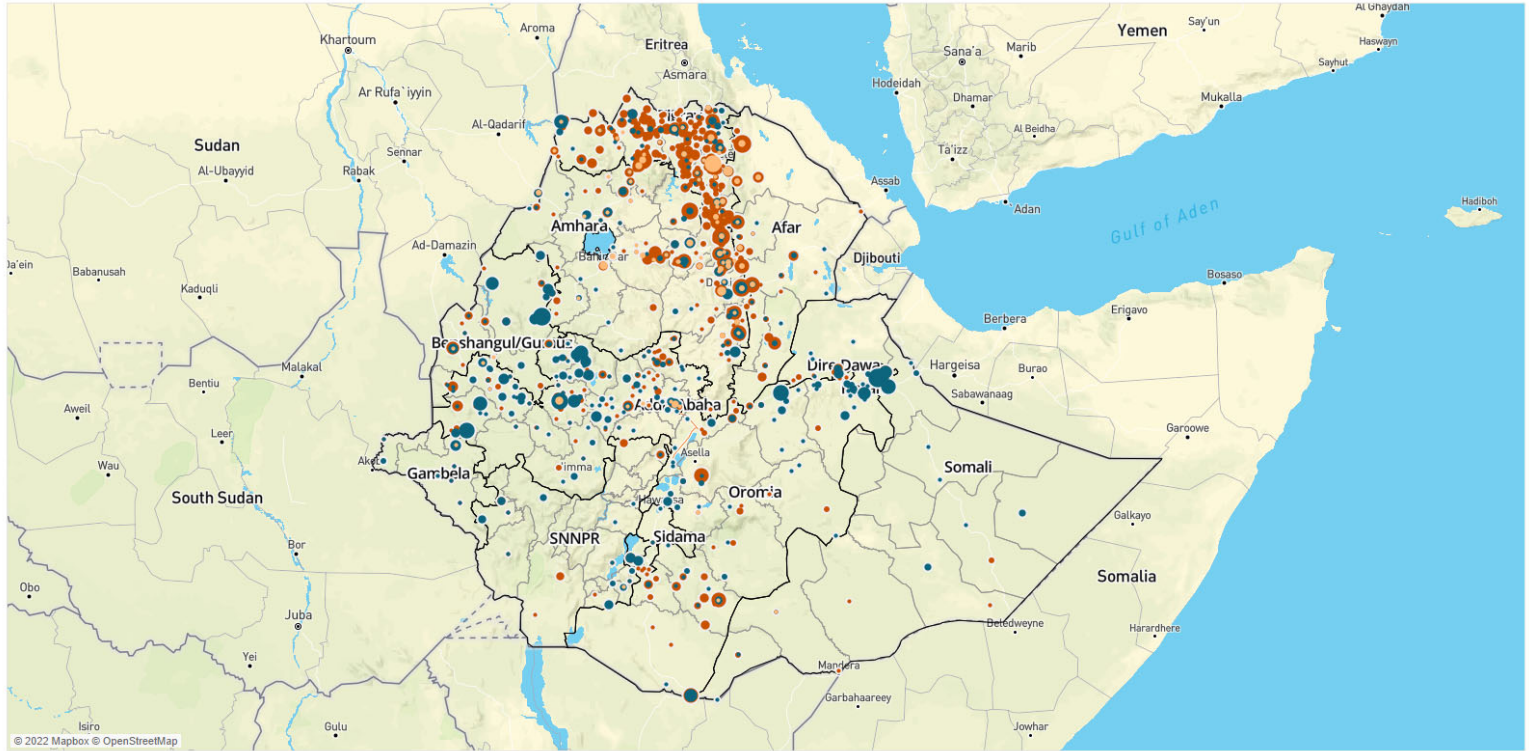


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June at a Glance

VITAL STATS

- ACLED records 116 organized political violence events and 1,067 reported fatalities in June.
- Oromia region had the highest number of reported fatalities due to organized political violence, with 813 reported fatalities. Benshangul/Gumuz region followed with 162 reported fatalities.
- In June, the most common event type was battles, with 81 events and 565 fatalities reported, followed by violence against civilians, with 30 events and 501 fatalities reported.

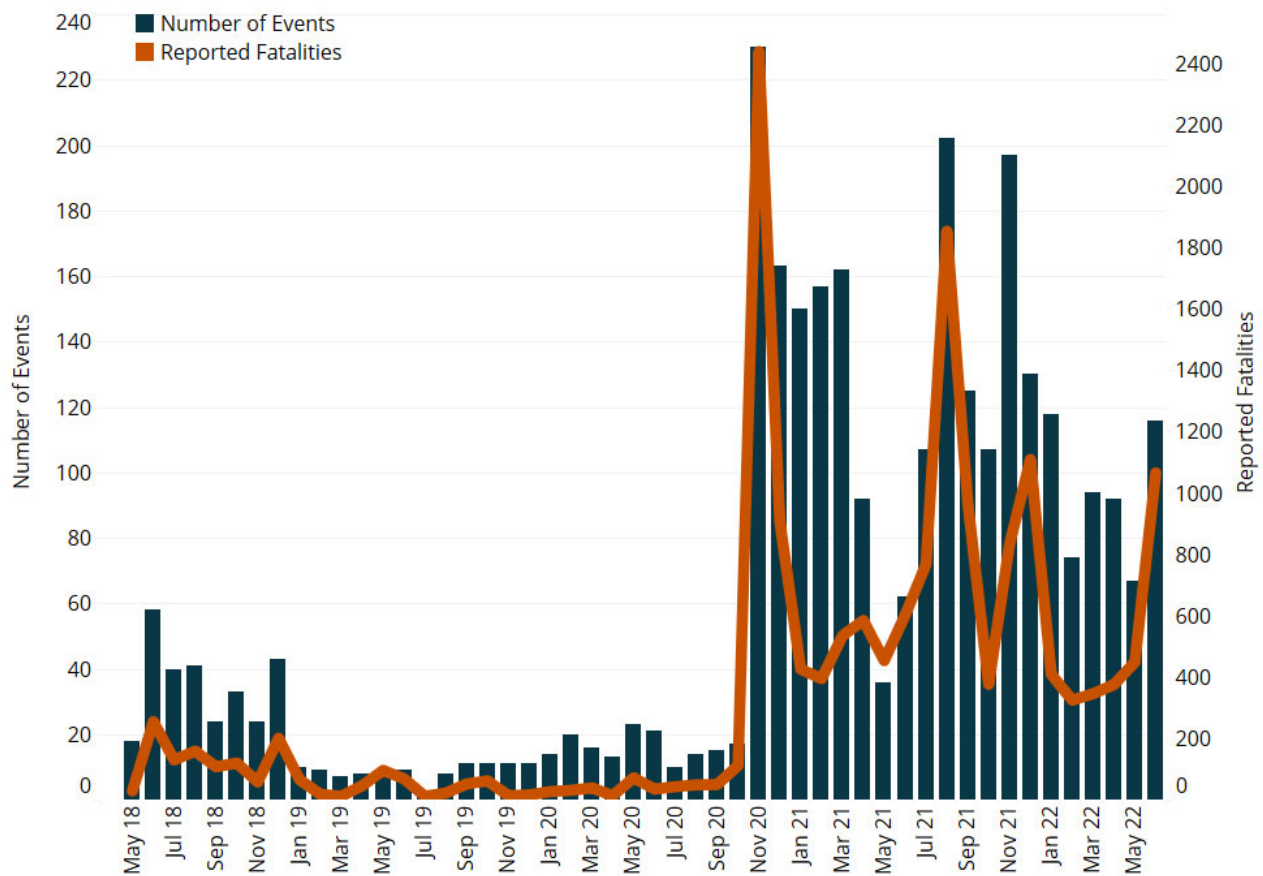
VITAL TRENDS

- In June, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane continued to clash with the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF), Oromia regional special forces, federal police, and kebele militias in different parts of Oromia region.
- The highest number of civilian fatalities was recorded in Tole kebele in Gimbi woreda in West Wollega zone in Oromia region.
- In June, battles between the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and government-affiliated forces were recorded in Amhara and Tigray regions. These are the first such events recorded between the two sides since March 2022.

IN THIS REPORT

- June Situation Summary
- Monthly Focus: The Tole Massacre and Violence Against Civilians in Oromia Region

Organized Political Violence in Ethiopia (1 April 2018 - 30 June 2022)



Note: Some events from this coverage period might be included in the data in subsequent weeks due to reporting delays.

June Situation Summary

Last month, battle events were recorded in Amhara, Benshangul/Gumuz, Gambela, Oromia, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNPR), and Tigray regions. The highest number of battle events was recorded in Oromia region, with 54 recorded events. Except for one battle event, the rest involved OLF-Shane and government forces – i.e. the ENDF, Oromia regional special forces, Oromia state police, federal police, and kebele militias. The highest number of these battle events were recorded in Guji, North Shewa, West Shewa, and West Wollega zones. Armed clashes were also recorded in Arsi, East Shewa, East Wollega, Finfine special, Kellem Wollega, and West Wollega zones.

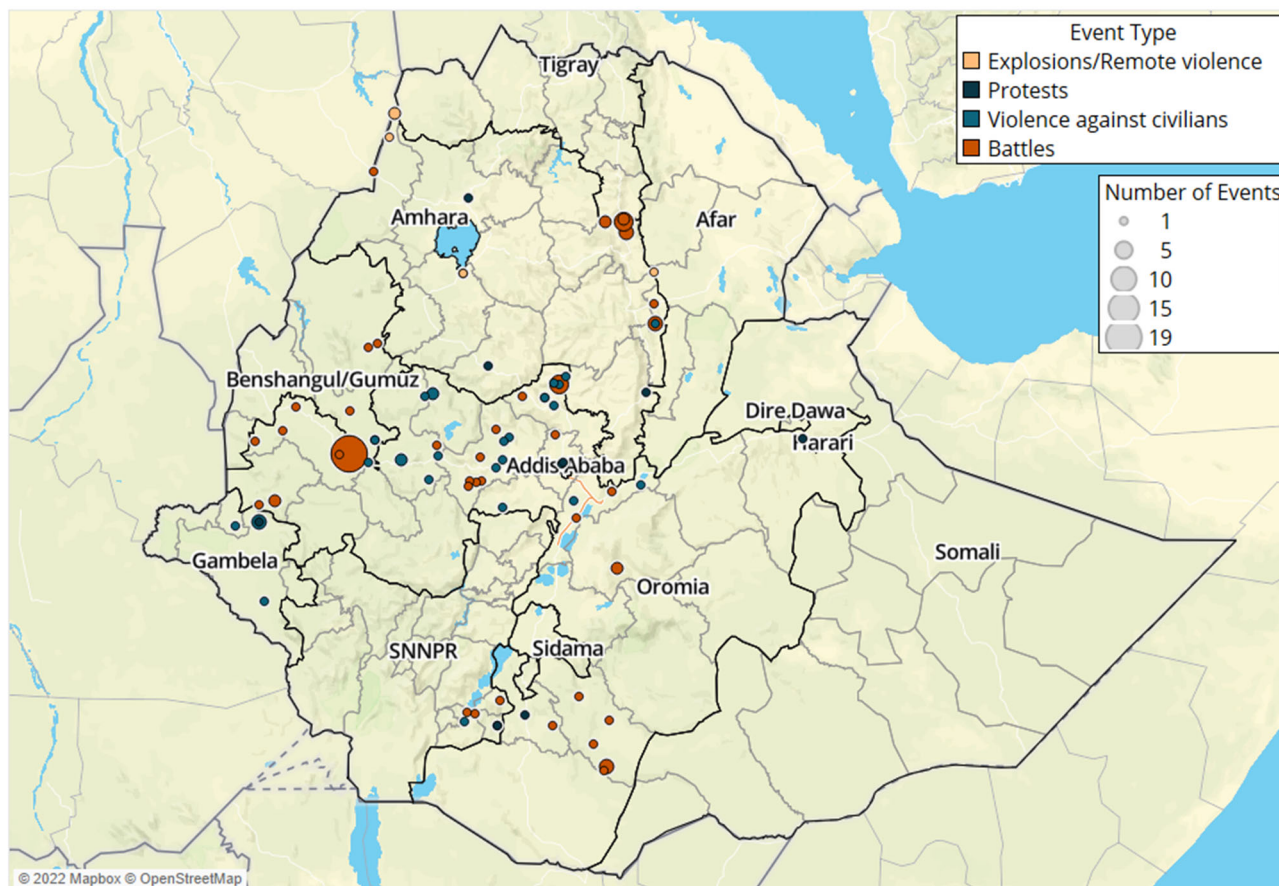
The OLF-Shane was also involved in armed clashes outside Oromia region. On 14 June, members of the Gambela Liberation Front (GLF) and OLF-Shane clashed with the ENDF, federal police, and Gambela regional special forces in Gambela city in Gambela region. At least 40 people, including 11 members of government security forces and two civilians, were reportedly killed during the clashes, with over 36 security forces and three civilians also getting injured. After retaking full control of the city, government forces assumed to be Gambela regional special forces shot and killed at least 10 civilians in the city. The killings occurred as government forces conducted a home-to-home search for GLF and OLF-Shane members believed to be hiding in the city. Reportedly, many of those killed were ethnic Oromos who were accused of being associated with

the OLF-Shane (*for more information, see [EPO Weekly: 4-10 June 2022](#) and [EPO Weekly: 11-17 June 2022](#)*). On 27 June, OLF-Shane and GLF militants also raided two farm camps owned by ethnic Amhara investors in Mera kebele in Itang special woreda in Gambela region and abducted 80 daily wage laborers. The OLF-Shane's Commander-in-Chief, Jaal Marroo, indicated that his forces had attacked these areas to refute the government's claim that it had neutralized the OLF-Shane following large-scale military operations in April ([BBC Afan Oromo, 24 June 2022](#)). Moreover, the OLF-Shane clashed with the ENDF in Bonfo in Dibate woreda, and in Bulan woreda in Metekel zone in Benshangul/Gumuz region. The ENDF claimed to have destroyed a training center used by the rebel group in Bonfo Kebele, killing 43 members of the group and taking control of four villages in Dibate and Bulan woredas. The OLF-Shane had been in control of these areas for over three years.

Violence against civilians continued in Oromia region. In June, ACLED recorded 20 violence against civilians events in the region. Ten of these events were conducted by government forces, seven by the OLF-Shane, and three by Fano militias. ACLED data demonstrate an increase in the number of fatalities from incidents of extrajudicial killing by government forces since April 2022. Similar to the previous two months, the highest number of such events in June were recorded in West Shewa zone, with four recorded events. Extrajudicial killings were also recorded in East Shewa, East Wollega, and South West Shewa zones. Most of the victims were either accused of having links with the OLF-Shane or hiding members of the rebel group. In June, most of the violence against civilians events by the OLF-Shane were recorded in North Shewa zone in Oromia region. However, the deadliest such event by the rebel group was recorded in West Wollega zone. This event is discussed in detail in the Monthly Focus section. Armed clash and violence against civilians events involving Fano militias were also recorded in East Wollega and Horo Guduru Wollega zones (*see [EPO Weekly: 28 May-3 June 2022](#) and [EPO Weekly: 4-10 June 2022](#) for more information*).

In June, new rounds of battle events involving TPLF and government forces were reported in areas bordering Amhara and Tigray regions. These are the first such events recorded between the two sides since March 2022. In Amhara region, all these armed clashes occurred in Raya Kobo, Gidan, and Kobo woredas in North Wello zone, while in Tigray region, all these clashes were recorded in Waja area in Raya Alamata woreda in Southern Tigray zone (*see map below*). Last month, TPLF forces took control of Jerota kebele and the surrounding Arengebo, Ageda, and Addisu villages in Raya Kobo woreda, as well as Semiza Giorgis, Mekenet Garia, and Jan Amora kebeles in Kobo woreda in North Wello zone in Amhara region following clashes with the ENDF, Amhara, and Fano militias. Meanwhile, Amhara and Fano militias, assisted by the ENDF, overtook control of Timuga and Ayer Marefia kebeles in Raya Alamata woreda in Southern Tigray zone after clashing with TPLF forces.

Political Disorder in Ethiopia (1 June 2022 - 30 June 2022)



Note: Some events from this coverage period might be included in the data in subsequent weeks due to reporting delays.

Elsewhere, unrest erupted following the killings of two individuals in Amhara region and SNNPR. In Amhara region, from 2 to 4 June, Afar ethnic militia members and local security forces clashed in Worku Addis area in Argoba special woreda following the militiamen's attack on civilians in the area, resulting in at least one reported fatality and two injuries. These incidents occurred after an ethnic Afar civilian was killed by an unidentified person while returning from the Medina marketplace in Argoba special woreda on 31 May. Similarly, on 4 June, ethnic Burji rioters beat 10 ethnic Oromo civilians from Guji zone to death and injured 20 others at Soyama town market in Burji special woreda in SNNPR. The victims were from Suro Bargudah woreda in Guji zone in Oromia region who had traveled to the area to sell and buy items at the market. This attack occurred after a rumor circulated that ethnic Oromos from Guji zone had killed an ethnic Burji person in an unidentified kebele. However, according to officials, he was allegedly killed by the OLF-Shane ([DW Amharic, 6 June 2022](#)). Two days later, on 6 June, members of the Burji ethnic group gathered in protest in Soyama town and denounced the killings of Oromo civilians in their town. A similar protest was held at Bule Hora University in Guji zone in Oromia region by ethnic Oromo students who also condemned the killings. The Burji special woreda officials stated that 70 people accused of participating in the killings were arrested.

In Benshangul/Gumuz region, on 1 June, members of the Gumuz People's Democratic Movement (GPDM) clashed with regional special forces in Soge town in Miziga woreda in Kamashi zone, reportedly resulting in the deaths of 19 people, including 16 members of the GPDM, the Miziga

woreda chief administrator, and a local investor and his son. The next day, regional special forces were besieged by GPDM militants in Kamashi town. The clashes occurred after some members of the GPDM reportedly refused to disarm as per their agreement during the traditional peace and reconciliation ceremony in the zone. Following these incidents, the chairman of the GPDM was arrested over accusations that the GPDM had conspired to initiate unrest in Kamashi zone (*see EPO Weekly: 28 May-3 June 2022 for more details surrounding this event*). He was released on 22 July 2022. The chairman claimed to have been released due to lack of evidence while the regional government stated that he was released to facilitate the peace and reconciliation process in the zone (*Ethiopia Insider, 26 July 2022*).

Lastly, by the end of last month, tensions between the Sudanese and Ethiopian governments escalated because of an incident in which the government of Sudan accused the ENDF of killing seven captive members of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and one civilian. The members of the SAF were reported missing after the SAF clashed with unspecified Ethiopian forces in an area east of Al Asira in Al Qureisha locality in the disputed Al Fashaga region on 22 June. From 27 to 29 June, the SAF fired artilleries targeting various areas in Mirab Armacho woreda in West Gondar zone in Amhara region and other unspecified locations in Ethiopia. There were no reported casualties due to these shellings (*for more details on these incidents, see EPO Weekly: 25 June-1 July 2022*).

Monthly Focus: The Tole Massacre and Violence Against Civilians in Oromia Region

ACLED data show a surge in the number of reported fatalities in June 2022, with over 40% of these fatalities resulting from two high-fatality attacks targeting ethnic Amhara civilians. On 18 June, members of the OLF-Shane allegedly killed at least 338 people, mostly ethnic Amhara civilians, in Gutu, Cherkosa, Silsaw, Begene, Chakaw sefer, and Hayaew areas in Tole kebele in Gimbi woreda in West Wollega zone in Oromia (*see EPO Weekly: 18-24 June 2022 for more information*). The attack also spread to the nearby Sene kebele in Bolo Jingafof (Miziga) woreda in Kamashi zone in Benshangul/Gumuz region where hundreds of civilians were reported killed. Some reports indicate that the number of fatalities may total over 500 and that the victims included women and children. The OLF-Shane denied the involvement of its forces and called for “an independent investigation” (*OLA Public Relations, 20 June 2022*). The recent massacre in Tole kebele in West Wollega is the deadliest attack against ethnic Amhara civilians in Oromia, and the second deadliest in the country. Demonstrations against the Tole killings were held in Gondar, Debre Markos, Shewa Robit, and Bahir Dar cities in Amhara region, and in the capital city, Addis Ababa (*see EPO Weekly: 18-24 June 2022 and EPO Weekly: 25 June-1 July 2022 for more details on these demonstrations*). The demonstrators in Addis Ababa and Bahir Dar were violently dispersed. Even though the demonstration in Shewa Robit on 28 June ended peacefully, security forces arrested an unidentified number of people accused of organizing the protest. A day later, some residents clashed with security forces when the Shewa Robit administration refused to release the arrestees. At least six people were reportedly killed during the unrest.

The high number of civilian fatalities in Oromia region in June has many Ethiopians and foreign observers worried that violence is becoming a norm in the region. In this analysis, we discuss the number of events and fatalities involved, the political environment in which the attacks occurred, and why they are unlikely to slow down even though there are ongoing plans for a national dialogue.

ACLED defines violence against civilians as incidents where an organized armed group deliberately inflicts violence against unarmed non-combatants without the use of explosions or remote violence tactics, whether they be civilians or off-duty security forces. Violence against civilians is considered

to be asymmetric as the perpetrator is assumed to be the only actor capable of using violence in the event (*for more details, see ACLED's Codebook*). The violence against civilians event type consists of three sub-event types: sexual violence, attack, and abduction/forced disappearance.

From April 2018 to June 2022, ACLED recorded 1,022 violence against civilians events, with 6,843 reported fatalities in Ethiopia. These events were recorded in all 11 regions of the country and the two cities – Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa. The highest number of events were recorded in Oromia region, with 499 events and 2,075 reported fatalities. During this period, the highest number of fatalities due to attacks against civilians within Oromia were recorded in West Wollega, East Wollega, West Shewa, Horo Guduru Wollega, and East Hararge zones. In June 2022 alone, 381 reported fatalities due to violence against civilians events were recorded in Oromia region. Out of these 381 reported fatalities, 338 were due to the Tole massacre in West Wollega zone. This accounts for 67% of all reported fatalities due to violence against civilians events in Ethiopia in June.

There are distinct trends that can be observed at the regional level. First, massacres have occurred periodically even prior to Abiy Ahmed's coming to power. Throughout 2016, most of these were perpetrated by government forces against Oromo civilians. In 2017 and 2018, during heavy clashes between Oromo and Somali militias in the east and south of Oromia region, massacres targeting the two communities were common. In 2020, suspected OLF-Shane forces attacked ethnic Amhara civilians in Guliso in West Wollega zone, reportedly killing an estimated 32 people. Subsequent massacres targeting ethnic Amhara civilians in Oromia region became more frequent throughout 2021 and 2022. These incidents resulted in thousands of estimated fatalities.

Second, violence against civilians increased in both the number of events and their deadliness, with reported fatality estimates in Oromia increasing since December of 2021. The actors involved in these events were the OLF-Shane, government forces – i.e. the ENDF, regional special forces, and state police –, Amhara ethnic militias, Fano militias, and unidentified armed groups. Despite Oromia region having a relatively small change in the monthly number of violence against civilians events since December 2021, Oromia's monthly number of reported fatalities has remained notably high in 2022, peaking at 381 in June 2022, the highest monthly total yet (*see table below*).

Violence Against Civilians Events and Reported Fatalities by Month in Oromia (1 April 2018 - 30 June 2022)

	Number of Events					Reported Fatalities				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
January		3	4	6	23		6	12	10	116
February		3	7	8	23		14	6	6	111
March		3	4	10	21		9	14	76	78
April	34	1	4	10	17	49	1	5	78	69
May	14		10	16	17	14		15	32	60
June	22	1	12	11	20	22	0	20	30	381
July	15		3	7		30		7	14	
August	19	2	9	4		107	8	11	156	
September	10	1	4	10		53	1	4	45	
October	5		8	11		1		8	43	
November	10	3	7	19		10	4	41	60	
December	14	4	11	19		52	3	47	136	

Darker Values Represent More Events or Reported Fatalities

0  381

The unidentified armed groups were primarily involved in attacks against government officials and unarmed security forces. From April 2018 to June 2022, ACLED recorded 21 violence against civilians events that targeted government officials in Oromia, with 51 reported fatalities. The majority of these fatalities were recorded last year. Both the OLF-Shane and unidentified armed groups were implicated in conducting these attacks. The OLF-Shane was mainly involved in ambushing the vehicles carrying government officials while attacks by unidentified armed groups targeted officials at or near their homes. Several mayors, administrators, deputy administrators, and heads of government sectors were killed by unidentified gunmen, probably linked with OLF-Shane urban operatives known as Aba Torbe ([Borkena, 24 December 2018](#)).

From April 2018 to June 2022, out of 391 recorded violence against civilians events in Oromia region, the OLF-Shane was involved in 112 events, with over 1,000 reported fatalities. One-third of these attacks targeted Amhara civilians resulting in around 750 reported fatalities – nearly 70% of all reported fatalities from violence against civilians involving the OLF-Shane. The highest numbers of deaths were recorded in West Wollega, East Wollega, and Horo Guduru Wollega zones, respectively. These three zones host large communities of ethnic Amharas who were resettled to these areas from Wello areas of Amhara region during the 1980s drought in Ethiopia ([Kassa Belay, 2004](#); [Dessalegn Rahmato, 2003](#)). Thousands of people have been internally displaced from these zones since 2018 because of frequent attacks. Many are still trapped within these zones as the roads are closed due to the ongoing clashes. Reports indicate that thousands of ethnic Amhara internally displaced persons (IDPs) from western Oromia are taking refuge in Amhara region. For instance,

more than 29,000 IDPs from western Oromia were reported to be taking shelter in South Wello zone ([Bisrat Radio, 29 March 2022](#)).

Other ethnic groups residing in the region, including members of Somali, Gamo, Gurage, and Koore ethnic groups, were also victims of attacks against civilians incidents from April 2018 to June 2022. While most attacks against ethnic Amhara civilians occurred in western Oromia, the majority of attacks against ethnic Somali civilians occurred at the border of Somali and Oromia regional states – in Borena and East Hararge zones – due to communal disputes between the two groups. The same is true for attacks against members of Koore ethnic group who reside at the border of Guji zone in Oromia region and SNNPR. Members of Gamo and Gurage ethnic groups were attacked in Finfine special zone.

Further, extrajudicial killings by government forces make up nearly 50% of all violence against civilians events in the region between April 2018 and June 2022, with 580 reported fatalities. Most of the victims were either accused of being members of the OLF-Shane, having links with, or hiding members of the group. Most fatalities due to these events were recorded in East Hararge, West Shewa, West Wollega, and Kellem Wollega zones, respectively. In East Hararge, the majority of such events – 50 events with 141 reported fatalities – occurred in 2018 when Qeerroo movement was still active in the zone and frequent conflicts between ethnic Oromo and Somali communities erupted (*for more information on the Qeerroo movement, see EPO's [Actor Profiles](#) page*).

However, since March 2022, most extrajudicial killings by government forces have occurred in West Shewa zone. This is likely connected with the high number of recorded armed clashes between government forces and the OLF-Shane in the zone.

Amhara and Fano militias were also involved in attacks against civilians in Oromia region during this period. Amhara ethnic militias have been mainly active since 2021 – 39 recorded events with 238 reported fatalities – while Fano militias began to attack civilians in the region this year. These attacks mostly occur in areas bordering Oromia and Amhara regions.

After the recent killings in Tole kebele, tensions in the country have escalated again over the past month. The Federal Security and Safety Joint Task Force stated that ENDF, federal police, and Oromia regional special forces undertook joint military operations from 14 June to 14 July 2022 against the OLF-Shane, killing more than 153 members of the rebel group and capturing over 900 members of the group ([Ethiopian Federal Police, 23 July 2022](#)). Many, especially residents in Amhara region, have expressed anger against the OLF-Shane and the apparent inability of the government to protect civilians in the country. The government cracked down hard on demonstrations against the killings last month, citing security threats. Short and often interrupted demonstrations were held in Gondar, Debre Markos, Bahir Dar, and Shewa Robit cities in Amhara region, and in Addis Ababa. At the beginning of July 2022, alleged members of the OLF-Shane reportedly attacked civilians in Mender 20 in Lemlem kebele in Hawa Galan woreda in Kellem Wollega zone, with at least 150 people, mostly ethnic Amhara civilians, reported killed. The rebel group denied involvement and accused the local government militias of perpetrating the attack ([DW Amharic, 5 July 2022](#)).

Frequent attacks against civilians are a disturbing trend of inability or unwillingness by security forces to protect civilians. In many cases, like those in Oromia region, security forces are the primary perpetrators of violence against civilians. The inability of the government to protect every civilian in the country was a point in the Prime Minister Abiy's recent speech to the House of Representatives ([EBC, 7 July 2022](#)). There are also indications that the government might organize and arm communal militias in vulnerable areas of Oromia region, like the settlement areas inhabited by ethnic Amharas. This may improve or worsen the situation, based on the abilities of the local

government to tightly control the newly formed armed groups and manage inter-communal conflicts that are sure to arise.

Incidents of violence against civilians in Ethiopia are increasing, and high-fatality events have become more common since 2018. There are real concerns that domestic and international actors have become numb to the news of attacks against civilians, which could indicate an unwillingness to prioritize their cessation. Rising tensions between the government and Amhara communities throughout the country due to these incidents threaten to open a new theater of conflict and instability in Ethiopia. Given the multitude of problems already facing security forces in the country, new conflict areas would produce a bleak outlook threatening even more civilian lives. As the country moves forward with negotiations and national dialogue, focus should be placed on civilians and the abuses that have occurred over the past four years. Without this, attacks are likely to continue at elevated levels.

Categories: Monthly Report, Oromia, Violence Targeting Civilians26/07/2022