

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	482
Land:	Etiopien
Kilde:	Freedom House
Titel:	Freedom in the World 2022 - Ethiopia
Udgivet:	28. februar 2022
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	11. maj 2022

Freedom in the World 2022 - Ethiopia

Not Free

23

/ 100

Political Rights 12 / 40

Civil Liberties 11 / 60

Last Year's Score & Status

22 / 100 Not Free

Global freedom statuses are calculated on a weighted scale. See the methodology.

Overview

The appointment of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who came to power after Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn resigned in the face of mass protests, set off a transitional period in Ethiopia. Abiy pledged to reform Ethiopia's authoritarian state, and has held elections and implemented some liberalization policies. However, Ethiopia remains beset by political factionalism and intercommunal violence, abuses by security forces and violations of due process are still common, and many restrictive laws remain in force. Since late 2020, fighting between the Federal Government and the Tigray Defense Force (TDF) has led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands and credible allegations of atrocity crimes, and violence has spilled over into neighboring regions.

Key Developments in 2021

- Early in the year, human rights organizations and media outlets began to report allegations of atrocity crimes in Tigray Region. These included alleged massacres of Tigrayans by Eritrean Defense Forces aligned with the federal government, and sexual violence against civilians. Outside of Tigray, hundreds of civilians were killed in Benishangul Gumuz, Oromia, and Amhara regions, largely on the basis of their ethnicity.
- In June, Ethiopia held much-anticipated elections for 436 of the 547 constituencies of the House of People's Representatives and regional councils. Due to security and logistical challenges, voting was postponed in several parts of the country and indefinitely suspended in Tigray. While there were some improvements under the leadership of an increasingly independent National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), a lack of participation by key political groups and intimidation of registered opposition parties and media undermined the credibility of the process and outcomes.
- In June, following the elections and as Tigrayan forces moved quickly to retake control of Mekelle and most parts of the region, the federal government announced a unilateral cease-fire. While accepting the cease-fire in principle, the TDF set out conditions for ending fighting, including the removal of Amhara and Eritrean forces from occupied parts of Tigray, the restoration of the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) regional government, and unfettered humanitarian access. When conditions were not met, the TDF launched attacks in neighboring Amhara and Afar Regions—leading to the mobilization of regular forces and militias in those regions and further expanding the conflict.
- In October the TDF pushed further into Amhara, capturing towns as far south as North Shewa. In response, the federal government announced a nationwide, six-month state of Emergency (SOE),

under which thousands of individuals, mostly Tigrayans, were detained under suspicion of supporting armed groups. The federal government retook Afar and Amhara Regions in December but refrained from pursuing the TDF, which retreated to Tigray.

Political Rights

A Electoral Process

A1 0-4 pts

Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

The president is the head of state and is indirectly elected to a six-year term by both chambers of Parliament. The prime minister is head of government, and is selected by the largest party in Parliament after elections, or in the case of a resignation.

General elections originally set for August 2020 were held in June 2021 but did not take place in Tigray, Harari, and Somali Regions, and parts of Oromia, Amhara, Afar, and Benishangul-Gumuz, and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Regions due to insecurity and logistical challenges including challenges with voter registration. An estimated 37 million people registered to vote, and some 90 percent of registered voters cast a ballot. Final results from the NEBE confirmed a majority for the Prosperity Party, which won over 410 of 436 constituencies contested. While a new election date was set for 73 of the constituencies where elections had been delayed, polls were indefinitely postponed in Tigray.

With a majority in Parliament, Prime Minister Abiy's Prosperity Party formed a new cabinet that included three opposition party members. In October 2021, Abiy was sworn in for a new five-year mandate. Despite the landslide victory for Abiy and the Prosperity Party, the results were contested by political actors who were excluded or who did not participate in the process due to perceived unfairness.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 because despite postponements, electoral flaws, and insecurity, the year's election offered voters a greater degree of choice than in previous years.

A2 0-4 pts

Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

The bicameral Parliament includes the 153-seat House of Federation, whose members are elected by state assemblies to five-year terms, and the House of People's Representatives, with 547 members directly elected to five-year terms.

The 2021 parliamentary and regional elections were seen as an opportunity for the country to break from its past of undemocratic elections. Changes in electoral laws and reform of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia, which came under the leadership of former opposition party leader, Birtukan Mideksa, improved the body's operations and encouraged far more opposition parties to

participate than ever before. A total of 47 political parties participated in the elections, fielding more than 8,200 candidates.

Despite these improvements, the elections were fraught with the previously described insecurity, registration problems, and other challenges that limited widespread acceptance of the outcomes as free and fair. In addition, numerous political parties raised concerns about the closure of their offices by security agents, harassment, imprisonment, and the killing of at least one candidate, which his supporters described as a probable assassination. In this context, key opposition groups boycotted the election, resulting in many uncontested seats. While more competitive than previous elections—the 2021 still fell short of conferring broad-based legitimacy to the elected government among significant political factions in the country.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 because despite postponements, electoral flaws, and insecurity, the year's election offered voters a greater degree of choice than in previous years.

A3 0-4 pts

Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

Several reforms to the electoral system and its oversight have taken shape under Prime Minister Abiy. In August 2019, Parliament unanimously passed the Ethiopian Election, Political Parties Registration, and Election Ethics law. The new legal framework reduced restrictions that had limited the participation of opposition groups, and failed to recognize voting rights of marginalized sections of the population such as international displaced persons (IDPs) and prisoners.

Challenges that arose during the 2021 polls tested the impartiality and credibility of NEBE and the broader electoral framework, including regarding the participation of imprisoned political candidates. One party, the Balderas for True Democracy, sought legal recourse to ensure imprisoned candidates were registered and succeeded when the Federal High Court directed NEBE to allow the jailed candidates to participate. NEBE initially resisted the court order, saying ballots had already been printed, but ultimately reprinted ballots to include the Balderas candidates. The case demonstrated a small but significant improvement in judicial oversight and compliance with the electoral laws.

The lack of a complete census remains a major impediment to the demarcation of constituencies that ensure fair representation based on accurate population estimates. With the exception of the newly established Sidama regional state, the distribution of electoral constituencies in 2021 has not changed from the original distribution established in 1995.

B Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 0-4 pts

Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 1 / 4

The transition beginning in 2018 initially brought progressive political reforms, but crackdowns in 2020—first after the assassination of Oromo musician Hachalu Hundessa and its aftermath in June, and then after the beginning of the conflict in Tigray in November—harmed political pluralism. Since then, in May 2021, the House of Peoples’ Representatives designated the TPLF and the (OLF-Shene), an armed breakaway group of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), as terrorist organizations, accusing them of carrying out acts of politically motivated violence against government and civilian targets. As a consequence, hundreds of Tigrayans accused of being affiliated with the TPLF have faced arrest and other pressure. Oromo political leaders have also faced pressure, including OLF chairman Dawud Ibsa who was placed under house arrest in May. Prominent political figures arrested after the assassination of Hachalu Hundessa—including Eskinder Nega, Jawar Mohamed, and Bekele Gerba—remain in prison, over a year after their arrest due to procedural delays in their trials.

B2 0-4 pts

Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4

Changes that Abiy’s government began to implement in 2018 improved conditions for opposition groupings, though the Prosperity Party still maintains numerous formal and informal advantages over opposition parties due to its effective incumbency. The party won a landslide victory in 2021 polls, taking almost 95 percent of the 436 constituency seats contested in June. However, numerous opposition candidates entered the new parliament compared to past elections, and some hold cabinet seats. However, key opposition groups including the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), and the OLF boycotted elections (the latter after being disqualified by NEBE), citing electoral mismanagement and harassment by the ruling party.

B3 0-4 pts

Are the people’s political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means? 1 / 4

The 2018 reforms allowed many constituencies to exercise their political rights more freely. However, the designation in 2021 of armed political groups such as the TPLF as terrorist organizations has been detrimental for the political support base of the party, which had dominated national and regional politics in Tigray for the past three decades.

The Tigray conflict also led Prime Minister Abiy to seek external military and political support from President Isaias Afwerki of Eritrea, to combat the TPLF. The presence within Tigray of the Eritrean Defense Forces—who have been accused of widespread atrocities and sexual violence—has exacerbated the conflict and remains an impediment to its resolution.

B4 0-4 pts

Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Since 1991, political parties in Ethiopia have primarily been based on ethnicity. However, upon coming to office, Abiy Ahmed has advocated a message of national unity and expressed disagreement with the enduring legacies of ethnic politics. In the past year, political alliances

between major political factions within the country have realigned, with Tigrayan and Oromo parties, on the one hand, urging for more decentralized power to ethnically defined regions, and mostly Amhara and other political parties, on the other hand, generally in favor of non-ethnically defined federalism and a greater unifying role played by the central government. Public opinion polling from 2020 indicate that Ethiopians are evenly split between preference for ethnic and non-ethnic federation. These divergent perspectives have fomented the ongoing conflict in Tigray and neighboring regions, and have hardened as a result of it.

C Functioning of Government

C1 0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 1 / 4

Political reforms that began in 2018 helped to create an atmosphere where opposition parties can win elected office. However, the shortcomings of the 2021 elections, including a climate of insecurity and growing repression of some opposition groups, suggest that gains have become forestalled and, in the absence of stability, may eventually be reversed.

Some areas plagued by insecurity remain out of the control of government—such as Tigray—while others have been under prolonged states of emergency, with heightened military presence and control—including parts of Oromia, Amhara, and Benishangul Gumuz.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 because the government was selected via a more representative electoral process than in previous years.

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 2 / 4

Corruption and unequal resource distribution are significant problems that have contributed to the recent unrest that has plagued Ethiopia. The government has taken some steps to address the issue, which remains a priority for Prime Minister Abiy's administration.

Numerous high-profile military and government officials were arrested and charged with corruption since 2018, and a handful have been convicted.

C3 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

The Prosperity Party made some initial attempts to be more transparent than its predecessors, but its actions have reflected an inability or unwillingness to operate with openness and transparency.

Authorities have notably been opaque and at times dishonest about the presence and role of Eritrean forces in Tigray. While state media and the government's official communications throughout 2021 emphasized the limited nature of what it has termed a "law enforcement operation," media and other reports of alleged atrocities, sexual violence, and expanding conflict have contradicted the government's narrative.

Civil Liberties

D Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

After years of severe restrictions on press freedom, Abiy's government took initial steps to increase freedoms for independent media, and notably released a number of prominent journalists from prison in 2018. However, independent journalists remain constrained by security imperatives that limit their ability to work and travel.

In 2021, international and Ethiopian journalists and media networks came under government pressure over coverage of internal conflicts and political dynamics, resulting in some cases in expulsions from the country and revocation of licenses. Several Ethiopian journalists were also imprisoned without charges. By the end of 2021, Ethiopia topped the list of countries with the most journalists in jail, ranked second highest in sub-Saharan Africa, only after Eritrea. Additionally, effective October 29, 2021, the Ethiopia Media Authority banned local Ethiopian broadcasters from transmitting programs from foreign media outlets.

In the early months of the conflict in Tigray, the lack of telephone and internet connectivity and the inability for journalists to travel and cover developments in the region, meant that very little was known about the scale of the conflict and the resultant humanitarian situation. In this context, misinformation and disinformation about the conflict and the humanitarian situation have been rampant on social media.

D2 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

The Ethiopian constitution guarantees religious freedom, and different faith groups have coexisted in the country for centuries. Prime Minister Abiy has promoted reconciliation between Ethiopia's main faith groups, including through the 2018 release of Muslim activists who had been arrested in 2015 for protesting the government's treatment of Muslims.

However, religion has increasingly become a divisive factor in Ethiopian politics, and local conflicts have featured violence along religious lines. Mass violence in July 2020 following the assassination of Hachalu Hundessa took on a religious dimension in parts of Bale and Arsi, in the Oromia Region, with the targeting of followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC). In 2021 the head of the EOTC, Abune Mathias, said he had been prevented from speaking out against the ongoing violence in Tigray, though he did not explain by whom.

D3 0-4 pts

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 1 / 4

Academic freedom remains restricted in Ethiopia, though academics have become more vocal on political and economic matters in lectures, at conferences, in media columns, and online since the lifting of the state of emergency in 2018. However, self-censorship remains common in the context of ongoing conflicts and political tensions.

With few exceptions, institutions of higher education are funded and administered by the federal government, which also sets admission standards and student quotas. The Ministry of Education still monitors and regulates official curriculums.

D4 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

The gains made in 2018, including the release of political prisoners and lifting of bans against prominent government critics in the media and other sectors, had fostered a more open atmosphere for free expression among ordinary people. However, in the last two years, arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial activities, widespread surveillance, and nontransparent court proceedings have once again led individuals to be more reluctant to express political views openly. In particular, the government has arrested hundreds of Tigrayan activists, professionals, and public figures and closed Tigrayan-owned businesses with alleged connections to the TPLF, contributing to a sense of fear among Tigrayans.

E Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

Free assembly is restricted by insecurity in several regions, and resultant declarations of states of emergency or martial law. In November, a six-month, nationwide state of emergency was enacted, further curtailing freedom of assembly and other civil liberties throughout the country.

E2 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights– and governance-related work? 1 / 4

The passage of a new civil society law in February 2019 dispensed with many restrictions that had been placed on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) by the draconian 2009 Charities and Societies Proclamation. However, the federal Civil Society Organizations Agency retains broad powers. Moreover, while NGOs are more able to legally operate in the human rights and governance spheres, practically many of these organizations are unable to access large parts of Ethiopia either due to security challenges or a lack of official approval, as was the case in Tigray. While the discourse around NGOs is more open, many of the practical realities for these groups have not improved.

Relations between federal government and international human rights and humanitarian NGOs further soured in 2021. In August, the government suspended for three months the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Doctors Without Borders (MSF), which had criticized the destruction

of refugee camps and health facilities in Tigray, respectively. In September, they designated seven senior UN humanitarian workers as *persona non grata*, requesting them to leave the country within 72 hours. The government has regularly accused aid organizations of spreading propaganda and providing material support to armed groups, while failing to provide evidence for such serious accusations.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to the government's crackdown on humanitarian organizations and personnel operating in Tigray.

E3 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

The Ethiopian Constitution recognizes the right of workers to join trade unions, and more than 500,000 workers are organized under the umbrella of the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions (CETU). However, independent unions have faced harassment in the past, and there has not been a legal strike in Ethiopia since 1993.

On the employer side, a large number of chambers of commerce and business associations exist for different industries and locations. The largest and oldest among them, the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce, is a regular critic of government economic policy. The federally organized Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce, of which the Addis chamber is a member, has been more aligned with official policy.

F Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

The judiciary is officially independent, but in practice it is subject to political interference, and judgments rarely deviate from government policy. Ethiopia's security forces have maintained significant influence over the judicial process, especially in cases against opposition leaders and other political adversaries. An exception to this was the notable decision of the Federal High Court to uphold the rights of jailed opposition party candidates to participate in the June 2021 elections.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

Due process rights are generally not respected. While more than 10,000 people who had been arbitrarily detained were released after the change of political leadership in 2018, several waves of summary arrests have taken place since.

In May 2021, the House of People's Representatives designated the TPLF a terrorist organization, enabling those affiliated with the group to be charged under the Prevention and Suppression of Terrorism Crimes Proclamation of 2020. The proclamation, which replaced a controversial antiterrorism law, made marginal improvements in safeguarding human rights but left open possibilities for government to use the law to detain opposition groups. The nationwide, six-month state of emergency enacted in November 2021 was announced as the TDF moved closer to Addis

Ababa, and at least 1,000 individuals—most of Tigrayan descent— were detained on suspicion of supporting the armed opposition.

The right to a fair trial is often not respected, particularly for government critics. In civil matters, due process is hampered by the limited capacity of the Ethiopian courts system, especially in the peripheral regions where access to government services is weak. As a result, routine matters regularly take years to be resolved.

F3 0-4 pts

Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? 0 / 4

Several conflicts have intensified in 2021—most notably in Tigray—but there has also been growing instability in Amhara, Afar, Oromia, and other regions. Over 2 million people have been internally displaced, and over 60,000 have fled to neighboring Sudan. Security forces, both regional and federal, have been accused of war crimes, including the massacring of civilians and rape. Conflict dynamics include competition for local resources, ethnic mobilization, and national political rivalries. External diplomatic pressure has had limited impact, while internally, political polarization is increasing, in part due to the government’s inflammatory rhetoric.

A joint investigation into human rights abuses in Tigray conducted by the UN Human Rights Office and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) confirmed several violations that took place between November 2020 and June 2021, concluding that some “may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes.” While most reported civilian attacks in Tigray were perpetrated by EDF and ENDF members, one of the earliest and most deadly, in the town of Mai-Kadra, is believed to have been perpetrated by Tigrayan forces against Amhara civilians. The scope of the joint UN-EHRC investigation did not cover areas outside of Tigray in Amhara and Afar during the months during which the TDF took the offensive southward. Several recent reports of TDF fighters indiscriminately killing civilians and perpetrating sexual abuse have emerged from the Amhara and Afar regions. In early 2021, the United Nations warned of alarming accounts of rape and sexual violence occurring in Tigray during the conflict. While the government convicted 3 soldiers of rape and brought charges against another 53, witness accounts from the region suggest the abuse is more widespread than what the government has acknowledged.

Separately, after restoring telecommunications within Tigray for some time in 2021, internet and telephone services were rendered largely inoperable following the government’s withdrawal from Mekelle and surrounding areas in June.

An ongoing government campaign to suppress armed opposition forces in western Oromia has led to repeated clashes and widespread displacement. The OLA’s attacks on Amhara civilians has led to the death of hundreds. Ethnic rivalries along the border of Amhara and Benishangul Gumuz as well as Afar and Somali regional states also resulted in bloodshed. The situation in the border region between Amhara and Tigray remains tense due to a boundary dispute.

F4 0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 0 / 4

The ongoing conflict in Tigray and political tensions throughout the country have inflamed ethnic divisions, contributing to discriminatory policies and actions against certain groups. The prime minister and prominent leaders aligned with him have referred to the TPLF with inflammatory language that may be interpreted as ethnic hate speech. Because of their perceived or actual support for regional Tigrayan forces, the broader Tigrayan population has become increasingly marginalized. Tigrayans have been purged from civil and military roles, forced to close businesses, and thousands have been detained arbitrarily. Amharas also decry growing targeted attacks, discrimination, and the failure of state actors to protect them, particularly in Oromia, Benishangul Gumuz, and in areas of Amhara where the TDF launched an offensive in mid-2021.

The number of IDPs in Ethiopia surpassed 2 million in 2021, and humanitarian groups have struggled to meet the growing need. Security and bureaucratic constraints continue to hinder the flow of aid.

Same-sex sexual activity is prohibited by law and punishable by up to 15 years' imprisonment. Women face discrimination in education. A gender gap persists in many aspects of economic life including women's wages relative to their male counterparts in similar positions; according to the World Bank's Gender Innovation Lab, women have far lower wage incomes (44 percent lower) and business sales (79 percent lower) than do men.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to growing ethnic-based discrimination, particularly against Tigrayans, amid the ongoing war.

G Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, 0 / employment, or education? 4

While the constitution establishes freedom of movement, local conflicts impede people's ability to travel freely. Travel to Tigray has been severely impeded due to conflict. Following the government's announcement of a cease-fire and withdrawal from the region, in June 2021, humanitarian aid deliveries into the region have slowed to a fraction of what is needed in what UN officials have referred to as a "de facto blockade." Fighting between forces loyal to the federal government and the TDF along the Tigray-Afar border and the Amhara-Tigray border, in addition to numerous government checkpoints, has also limited access and movement to the region. The intentional destruction of infrastructure such as roads and bridges by armed actors has also undermined civilian and humanitarian movement.

Violent conflict and security clampdowns in parts of 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.

G2 0-4 pts

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without 1 / undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 4

Private business opportunities are limited by heavy government regulation of key industries and the dominance of state-owned enterprises in many sectors. State monopolies have persisted in the telecommunication, shipping, and aviation industries, while the financial sector is closed to foreign competition and effectively controlled by state-owned banks. After announcing plans to liberalize the economy as part of the political transition, in 2021 the Abiy government completed the partial sale of the state-owned EthioTelecom, awarding a license to a consortium led by Vodaphone and ending more than a century of state monopoly in Ethiopia telecommunications.

All land must be leased from the state. The government has evicted Indigenous groups from various areas to make way for infrastructure projects, such as the Gibe III dam in the Lower Omo Valley. Urban development projects in Addis Ababa and other cities have also repeatedly led to the forced resettlement of local tenants.

A gender gap persists in many aspects of economic life including land ownership and access to finance.

G3 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1 / 4

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.

Forced child marriage is illegal but common in Ethiopia, and prosecutions for the crime are rare. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is also illegal, but the law is inconsistently enforced.

G4 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Despite near-universal primary school enrollment, access to quality education and other social services varies widely across regions and is particularly poor in the "emerging" lowland states. A new labor law adopted in 2019 expanded workers' rights, such by extending paid maternity leave, and raised the working age to 15 years. However, reports from Ethiopia's industrial parks suggest that working conditions can be precarious, and child labor is prevalent in many agricultural households.

In April 2020, the Ethiopian government adopted a new antitrafficking law which stipulates strict punishments for crimes such as sexual exploitation and the smuggling of persons.