating, I would plead with them to spare my life.”

In addition to torture and ill-treatment in detention, the Commission received credible information about deaths in custody. Former detainees witnessed or gave information about other detainees whom they witnessed or knew to have been killed in detention, including providing the names of individuals who died in custody. [...]

Multiple former detainees described being transferred to different detention sites, including police stations and military camps, where they were interrogated and tortured. Similar patterns have been documented by civil society groups and non-governmental organizations. [...]

In the cases reviewed by the Commission, detentions lasted for months – sometimes more than one year – and in most instances, detainees did not have access to lawyers and were not brought before courts to challenge the legality of their detention. A judicial officer explained that such practices were common, especially in areas under the control of Command Posts.

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During its investigation, the Commission received alarming allegations of sexual violence, including rape, in detention in Oromia. [...]

Based on its investigation, the Commission believes that sexual violence in detention – and in Oromia more generally – is seriously underreported. Civil society organizations working on Oromia explained that speaking about sexual violence is taboo, and survivors fear further reprisals if they report it.⁴²⁷

A September 2023 report from the ICHREE commented that:

The Commission further uncovered a pattern of arrest and detention of Oromo civilians, in particular men, accused of having links with the OLA. Detentions documented between November 2020 and February 2023 were perpetrated primarily by the federal or regional police, Oromia Special Forces and at times the ENDF and were accompanied by torture and ill-treatment. Violations are ongoing. Family members of suspected OLA fighters were also targeted for arrest and detention – including women who experienced sexual violence.⁴²⁸

The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission’s annual human rights situation report (covering the period of June 2022 to July 2023), highlighted in its executive summary that “The Commission’s monitoring of the

⁴²⁷ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Comprehensive investigative findings and legal determinations](#), 13 October 2023, paragraphs 369- 383

⁴²⁸ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE), [Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia](#), 14 September 2023, paragraph 41

situation in conflict affected areas in Oromia region between July and November 2022 also showed that several instances where detainees suspected of supporting the armed groups” were often subjected to acts constituting torture”.⁴²⁹

The EHRC discussed in its March 2024 national inquiry into persons deprived of liberty a public hearing in Adama from 24 to 26 April 2023. With relation to torture and ill-treatment and with testimonies from fifteen previous detainees, the report describes:

All victims (13 persons) who testified at the public hearing said that they were insulted and degraded during their arrest and detention. The following testimonies illustrate the types and manners of torture and other ill-treatment.

A victim from Metu town (Ilu Abba Bor Zone) testified that the police forced him to take off his clothes and beat him several times, forcing him to admit that “he had a working relationship with leaders of OLA.”

A victim from Burayu (Shaggar City) who claimed to be arrested by the police on 12 October 2020 and taken to a place 500 meters away from the main road of Burayu town, testified that four police officers kicked him several times in his neck, hips and abdomen and beat him with their weapon until he fell unconscious. According to him, they left him lying on the ground, thinking he was dead. One of the police officers who beat him, arrested him again on 9 June 2021 and on 17 May 2022, took him to Woreda 03 Police Station in Burayu, beating him on his way to the police station; and that one of the police officers urinated on him. He stated that police officers took off his clothes and repeatedly beat him with electric cable and a stick in the middle of the night until he was unconscious again; that they damped him in the garbage disposal area inside the compound of the police station; and left him there for two days without any medical attention. He noted that the Chief Inspector of the Police Station was watching when six police officers took turns to beat him. He also testified that there were other detainees who were beaten like him; and that the police chained detainees for months.

Another victim from Shaggar City reported that seven police officers beat her severely while arresting her. According to her, while beating her, they were asking questions such as “how is OLA giving you instructions?”, “where are they training you?” The female investigator who was interrogating her, brought other six policemen inside the interrogation room to assist her with the beating. They removed her clothes, tied her hand and feet behind her back and flogged her, using a thick electric wire. They took her from the police station to a forest area called Gefersa to beat her and force her to confess that she was a member of OLA. The police took her to a government health center, where the nurse physically assaulted her with his shoes and insulted her: “you are an animal.” She was forced to undergo HIV/AIDS and pregnancy tests, instead of getting treatment for the injuries she incurred from the beatings.

A victim from Darimu Woreda (Ilu Abba Bor Zone) noted that five members of Oromia Special Force arrested him on 21 May 2022 because he complained against the Special Force to the Woreda Administration, Peace and Security Office and Justice Office. According to him, they took him to Boto area Special Forces Camp in Darimu Woreda, and stripped him naked, beat him with a wire, and tied his hand and feet together.

A victim from Jimma City (Jimma Zone) stated that the police took him from the jail cell at night and beat him, that he was subjected to electric shock; that electric current was applied to his anus, saying, “he hid weapons in his house.”

⁴²⁹ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), [Executive Summary: Ethiopia Annual Human Rights Situation Report \(June 2022 – June 2023\)](#), 12 July 2023, p. 5

A victim from Limmu Kosa Woreda (Jimma Zone) noted that members of Oromia Special Force took her somewhere in the forest beat her severely, took off her Hijab (head cover), and pulled her hair. She added that she did not cry at the beginning of the beating; but that they continued beating her saying, “she is a well-trained Shane member” for several hours until she fell unconscious.

A victim from Jimma City (Jimma Zone) said he was denied access to toilet, forcing him to urinate and defecate on himself in an informal detention center called Dem Bank; that he was beaten repeatedly and forced to walk on his knees on the sand in the compound while bleeding from the beatings.

A victim, who said he was a member of OLF, testified that a police officer beat him and injured his head because he refused the police order to kneel before him. According to him, he was taken to the clinic in the camp and caught an infectious disease because of contaminated medical appliances used during his treatment. Although, he was referred to Adama Hospital for further treatment, the responsible police officer refused to take him to the hospital.

A victim from Agarfa Woreda (Bale Zone) said that the police harassed, insulted, and physically assaulted him during arrest and in the detention center.

A lawyer, who said that he represented a victim, testified that his client was arrested and detained since 2018 in Adama City, Chiro City, Meakelawi detention center, and Bishoftu City. The exact locations of the detention were not disclosed, the family members were unable to visit him, and it had been five years since family members and lawyer met the victim in person. The lawyer noted that when he met the victim at Oromia Special forces training camp in Bishoftu City after five years of enforced disappearance, the victim was not in good health. [...]

Victims and witnesses testified that they were forced to make confessions. A victim from Adami Tullu and Jido Kombolcha Woreda (East Showa Zone) reported that police officers threatened to kill him unless he confessed; and that several police officers beat him at the Special Force Camp and forced him to confess that he was working with OLA. A victim from Metu town (Ilu Abba Bor Zone) testified that he was tortured continuously for five days in a week and forced to confess that he was a member of Shane.

A victim from Shaggar City, a 21-year-old lady, stated that police officers arrested her at her aunt’s home and took her first to a place with explosives. According to her, they then took her to a police station for interrogation by a female investigator. The investigator slapped her, pulled her breasts, and beat her on private and other parts of her body to force her to confess that she worked with OLA and that she brought the explosives (bombs) to the city. The police officers took her into the woods, cut stick from a tree and beat her to force her admit that she was a member of OLA and threatened to kill her unless she confessed.

A victim from Limmu Kosa Woreda (Jimma Zone) testified that a member of the Oromia Special Force verbally harassed and threatened to kill her with a gun unless she confessed her role in Shane. She said that a police officer threatened to kill anyone who came to the police station to visit her.

A witness from Agarfa Woreda (Bale Zone) noted that his son was forced to admit that “he was Shane;” that the police officers promised to release his son if the latter admitted his membership in Shane; and that they threatened to take his son to Kilinto (a federal prison in Addis Ababa) to rot there.⁴³⁰

See the same report for further details of prison conditions and deprivations of other rights in Oromia.

USDOS’s annual report on human rights in Ethiopia in 2023 wrote that:

⁴³⁰ Ethiopian Human Rights Committee (EHRC), [National Inquiry into Persons Deprived of Liberty](#), 26 March 2024, pp. 88-89, 91-92.

During the year, EHRC investigations into prison and detention centers in Amhara, Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz, and Somali regions revealed detainees reported police beat them during arrests and in detention. The EHRC's monitoring teams found evidence of injuries on some detainees who reported police beatings. In addition, the EHRC stated Oromia police tortured suspects held in unofficial detention centers, including in Oromia police training camps and government offices. Individuals were allegedly beaten and tortured as punishment for supporting armed groups and to extract information. [...]

On June 5, the EHRC reported it was investigating an allegation government security forces tortured individuals in a police training center in Gelan town of Oromia. According to the EHRC, security forces took the victims from their homes in Addis Ababa to the police training camp starting May 2, after unrest broke out in Amhara Region following the federal government's initiative to dissolve regional Special Forces.⁴³¹

It added:

According to HRW, OLLAA, and media reports, both the government and militias in Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray engaged in torture and ill-treatment of civilians and captured combatants. Victims were reportedly beaten with electric cables and metal pipes, detained incommunicado, threatened with guns to their heads, and deprived of food and water. [...]

The government reportedly detained thousands of ethnic Amhara and Oromo after the August 4 state of emergency, and there were reports many detainees were held in inhuman and at times life-threatening conditions and subjected to torture.⁴³²

In June 2023 the Committee against Torture noted in its Concluding observations on Ethiopia that:

In view of the numerous, ongoing and consistent allegations and complaints of torture and ill-treatment by police officers, prison guards and other members of the security forces, as well as the military, in police stations, detention centres, federal prisons, military bases and in unofficial or secret places of detention, particularly during the investigation stage of proceedings, the Committee remains deeply concerned at the lack of accountability, which contributes to an environment of impunity. In that regard, it regrets that it has not received comprehensive information on the number of cases that have resulted in criminal proceedings and the number of prosecutions and convictions, as well as the penalties and disciplinary measures imposed on the persons convicted for acts of torture and ill-treatment during the period under review. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned at reports that detainees often do not lodge complaints owing to their fear of retaliation and, in cases where such complaints are lodged, the information on investigations carried out and their outcome is lacking. Moreover, it is concerned that there is still no specific, independent, effective and confidential mechanism for the receipt of complaints of torture or ill-treatment in all places of deprivation of liberty and that existing investigation bodies lack the necessary independence, as they belong to the same structure that employs the alleged perpetrators (arts. 2, 4, 11–13 and 16).⁴³³

⁴³¹ US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 23 April 2024

⁴³² US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 23 April 2024

⁴³³ UN Committee Against Torture, [Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Ethiopia](#), 7 June 2023, paragraph 40

In February 2024, the OLLAA reported on a video that emerged online with an alleged ENDF member abusing an Oromo child, noting:

A deeply disturbing [video](#) emerged on Friday, February 23, depicting members of the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) reportedly abusing a young boy named Ahmed Kasim Dube while speaking in Amharic. In the disturbing footage, the boy pleads for forgiveness as the security forces persist in mistreating him, going to the extent of placing an AK-47 in his mouth. Verified sources from the Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA) confirm that the incident occurred in February 21 in Saransar village, Gooroo Doolaa district, in East Guji, Oromia. This incident is part of a troubling pattern where security forces target minors and civilians, accusing them of supporting the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA).⁴³⁴

Reporting on the situation in Ethiopia in general the June 2024 OHCHR report covering the situation in 2023 and incidents in 2024 thus far detailed that:

The unnecessary and disproportionate use of force by law enforcement personnel, including police brutality, and other ill-treatment during detention remained of concern, with instances of torture or ill-treatment reported within police detention centers. Out of the 346 victims of torture or inhuman treatment documented in 2023, the highest number of cases were registered in Addis Ababa and in Somali region, with 160 and 126 victims respectively, perpetrated by state actors.⁴³⁵

b. Killings

See the [Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association's \(OLLAA\) monthly reports](#) on extrajudicial killings for a more comprehensive list of executions by state and non-state actors.

i. Extrajudicial killings by state actors

See also III. Security situation, d. Intercommunal violence, ii. [Civilian massacres](#).

According to the EPO's weekly update from 23 April to 6 May 2022:

[...] on 1 May, the ENDF opened fire on civilians attending a wedding ceremony in Doro Erbata kebele in Lome woreda in East Shewa zone, killing one person and injuring four others. The government forces also arrested 26 people attending the wedding. The reason behind the attack and arrest is unknown. On 3 May, members of Oromia regional special forces killed at least 15 people in Kajama military camp in Were Jarso woreda in North Shewa zone after accusing them of being OLF-Shane members. The victims were taken from their homes in Aware Gorje kebele the day before. Similarly, members of Oromia regional special forces shot and killed three civilians in Gemene Gudene kebele in Guduru woreda in Horo Guduru Wollega zone, after accusing them of collaborating with the OLF-Shane and refusing to pinpoint where

⁴³⁴ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Disturbing Video Reveals Ethiopian National Defense Force's Alleged Abuses of Minors-Urgent Call for International Attention](#), 27 February 2024

⁴³⁵ OHCHR, [Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia](#), June 2024, paragraph 21

the group militants were stationed. Finally, Oromia regional special forces shot and killed a teenager in Sichawo village in Jimma Horo woreda in Kellem Wollega zone after finding his picture in an OLF-Shane music video and accusing him of being a member of the rebel group.⁴³⁶

An 'atrocities alert' from the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect in May 2022 stated that "According to local media in Ethiopia, federal government forces and associated militia have summarily executed dozens of civilians and looted and burned homes in the Oromia region in recent weeks. The attacks are allegedly in retaliation for losses suffered during fighting against the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), an ethnic Oromo armed rebel group".⁴³⁷ It gave the following details: "At least 18 people, including the elderly, were also removed from wedding ceremonies on 1-2 May and executed in North Shewa zone. Government forces have been repeatedly accused of human rights abuses in their fight against the OLA, while the OLA have also targeted other ethnic groups and killed civilians".⁴³⁸

The monthly update for April and May 2022 from the EPO stated that:

In May, 28 violence against civilians events were recorded in Ethiopia, with 17 of these events recorded in Oromia region. [...] ACLED data demonstrate an increase in extrajudicial killings by government forces in April and May. Government forces – i.e., ENDF, federal police, and Oromia regional special forces – were implicated in [...] 11 of the 17 recorded violence against civilians events in May. This is an increase from March when ACLED recorded only three extrajudicial killings involving government forces in West Shewa zone. Victims were either accused of being OLF-Shane members, having links with the OLF-Shane, or hiding members of the group. In both months, the highest number of fatalities due to violence against civilians events were recorded in West Shewa zone.⁴³⁹

The weekly update for 28 May – 3 June 2022 from the EPO wrote that:

On 30 May, members of government security forces assumed to be the ENDF, reportedly shot and killed five people and injured another two in Irqo Washabo kebele in Illu Galan woreda in West Shewa zone after accusing them of supporting the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane. Similarly, On 2 June, security forces, also assumedly members of the ENDF, shot and killed one person and burned down his house in Gomosa Sato kebele in Ambo Zuria woreda in West Shewa zone on an accusation of supporting and hiding members of the OLF-Shane. [...]

One excessive force against protesters event was also recorded in Oromia region. On 1 June, Oromia regional special forces fired live ammunitions on youth protesters who had gathered in Aweday town in East Hararge zone against the "forced recruitment of youth into military" by the government (OMN, 3 June 2022). The intervention led to one fatality and 17 injuries among the protesters.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁶ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 23 April – 6 May 2022](#), 11 May 2022

⁴³⁷ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Atrocities Alert No. 301: Ethiopia, Burkina Faso and China](#), 18 May 2022

⁴³⁸ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, [Atrocities Alert No. 301: Ethiopia, Burkina Faso and China](#), 18 May 2022

⁴³⁹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: April-May 2022](#), 15 June 2022

⁴⁴⁰ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 28 May-3 June 2022](#), 8 June 2022

EPO's update for the following week observed that "members of government security forces, assumed to be the ENDF, killed an unidentified number of farmers in Yelo Bakaka and Koricha Chobi kebeles in Chobi woreda in West Shewa zone. Similarly, security forces, again presumably the ENDF, killed an unidentified number of farmers in unspecified locations in Bako Tibe woreda in West Shewa zone".⁴⁴¹

The OLLAA reported on the extrajudicial killings of Oromo in Gambella city in June 2022:

At approximately 6:30am on June 14, 2022, it was reported that there was a clash between the Gambella Liberation Front (GLF) and the OLA and Ethiopian government forces in Gambella city. [...]

Following the attack, the Gambella regional government announced that they would take further measures to "clear" and "totally eradicate" the members of the armed groups who remained in the city. The government then imposed a curfew in Gambella city, and the Gambella region chief administrator called for citizens to "report any suspicious behavior in Gambella city and to assist security forces in maintaining the city's tranquility." Since that time, it has been reported that security forces have been searching residents' homes for "Shane" (a term frequently used by the Ethiopian government to refer to the OLA), and have been targeting Oromo civilians. One resident spoke with the Addis Standard about seeing government forces shoot a man in the leg, noting that, "I'm not sure whether or not he is a member of the armed groups," but claiming that, "security forces were shooting at anyone who runs away from them, men whose hair is braided and those who can't speak Amharic or Gambella language, especially those who speak Afaan Oromo, are shot at. The government forces suffered massive losses in the attack so they were shooting victims at random." In another incident, a video was taken of government security forces repeatedly shooting a man who had his hands tied behind his back, and another resident told the Addis Standard that, "Eleven people that we know were rounded up. Only one survived. The one you saw in the video was taken from his home and shot down," and noted that, "He was raised in Gambella city by his sister. He lived here all his life."⁴⁴²

The monthly update for June 2022 from the EPO reporting on the same incident noted that:

The OLF-Shane was also involved in armed clashes outside Oromia region. On 14 June, members of the Gambella Liberation Front (GLF) and OLF-Shane clashed with the ENDF, federal police, and Gambella regional special forces in Gambella city in Gambella region. At least 40 people, including 11 members of government security forces and two civilians, were reportedly killed during the clashes, with over 36 security forces and three civilians also getting injured. After retaking full control of the city, government forces assumed to be Gambella regional special forces shot and killed at least 10 civilians in the city. The killings occurred as government forces conducted a home-to-home search for GLF and OLF-Shane members believed to be hiding in the city. Reportedly, many of those killed were ethnic Oromos who were accused of being associated with the OLF-Shane [...].

Violence against civilians continued in Oromia region. In June, ACLED recorded 20 violence against civilians events in the region. Ten of these events were conducted by government forces [...]. ACLED data demonstrate an increase in the number of fatalities from incidents of extrajudicial killing by government forces since April 2022. Similar to the previous two months, the highest number of such events in June

⁴⁴¹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 4-10 June 2022](#), 15 June 2022

⁴⁴² Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Ethiopian Security Forces are Targeting Oromos Following Clash with Armed Groups in Gambella City](#), 17 June 2022

were recorded in West Shewa zone, with four recorded events. Extrajudicial killings were also recorded in East Shewa, East Wollega, and South West Shewa zones. Most of the victims were either accused of having links with the OLF-Shane or hiding members of the rebel group.⁴⁴³

The update added that “on 28 July [2022], Somali regional forces were reported to have opened gunfire on civilians for an unknown reason, killing an unidentified number of people in Habrona kebele in Guradamole woreda in Bale zone”.⁴⁴⁴

According to the 2024 Bertelsmann Stiftung’s Transformation Index, covering the period from 1 February 2021 to 31 January 2023, “ethnic Oromo individuals have been extrajudicially executed in certain areas of Gambella by government forces, who assume an association with the OLA insurgency”.⁴⁴⁵

In September 2022, Addis Standard reported on a new report released by EHRC on extrajudicial civilian killings in June of that year in Gambella observing:

At least 50 action taken mainly by government forces killed at least 50 civilians between the afternoon of 14 June and 16 June being accused of “hiding Shene fighters and weapons in their homes” the reports says. Women and mentally ill individuals were among the victims.

A disturbing footage of government security forces shooting repeatedly at an unarmed man whose hands were tied behind his back had created an outcry on social media following the killings back in June.

In addition at least 25 people were lightly and seriously injured, numerous people were beaten and tortured, individuals were vandalized and looted including by OLA, GLF, regional Special Forces, militias and allied youths during the conflict said the report.

According to the information collected by the commission from the victims’ families, residents and eyewitnesses, the bodies of civilians killed by the regional security forces were collected by the regional Special Forces and regular police in trucks and taken to unknown location for mass burial.⁴⁴⁶

As highlighted by the EPO’s weekly update from 2 to 8 July 2022:

[...] government forces, assumed to be the ENDF, shot and killed an unknown number of Oromia state police officers in Chanka kebele in Sedi Chenka woreda in Kellem Wollega zone. The victims were accused of “refusing to cooperate with government forces on military operations against the OLF-Shane” (OMN, 7 July 2022). Similarly, security forces, presumably the ENDF, shot and killed an unknown number of government employees and kebele militiamen in Yubdo town in Yubdo woreda and Ayra town in Ayira woreda in West Wollega zone after accusing them of having links with the OLF-Shane. Moreover, government forces, again assumedly ENDF soldiers, shot and killed an unknown number of civilians in Semero in Nole Kaba woreda in West Wollega zone for an unknown reason.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: June 2022](#), 26 July 2022

⁴⁴⁴ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: July 2022](#), 18 August 2022

⁴⁴⁵ Bertelsmann Stiftung, [BTI 2024 Country Report — Ethiopia](#), 19 March 2024

⁴⁴⁶ Addis Standard, [News: At least 50 civilians killed in extra-judicial execution by security forces, armed groups in Gambella: new report](#), 29 September 2022

⁴⁴⁷ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 2-8 July 2022](#), 13 July 2022

The International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in July 2022 "clashes 7-8 July erupted in Oromia's West Wollega and Kellem Wollega Zones; residents said federal forces killed state civil servants for allegedly refusing to cooperate against OLA".⁴⁴⁸

The weekly update for 16 to 22 July 2022 from the EPO wrote that:

From 17 to 19 July, the OLF-Shane attacked civilians in Amuru woreda in Horo Guduru Wollega zone, killing and abducting an unidentified number of people. Moreover, government forces were implicated in six recorded attacks against civilians. They shot and killed over a dozen of civilians in West Arsi, East Wollega, West Wollega, South West Shewa, and West Shewa zones. Some of the victims were accused of either having links with the OLF-Shane or supporting the group, while the reason behind the killing of the others is unknown. Moreover, on 18 July, Somali ethnic militiamen from Somali region attacked Oromo civilians in Guradamole woreda in Bale zone, displacing the residents of the woreda.⁴⁴⁹

The following week, EPO observed that "Since the reformation of Somali regional special forces in 2018, their involvement in Oromia region has been rare. On 28 July, they were reported to have opened gunfire on civilians for an unknown reason, killing an unidentified number of people in Habrona kebele in Guradamole woreda in Bale zone and displacing residents from their homes".⁴⁵⁰

The monthly update for July 2022 from the EPO wrote that "In July, the majority of attack against civilians events in Oromia – 26 events with 68 reported fatalities – were conducted by government forces – i.e., ENDF and regional special forces from Oromia, Somali, and Amhara regions. [...] Most of the victims were either accused of having links with the OLF-Shane or hiding members of the rebel group".⁴⁵¹

In August 2022, the Oromia Support Group published a report for presentation to the UN Commission of Enquiry into Ethiopia stating that:

Government forces, especially Oromia Special Forces operating out of military command posts established in December 2018 (Guji) and in January 2019 (Wallega and elsewhere), continue to hunt down and execute Qeerroo members but the majority of those killed in 2022 have been killed on the pretext that they were 'associates' of OLA, the Oromo Liberation Army. Really, they were killed simply because they were Oromo living in an area where OLA had been active or they were killed in an act of ethnic cleansing by Amhara forces in Wallega and Showa, claimed as Amhara 'ancestral lands.' [...]

This year, civilian deaths were most frequently reported in West Showa zone, where over one third (262) of the reported killings took place. On several occasions; for example in North Showa at Warra Jarso, in East Showa at Bishoftu, and in Horo Guduru in KIRAMU district, summary executions were carried out en masse. Most mass killings were of young men with their hands tied behind their backs, some when lying

⁴⁴⁸ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), July 2022

⁴⁴⁹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 16-22 July 2022](#), 27 July 2022

⁴⁵⁰ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 23-29 July 2022](#), 3 August 2022

⁴⁵¹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: July 2022](#), 18 August 2022

on the ground. Killings were maximal in April (247) and May (132), following a directive issued by Ethiopia's Security Task Force on 14 March,¹ in which the government of PM Abiy Ahmed instructed federal and regional defence and police forces to 'eradicate' OLA 'and its associates' 'once and for all', so thoroughly that 'it is never able to resurface'.⁴⁵²

1 Counter-insurgency Operation Plan against 'Anti-peace' forces, leaked to Oromia Media Network and broadcast on YouTube on 28 March at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xel7q5Kq2Ys>. Translation by Oromia Global Forum members in USA, Canada, Belgium and Switzerland

See the full report for a list of the civilians killed.

According to the EPO's weekly update from 24 to 30 September 2022 "two extrajudicial killings by government forces were reported in Buno Bedele and West Guji zones".⁴⁵³

The monthly update for September 2022 from the EPO wrote that, in Oromia that month, "Government forces were involved in seven attack against civilians events resulting in 21 reported fatalities overall – with the majority occurring in West Shewa zone".⁴⁵⁴

According to the EPO's weekly update from 8 to 14 October 2022 "members of the ENDF reportedly shot and killed eight people in Bule Hora woreda in West Guji zone after accusing them of being members of the OLF-Shane".⁴⁵⁵

The following week, EPO observed the killing of civilians by state airstrikes:

[...] multiple airstrikes, which are rare in the region, were also reported in Oromia. On 19 October, the Ethiopian Air Force reportedly conducted drone strikes against OLF-Shane positions in Meta Walkite and Chobi woredas in West Shewa zone, and Nunu Kumba woreda in East Wollega zone. According to witnesses interviewed by BBC Amharic, one of the strikes targeted the graduation ceremony of OLF-Shane soldiers in Chobi woreda in West Shewa zone. At least 70 people, including members of the OLF-Shane and civilians attending the ceremony, were reported killed and 120 others injured (BBC Amharic, 25 October 2022).⁴⁵⁶

The weekly update for 22 – 28 October 2022 from the EPO wrote similarly that "strikes conducted by the ENDF continued in the region; three strikes were recorded in Wama Tobera kebele in Mana Sibule woreda, Mendi town, and Bila town in Boji Dirmeji, resulting in over 55 reported fatalities".⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵² Oromia Support Group (OSG), [*REPORT 60: Death, destruction and detention in Oromia Disinformation: a hate crime and a tool of abuse*](#), 2 August 2022, pp. 5-6

⁴⁵³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [*EPO Weekly: 24 – 30 September 2022*](#), 4 October 2022

⁴⁵⁴ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [*EPO Monthly: September 2022*](#), 5 October 2022

⁴⁵⁵ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [*EPO Weekly: 8 – 14 October 2022*](#), 18 October 2022

⁴⁵⁶ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [*EPO Weekly: 15 – 21 October 2022*](#), 25 October 2022

⁴⁵⁷ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [*EPO Weekly: 29 October – 4 November 2022*](#), 8 November 2022

Addis Standard published an article in October 2022 on the increased drone strikes killing civilians in Oromia:

Residents told *Addis Standard* that at least 68 people were killed in a drone strike in Ofu Bekke village, Chobi district, about 120 km northwest of the capital Addis Abeba in the West Shewa zone of Oromia regional state. [...]

“Drone strikes have been increasing in our area since lately,” said Kebede, a resident of Chobi district, adding that even funerals are held nightly as there is fear of attacks. He said the security situation in the region remained threatening after the attack.

There has been increasing presence of the rebel group Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), in several districts of West Showa zone of the Oromia region, and civilians are most often caught in the crosshairs as federal and regional government forces carry out attacks against the group [...].

International spokesman of Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), Odaa Tarbii, said in an October 24 post on his Twitter account that there had been six drone strikes “targeting civilians” and “killing hundreds of people” in the Oromia region since October 20. According to Odaa Tarbii, “150 people have been confirmed dead” in attacks in Meta Welkitie and Chobi districts of West Shawa zone alone.

Meanwhile, after Sunday’s attack in the district, another airstrike “targeting a school” in Chobi district on Monday morning killed several students, according to Odaa Tarbii’s subsequent tweet published on Tuesday, 25 October, with footage showing dead bodies, including students who wore school uniforms falling to the ground. [...]

The opposition party Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) said in a statement on 24 October that air strikes were carried out in many parts of Oromia region since 20 October. OLF said that on October 20, civilians were killed and many others wounded in an air strike in Minare town, Meta Welkitie district of West Shawa zone.

In addition, the OLF said that several civilians were killed and injured, and also houses and properties of residents were destroyed in many places in a continuous aerial attack that took place on October 22 and 23 in Fentale district of East Shawa, Meta Welkitie and Gindeberet districts of West Shawa and Nunu Kimba district of East Wallega. [...]

Corroborating the OLF statement, the other opposition party, Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), issued its own statement on on [sic] the same day saying that in addition to the attacks in Cobi district, drone strikes were also carried out in places such as Kare Heto village in Meta Walkitie district, Wama Agalo district of East Wallega zone, and Fentalle district of East Shawa zone, killing dozen civilians.

“The government has failed to fulfill its duty to protect the peace of the people and has used drones and warplanes together with its forces to kill civilians,” OFC said, urging the United Nations immediately discuss the matter and direct that the killings be investigated by independent bodies and that the forces involved in these human rights violations be held accountable.⁴⁵⁸

Reuters similarly reported at the end of October 2022 on deadly airstrikes, writing that:

Organisations from the Oromia area of Ethiopia have accused the army of carrying out airstrikes there that they claim resulted in the deaths of hundreds of civilians. [...]

A citizen in the western Ethiopian region of Oromia, which is near the nation’s capital Addis Ababa, told newsmen that he saw an airstrike on Sunday that claimed the lives of roughly 60 people, including his

⁴⁵⁸ Addis Standard, [News: Residents say drone strike killed dozens of civilians in West Shewa, Oromia region; OLF, OFC condemn relentless airstrikes across Oromia](#), 25 October 2022

uncle. [...]The OLF and the OLA specified places in Oromiya where they said a series of lethal air strikes had taken place between Thursday and Tuesday in statements supplied to Reuters by text message, email, and posts on Twitter.

“The combined civilian death toll stands in the hundreds,” said a statement that purported to come from the “OLF-OLA High Command”. it said schools and other civilian targets had been hit.⁴⁵⁹

The International Crisis Group’s CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in October 2022 “Amid ongoing clashes between security forces and Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), federal air force conducted multiple air strikes. One of deadliest drone strikes occurred 23 Oct in Cobi district in West Shewa Zone at OLA graduation ceremony, killing at least 50, including civilians”.⁴⁶⁰

The monthly update for October 2022 from the EPO wrote that “violence against civilians in Oromia remained at elevated levels throughout the month. Last month, 32 such events were recorded in the region; 15 of these events were perpetrated by government forces, mostly in West Shewa zone, resulting in 31 reported fatalities overall”.⁴⁶¹

It added that “In October, ACLED records at least 16 airstrike events resulting in an estimated 163 reported fatalities, an all-time high in the country”.⁴⁶² It further stated that “In Oromia region, airstrikes targeting OLF-Shane forces were conducted in East Shewa, West Shewa, West Wollega, and East Wollega zones, with at least one strike resulting in a significant number of civilian casualties”.⁴⁶³

In October 2022, the OLLAA similarly highlighted that:

OLLAA has received disturbing reports about drone attacks being carried out by the Ethiopian government throughout Oromia in recent days, leading to the death of civilians. On October 24, 2022, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) both released statements highlighting recent reports of drone attacks in the West Shewa, East Shewa, and East Wollega zones. The Addis Standard has reported that at least 68 civilians were killed in a drone strike that took place in the Cobi district of the West Shewa zone on October 23, 2022, and that reports are circulating on social media that another drone strike may have occurred on October 24, although they could not confirm those reports at this time. A credible source has recently provided OLLAA staff with a list of 87 individuals who were killed during the recent drone attacks in the West Shewa zone.⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁵⁹ Reuters, [Ethiopian Government Accused of Deadly Airstrikes in Oromia](#), 27 October 2022

⁴⁶⁰ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), October 2022

⁴⁶¹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: October 2022](#), 9 November 2022

⁴⁶² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: October 2022](#), 9 November 2022

⁴⁶³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: October 2022](#), 9 November 2022

⁴⁶⁴ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Drone Attacks and Violence Across Western Oromia](#), 25 October 2022

According to ICHREE's analysis in October 2023 on the risk of further atrocities in Ethiopia "The Commission has confirmed multiple airstrikes which killed or injured civilians [...] in Oromia from October to November 2022".⁴⁶⁵

The International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in November 2022 with regards to Oromia "Notably, federal air force early Nov launched three drone strikes in West Wollega Zone, killing 55".⁴⁶⁶

According to the EPO's weekly update from 26 November to 2 December 2022, "government forces were involved in two attack against civilian events, reportedly killing one person in Gimbi town in West Wollega zone".⁴⁶⁷

Ethiopia Insight remarked on the following incident in November 2022:

On the morning of 2 November 2022, the sound of weeping and grieving could be heard as local residents gathered around a small house in Burayu, an Oromia town located on the western outskirts of Ethiopia's capital. [...]

The brother's name was Dereje Yadeta and he was killed on 30 October by government security forces in Shambu town, Horo Guduru Wollega Zone's capital, where he had been living with his sister.

Dereje was a Grade 12 student [and] [...] preacher at one of the Protestant churches in Horo Guduru Wollega, an administrative zone in Oromia that has been a hotspot for recurring ethnic-based massacres of Oromo and Amhara civilians.

According to Temesgen, Dereje was shot dead in broad daylight on a street filled with people. He claims his brother had no involvement in politics. He was too busy with his studies and church service.

A week after his murder, a youth claiming to be an eyewitness said that a group of Oromia Special Forces standing on the side of the road in Shambu town stopped and started questioning Dereje, who was on his way back home from church.

"Within a few minutes, the government forces started firing their guns at him," he told *Ethiopia Insight*.

A month prior to Dereje's murder, Amhara militants raided his family's village in Wolkite Kebele of Amuru Wereda. "Fano killed 16 people including three elderly people and burnt many houses in our parent's village," Temesgen said.⁴⁶⁸

The Peace Research Facility of the RVI noted in March 2023 the following incidents in West Wollega:

- 30 November: A drone attack followed OLA's presence in Mendi town killing dozens.
- Early November: A drone strike in Bila town left scores dead. The attack by government forces came after the OLA had previously gained control of Bila, Mendi and Kiltu Karra towns, with mostly Oromo civilians killed in the strike.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁵ 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, p. 5

⁴⁶⁶ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), November 2022

⁴⁶⁷ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 26 November – 2 December 2022](#), 6 December 2022

⁴⁶⁸ Ethiopia Insight, [Peace in Ethiopia's Oromia will only come through genuine self-rule](#), 8 January 2024

33 'Wallagga Lixaa magaala Biilaatti haleellaa 'diroonitiin' lammiilee nagaan ajjeefamuu jiraattonni himan', BBC, 5 November 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/afaanoromoo/articles/cnkjn94400qo>. See also: <https://twitter.com/ameyuetana/status/1588863080842555392>

A September 2023 report from the ICHREE wrote that "The Commission also continued to investigate the civilian impact of a series of Ethiopian Air Force drone strikes carried out in Oromia region in October and November 2022, when fighting between the OLA and ENDF had re-escalated, particularly in Western Oromia. Access to Western Oromia remains extremely restricted, imposing constraints on access to information. The Commission was able to verify three separate incidents during which civilians were killed or injured and recommends further investigations".⁴⁷⁰

In December 2022, BBC News reported on escalations of conflict in Oromia noting with reference to civilian killings linked to the November battles in Nekemte, as well as increased government drone attacks:

A clear demonstration of the growing strength of the OLA came in November, when its fighters stormed Nekemte, a strategically important town with roads leading to Mr Abiy's home village, the capital, Addis Ababa, and a newly built mega dam that is vital to Ethiopia's electricity needs. [...]
Residents told the BBC that gun-battles between government troops and the rebels had claimed the lives of civilians, though they could not give an exact number as casualty figures are not collated.
One resident said he had lost two of his children in the Sunday morning attack - a 27-year-old son and a 16-year-old daughter, who was a top performer in school.
"We were awake to go to church but we didn't go because there was shooting outside. Both were killed while they were in a room," he said, blaming government forces for shooting into their home. [...]
Residents in other towns gave similar - and more tragic - accounts of the violence.
This woman says her rickshaw driver son was a casualty of Oromia's long conflict - allegedly killed by security forces in Nekemte
In Goro, a mere 100km (62 miles) from Addis Ababa, rebels overran government troops and then forced young boys, hiding in their homes, to come out and help carry their wounded away, locals told the BBC.
As the boys were doing that, they were hit by a drone strike, which killed them and some of the rebels.
Speaking in a desperate and emotional voice as he recalled the horror, one resident said that three of his brothers - all still in school - perished.
"I didn't bury my brothers. We didn't even find parts of their body," he said.
The drone strikes have raised fears that to halt the advances of the OLA, the military is using a strategy similar to that it employed in Tigray [...].
"In the Tigray war, though they have hit civilian targets, drones were often used against heavy weapons and military vehicles. But in Oromia, strikes have been aimed at OLA graduation ceremonies and civilians after rebels captured towns, possibly to punish people for showing support to the rebels," said William Davison, an Ethiopia analyst with the International Crisis Group think-tank.

⁴⁶⁹ Peace Research Facility and Rift Valley Institute (RVI), [Conflict Trend Analysis: Western Oromia](#), March 2023, pp. 8-10

⁴⁷⁰ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia](#), 14 September 2023, paragraph 42

At least a dozen air strikes are reported to have taken place since October, with the most devastating one taking place in Bila, a town 460km west of Addis Ababa.

A medical source there told the BBC that more than 80 people died in the strike that hit the centre of the town on market day, the busiest day of the week. A priest said he had buried 11 people, including his nephew.

The military has also been accused of shooting dead people merely on the suspicion that they support the OLA. They have also been accused of detaining people for lengthy periods without trial, including the relatives of youths who have joined the OLA.⁴⁷¹

In December 2022, the OLLAA remarked that:

Reports of drone strikes have also continued throughout western and central Oromia over the past month, leading to the death of civilians. These drone attacks have been in the media most frequently in the West Wollega, West Shewa, and North Shewa zones. OLLAA's sources on the ground have also confirmed that a drone attack took place in Wara Jarso, North Shewa zone on December 2nd, leading to the death of 80 civilians, and that airstrikes were carried out in Sassiga, East Wollega zone on December 4. Social media reports have also been circulating of airstrikes in the Begi, Gidami, and Togo districts of West Wollega and Kellem Wollega zones on December 5.⁴⁷²

AP News published an article in December 2022 on growing conflict in Oromia, noting that:

Speaking to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity out of fears for their safety, several residents of Oromia described deadly attacks in recent weeks.

One witness in the region's Kiramu district said his father and cousin were among at least 34 people killed since Nov. 24. He blamed soldiers under the control of the Oromia regional government, saying he saw their uniforms. [...]

Last week, the government-appointed Ethiopian Human Rights Commission said "hundreds" of people had been killed in a "gruesome manner" in the past four months across 10 zones in the Oromia region, and it confirmed the presence of government forces, Amhara militia and the OLA in areas where repeated killings occur.⁴⁷³

In its October 2023 report, covering events between 2020 and 2022, the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia stated that "The Commission received multiple reports of extrajudicial killings. During the reporting period, it investigated in detail two emblematic cases which demonstrate both a disregard for human life by government forces and a prevailing climate of impunity. The Commission's investigation indicates that these two cases are not unique. A common theme across documented incidents was a complete lack of accountability".⁴⁷⁴ The two incidents it reported on predated the timeframe for this research so have not been reproduced here.

⁴⁷¹ BBC News, [Ethiopia's PM sees OLA rebellion grow in his own backyard](#), 18 December 2022

⁴⁷² Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Gruesome Attacks Throughout Western and Central Oromia](#), 5 December 2022

⁴⁷³ AP News, [As Tigray calms, Ethiopia sees growing conflict in Oromia](#), 14 December 2022

⁴⁷⁴ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Comprehensive investigative findings and legal determinations](#), 13 October 2023, paragraph 353

The January 2023 New Humanitarian piece on conflict in Oromia wrote “The government has responded to the [OLA] rebellion with a counterinsurgency offensive. But the state-appointed Ethiopian Human Rights Commission has documented extrajudicial killings by government troops”.⁴⁷⁵ It added that “The regional government's clumsy counterinsurgency strategy has made the conflict worse. Poorly trained soldiers have abused communities accused of harbouring rebels, while federal airstrikes have killed scores of civilians, rights investigators say”.⁴⁷⁶

The Economist similarly commented in January 2023 that Abiy “has recently stepped up military operations against [the OLA], including launching drone strikes that have killed large numbers of civilians”.⁴⁷⁷

EPO’s weekly update for 14 to 20 January 2023 wrote “On 14 January, government forces – assumed to be members of the ENDF and Oromia special forces – opened fire on civilian homes in Sombo Chitu and Hidabu Sindi kebeles in Ifata (Ilfeta) woreda in West Shewa zone and burned several civilian houses”.⁴⁷⁸

Their update for 28 January to 3 February 2023 noted “On 28 January, Oromia regional special forces allegedly shot and killed at least five civilians in Chiro town in West Hararge zone and Sinan Leku kebele in West Shewa zone after accusing them of having links with the OLF-Shane”.⁴⁷⁹

USDOS’s annual report on human rights in Ethiopia in 2023 noted that “On February 15, the Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA) alleged government security forces killed 23 individuals in January”.⁴⁸⁰

In March 2023, the OLLAA wrote on the deaths of protestors in the Guji zone that February:

On February 27, 2023, the Oromia regional government announced that it would be restructuring the Oromia region, which would lead to the creation of a new zone, called “East Borana.” This new zone would be made up of 10 districts that were formally part of the Borana, Guji, and Bale zones. Since the announcement was made, there have been ongoing protests throughout the Guji zone, particularly because residents feel they were not consulted by relevant bodies during the decision-making process. There have been reports of abuses and the excessive use of force by Ethiopian security forces since the protests began. One resident told reporters that, “Four people were shot and three died in the Bore district. I also have information that one person was hospitalized after being beaten by police in Adola Wayu district. [...]”.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁵ The New Humanitarian, [As violence subsides in Tigray, Ethiopia’s Oromia conflict flares](#), 12 January 2023

⁴⁷⁶ The New Humanitarian, [As violence subsides in Tigray, Ethiopia’s Oromia conflict flares](#), 12 January 2023

⁴⁷⁷ The Economist, [Ethiopia’s war in Tigray has ended, but deep faultlines remain](#), 12 January 2023

⁴⁷⁸ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 14-20 January 2023](#), 24 January 2023

⁴⁷⁹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 28 January – 3 February 2023](#), 8 February 2023

⁴⁸⁰ US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 23 April 2024

⁴⁸¹ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Deaths of Protesters in the Guji Zone](#), 6 March 2023

In June 2023 the Committee against Torture noted in its Concluding observations on Ethiopia with regards to the excessive use of force in general in Ethiopia that:

The Committee is concerned about the allegations of excessive use of force, notably in the context of protests, resulting in deaths and injuries, including of children, arbitrary arrests, incommunicado detention, torture and ill-treatment and enforced disappearances by the security forces. It is also concerned about the limited progress made on investigations and prosecutions. While noting that a new law on the use of force is currently being drafted by the Office of the Attorney General, the Committee is further concerned that the State party's legal framework for the use of force and firearms by State agents is still not in line with international standards (arts. 2, 12, 13 and 16).⁴⁸²

USDOS's annual report on human rights in Ethiopia in 2023 recounted the following events:

The *Addis Standard* on March 3 reported Oromia police killed at least three persons in Guji Zone during a protest against a new subregional administration structure. Residents of Guji told media they were protesting the incorporation of Negele Town and three other districts from Guji Zone into the newly formed East Borena Zone following the February 27 decision of the Oromia Regional Council before police responded with force to disperse the crowd.⁴⁸³

Human Rights Watch similarly reported in its annual report covering 2023 that "In March, Oromia authorities demolished homes and businesses in Shegar city, a newly formed area near Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, rendering scores of residents in the area homeless. Security forces reportedly beat and shot individuals that protested the demolitions".⁴⁸⁴

USDOS's annual report on human rights in Ethiopia in 2023 noted that:

On June 1, the EHRC reported security forces' excessive use of force on civilians led to numerous deaths. The EHRC stated on May 26 police had arrested more than 140 individuals alleging participation in "violent demonstrations" against the demolition of mosques in Sheger City of Oromia at the Grand Anwar Mosque in Addis Ababa. Similarly, on June 2, security forces killed three members of the Islamic community in Addis Ababa following a disagreement as police had encircled the Grand Anwar Mosque during a Friday prayer to prevent potential protest. In a follow-up statement the Security and Intelligence Joint Task Force confirmed the death of three civilians and alleged injury to 63 security officers. On June 3, thousands of Muslims attended the funeral ceremony of four Islamic community members killed by security forces in Addis Ababa.⁴⁸⁵

The International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in August 2023 "Heavy clashes between govt and Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) continued in Oromia, with civilians again

⁴⁸² UN Committee Against Torture, [Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Ethiopia](#), 7 June 2023, paragraphs 34 and 36

⁴⁸³ US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 23 April 2024

⁴⁸⁴ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2024: Events of 2023](#), 11 January 2024, p. 217

⁴⁸⁵ US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 23 April 2024

targeted. Notably, residents in West Shewa Zone's Chobi district 16 Aug accused govt troops of killing at least 12 civilians during anti-insurgent operations".⁴⁸⁶

USDOS's annual report on human rights in Ethiopia in 2023 recounted the following:

In August media and the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) – an opposition political party – reported government security forces had committed extrajudicial killings in the Oromia Region. On August 14, the OFC told VOA Amharic security forces had killed at least 12 civilians during operations the prior week in Chobe district of the West Shewa zone in Oromia. Access to western Oromia was extremely restricted, imposing constraints on access to information.⁴⁸⁷

A September 2023 report from the ICHREE observed that:

In the face of increased violence, in Oromia and Amhara, command posts were established in Western and Southern Oromia from early 2019, comprised of local militia, Oromia Special Forces, ENDF, federal police and Oromia regional police. The Commission's investigation found that although claimed to have been officially lifted, command posts continue to operate in some areas of Oromia. [...] Other violations under command post authority include extrajudicial killings, rape and the destruction of civilian property.⁴⁸⁸

Addis Standard reported on drone strikes by government forces in West Oromia on 7 and 9 October 2023:

Over 12 individuals were reportedly killed in two separate drone attacks conducted by government forces in the Horro Guduru Wollega Zone of the Oromia region. [...] According to local residents, the alleged attacks happened in the Hababo Guduru and Kombolcha districts of the zone. [...]

Another informant from the Kombolcha district informed *Addis Standard* about a farmer named Fiqadu Abera who was injured and had his residence set on fire by government security forces in *Bikiltu Bargemo Mose* area, located 10 km from Kombolcha town.⁴⁸⁹

The OLLAA published a report in October 2023 on human rights violations in East Arsi Zone stating:

According to a local informant, the ENDF have been extrajudicially killing civilians. Some of these cases are included below:

- Ziyad Haji, 35, an innocent civil servant, was killed by the ENDF on 7 August 2023 in Abomsa Town. In the same incident, a mother passing by was shot by the same security forces while she was holding her

⁴⁸⁶ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), August 2023

⁴⁸⁷ US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 23 April 2024

⁴⁸⁸ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia](#), 14 September 2023, paragraph 59

⁴⁸⁹ Addis Standard, [News: Drone attacks coinciding with Irreechaa result in a dozen of fatalities in West Oromia](#), 13 October 2023

- The government security forces killed a young man [...] and displayed his body in front of the Ethio-Telecom building in Abomsa Town to terrorize the public.
- As reported in a monthly situation update report published by [OLLAA](#), Amboo Awaas and Hajii Tukee were killed by the government security forces on 23 May 2023, in Wataro Dino. According to reports, a family of four, including a mother and child, were also killed by the government security forces on the pretext that they were working with OLA forces.
- One of the respondents to this report stated that the government security forces have killed one deaf person and one person with a locomotor disability in Merti Woreda, Hela village. In the incident, the security forces raided the house of the disabled individual, searching for his family members on the pretext that they were collaborating with OLA fighters. [...]

According to the informant, the government security forces have killed many more civilians, especially in areas such as Wataro Dino, Bole, and Hela villages.⁴⁹⁰

BAMF observed in its October 2023 briefing notes on Ethiopia that:

A statement published by the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) on 25.10.23 accuses the Ethiopian Defense Forces (EDF) of having killed dozens of civilians in Jarso woreda in the North Shewa zone and in Jaldu woreda in the West Shewa zone in the north of the regional state of Oromia. The killings allegedly followed fighting between the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA-Shane), which is classified as a terrorist organisation, and the Ethiopian armed forces, which had recently escalated in parts of the region (cf. BN of 22.05.23). Back on 07./08.10.23, more than twelve people are alleged to have died in two drone attacks by the EDF in the Horo Guduru Welega zone.⁴⁹¹

The ICHREE's analysis in October 2023 on the risk of further atrocities in Ethiopia highlighted that it had "documented serious human rights violations by Government forces, including extrajudicial executions and torture and ill-treatment, in areas of Oromia under the control of the Command Post system".⁴⁹²

In November 2023, the OLLAA reported that it was alarmed by an "increase in attacks against Oromo civilians by Ethiopian government forces" and that:

This [video circulating on social media](#) from October 29, 2023, shows the security forces threatening to kill Addisu Hiraye in Galana district in West Guji zone. Another report by [BBC Afaan Oromo](#) and [Addis Standard](#) shows a mother of 7 was tragically executed by government security forces in the Garri Nura Dhera village in Bosat district of East Shoa zone. Her body along with two other victims identified as Gada Godana and Boru Bekele were found in the morning of October 29, 2023. Furthermore, according to [VOA](#), twelve civilians have been killed in recent fighting between the OLA and government security forces in Dagam and Wara Jarso districts of North Shoa region of Oromia.⁴⁹³

⁴⁹⁰ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Human Rights Violations: The Case of East Arsi Zone](#), 20 October 2023

⁴⁹¹ German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), [Briefing Notes: Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration](#), 30 October 2023, p. 3

⁴⁹² 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, p. 8

⁴⁹³ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Oromo Civilians Continue to be Targeted by Fano Militia](#), 7 November 2023

USDOS's annual report on human rights in Ethiopia in 2023 noted that "On November 2, BBC Amharic reported extrajudicial killings of three civilians in East Shewa zone of Oromia by security forces".⁴⁹⁴

The International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in December 2023 "govt-insurgent clashes erupted in Kombolcha district late Dec, with drone strike 25 Dec killing eight".⁴⁹⁵

Reuters wrote in December 2023 on reports of the drone strike on a church in Oromia:

An aerial strike on the grounds of a church in Ethiopia's Oromiya region killed eight people and injured five as they collected corn, two witnesses and an opposition political party said.

Government spokesperson Legesse Tulu dismissed the accounts of the air strike as "an absolute lie". [...]

The compound of the Baro Full Gospel Church in the Horo Gudru Wellega zone, around 200 km northwest of the capital Addis Ababa, was attacked on Monday morning, when people were gathering to collect corn from a field, witnesses said. [...]

The OLF also blamed Monday's deaths on a drone strike.⁴⁹⁶

In its annual report covering events in 2023, Freedom House noted that "Incidents of large-scale, ethnically motivated killings have occurred in Oromia, perpetrated by Amhara militias, the OLA, Oromia regional forces, and federal forces".⁴⁹⁷

The June 2024 OHCHR report recorded that:

Overall, 594 incidents of human rights violations and abuses impacting 8,253 victims (of whom at least 343 were women) were recorded in 2023, a 55.9 percent increase from 2022. State actors were allegedly responsible for 70 percent of the violations (415 incidents), while non-state actors accounted for 22.3 percent (133 incidents) of which 25 incidents were specifically attributed to the Eritrean Defence Forces. Out of the victims, a total of 1,106 people were killed in Amhara (740) and in Oromia (366) in 160 incidents during the reporting period. The use of drones by the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF/Ethiopian Airforce) resulted in disproportionate levels of civilian casualties, with 18 registered drone strikes that caused 248 civilian deaths and injured 55 between 4 August and 31 December 2023.⁴⁹⁸

The same source detailed:

The situation in Oromia region also continued to be of concern, where 366 were killed (including 46 women) in 2023 as fighting continued between Government forces and Oromia Liberation Army (OLA). In addition, inter-ethnic clashes between Amhara and Oromia militias, and Oromia and Somali groups, also led to casualties. For instance, OHCHR documented the killing of 29 people (1 woman, 28 men) and injury

⁴⁹⁴ US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 23 April 2024

⁴⁹⁵ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), December 2023

⁴⁹⁶ Reuters, [Aerial strike on Ethiopia church grounds kills eight – witnesses](#), 28 December 2023

⁴⁹⁷ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024 – Ethiopia](#), 29 February 2024

⁴⁹⁸ OHCHR, [Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia](#), June 2024, paragraph 3

of 84 men as a result of the intercommunal violence between the Somali and Oromo communities (Geri and Jarson clans).⁴⁹⁹

In January 2024, the Guardian produced an article on a surge of kidnappings in Ethiopia's Oromia region, adding that "The government's response to the insurgency has been ham-fisted, characterised by arbitrary arrests and unlawful killings, according to the state-appointed human rights commission".⁵⁰⁰

The International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in January 2024 "security forces 12 Jan conducted drone strike in Horo Guduru Wollega Zone, killing four".⁵⁰¹

In February 2024, Reuters published an investigation into a secret government committee ordering the killings and arrests of rebels in Oromia. While the report specifically investigated abuses pre-2022, it stated that:

Five current and former government officials told Reuters that the committee is at the heart of Abiy's efforts to end a years-old insurgency by the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), which wants self-determination for the Oromo people and greater language and cultural rights. [...]

The people familiar with Koree Nageenyaa's activities attributed dozens of killings to the committee's orders and hundreds of arrests. [...]

Reuters presented its findings to the head of the state-appointed Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), Daniel Bekele. In an interview, Bekele confirmed the existence of the Koree Nageenyaa. He said its aim was to address growing security challenges in Oromiya, but it "overreached its purpose by interfering in the justice system with widespread human rights violations."

"We documented multiple cases of extra-judicial killings, arbitrary detentions, torture and extortion," Bekele said, without elaborating on specific incidents. [...]

Jaal Marroo, the military leader of the OLA, told Reuters in an interview that he is aware of the Koree Nageenyaa's existence and that high-ranking officials in Oromiya are its members. He accused the committee of ordering extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions, harassment and intimidation, without citing specific examples.⁵⁰²

In March 2024, the New Humanitarian published a report on the civilian toll of drone strikes in Oromia's West Shewa district and Horo Guduru Welega zone, noting that:

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

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."

⁴⁹⁹ OHCHR, [Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia](#), June 2024, paragraph 2

⁵⁰⁰ The Guardian, ['This is a pandemic': Ethiopia's Oromia region gripped by surge in kidnappings](#), 23 January 2024

⁵⁰¹ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), January 2024

⁵⁰² Reuters, [In Ethiopia, a secret committee orders killings and arrests to crush rebels](#), 23 February 2024

In December, army chief Birhanu Julia made a rare admission about Ethiopia's use of drones, but he denied they targeted civilians. [...]

Yet human rights experts say Ethiopia is using drones indiscriminately and in remote places where there is little oversight.

Suad Nur, a campaigner with Amnesty International, said the Ethiopian military's use of drones is part of a broader pattern of impunity that characterises conflicts in the country.

Nur noted that government troops have been accused of extra-judicial killings, beatings, and looting in Amhara, Oromia, Tigray, and elsewhere in Ethiopia.⁵⁰³

The Global Protection Cluster's protection analysis update for Ethiopia, published in March 2024, wrote that:

Since the beginning of the conflict in Northern Ethiopia, the use of fatal air-delivered munitions (including through the use of drones) by Ethiopian government has been reported, as far back as November 2021; such incidents have been reported in Tigray, Amhara and Oromia regions.ⁱⁱⁱ⁵⁰⁴

iii While most strikes appear to target armed elements, loss of civilian lives and infrastructure has been recorded, in the last months of 2023 in Oromia and Amhara in particular, due to alleged drone attacks (Insecurity attacks 07/04/2023, Addis Standard 26/12/2023, Addis Standard 18/11/2023, OHCHR 17/11/2023, EPO 09/2023).

The International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch tracker for April 2024 noted that on 4 April, government forces "killed twenty civilians in Tole Woreda, South West Shewa Zone, accusing them of links to OLA".⁵⁰⁵

ii. Extrajudicial killings by non-state actors

See ARC's recent [Query Response: Situation in the Amhara region](#) (April 2024), 'VI. Treatment of Amharas by non-state actors outside of the Amhara region; b. Oromia' for an overview of an overview of the extrajudicial killings of Amhara civilians in Oromia, including during the June 2022 Gimbi massacre and the July 2022 Kellem Wollega massacre.

See also III. Security situation, d. [Intercommunal violence](#), i. [Violence between OLA/Fano](#) and ii. [Civilian massacres](#).

The monthly update for April and May 2022 from the EPO noted that:

[...] Amhara ethnic militias and Fano militias continued to attack civilians in Oromia region. In April, ACLED recorded six violence against civilians events involving these actors in Horo Guduru Wollega, West Shewa,

⁵⁰³ The New Humanitarian, ['Horrific' civilian toll as Ethiopia turns to combat drones to quell local insurgencies](#), 5 March 2024

⁵⁰⁴ Global Protection Cluster, [Ethiopia - Protection Analysis Update - Update on conflict and climate-related protection risks trends](#), 21 March 2024, p. 6

⁵⁰⁵ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), April 2024

and East Shewa zones. In May, four violence against civilians events involving Fano militias were recorded in Horo Guduru Wollega zone. [...]

In May, Oromo and Sidama ethnic militias clashed in Hamesho Borena kebele in Bensa woreda and in Sangota kebele in Bura woreda, resulting in the deaths of six people and the injuring of 17 others.⁵⁰⁶

The weekly update for 28 May to 3 June 2022 from the EPO stated that “On 31 May, Amhara Fano militia members burned civilian homes and killed a couple in Darge Koticha village in Jarte Jardega woreda in Horo Guduru Wollega zone. The Amhara Fano militiamen were also reported to have opened gunfire on farmers returning from their farms in Gudina Jiregna kebele in Kiremu woreda in East Wollega zone, killing three women”.⁵⁰⁷

The following week, the EPO wrote that:

On 6 June, Fano militias clashed with federal police forces in an unspecified location in the zone, resulting in an unknown number of fatalities, including among the members of the federal police. Clashes erupted after Fano militias refused the resettlement of internally displaced persons (IDPs) who had been previously displaced from the area. The same day, Fano militias attacked and killed an unknown number of farmers in Samo Ilamu, Cidhati, and Jamo Doba in Horo Guduru Wollega zone. The victims were IDPs who had recently returned to their primary residences. On 10 June, Fano militiamen reportedly opened gunfire at two kids who were herding their cattle in Makano kebele in Horo Guduru Wollega zone. The armed group raided their cattle after killing one of them and wounding the other. [...]

On 4 June, ethnic Burji rioters beat to death nine ethnic Oromos from Guji zone and injured 21 others at Soyama town market in Burji special woreda in Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples region (SNNPR). The victims were from Suro Bargudah woreda in Guji zone in Oromia region who had traveled to the area to sell and buy items at the market. This attack was conducted after a rumor circulated that an ethnic Burji person was killed by ethnic Oromos from Guji zone at an unidentified kebele. However, according to officials, he was allegedly killed by the OLF-Shane ([DW Amharic, 6 June 2022](#)). Two days later, on 6 June, members of the Burji ethnic group gathered in protest in Soyama town and denounced the killing of Oromo civilians in their town. A similar protest was held at Bule Hora University in Guji zone in Oromia region by ethnic Oromo students who also condemned the killings.⁵⁰⁸

The International Crisis Group’s CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in June 2022 “In Southern Nations region, mob 4 June stoned nine ethnic Oromos to death in Burji district amid rumour that Guji Oromos had killed ethnic Burji”.⁵⁰⁹

The monthly update for June 2022 from the EPO wrote that:

Violence against civilians continued in Oromia region. In June, ACLED recorded 20 violence against civilians events in the region. Ten of these events were conducted by government forces, seven by the OLF-Shane, and three by Fano militias. [...]

⁵⁰⁶ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: April-May 2022](#), 15 June 2022

⁵⁰⁷ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 28 May-3 June 2022](#), 8 June 2022

⁵⁰⁸ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 4-10 June 2022](#), 15 June 2022

⁵⁰⁹ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), June 2022

Amhara and Fano militias were also involved in attacks against civilians in Oromia region during this period. Amhara ethnic militias have been mainly active since 2021 – 39 recorded events with 238 reported fatalities – while Fano militias began to attack civilians in the region this year. These attacks mostly occur in areas bordering Oromia and Amhara regions.⁵¹⁰

The Oromia Support Group recorded that “Eighteen more Oromo youth were reported on 30 June to have been taken from two prisons in Wollo – Karipho, Dawe Harawa district, and Intale, Artuma Furse district – by ‘Amhara Fano extremists’ and executed [...]. Informants wrote that Wollo Oromos ‘are being killed in mass and thrown to wild animals, the remaining are taken to unknown places. We have inside information . . . of a campaign of massive elimination . . . Wollo Oromo farmers are currently in the dark and make an appeal to all those concerned to become their voice.’”⁵¹¹

EPO wrote in July 2022 with the following update “Border disputes reignited in Guradamole woreda in Bale zone which is located at the border of Oromia and Somali regions. In July, Somali ethnic militiamen from Somali region attacked Oromo civilians at least two times at different locations in Guradamole woreda”.⁵¹²

The weekly update for 30 July to 5 August 2022 from the EPO noted that “Amhara and Fano militias entered Chaki village in Amuru woreda in Horo Guduru Wollega zone and killed three people”.⁵¹³

BAMF stated in its September 2022 briefing notes on Ethiopia that:

In the regional state of Oromia in the town of Agamsa in the Woreda Amuru (Horo Guduru Welega zone, about 370 km west of the capital Addis Ababa), Amharic militias are allegedly responsible for the deaths of at least 62 civilians. According to a BBC report, members of the Fano, a group of mainly nationalist Amharic youth, targeted ethnic Oromo on 30.08.22, looted and set fire to their houses. Oromo and Amhara regularly clash in this region. The security forces are accused of withdrawing their troops and leaving the population defenceless against the militias.⁵¹⁴

In a September 2022 report to the UN Human Rights Committee, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission reported that “Due to the death of 3 Amharas by the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA- aka Shane) on August 29, 2022, at Horo Gudru Wollega zone, there were retaliatory attacks by armed assailants from the neighboring woredas from the Amahra region targeting ethnic Oromos. The attack happened at Amuru woreda from August 24 – 25th 2022”.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹⁰ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: June 2022](#), 26 July 2022

⁵¹¹ Oromia Support Group (OSG), [REPORT 60: Death, destruction and detention in Oromia Disinformation: a hate crime and a tool of abuse](#), 2 August 2022, p. 6

⁵¹² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: July 2022](#), 18 August 2022

⁵¹³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 30 July – 5 August 2022](#), 10 August 2022

⁵¹⁴ German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), [Briefing Notes: Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration](#), 5 September 2022, p. 3

⁵¹⁵ 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, p. 21

EPO's monthly update for August 2022 gave the following information:

On 30 and 31 August, Amhara militias from Addis Alem kebele in Amru woreda and Bure woreda in Amhara region killed at least 60 ethnic Oromo civilians and injured at least 70 others in Agamsa, Jog Migbar, Tam Eilamu, Jebo Doban, Tombe Danagebe, Jawaj, Gnare, Lege Micha and Lukuma kebeles in Amru woreda ([Ethiopia Human Rights Commission, 6 September 2022](#)). These attacks were conducted a day after the OLF-Shane entered Abora town — the administrative center of Amru woreda — in Agamsa kebele, and killed three ethnic Amharas, while trying to capture the town. The group also disarmed 59 people in the kebele. The Oromia regional special forces withdrew from the area on 28 August ([DW Amharic, 31 August 2022](#)).⁵¹⁶

EPO provided the following update in its brief for 17 to 23 September 2022:

On 20 September, an unidentified armed group – suspected to be the OLF-Shane – shot and killed the chairperson of Alge kebele in Fentale woreda in East Shewa zone. [...] The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission issued a statement this week indicating that in the past three weeks more than 100 civilians had been killed due to attacks by “the OLF-Shane, ethnic Amhara militias and individuals” in Amuru, Horo Bulk, and Jardega Jarte in Horo Guduru Wollega zone ([Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, 26 September 2022](#)).⁵¹⁷

According to the EPO's weekly update from 24 to 30 September 2022:

On 25 September, attacks on civilians were reported in Gobu Siba, Obora, Haro Gudina, Welkite, and Rigete kebeles in Amuru woreda. It is unclear who was behind these attacks ([DW Amharic, 28 September 2022](#)). Some witnesses, however, blamed Amhara and Fano militias for the attack in Gobu Siba kebele, and said that over 35 civilians, mostly ethnic Oromos, were killed in the attack ([DW Amharic, 26 September 2022](#); [OMN, 25 September 2022](#)). Meanwhile, another witness stated that the OLF-Shane entered the kebele and killed at least five ethnic Amhara civilians ([DW Amharic, 26 September 2022](#)).⁵¹⁸

The monthly update for September 2022 from the EPO summarised that “five violence against civilians events with over 75 reported fatalities by Amhara and Fano militias were recorded in total; three of them were in Horo Guduru Wollega zone, and the remaining two were in East Wollega zone”.⁵¹⁹

The Ethiopian Protection Cluster's overview for September 2022 summarised for Oromia that “During the reporting period, the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and Security Forces have continued to pose a security threat to the inhabitants of Wollega and Guji. During the month of August 2022, OHCHR found that 36 people were killed as a result of inter-communal conflict and attacks by a rebel group”.⁵²⁰

BAMF stated in its early October 2022 briefing notes on Ethiopia that:

⁵¹⁶ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: August 2022](#), 16 September 2022

⁵¹⁷ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 17-23 September 2022](#), 28 September 2022

⁵¹⁸ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 24 – 30 September 2022](#), 4 October 2022

⁵¹⁹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: September 2022](#), 5 October 2022

⁵²⁰ Protection Cluster, [Monthly Protection Overview – September 2022](#), 28 October 2022, p. 1

According to information from the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), more than 100 civilians were killed in armed attacks in the woreda (district) of Amuru in the Horo Guduru Wollega zone (regional state of Oromia) in September 2022. The EHRC further reports that there have been cases of looting and thousands of people have left the region, which borders with the regional state of Amhara, for fear of further violence. Local authorities blame the attacks on the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA Shane) and Amharic militias (cf. BN of 05.09.22). The EHRC accuses the security forces of being incapable of bringing the increasing violence under control.⁵²¹

According to the EPO's weekly update from 8 to 14 October 2022 "Amhara ethnic militias were reportedly involved in two attacks on civilians in Gutin kebele in Gida Ayana woreda in East Wollega zone and Goyi village near Agemsa town in Amuru woreda in Horo Guduru Wollega zone. In Gutin, five people were reportedly killed, and three others were wounded, while two youths were killed in Goyi".⁵²²

The International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in October 2022 "Amhara militias known as Fano reportedly killed at least 43 civilians in five attacks in East Wollega and Horo Guduru Wollega zone during month".⁵²³

The monthly update for October 2022 from the EPO observed that "Amhara ethnic militias were involved in seven violence against civilian events in East Wollega and Horo Gudru Wollega zones, leaving 50 reported fatalities".⁵²⁴

BAMF stated in a late October 2022 briefing notes on Ethiopia that:

According to reports in the Ethiopian media, members of the Amharic militia group Fano allegedly killed at least 30 people after attacking four villages in the woreda (district) of Kiremu in the East Welega Zone of the regional state of Oromia on 15.10.22. More than 50 houses were reportedly burned to the ground. Ethnic clashes between Oromo and Amhara are a common occurrence in the region. The Fano were allegedly responsible for the deaths of more than 60 people in the neighbouring Horo Guduru Welega Zone at the beginning of September 2022 (cf. BN of 05.09.22 and 10.10.22).⁵²⁵

In its annual report covering events in 2022, Freedom House remarked that "In November 2022, Amharic speaking militants raided a protestant church in a village in the East Wollega Zone of Oromia and killed 15 participants of the church service, including church leaders".⁵²⁶

⁵²¹ German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), [Briefing Notes: Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration](#), 10 October 2022, pp. 6-7

⁵²² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 8 – 14 October 2022](#), 18 October 2022

⁵²³ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), October 2022

⁵²⁴ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: October 2022](#), 9 November 2022

⁵²⁵ German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), [Briefing Notes: Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration](#), 31 October 2022, p. 4

⁵²⁶ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2023 – Ethiopia](#), March 2023

EPO's weekly update from 26 November to 2 December 2022 discussed continued violence in Kiremu woreda in East Wollega zone noting that on the 28 November:

[...] an unidentified armed group reportedly shot and killed more than 100 people sheltering in a school due to the ongoing violence in Kiremu woreda. The reason behind this attack is unclear. Violence in Kiremu woreda and surrounding rural villages and towns is ongoing at the moment, and additional incidents involving Amhara ethnic militias and civilians in Oromia region will be covered in next week's report. [...] This week, protests were held throughout Oromia region to denounce the involvement of Amhara militias, including the Fano, in the violence ([Addis Standard, 6 December 2022](#)). [...] Around 26 November, Amhara forces – assumed to be Amhara ethnic militia members – reportedly shot and killed an unknown number of civilians in Serer Kula kebele in North Shewa zone.⁵²⁷

BAMF noted in its December 2022 briefing notes that “More than 100 people were reportedly killed by an unknown armed group In Kiremu (East Wellega zone) on 28.11.22”.⁵²⁸

AP News reporting on the same incident stated in December 2022 that:

An ethnic Oromo resident of Kiramu [...] accused an Amhara armed group known as the Fano of attacking and killing civilians and said he had seen more than a dozen bodies and buried four of them on Nov. 29. “This militia group is killing our people, burning villages and looting everything we own,” Dhugassa Feyissa told the AP. “They shoot at anyone they find ... be it public servants, police officers or teachers.” [...] The deputy administrator of the Gidda Ayanna district, which also has seen some of Oromia's worst violence in recent weeks, also blamed the Amhara Fano fighters. “Civilians in our area are being killed, displaced and looted. This group is heavily armed, so it is no match for farmers who are defenseless,” Getahun Tolera said, noting that his district now hosts some 31,000 people who fled nearby districts. “We are still going house-to-house and discovering bodies.” [...] Ethiopian security forces, Oromo insurgents and Amhara militia are all battling each other in Oromia, Ethiopia's largest region, said William Davison, an analyst with the International Crisis Group. “Amid an intensifying government struggle against the rebels, all three have targeted civilians, particularly ethnic Amhara, which has led to an increase in violence by Amhara militia claiming to be defending their communities,” he said.⁵²⁹

According to the EPO's weekly update from 3 to 9 December 2022 “Fano militias and the OLF-Shane attacked civilians in other parts of Oromia region last week. On 5 December, Amhara militiamen – assumed to be members of the Fano militia – shot and killed two civilians in villages around Welenchiti town in Boset woreda in East Shewa zone”.⁵³⁰

In December 2022, Addis Standard reported on a new report by the EHRC on human rights violations against civilians in Ethiopia:

⁵²⁷ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 26 November – 2 December 2022](#), 6 December 2022

⁵²⁸ German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), [Briefing Notes: Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration](#), 12 December 2022, p. 3

⁵²⁹ AP News, [As Tigray calms, Ethiopia sees growing conflict in Oromia](#), 14 December 2022

⁵³⁰ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 3 – December 2022](#), 14 December 2022

The worsening crisis in Oromia region is due in most part to attacks by armed groups operating in the region, including by armed militia crossing over from the neighboring Amhara regional state; civilians are also increasingly being targeted in militarized clashes and deliberate attacks involving government security forces and armed groups, the report said. [...]

The fact that armed groups operating in these areas have shown “a tendency to increase or become more complex in terms of their type and number”, and the fact that different groups have been in control of entire kebeles or districts at different times, has also “aggravated the human rights violations”, making it impossible to conduct an adequate investigation into the exact number and areas of affected people, EHRC said.

Despite that, however, the reports says that hundreds of people have been brutally killed, an unknown number of people have been injured and hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced from their villages by militants of the armed groups [...].

Exacerbating the suffering of the civilians is the fact that the attacks “deliberately target civilians, and are especially based on ethnicity”, and in certain cases, the fact that they are “based on political views” – that victims are blamed for supporting one or the other group, which puts an overlapping pressure and/or threat on the violation of human rights against civilians, the report further said, adding that such act erodes confidence in justice and security administrations and has a significant impact on efforts to find a lasting solution.⁵³¹

A December 2022 New Lines investigation remarked that “In recent months, reports of irregular militias from neighboring Amhara ransacking towns in Oromia and killing residents have increased with alarming frequency. The state-backed Ethiopian Human Rights Commission accused militants of carrying out cross-border raids that killed scores and displaced up to 20,000 people in late August. Locals, meanwhile, say the militants are members of “Fano,” an ethnic Amhara militia group that has previously fought alongside the Ethiopian army”.⁵³²

In its annual report covering events in 2022, Freedom House noted that “Throughout the year in Oromia, Amhara militants were implicated in numerous killings of Oromo civilians”.⁵³³ It added that “Between August and early December, dozens of ethnic Oromo were killed in Horo Guduru and East Wollega zones by militants from the Amhara region, allegedly the Fano”.⁵³⁴

In its annual human rights report for Ethiopia in 2022, USDOS wrote that “Unidentified groups of militants reportedly carried out attacks and killings of civilians in various parts of Oromia and Benishangul-Gumuz throughout the year. Local militia groups in Afar, Oromia, and Somali Regions reportedly carried out attacks and killings of civilians as part of long-running regional boundary disputes.

⁵³¹ Addis Standard, [News Analysis: Civilians subjected to “grave violation of human rights” in clashes, attacks by armed groups, gov’t security forces operating in Oromia – EHRC](#), 8 December 2022

⁵³² New Lines Magazine, [Evidence of Drone Strikes Inside Civilian Areas in Ethiopia](#), 26 December 2022

⁵³³ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2023 – Ethiopia](#), March 2023

⁵³⁴ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2023 – Ethiopia](#), March 2023

The OLA reportedly killed civilians and government officials in many parts of Oromia, especially in the west”.⁵³⁵

The New Humanitarian piece on conflict in Oromia in January 2023 wrote:

Ethnically based massacres are also increasing. The OLA is accused of targeting Amharas who live in Oromia, while ethnic militias from the Amhara region – which borders Oromia – have killed Oromo civilians. Many hundreds, if not thousands, have died. [...]

Also complicating matters is the involvement of the Fano, an Amhara militia. The group claims to be defending Amhara civilians and interests and has launched several attacks into Oromia.

Three Oromia residents and an official from Oromia’s KIRAMU district, close to the border with Amhara, told The New Humanitarian that Fano fighters have killed ethnic Oromos and torched villages in a series of raids since mid-October.

Lemessa Jabessa, a hotel owner, said his father was wounded by a bullet on 18 November during a raid by what he called “Amhara extremists”. His wife was killed eight days later in a separate attack, he said.

“I told her to take the children to the bush, and it was during this that she was hit,” Lemessa said. “In my village alone, 37 civilians were killed.” He added that, “many homes, government offices, and [other] properties were burned and looted.”

In total, 214 civilians and 244 members of Oromia’s regional security force were killed in KIRAMU between 15 October and 10 December, according to a local official, who did not want to be named.⁵³⁶

According to the EPO’s weekly update from 7 – 13 January 2023, “Around 11 January, Fano militiamen opened fire and reportedly killed an unknown number of civilians in BURKA SOREMA in KIREMU woreda after crossing Abay River into Oromia region”.⁵³⁷

EPO’s weekly update for 14 to 20 January 2023 stated that “on 18 January, presumed kebele militia members shot and killed five prisoners in BOFA (WARJI) town in BOSET woreda in East Shewa zone after taking them out of prison. The reason behind these attacks is unknown. It was also reported that around 14 January, Fano militia members shot and killed an unknown number of civilians in SERAR KULLA (SELELKULA) kebele in DERA woreda in North Shewa zone after accusing them of collaborating with the OLF-Shane”.⁵³⁸

The weekly update for 28 January to 3 February 2023 from the EPO wrote that “the OLF-Shane and an Oromo ethnic militia looted banks after killing four security guards in GOBU SEYO town in East Wollega zone”.⁵³⁹

⁵³⁵ US Department of State (USDOS), [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 20 March 2023

⁵³⁶ The New Humanitarian, [As violence subsides in Tigray, Ethiopia’s Oromia conflict flares](#), 12 January 2023

⁵³⁷ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 7 – 13 January 2023](#), 17 January 2023

⁵³⁸ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 14-20 January 2023](#), 24 January 2023

⁵³⁹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 28 January – 3 February 2023](#), 8 February 2023

It further noted that on 28 January, “kebele militia members shot and killed two people in Guduru kebele in Abuna Ginde Beret woreda in West Shewa zone after accusing the victims of being OLF-Shane supporters”.⁵⁴⁰ It added:

On 29 January, members of the OLF-Shane opened fire on a vehicle near a forest close to Torre area in Gelana woreda in West Guji zone, killing two civilians, including a pregnant woman, and injuring four other civilians. The vehicle was traveling from Burji special woreda to Dila town. A day later, on 30 January, presumed OLF-Shane members opened gunfire at Habish hotel where nine Chinese nationals were staying, killing one Chinese citizen and abducting one Ethiopian in Gebre Guracha town in Kuyu woreda in North Shewa zone.² Lastly, on 1 February, an unidentified armed group attacked civilians in Golgota kebele in Merti woreda in Aris zone, killing an unspecified number of people and damaging property.⁵⁴¹

² Nigatu Regasa, Sheger FM 102.1 Radio, 1 February 2023

From the week of 11 to 17 March 2023, EPO reported that “in Oromia region, an unidentified armed group – suspected as Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane operatives – reportedly shot and killed eight civilians and wounded four others in Metehara town in East Shewa zone. Six of the victims were homeless youths on the road. Some activity by the OLF-Shane – also known as the Oromo Liberation Army – has been reported in this area, although its presence is not as strong as it is in the western part of the region”.⁵⁴²

According to the EPO’s weekly update for 20 to 26 May 2023, “on 20 May, members of an armed group – assumed to be the OLF-Shane – attacked civilians in Bekoji town in Arsi zone and reportedly killed four civilians, including a trainer of local militias. The group also managed to release prisoners from a prison in the town”.⁵⁴³

The International Crisis Group’s CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in June 2023 with regards to Oromia “armed groups stepped up attacks on civilians. Notably, OLA 6 June attacked bus near Bule Hora town (West Guji Zone), killing two; Fano militia 8-9 June killed at least three in Agemsa town (East Wollega); UN humanitarian agency 14 June reported deteriorating humanitarian situation following attacks on civilians in parts of Horo Guduru Wollega and East Wollega zones”.⁵⁴⁴

In September 2023, International Crisis Group’s CrisisWatch tracker noted “Fano militants also crossed into Oromia region, 9 Sept attacking civilians in West Shewa and North Shewa zones; alleged Fano militants 15-16 Sept killed around 30 in East Wollega Zone”.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴⁰ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 28 January – 3 February 2023](#), 8 February 2023

⁵⁴¹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 28 January – 3 February 2023](#), 8 February 2023

⁵⁴² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 11 – 17 March 2023](#), 22 March 2023

⁵⁴³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 20-26 May 2023](#), 1 June 2023

⁵⁴⁴ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), June 2023

⁵⁴⁵ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), September 2023

The ICHREE's analysis in October 2023 on the risk of further atrocities in Ethiopia commented that:

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 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.⁵⁴⁶

In November 2023, the OLLAA reported that:

On November 05, 2023, OLLAA spoke to residents in Coqorso area who said the Amhara militias (*Fano*) had killed at least 17 Oromo civilians and injured 27 people. The incident occurred around 6 a.m. local time and the violence eventually spread to the Doobbi, Garboota, and Wanbe villages in the Artuma Furse District, Wallo Oromo Special Zone, Amhara Region of Ethiopia. This latest attack was triggered when tensions escalated between Oromo civilians and Amhara Fano in the same village. According to a source who spoke to OLLAA, on October 29, 2023, Fano had previously ambushed youth herding livestock, killing three cattle and injuring one person. As of today, an additional 3 people have died, making the total number of people dead 20 while injuring many others. The precise number of deaths today is still unknown as this is a developing story and the conflict is still ongoing.⁵⁴⁷

The International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in December 2023 "Oromo-Amhara tensions triggered more attacks on civilians. Notably, suspected Fano militants 12 Dec attacked civilians in Horo Guduru Wollega Zone, killing at least thirteen".⁵⁴⁸

USDOS's annual report on human rights in Ethiopia in 2023 wrote "Ethnic-based violence reportedly intensified during the year in the Wollega zones of Oromia Region. The government blamed the attacks on the OLA, but the OLA rejected the accusation and demanded an independent investigation. In its September report to the Human Rights Council, the ICHREE noted allegations of ethnically based killings of hundreds of civilians in Oromia".⁵⁴⁹

It added that:

Unidentified groups of militants reportedly carried out attacks and killings of civilians in various parts of Oromia [...] throughout the year. Local militia groups in [...] Oromia [...] regions reportedly carried out attacks and killings of civilians as part of long-running regional boundary disputes and intercommunal

⁵⁴⁶ 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

⁵⁴⁷ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Oromo Civilians Continue to be Targeted by Fano Militia](#), 7 November 2023

⁵⁴⁸ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), December 2023

⁵⁴⁹ US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 23 April 2024

conflicts. The OLA and Fano militia reportedly killed civilians and government officials in many parts of Amhara and Oromia, especially in western Oromia.⁵⁵⁰

In its annual report covering events in 2023, Freedom House noted that “Incidents of large-scale, ethnically motivated killings have occurred in Oromia, perpetrated by Amhara militias, the OLA, Oromia regional forces, and federal forces”.⁵⁵¹

At the beginning of January 2024, Ethiopia Insight gave the following context on the violence in Oromia and the role of the Fano:

Attacks by Amhara militants have intensified in Oromia since 2021, with many Oromo civilians killed and hundreds of thousands displaced, mostly in Oromia *weredas* bordering Amhara.³⁵

Amhara Fano militants have since intensified their attacks, advancing into areas of eastern and western Oromia bordering Amhara, in what Oromo nationalists see as an attempt at annexation under the guise of protecting Amhara civilians in Oromia.³⁶

On 5 December, a graphic video circulated on social media of Fano militants parading the severed heads of Oromo individuals on pikes as proof of their victory in Jardega Jarte Wereda. The horrific act echoed historical accounts of nineteenth century massacres of Oromos by Emperor Menelik II.

Following these atrocities by Amhara militants, protests erupted throughout Oromia, exacerbating tensions between segments of the Oromo and Amhara people.⁵⁵²

35 In April 2022, Belay Desale, Kiremu Wereda Administrator, said that Amhara extremist groups that use names such as Fano and ‘Dirijit’, which means organization, have established structures in Haro, Chaffe Gudina, Sombo, and Bajin kebeles of the *wereda* that borders Amhara and carry out attacks targeting Oromo civilians. According to the Wereda Administrator, the group instructs the local Amhara residents to consider all Oromos as “Shene”, meaning OLA members. He said that the *wereda* has recorded 115 Oromo civilian casualties due to an attack by Fano militants. Since September, hundreds of Oromo civilians were reportedly killed by Amhara militants in Amuru, Agamsa, and JardegaJarte weredas of Horro Guduru Wollega zone. The EHRC has reported on some of these attacks. For instance, though it justified the killings and shied away from mentioning Fano, the EHRC confirmed the attacks on 29 and 30 August by militants from Amhara region that targeted Oromo residents in nine kebeles of Amuru Wereda, resulting in the killing of over 60 Oromo civilians.

36 In September 2021, an attack and massacre in Haro town of Kiremu Wereda caused residents to flee from the town, which subsequently remained a stronghold of the Amhara militants. Amhara militants based in Haro town have reportedly crossed over to the surrounding *weredas* and villages. In August, Amhara militants from Haro town and the bordering *weredas* of the Amhara region crossed over to Amuru Wereda of Horo Guduru Wollega Zone and attacked the Oromo civilians in several villages, killing over 60 civilians. On 12 October 2021, two days after the Haro massacre, a pro-Amhara media outlet referred to the presence of Amhara militias trained by the government and the activities of Fano militants in Kiremu Wereda and reported the detention of a group of Amhara militias from Haro who organized themselves and headed to Kiremu town to allegedly fight against the OLA.

A Brookings commentary on domestic challenges facing Ethiopia in January 2024 stated “an insurgency in Oromia, Ethiopia’s most populous region (and which envelopes Addis Ababa) continues. The Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) — having splintered from the Oromo Liberation Front when the latter disarmed

⁵⁵⁰ US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 23 April 2024

⁵⁵¹ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024 – Ethiopia](#), 29 February 2024

⁵⁵² Ethiopia Insight, [Peace in Ethiopia’s Oromia will only come through genuine self-rule](#), 8 January 2024

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".⁵⁵³

Insecurity Insight reported in a monthly news brief on 'education in danger' that "19 February 2024: In Shewa Robit town, North Shewa, Amhara region, around nine ethnic Oromo civilians, including five teachers and three women domestic workers returning to their families from the Middle East were kidnapped by Fano militias from a public bus while en route to Kemise. Eight were reportedly shot and killed on 22 February. Source: ACLED".⁵⁵⁴

An article by World Beyond War wrote in February 2024 that:

Inter-ethnic tensions and violence are also prevalent inside Oromia, particularly along its borders with the Amhara and Somali regions. There are routine reports of various ethnic militias and armed groups launching attacks against civilians throughout the region. The two groups most frequently accused of launching such attacks are the Amhara militia group known as Fano and the OLA, although it should be noted that the OLA has categorically denied reports that it has attacked civilians. In many cases, it is impossible to determine the perpetrator of any single attack, owing to limited telecommunications access in areas where these attacks occur and because the accused parties frequently exchange blame for various attacks.⁵⁵⁵

The International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in March 2024 "Fano 7 March reportedly killed at least nine civilians in Oromia's Dera woreda, North Shewa Zone. Clashes between Oromo and Amhara ethnic militias 9-21 March in Amhara's Oromo Special Zone and North Shewa Zone killed 27. Deteriorating security crippled economic activity".⁵⁵⁶

The Global Protection Cluster's update on conflict and climate-related protection risks trends in Ethiopia, published in March 2024, remarked that:

The risk of ethnically motivated attacks on civilians in Amhara and Oromia also remains high.⁵⁵⁷

v In North Shewa's Dera Woreda (home to significant number of Amhara population), federal forces fought OLA/OLF-Shane and Fano militias; with both insurgencies operating in area. In the same context, 21 people, including government and ruling party officials, were allegedly killed by Fano militias in two separate incidents in Alem Ber, in South Gondar, and in Jibayt district, in the Awi zone, on 9 and 28 October, respectively (OHCHR 17/11/2023).

⁵⁵³ Brookings, [Ethiopia's New Year's ledger: A controversial new port and domestic challenges](#), 16 January 2024

⁵⁵⁴ Insecurity Insight, [Education in Danger: Monthly News Brief – February 2024](#), February 2024, p. 1

⁵⁵⁵ World Beyond War, [Oromia: Ethiopia's War in the Shadows](#), 14 February 2024

⁵⁵⁶ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), March 2024

⁵⁵⁷ Global Protection Cluster, [Ethiopia - Protection Analysis Update - Update on conflict and climate-related protection risks trends](#), 21 March 2024, p. 6

c. Forced evictions and destruction of property

For information on the number and situation of the displaced, see section [VI. Internal displacement of Oromos within Ethiopia](#).

In its June 2022 Situation Update UNOCHA recorded that “In some areas, drought is also compounded with violence, including in southern Oromia Region due to conflict and in Somali Region due to intercommunal conflicts, exacerbating previous humanitarian needs and hindering access to hundreds of thousands of people in need of assistance. Population in Guji and West Guji zones in southern Oromia, for instance, have been affected by violence since 2020, as well as by the current drought. Public facilities such as health centres and schools have been destroyed and the movement of critical aid supplies such as food and nutrition items has been severely hindered”.⁵⁵⁸

In July 2022, the OLLAA reported on a massacre in Yaya Haro, a village in Degam Woreda in the North Shewa Zone of Oromia, in May 2022 and noted reference to the experiences of Chala, a Yaya Haro native and a volunteer at OLLAA:

On May 17-18, 2022, Yaya Haro endured the worst offense yet: an open attack on the entire village. Prior to this event, the aggression by government forces had been focused on a few suspects at a time. But in the face of continuing frustration and lack of success in hunting down the OLA members in the area, the soldiers turned their ire upon the people of Yaya Haro. [...]

Several of his former schoolmates and friends were killed in the May attack, and his aunt’s house was burned down. Per his knowledge, more than half of the fifty or so buildings in town were burned along with the fields of the farmers in the village. It is this aspect of the atrocity that poses the largest scale hardship on the people already endured active violence; killing civilians and burning houses is a horror many people cannot even imagine living through, but after those horrible moments so many from Yaya Haro were left without food or a source of income. This dual problem of nutrition and economics has implications far beyond the once picturesque landscape of the North Shewa Zone.⁵⁵⁹

The Oromia Support Group recorded in August 2022 that “The burning of civilian property has become a hallmark of Abiy’s regime”.⁵⁶⁰ The same source further documented:

Razing homes of farmers and other civilians is perpetrated in attacks on Qeerroo, on OLA’s support base and on any nearby village in retaliation for military losses. Amhara regional militia and Fano burn properties in territorially contested areas within (in Oromia Special Zone – Wollo) and surrounding Amhara Region – all zones of Wallega and Showa in Oromia Region and Kamashi and Metekel zones of Benishangul-Gumuz Region.

OSG’s informants numbered 193 homes burnt to the ground in Maliyu area, Warra Jarso, N Showa on 3 May and another 23 by 11 May in Borchesa area of the same district [...].

⁵⁵⁸ OCHA, [Ethiopia – Humanitarian Update Situation Report](#), 27 June 2022

⁵⁵⁹ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Invisible Atrocities](#), 22 July 2022

⁵⁶⁰ Oromia Support Group (OSG), [REPORT 60: Death, destruction and detention in Oromia Disinformation: a hate crime and a tool of abuse](#), 2 August 2022, p. 7

HRLHA [Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa] received ‘dozens of reports’ of properties being burnt in retaliation for battlefield losses in ‘North Shawa, East Wallega, Horo Guduru, West Guji and West Shawa (Nono and Abuna Gindeberet districts) [...]. Another 38 homes were destroyed in two localities in Abuna Gindeberet, W Showa, within three days in the first week of June, according to OSG’s own sources [...]. In West Showa alone therefore, 153 homes were destroyed within one month.

A video testimony from Ambo district, W Showa, on 8 July, was sent to OSG but cannot be published because of safety concerns. A farmer shows three adjacent properties, including stores of grain (one of which was over 40 quintals) razed to the ground. The first home-owner ‘never committed a crime. He always followed the law, but his house was burnt down.’ The farmer said when pointing out a destroyed ploughshare, ‘And here, without committing any crime, they completely destroyed everything. The man who owns this cannot plough again.’ The second burnt property belonged to an elderly man who earned a living selling coffee. The third, a farmer with seven children, said ‘We cannot rebuild this. We are poor people. . . . without warning, the government did this. We’ve never seen a government which burns our livelihoods. . . . They came and said ‘You support OLF-Shane’ and burned all of this down.’

As reported from West Wallega, Oromia Special Forces not only kill people but slaughter and steal animals and take money during these episodes of destruction.⁵⁶¹

According to the EPO’s weekly update from 8 to 14 October 2022, “on 8 October, government forces, assumed to be members of the ENDF, burned five houses in Boku Niso kebele in Mida Kegn woreda in West Shewa zone after accusing the owners of having links with the OLF-Shane”.⁵⁶²

Following an attack on civilians blamed on Fano militants in East Wollega zone of Oromia in October 2022, Addis Standard wrote “The militants also burned more than 50 houses and looted cattle, said district administrator Fikadu Hunde”.⁵⁶³

An article published at the start of December 2022 by The Reporter wrote, with reference to Wollega over the last year, that “Over three billion birr’s worth of property has been lost due to the prolonged violence in the zone”.⁵⁶⁴

In its annual report covering events in 2022, Freedom House noted “Throughout the year in Oromia, Amhara militants were implicated in numerous killings of Oromo civilians and the displacement of tens of thousands of people in areas bordering the Amhara region, which Amhara authorities attempted to annex”.⁵⁶⁵ It also wrote that “The rising number of attacks targeting ethnic groups committed by armed militants resulted in the destruction and looting of properties in Benishangul Gumuz, Amhara, SNNP, Oromia, and other regions”.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶¹ Oromia Support Group (OSG), [REPORT 60: Death, destruction and detention in Oromia Disinformation: a hate crime and a tool of abuse](#), 2 August 2022, p. 7

⁵⁶² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 8 – 14 October 2022](#), 18 October 2022

⁵⁶³ Addis Standard, [News: At least 30 people killed in an attacks blamed on “Fano militants” in East Wollega zone of Oromia region: local official](#), 22 October 2022

⁵⁶⁴ The Reporter Ethiopia, [Oromia in dire straits](#), 3 December 2022

⁵⁶⁵ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2023 – Ethiopia](#), March 2023

⁵⁶⁶ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2023 – Ethiopia](#), March 2023

Human Rights Watch reported in its annual report covering 2023 that “On January 5, Ethiopian police arrested and forcibly disappeared for several hours four Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) staff members—three human rights staff members, Daniel Tesfaye, Bezuayehu Wondimu, and Bereket Daniel, and their driver Nahom Husen—who were investigating cases of forced evictions outside Addis Ababa. On January 12, an Oromia court released the four staff on bail”.⁵⁶⁷

The weekly update for 11 – 17 February 2023 from the EPO wrote that “In West Shewa zone, kebele militiamen burned several homes of civilians in Jirma Kophesa kebele in Ifata woreda after accusing them of collaborating with the OLF-Shane”.⁵⁶⁸

Human Rights Watch remarked that “In March [2023], Oromia authorities demolished homes and businesses in Shegar city, a newly formed area near Ethiopia’s capital, Addis Ababa, rendering scores of residents in the area homeless. Security forces reportedly beat and shot individuals that protested the demolitions”.⁵⁶⁹

In May 2023, the EHRC submitted a statement for the 77th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the human rights situation in Ethiopia which commented: “The large-scale forced evictions and demolition in the newly established Sheger City of Oromia region which surrounds the capital city Addis Ababa has raised multiple human rights concerns including fairness, basic legal procedures, and minimum human rights standards that need to be followed even for cases of unlawful settlements. It has also caused a housing crisis and increased homelessness, with many of those affected being displaced to other regions”.⁵⁷⁰

USDOS’s annual report on human rights in Ethiopia in 2023 wrote:

On May 31, the EHRCO released the findings of its investigation into a government-sponsored house demolition and forced eviction mainly in Oromia Region, in areas surrounding the capital Addis Ababa, to make way for a newly established Sheger City administration. The local independent human rights group stated actions of the Oromia regional government violated economic, social, and cultural rights of citizens and domestic legislation protecting human rights and property rights. The EHRCO stated the government’s demolition and forced eviction campaign in parts of Addis Ababa, Sheger City, and Adama town administrations in Oromia left 111,811 households disposed of their homes since October 2022. On July 27, the Ethiopian Institute of the Ombudsman stated it had received more than 100,000 complaints from persons whose homes were demolished. On March 31, the EHRC stated despite the government’s claim of targeting only “illegal houses,” the demolition included those with proper title deeds and with

⁵⁶⁷ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2024: Events of 2023](#), 11 January 2024, p. 218

⁵⁶⁸ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 11 – 17 February 2023](#), 21 February 2023

⁵⁶⁹ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2024: Events of 2023](#), 11 January 2024, p. 217

⁵⁷⁰ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), [Statement of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission \(EHRC\) \(Affiliate Status No. 18\): AGENDA ITEM 3 - Human Rights Situation in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 75th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights \(03 May – 23 May 2023\)](#), 9 May 2023, p. 8

appropriate legal backing. The EHRC further asserted the demolition lacked warning, consultation with communities, and compensation.⁵⁷¹

Addis Standard reported in June 2023 on attacks by Fano militia in Amuru district of Horo Guduru Wollega zone of Oromia:

Armed militants described as members of the irregular Fano militia killed at least five people, injured dozens in a new attack in Amuru district of Horo Guduru Wollega zone of the Oromia regional states, residents told *Addis Standard*.

According to a resident of Agamsa town in Amuru district who asked for his name to be concealed for safety reasons, the attack on Wednesday, 07 June destroyed properties, and houses were burned and looted in the town and the surrounding rural villages.

The victims of the attack were civilian farmers, and many are fleeing the area as a result of the attack, the resident said, adding that the attackers may have wanted to evict the farmers from their farmlands.

He noted that similar attacks had displaced hundreds of farmers from the area last year. The militants traveled from Haro town in neighboring Kiremu district of East Wollega zone where they are stationed according to him. Haro is 50 kilometers away from Amuru. [...]

In neighboring Kiremu district of East Wollega zone, where according to the residents, Fano militias are stationed, there are ongoing attacks, and the militants are setting ablaze farmers houses in villages like Chafe Sorma, Boqa, Mayaa Jinina, Qoqophe, Qore and Daraba.

Many residents of the area were forced to leave their homes, as a result of the attacks, and are sheltered in the churches etc, multiple residents told Addis Standard. The residents urged the regional government to protect the farmers from the continued attack.⁵⁷²

Addis Standard wrote again in August 2023 on attacks in Kiremu, East Wollega, by Fano militia:

Eight civilians have been killed, 13 injured and 15 went missing following a fresh attack on 16 June, carried out by the irregular Fano militia in the village of Wasti, in Kiremu district of East Wollega zone, in Western Oromia, residents told *Addis Standard*. [...]

Addis Standard spoke to two other local residents who said the militia men took away a total of more than 3,000 cattle from the farmers in villages of *Wasti, Jirma Dongoro* and *Ajana* in the Kiremu district. [...]

Kiremu District Communication Office said in a statement posted on Facebook on 16 June, that the militants whom it referred to as “Amhara extremist group” are working to change the demography of the area by displacing Oromo farmers and settling Amhara natives on their lands. [...]

Residents accused the militants of destroying properties, looting and burning houses with the aim to evict farmers from their farmlands.⁵⁷³

⁵⁷¹ US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 23 April 2024

⁵⁷² Addis Standard, [News: Militants kill at least five, wound several people in renewed attacks in Western Oromia](#), 10 June 2023

⁵⁷³ Addis Standard, [News: Eight killed, 13 injured in fresh attack in Kiremu, East Wollega, local admin accuses “extremist group” from Amhara region](#), 3 August 2023

The OLLAA published a report in October 2023 on human rights violations in East Arsi Zone which observed, according to a local informant, “on the pretext that the people of the area are supporting OLA fighters, houses of civilians have been destroyed at different times in Wetero Dino and Hella, with residents forced to flee. There are also circumstances where the civilians of the area were forced out without being able to gather their cattle, which then became prey for wild animals. Among the areas that were subjected to such violations were Wataro Dino and Hela”.⁵⁷⁴

An October 2023 UNOCHA Situation Report noted that “IDP return exercises commenced in East, West, and Horo Guduru Wellega zones. About a third of the IDP caseloads (approximately 150,000 IDPs) have returned to their places of origin but require emergency shelter and nonfood-items (NFI) assistance due to partial or full damage to their homes”.⁵⁷⁵

In a December 2023 Update, UNOCHA reported that “more than 61,000 people are displaced due to ongoing violence in North Shewa zone of Oromia region, as per the findings of a Multi-Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) conducted between 19 and 26 November across 8 woredas in North Shewa Zone. The assessment findings indicate significant damage to public and private facilities, including 4,860 burnt shelters, damage to 53 health posts as well as 12 ambulances rendered unusable. Some 47,000 children have been left out of school due to damages to around 205 schools”.⁵⁷⁶

The June 2024 OHCHR report recorded that “In 2023, 28 incidents of mainly civilian properties looted and destroyed were recorded, resulting in the destruction of 2,494 private houses, with looting of five private houses, nine vehicles, 1,357 livestock, one hospital, 15 buildings and shops, and 26 private properties in Afar, Amhara, Central Ethiopia, Oromia and Tigray regions. The main perpetrators include the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), Fano militia, the EDF, and ENDF and the Tigray forces. The EDF, in particular, had looted livestock in areas in Tigray region falling within its control (at least eight incidents impacting 1,190 livestock recorded)”.⁵⁷⁷

On 10 June 2024, Front Line Defenders reported on an increasing crackdown on civil society in Ethiopia following threats against the Ethiopian Human Rights Council Organization (EHRCO), writing that:

In May 2023, the Addis Ababa City Administration Communication Office submitted a letter to the Addis Ababa Justice Bureau to file a complaint against EHRCO on the basis that the human rights organisation was inciting conflict among people and turning the people against the government. This was following a report prepared by EHRCO, in connection with house demolitions and forced evictions in the Addis Ababa City Administration, Sheger City Administration of the Oromia Region, and Adama City. [...]

⁵⁷⁴ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Human Rights Violations: The Case of East Arsi Zone](#), 20 October 2023

⁵⁷⁵ OCHA, [Ethiopia - Situation Report](#), 9 Oct 2023

⁵⁷⁶ OHCA, [Ethiopia Situation Report](#), 1 December 2023

⁵⁷⁷ OHCHR, [Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia](#), June 2024, paragraph 23

On 05 January 2023, four EHRCO staff members were arrested by the Oromia Police, after being sent to investigate a petition submitted by individuals whose houses were demolished during the demolition and eviction activities in the newly established Sheger City Administration, around Addis Ababa.⁵⁷⁸

d. Restrictions on freedom of movement in Oromia

The Oromia Support Group observed in August 2022 that “Military command posts, 41 of which are used to scour west, central and south Oromia for Qeerroo and OLA’s supporters, impose curfews, restrict or commandeered public transport and ambulances, prevent farmers attending crops or coffee plantations, hinder education opportunities, destroy local businesses, and confiscate, plunder and destroy properties, animals and produce”.⁵⁷⁹

The monthly update for November 2022 from the EPO wrote that:

Transportation routes through North Shewa zone to Amhara region and through Adama-Metehara to Djibouti have already been intermittently affected due to armed clashes and frequent abduction of civilians by the OLF-Shane ([Ethiopia Insider, 9 February 2022](#)). This has been impacting the transportation of goods within the country as well as goods imported through Djibouti port. As a result, there have been increases in the price of basic food necessities in different parts of the country. For instance, in November, the OLF-Shane closed the main road connecting Asosa zone of Benshangul/Gumuz to Addis Ababa through Nekemte town. The group also reportedly abducted an unidentified number of drivers who were going to Asosa. According to witnesses, civilians, including truck and bus drivers, were stuck in Gimbi town for several weeks due to the closure of the main road. Consequently, basic necessities could not enter Asosa zone, leading to price increases in the area ([DW Amharic, 9 November 2022](#)). UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) reports have confirmed this, indicating that “there is no road access along the main Assosa-Addis route via Oromia since 31 October, blocking both humanitarian and commercial supplies” ([UNOCHA, 17 November 2022](#)).⁵⁸⁰

A UNOCHA situation report in December 2022 noted that “The hostilities in western Oromia are also impacting humanitarian assistance to a large number of IDPs and refugees in Benishangul Gumuz Region as the main supply route (Addis Ababa-western Oromia-Assosa) remains blocked”.⁵⁸¹

In its annual report covering events in 2022, Freedom House stated that “While the constitution establishes freedom of movement, local conflicts impede people’s ability to travel freely. Travel to Tigray, several parts of Oromia, and other parts of Ethiopia have been severely impeded due to the violent conflicts. The intentional destruction of infrastructure such as roads and bridges by armed actors has also undermined civilian and humanitarian movement”.⁵⁸² It added that “Violent conflict and

⁵⁷⁸ Front Line Defenders, [Concern at increasing crackdown on civil society in Ethiopia following threats against the Ethiopian Human Rights Council Organization \(EHRCO\)](#), 10 June 2024

⁵⁷⁹ Oromia Support Group (OSG), [REPORT 60: Death, destruction and detention in Oromia Disinformation: a hate crime and a tool of abuse](#), 2 August 2022, p. 13

⁵⁸⁰ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: November 2022](#), 7 December 2022

⁵⁸¹ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Situation Report](#), 15 December 2022

⁵⁸² Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2023 – Ethiopia](#), March 2023

security clampdowns in Amhara, Afar, Oromia, and Benishangul Gumuz have also significantly reduced internal travel, with most Ethiopians feeling safer in their home region than in other states”.⁵⁸³

A September 2023 report from the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, focusing on events between November 2020 and November 2022, wrote that “Arrests, detentions and killings often took place against a backdrop of curfews and restrictions on movement, contributing to an overarching climate of fear. Large areas of Oromia appear to have been administered throughout the mandate periods under militarized Command Posts, whether or not State of Emergency legislation was in force”.⁵⁸⁴

The International Crisis Group’s CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in March 2023:

In sign of rising tensions between Oromia and Amhara regions, Oromia authorities late Feb-early March restricted transport from Amhara region to federal capital Addis Ababa, which is located in Oromia but is self-governing; Amhara President Yilikal Kefale 6 March declared blockade “unconstitutional”. Addis Ababa’s Oromo Mayor Adanech Abebe 14 March accused individuals of “flocking to the capital from some regional states with the intention of overthrowing the legally elected government”, implying regional authorities enforced blockade amid security concerns; National Movement of Amhara party same day condemned remark as “genocidal incitement”.⁵⁸⁵

In May 2023, the EHRC observed that “In some of the conflict affected areas of Oromia region, the security situation and road blockages restricted freedom of movement for prolonged periods”.⁵⁸⁶

The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission’s annual human rights situation report (covering the period of June 2022 to July 2023) wrote in its executive summary that “In Oromia and Benishangul Gumuz regions, attacks by armed groups, including the Oromo Liberation Army (aka Shane) and Gumuz Armed Forces, have made several areas inaccessible and forced the closure of connecting roads such as roads to Addis Ababa or to neighboring regions which has created serious socio-economic challenges for local residents and led to human rights violations”.⁵⁸⁷

A July 2023 Situation Report from UNOCHA reported that “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

⁵⁸³ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2023 – Ethiopia](#), March 2023

⁵⁸⁴ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia](#), 14 September 2023, paragraph 41

⁵⁸⁵ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), March 2023

⁵⁸⁶ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), [Statement of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission \(EHRC\) \(Affiliate Status No. 18\): AGENDA ITEM 3 - Human Rights Situation in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 75th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights \(03 May – 23 May 2023\)](#), 9 May 2023, p. 7

⁵⁸⁷ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), [Executive Summary: Ethiopia Annual Human Rights Situation Report \(June 2022 – June 2023\)](#), 12 July 2023, p. 6

services or livelihood activities and their movement is restricted within camps and towns due to threats of armed group movements beyond their domicile”.⁵⁸⁸

The OLLAA published a report in October 2023 on human rights violations in East Arsi Zone noting that:

In the face of increased violence, in Oromia and Amhara, command posts were established in Western and Southern Oromia from early 2019, comprised of local militia, Oromia Special Forces, ENDF, federal police and Oromia regional police. The Commission’s investigation found that although claimed to have been officially lifted, command posts continue to operate in some areas of Oromia. Witnesses from Western Oromia described ongoing arbitrary restrictions on freedom of movement, including curfews, denial of access to healthcare, shootings of unarmed residents and arbitrary arrest and detention.⁵⁸⁹

USDOS’s annual report on human rights in Ethiopia in 2023 stated, with regards to Oromia “Arrests, detentions, and killings often took place against a backdrop of curfews and restrictions on movement, contributing to an overarching climate of fear. Large areas of Oromia appeared to have been administered through the mandate of militarized Command Posts, whether or not State of Emergency legislation was in force”.⁵⁹⁰ It further wrote:

The government restricted movement in some areas, especially into and out of regions experiencing violence, including parts of Tigray, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, and western Oromia. Federal and regional authorities erected an extensive system of checkpoints on the road connecting regions to the center, which at times impeded travel for those seeking to deliver humanitarian assistance. Throughout the year, the Oromia Region and Federal Police frequently restricted movement into the capital Addis Ababa during public holidays and similar events, citing security concerns. [...] On January 25, media reported Oromia police had restricted movement of youth from the Amhara Region through Oromia. According to the report, members of the regional police erected checkpoints and were turning away youth passengers traveling to Addis Ababa from Gojjam and Gondar areas of the Amhara Region. On February 13, news network DW Amharic talked to passengers who said they were forced to return to Dejen town of the Amhara Region as Oromia police at Goha Tsion checkpoint told them to return to their point of origin. Passengers told DW Amharic the ban included all types of passengers, including those traveling to Addis Ababa for medical treatment and permanent residents of Addis Ababa who had traveled to the Amhara Region for business.⁵⁹¹

The International Crisis Group’s CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in January 2024 “OLA 28 Jan declared twenty-day ban on transport and business throughout region”.⁵⁹²

FEWS Net reported in its food security outlook for February – September 2024 that “In January, the OLA started an “economic siege” on Addis Ababa through market strikes and a transportation blockade. This

⁵⁸⁸ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Situation Report](#), 27 July 2023

⁵⁸⁹ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia](#), 14 September 2023, paragraph 59

⁵⁹⁰ US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 23 April 2024

⁵⁹¹ US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 23 April 2024

⁵⁹² International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), January 2024

“siege” only lasted about a week, and had minimal impact on market functionality. In the Wollega zones, the impact of conflict is limited; however, as conflict is concentrated in the Shewa zones, movement of the population is somewhat limited and conflict can temporarily impact market function”.⁵⁹³

e. Gender-based violence (GBV)

Note that source do not always specify the ethnicity of victims. Reports have been included that document the situation in Oromia.

The Ethiopian Protection Cluster’s monthly protection overview for September 2022 wrote for Oromia that: “Oromia - In the drought affected areas, the number of GBV cases is rapidly increasing. Critical water shortage forces women and girls to travel long distance to fetch water and firewood exposing them to high risk for GBV. Moreover, the lack of adequate lighting in IDP sites in East and West Hararghe, Oromia, continues to pose a security risk for women and children”.⁵⁹⁴ The overview also added that “An increase in resorting to negative coping mechanisms has been noticed in Oromia’s drought affected areas. It includes early marriage, child labour and exploitative practices, human and child trafficking, migration from rural to urban areas, begging in the streets”.⁵⁹⁵

In its November 2022 Situation Update, UNOCHA similarly reported that “Similar to the overall drought impact, the recent cholera outbreak in Bale Zone, Oromia Region, increases the risk of GBV as women are obliged to travel long distances to supply water for their family, while entire households face multiple cholera-related health risks”.⁵⁹⁶

USAID reported in a complex emergency fact sheet for the Horn of Africa in May 2023 that “Areas of Oromia Region’s Borena and Guji zones [...] reached catastrophic levels of GBV prevalence—the report’s most severe classification—by the end of 2022”.⁵⁹⁷

In its May 2023 situation update, UNOCHA recorded:

The humanitarian situation in western Oromia (East and West Wellegas) has shown to worsen in the last few months due to continued insecurity from conflict since 2020. Despite improved access, protection concerns have been reported amongst women and children displaced and exposed to different risks such as loss of families, gender-based-violence (GBV) and physical injury, as well as resort to dangerous and negative coping mechanisms. Response necessitates protection of civilians, as well as other multi-sectoral

⁵⁹³ The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), [Hunger and acute malnutrition outpace the scale-up of food assistance](#), February 2024

⁵⁹⁴ Protection Cluster, [Monthly Protection Overview – September 2022](#), 28 October 2022, p. 5

⁵⁹⁵ Protection Cluster, [Monthly Protection Overview – September 2022](#), 28 October 2022, p. 7

⁵⁹⁶ OCHA, [Ethiopia - Situation Report](#), 17 Nov 2022

⁵⁹⁷ USAID, [Horn of Africa – Complex Emergency; Fact Sheet #8 Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2023](#), 26 May 2023, p. 2

support, for the reported approximately 859,000 people displaced, tens of thousands of children out of school (damaged or closed), and high mortality and morbidity rates due to damaged health facilities and poor health services.⁵⁹⁸

A report on the situation in Oromia region (East, West and Kellem Wollega) in December 2023 that was published by UNCHR in June 2024 and based on interview with key informants recorded the following:

The Wollegas is one of the areas highly impacted by conflict and insecurity within Oromia region. East, West, Kellem, Horo Guduru Wollega, and West Shewa Zones of Oromia have been impacted by insecurity and continuing conflict for the last 5 years. In August 2023, according to government estimates, over 28,000 people were displaced from Yaso Woreda of Kamashi zone (Benishangul Gumuz Region) to Haro Limu Woreda in East Wollega. In November, about 4,500 individuals were displaced to Amuru Woreda (Horo Guduru) due to conflict in Bure Woreda (West Gojam). The ongoing conflict in the Wollegas continues to impact the protection situation of vulnerable individuals – especially women and children – most of whom have suffered multiple displacements since 2018. The conflict-induced displacement continues to exacerbate heightened protection-risk exposures for these vulnerable women and children. [...]

During the reporting period, lack of access to basic needs (53% of respondents), presence of armed groups (46%) and lawlessness (25%) are the top three risk factors increasing the risk of GBV in all three zones covered for this report.

Locations presenting the highest rate by risk factors are:

- Early and forced marriage: reported by 46% of respondent as factor increasing risk of GBV in Leta Sibu woreda (West Wollega).
- Lack of separate shelter for male and female: reported by 35% of respondents in Diga woreda (East Wollega)
- Presence of armed forces: reported as GBV risk factor in Gimbi (43% of respondents) and Sayo (24% of respondents). [...]

The conflict exacerbated the GBV concerns IDPs face in the Wollegas. Child marriage, Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV), and forced marriage are the main issues. There are 4 One-Stop Centers in the wollegas, but most IDPs live in kebeles far from these centers. The centers are overwhelmed due to lack of resources, qualified personnel, and medical equipment. Therefore, improving the quality of service delivery, building the resilience of GBV survivors, and economic empowerment of women and girls is essential to GBV.⁵⁹⁹

The March 2024 UNOCHA situation report described that “In Ethiopia, GBV continues to be a key concern in communities affected by conflict and climate shocks (drought and floods). GBV forms include violence, sexual assault, physical violence, abduction, rape, child marriage, and harmful traditional practices. Despite increasing reports of cases, GBV remains highly underreported in complex emergency settings. Survivors face stigmatization and lack poor access to assistance and services”.⁶⁰⁰ Reporting specifically on the situation in Oromia the same source noted that:

⁵⁹⁸ OCHA, [Ethiopia-Situation Report](#), 29 May 2023

⁵⁹⁹ UNHCR Ethiopia, [PROTECTION AND SOLUTIONS MONITORING \(PSM\) | Report #11 | Oromia Region \(East, West and Kellem Wollega\) December 2023](#), 12 June 2024

⁶⁰⁰ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Situation Report](#), 25 March 2024

Protection partners operational in the West Hararge Zone of Oromia reported concerns over increasing number of protection related cases. Guba Koricha district in the zone reported five child trafficking cases in just one month. The Zonal Women and Children's Affairs office in February reported incidents of child marriages (8), early marriages (5), bigamy (10), sexual and physical violences (6), and abductions (1 adult and 3 child). Provision of appropriate response to GBV is facing challenges of underreporting (in cases managed by community elders), lack of one-stop centers, as well as limited capacities of local authorities and funding for protection partners.⁶⁰¹

i. Conflict-related sexual violence

Note that source do not always specify the ethnicity of victims. Reports have been included that document the situation in Oromia.

Insecurity Insight's May 2022 monthly news brief on reporting sexual violence commented on the following incident: "Around 27 May 2022: In Jeldu district, West Shewa zone, Oromia region, a woman was raped for 16 days by members of Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane when the bus she was travelling on was stopped. Her three-year-old daughter was also kidnapped and forced to witness the attack. Source: ACLED".⁶⁰² The report did not specify the ethnicity of the victim.

USDOS remarked in its annual report for 2022 that "On July 8 [2022], the EHRC reported that sexual and gender-based violence occurred in all conflict-affected areas of the country. Some organizations reported that conflict-induced displacement had led to increased reports of rape and sexual violence including sexual slavery and sexual exploitation and abuse".⁶⁰³ The same source further noted that "In October 2022, the Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation at Washington University reported survivors of conflict-related sexual violence lacked access to critical support services such as sexual and reproductive health care, psychosocial support, and safe shelter due to limited access to conflict-affected areas".⁶⁰⁴

Its September 2022 monthly news brief stated that "Around 07 September 2022: In Sombo Chitu Kebele, West Shewa zone, Oromia region, a pregnant woman was raped by Ethiopian government soldiers assumed to be Oromia regional special forces. The woman died before reaching the hospital. Source: ACLED".⁶⁰⁵ The report did not specify the ethnicity of the victim. For November 2022, it reported the following incident: "Around 14 November 2022: In Goro Mako village, West Shewa zona, Oromia region, an unspecified number of women and girls were raped by members of the Oromia regional special forces. The women and girls were attacked whilst they were travelling to markets and schools. The perpetrators also stole their money. Source: ACLED".⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰¹ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Situation Report](#), 25 March 2024, p. 3

⁶⁰² Insecurity Insight, [Reporting Sexual Violence: Monthly News Brief – May 2022](#), May 2022, p. 2

⁶⁰³ US Department of State (USDOS), [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 20 March 2023

⁶⁰⁴ US Department of State (USDOS), [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 20 March 2023

⁶⁰⁵ Insecurity Insight, [Reporting Sexual Violence: Monthly News Brief – September 2022](#), September 2022, p. 2

⁶⁰⁶ Insecurity Insight, [Reporting Sexual Violence: Monthly News Brief – November 2022](#), November 2022, p. 2

The report of the UN Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict covering 2022 noted that “Sexual violence was perpetrated against 5 girls, aged from 12 to 17, by unidentified perpetrators (4) and Oromiya Police (1) in the state of Oromiya (5)”.⁶⁰⁷

In June 2023 the Committee against Torture noted in its concluding observations on Ethiopia with regards to conflict-related sexual violence (not specifically mentioning Oromia) that:

The Committee remains alarmed by the alleged widespread use of sexual and genderbased violence against women and girls, including rape, gang rape and sexual slavery, as a method of warfare by all parties to the armed conflict in the regions of Tigray, Amhara and Afar. While noting the initial steps taken to provide support to the victims and hold perpetrators accountable, including through the work of the Investigation and Prosecution Committee and the Committee on Sexual and Gender-based Violence, the Committee is concerned that victims lack sufficient access to justice and that the lack of independence of civil and military courts exercising jurisdiction over cases of sexual violence linked to the armed conflict is giving rise to a pervasive environment of impunity. The Committee also deplores the fact that, as a result, very few victims have access to effective remedies, reparation or rehabilitation and reintegration services (arts. 2, 12–14 and 16)”.⁶⁰⁸

A September 2023 report from the ICHREE, focusing on events between November 2020 and November 2022, wrote that: “Family members of suspected OLA fighters were also targeted for arrest and detention – including women who experienced sexual violence”.⁶⁰⁹

The report also noted that:

In the face of increased violence, in Oromia and Amhara, command posts were established in Western and Southern Oromia from early 2019, comprised of local militia, Oromia Special Forces, ENDF, federal police and Oromia regional police. The Commission’s investigation found that although claimed to have been officially lifted, command posts continue to operate in some areas of Oromia. [...] Other violations under command post authority include [...] rape [...].⁶¹⁰

The OLLAA published a report in October 2023 on human rights violations in East Arsi Zone noting that, according to a local informant, “Two of the government security forces raped Fayo Ahmed, a 14-year-old

⁶⁰⁷ UN General Assembly, [UN Security Council: Children and armed conflict; Report of the Secretary-General](#), 5 June 2023, para 250

⁶⁰⁸ UN Committee Against Torture, [Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Ethiopia](#), 7 June 2023, paragraph 16

⁶⁰⁹ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia](#), 14 September 2023, paragraph 41

⁶¹⁰ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia](#), 14 September 2023, paragraph 59

elementary school student. This abuse has caused her to drop out of school, and she has been left struggling with serious mental trauma”.⁶¹¹

Although not specifying location, the report of the UN Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict covering 2023 wrote that “Sexual violence was perpetrated against 17 girls by unidentified perpetrators (13), the Eritrean Defence Forces (2) and Oromo Liberation Army/Front-Shene (2)”.⁶¹²

The report of the Secretary-General on Conflict-related Sexual Violence covering 2023 noted with regards to Ethiopia that:

All parties to the conflict, including members of the Ethiopian National Defence Forces, the Eritrean Defence Forces, the Amhara Special Forces and militia, and the Tigrayan forces, have reportedly been implicated in acts of conflict-related sexual violence. [...]

Highlighting the scale and scope of the violations, the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia concluded that in Tigray alone, between November 2020 and June 2023, some 10,000 survivors of sexual violence had sought health care in one-stop centres. Moreover, the Commission underscored that rape and other forms of sexual violence, in particular against women and girls in Tigray, had continued after the signing of the Agreement for Lasting Peace in 2022 (see A/HRC/54/CRP.3) [...]

In 2023, the United Nations verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence, including rape and gang rape, affecting 795 women, 36 girls, 3 men and 1 boy. Of that total, 454 cases took place in 2022. In addition, humanitarian service providers registered cases affecting 370 women and 192 girls, the majority of which took place in 2022. Survivors faced unwanted pregnancy and HIV infections resulting from rape, amid reports of an increase in suicidal ideation. Members of non-State armed groups, such as the Oromo Liberation Army/Oromo Liberation Front-Shene, Tigrayan forces, and the Fano/Amhara militia in the Afar, Amhara and Oromia regions were implicated. A number of cases were attributed to the Eritrean Defence Forces. The Ethiopian National Defence Forces were also implicated, in addition to the Amhara regional police and the Oromia Special Forces. The National Rehabilitation Commission reported that some 1,500 female ex-combatants were victims of sexual violence, 41 of whom experienced uterine or vaginal prolapse and were provided access to corrective surgery. Access to reporting and services was curtailed owing to humanitarian access constraints, and a collapsed health system in Tigray. In Amhara region, some one-stop centres were either closed or operating below capacity owing to limited access to essential supplies, such as post-rape kits. Female health workers were allegedly subjected to sexual assault, while women human rights defenders were threatened, including online.⁶¹³

Insecurity Insight’s January 2024 monthly news brief on reporting sexual violence listed the following incident: “20 January 2024: In Rarati Kebele, Dofa area, Bale Zone, Oromia region, a 15-year-old girl was raped by an ENDF soldier. Source: ACLED”.⁶¹⁴

⁶¹¹ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA)d, [Human Rights Violations: The Case of East Arsi Zone](#), 20 October 2023

⁶¹² UN General Assembly, [UN Security Council: Children and armed conflict; Report of the Secretary-General \[A/78/842-S/2024/384\]](#), 3 June 2024, paras 260

⁶¹³ UN Security Council, [Conflict-related sexual violence; Report of the Secretary-General \[S/2024/292\]](#), 4 April 2024, paragraph 82 and 83

⁶¹⁴ Insecurity Insight, [Reporting Sexual Violence: Monthly News Brief – January 2024](#), January 2024, p. 2

The June 2024 OHCHR report detailed that “Cases of sexual violence, including conflict related (CRSV), were also recorded but remained generally underreported”.⁶¹⁵ The same source further recorded:

During the reporting period, 46 incidents affecting 82 victims of sexual violence or CRSV (68 women and 14 girls) were documented, reportedly committed by ENDF, Amhara Regional Forces,⁹ Oromia Regional Special Forces, Oromia Police, Eritrean Defense Forces and the Selam Askebari militia¹⁰. In Oromia region, 25 incidents affected 27 victims (including at least 10 girls) were recorded. The victims in Oromia region were both Amhara and Oromo people, as armed groups of both ethnic groups attacked and counter-attacked each other, whilst others were victims of the fighting between Government forces and the OLA.⁶¹⁶

9 Unit within the Amhara Regional Police force

10 Selam Askebari (peacekeeper" in Amharic) was established by the Wolkait-Tegede Setit Humera Zone administration in the Amhara region. They act as a regional security enforcement actor under the command of the zonal administration and coordinate with regular Amhara security forces, to whom they guarantee their support, particularly in rural areas where the regional police are not present.

Furthermore the report noted that “Sexual and conflict-related sexual violence remained underreported in Ethiopia due to the socio-cultural stigmatization of victims and fears of reprisal by perpetrators if victims denounced them, or even simply sought medical assistance. The limited availability of comprehensive assistance facilities or relevant specialized services in some areas may also account for underreporting, especially in the rural areas. The lack of awareness and limited deterrent action by the authorities also raises concerns about future accountability for cases of conflict-related sexual violence in the country”.⁶¹⁷

ii. Domestic violence

In its Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Ethiopia, the Human Rights Committee reported on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights noting that it was “concerned about reports of harmful practices against children, including female genital mutilation, forced marriages, infanticide and corporal punishment, particularly in remote areas; increased domestic violence, including sexual violence, against children during the COVID-19 pandemic, due in part to school closures; and abuse and ill-treatment of children living in residential institutions and of children with disabilities”.⁶¹⁸

USDOS remarked in its annual report for 2023 “The law did not expressly address spousal rape. The government did not fully enforce the law. The law generally covered violence against a marriage partner

⁶¹⁵ OHCHR, [Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia](#), June 2024, paragraph 3

⁶¹⁶ OHCHR, [Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia](#), June 2024, paragraph 24

⁶¹⁷ OHCHR, [Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia](#), June 2024, paragraph 25

⁶¹⁸ UN Human Rights Committee, [Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Ethiopia \[CCPR/C/ETH/CO/2\]](#), 7 December 2022

or a person cohabiting in an irregular union without specifically mentioning spousal rape”.⁶¹⁹ The same source further noted that:

In its July 2022 annual report, the EHRC indicated pervasive incidents of gender-based violence across the country and stated impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence was a problem. According to the EHRC’s report, women and children were targeted and exposed to a wide range of human rights violations and abuses in Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, and Oromia. [...]

On January 8, seven local civil society organizations working on human rights reported increased gender-based violence throughout 2022, including physical assault, murder, and other forms of sexual violence against women. The organizations cited research commissioned by the EWLA that counted approximately 47 cases of murder and attempted murder, 32 cases of rape, and 158 physical assault crimes against women across different regions in 2022. The EWLA stated it had provided free legal support services to more than 13,000 women including victims of domestic violence within a year.

Domestic violence was illegal, but government enforcement of the law was inconsistent. Depending on the severity of injuries inflicted, penalties for conviction ranged from small monetary fines to 15 years’ imprisonment. Domestic violence, including spousal abuse, was a pervasive social problem. According to the 2016 Demographic and Health Survey, 34 percent of married women and girls between ages 15 and 49 had experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence from spouses.⁶²⁰

In its annual report covering events in 2023, Freedom House explained that “Legislation protects women’s rights, but these rights are routinely violated in practice. Enforcement of laws against rape and domestic abuse is inconsistent, and cases routinely stall in the courts. Particularly in conflict-affected areas, people have barely any legal protections in practice”.⁶²¹

In a February 2023 report the UN Population Fund Protection Cluster published a review of secondary data which detailed with regards to domestic violence in Ethiopia that:

It is the most common type of violence that women face, and it includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. In ten studies, the lifetime prevalence of domestic violence against women by husbands or intimate partners ranged from 20 to 78%. Domestic physical violence by a husband or intimate partner against women ranged from 31 to 76.5% over a lifetime. Domestic sexual violence against women by husbands or intimate partners ranged from 19.2 to 59% over a lifetime. Domestic emotional violence had a lifetime prevalence of 51.7%. During their pregnancy, a significant number of women were subjected to violence. Domestic violence against women is strongly linked to alcohol consumption, chewing tobacco, a family history of violence, occupation, religion, educational status, residence, and decisionmaking power (NCBI, 08/29/2015).⁶²²

In June 2023, the Committee against Torture noted in its concluding observations on Ethiopia with regards gender-based violence (not specifically mentioning Oromia) that:

⁶¹⁹ US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 23 April 2024

⁶²⁰ US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 23 April 2024

⁶²¹ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024 – Ethiopia](#), 29 February 2024

⁶²² Protection Cluster, United Nations Population Fund, iMMAP, [Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility: Ethiopia Secondary Data Review, February 2023](#), 31 March 2023

While taking note of the range of measures being implemented in the framework of the recently adopted National Strategy and Action Plan on prevention and response to violence against women and children (2021–2026), the Committee is concerned at the widespread incidence of gender-based violence against women and girls, including in the home and in places of detention. The Committee is also concerned about:

- (a) The absence of a comprehensive law on gender-based violence and the fact that marital rape is still not criminalized;
- (b) The low number of prosecutions and convictions for gender-based violence, the leniency of the penalties imposed and the lack of expertise within the judiciary on the issue;
- (c) The failure to provide adequate redress for victims and the insufficiency of the resources allocated to victim support programmes;
- (d) The lack of up-to-date disaggregated statistical data on gender-based violence in all its forms and on the resolution of such cases, including prosecutions, sentences and convictions of the perpetrators and victim compensation awards (arts. 2 and 16)".⁶²³

Ahead of that report, the Committee Against Torture met in May 2023 to consider the State reports in which it was discussed that "Marital rape was not a punishable offence under Ethiopian criminal law on account of the spousal obligation to consummate the marriage. A national study on the legislative gaps relating to gender-based violence and marital rape had been conducted and discussions on its outcome and the way forward were under way".⁶²⁴

The Global Protection Cluster's protection analysis update for Ethiopia, published in May 2024 stated that:

Due to the lack of official judicial routes for the different threats that the affected population is facing, some have resorted to traditional justice. Women and girls have been resorting to traditional justice to address GBV issues such as FGM, child marriage and domestic violence partly due to limited legal services (RDRMB 31/08/2023). However, there are reported challenges for women and girls when accessing traditional justice mechanisms, with them having to rely on male family members, and with customary laws and traditional justice structures often lacking female representation, hindering their rights and in particular failing to address domestic violence effectively (GPC - Ethiopia 14/09/2023).⁶²⁵

iii. Female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C)

⁶²³ UN Committee Against Torture, [Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Ethiopia](#), 7 June 2023, paragraph 16

⁶²⁴ UN Committee against Torture, [Seventy-sixth session Summary record of the 2000th meeting](#), 16 May 2023

⁶²⁵ Global Protection Cluster, [Ethiopia - Protection Analysis Update - Update on conflict and climate-related protection risks trends](#), 2 May 2024

An UNICEF Regional Brief published in June 2022 described that “Three out of four, or 75 per cent, of women aged 15 to 49 in Oromia are subjected to female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C), significantly above the national rate of 65 per cent”.⁶²⁶

USDOS remarked in its annual report for 2023:

The law criminalized the practice of clitoridectomy and provided for three months’ imprisonment or a monetary fine if convicted. Conviction of infibulation of the genitals (the most extreme and dangerous form of FGM/C) was punishable by five to 10 years’ imprisonment.

According to research by authors from the Amhara Public Health Institute and Bahir Dar University, published in 2021, the prevalence of FGM/C among girls from birth to age 14 was 18.6 percent, representing a decline compared with 24 percent reported in the Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey conducted in 2005. The research also indicated FGM/C was still widely practiced across communities (16 percent among girls younger than age 14, and 65 percent among girls and women ages 15 to 49). The country was home to 25 million circumcised women and girls.⁶²⁷

In June 2023 the Committee against Torture noted in its concluding observations on Ethiopia with regards gender-based violence (not specifically mentioning Oromia) that:

While noting the measures taken by the State party to eliminate child marriage, the adoption of the national costed road map to end child marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting by 2025 and the adoption of the National Strategy and Action Plan on harmful traditional practices against women and children in 2013, the Committee is concerned that traditional harmful practices, including female genital mutilation and child marriage, remain prevalent, particularly in rural areas and in some communities. It also notes with concern the lack of accurate data on cases of traditional harmful practices, the underreporting of such cases and the relatively low level of prosecutions and the continued impunity of perpetrators (arts. 2 and 16).⁶²⁸

A June 2023 country update on FGM/C in Ethiopia by 28 Too Many and the Orchid Project analysed prevalence across Ethiopia. However, it used statistics compiled through Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) in 2000, 2005, 2011 and 2016, as well as Orchid Project’s estimates. It wrote:

FGM/C prevalence is significantly higher in the eastern regions of Ethiopia (Somali and Affar) and lowest in the northern region of Tigray. However, taking population density into account, more than 60% of the women and girls affected by FGM/C live in the Oromiya (nine million) and Amhara (seven million) regions. [...] In the Oromiya region, FGM/C is strongly linked to marriage and motherhood – so much so, some girls beg their parents to have them cut to increase their likelihoods of marriage and pregnancy, even if their parents want to stop the practice.¹⁶⁴ [...]

As with other aspects of FGM/C in Ethiopia, there are strong relationships between ethnicity, religious belief and FGM/C. 74.6% of Affar women (aged 15–49), 56.1% of Somali women, 28% of Oromo women

⁶²⁶ UNICEF, [Regional Situation Analysis of Children and Women Regional briefs 2022: Oromia](#), June 2022

⁶²⁷ US Department of State (USDOS), [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 23 April 2024

⁶²⁸ UN Committee Against Torture, [Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Ethiopia](#), 7 June 2023, paragraph 24

and 23.2% of Sidama women believe FGM/C to be required by their religions.¹⁷⁰ These same ethnic groups also have high numbers of women who believe that FGM/C should continue. This means that there are ‘hotspots’ of the belief that FGM/C is required by the major religions, most commonly in Affar, Oromiya, Somali, Harari and Dire Dawa. [...]

Ethiopian women over the age of 30 are generally more accepting of GBV/IPV than are younger women: 43–44% and 35–39% respectively hold the opinion that wife-beating is justified in certain given circumstances; 63.0% of all Ethiopian women aged 15–49 hold this belief.²²² Interestingly, this view is taken by significantly fewer Ethiopian men – 27.7% of those aged 15–49.²²³ Views on GBV also vary by region. The highest rates of acceptance are in SNNPR (47.6%), Affar (46.0%), Oromiya (45.9%) and Tigray (39.0%).²²⁴ [...]

Although the prevalence of FGM/C is highest in the Somali and Affar regions, the population in those regions is smaller than in other regions that have a lower prevalence. It is estimated that seven million women and girls are affected in the Amhara region alone and nine million in the Oromiya region, compared to 790,000 in Affar and two million in Somali.²⁴⁵⁶²⁹

164 Ibid [Elizabeth Presler-Marshall, Nicola Jones, Erin Oakley, Rebecca Dutton, Sarah Baird, Workneh Yadete and Yitagesu Gebeyehu (2022) Exploring the diversity of FGM/C practices in Ethiopia: Drivers, experiences and opportunities for social norm change. London: Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence. Available at <https://www.gage.odi.org/publication/exploring-the-diversity-of-fgm-c-practices-in-ethiopia-drivers-experiences-and-opportunities-for-social-norm-change>.] [...]

170 DHS 2016, p.326. [...]

222 DHS 2016, p.283.

223 DHS 2016, p.283.

224 DHS 2016, p.283. [...]

245 UNICEF (2020) A Profile of Female Genital Mutilation in Ethiopia, p.5. New York: UNICEF. Available at <https://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/reports/profile-female-genital-mutilation>.

In its August 2023 situation update UNOCHA reported that “protection issues among the vulnerable, including children were serious challenges prevalent in Amhara, Oromia, and Somali regions. Traditional harmful practices such as female genital mutilation, child marriage, child labour, as well as crimes in relation to gender-based violence and human trafficking were among findings in these regions. Provision of necessary protection services and strengthening awareness on child protection are necessary”.⁶³⁰

f. Situation of journalists and human rights defenders

See also [IV. Human rights situation, a. Arbitrary arrest and detention](#).

At the beginning of May 2022, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) wrote on the ongoing detention of journalists Dessu Dulla and Bikila Amenu:

On April 7, authorities in the Ethiopian region of Oromia charged Dessu and Bikila, both journalists with the social media-based broadcaster Oromia News Network, under Article 238 of the country’s criminal

⁶²⁹ 28 Too Many and the Orchid Project, [FGM/C in Ethiopia: Country Profile Update](#), June 2023, pp. 10, 39, 47, and

52

⁶³⁰ UNOCHA, [Situation Update](#), 25 August 2023

code, which bars “outrages against the constitution,” according to [news reports](#) and Gudane Fekadu, a lawyer representing the journalists, who spoke to CPJ in a phone interview.

If convicted, the journalists could face three years to life in prison, or the death penalty, according to [the criminal code](#). Prosecutors have also invoked Article 258, which compels courts to issue death sentences in cases of outrages against the constitution under aggravating conditions, including if the alleged offenses were committed during a civil war or with the support of foreign actors, Gudane said.

Authorities [arrested Dessu](#), ONN’s editor-in-chief and the host of its “Under the Shadow of Democracy” program, and [Bikila](#), a reporter and news presenter, on November 18, 2021.

The journalists are being held at Daleti Prison in Oromia Regional State’s Finfinne Surrounding Special Zone, according to Gudane and those reports; hearings in their cases have been repeatedly adjourned, and they are next due in court on Tuesday, May 3.

“After months of arbitrary detention, the anti-state charges filed against Ethiopian journalists Dessu Dulla and Bikila Amenu, potentially carrying the death penalty, are outrageous. Authorities had months to bring credible charges against the journalists, and the fact they did not only exposes the retaliatory nature of the proceedings,” said CPJ’s Africa program coordinator, Angela Quintal, in New York. “Dessu and Bikila should be freed immediately and unconditionally, and those who abused the justice system to keep them behind bars should be held to account.”

Dessu and Bikila are facing trial alongside 15 co-defendants, all of whom are accused of connections to the Oromia Regional National Transitional Government, a regional body established by the Oromo Liberation Front and Oromo Federalist Congress opposition parties, according to Gudane and those news reports.

Gudane said that authorities’ chargesheet does not specify exactly what offenses the defendants are alleged to have committed.

On “[Under the Shadow of Democracy](#),” Dessu covered threats to democracy in Ethiopia and specifically in Oromia. Bikila hosted [daily](#) and [weekly](#) news roundups on issues including the wars in the country’s Tigray and Oromia regions and human rights violations in Oromia.

Gudane told CPJ that the chargesheet did not mention either ONN or the Oromo Liberation Front by name, but said that Dessu and Bikila told him they could not think of any reason they would be targeted for arrest other than their journalistic work.⁶³¹

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) also remarked at the beginning of June 2022 that:

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) is alarmed by the worsening press freedom situation in Ethiopia, where at least 18 journalists were arrested in the space of ten days and two – Oromia News Network editor-in-chief Dessu Dulla and one of his top presenters, Bikila Amenu – are facing a possible death sentence.

Dessu Dulla and Bikila Amenu were due to appear in court on 3 June on charges of “outrage against the constitution,” which carry a possible death penalty. They are accused in connection with their documentation of crimes committed in the Tigray and Oromia regions.⁶³²

VOA News released a news piece in June 2022 on media arrests in Ethiopia, stating:

⁶³¹ Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), [Ethiopian journalists Dessu Dulla and Bikila Amenu face death penalty on anti-state charges](#), 2 May 2022

⁶³² Reporters Without Borders (RSF), [Eighteen journalists arrested in Ethiopia, two facing possible death sentence](#), 3 June 2022

June 18 marks seven months in prison for Dessu Dulla. The Ethiopian journalist from the Oromia News Network, or ONN, is accused of anti-state activities. If convicted, he could face life in prison, or even the death penalty.

It's a sharp turn of events for Dessu, who returned from exile in Europe in 2018, drawn by what seemed at the time like a period of reform.

He started work at ONN, where he hosted the weekly show "Under the Shadow of Democracy," looking at threats in Ethiopia and its Oromia region. [...]

Dessu is one of more than 20 journalists currently held in Ethiopian prisons. Most had reported on the conflicts in Ethiopia's Tigray, Oromia and Amhara regions. [...]

Alongside arrests, Ethiopia's media regulator in April announced it was taking legal action against 25 media outlets that it said were spreading false news and hate speech.

Authorities say their actions are designed to stop the spread of disinformation or anti-state activities. But rights groups and journalists say Ethiopia is using legal avenues to silence critics or dissidents. [...]

In Dessu's case, he and his ONN colleague Bikila Amenu are included in a case that includes 15 members and supporters of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) political party, who are accused of plotting to overthrow the government. [...]

Authorities say the journalists' news coverage was sympathetic to the OLF.

Their lawyer, Milkiyas Bulcha, told VOA Amharic Service that Dessu and the others have not been given a fair chance to defend themselves.

"The prosecutor is narrowing the right of the accused to defend themselves, and they are not meeting the standards required by law," he said.⁶³³

The same month, CIVICUS also discussed the systematic detention and prosecution of journalists, writing that:

On 21st April 2022, the Oromia Supreme Court in Addis Ababa arraigned 14 members of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and three journalists from the Oromia News Network (ONN). They were charged with attempting to overthrow the government to instill the Oromia Regional National Transitional Government, which would be in violation of the constitution. Two of the journalists were among the ones arrested during the larger crackdown on journalists in November 2021 under the state of emergency. The case was adjourned until 3rd May 2022.⁶³⁴

The UK's 2022 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office report wrote that "In January, Ethiopia announced the release of high-profile detainees as part of a statement on national reconciliation, including prominent Oromo, Tigrayan and Amhara activists. Following a vote in the Ethiopian parliament to end the state of emergency in February, the majority of those arrested under the state of emergency were released. However, reports of arbitrary arrests continued throughout the year across the political spectrum".⁶³⁵

⁶³³ VOA News, [Media Arrests 'Reverberate' Across Ethiopian Newsrooms](#), 16 June 2022

⁶³⁴ CIVICUS Monitor, [Systematic detention and prosecution of journalists a continuing concern](#), 30 June 2022

⁶³⁵ UK Government and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, [Human Rights & Democracy: The 2022 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office Report](#), July 2023, p. 60

According to the EPO's weekly update from 26 November to 2 December 2022, "government forces were involved in two attack against civilian events, reportedly [...] beating up journalists in Kaso Serbe kebele in Sululta town in Finfine special zone".⁶³⁶

In its annual human rights report for Ethiopia in 2022, USDOS wrote that: "On May 2, the CPJ reported journalists Dessu Dulla and Bikila Amenu faced the death penalty on antistate charges. On April 7, authorities in Oromia charged Dessu and Bikila, both working for the news outlet Oromia Media Network (OMN), under Article 238 of the country's criminal code, which bars "outrages against the constitution" and sanctions a penalty as high as death. On November 29, the CPJ reported that a court had acquitted the two journalists of the antistate charges and released them on November 15".⁶³⁷

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

In February 2023, authorities also detained and questioned Yosef Ketema, a journalist for the EOTC Afaan Oromoo broadcasting service who had been conducting frequent interviews with religious figures.¹⁴⁶⁶³⁸

146 "Security Forces Detain Two Journalists amidst Crackdown following Ongoing Orthodox Church Schism, Ensuing Unrest," Addis Standard, February 15, 2023, <https://addisstandard.com/news-security-forces-detain-two-journalists-a...>

CIVICUS highlighted in November 2022 that:

On 15th September 2022, Director General of the federal Authority for Civil Society Organizations (ACSO), Jima Dilbon, issued a warning against CSOs "working against Ethiopia's sovereignty and the public interest". He added that the agency will hold these CSOs accountable and threatened to revoke their licences. The warning came days after local CSOs including the Ethiopian Human Rights Defenders Center released a statement calling for peace in Ethiopia and an end to the ongoing militarised hostilities in parts of the Tigray, Afar and Amhara regions, as well as other conflicts involving the federal and Oromia regional state forces on the one hand and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA).⁶³⁹

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) wrote in February 2023 that "Deacon Yosef Ketema, a journalist with the Oromo-language *Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Television (EOTC TV)*, was arrested on 13 February and is being held in an unknown location".⁶⁴⁰

In April 2023, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) posted a piece on the detention of journalists in Ethiopia, writing on the following two arrests in relation to Oromia:

⁶³⁶ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 26 November – 2 December 2022](#), 6 December 2022

⁶³⁷ US Department of State (USDOS), [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 20 March 2023

⁶³⁸ Freedom House, [Freedom on the Net 2023 - Ethiopia](#), 4 October 2023

⁶³⁹ CIVICUS Monitor, [Spate of arrests spirals, as journalists bear the brunt of war-related reporting](#), 15 November 2022

⁶⁴⁰ Reporters Without Borders (RSF), [In Ethiopia's Somali region, 15 foreign TV channels banned, journalist arrested](#), 21 February 2023

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.

She was released unconditionally on April 5. Yeayeneabeba did not suffer significant injury, she said, adding that her abduction was particularly unexpected because the magazine suspended printing in September 2022 due to the prohibitive cost. They plan to resume on a bi-monthly basis when they can, she said.

On April 4, Oromia state police arrested Samuel Assefa, an EMS reporter, while he covered demolitions in the town of Legetafo-Legedadi, on the outskirts of the capital, according to EMS editor Wosenseged Gebrekidan, who spoke to CPJ by messaging app, and an Ethiopia Human Rights Council [statement](#).

Samuel appeared at the Legetafo-Legedadi town First Instance Court on April 5 and was accused of incitement and attempting to report without authorities' permission, according to Wosenseged. The court granted the police an additional five days to hold Samuel, and on April 11, the court closed the case. Samuel was released on April 13 after paying bail of 10,000 Ethiopian birr (US\$185).⁶⁴¹

Front Line Defenders reported on an increasing crackdown on civil society in Ethiopia in May 2023 following threats against the Ethiopian Human Rights Council Organization (EHRCO), writing that:

In May 2023, the Addis Ababa City Administration Communication Office submitted a letter to the Addis Ababa Justice Bureau to file a complaint against EHRCO on the basis that the human rights organisation was inciting conflict among people and turning the people against the government. This was following a report prepared by EHRCO, in connection with house demolitions and forced evictions in the Addis Ababa City Administration, Sheger City Administration of the Oromia Region, and Adama City. [...]

On 05 January 2023, four EHRCO staff members were arrested by the Oromia Police, after being sent to investigate a petition submitted by individuals whose houses were demolished during the demolition and eviction activities in the newly established Sheger City Administration, around Addis Ababa. After eight days of detention, they were released on bail on 13 January 2023, due to pressure from various national and international human rights institutions. However, at a public workshop organised in Adama City from the 25th to 27th of April 2023, officials from the Oromia Police and Justice Bureau stated that they had not closed the case against these four EHRCO staff. They added that they will closely monitor the case and could at any time re-arrest these human rights defenders.⁶⁴²

In June 2023 the Committee against Torture noted in its concluding observations on Ethiopia that:

⁶⁴¹ Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), [At least 8 journalists detained amid renewed unrest in Ethiopia](#), 14 April 2023

⁶⁴² Front Line Defenders, [Concern at increasing crackdown on civil society in Ethiopia following threats against the Ethiopian Human Rights Council Organization \(EHRCO\)](#), 10 June 2024

While noting the adoption of Proclamation No. 1238/2021 of 5 April 2021 on the media, which aims to ensure better protection from arbitrary detention for media workers, the Committee is gravely concerned by continued reports of threats, harassment, intimidation and attacks against, and arbitrary arrests and detentions of, human rights defenders, journalists, political opponents, government critics and activists. 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 2022.⁶⁴³

The June 2024 OHCHR report covering the situation in 2023 and incidents in 2024 thus far detailed that “opposition leaders, journalists, and civil society organizations (CSOs) faced a restrictive environment, with freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly constrained, both before and following the declaration of the SoE”.⁶⁴⁴ Further reporting on the situation for journalists the report noted:

At least 12 male journalists were arrested by the authorities since the declaration of the SoE on 4 August 2023, while four others were arrested earlier in 2023. Three were released on bail, including the founder of a radio station, who was arrested in Addis Ababa on 11 September and released on 26 October after receiving “rehabilitation training”. 12 Out of the 12 journalists arrested following the SoE, eight remain in detention, with the four journalists arrested in April 2023 held at Kaliti Prison, Addis Ababa standing trial before the Federal High Court. Furthermore, two journalists and one activist arrested by security forces in Bahir Dar on 14 and 20 August 2023, respectively, remained in detention at the Awash Arba detention center in Afar region.

The others remained remanded without charges, in violation of the Media Proclamation which prohibits remanding persons charged with committing an offence through the media.¹³ During the reporting period, human rights defenders have also been arrested due to the legitimate exercise of human rights work. For example, four members of civil society organizations carrying out their activities in relation to cases of alleged forced evictions in Addis Ababa on 5 January 2023.⁶⁴⁵

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) called in February 2024 for the release of a visiting French reporter:

The journalist, Antoine Galindo, 36, was arrested by plainclothes police in Addis Ababa on 22 February, nine days after arriving in Ethiopia on assignment for *Africa Intelligence* to cover an African Union summit in the capital. He had press accreditation and had notified the Ethiopian Media Authority of his intention to cover local news stories.

RSF has learned that Galindo was arrested while meeting with alleged members of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), a political organisation opposed to the Ethiopian government. On the basis of this meeting, he is accused of seeking to “create chaos and violence,” as are the presumed OLF members themselves. Sources close to the case say he was brought before a judge on 24 February, that a police investigation is under way and that he is due to have another hearing on 1 March.

⁶⁴³ UN Committee Against Torture, [Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Ethiopia](#), 7 June 2023, paragraph 50

⁶⁴⁴ OHCHR, [Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia](#), June 2024, paragraph 2

⁶⁴⁵ OHCHR, [Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia](#), June 2024, paragraph 27

Indigo Publications Group, which owns *Africa Intelligence*, has issued a statement condemning Galindo's "unjustified arrest" and the "spurious accusations" against him, which it said were "not based on any tangible evidence that might justify this extended deprivation of liberty."⁶⁴⁶

The International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch tracker also gave the following update in February 2024 "security forces 22 Feb arrested French journalist for allegedly conspiring with OLA and Fano to incite unrest in capital Addis Ababa, released him 29 Feb".⁶⁴⁷

g. Situation of political opponents

See also [IV. Human rights situation, a. Arbitrary arrest and detention](#).

Human Rights Watch noted in July 2022 that "opposition politicians from the Oromo Liberation Front remain in detention despite multiple judicial orders instructing they be released on bail".⁶⁴⁸

With reference to the treatment of alleged members or persons affiliated with Oromo opposition groups, a Country of Origin report by the Danish Immigration Service on Ethiopia security and human rights situation, published in September 2022, wrote that:

Regarding treatment of OLF members, supporters and family members, a source stated that available information is unverified. However, there are numerous stories about disappearances, mass arrests and torture of OLF members. Thus, perceived OLF supporters or members are likely to be ill-treated by the authorities according to the source.¹⁹⁴⁶⁴⁹

194 International Researcher: 6

According to the EPO's weekly update from 8 to 14 October 2022 "On 12 October, a member of the OLF party executive committee was reportedly shot and killed by unidentified gunmen near his home in Sansusi in Burayu town in Finfine special zone in Oromia region".⁶⁵⁰

In its annual report covering events in 2022, Freedom House wrote that:

The government silences critical voices and the voices of its political opponents to control the narratives around the civil war in Tigray and conflicts in other regions, especially Oromia. Its crackdown on

⁶⁴⁶ Reporters Without Borders (RSF), [Visiting French reporter held in Addis Ababa must be freed at once, says RSF](#), 26 February 2024

⁶⁴⁷ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), February 2024

⁶⁴⁸ Human Rights Watch, [Ethiopia's Other Conflict: Ethiopia's Tigray War Overshadows Ongoing Cycles of Violence in Oromia](#), 4 July 2022

⁶⁴⁹ Ministry of Immigration and Integration, Danish Immigration Service, [Ethiopia An update on the security and human rights situation since February 2022](#), September 2022, p. 25

⁶⁵⁰ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 8 – 14 October 2022](#), 18 October 2022

individuals and political institutions with opposing views has pushed individuals to refrain from commenting on sensitive topics, including political issues.

Nationwide sweeps, raids, and arrests, as well as a rising tolerance for hate speech and incitement to violence by authorities and other public figures—particularly against Tigrayans and Oromo people—have intensified a climate of fear around expressing personal views.⁶⁵¹

In February 2023, Addis Standard noted that on the treatment of detained OLF members in currently detained at Burayu police station “Kennasa Ayana, member of the central committee of the opposition Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and three other senior officials of the party have been critically ill and denied urgent treatment, spokesperson of OLF Lemmi Gemechu told Addis Standard”.⁶⁵²

An article released by Human Rights Watch in July 2023 discussed the ongoing detention of Oromo opposition figures observing that:

Oromia police have held seven senior members of the opposition political party, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), a once-banned political opposition group that for decades fought a low-level insurgency for the self-determination of Oromos. Since 2020, authorities have detained Abdi Regassa, Dawit Abdeta, Lammi Begna, Michael Boran, Kenessa Ayana, and Gaada Oljira, and, since 2021, Gaada Gebissa – despite multiple judicial orders directing their release. The authorities have provided no legal basis for their long-term detentions without charge. [...]

Oromia police authorities have repeatedly violated the detainees’ due process rights, forcibly disappearing them or holding them incommunicado, denying them access to their lawyers and family members for weeks or months – and at times up to eight months – and frequently moving them between makeshift and official detention sites, further hampering their families’ access. [...]

In April 2023, Oromia police authorities moved the seven detainees from a Burayu police station and then withheld their whereabouts. It was only after two weeks that family members discovered where they were held. People interviewed said they believed that the detainees’ disappearance occurred the day before Ethiopia’s national electoral board was expected to visit them.

The detainees reappeared a week later in the town of Dukem, 37 kilometers southeast of Addis. “The police didn’t mention or give any explanation for why they were transferred from Burayu to Dukem,” said a defense team lawyer. “All seven were imprisoned in a nine-square-meter room with bad sanitary conditions.” [...]

Regional and federal courts have called for the release of all the detainees, yet authorities have appealed and flouted judicial orders. Regional state prosecutors closed case files against Michael Boran, Kenessa Ayana, and Gaada Gebissa due to lack of evidence between November 2021 and January 2022, yet all remain detained without charge. Gaada Oljira has never been formally charged. [...]

Oromia police continued to detain the opposition figures, despite a district court ruling in favor of a habeas court petition filed by defense lawyers for four of the detainees in July 2022, ordering them freed.

Family members, lawyers, and other opposition members say they believe that they have exhausted all options and are at a loss as to how to challenge the continued detentions. [...]

⁶⁵¹ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2023 – Ethiopia](#), March 2023

⁶⁵² Addis Standard, [News: Four high-ranking officials of opposition OLF including CC member Kennasa Ayana critically ill inside prison, denied treatment](#), 24 February 2023

Family members and defense lawyers have been particularly concerned about the detainees' deteriorating health and well-being. While the authorities have allowed detainees to receive treatment, care has been delayed, interrupted, and inadequate, or otherwise denied, former detainees and relatives have said. Kenessa Ayana's health rapidly deteriorated in detention, and he now suffers from chronic diabetics and liver complications and needs crutches or a wheelchair to move. Gaada Gebissa suffers from a Hepatitis B infection.⁶⁵³

Amnesty International stated in a news article concerning the silencing of peaceful dissent in Ethiopia that "Taye Denda, the former state minister of peace and a member of the Oromia regional council, was arrested on 12 December 2023, days after criticizing the prime minister over atrocities in Ethiopia saying, 'you are an evil man who plays with blood'".⁶⁵⁴

In its annual report covering events in 2023, Freedom House noted that "Oromo civilians still face pressure over suspected ties to the OLA".⁶⁵⁵ It added "Several OLF leaders have been held in detention since 2020, in defiance of court orders calling for their release" and that "The EHRC has reported numerous instances of arbitrary arrest, detention, and prolonged imprisonment of individuals suspected of ties with armed groups in Oromia. Authorities cite security needs when justifying these actions".⁶⁵⁶

The same report also remarked "The government silences critical voices including those of political opponents, members of Parliament, and Prosperity Party members to control the narratives around internal conflict. In December 2023, for example, Taye Dendea, who sharply criticized the government's conduct regarding Oromia, was dismissed as minister of peace. He was then arrested for purported links to the OLA".⁶⁵⁷

According to Human Rights Watch in March 2024, "In February, plainclothes security officers detained Batte Urgessa, a spokesperson for the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), an opposition political party, and French journalist Antoine Galindo, as they met for an interview in a hotel in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa. [...] Batte appeared in court on March 1, where the prosecutor said he was under investigation for links to the banned Oromo Liberation Army. He was returned to detention until March 6".⁶⁵⁸

In April 2024, BBC News reported on the murder of Bate Urgessa, the aforementioned Ethiopian opposition leader and outspoken critic of the government:

A top Ethiopian opposition figure has been shot dead and his body found on the side of a road in his hometown in Meki, in the troubled Oromia region.

Bate Urgessa, 41, was an outspoken critic of the government and had been jailed on several occasions.

⁶⁵³ Human Rights Watch, [Ethiopia: Oromo Opposition Figures Held Despite Court Orders](#), 24 July 2023

⁶⁵⁴ Amnesty International, [Ethiopia: Authorities must stop using state of emergency law to silence peaceful dissent](#), 19 February 2024

⁶⁵⁵ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024 – Ethiopia](#), 29 February 2024

⁶⁵⁶ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024 – Ethiopia](#), 29 February 2024

⁶⁵⁷ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024 – Ethiopia](#), 29 February 2024

⁶⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch, [Ethiopia's Deepening Crackdown on Dissent](#), 4 March 2024

Family members told local news site, [Addis Standard, external](#), people who "looked like government security forces" took him from his hotel room on Tuesday night.

The Oromia regional government denied that security forces were involved.

In recent years Ethiopia has seen an increase in the killing of political and cultural figures.

Mr Bate was a senior official of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) - one of the biggest political parties in Ethiopia.

The OLF condemned the "brutal murder" of Mr Bate and said he was a "eloquent, brave and selfless Oromo soul".

"The unwarranted and extrajudicial killing of conscious and active Oromo political and cultural figures has been a systematic and irresponsible act of silencing the Oromo throughout years and decades," the statement said.

His death has sparked outraged across social media, while human rights groups are demanding justice.

Chief commissioner of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) Daniel Bekele posted on X, formerly known as Twitter, that the federal authorities need "to hold perpetrators to account". [...]

Mr Bate has been jailed several times in recent years, but has remained an advocate of non-violent dissent.

In February security forces accused him of "working to incite unrest." He was arrested while being interviewed by French journalist Antoine Galindo and later released on bail.⁶⁵⁹

The June 2024 OHCHR report covering the situation in 2023 and incidents in 2024 thus far detailed that "opposition leaders, journalists, and civil society organizations (CSOs) faced a restrictive environment, with freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly constrained, both before and following the declaration of the SoE".⁶⁶⁰

V. Humanitarian situation

a. Humanitarian access

An 'access snapshot' by UNOCHA in November 2022 commented that:

Security incidents have prevented the delivery of aid in large parts of Oromia. Overall, in 2022, the humanitarian response capacity in western and southern Oromia has reduced by 50 per cent, due to limited funding and re-prioritization of resources to other crises. The food response remained insufficient in terms of quantity and quality, compromised by insecurity and logistic issues, against a backdrop of increasing malnutrition rates above emergency levels. Partners have not been able to scale up the response due to insecurity, access restrictions, and limited capacity due to funding shortages. [...]

Due to insecurity, aid partners had to halt life-saving operations, stop movements, and hibernate in field locations. Violence has impacted the transport of relief supplies along the road Addis Ababa - Ambo - Nekemte and onwards to Assossa (BGR), impacting the response to hundreds of thousands of IDPs and refugees. At the time of writing, large areas remain out-of-reach to aid partners, for instance, thousands of non-food items (NFIs) remain stored in Nekemte and Addis. In Horo Gudru Wollega Zone, partners have

⁶⁵⁹ BBC News, [Bate Urgessa: Ethiopian opposition OLF figure shot dead and dumped by road](#), 10 April 2024

⁶⁶⁰ OHCHR, [Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia](#), June 2024, paragraph 2

struggled to sustain access to over 100,000 people displaced. In West Wellega thousands of IDPs have not received food for two years, while in East Wellega, large amounts of wheat remain stored in Nekemte town pending to be distributed in rural areas. [...] Further, physical access constraints related to poor state of roads following heavy rainfall have challenged the transportation of aid supplies to rural areas. [...]

Aid workers through Oromia region are working in volatile and dangerous conditions. They are often trapped between conflict lines, and unable to reach people in need according to the internationally recognized principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and operational independence. In 2022, violence affecting medical missions and aid workers has largely increased in the region. Vehicles and commodities were often commandeered, aid workers have been detained and/or kidnapped and experienced other forms of harassment and intimidation. This has been compounded by an increase in criminal activities in rural areas that impact the population and aid workers alike.⁶⁶¹

Insecurity Insight wrote in December 2022 that “four aid workers were reportedly stopped and held by unidentified armed forces in Oromia and Benishangul-Gumuz regions between June and July 2022. In two cases the aid workers were reportedly questioned and later released unharmed. These incidents underline the suspicion with which aid activities are frequently viewed and highlight the precarious situation in which aid workers are trying to deliver aid”.⁶⁶²

While writing on a new report by the EHRC on human rights violations against civilians in Ethiopia in December 2022, Addis Standard added that:

Government officials have also been killed, public and civilian properties looted and destroyed, and public infrastructure and services damaged or disrupted, the report said, adding that hundreds of thousands of IDPs are currently in dire situations due to lack of humanitarian aid or inadequate supplies food and non food items.

The delay or lack of provision of humanitarian aid and basic services, as well as the disruption of transportation, productivity, education, health and other services due to the conflict have caused great tribulations to the residents of the area.⁶⁶³

In its October 2023 report covering the situation between 2020 and 2022, the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia stated that:

The situation in Oromia today is characterised by severe restrictions on freedom of expression, in particular in Western and Southern Oromia, where the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) remains active. The security situation presents serious obstacles for investigating the human rights situation there. Independent journalists and human rights monitors are restricted from parts of Western and Southern

⁶⁶¹ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia: Access Snapshot, Oromia region \(south-west\) – October 2022](#), 9 November 2022

⁶⁶² Insecurity Insight, [Horn of Africa: Conflict, Hunger and Aid Security – Ethiopia](#), December 2022, p. 4

⁶⁶³ Addis Standard, [News Analysis: Civilians subjected to “grave violation of human rights” in clashes, attacks by armed groups, gov’t security forces operating in Oromia – EHRC](#), 8 December 2022

Oromia. Some areas are classified as “hard-to-reach” by United Nations agencies, meaning that the security situation is volatile, with risks to the safety of the population and aid workers.⁶⁶⁴

150 UNHCR, Oromia Region Information Brochure, June 2021.

151 UN OCHA, Ethiopia – Situation Report, 07 September 2023.

In its May 2023 situation update, UNOCHA recorded that “Humanitarian access remains a challenge in some locations in northern and western parts of the country, delaying delivery of food assistance, particularly in Afar (Meghale, Berhale), Amhara (Tsagbeji), Benishangul Gumuz (Kamashi), Tigray (Erob, Egela, Gulo Mekeda, Rama, Zala Anbesa, Dima, Tahtay Adiyabo, Ofla and Zata) and Oromia (East and West Wellega) regions”.⁶⁶⁵

A July 2023 UNOCHA situation report recorded that:

As partners dispatch anti-malaria drugs in East, West and Horo Gudru zones, further distribution to woredas including insecticide spraying operations beyond the zonal capitals are constrained due to hostilities. Humanitarian partners are also facing challenges in their operations including in the delivery of supplies to zones, which are intermittently accessible due to sporadic hostilities or roadblocks.⁶⁶⁶

A UNOCHA situation report for August 2023 wrote that “Despite improved security, access, and partner presence in 2023, the lack of resources is constraining scale-up of humanitarian responses in Western Oromia, specifically in the four Wellega zones of East, West, Kellem, and Horo Guduru. Impacted by violence since 2019 and displacements from Benishangul Gumz Region (2018), Western Oromia hosts up to 725,000 IDPs”.⁶⁶⁷

USAID published the following map, originally produced in August 2023 with UNOCHA⁶⁶⁸:

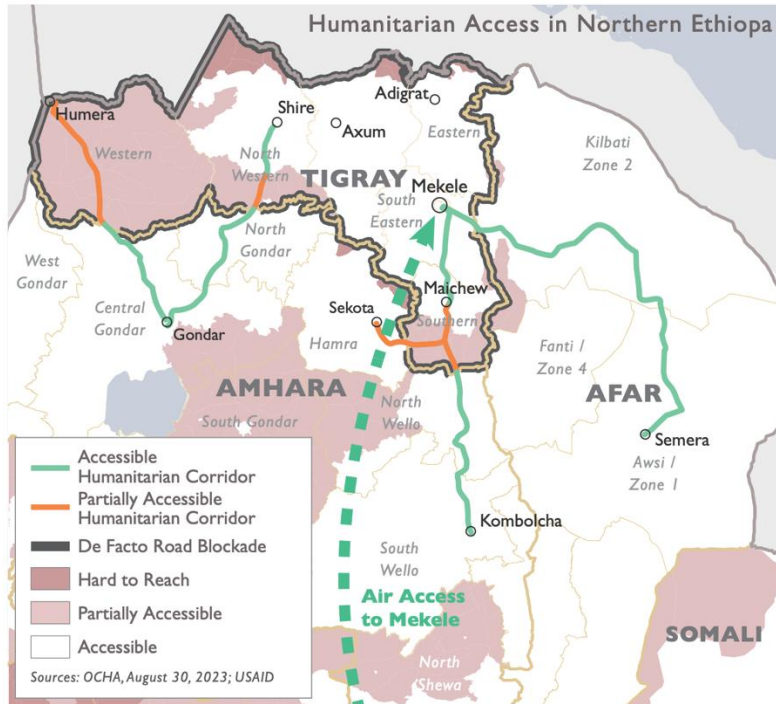
⁶⁶⁴ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Comprehensive investigative findings and legal determinations](#), 13 October 2023, paragraph 351

⁶⁶⁵ OCHA, [Ethiopia-Situation Report](#), 29 May 2023

⁶⁶⁶ OCHA, [Ethiopia- Situation Report](#), 24 July 2023

⁶⁶⁷ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Situation Report](#), 4 August 2023

⁶⁶⁸ USAID, [NORTHERN ETHIOPIA USG Humanitarian Response to the Crisis](#), 30 August 2023



A UNOCHA situation report for December 2023 wrote that “The humanitarian response capacity, remains minimal and inadequate, exacerbated by the shortage of humanitarian partners and response resources to address flood, cholera, and protracted drought-impacted communities in the southwest Oromia zones”.⁶⁶⁹

The June 2024 OHCHR report recorded that “Humanitarian access was impeded in parts of Amhara and Oromia regions because of insecurity, while in some parts of Somali region severe rainfall damaging roads made it difficult to deliver aid to the affected communities in November and December 2023”.⁶⁷⁰

UNICEF wrote in an end of year report for 2023 that “Issues of access negatively impacted humanitarian operations in Amhara and parts of Oromia, exacerbating existing needs”.⁶⁷¹

A January 2024 UNICEF article described that “The west Wolega zone in the Oromia region has been inaccessible for the past three years due to conflict. The conflict has significantly disrupted essential health services resulting in the outbreak of diseases like malaria and measles. Children were unable to attend school and communities have been compelled to abandon their homes. Recently, UNICEF has been able to access the west Wolega zone, and its humanitarian actions are underway to deliver much needed humanitarian services to thousands of women and children affected by the conflict”.⁶⁷²

⁶⁶⁹ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Situation Report](#), 1 December 2023

⁶⁷⁰ OHCHR, [Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia](#), June 2024, paragraph 54

⁶⁷¹ UNICEF, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Situation Report No. 12 including Northern Ethiopia and Drought responses](#), 2024

⁶⁷² UNICEF, [Response in times of crisis](#), 23 January 2024

The Global Protection Cluster's protection analysis update for Ethiopia on conflict and climate-related protection risks trends in 2023, published in March 2024, wrote that:

Also, humanitarian access is still challenging in parts of Oromia and Benishangul Gumuz, mostly due to insecurity (OCHA last accessed 16/11/2023, OCHA 15/08/2023, OHCHR 03/10/2023).

Moreover, ongoing restrictions on humanitarian operations continue due to attacks on humanitarian workers, particularly in in Tigray, Oromia, and Amhara regions. [...] Most of the reported kidnapping incidents occurred in Oromia. Hospitals and ambulance were also reportedly looted and damaged in Oromia. Impunity for such attacks further exacerbates risks to aid workers and humanitarian operations (CDCB 17/10/2023, OHCHR 03/10/2023, Humanitarian Outcomes 17/08/2023).⁶⁷³

In its January 2024 humanitarian situation report, UNICEF highlighted 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. [...] Road blockages in Amhara and Oromia have restricted vehicle movement within and between these regions [...]. 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.⁶⁷⁴

Reporting in February 2024, the International Committee of the Red Cross noted that "In Amhara and Oromia health facilities struggle to assist the wounded and the sick, after supply chains were disrupted by insecurity and movement restrictions".⁶⁷⁵

UNOCHA's Humanitarian Needs Overview report for Ethiopia, published in February 2024, wrote that "Insecurity, particularly in western Oromia, Amhara, and border areas of Somali and Tigray regions are heightening protection risks, hindering humanitarian operations and disrupting markets".⁶⁷⁶ The report added that "In the Oromia region, the main threat to humanitarians was a rise in economically motivated abductions".⁶⁷⁷

At the end of March 2024, the New Humanitarian published a news feature on Ethiopia's social safety net programme in the face of starvation across the country. With reference to the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), it wrote "In the Oromia region, this year's public works activities also began in March, said Kebede Genba, the director of the Oromia Region Food Security Directorate. But the

⁶⁷³ Global Protection Cluster, [Ethiopia - Protection Analysis Update - Update on conflict and climate-related protection risks trends](#), 21 March 2024, p. 9

⁶⁷⁴ UNICEF, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Situation Report, January 2024](#), 2024

⁶⁷⁵ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), [Ethiopia: Health facilities lack supplies amid ongoing violence. Civilians struggle to rebuild livelihoods](#), 20 February 2024

⁶⁷⁶ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024](#), February 2024, pp. 7-8

⁶⁷⁷ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024](#), February 2024, p. 23

delivery of the PSNP programme in parts of Oromia and Amhara continues to be disrupted by ongoing conflict and insecurity, compounding the financing gaps”.⁶⁷⁸

The March 2024 UNOCHA Situation Report described that “Security issues in Amhara, parts of Benishangul Gumuz, and Western Oromia are preventing the delivery of basic health services”.⁶⁷⁹

USAID’s fact sheet for Ethiopia in May 2024 highlighted the following:

- Climate-related shocks as a result of El Niño continue to exacerbate multi- sector humanitarian needs and affected millions of people in Amhara’s Region’s Gondar and Oromo zones, as well as in central Ethiopia.
 - Armed clashes continue to drive displacement in Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray regions and impede humanitarian relief operations. [...]
- Hostilities between armed actors in Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray continued to drive displacement and humanitarian needs and hindered the ability of humanitarian actors to deliver life-saving assistance in April, according to the UN. [...]
- While the UN categorizes most of Oromia and Tigray as accessible with minimal security risks for humanitarian partners as of March 18, parts of both regions are considered hard-to-reach. In Oromia, the town of Shambu is designated as partially accessible while its surrounding areas to the northeast and northwest are hard-to-reach. [...]
- [...] armed group activity continues to restrict access in some areas, such as in Amhara, where clashes between the ENDF and Fano militia have been ongoing since August, and Oromia, where the Oromo Liberation Army continues to clash with the ENDF and Fano militia.⁶⁸⁰

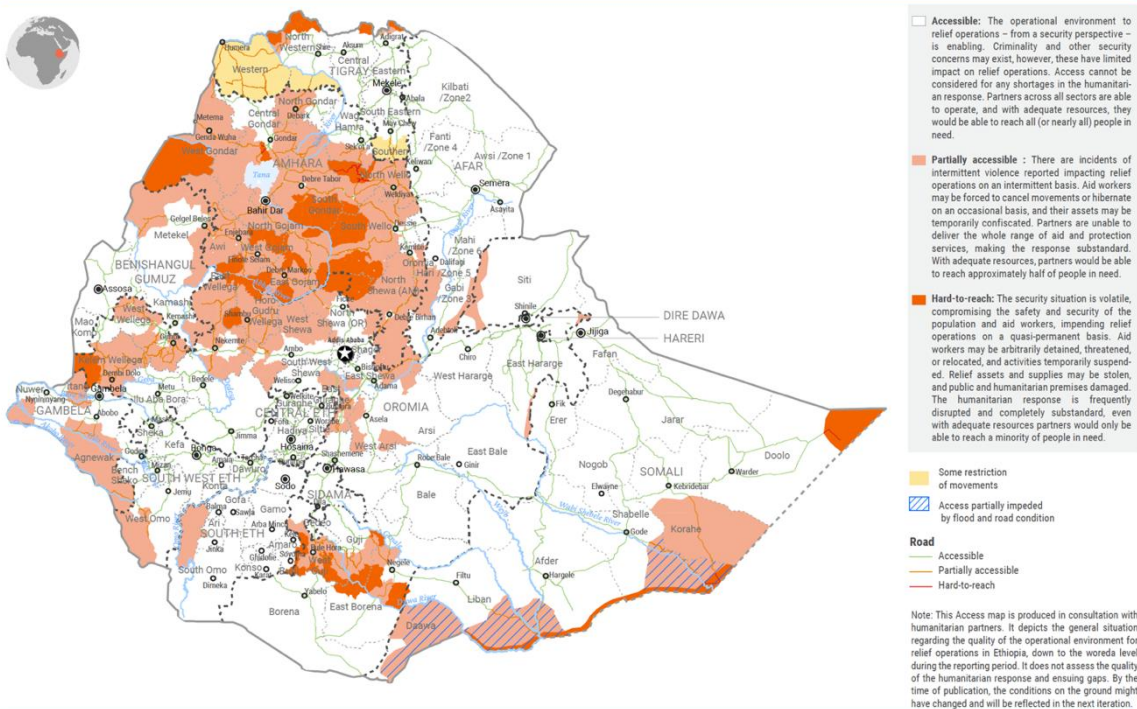
A map provided by UNOCHA as of 31 May 2024 displays the following access constraints⁶⁸¹:

⁶⁷⁸ The New Humanitarian, [As starvation looms, Ethiopia’s social safety net programme faces a funding gap](#), 28 March 2024

⁶⁷⁹ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Situation Report](#), 25 March 2024

⁶⁸⁰ USAID, [Ethiopia – Complex Emergency: Fact Sheet #3 Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2024](#), 9 May 2024

⁶⁸¹ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia: National Access Map – As of 31 May 2024](#), 31 May 2024, pp. 1, 3, and 6



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
Creation date: 31 May 2024 Map Doc.: 04_ETH_National_Access_Map_30052024 Sources: OCHA Field, Feedback: ocha-eth@un.org www.unocha.org www.reliefweb.int

b. Food insecurity

In August 2022, the OLLAA reported on food insecurity in Oromia. It highlighted the following:

OLLAA last examined the effects of the drought on Oromo civilians in April 2022, we have received further updates about the extent of humanitarian needs in Oromia, both from publicly available sources and credible sources on the ground. We are particularly concerned about the latest report that 38,000 people in the Sabaa Borruu district of the Guji zone are currently facing acute starvation. [...]

Recent official reports by UN OCHA suggest that at least 8 million individuals throughout the Somali, Oromia, Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples', and South-West regions of Ethiopia have been affected by the drought, and 2.2 million livestock have died. UNICEF has estimated that 600,000 children will require treatment for severe acute malnutrition by the end of 2022, and the World Food Programme has recently stated that the drought has led to food insecurity for 9.88 million people, including 3.3 million inside Oromia. On July 29th, the head of the emergency relief office in Sabbaa Boruu District in the Guji zone told reporters that at least 12 people had died of hunger in that district so far, and that 38,000 people were "facing acute starvation" in that district alone. [...]

In addition to the above data, which is publicly available, a credible source on the ground has recently provided OLLAA data from the Ethiopian government regarding humanitarian needs inside Oromia. [...]

According to the data provided to OLLAA, more than 4.5 million people are currently facing a severe food shortage throughout Oromia. Of these, 3.2 million reside in eight zones that are affected by the drought,

while the remaining 1.3 million were IDPs and “poor household settlement[s] in western parts” of Oromia. The report notes that the food security situation is especially dire in the East Bale, East Hararghe, West Hararghe, Guji, and West Guji zones, which have faced successive seasons of drought.

They also report that there is a severe shortage of water and animal feed in the East Hararghe, West Hararghe, Borana, East Bale, Guji and West Guji zones, and that these zones, alongside Bale, are experiencing a lack of available pasture, leading to the death of livestock.

Overall, the report posits that the food security issues stem from the drought, instability within Oromia, and the fact that the prices of grain have been increasing throughout the region while livestock prices have been decreasing. This has led to a decrease in the purchasing power of communities, and an increased frequency of food shortages.⁶⁸²

In September 2022, the Protection Cluster’s monthly protection overview for September 2022 wrote for Oromia that:

Irregular and incomplete food distributions in areas already hit by the effect of the drought are exacerbating food insecurity in East and West Hararghe zones. Due to the drought, malnutrition in both zones is drastically increasing, particularly affecting children and pregnant and lactating women. Access to safe potable water is severely impeded with the worsening drought situation on both zones: the safe water coverage of East Hararghe and West Hararghe zones is reported as 64.35% and 49.41% respectively.⁶⁸³

It added that “Malnutrition is commonplace in most IDP sites, notably [...] Guji (Oromia)”.⁶⁸⁴

An October 2022 UNICEF article described that “Child marriage often increases in times of drought as families earn dowries and also hope their children will be fed by wealthier families. This year, according to local government sources, between January-April 2021 compared to the same period in 2022, child marriage has increased by an average of 119 per cent across some areas in regions worst hit by the drought”. It described the marriage of a girl at 13 in Oromia, owing to her family’s lack of income and that she was from an area in Oromia region which experiences recurrent drought which was subsequently cancelled with support from her neighbours.⁶⁸⁵

In reference to serious drought in the Bale regions in Oromia in November 2022, Ethiopia Insight stated that ““The number of cattle perishing sank and reached a low point before returning to similar levels reported earlier this year,” said a researcher at the East Bale zonal disaster risk management bureau. In East Bale, severe cases of malnutrition are overwhelming local health centers. “We are on the verge of famine and people may die if action is not taken immediately,” the researcher added.”⁶⁸⁶

⁶⁸² Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Death By Starvation: An Update on the Humanitarian Situation inside Oromia](#), 3 August 2022

⁶⁸³ Protection Cluster, [Monthly Protection Overview – September 2022](#), 28 October 2022p. 2

⁶⁸⁴ Protection Cluster, [Monthly Protection Overview – September 2022](#), 28 October 2022, p. 3

⁶⁸⁵ UNICEF, [Drought pushes more and more girls into child marriage, but not for girls like Fiinxee](#), 5 October 2022

⁶⁸⁶ Ethiopia Insight, [Oromia’s Bale is facing a multi-layered crisis](#), 23 November 2022

In December 2022 a UNICEF article noted that “After one of the most severe droughts in decades hit the Borena zone of Oromia Region, communities lost many of their cattle – their only means of livelihood. Thousands of people, mainly women and children, have been forced to leave their homes. The drought has its toll on children, and malnutrition cases are on the rise. According to the Borena Zone Health Office, in September 2022, more than 1,000 children were treated for Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM), a threefold increase from the same month last year”.⁶⁸⁷

An article by the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) at the end of December 2022 commented that “With recurrent drought in places like Borena and Bale Zones, the humanitarian crisis in Oromia has been exacerbated”.⁶⁸⁸

In February 2023, Save the Children wrote in a news piece on a measles and cholera outbreak in Ethiopia that “In the Somali and Oromia regions of Ethiopia, distraught mothers are arriving at Save the Children’s malnutrition stabilization centres with children showing severe symptoms and complications caused by malnutrition”.⁶⁸⁹

USAID reported in a complex emergency fact sheet for the Horn of Africa in February 2023 that “in Oromia’s Borena Zone, a screening campaign in late December 2022 found moderate acute malnutrition prevalence as high as 43 percent among people older ages 60 years and older”.⁶⁹⁰

In March 2023 a UNICEF article noted that “in drought ravaged Borena, Oromia Region, children suffering from severe acute malnutrition are being rushed to health centres by their parents”.⁶⁹¹ Providing additional background the same source further noted that:

For the past three years, unrelenting drought has taken a devastating toll on children and their families in Borena Zone, Ethiopia. Lack of food and water has forced thousands of people to abandon their homes. According to the zone’s multi-agency rapid assessment report, scarcity of livestock feed and water has caused the deaths of over 3.3 million livestock in Borena. The same report also indicates that, out of the 1.7 million population, more than half are in need of food assistance.

A proud pastoralist society, normally self-sufficient and able to feed others, are currently dependent on aid.

Households are running out of food, malnutrition cases are on the rise, and some parents are rushing to health centres to save their babies from dying.

The nutrition stabilization unit of Yabello Hospital is currently swamped with children requiring care. After being weakened by severe malnutrition, many are now even more vulnerable to the impacts of common childhood illnesses such as diarrhoea, malaria, pneumonia and measles.⁶⁹²

⁶⁸⁷ UNICEF, [A campaign to save lives](#), 22 December 2022

⁶⁸⁸ African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), [Beyond power-politics: Ethiopia need to pivot to dialogue](#), 22 December 2022

⁶⁸⁹ Save the Children, [Measles and cholera outbreaks pose deadly threat to already malnourished children](#), 2 February 2023

⁶⁹⁰ USAID, [Horn of Africa – Complex Emergency: Fact Sheet #5 Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2023](#), 21 February 2023, p. 3

⁶⁹¹ UNICEF, [The drought is driving up cases of child hunger and malnutrition in Borena](#), 10 March 2023

In May 2023, FEWS NET stated in an alert that “In the southern and southeastern areas of Oromia and Somali regions, humanitarian food assistance remains the primary food and income source across the worst-affected drought areas”.⁶⁹³

In June 2023, FEWS NET published a food security outlook update on Ethiopia, focusing on the impact of conflict, drought, and flooding remarking that “The areas of highest concern are the southern Somali Region and Borena Zone of Oromia, where destitute and displaced populations are not expected to benefit from seasonal improvements”⁶⁹⁴ and later that “Parts of Oromia also experienced flooding and landslides, resulting in reports of widespread displacement, loss of livestock, and damage to infrastructure and crop lands, which in turn impeded the planting of crops across the entire region”.⁶⁹⁵

The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission’s annual human rights situation report (covering the period of June 2022 to July 2023) wrote in its executive summary that “In Oromia region, recurring and expanding conflicts continue to aggravate conflict-induced displacements, property and infrastructure destruction and food insecurity”.⁶⁹⁶

In a July 2023 article, UNICEF reported that “In the Oromia region of Ethiopia, mothers are faced with multiple challenges including economic problems due to the rise in the cost of living and trying to make ends meet and provide for their family. In addition, some are displaced due to conflict and forced to flee from their homes which makes it difficult to settle and move on with their normal lives”.⁶⁹⁷

In August 2023, FEWS NET published a food security outlook update on Ethiopia, writing on the persisting food security emergency:

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 northern SNNPR and neighboring areas of the Oromia Region, the rainfall deficits for the June to August period mark the driest season on the historical record. [...]

Kiremt-receiving areas along the Rift Valley of Oromia, Sidama, Southwest Region, and SNNPR have seen atypical declines in pasture availability due to low rainfall and high temperatures. [...]

Additionally, the ongoing conflict in Amhara and insecurity in western Oromia continue to result in lower-than-normal trade flows, driving up food prices. [...]

⁶⁹² UNICEF, [The drought is driving up cases of child hunger and malnutrition in Borena](#), 10 March 2023

⁶⁹³ The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), [The emergency in Ethiopia is far from over, as food aid remains vital to saving lives](#), 30 May 2023

⁶⁹⁴ The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), [Lasting, severe impacts of conflict and drought leave millions struggling to cope: June 2023 – January 2024](#), June 2023

⁶⁹⁵ The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), [Lasting, severe impacts of conflict and drought leave millions struggling to cope: June 2023 – January 2024](#), June 2023

⁶⁹⁶ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), [Executive Summary: Ethiopia Annual Human Rights Situation Report \(June 2022 – June 2023\)](#), 12 July 2023, p. 8

⁶⁹⁷ UNICEF, [Zero dose, the children missing out on lifesaving vaccines](#), 4 July 2023

Localized conflict in southern and western Oromia, SNNPR, and Amhara is limiting the movement of daily laborers to western surplus-producing areas in search of labor. Notably, in Tigray, income from labor migration is minimal. Additionally, daily wage labor opportunities and income in Sidama, SNNP, and central and eastern Oromia are limited due to the increased supply of laborers and low labor availability associated with the poor rainfall in these areas. [...]

[...] in May in Siraro *woreda* of West Arsi Zone in Oromia, 21.8 percent of kids were diagnosed with GAM, indicating proxy GAM rates indicative of Critical levels of acute malnutrition.⁶⁹⁸

An October 2023 UNOCHA situation report noted that “In Oromia, seventy thousand HHs in West Hararge Zone have lost the Meher crop to long dry spells during the months of July and August. With November to January meher harvest now affected due to crops having been damaged at their growth and flowering stages, the number of people to require food assistance could be significantly higher than the multi-agency Belg Assessment’s forecast of close to 181,740 people would need food assistance from July to December 2023. Conditions are aggravated by inconsistent food distribution prior to the pause in food aid in June, and consequently affecting food security”.⁶⁹⁹

In a further October 2023 update, UNOCHA reported that “Food shortage has been reported across 50 *woredas* of Oromia due to poor belg season rainfall (March to May) and an early cessation of Kiremt rains (July-September), having contributed little to fresh harvest. Moreover, inconsistent food rations from government stocks, the pause in food aid and insecurity in pocket areas further impact food security”.⁷⁰⁰

The same month, FEWS NET reported in its food security outlook for October 2023 – May 2024 that “A rapid nutrition assessment conducted by CARE in the first week of August in Meyu Muluke *woreda* of East Hararghe Zone of Oromia Region estimated a proxy GAM rate of 24 percent – suggesting Critical (GAM 15-24.9%) levels – and a proxy Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) rate at 5.4 percent”.⁷⁰¹

In December 2023 it observed that:

The *deyr/hageya* rains, which typically begin in October and end in December in the south and southeast, concluded with some of the highest cumulative totals on the 40-year historical record due to the ongoing, strong El Niño [...]. [...] The record-breaking rainfall led to extensive flooding in the Somali, Oromia, and South Ethiopia regions in October and November, causing considerable population displacement, pushing pastoralists to migrate their livestock to higher-ground areas, and resulting in the loss of main season crops among agropastoralists, mainly in riverine areas along Shebelle and Omo rivers.⁷⁰²

⁶⁹⁸ The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), [Food security emergency persists across Ethiopia in aftermath of severe shocks](#), August 2023

⁶⁹⁹ OCHA, [Ethiopia - Situation Report](#), 9 Oct 2023

⁷⁰⁰ OCHA, [Ethiopia Situation Report](#), 31 October 2023

⁷⁰¹ The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), [Food assistance needs remain high amid slow recovery of livelihoods in 2024](#), October 2023

⁷⁰² The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), [Drought-induced crop failure leads to Emergency in conflict-affected north](#), December 2023

USAID reported in a complex emergency fact sheet for Ethiopia at the beginning of January 2024 that:

The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) also cites the impact of escalating conflict on agricultural production and livestock loss in Amhara and Oromia as a factor in the projected continuation of Crisis—IPC 3—and Emergency—IPC 4—levels of acute food insecurity through at least early 2024.⁷⁰³

3 The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a multi-partner initiative that developed a standardized scale to classify the severity and magnitude of food insecurity. The IPC scale, which is comparable across countries and time, ranges from Minimal—IPC 1—to Famine—IPC 5—for acute food insecurity. IPC Phase 5 is referred to as “Catastrophe” when classifying a household and “Famine” when classifying an area. Famine conditions occur when at least 20 percent of the population in a given area face an extreme lack of food; the Global Acute Malnutrition prevalence, measured by weight-for-height z-score, exceeds 30 percent; and the mortality rate exceeds two people per 10,000 individuals per day.

The same month, a UNOCHA situation report wrote that “Nearly 1.3 million people were affected by drought, and over 4 million livestock were lost due to a historic length and severity of drought in the Oromia Region and the below-average short rainfall season of October to December 2022, which set the stage for a record-breaking five-season drought, severely affecting both pastoralist and agro-pastoral communities. However, the latest assessment shows that nearly 551,000 people are currently affected by drought in Oromia”.⁷⁰⁴

FEWS Net highlighted in its food security outlook for February – September 2024 that “Nationally, in 2023, over 650,000 severely acutely malnourished children were admitted to therapeutic feeding programs (TFP), a figure that is 5.8 percent lower than the same period last year and 41.7 percent higher than the five-year average (Figure 17). It is likely that TFP admissions would have been higher in 2023 if all health facilities in the conflict-affected areas of Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray were functioning”.⁷⁰⁵

It further added, with reference to food security, that “Areas of Tigray, northeastern Amhara, Afar, Somali, and Oromia are facing the most severe outcomes; livelihoods in these areas have been decimated by conflict and/or drought. Humanitarian food distribution only recently restarted, and distributions have not been sustained in many of the most severely food-insecure areas”.⁷⁰⁶

An article by the Guardian in February 2024 reported that a recent memo circulated among aid agencies and reviewed by the Guardian warns that “child malnutrition rates are as high as 47% in parts of Oromia, Ethiopia’s biggest region”.⁷⁰⁷

UNOCHA’s Humanitarian Needs Overview report of Ethiopia, published in February 2024, wrote that:

⁷⁰³ USAID, [Ethiopia – Complex Emergency; Fact Sheet #1 Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2024](#), 8 January 2024, pp. 1-2

⁷⁰⁴ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Situation Report](#), 10 January 2024

⁷⁰⁵ The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), [Hunger and acute malnutrition outpace the scale-up of food assistance](#), February 2024

⁷⁰⁶ The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), [Hunger and acute malnutrition outpace the scale-up of food assistance](#), February 2024

⁷⁰⁷ The Guardian, [‘At the door of death’: desperation in Ethiopia as hunger crisis deepens](#), 9 February 2024

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. [...]

[...] communities in southern and eastern Ethiopia, including lowlands of Somali, Oromia, Sidama, South Ethiopia, South West Ethiopia and Central Ethiopia regions, are reeling from the impact of the prolonged drought resulting from five consecutive failed rainy seasons since late 2020. This was the worst drought in 40 years. Good rains received during the March-May 2023 (belg/gu/ganna) season in parts of these areas have provided temporary solace to the drought-affected communities through replenished surface water sources and regeneration of pasture. [...]

The same good March-May 2023 rains that brought respite in parts of the previously drought-affected areas, have also brought with them flood emergencies, displacing thousands across SNNP, Oromia, Somali, Afar, Sidama and Dire Dawa, causing additional livelihood loss, including loss of some of the remaining emaciated livestock that had survived the drought and erosion of fertile lands impacting agriculture.⁷⁰⁸

The June 2024 OHCHR report recorded that:

With almost 4.5 million IDPs and more than 20 million people affected by the conflict, violence, and natural hazards across Ethiopia, 37 the pause in the delivery of food aid by main non-governmental food partners from April to November 2023, 38 due to reports of diversion of food aid across the country, 39 seriously affected IDPs and generally aggravated food insecurity for communities grappling with the impact of conflict, climate shocks, and high inflation rates, resulting in increased use of negative coping mechanisms. 40 In 2023, food insecurity and rising malnutrition in Afar, Amhara and Tigray and other regions surpassed globally recognized crisis thresholds.⁷⁰⁹ 41”

37 OCHA, Ethiopia: Humanitarian Response Plan Summary 2023, available at <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/ethiopia/>.

38 See statement about suspension of aid by the United Nations World Food Programme, 3 May 2023, available at <https://www.wfp.org/news/wfp-statement-diversion-food-aid-ethiopia-0>

39 Food aid was suspended across Ethiopia from April to November 2023, as USAID, the main donor to WFP decried misappropriation and diversion of food destined for IDPs. Control and due diligence measures instituted by Government and its partners deemed satisfactory by the donor, allowed for the resumption of Refugee operations in October and Relief assistance in December

40 See WFP Ethiopia Annual Country Report 2023, available at <https://www.wfp.org/publications/annualcountry-reports-ethiopia>

41 See 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, available at [Joint_EDRMC_UN_Statement__1_February_2024.pdf](#) (mcusercontent.com)

⁷⁰⁸ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024](#), February 2024, pp. 5-7

⁷⁰⁹ OHCHR, [Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia](#), June 2024, paragraph 55

In a June 2024 situation report UNOCHA reported that “In Oromia, over 285,000 people were affected (at least 38,300 displaced) by belg rainy season flash floods in six southern zones, with significant damage to crops, houses, schools, and health facilities as of 21 May. Response has been minimal, with assistance primarily from host communities”.⁷¹⁰ Furthermore “Reports show high numbers of children dying due to medical complications and severe malnutrition in Oromia and in South Ethiopia. The proportion of severely malnourished children with complications had already reached 10.3 per cent as of March 2024, compared to 9.4 per cent registered during the same time last year, according to the Cluster”.⁷¹¹

c. Access to basic services, education, and health care

For information on IDP access to basic services, education and health care see section [VI. Internal displacement of Oromos within Ethiopia](#).

Reporting on a drone strike killing civilians in Chobi district in Oromia on 23 October 2022, Addis Standard quoted a resident from Chobi stating that “There are also many wounded. Even the injured are not receiving treatment as health services have been blocked in our area due to security problems”.⁷¹²

In reference to drought and an outbreak of viral diseases in Bale zones in Oromia, Ethiopia Insight wrote in November 2022 that:

In East Bale, severe cases of malnutrition are overwhelming local health centers. [...]

Drought and viral disease outbreaks go hand in hand. Earlier this year, Bale and East Bale zones reported a cholera outbreak, with 191 confirmed cases and four deaths. Across the Horn of Africa, 11,500 cases of cholera have been recorded, along with 22,000 cases of measles.

The outbreak is being addressed by federal and regional health institutes, as well as the World Health Organization (WHO). In the case of Bale, however, the response has been insufficient. This is due to poor infrastructure, inaction on the part of local officials, and sporadic clashes in the area.

Residents continue to complain about the impediments to humanitarian assistance. According to humanitarian partners, the response is hindered by a lack of supplies and inadequate cholera case management technical expertise.

This includes an insufficient number of water trucks, water quality test kits, ambulances, and medical supplies, coupled with a lack of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services and limited distribution of WASH items, especially water treatment chemicals.

According to the report, a lack of resources is not the only issue that humanitarian partners face. “Some of the cholera-prone locations are also considered hard-to-reach areas due to poor infrastructure as well as sporadic clashes that are impacting the prompt delivery of vital supplies and access for medical teams,” the statement details.

⁷¹⁰ OCHA, [Ethiopia - Situation Report](#), 10 June 2024

⁷¹¹ OCHA, [Ethiopia - Situation Report](#), 10 June 2024

⁷¹² Addis Standard, [News: Residents say drone strike killed dozens of civilians in West Shewa, Oromia region; OLF, OFC condemn relentless airstrikes across Oromia](#), 25 October 2022

Local medical professionals are also concerned. “We get contacted by a lot of NGOs, but due to the poor state of infrastructure in Bale and East Bale, the response is delayed, and many people are forced to go to big towns for access to services,” said a health professional named Taha.⁷¹³

The report of the UN Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict covering 2022 noted that “Three schools (2) and hospitals (1) were used militarily by Tigrayan forces (2) and unidentified perpetrators (1) in the states or regions of Tigray (2) and Oromiya (1)”.⁷¹⁴

In a February 2023 Working Paper, UNDP reported with regards to availability of basic services:

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. At the same time, insecurity in other parts of Ethiopia – such as Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella and specific areas within Oromia – are quite likely to have disrupted delivery of basic services to populations in need, an aspect that has perhaps received less attention than the effects of the conflict in Northern Ethiopia.⁷¹⁵

In its May 2023 Situation Update UNOCHA recorded that “IDPs in Oromia, Afar and Somali regions lacking access to basic services, are put at further risk of harmful coping mechanisms and GBV in camp and out-of-camp settings”.⁷¹⁶

In June 2023, the ICRC described the violence in Oromia and its impact on critical health infrastructure in the region, writing that:

Health facilities and water systems have been seriously affected. In Begi, a district of 100,000 inhabitants, nearly all 42 existing health posts have been looted or damaged. Patients with life-threatening medical conditions cannot receive urgent care because health facilities are no longer functioning.

The walls of the Guduru Primary Hospital, which serves more than five districts, were riddled with bullets, and its water tank was damaged. Beds, equipment, surgical sets, medicines, and ambulances were looted. At the same time, the number of patients has drastically increased as thousands of people who fled their homes arrived in this area, making it extremely difficult for staff to provide healthcare services to the population.

“We have a shortage of emergency drugs. No operating room sets. We do not have beds. And now there is also a shortage of water supply due to the damage to the water reservoir. The community pharmacy was also destroyed, and all the drugs and materials were taken,” said Dr. Alemayehu Kiri, the hospital’s medical director.

⁷¹³ Ethiopia Insight, [Oromia’s Bale is facing a multi-layered crisis](#), 23 November 2022

⁷¹⁴ UN General Assembly, [UN Security Council: Children and armed conflict; Report of the Secretary-General](#), 5 June 2023, para 252

⁷¹⁵ UNDP, [UNDP Ethiopia Working Paper Series: Crisis, Resilience and Opportunity: Poverty, Human Development, and the Macro-Economy in Ethiopia, 2020-23](#), 13 February 2023

⁷¹⁶ OCHA, [Ethiopia-Situation Report](#), 29 May 2023

Hundreds of thousands of people in the Oromia region of Ethiopia are seriously affected by the current violence. Many of them require humanitarian assistance, and the situation could deteriorate as ongoing fighting limits aid access to many areas. The needs are particularly significant in parts of Guji, the Wellegas, and Borena. [...]

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), working together with the Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS), faces numerous challenges in addressing the enormous needs despite the extension of operations to the western part of the Oromia region and to Guji. The capacity of the ICRC and the ERCS in Oromia is overstretched in their efforts to provide protection and assistance to populations most affected by the violence in areas that are particularly difficult to access such as Bubul, Begi and Kondole, Balo, Bareda and Kombolsha, where few if any other humanitarian organizations operate. “We have had to make difficult choices, targeting places with little presence of other humanitarian actors,” said Julian Jaccard, the ICRC head of sub-delegation in Nekemte. “People in these areas have suffered immensely and for a long time.”⁷¹⁷

In June 2023, FEWS NET observed that “Confirmed cases of cholera outbreaks increased by 85 percent in May, from 6,157 to 11,407 cases as of June 20, 2023, with 156 associated deaths reported in 43 *woredas*, mainly in Oromia, Somali, and SNNP regions. The alarming rise in cholera cases is attributed to insecurity and access constraints in affected areas, compounded by the contamination of water sources along with the continued rains”.⁷¹⁸

USAID stated in a complex emergency fact sheet for the Horn of Africa in July 2023 that: “Recent armed clashes in Ethiopia’s Oromia Region have left many health facilities inoperable while prompting elevated needs for medical care”.⁷¹⁹ It explained further that:

Ongoing violence in Oromia has extensively damaged or destroyed critical health infrastructure, limiting vulnerable populations’ access to health care, a State/PRM partner reports. In West Wollega Zone’s Begi woreda, non-state armed group (NSAG) actors had damaged or looted nearly all of Begi’s 42 health facilities as of June 22, limiting access to health facilities for the zone’s population of an estimated 100,000 people. In Horo Guduru Wollega Zone’s Guduru Primary Hospital—which serves more than five woredas—NSAG actors damaged and looted ambulances, beds, medicines, and surgical sets during recent armed clashes. Concurrently, violence has prompted an increase in the number of patients admitted to Oromia’s hospitals, where health care workers are unable to meet patients’ needs due to violence-induced damage and supply shortages. Health needs are particularly high in Oromia’s Borena, East Wollega, Guji, and West Wollega zones, a State/PRM partner reports.⁷²⁰

A July 2023 UNOCHA situation report recorded that:

⁷¹⁷ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), [Ethiopia: Healthcare crisis in Oromia exacerbated by massive displacement](#), 22 June 2023

⁷¹⁸ The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), [Lasting, severe impacts of conflict and drought leave millions struggling to cope: June 2023 – January 2024](#), June 2023

⁷¹⁹ USAID, [Horn of Africa – Complex Emergency: Fact Sheet #10 Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2023](#), 21 July 2023, p. 1

⁷²⁰ USAID, [Horn of Africa – Complex Emergency: Fact Sheet #10 Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2023](#), 21 July 2023, p. 2

Four Wellega zones in western Oromia continue to experience a worsening humanitarian situation due to the spread of malaria amid ongoing rainfall and waterlogging, exacerbated by the weak health systems due to hostilities. Across West, East and Kellem Wellega zones, an estimated 272,400 people are reportedly affected, and at least 45 per cent of health centres and 63 per cent of total health posts across West, East, Horo Gudru, and Kellem, Wollega zones are non-functional, according to zonal authorities. Data has not been verified independently.⁷²¹

The September 2023 report from the ICHREE 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”.⁷²²

The report also highlighted that “Social discrimination associated with sexual violence and lack of access to education – coupled with telecommunication and internet shutdowns and inaccessible health systems in Tigray, Amhara, Afar, and Oromia regions – contributed to untreated, long-term physical and mental health consequences for sexual violence survivors with incidence of significantly delayed reporting and underreporting”.⁷²³ It further noted:

In the face of increased violence, in Oromia and Amhara, command posts were established in Western and Southern Oromia from early 2019, comprised of local militia, Oromia Special Forces, ENDF, federal police and Oromia regional police. The Commission’s investigation found that although claimed to have been officially lifted, command posts continue to operate in some areas of Oromia. Witnesses from Western Oromia described ongoing arbitrary restrictions on freedom of movement, including curfews, denial of access to healthcare [...].⁷²⁴

The Global Protection Cluster’s protection analysis update for Ethiopia on conflict and climate-related protection risks trends in 2023 wrote that “Education has been [...] impacted by the security situation in both Oromia and Amhara, with 2.6M children out of school and over 1,400 schools damaged in Oromia, as of December 2023 (Ethiopia Education Cluster 12/2023)”.⁷²⁵

USAID reported in a complex emergency fact sheet for Ethiopia at the beginning of January 2024 that “In Oromia, a rapid assessment conducted between November 19 and 26 [2023] across eight *woredas*, or districts, in Oromia’s North Shewa Zone indicated significant gaps in food, education, health, shelter,

⁷²¹ OCHA, [Ethiopia- Situation Report](#), 24 July 2023

⁷²² International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia](#), 14 September 2023, paragraph 55

⁷²³ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia](#), 14 September 2023, paragraph 53

⁷²⁴ International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, [Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia](#), 14 September 2023, paragraph 59

⁷²⁵ Global Protection Cluster, [Ethiopia - Protection Analysis Update - Update on conflict and climate-related protection risks trends](#), 21 March 2024, p. 6

and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services as response efforts face operational constraints due to ongoing violence in the area”.⁷²⁶ The fact sheet continued:

A cholera outbreak began in August 2022, and health actors have reported approximately 30,000 suspected cases and 449 cholera-related deaths as of December 29, with Oromia and Somali identified as the most affected regions of the country in December, according to the Health Cluster. [...]

Ongoing insecurity in Amhara, Benishangul Gumuz, Oromia, and Tigray regions continues to impede the delivery of basic health services, resulting in increased risks of undetected disease outbreaks, according to the Health Cluster.⁷²⁷

The same month, a UNOCHA situation report wrote, in reference to malaria outbreaks, that “In the most affected regions such as Oromia (1.09 million cases) and Amhara (over 987,000 cases) response is affected by insecurity, shortage of supplies, damaged health infrastructure, and limited road access”.⁷²⁸

Human Rights Watch reported in its annual report covering 2023 that “Reports of attacks against the population in Oromia, including Oromo and Amhara communities, continued through August. In June, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said the fighting damaged critical infrastructure, including healthcare centers and water systems”.⁷²⁹

The Global Protection Cluster’s protection analysis update for Ethiopia on conflict and climate-related protection risks trends in 2023, published in March 2024, wrote that:

Attacks on medical personnel, ambulances and the medical missionvi have exacerbated people’s health needs and impacted their access to healthcare, in particular in Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray, where the population has been facing multiple health crises due to the conflict and drought (cholera, malaria, measles and conflict-related casualties) and their impact on access to essential health services (WHO 24/11/2023, ICRC 16/08/2023, ICRC 22/06/2023).

In addition to civilian casualties, the fighting and violence have had a significant impact on essential infrastructure: [...]

- Health facilities have also been impacted by conflict and violence, for example with a November 2023 assessment in the North Shewa zone of Oromia, reporting damage to 53 health posts as well as 12 ambulances rendered unusable (OCHA SitRep 12/2023). [...]

The damage to or destruction of public infrastructure has created additional barriers to access to basic services:

- In terms of barriers to access to healthcare, in addition to attacks/damages to healthcare structure and workers [...] floods in the last quarter of 2023 damaged [...] 55 [health facilities] in West Guji (Oromia) [...] (OCHA SitRep Dec 2023 and OCHA Oct-Nov-Dec rainy season Flash Update 1, 12/2023). [...]

⁷²⁶ USAID, [Ethiopia – Complex Emergency; Fact Sheet #1 Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2024](#), 8 January 2024

⁷²⁷ USAID, [Ethiopia – Complex Emergency; Fact Sheet #1 Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2024](#), 8 January 2024, pp. 3-4

⁷²⁸ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Situation Report](#), 10 January 2024

⁷²⁹ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2024: Events of 2023](#), 11 January 2024, p. 217

Hospitals and ambulance were also reportedly looted and damaged in Oromia. Impunity for such attacks further exacerbates risks to aid workers and humanitarian operations (CDCB 17/10/2023, OHCHR 03/10/2023, Humanitarian Outcomes 17/08/2023).⁷³⁰

vi Recently, for example, an alleged drone strike on an ambulance in Amhara in November 2023, and the killing of an ambulance driver in Tigray in January 2024 (Addis Standard 12/01/2024, Aljazeera 29/12/2023).

UNOCHA, along with the Ethiopian Disaster Risk Management Commission (EDRMC), wrote in a flash update in December 2023:

In Oromia over 305,500 people are flood-affected across four zones of Bale, East Bale, West Guji and Arsi. Close to 19,000 people are displaced and 10 human fatalities reported, and more than 300 livestock deaths are recorded. Four health facilities, 24 water pipes, over 25 rural roads, 80 houses, 30 schools, and over 85,000 ha of cropland were damaged. The provision of food, WASH NFI, education support, protection services, supply of emergency drugs and materials for prevention and control of cholera, malaria, and measles outbreaks, and malnutrition response remain critical.⁷³¹

In May 2024, Insecurity Insight released a report on violence against health care in conflict in 2023 noting on the Oromia region that:

Six incidents of violence against or obstruction of health care were recorded in Oromia in 2023, compared to two in 2022. Health workers were arrested and shot, and at least one ambulance was set on fire. ENDF forces arrested a doctor on suspicion of collaborating with the OLA and shot and killed a doctor they accused of providing medical treatment to Fano militia.⁶⁶ OLA forces burned down a health center during a wider attack on the area.⁶⁷ Other attackers shot at an ambulance, killing a health worker; looted beds, equipment, surgical sets, and medicines from a health facility; and set an Ethiopian Red Cross ambulance stationed at Haru District Health Center on fire.⁶⁸ [...]

In the Oromia region, patients were unable to receive urgent care due to the minimal functioning of health facilities and lack of medical supplies following widespread looting of or damage to health infrastructure.

Violence against health care affected the country's ability to cope with public health emergencies, particularly in regions most affected by conflict. Ethiopia was experiencing a prolonged cholera outbreak that began in August 2022. Both Amhara and Oromia reported some of the highest numbers of cases; however, due to communications challenges caused primarily by internet blackouts, it was difficult to collect proper disease data, and figures were likely to be an underestimate. Additionally, conflict and instability made it difficult for cholera response activities to be implemented, contributing to the further spread of the disease. The regions were also dealing with outbreaks of malaria, measles, and dengue fever, which placed additional strain on an already struggling health care system.⁷³²

⁷³⁰ Global Protection Cluster, [Ethiopia - Protection Analysis Update - Update on conflict and climate-related protection risks trends](#), 21 March 2024, pp. 6 and 8

⁷³¹ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia: Oct-Nov-Dec rainy season - Flash Update 1 - As of 18 December 2023](#), 18 December 2023, p.

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⁷³² Insecurity Insight, [Critical Condition: Violence Against Health Care in Conflict 2023](#), May 2024, pp. 47-48

66 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2023 Report Dataset: 2023 ETH SHCC Health Care Data. Incident number 38757.
67 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2023 Report Dataset: 2023 ETH SHCC Health Care Data. Incident number 42168.
68 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2023 Report Dataset: 2023 ETH SHCC Health Care Data. Incident numbers 39618; 44618; 44617.

Also commenting on events in 2023, the June 2024 OHCHR report recorded that:

The enjoyment of economic, social, and cultural rights in Ethiopia was affected by conflicts, climatic issues, and the current socio-economic situation of the country. Natural climatic disasters, conflicts, destruction of both private and public infrastructures, including health facilities and schools, negatively affected the enjoyment of people's human rights. This was particularly the case in conflict hit regions of Amhara, Oromia, parts of Tigray, as well as Somali and Afar regions. [...]

While during and after the conflict, children in northern Ethiopia were deprived of their right to education, also due to the destruction of schools and occupation of some by IDPs, following the Pretoria peace agreement, schools started reopening through 2023 and distribution of learning and teaching materials is notably increasing. [...]

Some measures are reported to have been taken to make health services accessible in the rural parts of the country far away from urban centers. These include making health posts accessible in all kebeles, increasing the number of health centers, and increasing the number of primary hospitals although this remains a challenge in areas affected by conflicts. [...]

The right to housing remains a serious challenge in Ethiopia, especially in the conflict affected regions. To address those challenges, the Government of Ethiopia continued to roll out its Integrated Housing Development Programme (IHDP) in which about half a million housing units nationwide are reported to have been built and transferred to individuals.⁷³³

According to a news release by the ICRC in February 2024, "In Amhara and Oromia health facilities struggle to assist the wounded and the sick, after supply chains were disrupted by insecurity and movement restrictions".⁷³⁴

In March 2024, the ICRC posted an article on conflict in Anfilo, Oromia region, writing that "Armed clashes between the government security forces and the non-state armed group active in the region has resulted in the suspension of public services, impacted access to healthcare and clean water supply, and disrupted the availability of seeds and fertilizers. People fleeing from the fighting and seeking opportunities to support their families have been repeatedly displaced as a result".⁷³⁵

⁷³³ OHCHR, [Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia](#), June 2024, paragraphs 59, 62, 63, 64

⁷³⁴ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), [Ethiopia: Health facilities lack supplies amid ongoing violence. Civilians struggle to rebuild livelihoods](#), 20 February 2024

⁷³⁵ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), [Ethiopia: People affected by conflict in Anfilo, Oromia region receive assistance](#), 26 March 2024

USAID reported in a complex emergency fact sheet for Ethiopia at the beginning of March 2024 that “Amid the rising health needs, limited funding, access constraints, and insecurity in Amhara, Benishangul Gumuz, Tigray, and Oromia regions often pose an impediment to ongoing cholera response efforts”.⁷³⁶

A UNOCHA situation report for March 2024 wrote that “Health facilities are nonfunctional leaving about 3,800 children and 800 breastfeeding mothers without essential healthcare in the zone’s Dodota district”.⁷³⁷

The ICRC reported again in May 2024 that “the security situation in Oromia region remains volatile [...] which is still affecting people’s ability to access health facilities”.⁷³⁸

VI. Internal displacement of Oromos within Ethiopia

Note that sources do not necessarily all report on the ethnicity of IDPs. As documented by the following sources, the majority of sources document the home area of IDPs, i.e. from Oromia region, who may be Oromo civilians or Amhara, unless specified otherwise. Where sources discuss the situation of IDPs in Oromia, this does not necessarily relate to the situation of Oromo IDPs.

Indeed, sources indicate that many IDPs from Oromia are residing in Amhara. To illustrate:

In November 2022 UNHCR reported that Amhara “continues to receive IDPs from the Oromia region”⁷³⁹ and in February 2023 the same source recorded that “Due to the ongoing fighting in the Oromia region, people continue to flee from East Wollega (Oromia) to North Shewa (Amhara) where over 300,000 persons are displaced in five woredas”.⁷⁴⁰ In its February 2023 Situation Update UNOCHA recorded that “Hundreds of thousands of people reportedly displaced to date from Oromia into Amhara Region”.⁷⁴¹ In a May 2023 edition, the same source noted that “IDP camps in Debre Birhan in North Shewa Zone of Amhara, host more than 26,000 IDPs from Western Oromia and are overcrowded due to lack of resources for rehabilitation, and lack of land or rental support. Regular and complete food baskets, and other multi-sector responses are essential”.⁷⁴² For information on the situation for IDPs in Amhara, see ARC, [Query Response on the Situation in the Amhara Region \(January 2022-February 2024\)](#), April 2024.

Numbers of IDPs in Oromia

⁷³⁶ USAID, [Ethiopia – Complex Emergency; Fact Sheet #2 Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2024](#), 19 March 2024, p. 3

⁷³⁷ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Situation Report](#), 25 March 2024, p. 2

⁷³⁸ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), [Ethiopia: Thousands of people unable to access healthcare services after upsurge in violence](#), 29 May 2024

⁷³⁹ UNHCR, [NORTHERN ETHIOPIA EMERGENCY SITUATION](#), November 2022

⁷⁴⁰ UNHCR, [Regional Update #40; Northern Ethiopia Situation; February 2023](#), 19 March 2023

⁷⁴¹ OCHA, [Ethiopia- Situation Report](#), 2 February 2023

⁷⁴² OCHA, [Ethiopia-Situation Report](#), 29 May 2023

The OLLAA observed humanitarian access limitations and data gaps within a report in August 2022 on food security in Oromia stating:

[...] OLLAA is gravely concerned that the official reports regarding the humanitarian situation inside Oromia may be significantly underestimating the true extent of humanitarian need throughout the region. [...]

Given the fact that humanitarian access has been cut off to multiple parts of Oromia due to security concerns, it seems likely that organizations tasked with calculating humanitarian needs cannot accurately assess the extent of need in these areas.

In addition, OLLAA has also received a worrying report from an Ethiopian official regarding how the government counts the total number of displaced persons inside Oromia. According to our source, inside Oromia, individuals are only labeled as IDPs during the first six months of their displacement, after that time, they are no longer considered “displaced.” This means that individuals who are still displaced are not being officially counted as IDPs, and therefore they are not provided with the additional humanitarian assistance they need. It also seems likely that these IDPs are not being included in official tallies of IDPs counted by independent organizations, such as the IOM, who are reportedly unable to access large parts of Oromia due to security concerns.⁷⁴³

According to UNHCR, as of end February 2024 there were an estimated 4,385,789 IDPs in Ethiopia, which includes IDPs in accessible and inaccessible locations, of which 3.4 million IDPs in accessible locations and 2,548, 685 returnees.⁷⁴⁴ It recorded that of these, 1,064,500 were IDPs in Oromia, and that Oromia also was home to 137,667 returnees.⁷⁴⁵ It further detailed that the top 5 zones of IDP origin were Western (Tigray) with 656,898 (19%); WestGuji (Oromia) 192,413 (6%); East Borena (Oromia) 304,256 (9%); Daawa (Somali) 165,910 (5%) and Afder (Somali) 133,744 (4%) but did not provide further breakdowns of IDP origins or detail ethnicities of the IDPs.⁷⁴⁶ As of May 2024 UNOCHA reported an estimated 1.1 million IDPs as of May 2024.⁷⁴⁷ The same source reported with regards to the situation in Ethiopia in general that “About 56 per cent of IDPs have been displaced for more than one year, 23 per cent for two to four years and 11 per cent for five or more years. Many IDPs, especially those living in protracted displacement can be assisted to return, relocate or locally integrate, according to assessment”.⁷⁴⁸

Overview / displacement from Oromia (to unspecified locations)

According to the EPO’s weekly update from 23 April to 6 May 2022 “Starting from 3 May, thousands were internally displaced from Chanco, Geshe, and Gish Gara rural kebeles of Debati woreda (DW Amharic, 5 May 2022). The exact reason behind this displacement is unknown. Government forces have

⁷⁴³ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [Death By Starvation: An Update on the Humanitarian Situation inside Oromia](#), 3 August 2022

⁷⁴⁴ UNHCR, [Operational Data Portal, Ethiopia](#), undated current webpage (last accessed 5 July 2024)

⁷⁴⁵ UNHCR Ethiopia, [Statistics Refugees and Internally Displaced People \(IDPs\) -May 2024](#), 20 June 2024

⁷⁴⁶ UNHCR Ethiopia, [Statistics Refugees and Internally Displaced People \(IDPs\) -May 2024](#), 20 June 2024

⁷⁴⁷ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Snapshot May 2024](#), 4 July 2024

⁷⁴⁸ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Snapshot May 2024](#), 4 July 2024

been undertaking operations against different armed groups, including the OLF-Shane, in the woreda”.⁷⁴⁹

The monthly update for July 2022 from the EPO wrote that:

Border disputes reignited in Guradamole woreda in Bale zone which is located at the border of Oromia and Somali regions. In July, Somali ethnic militiamen from Somali region attacked Oromo civilians at least two times at different locations in Guradamole woreda. Further, on 28 July, Somali regional forces were reported to have opened gunfire on civilians for an unknown reason, killing an unidentified number of people in Habrona kebele in Guradamole woreda in Bale zone. Over 8,000 civilians were forced to flee their homes due to these attacks ([Ethiopian Reporter, 3 August 2022](#)).⁷⁵⁰

In its annual human rights report for Ethiopia in 2022, USDOS wrote that “On July 18, local media reported clashes on the border of Somali and Oromia Regions, displacing thousands of civilians from an entire village where villagers said at least 20 persons had died of hunger following a large displacement. On August 4, as the communal clashes intensified, 8,759 civilians were reportedly displaced in the border area of Somali and Oromia Regions”.⁷⁵¹

According to the EPO’s weekly update from 13 August to 9 September 2022:

On 30 and 31 August, Amhara militias from Addis Alem kebele in Amru woreda and Bure woreda in Amhara region killed at least 60 ethnic Oromo civilians and injured at least 70 others in Amru woreda. Attacks were recorded in Agamsa, Jog Migbar, Tam Eilamu, Jebo Doban, Tombe Danagebe, Jawaj, Gnare, Lege Micha, and Lukuma kebeles ([Ethiopia Human Rights Commission, 6 September 2022](#)). This attack was conducted a day after the OLF-Shane entered Abora town — the administrative center of Amru woreda — in Agamsa kebele and killed three ethnic Amharas, while trying to capture the town. The group also disarmed 59 people in the kebele. Oromia regional special forces withdrew from the area on 28 August ([DW Amharic, 31 August 2022](#)). Some reports indicate that from 29 to 31 August, OLF-Shane killed 11 people and injured another 11 in Agamsa town. [...]. Following these attacks, more than 20,000 people were forced to flee from these areas ([Ethiopia Human Rights Commission, 6 September 2022](#)).⁷⁵²

Following an attack on civilians attributed to Fano militants in East Wollega zone of Oromia in October 2022, Addis Standard stated:

A resident of the district who want to give information under the condition of anonymity also told the media that he and seven of his family members had fled Gudina Jiregna village due to the attack. “Early in the morning, without anyone knowing, they went around the village and started shooting. There was no way out and many people were killed there, and some people fled. There are many injured,” he said. [...] “Everyone from Gudina Jiregna village is completely displaced,” the witness said, adding that the reason for the attack was to “displace these people from their land and take the land” and “destroy Shane” (a

⁷⁴⁹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 23 April – 6 May 2022](#), 11 May 2022

⁷⁵⁰ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Monthly: July 2022](#), 18 August 2022

⁷⁵¹ US Department of State (USDOS), [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia](#), 20 March 2023

⁷⁵² Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 13 August – 9 September 2022](#), 15 September 2022

reference to the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) which know by the government as OLF/Shane). “But it is not Shane that they are killing but the civilians,” the resident added.⁷⁵³

An ‘access snapshot’ by UNOCHA in November 2022 commented that “In Western Oromia as well as in border areas with Amhara and Benishangul Gumuz region (BGR), insecurity and clashes with Unidentified Armed Groups (UAGs) have displaced an estimated 740,000 people”.⁷⁵⁴

In its November 2022 Situation Update, UNOCHA reported that:

While the relatively improved security situation in northern Ethiopia is gradually easing humanitarian movement, ongoing hostilities in western Oromia continue to displace hundreds of thousands of civilians and impacting humanitarian operations. With the high probability of continued violence, the number of IDPs is expected to increase whilst response preparedness and capacity on the ground is very low to inadequate, compounded by funding and access challenges.

Similarly in southern Oromia, according to a rapid needs assessment conducted in Liben and Gorodola woredas of Guji Zone on 29 October, the shelter condition of the IDPs in collective sites and host community is sub-standard, with overcrowding and congestion. In some IDP sites, an estimated 4 to 5 households (30 to 40 people) are living in a single room in undignified conditions, increasing health and protection risks. Overall, food response remains a priority for the recent IDPs in the Wollegas (over 700,000) and over 60,000 IDPs in Guji zones. The escalation of hostilities in western Oromia has also impacted humanitarian operations in eastern Benishangul Gumuz Region. There is no road access along the main Assosa – Addis route via Oromia since 31 October, blocking both humanitarian and commercial supplies impacting approximately 200,000 IDPs and 76,000 refugees in the region.⁷⁵⁵

According to the EPO’s weekly update from 3 to 9 December 2022:

Due to the intensified violence in the region, thousands of people, both ethnic Amhara and Oromo civilians, have been internally displaced. According to a UN report, “new displacement figures have yet to be confirmed for lack of access, but it is expected to cause a drastic increase” in the number of internally displaced people ([UNOCHA, 6 December 2022](#)). According to local officials, “almost all residents” of the 19 kebeles in Kiremu woreda are internally displaced due to the ongoing conflict in the area ([DW Amharic, 5 December 2022](#); [BBC Amharic, 5 December 2022](#)).⁷⁵⁶

In December 2022, Addis Standard reported on a new report by the EHRC on human rights violations against civilians in Ethiopia noting that:

Due to the abundance of indicators and evidences gathered from the areas on the extent of the violation of human rights, the violations “can be classified as a grave violation of human rights according to the principles and provisions of human rights.” the report, issued on Wednesday, said, adding that hundreds

⁷⁵³ Addis Standard, [News: At least 30 people killed in an attacks blamed on “Fano militants” in East Wollega zone of Oromia region: local official](#), 22 October 2022

⁷⁵⁴ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia: Access Snapshot, Oromia region \(south-west\) – October 2022](#), 9 November 2022

⁷⁵⁵ OCHA, [Ethiopia - Situation Report](#), 17 Nov 2022

⁷⁵⁶ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 3 – December 2022](#), 14 December 2022

of civilians have been killed, injured, and displaced from their homes having their properties destroyed over the last five months, and several rural villages and towns have been either completely or partially destroyed.

“These armed groups and the government’s security forces have been fighting each other at different times, and due to their separate attacks at other times, many civilians have been killed, injured, displaced and property destroyed, and some villages or rural towns have been completely or partially destroyed.” [...]

In addition to the context of the conflicts in which the killings, displacement, injuries, looting, environmental destruction and human rights violations happen, civilians are also subjected to abuses in instances including when the armed forces or government security forces control given areas. [...]

Despite that, however, the reports says that hundreds of people have been brutally killed, an unknown number of people have been injured and hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced from their villages by militants of the armed groups [...].

Government officials have also been killed, public and civilian properties looted and destroyed, and public infrastructure and services damaged or disrupted, the report said, adding that hundreds of thousands of IDPs are currently in dire situations due to lack of humanitarian aid or inadequate supplies food and non food items.⁷⁵⁷

The International Crisis Group’s CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in December 2022 with regards to Oromia “Notably, clashes 3-4 Dec between Fano and Oromia regional special forces around Gutin town in East Wollega killed dozens and displaced thousands”.⁷⁵⁸

A December 2022 New Lines investigation on drone strikes on civilian areas in Ethiopia stated that:

Initially a lower-scale insurgency, fighting in Oromia has over the past three years escalated into a war of attrition that has seen atrocities, mass displacement of civilians and control of territory change hands repeatedly. [...]

The state-backed Ethiopian Human Rights Commission accused militants of carrying out cross-border raids that killed scores and displaced up to 20,000 people in late August. [...]

At least 700,000 people recently displaced from their homes in parts of the Oromia region need food assistance, according to a UNOCHA report published in November, which cited “ongoing hostilities in western Oromia” as triggering the exodus.⁷⁵⁹

Human Rights Watch reported in its annual report covering 2022 that “Parts of Oromia experienced protracted fighting due to government operations against the OLA. [...] The UN reported that the violence in the area led to a drastic increase in internal displacement and the destruction of infrastructure”.⁷⁶⁰

⁷⁵⁷ Addis Standard, [News Analysis: Civilians subjected to “grave violation of human rights” in clashes, attacks by armed groups, gov’t security forces operating in Oromia – EHRC](#), 8 December 2022

⁷⁵⁸ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), December 2022

⁷⁵⁹ New Lines Magazine, [Evidence of Drone Strikes Inside Civilian Areas in Ethiopia](#), 26 December 2022

⁷⁶⁰ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2023: Events of 2023](#), 12 January 2023, p. 219

In its annual report covering events in 2022, Freedom House noted “Throughout the year in Oromia, Amhara militants were implicated in numerous killings of Oromo civilians and the displacement of tens of thousands of people in areas bordering the Amhara region, which Amhara authorities attempted to annex”.⁷⁶¹

The New Humanitarian piece on conflict in Oromia in January 2023 noted that “In total, 214 civilians and 244 members of Oromia’s regional security force were killed in KIRAMU between 15 October and 10 December, according to a local official, who did not want to be named. They said over 80,000 people were displaced during this period”.⁷⁶²

According to the 2024 Bertelsmann Stiftung’s Transformation Index, covering the period from 1 February 2021 to 31 January 2023, “the armed clashes in various areas of the country (e.g., in Ethiopia’s northern Afar, Amhara and Tigray regions, as well as the Oromia region) are forcing civilians to leave their homes and seek shelter at various camps for IDPs”.⁷⁶³ It further noted, although again without specifying the ethnicity, that “due to armed conflict and attacks on civilians in Kiremu woreda in the East Wollega zone, Oromia region, more than 350,000 people have been internally displaced”.⁷⁶⁴

A May 2023 African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR) report by the Special Rapporteur on refugees, asylum seekers, displaced persons and migrants in Africa wrote that “Ethiopia is also facing the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people due to drought and insecurity in some regions, particularly in the south and in the Somali and Oromia regions”.⁷⁶⁵

The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission’s annual human rights situation report (covering the period of June 2022 to July 2023) wrote in its executive summary that “In Oromia region, recurring and expanding conflicts continue to aggravate conflict-induced displacements, property and infrastructure destruction and food insecurity”.⁷⁶⁶ It added that “Conflict remains one of the main drivers of displacement although the drought in SNNPR, Oromia and Somali regions were also contributing factors”.⁷⁶⁷

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”.⁷⁶⁸

⁷⁶¹ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2023 – Ethiopia](#), March 2023

⁷⁶² The New Humanitarian, [As violence subsides in Tigray, Ethiopia’s Oromia conflict flares](#), 12 January 2023

⁷⁶³ Bertelsmann Stiftung, [BTI 2024 Country Report – Ethiopia](#), 19 March 2024

⁷⁶⁴ Bertelsmann Stiftung, [BTI 2024 Country Report – Ethiopia](#), 19 March 2024

⁷⁶⁵ African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR), [Special Rapporteur on Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Displaced Persons and Migrants in Africa - 75OS](#), 20 May 2023

⁷⁶⁶ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), [Executive Summary: Ethiopia Annual Human Rights Situation Report \(June 2022 – June 2023\)](#), 12 July 2023, p. 8

⁷⁶⁷ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), [Executive Summary: Ethiopia Annual Human Rights Situation Report \(June 2022 – June 2023\)](#), 12 July 2023, p. 10

⁷⁶⁸ UNICEF, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Situation Report, Mid-Year 2023](#), 4 August 2023

FEWS NET wrote in December 2023 that: “The record-breaking rainfall led to extensive flooding in the Somali, Oromia, and South Ethiopia regions in October and November, causing considerable population displacement, pushing pastoralists to migrate their livestock to higher-ground areas, and resulting in the loss of main season crops among agropastoralists, mainly in riverine areas along Shebelle and Omo rivers”.⁷⁶⁹ It added that “Clashes between armed groups in northern Amhara and central Oromia continue to cause population displacement”.⁷⁷⁰

In December 2023, the UNHCR, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Shelter Cluster stated in a flood response update that “Since the rains started in October, floods have affected at least 1,034,087 people and displaced 437,002 across Afar, Oromia, South, and Somali regions. In all 14 affected zones, vast damage was reported to shelters and other infrastructures”.⁷⁷¹

In its annual report covering events in 2023, Freedom House noted that “In Oromia, Amhara militants have been implicated in the killings of Oromo civilians and displacement of tens of thousands of people in areas bordering Amhara”.⁷⁷² It later added that “Conflict in Amhara, Oromia, and other areas has contributed to internal displacement”.⁷⁷³

UNOCHA’s Humanitarian Needs Overview report for Ethiopia, published in February 2024, wrote that:

Reports also indicated interethnic conflicts and the movement of UAGs [unidentified armed groups] in the region resulted in the displacement of thousands of individuals in the North Shewa and Oromo special zones.³⁵ Reportedly, traditional labor migration patterns from the region to other countries were impacted by insecurity.

In Oromia Region, armed clashes between security forces and the UAGs displaced thousands of people, and created a major humanitarian crisis, including targeted attacks on civilians in different parts of the region.³⁶⁷⁷⁴

35 ReliefWeb, Conflict trends analysis: Amhara region 10 Nov 2023 <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/conflict-trends-analysis-amhara-region> See also EPO, Oromia Special zone and North Shewa zone Conflict Last updated: 29/09/2023 <https://epo.acleddata.com/kemise-conflict/>

36 Human Rights Council Fifty-fourth session, The acute risk of further atrocity crimes in Ethiopia: An Analysis International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia 3 October 2023

With reference to expected risks and shocks, it further wrote “The protracted insecurity situation in Amhara and Oromia, where over a million people are already displaced, may cause additional

⁷⁶⁹ The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), [*Drought-induced crop failure leads to Emergency in conflict-affected north*](#), December 2023

⁷⁷⁰ The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), [*Drought-induced crop failure leads to Emergency in conflict-affected north*](#), December 2023

⁷⁷¹ UNHCR, International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC), and the Shelter Cluster, [*Ethiopia ES/NFI Cluster Flood Response Update \(as of December 2023\)*](#), 12 December 2023

⁷⁷² Freedom House, [*Freedom in the World 2024 – Ethiopia*](#), 29 February 2024

⁷⁷³ Freedom House, [*Freedom in the World 2024 – Ethiopia*](#), 29 February 2024

⁷⁷⁴ UNOCHA, [*Ethiopia Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024*](#), February 2024, p. 20

displacement, and civilian casualties, and disrupt health services and aid delivery. Ongoing initiatives by Oromia and Amhara authorities to resolve the conflict will encourage returns, but humanitarian conditions will be precarious due to a lack of access to basic services and continued protection threats should clashes erupt further”.⁷⁷⁵

The 2023 overview of the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) for Ethiopia stated that “Around 140,000 displacements were also reported in the Oromia region, mostly the result of fighting between government forces and the Oromo Liberation Army. [...] Oromia, Somali and Amhara were also hosting significant numbers of IDPs”.⁷⁷⁶

The International Organization for Migration’s (IOM) May 2024 national displacement report for Ethiopia stated that “As of December 2023, drought was the primary cause of displacement for an estimated 536,434 IDPs (16.8% of the national IDP caseload), with IDPs reporting this reason for displacement concentrated in Somali and Oromia regions”.⁷⁷⁷

In May 2024, FEWS NET published a key message update on acute food insecurity and widespread crisis in Ethiopia, stating that “Heavy April and May rainfall in areas that receive *diraac/sugum* and *gu/genna* rains led to localized flooding, predominantly in areas of the Somali, Afar, and Oromia regions. According to the Ethiopia Disaster Risk Management Commission (EDRMC), the floods have affected over 590,000 people and displaced around 95,000 people [...]. In southern and southeastern areas of Oromia Region, over 2,500 hectares of farmland were damaged and over 35,500 people were displaced”.⁷⁷⁸

The June 2024 OHCHR report recorded with regards to the situation in Ethiopia in general that “The humanitarian situation remained concerning, as violence and drought continued to cause displacement and prevented the safe return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to their places of origin. Several protection concerns affecting IDPs were observed, including human rights violations such as arbitrary arrests and detentions, denial of identification documents, and lack of adequate food, healthcare, water, and housing. Moreover, humanitarian access was impeded, notably in parts of Amhara and Oromia regions because of prevailing insecurity”.⁷⁷⁹

The same source further described:

IDPs in northern Ethiopia also faced very serious protection challenges, including arbitrary arrests and detentions, lack of acquisition or provision of identification documents, and lack of access to food,

⁷⁷⁵ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024](#), February 2024, p. 36

⁷⁷⁶ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), [Ethiopia: Overview – 2023](#), last updated 14 May 2024 [accessed 2 July 2024]

⁷⁷⁷ International Organization for Migration (IOM), [DTM Ethiopia – National Displacement Report 18 \(November – December 2023\)](#), 16 May 2024, pp. 3-4

⁷⁷⁸ The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), [Widespread Crisis \(IPC Phase 3\) or worse outcomes likely until October harvest](#), May 2024

⁷⁷⁹ OHCHR, [Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia](#), June 2024, paragraph 4

healthcare, water, and shelter. The Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and related protection actors alongside local authorities mainstreamed human rights in humanitarian interventions through regular human rights and protection monitoring, reporting and advocacy work in Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Somali, and Tigray regions.⁷⁸⁰

Displacement within Oromia

Reuters reported on attacks against Oromo civilians in August 2022:

The state-appointed Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) said the latest bloodshed started on Aug. 29, when fighters from the outlawed Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) attempted to capture the town of Obora, killing three Amharas in the process.

Over the following two days, the EHRC said, Amharas from surrounding districts, including from across the boundary with the neighbouring Amhara region, launched reprisal killings against Oromos.

"During the two-day attack more than 60 people were killed and more than 70 were injured. In addition, properties and cattle were looted," the EHRC said, citing local people and officials.

"Due to the attack more than 20,000 people were displaced and are now in Obora town," it said.⁷⁸¹

In September 2022, the Protection Cluster's monthly protection overview for September 2022 noted on Oromia that "Malnutrition is commonplace in most IDP sites, notably [...] Guji (Oromia). [...] The inadequate WASH services, most notably provision of safe drinking water, is subjecting IDPs in Tigray, Oromia, Afar and Amhara regions to water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases".⁷⁸²

Ethiopia Insight wrote in December 2022 on drought in East Bale in Oromia region, noting that "Due to the drought, tens of thousands of people have been forced to flee their homes. Many people are looking for work in the less affected Bale Zone. Even those who have not been directly affected have chosen to relocate to Bale-Robe and Ginnir, the administrative capitals of the two zones, in search of better economic opportunities".⁷⁸³

Addis Standard also reported at the beginning of December 2022 on attacks by Fano in Kiremu district, East Wollega zone of Oromia region, and ensuing displacement of civilians:

Two attacks in the past few days in Kiremu district, East Wollega zone of Oromia region, killed dozens of people, including Damtew Kefyalew Gemedo, Kiremu District Court judge. According to information obtained by *Addis Standard* from residents, the attacks took place on 25 and 29 of November, 2022.

Residents who spoke to *Addis Standard* blamed Amhara militants called "Fano" for the attack.

Debela Fikadu, a native resident of Kiremu district but whose family has fled from Kiremu district to the neighboring Gida Ayana district due to repeated attacks and who himself lives elsewhere for work, told

⁷⁸⁰ OHCHR, [Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia](#), June 2024, paragraph 56

⁷⁸¹ Reuters, [Ethnic attacks kill 60 in Ethiopia's Oromiya, says human rights body](#), 6 September 2022

⁷⁸² Protection Cluster, [Monthly Protection Overview – September 2022](#), 28 October 2022, p. 3

⁷⁸³ Ethiopia Insight, [Oromia's Bale is facing a multi-layered crisis](#), 23 November 2022

that his brother, Capitano Fikadu, who lived in Kiremu district for work, was killed in the attack on Friday, November 25. [...]

Four days later, more than 20 additional people, including Kiremu District Court judge Damtew Kefyalew Gemed, were killed in a similar attack in Kiremu district on November 29, another resident of the district who fled the attack to Gida Ayana district told *Addis Standard*.

According to a statement by Gida Ayana district government communication office, the attack by “extremist Amhara militants” displaced the entire Oromo natives living in 19 rural villages of the Kiremu district. The displaced are currently sheltered in Gida town of the neighboring Gida Ayana district, the statement added. [...]

Asked about the current security situation in Kiremu district, a resident of the district who fled the attack to neighboring Gida Ayana district said the security situation is showing stability. “I heard more government security forces are coming in. The situation is frightening but nothing is happening now, it seems to be calming down.”⁷⁸⁴

The December 2022 monthly update from the EPO commented that “Thousands of displaced ethnic Oromo people have also fled to nearby towns in Oromia and Benshangul/Gumuz”.⁷⁸⁵

In December 2022 a UNICEF article noted that “After one of the most severe droughts in decades hit the Borena zone of Oromia Region, communities lost many of their cattle – their only means of livelihood. Thousands of people, mainly women and children, have been forced to leave their homes. [...] Since September [2022], more and more people are arriving in Dubuluk camp. Currently, the site hosts more than 43,000 people out of which 7,200 are children under five years of age. Rufo Iya, a mother of three, arrived at the site recently after she lost her cattle. Her youngest child Ubsa is getting treatment for severe acute malnutrition thanks to the lifesaving campaign”.⁷⁸⁶

The IOM’s December national displacement report for Ethiopia, covering the period August to September 2022 as part of its Displacement Tracking Matrix, found that:

144,331 households comprising 806,987 IDPs were identified in 570 sites in Oromia region. Since the last round (June — July 2022), there has been an increase of +144,310 IDPs (+21.78%) in the region. One reason for this increase is that six new sites with a significant caseload of drought-induced IDPs were covered in Borena and Guji zones. Conflict was the leading cause of displacement in Borena zone (96,803 IDPs, a +33% increase since the last round), however there was also a significant increase in IDPs reporting drought as the main reason for displacement from 7,050 IDPs in the last round to 84,026 IDPs (a +1,092% increase). Drought conditions in the region are worsening. In the previous round East Bale zone had seen light rainfall prompting returns, however in this round the total IDP caseload grew by 19% to a total of 15,543 IDPs. Coverage in West and Kellam Wallagas slightly improved this round with 105 sites that were not covered (compared to 130 sites in the previous round) due to insecurity. Another 103 sites in East Wallaga and West Guji zones could not be covered due to the presence of unknown armed groups (UAGs)

⁷⁸⁴ Addis Standard, [News: District court judge, dozens of civilians killed, entire residents of a district displaced in attacks blamed on “Fano militants” in East Wollega](#), 3 December 2022

⁷⁸⁵ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO December 2022 Monthly: Conflict Expands in Oromia Region](#), 12 January 2023

⁷⁸⁶ UNICEF, [A campaign to save lives](#), 22 December 2022

and 26 more sites in Guji zone were uncovered due to intensified insecurity, meaning that the regional displacement total, especially that related to conflict and drought should be higher. [...] Conflict remained the primary reason for displacement for an estimated 491,188 IDPs (60.87%).⁷⁸⁷

The report also noted that “Drought continues to consitute [*sic*] a large portion of the IDP caseload this round. Significant changes were noted on a zone level, where increases in reports of drought as the initial cause of displacement were particularly evident in Borena zone in Oromia region (+76,976 IDPs or a +1,092% increase)”.⁷⁸⁸

In August 2023, the OLLAA stated that:

According to the International Organization for Migration’s (IOM) best estimate, Oromia was home to 959,712 IDPs in 2022. This was second only to the Somali region (1,263,155). These numbers are likely gross underestimates, however, as the IOM itself notes. Indeed, in its National Displacement Report #15, the IOM identified several sites in Oromia that were unreachable by assessment teams due to security issues, including in Guji, West Guji, West Wollega, Kelem Wellega, East Wollega, Arsi, West Shewa, and North Shewa. UN OCHA estimates that Western Oromia alone hosts about 725,000 IDPs. The rate of growth in IDP populations is especially high in Oromia, with nearly 40 percent of all displacements in the last year occurring in the region. Oromia is also home to the vast majority (71.3 percent) of people who have been displaced for 10 years or more. Worryingly, sources also indicate that IDPs in Oromia tend to only be considered displaced for the first six months, another factor that contributes to undercounting.⁷⁸⁹

In February 2023, Addis Standard wrote an article on displaced victims of violence from East Wollega, reporting that:

Internally Displaced People (IDPs) who are stranded in Gida town of Gida Ayana district, in East Wollega zone of Oromia regional state, said they are forced to endure dreadful situations without enough food, water and medical services for months.

They are the victims of deadly attacks in Kiremu and Gida Ayana districts which took place in November last year and have since been living in IDP shelters in the small Gida town.

“We received 25 kilo of flour per household in a month or two. We do not have access to clean water. We either have to buy or fetch from rivers. We do not have access to health services either” an IDP from Gida town told *Addis Standard*. “The majority of us are living on the streets. We are spending night under verandahs,” he said.

In December *Addis Standard* reported that more than 30, 000 internally displaced civilians sheltered in Gida town were in dire humanitarian crisis without access to food, water, shelter and medical services.

⁷⁸⁷ International Organization for Migration (IOM), [DTM Ethiopia — National Displacement Report \(14 August – September 2022\)](#), 27 December 2022, p. 13

⁷⁸⁸ International Organization for Migration (IOM), [DTM Ethiopia — National Displacement Report \(14 August – September 2022\)](#), 27 December 2022, p. 4

⁷⁸⁹ Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association (OLLAA), [In the Margins, Among the Masses: IDPs Navigating Government Neglect and Neighborhood Hostility](#), 16 August 2023

Speaking to *Addis Standard*, Ijigu Gudeta, administrator of Gida Ayana district, said that some 35, 000 IDPs: 22,000 who fled from Kiremu district, and 13,000 who fled from different villages of the Gida Ayana district, are currently sheltered in Gida town.

According to him, the regional administration is providing assistance to the displaced people in their respective districts, but he urged the IDPs who fled Kiremu district and who are currently in Gida town to go back to their districts. He said that some of the IDPs have already returned back to their homes, while the majority who have refused to go back remained stranded in Gida town.

“We are calling on the IDPs to go back to their district. It is impossible for us to rent houses for all the 22,000 IDPs from Kiremu. The only option is to return them back to Kiremu and dispense assistance through the zone’s administration,” Ijigu said.

Similarly, administrator of Kiremu district Fikadu Hunde said the people who fled the districts should return back to get better assistance.

The IDPs however, are reluctant to return to their homes saying that the security is still volatile. “It is risky for us to go back to our villages before reliable security is established in the area” an IDP who asked to be anonymous told *Addis Standard*.

“The security in the area is volatile. The ‘Fano’ militants may come back anytime and start another round of offensives after the government security forces leave the area. This had happened in the past,” the IDP who fled Kiremu said.

“They [the government] have not yet restored security. However, we are being forced to return back to the district,” he added.⁷⁹⁰

Addis Standard reported in June 2023 on attacks by Fano in Amuru district of Horo Guduru Wollega zone of Oromia:

Armed militants described as members of the irregular Fano militia killed at least five people, injured dozens in a new attack in Amuru district of Horo Guduru Wollega zone of the Oromia regional states, residents told *Addis Standard*.

According to a resident of Agamsa town in Amuru district who asked for his name to be concealed for safety reasons, the attack on Wednesday, 07 June destroyed properties, and houses were burned and looted in the town and the surrounding rural villages.

The victims of the attack were civilian farmers, and many are fleeing the area as a result of the attack, the resident said, adding that the attackers may have wanted to evict the farmers from their farmlands.

He noted that similar attacks had displaced hundreds of farmers from the area last year. The militants traveled from Haro town in neighboring Kiremu district of East Wollega zone where they are stationed according to him. Haro is 50 kilometers away from Amuru. [...]

In neighboring Kiremu district of East Wollega zone, where according to the residents, Fano militias are stationed, there are ongoing attacks, and the militants are setting ablaze farmers houses in villages like Chafe Sorma, Boqa, Mayaa Jinina, Qoqophe, Qore and Daraba.

Many residents of the area were forced to leave their homes, as a result of the attacks, and are sheltered in the churches etc, multiple residents told Addis Standard. The residents urged the regional government to protect the farmers from the continued attack.⁷⁹¹

⁷⁹⁰ Addis Standard, [Analysis: Victims of violence in East Wollega endure dire situations, hesitant to return home citing lingering insecurity despite officials urge otherwise](#), 13 February 2023

⁷⁹¹ Addis Standard, [News: Militants kill at least five, wound several people in renewed attacks in Western Oromia](#), 10 June 2023

The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission's annual human rights situation report (covering the period of June 2022 to July 2023) wrote in its executive summary that "Large numbers of IDPs in Benishangul Gumuz and Oromia regions as well as in parts of Northern Ethiopia affected by the war remained without adequate humanitarian assistance".⁷⁹²

The IOM's August 2023 national displacement report for Ethiopia, covering the period November 2022 to June 2023 as part of its Displacement Tracking Matrix, found that Oromia hosted an estimated 1,064,500 IDPs, 24.27% of the total number of IDPs nationally and the second highest (after Somali) of all the regions.⁷⁹³ It also found that:

As of June 2023, drought was the primary cause of displacement for 810,855 IDPs (18.49% of the national IDP caseload), with IDPs reporting this reason concentrated in Somali, Oromia and Afar regions.

As of March 2023, drought-affected areas in Oromia and Somali regions witnessed flash floods causing temporary displacement, and an increase in cholera cases was registered.⁷⁹⁴

9 UNFPA, 2022. UNFPA Ethiopia Humanitarian Response Situation Report - March 2023. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/unfpa-ethiopia-humanitarian-response-situation-report-march-2023>

The early October 2023 UNOCHA situation report noted that "Displacements in the two Oromia zones of West Guji and Guji have taken place in the past two years due to escalation of violence in the area. Most recently, clashes that took place in late August 2023 in Guji reportedly displaced 89,096 people across four woredas. This adds to a compounded figure of 148,459 IDPs (22,006 HHs) currently hosted in the zone, and who need emergency humanitarian assistance. Similarly, 124,932 IDPs hosted in West Guji have not received assistance for several months due to funding constraints and insecurity, according to a recent multiagency assessment. About 159,400 people in West Guji will remain in need of food assistance for the coming six to eight months, because of low crop yields due to climate shocks including floods. Where access permits, there is a need to assess needs and provide emergency assistance to newly displaced, and the protracted IDPs in the Gujis".⁷⁹⁵

Assessment findings from the Center for Development and Governance in October 2023 stated that "currently close to 1.3 million people are displaced in Oromia" and that "Among these only 29% (374,400) were placed in shelter centers. The remaining (71%) were dispersed within host communities".⁷⁹⁶

⁷⁹² Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), [Executive Summary: Ethiopia Annual Human Rights Situation Report \(June 2022 – June 2023\)](#), 12 July 2023, p. 10

⁷⁹³ International Organization for Migration (IOM), [DTM Ethiopia — National Displacement Report 16 \(November 2022 – June 2023\)](#), 22 August 2023

⁷⁹⁴ International Organization for Migration (IOM), [DTM Ethiopia — National Displacement Report 16 \(November 2022 – June 2023\)](#), 22 August 2023, p. 5

⁷⁹⁵ OCHA, [Ethiopia - Situation Report](#), 9 Oct 2023

⁷⁹⁶ Center for Development and Governance (CDG), [Policy Brief On Creating Sense Of Urgency For Intervention In Conflict Affected Areas Of Oromia, Ethiopia](#), 17 October 2023

The IOM's December 2023 national displacement report for Ethiopia, covering the period August to September 2023 as part of its Displacement Tracking Matrix, found that Oromia hosted an estimated 1,023,439 IDPs, 29.58% of the total number of IDPs nationally and the second highest (after Somali) of all the regions.⁷⁹⁷ The report did, however, note major access constraints in Oromia during the three rounds of data collection, suggesting the caseload should in fact be higher.⁷⁹⁸ The data found that, in Oromia:

Conflict was the primary reason for displacement reported in 506 sites hosting an estimated 532,679 IDPs (69.5% of the sites). This is followed by social tension which was reported as the primary reason for displacement in 132 sites hosting an estimated 254,673 IDPs (18.1% of the sites), drought (55 sites, 7.6%), floods (18 sites, 2.5%), other climate induced reasons* (12 sites, 1.6%) and landslides (5 sites, 0.7%). The majority of the IDPs were residing in host communities (74.5%), followed by spontaneous camps/sites (10.4%), dispersed settlements (7.4%), planned camps/sites (4.3%) and collective centers (3.4%). The most reported need in the region was food, which was reported in 712 of the 728 sites assessed (97.8%). This is followed by livelihood support (57.8% or 421 sites) and shelter (51.8% or 377 sites)**.⁷⁹⁹

**Other climate induced reasons include wind, swampy land and hydropower projects*

***Multiple answers possible as IDP key informants were asked to select a maximum of 3 top priority needs for IDPs in their site.*

A report on the situation in Oromia Region (East, West and Kellem Wollega) in December 2023 that was published in June 2024 by UNCHR and based on interview with key informants recorded the following:

The picture painted by the Key Informants (KI) remains dire, particularly for persons with chronic illness and disability, child-headed households, female-headed households, and unaccompanied and separated children (UASC). The ensuing conflict is the primary cause of displacement for over 66% of IDPs sampled in accessible sites in the DTM Round 16 Report (June 2023). The report estimates that over 1 million IDPs are still displaced in the broader Oromia region.

The Wollegas is one of the areas highly impacted by conflict and insecurity within Oromia region. East, West, Kellem, Horo Guduru Wollega, and West Shewa Zones of Oromia have been impacted by insecurity and continuing conflict for the last 5 years. In August 2023, according to government estimates, over 28,000 people were displaced from Yaso Woreda of Kamashi zone (Benishangul Gumuz Region) to Haro Limu Woreda in East Wollega. In November, about 4,500 individuals were displaced to Amuru Woreda (Horo Guduru) due to conflict in Bure Woreda (West Gojam). The ongoing conflict in the Wollegas continues to impact the protection situation of vulnerable individuals – especially women and children – most of whom have suffered multiple displacements since 2018. The conflict-induced displacement continues to exacerbate heightened protection-risk exposures for these vulnerable women and children.

Summary of the key findings

⁷⁹⁷ International Organization for Migration (IOM), [DTM Ethiopia — National Displacement Report 17 \(August - September 2023\)](#), 20 December 2023, p. 8

⁷⁹⁸ International Organization for Migration (IOM), [DTM Ethiopia — National Displacement Report 17 \(August - September 2023\)](#), 20 December 2023, p. 10

⁷⁹⁹ International Organization for Migration (IOM), [DTM Ethiopia — National Displacement Report 17 \(August - September 2023\)](#), 20 December 2023, p. 19

- The conflict in the Wollegas is leading cause of displacement and other human rights violations.
- IDP Women/girls impacted by Gender Based Violence (GBV) - including Conflict Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) have limited access to specialized services including MHPSS.
- Lack of access to basic needs is the leading risk factor for GBV.
- Child labor is prevalent because displaced families facing economic hardships resort to sending their children to work in order to survive.⁸⁰⁰

The same report presented findings from the key informants in relation to mental health and psychosocial support, access to fundamental rights and basic needs, obstacles to access basic needs, coping strategies to meet basic needs, safety and security, documentation, gender-based violence (GBV), child protection, explosive ordnance, access to justice and conflict resolution assistance, shelter and non-food items, IDPs and returnees' situation, as well as on critical needs and recommendations. Among the findings on these topics, it was reported that:

9 out of 10 key informants reported to have observed signs of distress among the different populations in their locations. Amongst IDPs and IDP returnees, women and girls emerged as the group showing more signs of distress. [...]

The top 3 persons with specific needs facing the greatest challenges by location are: persons with disabilities, female-headed households, and older persons. [...]

"Armed elements on the way" has been reported as obstacle to access basic needs in 6 woredas out of 7. In the 6 woredas, there is sporadic armed conflict between Ethiopian security forces and UAGs [Unidentified armed groups]. There have also been reported incidents of temporary road blockages, and unwarranted searches by UAGs. Furthermore, there are also reports of abduction and destruction of civilian property in these woredas. Most GBV survivors, persons with chronic illness, pregnant women & lactating mothers are unable to access health care assistance due to the presence of armed elements and conflict.

Price increase is impeding access to food and basic WASH items such as soap. Insufficient water storage capacity appears as a main obstacle to access potable water. [...]

Harmful coping strategies impacting children (Child labor and Withdrawal of children from school) appear as the most common coping strategies (highest rate of 'Always').

- Child labor and withdrawal of children from school was reported as 'always' by all respondents in Kellam Wollega zone IDPs have been displaced multiple times over the past five years and most vulnerable families are unable to meet their basic feeding requirements, and afford the cost of living in most urban/semi-urban displacement areas. Hence, most IDP family's resort to child labor as a coping mechanism. The children are forced to work & support their families. IDP children face high GBV risk exposure because they work long hours away from their homes. Some IDP children are separated from their family to work as maids, babysitters, and waiters in other town/regions.

- Early marriage for girls was reported as "Sometimes" by all respondents in East Wollega and 9 out of 10 respondents in West Wollega. Most IDP families in protracted displacement are unable to afford the cost of living. Early marriage is one of the harmful coping mechanisms IDP families engage in when they are unable to support their family.

⁸⁰⁰ UNHCR Ethiopia, [PROTECTION AND SOLUTIONS MONITORING \(PSM\) | Report #11 | Oromia Region \(East, West and Kellam Wollega\) December 2023](#), 12 June 2024

- Transactional sex was reported as Sometimes by 90% of respondents in Sayo woreda, Kellam Wollega. The conflict led to family breakdowns and weakened the traditional social support system, therefore, IDP girls and women are the sole providers in Child & women-headed households. Hence, most vulnerable IDP women/girls engage in transactional sex to support themselves and their families. [...]

1 out of 2 respondents reported that men, boys, women, and girls are not able to move freely in their communities.

The main reasons limiting freedom of movement for women and girls are Insecurity in the area and fear of rape, and sexual harassment. For men and boys the top reasons are fear of arrest, insecurity in the area and lack of documentation. [...]

According to 67 percent of respondents, IDPs can obtain Kebele ID in their locations especially in East Wollega and West Wollega.

90 percent of respondents in Kellam Wollega has reported no document can be obtained by IDPs.

The Main barriers to having or obtaining legal documentations in Kellam Wollega are: 'People have no clearance' (40 percent of respondents) and 'Civil registration office not available' (40 percent of respondents).

Top 3 risks community members encounter as a result of lacking documentation: difficulty passing checkpoint; difficulty moving and difficulty opening a bank account. [...]

Rent increase, insecurity and destruction of crops have been reported as overall the top 3 HLP issues faced by IDP returnees.

65% of KIIs [key informant interviews] have reported that most people who returned have their houses fully destroyed and 78% have reported that IDP don't have access to land for farming. [...]

During the reporting period, lack of access to basic needs (53% of respondents), presence of armed groups (46%) and lawlessness (25%) are the top three risk factors increasing the risk of GBV in all three zones covered for this report.

Locations presenting the highest rate by risk factors are:

- Early and forced marriage: reported by 46% of respondent as factor increasing risk of GBV in Leta Sibu woreda (West Wollega).

- Lack of separate shelter for male and female: reported by 35% of respondents in Diga woreda (East Wollega)

- Presence of armed forces: reported as GBV risk factor in Gimbi (43% of respondents) and Sayo (24% of respondents). [...]

Child labor has been reported as the most significant problem children are facing by 80% of the Key informant correlating the finding of Child labor as top coping mechanism. IDP children are unable to attend school due to lack of scholastic materials and uniforms. Furthermore, most are engaged in difficult labor works for long hours to support themselves and their families. IDP children as young as 9 years of age work as daily laborers in most woredas. [...]

The top 3 locations where respondents reported being aware of incidents related to unexploded ordnances and other explosives remnants of war are:

- Nekemte town, East Wollega zone (72%).

- Hawa Galen, Kellam Wollega zone (42%) and

- Sayo, Kellam Wollega zone (30%) [...]

Main obstacles to access shelter/houses are high rental prices, shelter material not available and lack of shelter services.

Most urgent shelter NFI needs are blankets, emergency shelter and kitchen sets.

69% of key informants have reported that their communities don't receive any NFI support during the last 6 months and beneficiary selection process is the top factors to be improved during shelter and NFI assistance. [...]

According to 1 respondent out of 4, IDP returnees are renting houses.

The average amount of rent reported is 1,100 ETB in Kellam Wollega and 540 ETB in West Wollega.

Most IDP HHs are unable to afford the cost of rent. Therefore, two or three HHs share one premise to afford payments. This leads to overcrowding and increased risk of GBV.⁸⁰¹

A January 2024 UNICEF article described that "For more than four years, Borena zone of Oromia region has been hit by recurrent drought and conflict caused by inter-communal clashes which forced many families to leave their homes for safety, security and to get basic lifesaving assistance. According to Multi agency Belg/Gena 2023 seasonal assessment report, in the zone, there are an estimated 154, 824 IDP's out of which 19501 are under 5 years who requires Birth Certificate".⁸⁰²

UNOCHA's Humanitarian Needs Overview report for Ethiopia, published in February 2024, wrote that:

Continuing insecurity is one of the biggest hurdles for IDP return and recovery. During the last IOM-DTM site assessments (August-September 2023), 19 per cent of the IDPs indicated to have been displaced recently (up to 1 year); 30 per cent between 1 to 2 years; 23 per cent between 3 to 4 years; and 28 per cent had been displaced for more than 5 years.

Of the IDPs that have been displaced for more than 5 years (a total of 968,000 IDPs in the assessed locations), the majority (636,000) were displaced by conflict and are predominantly in Somali (58 per cent) and Oromia (35 per cent) regions. [...]

The substantial number of protracted IDPs demonstrates that displacement is not only of short-term humanitarian concern, but also a peace and development challenge. Considering that conflict is a main driver of displacement, peace-building initiatives are crucial both to prevent future displacement and to restore peace and enable returns. Development action is also essential to reduce vulnerabilities and enable improved conditions for returns through system strengthening, as well as to prevent future displacement by sustainably building the resilience of communities, infrastructure and social services to recurring climatic shocks. [...]

Unresolved conflicts and persistent insecurity, particularly in Amhara and Oromia regions, are expected to continue to drive displacement, destitution and humanitarian needs and displacement.⁸⁰³

The same source reported with regards to returning IDPs that: "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".⁸⁰⁴

⁸⁰¹ UNHCR Ethiopia, [PROTECTION AND SOLUTIONS MONITORING \(PSM\) | Report #11 | Oromia Region \(East, West and Kellam Wollega\) December 2023](#), 12 June 2024

⁸⁰² UNICEF, [Reaching Internally Displaced Children with Birth Certificate](#), 5 January 2024

⁸⁰³ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024](#), February 2024, p. 8, 35

⁸⁰⁴ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024](#), February 2024, p. 32

FEWS Net reported in its food security outlook for February – September 2024 that:

In Oromia, there are over 1.27 million conflict- and drought-displaced persons in the region as of December, according to the Oromia Disaster Risk Management Commission (DRMC). The regional government is attempting to return conflict-displaced populations to their place of origin, while those impacted by the 2020-2023 drought have started to return home following the favorable 2023 seasons. [...] Flood-displaced persons in West Guji, Arsi, West Shewa, Southwest Shewa, and East Shewa zones of Oromia and Somali regions returned to their farms and resumed their planting activities after the flood waters subsided.⁸⁰⁵

A March 2024 UNOCHA situation report described that “Recent years have seen a gradual deterioration of conditions in IDP sites across regions. Due to limited funding and resource capacities within the humanitarian community, efforts to address needs of IDPs are becoming increasingly challenging. These conditions are observed in Jara IDP camp in the North Wello Zone of the Amhara Region, as well as Ano IDP camp (East Wellega Zone) and tens of thousands of IDPs in Arsi Zone of the Oromia Region”.⁸⁰⁶ Reporting further on the conditions in Arsi Zone, the report described:

In Oromia’s Arsi Zone, OCHA and government authorities in February jointly assessed and found security concerns in 19 out of 25 districts due to ongoing hostilities. More than 40,000 people are reportedly displaced in the zone between December 2023 and February 2024. Health facilities are nonfunctional leaving about 3,800 children and 800 breastfeeding mothers without essential healthcare in the zone’s Dodota district. Schools are closed, and IDPs find refuge under makeshift shelters, public buildings and with host communities. The humanitarian situation is aggravated due to the impact of recurrent droughts, floods, and mud slides in the zone. Close to 345,000 people in the lowlands of the zone urgently require food assistance. The absence of humanitarian partners, inconsistent food aid, and inadequate protection measures further fuel their dire situation. A coordinated and robust response is required to address the critical needs of the vulnerable populations in Arsi Zone.⁸⁰⁷

Reporting on further IDP sites in Oromia, a March 2024 UNOCHA report noted:

An estimated 453,000 people remain displaced in East Borena, Guji, and West Guji zones of Oromia due to sporadic hostilities ongoing since 2018, according to local authorities. Health systems are impacted, and insecurity constrains humanitarian movements to access affected communities. Conflict impacts reduced grain supply, raising prices, while livestock supply increased, lowering prices. Negative term of trade leaves pastoralists unable to access market supplies. Despite a volatile security environment, partners have made efforts to deliver humanitarian assistance in various collective sites and host community IDP settings.

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⁸⁰⁵ The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), [Hunger and acute malnutrition outpace the scale-up of food assistance](#), February 2024

⁸⁰⁶ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Situation Report](#), 25 March 2024

⁸⁰⁷ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Situation Report](#), 25 March 2024

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An estimated 453,000 people remain displaced in East Borena, Guji, and West Guji zones of Oromia due to sporadic hostilities ongoing since 2018, according to local authorities.⁸⁰⁸

An early March 2024 UNOCHA situation report noted the situation for IDPs in Oromia, focusing in particular on the two Hararge zones:

Oromia hosts a reported 1.5 million IDPs living in sites and with host communities as of February 2024, according to regional authority figures.

In August – September 2023, surveys conducted in 728 IDP sites identified 1,023,439 IDPs/196,609 households. The IDPs living among the host communities are in situations of protracted displacement with compounded humanitarian needs due to floods, drought, disease, and hostilities. These are evident in the southern zones of East Borena, Guji and West Guji where an estimated 543,000 IDPs affected by hostilities live in dire conditions. Food is among the priority urgent needs. Similarly, close to 794,000 IDPs in the four Wellega zones (West, East, Kelem, and Horo Guduru) as well as in the North and West Shewa zones require food, WASH, health, nutrition, education, protection and ES/NFI assistance.

Oromia's two Hararge zones (East and West) host up to 172,000 IDPs and over 300,000 returnees living in protracted and poor conditions respectively. These IDPs have been living with host communities and have not been prioritized for humanitarian assistance despite their dire condition. Food, shelter, WASH, and access to health remain critical gaps.

However, humanitarian partners (their presence currently limited) face challenges to assist communities in hard-to-reach areas due to frequent clashes between Government and non-state armed groups. Assistance has therefore had a slow pace, due to security challenges over the past couple of years among others. In 2023, for example a little over 100,000 people out of a targeted 800,000 people received emergency shelter and non-food item assistance across the Hararge zones, as well as in the southern and western zones of Oromia. For returnees in the Hararge zones, restoration of their assets, recovery and rehabilitation support, including livelihood intervention are their primary needs without which they continue to depend on humanitarian assistance. Food also remains a primary need (20 per cent of the returnees currently receive intermittent food assistance), until durable solutions are put in place.⁸⁰⁹

The late March 2024 UNOCHA report also described conditions for IDPs from Oromia returning from Amhara:

The implementation of government-led returns/relocations of IDPs from Amhara to Oromia that started in February 2024 is facing challenges highlighting food, shelter and NFI assistance, health, and WASH services as primary needs. In East Wellega Zone (Oromia), a recent joint visit made by government authorities, OCHA, and partners found over 4,700 IDPs residing in the Ano Town IDP collective site. The IDPs comprise of those recently relocated from Amhara and others previously displaced in the area. In addition to the need for basic services, protection needs in relation to transitional justice, housing, land, property issues and security have been reported. Humanitarian response has been inadequate so far. With the support of the Government, a one-month food ration of maize and rice (as opposed to a planned

⁸⁰⁸ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Situation Report](#), 25 March 2024

⁸⁰⁹ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Situation Report](#), 1 March 2024

three months) has been distributed to the returnees. The temporary shelters provided are sub-standard and not able to withstand harsh weather, which is concerning given the incoming March-May rainy season. Pregnant and lactating women and children mainly received limited NFIs (blankets, soap) leaving most people without assistance. The IDPs report feeding on one meal a day, impacting primarily children's and pregnant and lactating women's nutrition and health situation. The lack of durable solutions options also remains a concern. In general, returns/relocations are challenged by the requirement for compliance to international IDP returns and relocation standards. Non-compliance with standards may hinder the support from international partners.⁸¹⁰

The IOM's May 2024 national displacement report for Ethiopia, covering the period November to December 2023 as part of its Displacement Tracking Matrix, found that Oromia hosted an estimated 862,226 IDPs, 26.99% of the total number of IDPs nationally and the second highest (after Somali) of all the regions.⁸¹¹ The report clarified the decrease from the previous round, writing that:

This shows a decrease of 161,213 IDPs (-15.8%), since round 34 (August – September 2023). Part of the decrease is likely due to 79 sites which closed due to return to place of origin and local integration, especially in East Wellega and West Guji zones. Additionally, 18 sites which were covered in the previous round 34 were uncovered this round, specifically 2 sites in East Borena and Arsi zones were uncovered due to road inaccessibility, and 16 sites in Arsi, East Bale, East Borena, East Wellega, South West Shewa, West Guji and West Shewa zones were uncovered due to social tension and insecurity. These sites had previously contained an estimated 27,802 IDPs.⁸¹²

The data also found that, in Oromia, "Conflict was the primary reason for displacement reported by an estimated 545,619 IDPs (63.3%)".⁸¹³

In a June 2024 situation report, UNOCHA reported that "Malnutrition is worsening among 355,257 IDPs and returnees in hard-to-reach areas of Western Oromia due to severe food insecurity".⁸¹⁴ It further noted that "In the East Wellega Zone of the Oromia Region, more than 24,000 IDPs who fled hostilities in the neighbouring Benishangul Gumuz Region in 2018 face dire conditions, including in health and education. Recent assessments in Haro Limu district highlight alarming situations: overcrowded temporary schools, limited access to education resources, and challenges in providing adequate shelter and non-food items such as clothing".⁸¹⁵

Displacement of Oromos outside Oromia (from Oromia)

⁸¹⁰ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Situation Report](#), 25 March 2024

⁸¹¹ International Organization for Migration (IOM), [DTM Ethiopia — National Displacement Report 18 \(November – December 2023\)](#), 16 May 2024, p. 8

⁸¹² International Organization for Migration (IOM), [DTM Ethiopia — National Displacement Report 18 \(November – December 2023\)](#), 16 May 2024, p. 17

⁸¹³ International Organization for Migration (IOM), [DTM Ethiopia — National Displacement Report 18 \(November – December 2023\)](#), 16 May 2024, p. 17

⁸¹⁴ OCHA, [Ethiopia - Situation Report](#), 10 June 2024

⁸¹⁵ OCHA, [Ethiopia - Situation Report](#), 10 June 2024

In September 2022, the Protection Cluster’s monthly protection overview for September 2022 wrote for Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State (BGRS) that: “In the IDP sites of Bambasi, Sherkole and Bildigilu, Assosa, the rise of child labour is pronounced and exacerbated by insufficient food supply and means of livelihood. 26 individuals of whom 13 children (boys and girls) were reunited with their families through the assistance of the military, in Dar Aldab in Bildigilu, BGRS. These Children are IDPs from Qedo, Oromia. They were exposed to abuse and exploitation and need immediate case management services”.⁸¹⁶

According to the EPO’s weekly update from 3 to 9 December 2022: “Displacement due to the violence in West Wollega zone has also resulted in thousands of people fleeing and crossing into Benshangul/Gumuz region since last week”.⁸¹⁷

A UNOCHA situation report for December 2022 wrote that:

In Oromia Region, the security situation is fast deteriorating, particularly in western Oromia. According to reports from local authorities, hundreds of thousands of civilians have been uprooted from their homes and social infrastructure have been destroyed. [...] The affected population are not only taking refuge in better-off areas within Oromia, but also crossing the border into Amhara Region in large numbers after a three to five days journey on foot. More than 10,000 people were reportedly displaced in the first half of December 2022 alone according to local authorities.

The majority of the displaced people (IDPs) from Oromia in Amhara are living with host communities in East Gojam, North Shewa, North Wello, South Gondar, South Wello and West Gojam zones as well as Debre Birhan City. A relatively smaller number are sheltered in IDP sites in North Wello and South Wello zones. Given the increasing IDP influx, Amhara regional authorities are reopening Jara IDP site in North Wello and have reopened Turkish site in South Wollo zones.⁸¹⁸

The December 2022 monthly update from the EPO commented that “Thousands of displaced ethnic Oromo people have also fled to nearby towns in Oromia and Benshangul/Gumuz”.⁸¹⁹

A further UNICEF article of 24 January 2023 recorded that “Thousands of people have fled ongoing conflict in Ethiopia’s Oromia region. Some of the displaced people have been settled in temporary camps in Debre Birhan that host more than 25,000 people”.⁸²⁰ The same source further noted that:

When we visited Woyinshet camp, over 6,800 people were living in difficult conditions. “We don’t have any hope to return to our homes” said one woman who has been living in the camp for nearly two years. Recent data shows that there are almost 300 people with disabilities in the camp.

⁸¹⁶ Protection Cluster, [Monthly Protection Overview – September 2022](#), 28 October 2022, p. 6

⁸¹⁷ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO Weekly: 3 – December 2022](#), 14 December 2022

⁸¹⁸ UNOCHA, [Ethiopia Situation Report](#), 15 December 2022

⁸¹⁹ Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), [EPO December 2022 Monthly: Conflict Expands in Oromia Region](#), 12 January 2023

⁸²⁰ UNICEF, [Scaling up humanitarian support for children with disabilities and their families](#), 24 January 2023

UNICEF is on the ground providing education, water, sanitation and hygiene, health and child protection services for children in the camps and in the host community. [...]

More funding is needed to provide services for the most marginalized in the camp. All the classes are at full capacity, and teachers have no training to provide adequate learning support for children with disabilities. We met a young boy of 10 with a physical disability who wishes he could go to school and become a teacher. "I am able to be educated."

There is also a need for cash top-ups for additional disability-related costs, social behaviour change interventions to address stigma against persons with disabilities, assistive devices, livelihoods programmes and data on the number and specific needs of persons with disabilities in the camps.⁸²¹

Save the Children's Ethiopia external response update in June 2023 wrote that "over the past two years, hundreds of thousands of people have fled the Oromia region for the Amhara region increasing the number of people in need in the latter".⁸²²

Refugees International wrote a report on humanitarian crises in Ethiopia, noting that "Ethiopia's other regions also host large numbers of IDPs, who are also in desperate need of humanitarian assistance, and risk having their rights denied. 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".⁸²³

While not specifying the ethnicity of IDPs, Addis Standard reported in February 2024 on an unfolding humanitarian crisis in Jara IDP camp in North Wollo Zone, Amhara, where many individuals displaced from the Oromia region are:

Thousands of individuals taking shelter at the Jara Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) center located in the North Wollo Zone of the Amhara region are currently grappling with a critical shortage of food, which has endured for a continuous period of two months.

These individuals displaced from the Oromia and Benishangul Gumuz regions conveyed their distress via a peaceful demonstration last week, drawing attention to the critical deficiency in food aid.

IDPs residing at Jara used to receive a monthly ration of 15 kilogram of wheat flour and half a liter of oil per person.

Nevertheless, it has been over two months since they last received the ration, pushing the IDPs to the brink of starvation. [...]

Since 2018, over 10,000 individuals have sought refuge at the Jara camp, fleeing conflicts primarily in various zones of the Oromia region.⁸²⁴

⁸²¹ UNICEF, [Scaling up humanitarian support for children with disabilities and their families](#), 24 January 2023

⁸²² Save the Children, [Ethiopia Response: Humanitarian Situation and Response – External Update, Update 16](#), 5 June 2023, p. 1

⁸²³ Refugees International, [Scars of War and Deprivation: An Urgent Call to Reverse Tigray's Humanitarian Crisis](#), 29 February 2024

⁸²⁴ Addis Ababa, [News: Urgent humanitarian crisis unfolds at Jara IDP center in North Wollo Zone, leaving thousands without food aid for over two months](#), 12 February 2024

The International Crisis Group’s CrisisWatch tracker gave the following update in March 2024 “OLA 4 March reportedly made gains in Gelana district, West Guji Zone, forcing hundreds to flee to South Ethiopia People’s Region”.⁸²⁵

⁸²⁵ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch: Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#), March 2024