



War Crimes of TPLF in occupied Adarkay Woreda of Amhara Region

Introduction

The Aderkay (Addi Arkay) Woreda (district) is located in the North Gonder Zone of Amhara Region in northern Ethiopia. It is located in the northern Semien Mountains area, bordered by Debark to the southwest, Tegede in the north, and by Telemt in the east. Since late July 2021, most parts of Aderkay Woreda have been under the control of invading forces of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) or Tigrayan forces. The TPLF invaded and occupied Aderkay on July 24, 2021. They controlled the area up until tensions began to escalate around August 23, 2022. On August 24, 2022, TPLF violated the unilateral ceasefire declared by the Ethiopian Government. The ceasefire was a humanitarian truce that hoped to bring some relief to the countless war-ravaged civilian towns of Amhara, Afar, and Tigray Regions. TPLF forces reopened a major offensive in various parts of the Amhara and Afar Regions of Ethiopia. This included Aderkay Woreda, where the TPLF forces opened fire on nearby Ethiopian allied forces. The Tigrayan forces, however, shifted the blame to the Ethiopian allied forces from the start of the war and justified their actions as self-defense. After days of heavy fighting, on September 10, 2022, the Tigrayan forces

retreated from Adarkay back to neighboring woredas.

This report is focused on human rights violations and infrastructural destruction perpetrated by Tigrayan forces between July 24, 2021, and September 10, 2022. The TPLF military occupation of Aderkay Woreda was marked by the execution of civilians, the shelling of civilians and civilian objects, and rape. The TPLF forces also engaged in widespread looting and destruction of both public and private properties. These included specially protected sites such as religious institutions. Basic public services like banking, telecommunication, and electricity have been unavailable in Aderkay ever since the woreda fell under the control of Tigrayan forces. In addition to communication blackouts, residents of Aderkay have not had any access to humanitarian aid. As a result, residents have been forced to flee en masse to the surrounding towns of Debark and Zarima.

At the time of writing this report, out of the twenty-two total kebeles in Aderkay, seven were under the control of the TPLF. The remaining fifteen kebeles were under the control of allied Ethiopian forces including the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF), Amhara Special Forces (ASF), Amhara militia, and Amhara Fano. Presently, the Tigrayan forces are actively fighting the allied forces to control the remaining kebeles of Aderkay. The Amhara Association of America (AAA) expects the ongoing fighting in the area to increase the intensity of service blackouts, targeted killings of Amhara civilians, and the displacement toll.

Killings and Bodily Injuries

The communication blackouts and security concerns in Aderkay continue to be major hindrances to conducting thorough investigations on the atrocities committed by TPLF. Despite these challenges, AAA investigators have managed to confirm the names of dozens of civilian victims killed by TPLF. The victims included children, women, the elderly, and specially protected persons such as the deaf and blind. Sources also add the existence of grave willful bodily injury on an unspecified number of civilians by the TPLF militia. A

number of civilians endured battery, biting, and derogatory insults from the TPLF soldiers.

An eyewitness from Aderkay, told AAA that TPLF forces killed more than one hundred Amhara civilians through ethnically motivated killing sprees. The TPLF soldiers justified the killings of ethnic Amhara civilians by deeming Amharas guilty of a range of accusations. These accusations included that ethnic Amharas supported the allied forces of Ethiopia and were members of Fano or the Amhara militia. Crossfire and artillery shells also claimed the lives of many innocent civilians. *“Four family members were intentionally killed in a house after being bombed by the TPLF’s mortar shells.”* they told AAA. He also told the AAA that he witnessed the TPLF forces intentionally kill an 11-year-old minor in the town of Zarima. The deceased minor was also deaf.

Another source, a public prosecutor at Aderkay, told AAA, *“Since the TPLF forces took control of Aderkay last July, there have been reported killings of eighty-five (85) civilians. Seven kebeles are still under the control of the TPLF forces. The present active fighting is likely to increase the death toll. It is also likely there is an underreporting of the killings as a result of the communication blackouts and security concerns..”*

A list of 70 civilian victims in Aderkay Woreda (North Gonder Zone, Amhara Region, Ethiopia) killed by TPLF forces.

No.	Name	Age	Sex	Manners of killing	Location/Kebele
1	Abebaw Alehegn	35	M	Execution	Aderkay 02
2	Woldie Yigzaw	60	M	Shelling	Aderkay 02
3	Emuhay Gelanesh ¹		F	Shelling	Aderkay 01
4	Adane Mulualem	40	M	Execution	Aderkay 02
5	Ahmed Mohammed ²		M	Execution	Aderkay 02
6	Arega Tigabie	34	M	Shelling	Ber-Mariam
7	Temesgen Addisu	36	M	Execution	Ber-Mariam

¹Died along with 6 of her family members

²Died along with 5 of his family members

8	Gashaw Endalew	24	M	Shelling	Chew-Ber
9	Solomon Mehabie	28	M	Shelling	Chew-Ber
10	Solomon Berie	26	M	Shelling	Aderkay 01
11	Melese Gerseie	34	M	Shelling	Aderkay 02
12	Solomon Aklilu	26	M	Execution	Aderkay 02
13	Aboy Gebrie	76	M	Shelling	Aderkay 02
14	Meseret Tsegaye	22	F	Shelling	Meki
15	Sisay Aragaw		M	Shelling	Meki
16	Chalachew Jajew	28	M	Shelling	Aderkay 02
17	Yingalgn Gebre-Egziabher	34	M	Execution	Aderkay 02
18	Tekle Fentaye	76	M	Shelling	Aderkay 01
19	Teshome Nigussie		M	Shelling	Meni
20	Adem Habib		M	Shelling	Aderkay 02
21	Temesgen Mulat		M	Shelling	Aderkay 01
22	Getachew Kassahun		M	Shelling	Aderkay
23	Bazewew Jajew		M	Execution	Aba-Mar
24	Hunachew Tafere	34	M	Execution	Aderkay 02
25	Birkie Aderajew		F	Execution	Ber-Mariam
26	Endalkachew Shimeles	37	M	Execution	Aderkay 02
27	Zewude Tassew	43	M	Execution	Aderkay 02
28	Mekdes Tesfaye		F	Shelling	Aderkay 01
29	Maru Tilahun		M	Execution	Zarima
30	Mulat Tekle		M	Execution	Zarima
31	Getahun Bayeh		M	Shelling	Zarima
32	Zewdu Negash	45	M	Execution	Meni
33	Zenaw Assefa	24	M	Execution	Chew-Ber
34	Tigabie Mengistie	41	M	Shelling	Alli

35	Aderajew Alebel		M	Execution	Aba-Mar
36	Tekle Fentaye		M	Execution	Aba-Mar
37	Sisay Addissie		M	Shelling	Aderkay
38	Endris Abdo		M	Execution	Aderkay 02
39	Gelaye Chekole		M	Execution	Aderkay o2
40	Belay Sharew		M	Execution	Aderkay 02
41	Melese Mekonnen		M	Shelling	Aderkay 02
42	Solomon Melese	43	M	Execution	Aderkay 02
43	Netsanet Melese	23	M	Execution	Aderkay 02
44	Tsehay Mekonnen		F	Shelling	Ber-Mariam
45	Eshete Tajele		M	Shelling	Aderkay
46	Sheikh Seman Adem	54	M	Execution	Hawza
47	Nigatie Melkamu		M	Execution	Meka
48	Kasahun Ashebir		M	Execution	Sekenil
49	Negash Eshete		M	Execution	Meka
50	Ertibu Cherkos		M	Execution	Chew-Ber
51	Arega Abebe		M	Shelling	Meka
52	Habtamu Fentie		M	Execution	Meka
53	Mulate Abate		M	Execution	Meka
54	Jajew Birhanu		M	Execution	Nebira
55	Melese Mekuanint	29	M	Execution	Aderkay 02
56	Birhane Cherinet	37	M	Shelling	Meka
57	Adelelew Muluken	47	M	Execution	Zarima
58	Solomon Gebre-Egziabher		M	Shelling	Aderkay 02
59	Melese Gebre-Selassie		M	Execution	Aderkay 02
60	Gashaw Mekonnen		M	Execution	Aderkay 02
61	Wolde Tamirat		M	Execution	Aderkay 02

62	Aba Mekuanent Demoz		M	Shelling	Ber-Mariam
63	Kinfe Birhane		M	Shelling	Adi-Argafi
64	Gashaw Marie		M	Execution	Aba-Mar
65	Hayat		F	Shelling	Zarima
66	Tigabu Birhanu	27	M	Execution	Adarkay
67	Nurhusen Osman	13	M	Execution	Adarkay
68	Shifferaw Zewale		M	Execution	Adarkay
69	Gebre-Egziabher		M	Execution	Adarkay
70	Eshe Besora	32	M	Execution	Adarkay

Rape

The AAA has received reports of widespread rape committed by Tigrayan forces across Aderkay. The victims included several girls under the age of 18 and elderly women. An administrator in the area, told AAA, “*TPLF forces raped more than one hundred women and girls in Aderkay Woreda.*” A local prosecutor told AAA investigators that “*Seventy-five of the women that were raped by the TPLF forces reported unwanted pregnancies to the Woreda justice center.*”

He went on to share the following gruesome story with AAA.

“One day, during their (TPLF) control of Aderkay, members of the Tigrayan forces entered an Ethiopian Orthodox Church priest’s house in Kebele 02. They found the priest, his wife, and their 11-year-old child inside the house. Members of the Tigrayan militia demanded that the family give them food. The family provided food and water. When members of the Tigrayan militia were finished eating, they physically restrained the priest. They tied his two hands behind his back and executed him behind his house. They proceeded to gang rape the mother and her 11-year-old child. The child died immediately after

the act, and the mother fell unconscious. The mother is presently receiving some medical help in Debark Hospital.”

The AAA has identified large discrepancies between reports of rape at the woreda level and zone level. The North Gonder Zone women’s affairs office has recorded that only 16 girls and women were raped by the TPLF forces. The administration is consequently only providing support for the 16 victims. However, AAA’s investigators have confirmed from multiple sources that there were well over one hundred women and girls who were raped by the Tigrayan forces. The high discrepancy indicates underreporting possibly in part due to the social stigma and shame victims of rape face. Even with third-party eyewitness testimonies, victims rarely consent to publicly come forward. This makes it particularly difficult to compile a complete list of victims. This report contains the names of only women who consented to share their names and addresses.

Partial list of women that were raped by the TPLF forces who consented to identify themselves (names anonymized for privacy).

No.	Name (Initials)	Age	Location/Kebele
1	B. G.	34	Adarkay
2	H. A.	29	Zarima
3	T. W.	37	Adarkay
4	F. A.	31	Adarkay

Internal Displacement

The TPLF invasion of Aderkay Woreda has resulted in the displacement of tens of thousands of ethnic Amhara civilians. AAA reporters have verified that almost 80 percent of the total population of Aderkay Woreda has been displaced to neighboring Woredas in the North Gonder zone. **86,866 people have been displaced from Aderkay Woreda.** This number includes people who are living in neighboring host communities through renting houses in groups, staying with families and relatives, or surviving through other options

they find available. The displaced residents are living under desperate conditions in the towns of Debark and Zarima.

An IDP Coordinators in North Gonder Zone told AAA that “*Debark town has currently sheltered a total of 15,636 male and 14,931 female displaced civilians. Zarima town has sheltered a total of 30,502 male and 25,797 female civilians.*” Out of the total number of displaced civilians, only elderly people, women, girls, and specially protected persons are living in the (Internally Displaced People) IDP camps of Debark and Zarima. The total number of displaced people who are temporarily sheltered in IDP camps is 10,535.

Condition of People Living in IDP Sites

Displaced Aderkay residents at the Zarima and Debark IDP camp sites face continuously deteriorating living conditions. There is a shortage of essential medical supplies and basic medicine for chronic illnesses like diabetes, blood pressure, and mental disorders. Shortage of food, lack of water, and lack of female hygiene/sanitary kits are also common concerns at these sites. Furthermore, facilities are not safe and accessible for the elderly and persons with disabilities. An IDP at the Debark camp, told AAA “*We are living desperately here; there is a shortage of food, shortage of medical drugs, shortage of water and lack of various other essential things necessary for living.*”

Destruction of Property and Looting

The Aderkay Woreda administration has assembled a special body to investigate the destruction and looting brought about by the TPLF forces. This investigation is yet to be completed. AAA investigators, however, have collected preliminary data on both private and public properties that were destroyed and looted by the TPLF forces. A total of 24 private homes have been destroyed by shell fire from the TPLF. Schools, health centers, and administrative buildings were also intentionally destroyed and looted by the TPLF. Many others were the subjects of destruction and looting.

An official at the communication affairs of Aderkay Woreda, told AAA *“Almost 80 % of private and all public property in Aderkay Woreda is either looted or destroyed by the TPLF forces.”* He cited Aderkay secondary and preparatory schools as an example. He told AAA that *“TPLF militia looted all computers, plasmas and other supplies of the school. Then they vandalized the windows and doors.”*

List of schools in Aderkay looted and destroyed by the TPLF forces.

No.	Name	Location/Kebele
1	Buya Primary School	Amba-Mariam Kebele
2	Walena Primary School	Walina Kebele
3	Degaro Primary School	Degaro Kebele
4	Amba-Mariam Primary School	Amba-Mariam Kebele
5	Hawuza Primary School	Aderkay town, 02 Kebele
6	Aderkay Primary School	Aderkay town, 02 Kebele
7	Ber-Mariam Primary School	Ber-Mariam Kebele
8	Chew-Ber Primary School	Chew-Ber Kebele
9	Aderkay Primary and Elementary School	Aderkay town, 02 Kebele
10	Aderkay Secondary and Preparatory School	Aderkay town, 01 Kebele
11	Zarima Primary School	Zarima town
12	Zarima Primary and Secondary School	Zarima town
13	Aderkay Polytechnic College	Aderkay town 02



(a) Photograph of Aderkay Polytechnic College after it was looted and shelled by the TPLF forces (External View)



(b) Photograph of Aderkay Polytechnic College after it was looted and shelled by the TPLF forces (Internal View)

Figure 1

List of health centers in Aderkay looted and destroyed by the TPLF forces.

No.	Name	Location/ Kebele
1	Walena Health Center	Walena Kebele
2	Dagaro Health Center	Degaro Kebele
3	Amba-Mariam Health Center	Amba-Mariam Kebele
4	Buya Health Center	Buya kebele
5	Aderkay Health Center	Aderkay town
6	Zarima Health Center	Zarima town

7 Aderkay Primary Hospital Aderkay town

List of Governmental Institutions in Aderkay looted and destroyed by the TPLF forces.

No.	Name	Location/Kebele
1	Aderkay Woreda Health Center Secretariat Office	Aderkay
2	Zarima Sub-Secretariat Office for Health Centers	Zarima
3	Aderkay Woreda Administration Pools	Aderkay
4	Office for Agriculture in Aderkay	Aderkay
5	Aderkay Woreda Water Distribution Center	Aderkay
6	Commercial Bank of Ethiopia	Aderkay



(a)

Figure 2: Photograph of Aderkay Woreda Administration Office destroyed by the TPLF forces

Religious Institutions damaged by the TPLF forces.

No.	Name	Location/kebele	Manner of destruction
1	The Church of Medhanialem	Zarima	Shelling
2	The Church of St. George	Zarima	Shelling

List of 13 private properties looted and destroyed. An additional eleven private houses

including residential houses belonging to monks of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church were also shelled and intentionally destroyed across different kebeles.

No.	Name/owner (initials)	Type of houses	Location or Kebele
1	A. Y.	Ras Dejen Hotel	Aderkay
2	T. K.	Residential house	Aderkay
3	T. G.	Residential house	Aderkay
4	M.	Residential house	Aderkay
5	T. H.	Residential house	Zarima
6	W. T.	Residential house	Aderkay
7	A. B.	Residential house	Aderkay
8	Y. D.	Business	Aderkay
9	D. J.	Business	Aderkay
10	A. Y.	Residential house	Aderkay
11	W. M.	Residential house	Aderkay
12	A. G.	Residential house	Aderkay
13	S. K.	Business	Aderkay

Summary of Findings

The central focus of this investigation was identifying the humanitarian crisis and infrastructural destruction the Tigrayan forces brought upon Aderkay Woreda between July 24, 2021, and September 10, 2022. Below is a summary of civil and human rights violations our investigation identified at the time of writing this report.

- Killed at least 85 civilians in Aderkay Woreda.
- Raped at least 100 girls and women in Aderkay Woreda.
- Exposed at least 89 girls and women to unwanted pregnancies as a result of rape from the Tigrayan TPLF forces.

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- Caused displacement of more than 86,866 residents of Aderkay who are living under abject conditions in the nearby towns of Debark and Zarima.
 - Looted and destroyed thirteen schools, seven health centers, several residential homes, private businesses, governmental institutions, and religious institutions.
 - Currently control seven kebeles of Aderkay Woreda, including the woreda capital. This indicates human suffering and infrastructural damage will continue in the area.

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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