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Freedom in the World 2021 - Ethiopia

NOT FREE

22

/ 100

[Political Rights](#) 9 / 40[Civil Liberties](#) 13 / 60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

24 / 100 Not Free

Global freedom statuses are calculated on a weighted scale. [See the methodology.](#)

Overview

Ethiopia is undergoing a turbulent period of political change set off by the 2018 appointment of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who came to power after Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn resigned in the face of mass protests at which demonstrators demanded greater political rights. Abiy pledged to reform Ethiopia's authoritarian state and has overseen a revision of some laws used by his predecessors to suppress dissent. However, long-awaited August 2020 general elections were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, posing an obstacle to the country's democratic transition. Moreover, Abiy's ruling Prosperity Party—a reconfiguration of the ethnoregional coalition that ruled Ethiopia since 1991—has partly reverted to authoritarian tactics, jailing opposition leaders and limiting media freedom in the face of growing regional and intercommunal violence. Most notably, the Ethiopian military has been engaged in a prolonged conflict with the security forces of the Tigray Region in a bid to arrest senior members of the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF).

Key Developments in 2020

- In March, amid the worsening COVID-19 pandemic, authorities postponed general elections set for August; the planned multiparty poll would have been a milestone in the country's democratic transition. At year's end, the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) scheduled polls for June 2021. While there was broad agreement on the need to postpone the elections, there was very little agreement on what would happen after the mandate of the government expired at the beginning of October, and it remains unclear how the de facto extension of the government's mandate was legally justified.
- The killing of Oromo musician Hachalu Hundessa in June triggered violent protests across Oromia regional state. According to federal police, 239 people were killed during the unrest, including many civilians in targeted attacks against minorities in Oromia, as well as in clashes with security forces. The Ethiopian government responded with a wave of arrests, including the detention of several high-profile opposition leaders, and imposed an internet shutdown. At least two suspects have been arrested on suspicion of involvement in the singer's death.
- In September, the Tigrayan Regional Council held regional elections, defying the decision to postpone all elections due to the pandemic. Results showed a landslide victory for the TPLF. The federal government deemed the regional Tigray government unlawful, and withdrew budget subsidies from the Tigray Regional Council. The Tigray Regional Council responded by withdrawing recognition of the legislative and executive branches of the federal government.
- In November, the dispute between the federal government and the TPLF escalated into violence when Abiy ordered the deployment of federal troops into the Tigray Region after TPLF forces had attacked the Ethiopian military's Northern Command. The ensuing violent conflict involved a number of militia groups, as well as special police forces, and displaced thousands of refugees to Sudan. While allegation of the massacre of civilians and of rape by federal and regional security forces have trickled out, the number of casualties is unknown, as the flow of information in and out of Tigray was severely disrupted by internet and telecommunications blackouts and interference with journalists trying to cover the unrest.

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? 0 / 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.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed—a former military officer from Ethiopia’s largest ethnic group, the Oromo, and a longstanding member of the ruling Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)—was sworn in as prime minister in April 2018, succeeding Hailemariam Desalegn, who had resigned in February 2018 amid growing protests at which demonstrators demanded greater political rights. Abiy was reconfirmed at the EPRDF party congress in October 2018 and was expected to lead the EPRDF’s successor, the Prosperity Party, into the next election. The election had been slated for August 2020, but was postponed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In December, the NEBE set the elections for June 2021.

A2 0-4 pts

Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 0 / 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 2015 parliamentary and regional elections were tightly controlled by the EPRDF, with reports of voter coercion, intimidation, and registration barriers. The opposition lost its sole parliamentary seat, as the EPRDF and its allies took all 547 seats in the House of People’s Representatives. The Prosperity Party, the successor party of the EPRDF, largely controls both houses, except for representatives of the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), who left the EPRDF coalition when it was merged into the Prosperity Party.

The Tigrayan Regional Council held regional elections in September 2020, defying the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia’s decision to postpone all elections due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Several parties participated and the results showed a landslide victory for the TPLF, though the Prosperity Party and the Tigray Democratic Party boycotted the poll. Following the election, the federal government deemed the regional Tigray government unlawful, and withdrew budget subsidies from the Tigray Regional Council. TPLF parliamentarians were recalled to the regional capital, and the Tigrayan Regional Council said it no longer recognized the executive and legislative branches of the federal government.

In December, the NEBE set the next parliamentary elections for June 2021, but its schedule did not include polls in Tigray Region.

A3 0-4 pts

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

The 2015 elections were held on time and official results were released within a month. However, opposition parties repeatedly questioned the independence of the NEBE, and the Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDJ) party alleged that it blocked its leaders from registering as candidates.

A number of reforms to the electoral system and its oversight have taken shape under Prime Minister Abiy. In November 2018, parliament confirmed Birtukan Mideksa, a prominent, previously exiled former opposition leader, to serve as head of the NEBE. In August 2019, Parliament unanimously passed the Ethiopian Election, Political Parties Registration, and Election Ethics law. Some opposition parties claimed that consultations ahead of the bill’s approval were inadequate. The law provides an updated and more complete framework for the 2020 elections than had been mandated previously, and represented a step toward multiparty democracy. With the postponement of the election, however, electoral laws could again be amended ahead of the planned 2021 polls. One member of the NEBE, Gethahun Kassa, resigned in September, signaling tensions within the electoral board.

While there was broad agreement on the need to postpone the elections slated for August 2020, there was very little agreement on what would happen after the mandate of the government expired at the beginning of October. In order to resolve this constitutional crisis, the government called upon the Council of Constitutional Inquiry to lead a number of consultations with experts and produce recommendations. These consultations were televised nationally and largely viewed as productive. However, they were largely ignored by the CCI and it remains unclear how the decision-making process regarding the postponement of the election and the de facto extension of the government’s mandate was legally justified.

Separately, in June 2019, the parliament postponed a planned census due to unrest associated with various ethnic conflicts. The completion of the census is a key step toward demarcating constituencies.

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

During the premierships of Abiy’s predecessors, opponents of the EPRDF found it nearly impossible to operate inside Ethiopia and were subject to prosecution under restrictive antiterrorism and other legislation. However, political reforms starting in 2018, as well as that year’s approval of a widespread amnesty, have permitted increasing political plurality and mobilization.

However, Ethiopia’s political party landscape underwent major changes in 2020, particularly after the postponement of elections in March and the assassination of Oromo musician Hachalu Hundessa and its aftermath in June. The deadly attacks on members of ethnic minority groups in parts of Oromia resulted in a crackdown on political parties and leaders. Among these are prominent opposition politicians Jawar Mohammed, Bekele Gerba, Eskinder Nega, and Lidetu Ayele, who were all arrested for alleged involvement in the violent aftermath of Hachalu’s assassination. Public protests in support of these individuals have been suppressed violently. Most of the most vocal opponents of the government were in jail at year’s end.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to mass arrests of high-profile politicians and their supporters from across the political spectrum following unrest sparked by the assassination of Oromo musician Hachalu Hundessa.

B2 0-4 pts

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

The changes Prime Minister Abiy’s government began to implement in 2018 had started to improve conditions for opposition groupings, though the Prosperity Party still maintains numerous formal and informal advantages over opposition parties due to its effective incumbency.

New freedoms for opposition politicians and parties resulting from 2018 reforms deteriorated in 2020. However, despite the arrests of high-profile opposition politicians and the growing impasse between the Tigray regional government and the federal government, the government’s rhetorical commitment to inclusive multiparty elections has remained, and the opposition camp stands a better chance than in previous elections to curb the ruling party’s complete hold on power.

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 authoritarian one-party system in Ethiopia has largely excluded the public from genuine political participation, though nascent attempts by Abiy to include more diverse voices in the political system are starting to yield mixed results. Moreover, Abiy has taken steps to curtail the role of Ethiopia’s powerful military in the country’s politics in some parts of the country, while maintaining a stronghold in others.

Patronage networks, often based on ethnicity, continue to drive political decision making, especially in rural regions.

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

Women hold nearly 39 percent of seats in the lower house and 32 percent in the upper house, but in practice, the interests of women are not well represented in politics. Prime Minister Abiy has made some effort to include women in high-level decision-making processes. In 2018, women were appointed to a number of prominent positions including the presidency, head of the NEBE, president of the Supreme Court, and to half of all cabinet posts.

Since 1991, political parties in Ethiopia have primarily been based on ethnicity. The country’s major ethnic parties have been allied with the EPRDF, but have historically had little room to effectively advocate for their constituents. The Prosperity Party has developed a national platform under the leadership of Prime Minister Abiy. This development has raised the profile of ruling-party structures in Ethiopia’s peripheral regions, where local ruling parties had previously been denied full membership in the EPRDF. (Populations in Afar, Somali, Gambella, and Benishangul Gumuz—officially termed “emerging regions”—were notably underrepresented in national politics since their local ruling parties were affiliates rather than full members of the EPRDF coalition.) At the same time, the merger has increased demands for more regional autonomy, particularly in Tigray; Oromia; and the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People’s Region. It has also rekindled longstanding fears of smaller regions of being dominated by the more populous ethnic groups.

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? 0 / 4

None of Ethiopia’s nominally elected officials were chosen through credible elections. The country’s governance institutions have long been dominated by the EPRDF and subsequently the Prosperity Party. The elections slated for August 2020 were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Tigrayan Regional Council was elected in September of 2020, although these elections were labelled illegal by the House of Federations and the results are not recognized at the federal level.

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 unrest that has plagued Ethiopia in recent years. 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 in 2018 and 2019. In May 2020, Bereket Simon, a former communications minister and prime minister, was convicted on corruption charges and sentenced to six years in prison in Bahir Dar. Proceedings in many other cases continued throughout 2020.

The most notable safeguard introduced against corruption in 2020 was the introduction of new bank notes in September. The government announced that all old bank notes were being withdrawn from circulation within three months to fight corruption, embezzlement, and contraband. The new notes have additional design and security features that makes the production of counterfeits very difficult.

C3 0-4 pts

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

The Prosperity Party has attempted to be less opaque than its predecessors, but the events leading up to the postponement of the elections and subsequent to Hachalu Hundessa’s death reflect some inability or unwillingness of authorities to operate with openness and transparency. Moreover, a series of political assassinations and high-profile deaths in the last two years remain unresolved, with little government communication about the matter.

In the aftermath of Hachalu Hundessa’s assassination and the violence that ensued in Oromia, the internet was shut down for 3 weeks, making the entire population dependent on state-run news channels for information. The mass arrests that followed were also not handled transparently. Similarly, very little information was released about numerous killings by militias in the Metekel Zone of the Benishangul-Gumuz Region.

Very little information is available about the conflict in Tigray Region, and what does emerge is difficult or impossible to verify. Internet and telephone lines were cut for almost two months, while independent journalists were denied access to the region. The nature of the involvement of Eritrean soldiers, the status of camps, the humanitarian situation in the region all remain opaque.

Government procurement processes remain largely opaque. The renovation of Meskel Square, and the development of Friendship Park and Entoto Park were awarded to companies without full transparency of the tender and decision-making processes.

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, the government took initial steps to increase freedoms for independent media in 2018, when a number of prominent journalists were released from prison.

Ethiopia’s media landscape is dominated by state-owned broadcasters and government-oriented newspapers. Since Abiy took office in 2018, the government has eased restrictions on independent media, permitting both greater freedom for journalists and a more diverse range of news for consumers. That year, the government lifted bans on 264 websites (including news sites and blogs) and television networks.

However, after the assassination of Hachalu Hundessa, Oromo Media Network (OMN), which has been banned before 2018, was again shut down and charged with inciting violence through its platforms. Similarly, Tigray TV is no longer available outside of Tigray, and has similarly been accused by the government of inciting violence and spearheading misinformation campaigns. A large number of journalists were jailed in July and August, including Kenyan journalist Yassin Juma. This prompted the Ethiopian Foreign Correspondents’ Association (FCA) to write an open letter condemning the government’s activities. Juma was released in September with several other journalists.

During the conflict in Tigray, a number of journalists have been arrested, had their licenses revoked, or were deported, and internet and telecommunications blackouts affected the flow of information in and out of the region. Ethiopia’s state-owned telecommunications monopoly, Ethio Telecom, also suspended internet service for in

Western Oromia for more than three months from January through March, and then again for three weeks in early July 2020 following the assassination of Hachalu Hundessa. Social media and communications platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp have been blocked intermittently.

Hate speech and the deliberate spreading of misinformation on social media have been blamed for fanning the flames of violent conflict in regions of Ethiopia. In February 2020, the government approved a new hate speech law that makes the intentional publication, distribution, and possession of false information illegal. However, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch criticized the proposed law as vague and as potentially opening the door for misuse by public authorities to curb freedom of expression. In December, the Council of Ministers approved a draft media proclamation to serve as a legal framework for media, with an emphasis on freedom of information and expression. It remains to be seen how this will be implemented.

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. The mass violence in July 2020 has taken 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).

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 markedly more vocal on political and economic matters since the lifting of the state of emergency in 2018. Conferences and lectures at state universities have addressed controversial topics and featured a number of speakers who criticized the ruling party. Academics have been able to voice their critiques of the government through social media and various media outlets including the *Addis Standard* and Ethiopia Insight, discussing issues including federalism, election postponement, the administration’s COVID-19 response, and the importance of national dialogue.

Direct political indoctrination of university students—through mandatory trainings on government policy or pressure to join the ruling party—also seems to have abated under Abiy, mainly as a consequence of the weakening of the party structures in general.

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 curricula.

D4 0-4 pts

**Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of 1 /
surveillance or retribution? 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, following the assassination of Hachalu Hundessa, arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial activities, widespread surveillance in parts of Oromia, and nontransparent court proceedings have once again led individuals to be more reluctant to express political views openly. This has been further escalated by the violent conflict in the Tigray Region, where a state of emergency proclamation has led to a greater wariness of surveillance.

E Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

Severe restrictions on assembly under the EPRDF government eased after the political transition in 2018, when formerly banned opposition movements returned from exile and held political rallies with thousands of supporters. However, the Abiy administration has continued to break up political meetings and arrest activists, particularly in Addis Ababa and Oromia regional state. In January 2020, dozens of supporters of the opposition Oromo Liberation Front were arrested across Oromia, and security forces used violence to disperse crowds of protesters after the killing of Hachalu Hundessa. Clashes between protestors and local security forces were also reported from the Afar Region.

Freedom of assembly was formally suspended between April and September, when strict social distancing rules prohibited meetings of four or more people unless approved by local authorities. While the state of emergency ended in September, social distancing norms continued to limit mass assemblies of people compared to previous years. The state of emergency announcement in November in Tigray has once again prohibited assembly.

E2 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 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, which prohibited work on political and human rights issues and had forced international NGOs working on human rights and democratic governance to leave the country. Institutions like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch returned after the law's approval. International funding for local advocacy organizations has resumed, too, resulting in a much more active and visible human rights community. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, which has previously functioned as a government mouthpiece, has been more independent following the appointment of Daniel Bekele, previously Africa director at Human Rights Watch, as its commissioner in 2019. On the eve of the conflict in Tigray, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission held a dialogue on the "Structural Human Rights Challenges of Ethiopia" that included dozens of domestic civil society organizations.

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 have not improved.

Relations between federal government and human rights NGOs soured in 2020. Amnesty International and others published reports throughout the year criticizing the administration's response to political protests in Oromia and pointing to human rights violations by security forces, which were downplayed by government officials.

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 a 2019 labor law has further bolstered their legal status. More than 500,000 workers are organized under the umbrella of the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions (CETU). However, CETU has refrained from openly challenging the government, and independent unions have faced harassment in the past. 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 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. The appointment of lawyer and civil society leader Meaza Ashenafi as president of the Supreme Court in November 2018 as well as the selection of constitutional scholar Gideon Timotewos as attorney general in August 2020 have raised hopes for reform and greater independence of the courts. However, Ethiopia's security forces have maintained significant influence over the judicial process, especially in cases against opposition leaders and other political adversaries. A number of approved bail orders by courts were also overruled by the police during the year.

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. More than 9,000 individuals—many of them supporters of local opposition groups, but also law enforcement and local government officials—were arrested in the aftermath of the violence that followed the killing of Hachalu Hundessa in June 2020. In September, the government brought charges against about 2,000 of them, denying that the investigations were politically motivated.

The right to a fair trial is often not respected, particularly for opponents of the government charged under the antiterrorism law. 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. The temporary closure of the court system in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic further contributed to the backlog in cases.

F3 0-4 pts

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

Ethnic violence and unrest continued in numerous regions of Ethiopia in 2020. A government campaign to suppress armed opposition forces in western Oromia has led to repeated clashes and widespread displacement from there. 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. Most notable, however, is the conflict in Tigray, which at year’s end led to the fleeing of 50,000 people and an unknown number of deaths, estimated likely to be in the thousands. Security forces, both regional and federal, have been accused of war crimes, including the massacring of civilians and rape.

Conflicts in other parts of the country, notably along the border between Oromia and Somali state, grew less intense in 2020.

F4 0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1 / 4

There are major regional discrepancies between Ethiopia’s “highland” regional states—Oromia, Amhara, Tigray, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples’ Region, and the new Sidama State—and the “lowland” states of Afar, Somali, Gambella, and Benishangul Gumuz. Populations in the latter four states continue to have less access to government services. A split between the Abiy administration and the TPLF removed the previously dominant Tigrayan political elite from power. The mutual nonrecognition and the violent conflict that ensued in 2020 has had financial and other implications for the Tigray Region and Tigrayans more broadly, the rights of civilians are limited under the state of emergency, and people are vulnerable to abusive practices by security forces.

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.

A government campaign to support internally displaced people (IDPs) to return to their home communities has led to a significant decline in their numbers. According to the International Organization for Migration, there were 1.8 million IDPs in Ethiopia in mid-2020, down from a peak of more than 3 million the previous year.

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. In early 2020, blockades and temporary road closures were reported from the border of Amhara and Tigray, Somali and Afar, as well as from several parts of Oromia. Measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic introduced additional restrictions: state governments temporarily suspended travel between regions, the federal government instituted limitations on the capacity of public transport, and the Addis Ababa city administration briefly restricted the circulation of private cars.

From March to September 2020, Ethiopia closed all its land borders in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The border with Eritrea has remained shut since April 2019; it had been opened in 2018 for the first time in two decades, but Eritrean officials ordered the border crossing closed when the peace process between the two countries stalled.

Violent conflict, fueled by ethnic tensions, armed groups, as well as security clampdowns in parts of Oromia and Benishangul Gumuz, have significantly reduced interregional travel, with most Ethiopians feeling safer in their home region than in other states. The escalation of violence in Oromia following the death of Hachalu Hundessa led to a security crackdown during which grave crimes were committed. Movement inside and into Oromia was consequently reduced, with roadblocks set up both by protesters and security forces.

The violent conflict in Tigray has made movement within and to the region as well as northern Amhara difficult, with curfews set by the military to control movement.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 because increased violence between ethnic groups has caused mass displacement and severely impaired civilians’ ability to travel safely within the country.

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 persist in the telecommunication, shipping, and aviation industries, while the financial sector is closed to foreign competition and effectively controlled by state-owned banks. In 2020, the Abiy government advanced its plans for a liberalization of the economy, and the deadline for a partial sale of the state-owned EthioTelecom was set for early 2021.

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, 1 / protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 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. According to government estimates, incidences of rape and domestic violence rose by about 25 percent during the COVID lockdown period.

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, and the 2016 Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey found that 65 percent of women between the ages of 15 and 49 had undergone the practice. However, reports suggest that FGM rates have reduced in recent years due to efforts by both NGOs and the government to combat the practice.

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 as 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.

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