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The State of the World's Human Rights; Ethiopia 2025

Authorities carried out mass forced evictions without adequate warning, displacing thousands of people in the name of urban development. Journalists were arbitrarily detained and harassed. Civic space continued to shrink as authorities increased surveillance and suppression of activists and human rights defenders, while introducing draft legislation that threatened freedom of association. The transitional justice process stalled, and no steps were taken towards justice and accountability for crimes under international law in the Tigray conflict. Women and girls continued to face gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence. Women human rights activists were abused for their advocacy work. Ethiopia arbitrarily detained and deported at least 600 Eritrean refugees to Eritrea.

Forced evictions

Thousands of Ethiopians faced sudden forced evictions under the Corridor Development Project, described by the authorities as an urban development project to “[improve] infrastructure, housing, and public spaces”. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed was credited with its creation and closely oversaw its implementation, while the Ministry of Urban and Infrastructure led the project.

The mass evictions occurred in 60 cities, including the capital, Addis Ababa (which accounted for most of the documented cases), Arba Minch, Hawassa, Dessie, Jimma, Adama and Jigjiga. Victims reported a pattern whereby affected residents received only 72 hours’ notice of eviction without any consultation. Authorities harassed residents who challenged their eviction, and subjected people covering the issue for various media outlets to intimidation, including arbitrary arrest and threats. Millions of others lived in fear that they too would be evicted.

The evictions constituted serious violations of multiple human rights, including to adequate housing, education and justice, as well as the right to participate in meaningful consultations and to legal remedies and compensation. In early October, city officials announced a temporary suspension of the project and committed to more effective consultation with affected communities in Addis Ababa.

Freedom of expression

Authorities subjected journalists and other media workers to arbitrary arrests and unlawful detention. A growing number of arrests saw journalists being taken into custody by masked

men and held incommunicado for up to 12 days. Detention patterns shifted from arresting journalists for publishing reports that were critical of the authorities to detaining them for private discussions.

On 21 June journalists Andualem Sisay and Wudineh Zenebe were detained for discussing politics in a bar in Addis Ababa. The police searched their electronic devices and released them a few hours later.

Earlier in June prominent journalist Tesfalem Waldyes was arrested and held for five days despite multiple court orders for his release, before being released on bail.

On 13 August Yonas Amare, a journalist at The Reporter, one of Ethiopia's largest newspapers, was taken into custody from his home in Addis Ababa by multiple masked men in military uniforms. He was released after 10 days in incommunicado detention.

Abdulsemed Mohammed, the host of Kidame Gebeya, a popular show on Ahadu Radio, was arrested on 11 August in Addis Ababa. He was released by police after 12 days in incommunicado detention.

No one was held accountable for the arrests and detentions of media workers.

Freedom of association

Federal authorities increasingly restricted civic space by deploying unlawful surveillance of human rights defenders and activists, along with other forms of harassment in relation to their work.

The Ministry of Justice proposed a draconian draft amendment to the Organizations of Civil Societies Proclamation (the CSO law). It aimed to amend 2019 legislation that had been introduced as part of the legal reforms initiated by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government after he took office in 2018. The amendment sought to undermine judicial independence and oversight of the executive agency responsible for enforcing the CSO law. Among other harsh measures, it sought to prohibit national civil society organizations from receiving funding from foreign individuals or organizations. If passed, it would effectively close civic space by concentrating unchecked power in the executive.

Freedom of peaceful assembly

Authorities arrested more than 140 medical workers for allegedly participating in nationwide strikes that began on 12 May, demanding better working conditions and fair pay. Some were held for up to 27 days. Authorities ignored their demands and failed to engage in meaningful negotiations about their concerns. By the time of the protests, medical doctors were earning a monthly salary of just ETB 8,978 (around USD 60).

Impunity

The transitional justice process remained stalled almost three years after the government began discussions on establishing and implementing legal and institutional policies, which the government claimed would deliver justice and accountability for atrocities committed in Ethiopia.

There remained no justice and accountability for crimes under international law, including war crimes and crimes against humanity, committed during the armed conflict in Tigray region in 2020. Meanwhile, violations in the context of the ongoing armed conflicts in Amhara and Oromia regions continued.

Women's and girls' rights

Women and girls continued to face conflict-related sexual violence amid the ongoing armed conflicts. No steps were taken to secure justice and reparation for survivors of such abuses in Tigray region. Outside the conflicts, women and girls experienced gender-based violence that worsened due to the collapse of the rule of law following prolonged conflict.

Refugees' and migrants' rights

Ethiopia arbitrarily detained and unlawfully deported at least 600 Eritrean refugees to Eritrea where they were arrested and detained on arrival. The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea said in his May report that he had received credible information that returnees deported from Ethiopia were interrogated, arbitrarily detained and subjected to enforced disappearance and indefinite military conscription. Many Eritrean refugees fled to escape military service, sometimes amounting to slavery (see Eritrea entry).

Credible media reports from February onwards indicated that the Eritrean government intensified its military mobilization on the border with Ethiopia as tensions between the countries escalated. This put Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia at increased risk of human rights violations.

