

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	649
Land:	Etiopien
Kilde:	Amnesty International
Titel:	Ethiopia: End the month-long arbitrary detention of thousands in Amhara Region
Udgivet:	6. november 2024
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	19. december 2024

Ethiopia: End the month-long arbitrary detention of thousands in Amhara Region

A joint task force composed of Ethiopia's federal army and Amhara regional security authorities must end the month-long arbitrary mass detention of thousands in the Amhara region, Amnesty International said today.

Amnesty International research has found that since 28 September 2024 the task force has filled four makeshift detention camps across the Amhara region with thousands of civilians.

"Ethiopia has entered a new era of disregard for national, regional and international human rights obligations. Over the past five years, arbitrary mass detentions have been used as political tools to silence peaceful dissent, often under the guise of sweeping state of emergency laws," said Amnesty International's Regional Director for East and Southern Africa Tigere Chagutah

What is now being witnessed in the Amhara region shows that mass and arbitrary detentions have become a routine tactic

Amnesty International's Regional Director for East and Southern Africa Tigere Chagutah

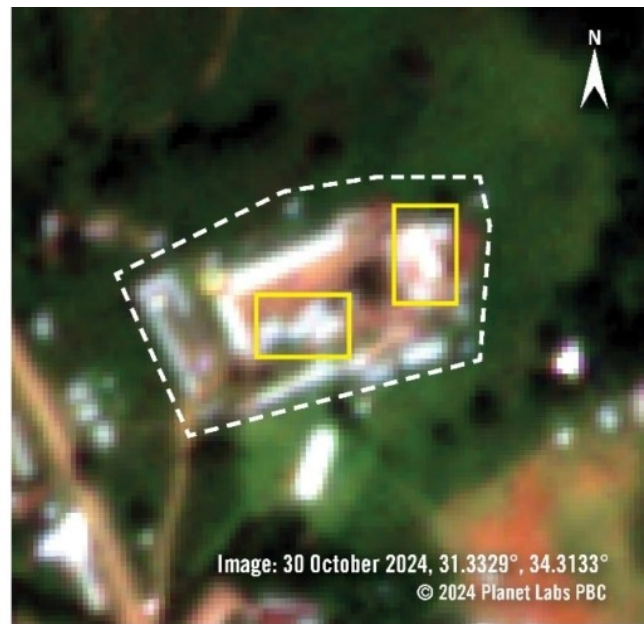
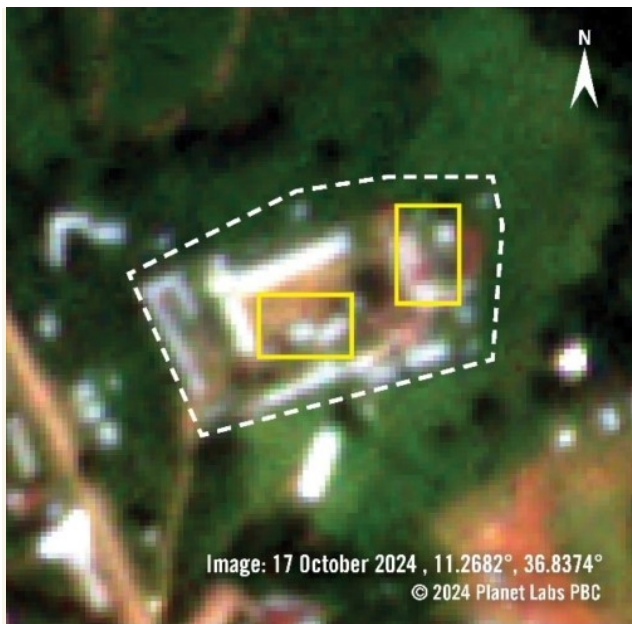
The organization interviewed two people recently released from the makeshift camps, five family members of detained individuals, and nine authoritative sources familiar with the mass detention.

"What is now being witnessed in the Amhara region shows that mass and arbitrary detentions have become a routine tactic."

Eight people who have documented different instances of mass arrest consistently reported to Amnesty International that thousands of people are currently detained in four major makeshift detention camps in the towns of Dangla, Seraba (Chilga), Chorisa (Kombolcha), and Shewa Robit.

"The 'clusters' [different camps] are being used to detain people from specific nearby zones," stated one source, who spoke on condition of anonymity for their security.

An individual recently released from Dangla makeshift camp reported that there were approximately 1,610 detainees, with more people being detained as he was released. He also reported that authorities have been constructing additional detention rooms out of metal sheets in the Dangla camp due to overcrowding in existing spaces. Amnesty International has also verified that new structures were erected in October. Another witness who visited arrested individuals in the Chorisa Military camp said they have seen at least hundreds of people detained.



Three-meter (medium) resolution satellite imagery from 17 October 2024 shows the prison in Dangla, Ethiopia. By 30 October 2024, new probable construction is visible, highlighted in yellow boxes. These changes corroborate the testimonies of at least two individuals who were physically present in the detention camp.

Members of the judiciary and academics targeted

Members of the judiciary and prosecutors have also been arrested, particularly those who challenged executive interference in political cases, according to four interviewees.

A judge who spoke with Amnesty International on condition of anonymity confirmed that nine judges and court staff from across the region remain detained, while four others were released on 20 October.

“The majority of detained individuals [judges and court staff] were taken from court, while a few were arrested at home,” said a source within the judiciary. “All arrests are directly related to the detainees’ professional duties, with most serving as judges on criminal benches,” the source added.

Similarly, a senior prosecutor told Amnesty International that at least 13 prosecutors have been detained across the region. In both cases, detainees have not been brought to court and have been held for between two weeks to a month without due process.

An individual that served in the justice system for decades said, “I’ve never experienced or witnessed this level of lawlessness in my nearly 30 years of service in the justice system”.

They added, “Previously, even with instances of illegal detention, people would be brought to court within a day or two. Detainees were at least told who was responsible for their detention, even if the reasons were fabricated. Now, no one knows who ordered the arrests or releases.”

African and global human rights bodies, along with Ethiopia's development partners, must publicly condemn these actions and engage with Ethiopian authorities to end this assault on the rule of law. Failure to act will only embolden authorities, fueling cycles of human rights violations not only in the region but across Ethiopia

Tigere Chagutah

Others arbitrarily arrested are members of the academic community across the region. Amnesty International received a list of 11 academic staff members detained from Wollo University. A credible source stated that, after over a month in arbitrary detention at the Choris makeshift camp, these individuals were finally brought before a court this week.

“This wave of arbitrary mass arrests has also targeted those who challenged executive interference in the judiciary, as well as a large number of academics. Alongside a recent surge in harassment of human rights defenders and journalists, these tactics are deeply alarming,” said Tigere Chagutah.

“This dangerous trend further undermines efforts to monitor the toll of conflict on civilians in Amhara region, instilling fear in anyone who dares to uphold the law. African and global human rights bodies, along with Ethiopia's development partners, must publicly condemn these actions and engage with Ethiopian authorities to end this assault on the rule of law. Failure to act will only embolden authorities, fueling cycles of human rights violations not only in the region but across Ethiopia.”

Arrested without warrant or explanation

Two former detainees from different detention centers reported to Amnesty International that they were arrested by local police from their city administration without a warrant or explanation.

One former detainee said, “They broke into my home with a rifle, arrested me in front of my children, and gave no explanation. I was helpless.”

Another former detainee reported that the police officers expressed frustration, telling those they arrested that they had simply been handed a list and were unaware of who ordered the arrests.

They broke into my home with a rifle, arrested me in front of my children, and gave no explanation. I was helpless.

Former detainee

“Police officers who detained others in the morning found themselves detained by the afternoon—I was held alongside many of them, including their commander,” he said.

Several sources also told Amnesty International that authorities are running what they called “rehabilitative training” in these camps.

One witness said, “I saw the ruling Prosperity Party’s leaders preparing to give the training in the camp”. A family member of a detained individual said detainees were told they will be released after completing the “rehabilitative training”.

Background

An armed conflict between the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) and Fano militia broke out in August 2023 in the Amhara region.

Since 28 [September](#) the ENDF and Amhara Regional security forces launched region-wide mass arrests. A joint [press conference](#) by the ENDF and the Amhara regional government on 1 October referred to the mass detention campaign as “law enforcement, to stabilize the Amhara region and ensure peace.”

Judges in the Amhara region do not have immunity from liability related to their judicial conduct. The Amhara Region Judges Association on 17 October 2024 issued a statement with a list of judges who were arbitrarily arrested as part of the ongoing mass arrest campaign.

“Over the past year, harassment of judges has increased to the point of loss of life, and we recorded the arbitrary arrest of 35 judges, mainly due to their judicial conduct” reads the statement.