



Killing, injury and arbitrary arrests of Amhara civilians by security personnel during Timket celebrations in Addis Ababa city

Executive Summary

The Amhara Association of America (AAA) has verified that between January 19 and 20, 2023, security personnel in the Bole and Nefas-Silk sub-cities of Addis Ababa city carried out various identity-based abuses against civilians in connection with the Timket (Epiphany) celebration by followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC). The investigation found that Addis Ababa and Federal Police killed at least one youth, injured an additional four youth and arrested 25 civilians on the basis of their ethnic Amhara identity in Addis Ababa city, federal capital of Ethiopia.

Killing of an Amhara youth, injury of four others and arrests of 11 civilians in the Bole Bulbula area of Bole sub-city in Addis Ababa on January 20, 2023

AAA has verified from witnesses and victims' family members that security forces perpetrated widespread human rights violations against civilians on January 20, 2023, during the Timket celebrations in Addis Ababa city (capital city of Ethiopia). The perpetrators were Addis Ababa police and Federal police which caused killing of at least one youth, bodily injury to four youths and arbitrary arrest of at least 11 civilians. On

January 20, 2023, followers of the EOTC gathered for the yearly celebration of St. Michael's day in *Bole-Bulbula* area of Bole sub-city in Addis Ababa city. During the celebrations, the worshippers marched from the football stadium (Quas Meda) to Michael's Church. The religious ceremony involved clergy wearing distinct robes and umbrellas containing various hues and performed hymns, while youth accompanied them dressed in their finest wear, while singing in choir.

As part of the religious ceremony, the holy *Tabot* (ceremonial replica of the Holy Ark of the Covenant) was transported to the Mariam Church in the Bole-Bulbula area however Addis Ababa police created a disturbance by arresting the youth choir leader. The reason of his arrest was the allegation that he was wearing a t-shirt depicting *Emperor Tewodros II* (a historic figure and former ruler of Ethiopia). The police members dragged him to the Addis Ababa police pick-up car alleging he was a supporter of *Amhara Fano*. While other youths gathered and peacefully requested the police free the young man, saying he had done nothing wrong. In response to the pleas of the youth, the security forces used excessive force with the help of their guns.

A witness during the time spoke to AAA saying:

“When the youth requested the police to free the arrested individual so that they could continue their traditional celebration the police responded ‘you are supporters of the Amhara Fano.’ They started to shoot at the youth who stood around the police patrol vehicle. First, they shot Bilal Tadesse on his chest and he died after a short while. They also shot Gashaw Birhanu on his leg, Kerebign Admassu on his leg, Moges Gashaw on his hamstring and Tesfaye Birara on his stomach, which resulted in critical bodily injuries. They took 11 individuals to police stations located in Bole Bulbula including Bariwu who led the traditional song before his arrest.”



Figure 1: Photographed is Bilal Tadesse, a young man who was killed by security personnel wearing Federal Police uniforms on January 20, 2023, in Addis Ababa city.

Additional sources confirmed that Bilal Tadesse was killed by security personnel wearing Federal Police uniforms. At the time of this report’s composition, the victim’s body has yet to be returned to relatives. When the deceased’s family asked police to handover the body, police replied “*giving the corpus might raise unrest in his homeland of Gojjam so that we are not going to provide you the body.*” The injuries of the other four individuals were the result of arbitrary and disproportionate force used by Addis Ababa police. AAA further confirmed from families that the three individuals named Gashaw Birhanu, Tesfaye Birara and Moges Gashaw sustained critically injuries and were hospitalized in *Zewditu Hospital*. A family member of one of the victims, Yohannes (name changed), told AAA that doctors conducted the surgery on Tesfaye Birara on the evening of January 20, 2023, and were able to remove the bullet from his stomach. The doctors told them that his

intestines were severely damaged by the bullet and that he was in critical condition. The other individual named Gashaw Birhanu was seriously injured on his leg where the bullet remained. Doctors ordered a referral to *Menelik Hospital* for Gashaw. Upon the composition of this report, he is waiting his turn in queue to be seen at Menelik Hospital. Doctors also told the victim's family if they have the financial means to consider taking him to a private hospital to get immediate care. The other victim, Moges Gashaw, suffered an injury on his hamstring and doctors allegedly opted not to conduct surgery.



Figure 2: Photographed is the injured leg of Gashaw Birhanu after he was severely injured by Addis Ababa police on January 20, 2023.

Security forces arbitrarily detain 14 Amharas alleging they chanted Fano in Nefas-Silk sub-city in Addis Ababa city on January 19, 2023

AAA has confirmed on January 19, 2023, members of Addis Ababa police arbitrarily arrested 14 Amhara civilians in the Mariam-Sefer area of Jemo Woreda 1 in Nefas-Silk sub-city in Addis Ababa city. At the time, the youth were returning from St. Gabriel's Church following Timket celebrations. When they marched from St. Gabriel's

Church to Mariam area, they sang traditional Timket songs wearing a t-shirt uniform with the number 7 on their back.

A witness, Tesfaye (name changed) told AAA:

“When the youth arrived at Mariam-Sefer, members of the Addis Ababa police blocked the road and ordered us to stop singing. After that, they (police) ordered them (the youth) to stand before the police until they called and notify their commander about the incident. They (police) called their commander and he ordered the police to arrest everyone there.”

Following the order of the commander, 14 individuals all from the Amhara ethnic group were arrested by police and taken to a police station located in the Mariam-Sefer area. The reasons for their arrest was allegedly for chanting the names of notable Amhara Fano and other popular figures such as Fano Zemene Kassie and the late Brigadier General Asaminew Tsige among others. Among the arrested individuals, two of them are police members who were on leave, named Mulugeta and Simeneh. There were also two members of the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) unidentified by name who were arbitrarily arrested at the time. The two ENDF personnel were released the next morning (January 20, 2023) from police custody. According to AAA’s sources, on January 21, 2023, the police station wanted to release the remaining detainees on a bail of 200 ETB each for the remaining twelve individuals. However, other members of the police particularly the Oromo officers prohibited the release up until the composition of this report. Among the currently detained individuals, AAA was able to identify names of the following four: Adamu Bimerew, Demeke Abe Hailu Bimerew, Mulugeta (last name unknown) and Simeneh (last name unknown).

Another Amhara man by the name of Abebe Getachew was also arrested by Addis Ababa police on January 19, 2023. He was arrested while he was on his way to a place of

baptism around Mariam-Sefer. They arrested him simply for wearing a blanket with green, yellow and red colors (colors of the Ethiopian national flag).

One of the arresting police officers told him:

“You can wear this cloth in your land, the Amhara Region, but you cannot wear this in Addis Ababa, this is the land of Oromia.”

They released him after a while with reprimand not to wear the clothing again.

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.

- Contact us via Email: info@amharaamerica.org
- Visit our website at www.AmharaAmerica.org
- Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)
- Subscribe to our [Telegram Channel](#) and contact us on Telegram via:
+1-404-458-7046
- To make donations: <https://www.amharaamerica.org/get-involved>

