

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	571
Land:	Etiopien
Kilde:	Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge
Titel:	Briefing Notes Summary. Ethiopia – July to December 2023
Udgivet:	31. december 2023
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	14. juni 2024



Briefing Notes Summary

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Ethiopia – July to December 2023

31 December 2023

24 July 2023

Over 30 dead after militia attack in Gambella

An attack by a militia on 18.07.23 in Nuer woreda (district) in Zone 3 of Gambella Regional State has left at least 31 people dead, including 12 militiamen, 20 people were injured, according to local sources. The Ethiopian army took control of the area and a night curfew was imposed.

Already on 13.07.23, three people were reportedly killed and 23 injured in an attack on two public buses in the outskirts of Gambella town by an unknown militia. Gambella had been one of the most peaceful regions in Ethiopia for many years. Since mid-2022, however, armed conflicts have been on the rise, mostly with an ethnic background in the form of disputes over resources such as grazing land and access to water.

Blocking of online networks lifted

After a five-month nationwide blockade, access to social networks, such as Facebook, TikTok and Instagram, was reestablished on 19.07.23. According to Amnesty International, the government blocked all online services in February 2023 after several bishops split from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and called for protests. The Ethiopian authorities have blocked access to the internet and social media platforms several times in recent years, including to prevent criticism of the government, e.g., in the Tigray conflict.

31 July 2023

Ethiopia pushes for access to Red Sea ports - if need be by force

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has announced that the Ethiopian government is looking at all options to secure a port belonging to the country. At a meeting with investors in Addis Ababa on 27.07.23, Abiy referred to the exorbitant and unsustainable costs associated with dependence on the ports of neighbouring countries. He said negotiations are already underway with Eritrea, Djibouti and Somaliland. In the case of Eritrea, the government has proposed to transfer 30% of Ethiopian Airlines' shares to the Eritrean government in exchange for port access. Abiy went on to say that he is striving to secure Ethiopia's own port by peaceful means, but also threatened violence if this were to fail.

Ethiopia has been a landlocked country since Eritrea's independence in 1993. The lack of its own port is seen as the biggest obstacle to the country's economic development. Currently, goods are imported and exported via the ports of Djibouti and Somaliland. However, the use of these ports is expensive and they are often congested.

07 August 2023

Proclamation of a state of emergency in Amhara

After renewed clashes between the Amharic Fano militia and government troops (Ethiopian National Defence Force) at the beginning of August 2023, which reportedly resulted in several casualties, the government declared a six-month state of emergency in Amhara on 04.08.23. Allegedly the clashes were triggered by the expulsion of Fano fighters from the Amharic town of Kobo. Later, the town of Lalibela was captured by Fano forces and roads were blocked. As a consequence, Ethiopian Airlines cancelled flights from Addis Ababa to Gondar and Lalibela; mobile internet access was interrupted in parts of Amhara. Reportedly, a massive wave of arrests of ethnic Amhara considered to be linked to the tense security situation, started after the declaration of the state of emergency, especially in Addis Ababa.

14 August 2023

Security situation in Amhara

After the declaration of a state of emergency in Amhara (cf. BN of 07.08.23), government troops are said to have regained control over the towns of Gondar and Lalibela, which had previously been captured by the Fano militia. The government imposed a curfew for the areas affected by the clashes until 23.08.23. Official figures on casualties are not yet available - those concerned said that at least 20 civilians were killed since the outbreak of the renewed clashes. Furthermore, it is said that numerous ethnic Amhara and journalists reporting on the situation in Amhara were arrested. Meanwhile, Ethiopian Airlines is reported to have resumed flights to Amhara.

Action against LGBTIQ community

Reportedly, the government raids hotels, bars and other establishments suspected of supporting homosexual acts, especially in Addis Ababa. The government called on the population to report to the police any evidence of homosexual acts or establishments supporting them. Homosexuality is illegal in Ethiopia and the penal code provides for up to 15 years in prison if convicted. Human rights groups have already reported a rise in attacks on LGBTIQ people.

21 August 2023

Several dead in air strike in Amhara

Recently, the air force supported the Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) in the conflict in Ethiopia's regional state of Amhara (cf. BN of 14.08.23 and 07.08.23). On 13.08.23, the town of Finote Selam (West Gojjam Zone) is reported to have been the target of a drone attack in which at least 30 people were killed and 55 injured, some seriously. This is the most serious incident so far during the months of tensions between irregular Amharic militias, commonly referred to as "Fano" and the ENDF in Amhara. According to local sources, Finote Selam is under Fano control. The Ethiopian government has not yet provided any comment. Night-time curfews have been imposed in six towns - including the regional capital Bahir Dar. Security forces have set up checkpoints throughout the region. Representatives in the Ethiopian parliament demanded the cessation of fighting and called for a dialogue. Most recently, the situation is said to have calmed down. However, on 17.08.23, fierce fighting was reported between Fano and the ENDF near Dembecha town (West Gojjam).

Background

Amhara is the second largest region in Ethiopia, home to more than a quarter of the total population. Protests have been going on for months. One of the triggers for the violence is the November 2022 agreement on the settlement of hostilities to end the armed conflict between the Ethiopian government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in the regional state of Tigray (cf. BN of 07.11.22). In Amhara, this agreement met with criticism because the negotiations took place without Amharic participation, although Fano militias and Amhara Special Forces fought on the side of the federal army. In the process, Amhara forces occupied areas in Welkait, Tselemti, Humera and Tsegede in the western Tigray region, officially subordinating them to the Amhara regional government and displacing thousands of ethnic Tigray. Human rights organisations accused Amhara forces of an ethnic cleansing campaign characterised by arbitrary arrests, killings and deportations (cf. BN v. 11.04.22). The future affiliation of

the zone is unclear. The Ethiopian government has not yet taken a clear position, it did, however, discuss a referendum, which is fundamentally rejected by Amhara on the grounds that the federal government, which was led by the TPLF at the time, assigned these areas to the Tigray region in the 1990s without consulting the local, majority Amharic population.

In addition, in April 2023, the central government decided to dissolve all local special units nationwide and to integrate them into the state security forces in order to promote ethnic unity and to prevent regional forces from becoming involved in conflicts, thus reads the official justification. This decision was widely rejected in Amhara as an attack on regional autonomy and a threat to security in the regional state. The first riots broke out in several towns (cf. BN of 24.04.23). Although some Amharic special forces agreed to their incorporation, about half are said to have joined the Fano, which refused to demobilise. The ENDF then launched an offensive against "extremist" elements. Since then, fighting between the Fano and the ENDF broke out time and again (cf. BN of 24.06.23).

11 September 2023

UNHCR: Over 183 dead in unrest in Amhara

According to UNHCR, at least 183 people have been killed in violent clashes between regional militias (Fano) and the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) in Amhara Regional State (cf. BN of 07.08.23, 14.08.23 and 21.08.23) since July 2023. According to local news sources, the number of civilian casualties is said to be much higher because of the artillery shelling of residential areas. No reliable information is available due to an internet blockade, the interruption of telephone connections and because media professionals do not have access to the region. In addition, during the same period, more than 1,000 people - mostly young Amhara - were arbitrarily arrested on the basis of the state of emergency imposed (cf. BN of 07.08.23). Also, mass searches of houses began and media workers reporting on the situation in Amhara were detained since the beginning of August 2023. This is according to an UNHCR statement of 29.08.23 which goes on to say that all of this indicates that the human rights situation in Ethiopia has deteriorated and calls on all parties to stop killings, abuses and other violations and to seek dialogue.

Government troops allegedly responsible for indiscriminate killings and looting in Amhara

On 08.09.23, various media reported that the ENDF killed more than 70 civilians and looted property in Majete town (North Shewa zone, Amhara). This was preceded by heavy fighting between the army and Fano. Survivors said the victims had been unarmed farmers. According to a local source, the ENDF shot dead 15 young men in Ensaro town (North Shewa, Amhara) at the end of August 2023. The source said that the victims were tied up and suspected of supporting Fano, which temporarily controlled the town.

Sexual violence continues in Tigray

AI reported that even after the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoH) concluded in November 2022 in the regional state of Tigray (cf. BN of 07.11.22), sexual violence against women and girls has continued, resulting in numerous unwanted pregnancies and HIV infections. The perpetrators are military and paramilitary groups which, according to the accusation, are "most likely linked to the governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea".

25 September 2023

UN reports serious human rights violations in Tigray

Despite the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoH) signed in the regional state of Tigray in November 2022, the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE) reports that serious human rights violations are still taking place (cf. BN of 07.11.22). Its report lists sexual violence, killings, arbitrary detentions, looting and expulsions and cites the Amharic Fano militia and the Eritrean Defence Forces (EDF) as primary responsible actors. The Ethiopian government had not lived up to its obligation to protect the population, had failed to urge Eritrea to withdraw its troops and to punish the crimes committed in the conflict, the commission says. There is a culture of impunity that encourages the risk of further atrocities. In its report published on 18.09.23, the commission, which the UN Human Rights Council established in December 2021, warned that the conflict could spread to neighbouring regions and threaten the country's stability. It said it was concerned about the recent increase in violence in Oromia and Amhara, Ethiopia's two most populous regions. In both regional states, civilians continue to be arbitrarily arrested and abused. Furthermore, security forces are responsible for extrajudicial

executions, it is said. In addition, the need for humanitarian aid is growing, a situation made more complex by the influx of refugees from Sudan.

23 October 2023

Report on human rights violations in Tigray

On 13.10.23 the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE) published its final report on human rights violations committed during the Tigray conflict. The commission refers to serious breaches of international law which are tantamount to “war crimes and crimes against humanity” and warns that many of these crimes still persist, despite the agreement to end hostilities in November 2022.

The Ethiopian and Eritrean armed forces, the Amhara Special Forces and Fano militias are accused of “large-scale” killings of Tigrayan nationals, including priests and religious leaders. Relatives were reportedly prevented from burying their dead. Rape and other forms of sexual violence were also allegedly widespread. The report further describes lootings of harvested crops and blockades of relief supplies, which it alleges led to a famine. The Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) and the Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF) are named as the main perpetrators. It is claimed that these two organisations also deliberately destroyed health facilities. Large numbers of the Tigrayan population are reported to have been driven from their homes.

Eritrean refugees were reportedly also the targets of attacks and abductions by both the EDF and the Tigrayan armed forces. Tigrayan forces also committed crimes specifically against the civilian population in the regional states of Amhara and Afar, the report concludes.

30 October 2023

Oromia: Military allegedly responsible for civilian deaths

A statement published by the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) on 25.10.23 accuses the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) of having killed dozens of civilians in Jarso woreda in the North Shewa zone and in Jaldū 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 ENDF in the Horo Guduru Welega zone.

OLA-Shane is accused of killing civilians

Fighting also occurs between OLA-Shane and the Amharic Fano militia in several border regions of the two regional states of Oromia and Amhara. Local sources report that more than 300 civilians have been killed by OLA-Shane in Dera woreda (North Shewa zone) since October 2023. A number of locations in the zone are said to be under OLA control. No official statements have been forthcoming to date.

06 November 2023

Ethiopian Human Rights Commission reports human rights violations in Amhara

On 30.10.23 the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) published a statement on human rights violations in the regional state of Amhara. According to the statement, fighting between the Amharic Fano militias and the Ethiopian armed forces is taking place in many regions. The military is accused of using drones and heavy artillery, which has allegedly led to large numbers of civilian fatalities. The statement claims that civilian infrastructures have been destroyed, looting has taken place and people have been driven from their homes. Extra-judicial killings are alleged to have been carried out by the state security forces searching for Fano members. Women have reportedly fallen victim to sexual violence. Schools are said to have been used as makeshift military camps, making it impossible for large numbers of pupils to receive schooling. The Ethiopian government has described the report as one-sided, pointing out that life in Amhara has returned to normal as a result of operations carried out by the security forces.

Fighting between the state security forces and Fano, who reject demobilisation, has been particularly prevalent since April 2023 (cf. BN of 24.04., 26.06., 07.08., 14.08., 21.08. and 11.09.23).

18 December 2023

Serious human rights violations in several regional states

In a statement published on 07.12.23, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) refers to serious human rights violations against civilians in a number of Ethiopian regions and calls on the government to ensure that the population is protected from killings, abuse, looting and displacement.

According to the EHRC, ethnic clashes in the Awi and West Gojam zones of the regional state of Amhara once again led to several dozen fatalities in November 2023. Fighting between the state security forces and Fano, a local militia which refuses to disarm, has been ongoing in Amhara for a number of months now (cf. BN of 05.06., 26.06., 07.08., 14.08., 21.08., 11.09. and 06.11.23).

More than 50 civilians have been killed over roughly the same period in the regional state of Oromia as a result of clashes between the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA-Shane) and the Ethiopian military. Observers judge the security situation in the region to have further deteriorated following the failure of a second round of negotiations between the OLA and the central government which were held in Tanzania in mid-November 2023 under the auspices of Mike Hammer, special envoy for the Horn of Africa. The government side has claimed that the OLA had put forward “unrealistic demands”, such as participation in the government in Oromia. The parties were unable to agree on a ceasefire, which the government had been pushing for. The USA called on both sides to “make compromises and enter into political dialogue”. Armed clashes are occurring first and foremost in the Horo Guduru, Kelam and West Welega zones, in Arsi and in West and North Shewa.

OLA-Shane has also carried out attacks in the border region of the regional state of Benishangul-Gumuz. These attacks are also reported to have resulted in civilian fatalities. Entire villages are also said to have been burnt to the ground.

Tigray is furthermore continuing to suffer from extreme food shortages. Hundreds of people have reportedly starved to death in recent weeks. According to relevant reports, two million people are at risk of starving to death and approx. 5.2 million people are dependent on food aid.

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration
Briefing Notes
BN-Redaktion@bamf.bund.de