



## **Update on the January 11, 2023 massacre of Amhara IDPs and civilians in Haro Kebele (East Wollega, Oromia Region) by Oromia Special Forces**

***Haro Kebele, Kiremu Woreda, East Wollega Zone, Oromia Region,  
Ethiopia***

### **Executive Summary**

AAA has verified from survivors and families of victims that on January 11th, 2023, heavily armed *Oromia Special Forces* (OSF) members (Oromia Regional Government forces) opened fire on Haro town and surrounding areas that resulted in the killing of at least 27 Amhara civilians and injury of an additional 15 Amhara civilians. The victims included vulnerable groups including women and children, most of whom were IDPs. The attack also resulted in the further displacement of residents and IDPs. The OSF used heavy machine guns and heavy artillery which are not legally permitted weapons for police forces like the OSF. Haro town, Kiremu Woreda, East Wollega Zone, Oromia Region, which hosts an estimated 80,000 IDPs amidst a state-imposed siege, has seen such frequent attacks by the OSF and *Oromo Liberation Army* (OLA).

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## The January 11th, 2023 ethnic-based massacre

AAA's sources (eyewitnesses and survivors) confirmed after attacking the town of Haro (Kiremu Woreda, East Wollega Zone) on December 23rd, 2022, that the OSF setup camp 7-km away in Kiremu town of the same woreda.<sup>1</sup> The OSF camp received personnel and weapon reinforcements from the nearby town of Nekemte of East Wollega Zone. On January 9th, 2023, after amassing heavy artillery (mainly mortars) and machine guns, the OSF began to encircle Haro town from three directions. Around 7:00 am on January 11th, 2023, the OSF opened fire and shelled the town. Bullets from the heavy machine guns and mortar shells resulted in the indiscriminate killing and injury of Amhara IDPs and residents in the town. AAA's several sources put the death toll between 27 to 36 people and the number of injuries at 15 to 25 people. AAA was able to confirm the names of 27 of the deceased and 15 civilians that were injured.

Mohammed Ahmed (name changed), an IDP living in Haro town after fleeing the November 18th-20th, 2022 attack in Kiremu town, and a wounded survivor of the December 23rd, 2022, Haro attack told AAA's investigators the following:

*“It is the innocents that were massacred. They were killed with dishka (machine guns). They (OSF) just swarmed the town (Haro) with bullets from dishka, rail, and mortar shells. I personally saw a fired mortar shell. I know 27 of the people that died. Many more who I could not count were injured. Yasin Yimam was injured after being shot in the gut by a stray bullet while he was in the middle of the town. He was not in the fighting zone nor was he fighting.”*

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<sup>1</sup>AAA previously reported on a series of massacres which occurred between December 18th and 26th, 2022 by joint OSF-OLA forces and *Qeerro* (ultranationalist Oromo youth) against Amhara civilians in Haro Kebele of Kiremu Woreda. The attacks left at least 46 Amhara civilians killed and an additional 16 injured. The attack on December 23rd, 2022 alone left 32 Amhara IDPs and civilians killed and 16 civilians injured. The full report is available [here](#).

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Another resident of Haro town, Yesuf Tesfaye (name changed) recounted the incident as follows:

*“They (OSF) attacked us from 7:00 am to 1:00 pm. They killed our people (Amharas), too many to count using dishka and brail. Even women and children who could not fight were hit by mortar [shells] in the middle of the town. Among the dead, I knew Ismail (40-years-old) who was killed by mortar shells while staying in the town and Suleiman Indris (15-years-old) who was killed by heavy artillery. We have counted 25 dead people so far. Many more were injured. 12 heavily injured people are being taken to Amhara Region on foot. We are still hearing that they (OSF) are preparing to come and attack us again.”*

Haile Getachew (name changed), a severely wounded survivor and hospitalized at Tibebe Ghion Hospital (Bahir Dar city, Amhara Region) recounted the situation to AAA’s investigators as follows:

*“Fighting began when they (the OSF) came and attacked the town (Haro). The fighting took place on the outskirts of the town. We went there to help defend the town. We started heading back to town thinking they (the OSF) had retreated and the attack had ended. Suddenly, they (the OSF) shot my friend, Yimene (deceased). As I was dragging him to safety, a brail bullet shot me in my leg below the knee. I fell on my back and a second bullet hit me on the same part. A third bullet struck me on the edge of my testicle and went up around my kidney. Now my leg is broken. Another guy named Ismail was shot dead in front of me. Dessalegn Tibebu, who is here (Tibebe Ghion Hospital), was shot in the mouth next to me. I saw the fighters who shot us all. They wore the special police (OSF) uniforms, their weapons were mostly brail but also had dishka, snipers, and even mortars.”*

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## **State-imposed siege of Amhara residents and IDPs in Haro Kebele**

The town of Haro and its residents have hosted an estimated 80,000 Amhara IDPs displaced by the recurring ethnic-based attacks in the Wollega Zones of Oromia Region. The IDPs come from 19 kebeles in Kiremu (East Wollega Zone) and Amuru (Horo Guduru Wollega Zone) Woredas. The kebele has been under blockade for several months, where its residents and IDPs have been cut off from the outside world. Wounded survivors of the repeated ethnic-based attacks, mothers, and other residents that are suffering from treatable but terminal diseases have been unable to access basic health services. As a result, the death continues to climb on a daily basis as a result.

The OSF have also cut off the area's telecommunications, internet, and electrical services. This has hindered access which has impacted capacity of human rights experts and journalists to investigate and report on conditions in Haro Kebele. The IDPs and residents are also highly exposed to additional rounds of attacks. The OSF forces are stationed in Kiremu town (located 7-km away from Haro) and have carried out a series of indiscriminate attacks on the IDPs and residents in the Haro Kebele. The siege of the town makes it nearly impossible for the residents and IDPs to flee to a safer place. Survivors of the attack also told AAA that the OSF is preparing for yet another round of attacks.

Roads to hospitals in the Amhara Region where survivors could receive medical care are blocked by the OSF and OLA forces. Families have been trying to take their wounded to the Amhara Region carrying them on foot. They have been taking unconventional offroad paths spanning hundreds of kilometers to avoid main roads which are blocked. Many of the wounded have died on the way while some have survived the hardships all the way to the Amhara Region. Injured Amhara residents are prohibited from crossing the Abay Bridge that connects the Amhara and Oromia Regions. The bridge is under the supervision of Federal Police that accuse wounded survivors of fighting against the OSF.

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Ethnic Amharas in general, and injured survivors in particular, are thus faced with crossing the Abay River (also known as the Blue Nile River) on foot.

Ahmed Yimam (name changed), who brought his wounded nephew, Yasin Yimam to the Yohannes Higher Clinic (Burie town, West Gojjam Zone, Amhara Region) after a harsh three-day journey (between January 11-13, 2023) told AAA the following:

*“All the roads are blocked (by the OLA and OSF) for us (Amharas). So, we have to carry our wounded on a stretcher and travel on foot. We walked day and night for hundreds of kilometers through jungles, ditches, and small rivers. We had four injured people when we began the journey. One of them, Issa Wondimnew died on the way due to the harshness of the journey. Three of the wounded - Yasin Yimam, Dessalegn Tibebu, and Yenus Getu survived and reached Yohannes Higher Clinic (Burie town, West Gojjam Zone, Amhara Region) after a three-day journey. The journey began on Wednesday (January 11th, 2023) and ended on Friday (January 13th, 2023). Crossing Abay (Blue Nile River) was difficult. For the wounded victims, it was only possible through the help of paid swimmers. They made a stretcher-like structure from bamboo stalks that would not sink when a person is laid on top of it. Then the swimmers pulled and pushed it from the front and back respectively. The payment ranges from 1,500-2,500 birr per person. After crossing the Abay (Blue Nile River), we took them to the hospital.”*

A cousin of one of the other wounded survivors that were receiving treatment at Tibebe Ghion Hospital (Bahir Dar city, Amhara Region), Dessalegn Tibebu confirmed Yesuf’s story to AAA and added:

*“He (Dessalegn Tibebu) was shot in the mouth by a rifle while he was in the town (Haro). The bullet then remained below his ear. After coming here*

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*(Bahir Dar), the bullet was removed by a surgical operation. We walked on foot carrying four wounded victims including Dessalegn. We carried them on a stretcher made from wood. We began our journey on Wednesday (January 11th, 2023) at around 7:00 pm and reached Burie (West Gojjam Zone, Amhara Region) on Friday (January 13th, 2023) at around 6:00 am. One of the injured, his name was Issa Wondimnew, died on our way here.”*

Another badly wounded survivor, Haile Getachew recounts his journey to the Amhara Region as follows:

*“My brothers brought me here, carrying me on foot - all the way up the Abay (Blue Nile River). We could not use vehicles and roads. Roads are blocked for us (Amharas) by the Oromia Regional Government and Shene (OLA). We reached Abay after the three-day harsh journey. Wounded people like myself are prohibited to use bridges to cross Abay. The river is very large and difficult to cross. Also, I could not swim as I am wounded and handicapped. We paid swimmers and they made a stretcher from bamboo stalks and four empty jars that could not sink while I was laying over it. After they strapped me to the stretcher, two of the swimmers came in front of me and the other two went behind. Then after they put me over the river water, those who were in the front pulled me while those in the back pushed. After crossing the river, I was taken to Yohannes Higher Clinic (Burie town, West Gojjam Zone, Amhara Region). I was referred to Tibebe Ghion Hospital (Bahir Dar, Amhara Region).”*

In addition to taking treacherous alternative paths to the Amhara Region, wounded Amharas fleeing the Oromia Region have also been prone to attacks by OLA militants. Sisay Kassa (name changed) and Yesuf Tesfaye, who brought their injured loved ones to the Amhara Region, told AAA that an OLA militant killed a person in their group and

injured another in the Tabo area of Amuru Woreda (Horo Guduru Wollega Zone, Oromia Region).



**Figure 1:** Yasin Yimam, a wounded survivor of the January 11th, 2023 Amhara massacre while receiving medical care in Burie Yohannes Hospital (West Gojjam Zone, Amhara Region).

Below is a list of identified victims killed and injured by OSF on January 11th, 2023, in Haro Kebele (Kiremu Woreda, East Wollega Zone, Oromia Region).

No.	Victim name	Sex	Age	Outcome of attack
1	Bimir Abdela	M	46	Killed
2	Yesuf Dawid	M	18	Killed
3	Mohammed Alebachew	M	35	Killed
4	Ismael Abdi	M	40	Killed
5	Suleiman Indris	M		Killed
6	Issa Wondimnew	M	25	Killed
7	Yimene Alemayehu	M	51	Killed
8	Emiamr Dinku	M		Killed

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9	Alemnew Wonde	M	35	Killed
10	Habtamu Sete	M	27	Killed
11	Temesgen Woldie	M		Killed
12	Mezgebu Azage	M	31	Killed
13	Birlew Gashaw	M		Killed
14	Alehegn Amene	M		Killed
15	Jember Geberew	M		Killed
16	Kedija Kassim	F	33	Killed
17	Teshager Tsegaw	M		Killed
18	Masrie Assefa	M	35	Killed
19	Getaw Nigatu	M		Killed
20	Marshet Ahmed	M	31	Killed
21	Ismael Indris		15	Killed
22	Suleiman Abdella		55	Killed
23	Kemal Gelaw		13	Killed
24	Yimer (last name unknown)		12	Killed
25	Yasin Ali		15	Killed
26	Reda Melaku		54	Killed
27	Jemberu Geze		39	Killed
28	Dessaiegn Tibebu	M	25	Injured
29	Yenus Getu	M	36	Injured
30	Siraj Kahnie	M	45	Injured
31	Yasin Yimam	M	38	Injured



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## About Amhara Association of America (AAA)

The Amhara Association of America (AAA) is a non-profit civic organization located in Charlotte, North Carolina that investigates and documents human rights atrocities and repression against Amharas in Ethiopia. AAA seeks to inform U.S. policymakers, international human rights organizations, media, and all Ethiopian stakeholders to pressure Ethiopian leaders to change laws, policies, and practices in Ethiopia so perpetrators are held accountable and victims receive justice. AAA also collaborates with Amhara organizations in the U.S., supports independent Amhara organizations in Ethiopia, and provides humanitarian aid for Amharas impacted due to targeted ethnic attacks. AAA's funding comes directly from members and supporters; the organization is not affiliated with any Ethiopian or American political or governmental entities.

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