



Continued arrests of Amhara journalists and rights lawyers in Ethiopia - November 2023

Summary

The Amhara Association of America (AAA) has documented Ethiopian authorities' continued mass arrests of Amhara politicians, journalists, civic association leaders, activists, and even lawyers representing victims arrested since April 2023 when widespread civil protests began and in the following months as armed conflict ensued between Fano freedom fighters and regime forces. The initial wave of arrests included high-profile figures such as Meskerem Abera, author and owner of *Ethio-Nikat* Media, Dr. Wondwossen Assefa, a political figure, and Assistant Professor Sisay Awgichew, President of the *Shewa Peace and Development Association*, who are all still in jail and denied their bail rights.¹²³ Another wave of mass arrests of Amhara figures happened in early August 2023 when Fano freedom fighters were able to capture major towns in the Amhara Region which prompted federal authorities to declare a state of emergency. Prominent Amhara figures who enjoyed parliamentary immunity by law including

¹See statement from [Amnesty International](#)

²See statement from [Coalition For Women in Journalism \(CFWIJ\)](#)

³See article from [Committee to Protect Journalists \(CPJ\)](#)

Christian Tadele, member of the *House of Peoples' Representatives*, Dr. Kassa Teshager, member of the *Addis Ababa City Council*, and Yohannes Buayalew, member of the *Amhara Regional State Council* and *The House of Federation* and dozens of journalists were victims of this wave of arrests.⁴ **AAA's latest investigation revealed a potential new wave of arrests of Amhara journalists and lawyers between November 12-14, 2023. Among the latest arrest victims are journalist Belay Manaye, attorney Talema Gizachew and attorney Addisu Getaneh.**

The November 13, 2023 arrest of journalist Belay Manaye

On November 13, 2023, at 6:30 p.m., Federal Police arrested journalist Belay Manaye as he was leaving his place of work. Belay is Co-founder and Managing Director of independent online media outlet *Ethio-News*.⁵ Ethio-News was known for its impartial reporting on the ongoing war in Amhara Region and the ensuing civilian casualties and produced two daily programs. Belay's colleague Belete Kassa told AAA while Belay was arrested, authorities had no court warrant and that he was prohibited from contact and visitation from his lawyer for legal counsel. He is now being detained in the Federal Crimes Investigations Office, located in Mexico Square in Addis Ababa city. Belay has yet to be told the reason for his arrest nor brought before a court since his arrest. Belete also informed AAA that owing to Belay's arrest, Ethio-News has been forced to suspend its daily reporting including on the war and civilian suffrage in the Amhara Region. This is also not Belay's first arrest as he and former colleagues at *Asrat Media* including journalist Mulugeta Anberber were arrested on August 6, 2020 following their reporting of ethnic violence against Amhara people in Oromia Region.^{6,7}

⁴See report from [Amhara Association of America \(AAA\)](#)

⁵See the Youtube page for [Ethio-News](#)

⁶See report from [Committee to Protect Journalists \(CPJ\)](#)

⁷See report from [Human Rights Watch \(HRW\)](#)



Figure 1: Co-Founder and Managing Director of *Ethio-News*, Belay Manaye, who was arrested on November 13, 2023.

The November 12 and 14, 2023, arrests of rights lawyers Talema Gizachew and Addisu Getaneh

The Prosperity Party security forces also arrested lawyers who previously served as legal counsel for Amhara political prisoners. According to attorney Solomon Gezahegn who spoke to AAA, Talema Gizachew one of the lawyers representing 23 Amhara political prisoners under the case file of Dr. Wondwossen Assefa was arrested on November 12, 2023, in Addis Ababa city by Federal Police. Talema was transported to the Federal Crimes Investigations Office and denied visitation by his co-lawyers, possibly to prevent him from consulting with them about his or his clients' cases. The reason for his arrest was not communicated to him nor has he been brought before a court since his arrest.

Two days later, on November 14, 2023, another well-known rights lawyer, Addisu Getaneh, was unlawfully abducted in Addis Ababa and taken to the Federal Investigations Office. The reason for his arrest was not told to him and he has not been brought before a

court. Addisu used to forward legal aid to various Amhara prisoners of conscience including journalist Meaza Mohammed and political figure Yilkal Getnet who were both arrested multiple times in 2022 and prior to this period. Both Addisu and Talema were handling active cases and were jointly representing author Tadios Tantu whose case is pending in the Criminal Branch of the Federal Court.⁸ Another lawyer source who opted for anonymity also informed AAA that regime security forces have been threatening other rights lawyers representing Amhara prisoners to arrest them if they engage in actions the government deems acceptable including speaking to journalists about the cases they are handling. This is not the first arrest for attorney Addisu Getaneh who was detained on May 23, 2022 during the nationwide crackdown on Amhara dissidents.⁹ Addisu was also detained on March 25, 2018 alongside notable opposition figure Eskinder Nega and journalists/bloggers Temesgen Dessalegn, Sintayehu Chekol, Woynshet Molla and others.¹⁰ Since the latest wave of arrests against Amhara people that began in April 2023 legal professionals have been targets. For example, on April 7, 2023 attorney Aleligne Mihretu was arrested as he was returning from visiting Amhara detainees.¹¹¹² Aleligne previously represented Amhara prisoners detained under the *Tigray People's Liberation Front* (TPLF) dominated regime prior to 2018, including Colonel Demeke Zewdu, Chairman of the *Welkait Amhara Identity Repatriation Committee*.

⁸See report from [Amhara Association of America \(AAA\)](#)

⁹See report from [Ethiopian Human Rights Defenders Center \(EHRDC\)](#)

¹⁰See report from [Amnesty International](#)

¹¹See update from [Amhara Association of America \(AAA\)](#)

¹²See report from [IAPL Monitoring Committee on Attacks on Lawyers](#)



(a) Addisu Getaneh



(b) Talema Gizachew

Figure 2: Rights lawyers arrested for representing Amhara political prisoners on November 12 and 14, 2023.

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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