



Transcript of exclusive press briefing given by Amhara Fano leaders on current affairs with foreign journalists and analysts

Updated April 2024

Summary

On Saturday, April 13, 2024, Amhara Fano leaders held an exclusive press briefing with foreign journalists and analysts on current affairs facilitated by the Amhara Association of America (AAA). The Fano leaders received various questions which were translated from English to Amharic and then the Fano were given ample time to respond in Amharic. The audio from the press briefing was recorded and shared with foreign stakeholders who attended the session live and those who could not attend due to schedule constraints. The final version of the briefing is edited therefore order of speakers may not reflect the order in which they spoke during the live briefing. This document contains a transcript of English translations of their responses (originally in Amharic). The audio is available [here](#) and a full transcript is available below with questions (in English and Amharic) and responses.

Disclaimer

AAA is a nonprofit organization that is not affiliated with any political party in The United States or in Ethiopia. AAA facilitates discussions to promote understanding between Amhara leaders and various foreign stakeholders. AAA does not claim to represent the Amhara Fano.

Fano Leaders

The Fano leaders who were present for at least some of the press briefing are listed below but do not represent an exhaustive list of all Fano leaders. Fano leaders and members are often referred to by their full name preceded by the title *Fano* and/or *Arbegna* (Amharic word roughly translating to “freedom fighter”) and often professional designations such as “Dr” or “Engineer” however these designations and titles are omitted in the list below for brevity. The attending Fano leaders and their positions within their respective structures were as follows:

- **Aseged Mekonnen**, Head of Amhara Fano Shewa
- **Abebe Fentaw**, Head of Public Relations for East Amhara Fano, Amhara Unity Council
- **Asres Mare Damtie**, Deputy Head of Amhara Fano Gojjam
- **Beyene Alamaw**, Head of Foreign Affairs and Diplomacy for Amhara Fano Gonder

First question set

1. What are Fano trying to achieve? የፋኖ ትግል ማሳካት የሚፈልገው ግብ ምንድን ነዉ?

-
2. Does Fano have a central structure across Amhara region? የአማራ ፋኖ የተለያዩ አካባቢ ያሉትን ፋኖዎች በአንድ አቅፎ የያዘ መዋቅር ዘርግቷል ማለት ይቻላል ወይ?
 3. What has been done so far when it comes to explaining the objectives behind the Fano struggle to the diplomatic community? የፋኖ ትግል ዓለማዎች ለዲፕሎማቲክ ኮሚኒቲ ከማስረዳት አንጻር ምን ያክል ስራ ተሰርቷል?

Responses to first question set

Aseged

Thank you - my name is Aseged Mekonnen

I am leader of Amhara Fano Shewa (Command)

I will respond to the first question that was posed in brief

Amhara Fano are fighting foremost to safeguard the survival of the Amhara people This is because the Amhara people have suffered genocide continuously over the past six years

Therefore the primary purpose is to ensure the survival of the Amhara people

After Fano are able to ensure this they will transition to other matters

However the primary purpose of Fano is the survival of the Amhara people

Asres

My name is Fano Asres Mare Damtie and I am deputy head of Amhara Fano Gojjam

The goal of the current Fano resistance is to protect the Amhara people from threats and this can be seen in two ways

The first one is physical security - ensuring Amhara people can live peacefully as any Ethiopian

The second is to ensure the Amhara people have their due political representation In pursuit of these things it is necessary to change the existing constitutional order which has resulted in political marginalization of the Amhara people

The constitution falsely portrays unfair relationships between various ethnic groups and aims to rectify that but it was written to make way for creation of new empires at the expense of the Amhara people

This is through changing the government structure or undertaking "regime change"

We believe that we can create a system incorporating the will of the Ethiopian people through our armed resistance

The other question was whether we have a single command structure

There are no political differences or differences in goals within the Fano struggle

Under the current circumstance as you have heard from the three of us we are operating while united in our goals and vision

At this time there are Fano army structures in all [Amhara] areas with wide membership and respected leaders

[Inaudible]

We are currently in the process of making a centralized command structure I can not say this would not impact the struggle however we currently we are close to forming the central command

Significant work has not been done in explaining our stance to the diplomatic community Aside from the work done in a voluntary capacity by AAA and other diaspora collectives coordinated work has not been done

Abebe

My name is Fano Abebe Fentaw and I am head of public relations for the East Amhara Fano - Amhara Fano Unity Council

The first question was addressed by Arbegna Aseged Mekonnen and there is not much we can add

We emerged as Fano undertaking this resistance under the belief that the Amhara people face an existential threat and that we had to mitigate this threat

From this perspective our primary aim is to ensure the survival of the Amhara people

Our goal is to ensure our people survive

Aside from this I will not go into extensive details as it has been discussed already

The existential threat is the result of false narratives which have amassed over many years And over the past six years genocide has been perpetrated against the Amhara people which is so extensive that the deaths of Amharas has become normalized as a statistic

Even now these acts continue against those residing in Oromia

Therefore genocide is taking place against the Amhara people

And these crimes of genocide are systematic with involvement from the regime apparatus of the Oromo Prosperity Party regime [Oromo Liberation Front - Prosperity regime] Our primary purpose is to protect our people who had come out saying "don't kill us" so we are simply saying "don't kill our people"

So our goal is to ensure we can emerge victorious in our struggle for self-preservation

Afterwards our wish is to join with fellow Ethiopians in building a democratic system in Ethiopia

In order to achieve this we must overthrow the regime led by Abiy Ahmed and his Prosperity Party officials

Therefore this is our aim as Amhara Fano in brief - thank you

Thank you again - the responses as made by my comrade Asres Mare Damtie are just as he says

From this there are some additions - efforts have been and are underway to organize a centralized command

Our brothers are here among the stakeholders in that process

Therefore it can be said this structure does presently exist

Based on the situation now it can be said this central structure currently exists and this will be a matter we bring to the public soon

Beyene

Thank you and firstly my name is Arbegna Beyene Alamaw

I am head of external affairs (Amhara Fano Gonder)

I wanted to begin with addressing why Amhara Fano are fighting

The struggle we are currently undertaking is one for self-preservation

And we can only ensure our survival when the regime and group in power committing the crime of genocide is overthrown

Our reason for this struggle is ensuring the security of our people [*technical interruption*]

Overall we believe in order to resolve the problem faced by our people the Abiy regime and group in power must be removed from its foundation

Further, regarding organizational structures

We have a structure with both military and political divisions

This structure includes lawyers, doctors, farmers and economists and other professionals so all disciplines are present in the structure

Our structure includes all those who understand the significance of this struggle for self-preservation against the suffering, misery and destruction brought on by the regime of Abiy Ahmed who wishes to destroy the country and impose Oromumma

There are structures from all four regions and a central joint structure which incorporates all regions equally and helps to facilitate joint planning

And as a result of past fighting, between 60-75% of area in the region is under Fano control

Regarding the administering itself it has been addressed previously so there is no need to repeat it

We currently find ourselves at the final juncture

We have created a disciplined army that is stronger than ever and understands the cause for which it fights

I have finished - thank you brothers

Second question set

1. What took place yesterday in Addis Ababa? Was it a coordinated operation? Do Fano have plans to conduct similar operations in Addis Ababa? በአዲስ አበባ በቅርቡ ፋኖ ያደረገው አፕሬሽን በደንብ ታስቦባት የየደረገ አፕሬሽን ነበር ወይ? ከነበረስ ምን ለማሳከት ያለመ አፕሬሽን ነበር? መሰል አፕሬሽን በአዲስ አበባ ወደፊት ለማድረግ ታቅዳላቹህ ወይ?
2. Do you believe it is possible to undertake negotiations with the Ethiopian Government? ከኢትዮጵያ መንግሥት ጋር ድርድር ይቻላል ብላችሁ ታስባለችሁ?

Responses to second question set

Asres

Ok - regarding the matter of what transpired in Addis Ababa similar operations have been undertaken in various major cities targeting only military and security structures
What makes the Addis Ababa operation different and the reason it drew media attention is probably because it was the first of its kind in the capital. This and other operations have been planned and coordinated for a long time.

Going forward this work will continue in an improved manner

Such operations are carried out in order to attain victories and fulfill our vision and the end goals of the struggle so they will continue

Next to address the question of whether Amhara Fano can negotiate with the regime

[Inaudible] ...millions of young people have entered this resistance

As this has been happening our country has a leader with no sense of accountability for all that has happened so we have no faith that they will prepare themselves for negotiations in good will

As when they will come to that reality and when they will accept that truth, the struggle on the ground will determine it

The reality on the ground and what must be done without any political or moral hesitation is to crush the Ethiopian military that has invaded the Amhara people and region, its the only plan

From our experience so far, we don't believe the government has achieved the capability to resolve the Amhara people's questions through negotiations

Abebe

Regarding negotiations there is something we want the international community to understand

The Amhara people are not difficult to administer and believe in a central government and the history of the past supports this

The people like peace and want peace

In fact this is a people who have made significant contributions to peace efforts in Ethiopia and throughout Africa

This is the case now and it will be in the future too

Despite this there have been efforts to falsely portray the Amhara people as being against peace including by the ruling party and this is part of the false narrative rhetoric

The Amhara Fano entered its resistance in order to ensure the survival of the Amhara people saying "don't kill our people"

This is a people who have been subject to horrific atrocities in the 21st century

This is a people suffering genocide

And this genocide is systemic - led and perpetrated by the regime by order of Abiy Ahmed Therefore allowing Abiy Ahmed to continue his reign would mean endorsing the enslavement of our people

And that would be if the people were allowed to live as slaves

We cannot accept this scenario but Abiy Ahmed seeks to fulfill his vision of prosperity on the burials of the Amhara people

We fully understand this reality so we refuse to negotiate with the Abiy Ahmed regime with reason

The matter of our survival being the primary reason

That is against the Prosperity Party regime led by him and his affiliates

So the continuation of this regime's rule would mean the continuation of the existential threat against the Amhara people and this threat could in fact result in endangerment of being eliminated

The Amhara people have been engaged in a heroic resistance against a regime using everything from AK-47s up to drones to massacre the Amhara people including innocent civilians

We strive to mitigate this, neutralize the fear and ensure our survival

If we were to negotiate this would mean salvaging this regime

And the continuation of this regime would mean the people would move towards being wiped out

The Amhara people are peace seeking and the Amhara Fano came from this society and are fighting this war in a highly disciplined manner

We are fighting to ensure the survival of the Amhara people with discipline meaning the world can attest we are not committing acts of theft or rape which is unthinkable for us

This is our moral stature which the international community should understand

The Amhara Fano will ensure its survival and promote a democratic system not only in

Ethiopia but in the Horn of Africa region

Amhara Fano are fighters capable of making grand change and carry a grand vision

This is our vision

On behalf of Amhara Fano I would like to clarify our stance towards negotiations is not because our people dislike peace or are war-like as they say

So if we negotiate and the regime continues the Amhara people will disappear

Therefore the regime must be removed from its foundation not only for the Amhara people but from Ethiopia and East Africa since their fate is interlinked

As you all know, with the Red Sea issue and the Somaliland issue, he (Abiy) was trying to mobilize the Ethiopian people for war but when he could not succeed now he is plotting to start other wars

The removal of this regime from its foundation would not just bring substantial change to the Amhara people or the Ethiopian people but also for the entire Horn of Africa. That is the big change we are bringing

The international community should take this into consideration and everyone should do their part to get rid of the murderous and destructive regime of Abiy Ahmed

The reason we refuse to negotiate is because this would mean the continuation of the Abiy regime and the elimination of the Amhara people

This would make us complicit in our own demise therefore we reject negotiation

We have set out in this final struggle and we are in a circumstance where we are fully committed to this cause

We are currently in favorable circumstances and are in a position where we can ensure the survival of our people

On this matter we wish for the international community and especially for America to give this matter due attention

Thank you

Aseged

Thank you - we are at a time when Amhara Fano from all four corners are coming together under a single centralized command structure

This is because we are approaching the time of victory

So we are working to bring our structures together

Our ultimate goal is winning and taking power

As Amhara Fano we believe peace and equality for all people can only be assured when we enter and take control of Arat Kilo

As we do this we will not carry out any negotiations with the murderous and racist Abiy regime and his affiliates

There will be a transition period and during this transition there will be engagement with communities in Ethiopia over how to build a new system

We will create an Ethiopia which promotes peace and equality for all its citizens

Amhara Fano believes this will be achieved only through engaging in discussions in equality

Therefore when we topple this regime we will lead a transitional government And in this transition we will conduct dialogue with various communities in Ethiopia and with international observers to promote equality

The Amhara Fano believe there is no other option but to build a country where all can enjoy peace, equality and where people can move and go outside in peace

This is our ultimate vision - thank you

Beyene

I can comment on the operation which was conducted in Addis Ababa

For a long time a system for carrying out operations comprising members from across the four parts of the region

The system is intended to selectively target regime leaders and officials considered to be part of the regime's spinal card and brain

This will also continue and our brother the heroic Arbegna Fano Nahusenay

Andargae was also a leader within Amhara Fano Gonder The work that was done was satisfactory to us

It was a first display of where we want to go

This work will continue tomorrow and the day after

It was a demonstration that Fano are organized even near Arat Kilo directly under the ruling party

The work was undertaken jointly with participation from Shewa Fano, Wollo Fano and Gojjam Fano

This was also because there is work underway to bring the Fano from all four regions under a central command

This operation was one way we have demonstrated our cooperation

I believe there was also a question raised about negotiations if I am not mistaken As Fano we have no wish to negotiate with the murderous regime of Abiy Ahmed which employs ethnic federalism for its ethnonationalist agenda

The reason being we believe ethnic federalism is the root cause of the ethnic-based massacres, mass displacement, persecution and destruction of property

And because we believe regime change is necessary

So as Fano we have no desire to negotiate with this murderous criminal regime

When we realize the end goal of our struggle and regime change occurs it will become possible to hold dialogue with brotherly communities and people's across Ethiopia on self-governance and leadership

Third question set

1. Does Fano have a political wing and does it have any political strategies for governing areas under its control? Are there areas they have under their control now and how are they governing those areas? ፋኖ የፖለቲካ ክንፍ እና በቁጥጥር ስር የሚሆኑ ቦታዎችን ለማስተዳደር የፖለቲካ ስትራቴጂ አለዉ ወይ? በአሁኑ ወቅት በፋኖ ቁጥጥር ስር የሆኑ አካባቢዎች አሉ? ፋኖ እነዚህን ቦታዎች እንዴት ነው እያስተዳደረ ያለው?

Responses to third question set

Abebe

Great thank you - I believe both points have been addressed by my comrades

There are many things that have been raised in connection with the goals of Fano

As it is known we are leading a struggle for self-preservation

We are balancing both the political and military wing as we continue our struggle

We have many educated members including doctors, professors so this is a struggle where we have professionals on the field with us and there is no shortage of expertise or political experience

There are many liberated areas and it is Fano that is administering in these areas

On this matter what is important to understand is outside of the main roads leading to Addis Ababa (and Arbegna Aseged may supplement this point)

We can see the majority of rural areas are under the effective control of Fano

They must understand our capacity as Fano because it is us who are administering

For us as East Amhara Fano, in the areas where we operate there is presence of the enemy's army in the major cities, there are Prosperity soldiers

We have avoided urban warfare to prevent our people from becoming collateral otherwise we are fully capable of engaging in these areas

We are fighting for our people but the regime has used any pretext to attack civilians including with drone attacks in major cities, so our operations in major cities has mainly been to get resources from our people as well as the enemy

The majority of rural areas are being administered by Amhara Fano

We are working on administration in rural areas at the kebele level we are organizing administrators and even members of the peace and security bureau

They should understand this and that the ruling power has been isolated to the major cities It is hard to call the ruling power a government. Most of the people live in rural areas. In the current situation, it would not be an exaggeration to say Fano is administering more than 60

Outside of the main roads and main cities the regime has no control for example Prosperity Party's hold on Woldia does not connect to Dessie. They (the government) can not use the road.

Next, we are in the process of interconnecting Wollo area as majority of the rural areas are being administered by Fano

We are also organizing and appointing leaders we are overseeing renewed development efforts

Over the past year the Amhara people did not pay tax to the Abiy government and even now they are not paying tax

The people are paying tax to Amhara Fano, who is fighting to safeguard the people, by providing food and other supports. The Prosperity Party is disabled and no longer functioning in Amhara Region.

This is what we would like you to know, our people have been using all available resources to support us, and as I stated earlier we have been organizing the people using our structure to help appoint leaders so we are working on administration for the people

And it can be said virtually all rural areas are under Fano administration On this occasion I would like you [facilitators] to relay this to them [international audience]

Beyene

When we set out in this struggle we had a political strategy in place and a political division There are a large number of areas under our control and we have arranged administrations including political representatives from the people at the kebele level

Overall Fano are administering but also in the middle of an armed struggle

So there are elected leaders from the public and we collect taxes to empower these leaders to administer effectively

We are doing this at the moment as we are administrating kebeles and woredas So we do have a political strategy in place which allows administration, we are able to facilitate administration from elected leaders and these leaders work closely with the Fano

This is what I can say in response to the question

The response was short in accordance with the question

This is what I can say

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>

