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World Report 2025 - Ethiopia

The human rights situation in Ethiopia remained dire, with government forces, militias, and non-state armed groups committing serious abuses in conflict-affected areas and elsewhere throughout the country.

Fighting between the Ethiopian military and militias in the Amhara region resulted in [hundreds of civilian deaths and injuries](#), including [attacks against refugees](#) and civilian infrastructure such as [hospitals](#). The government renewed a sweeping state of emergency for the Amhara region, but its provisions were applied throughout Ethiopia; mass arrests persisted once it expired.

Authorities harassed, surveilled, and detained journalists, human rights defenders, and outspoken figures, creating an increasingly hostile and restrictive reporting environment.

Impunity for human rights abuses remained the norm. While the government developed a transitional justice policy, accountability efforts for past and ongoing abuses have been inadequate and lacked transparency and independent oversight. Ethiopia's international partners continued to normalize their relationships with the Ethiopian government with little regard for ongoing abuses.

Consensual same-sex relationships are outlawed and carry a penalty of up to 15 years in prison.

Ethiopia grappled with soaring inflation and rising external debt. In January, the United Arab Emirates [pledged US\\$2.4 billion investment](#), and in July agreed to [a bilateral currency swap](#). That same month, the World Bank [approved](#) US\$1.5 billion in direct budget support, while the government [secured](#) a US\$3.4 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund as part of an economic reform program. Authorities announced policies aimed at gradually [eliminating fuel subsidies](#), while lawmakers considered a proposal to [expand](#) the value-added tax law to include transportation services, water, and electricity.

Ethiopia's relationship with Somalia and Eritrea grew increasingly strained after the government signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Somaliland, which Somalia considers part of its territory.

Conflict and Abuses

The armed conflict between the Ethiopian military and Fano militia in the Amhara region continued throughout 2024, with warring parties committing war crimes and other serious abuses.

In Amhara, government forces carried out extrajudicial executions, sexual violence, torture, and ill-treatment against civilians, and used drones and heavy artillery against civilians, [according to](#) the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Fano militias were also responsible for killings of civilians, attacks on civilian objects, and unlawful arrests.

On January 29, [Ethiopian military forces summarily killed dozens of civilians and carried out other war crimes in Merawi town](#), marking one of the deadliest incidents since the outbreak of the conflict in August 2023. On February 24, military forces again killed civilians in Merawi following another Fano attack in the town.

Media [reported](#) a February 19 apparent drone strike on a truck transporting civilians in Amhara, which [killed](#) at least 30 people and left more wounded. Government strikes in Amhara [reportedly](#) continued in October.

Ethiopian forces also committed widespread attacks amounting to war crimes [against](#) medical professionals, patients, and health facilities in the Amhara region. Soldiers beat, arbitrarily arrested, and intimidated medical professionals. Soldiers also unlawfully attacked medical transports and interfered with the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

International humanitarian presence [remained deeply constrained](#) in Amhara, where the UN faced the highest incidents of violence in the country. Since January, [eight aid workers](#) have been [killed](#). In October, media reported that the UN was [considering suspending relief operations](#) in Amhara due to attacks on aid workers.

In Tigray, Eritrean government forces committed rape and sexual violence against women and girls, and abducted, and pillaged civilian property in areas they occupied.

Communities across the country experienced [a sharp rise in kidnappings for ransom](#), with authorities failing to address the crisis. In July, kidnappers in Oromia [reportedly](#) abducted more than 100 people, mostly university students travelling from the Amhara region.

Freedoms of Expression, Media, and Association

On February 2, Ethiopia's parliament extended the state of emergency in the Amhara region, initially enacted in August 2023, by an additional four months.

Under the law, authorities carried out mass arrests without a warrant and enabled numerous restrictions on people's movement and communication. Authorities targeted journalists and politicians critical of the government's actions in Amhara. On January 31, Ethiopian security forces [arrested](#) Dessalegn Chanie, a member of parliament representing the opposition party, the National Movement of the Amhara (NAMA). Authorities released Dessalegn on March 14. The state of emergency expired in June.

In late September, security forces carried out a [new wave of mass arbitrary arrests](#) in Amhara, where hundreds of people, including [senior police and national intelligence members](#), as well as [journalists](#), academics, lawyers, and civil servants were detained [according](#) to Amnesty International. On February 22, security officers [detained](#) Batte Urgessa, a member of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), an opposition party, and French [journalist Antoine Galindo](#), as they met in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa. Following an international outcry, Antoine Galindo was released on February 29, while Batte remained [detained](#) until March 6. On April 10, Batte was murdered in his hometown in the Oromia region. In the ensuing days, local police announced the arrest of 13 suspects to the killing, including Batte's younger brother, Millo. Authorities [detained](#) Millo for eight months, despite court orders calling for his release.

Ethiopian security and intelligence forces [intimidated, harassed, and threatened](#) prominent Ethiopian human rights organizations, forcing several rights defenders into exile. On May 23, security officials [visited](#) the Addis Ababa offices of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO), in search of information, and threatened two staff members in the process. On April 6, 2024, two security force personnel came to the home of an EHRCO staff member and warned them to cease their human rights work or face consequences.

In mid-November, the Ethiopian Authority for Civil Society Organizations (ACSO), a government body that oversees civil society groups, [suspended](#) the [Center for the Advancement of Rights and Democracy](#) (CARD), the [Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia](#) (AHRE), and [Lawyers for Human Rights](#) (LHR), forcing the organizations to cease their work. Ethiopian authorities [lifted](#) the suspension on December 11.

Media remained under a government stranglehold, with many journalists having to choose between self-censorship, harassment and arrest, or exile. In June, the Committee to Protect Journalists [reported](#) that 54 journalists and media workers had fled the country since 2020.

Authorities [resumed](#) mobile-internet services in several cities in Amhara in July after year-long disruptions of communications. After hostilities [escalated](#) in September, authorities once again cut mobile internet services, hampering communications and real-time reporting.

Due Process and Fair Trial Rights

Authorities detained critics and journalists for prolonged periods without charge. In June, authorities [released](#) journalists Belay Manaye, Bekalu Alamirew, and Tewodros Zerfu, and opposition figure Sintayehu Chekol after several months in detention. Authorities had held Belay and Bekalu in different detention sites, including [Awash Arba military camp, under harsh detention conditions](#).

Amhara journalists and opposition politicians, including Christian Tadele and Yohannes Buayalew, among others, whom authorities detained as part of a broader crackdown in August 2023, remained in detention.

On September 5, the government [released](#) seven senior Oromo political opposition figures, whom authorities [arbitrarily detained](#) for four years without charge and ignored multiple court orders calling for their release.

In April, media reported that authorities demolished homes and evicted thousands of residents in the capital with [little warning](#) and at times with [no compensation](#).

Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees

In February, Ethiopian authorities [facilitated](#) the return of internally displaced people (IDPs) in Amhara to their areas of origin in Oromia in a manner that aid agencies [found](#) did not align with international IDP return principles.

In Tigray, the UN [reported](#) tens of thousands of people displaced to the neighboring Amhara region, following armed clashes in Alamata town in mid-April.

Conflict and unrest in Amhara also impacted refugees. Local militias and gunmen [subjected](#) Sudanese refugees in Awlala and Kumer camps to killings, beatings, looting, and forced labor. On August 21, Ethiopian soldiers, police, and local militia beat and separated Sudanese refugees, returning several hundred to Sudan in a process that did not meet international standards. Between September 1 and 8, Ethiopian federal forces clashed with Fano, an Amhara armed group, in and around these camps, putting refugees at risk.

Barriers to Education

In November 2023, the Ministry of Education published a [draft directive](#) requiring students to return to school within 15 days of giving birth or be suspended for the academic year. Women's rights organizations [criticized](#) the directive for undermining girls' rights to education and adequate maternity leave.

In April, the UN said continued hostilities in Amhara and the impact of the conflict in northern Ethiopia forced the [closure of 4,178 schools in Amhara](#). The region's education bureau [reported](#) that enrollment dropped to two million out of a target of seven million. Warring parties in Amhara and in Tigray also [occupied and used schools](#) for military purposes.

Accountability and Justice

In April, the government approved a nation-wide transitional justice policy, after a year-long consultation process that was criticized by victims, political opposition groups, and [civil society actors](#) over the lack of transparency and the inclusiveness of the consultations, and the timeliness of the discussion while fighting was ongoing.

Ethiopian authorities continued to deny or downplay allegations that it committed abuses against civilians, casting doubt on its commitment to hold its forces and [Eritrean soldiers](#) to [account for grave crimes](#).

At the March and September Human Rights Council sessions, the European Union delivered joint statements, supported by more than 40 UN members, which affirmed the importance of a credible transitional justice and accountability process with the March statement saying it should include an international component. In September, the United States [extended](#) its executive order that established a sanctions regime for human rights abuses and other actions in northern Ethiopia.

In March, Ethiopian [authorities dropped all charges](#) “for the sake of public interest,” and [released](#) Abdi Mohamoud Omar, also known as Abdi Illey, the former president of Ethiopia’s Somali region after he served more than five years in prison. Authorities never brought charges against him for decades of [abusive rule](#).

In June, a UN inter-agency report evaluating the aid response to the conflict in northern Ethiopia [found](#) systemic [failures by UN agencies](#) to overcome government restrictions, abide by humanitarian principles, meet essential needs and protect communities, including from sexual violence in its response.