



Update on Developments in Ethiopia – May 22, 2023

The Amhara Association of America (AAA) has verified that as of May 22nd, 2023, large-scale human rights violations continue as a result of the Abiy regime’s war on Amhara Region including indiscriminate shelling of civilian populations by the Oromo Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF), mass arrests and a renewed attack on the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC). In parallel, the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) has launched artillery strikes onto the Welkait Tegede Setit Humera Zone and are mobilizing to launch invasions into Telemt and Raya. Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) continues its activities in Oromia Region which have also victimized civilians. Updates based on AAA’s independent investigations and assorted reports from independent media outlets are compiled below by geographic location and topic.

Updates from Welkait Tegede Setit Humera, North Gonder, Central Gonder Zones, Amhara Region

- According to reporting from Voice of Amhara, between May 21st and 22nd, 2023, the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) have begun firing heavy artillery on security forces stationed at the Tekeze River in Welkait Tegede Setit Humera Zone,

from Adi Goshu direction.¹

- On May 17th, Ethio-News reported that a rally which was planned to take place on May 17th, in Eastern Dembia (Central Gonder Zone) in support of the Prosperity Party's crackdown on Fano was canceled after Fano members expressed their concerns that it would not bring peace. In nearby Nefas Mewcha (South Gonder Zone), another rally was canceled after a warning message was circulated at night.
- Farmers in the Telemt Woredas of the North Gonder Zone are facing a severe scarcity of agricultural inputs such as fertilizers and seeds. There have been reports that certain TPLF entities are misleading farmers by promising to provide these inputs if they travel to Shire in the Tigray Region. However, this appears to be a deceptive tactic aimed at displacing Amharas from the area. Additionally, leaders from the East Telemt Woreda have informed Ethio-News that the TPLF militias are receiving logistics support from the ENDF. The ENDF justifies this support as a means to disarm the TPLF. Sibhat Mebratu, the Commander of TPLF's Army 111, has written a letter to the ENDF, urging them to expel Amhara militias from the Telemt and Welkait areas in the name of peace. The TPLF leadership claims to have received permission from the Federal Government to seize Raya and Telemt swiftly but acknowledges that capturing Welkait will take more time. The TPLF is mobilizing its fighters extensively following the Ethiopian National Election Board's denial of their legal status restoration. There have been sightings of TPLF militias moving cannons in Maychew, which they claim are intended for Eritrea.
- On May 18th, Ethio-News reported that protests called by the government in Tinfaz Begela and Belesa Woredas (Gonder), were flipped into anti-government protests when protesters chanted, "*all Amhara is Fano*", "*PP is killer of Amhara*", and made demands to stop the illegal detainment of Amharas. In Maksegnit (Central Gonder

¹See media [reporting](#) from Voice of Amhara on May 22, 2023

Zone), a protest against Fano was aborted by residents. In East and West Dembia (Chahit and Kola Diba) towns (Central Gonder Zone), protests called by the government were canceled due to pressure from local youth and other residents.

- On May 20th, Ethio-News reported that the Pretoria Peace Monitoring and Compliance Commission is set to visit Welkait and Raya to confirm the non-presence of non-federal forces (Amhara militias).

Updates from North Shewa Zone, Amhara Region

- According to reporting from Ethio-News as of May 22, 2023, ENDF representatives and local elders convened a meeting yesterday in Agam Ber and Debre Sina (Termaber Woreda, North Shewa Zone) to settle the conflict amicably.² But it was concluded without agreement. No more gunshots have been heard since the day before yesterday.
- AAA received reports that on May 18th, 2023, the ENDF fired heavy artillery on residents in and around Shewa Robit and Kewet Woreda (North Shewa Zone, Amhara Region) which led to civilian casualties. AAA was able to identify ten victims by name including eight who were killed as a result of the attack and two who sustained injuries.

No	Victim Name	Outcome	Occupation	Age	Woreda	Kebele	Neighborhood
1	Dereje Nigussie	Death	Clergyman	50	Kewet	Medina	Ashal
2	Babye Yeshidane	Death	Farmer	40	Kewet	Medina	Medina
3	Agizew Begashaw	Death	Farmer	45	Kewet	Sefi Beret	Hedi
4	Beriye Abera	Death	Farmer	40	Kewet	Abaytir	Abaytir
5	Ayefoker Zeyede	Death	Farmer	16	Kewet	Medina	Ashal

²See media [reporting](#) from Ethio-News on May 22, 2023

6	Wondessen Aragie	Death	Farmer	18	Kewet	Medina	Medina
7	Chanie Misganaw	Death	Laborer	32	Shewa Robit	3	Chare
8	Ayalkebet Mulatu	Death	Laborer	23	Kewet	Sefi Beret	Gelte Beret
9	Alemayehu Shifera	Injury	Farmer	49	Kewet	Sefi Beret	Hedi
10	Beletewe Tafiso	Injury	Farmer	32	Welo		

- In Shewa Robit, security forces are going house-to-house searches for firearms without warrants. As a result, many residents of the town have fled to the outskirts. Heavy gun fire and artillery sounds were heard in Mafud Gebaya, Rasa, and Armania near Debre Sina, in the early morning hours. The Voice of Amhara has also reported that ENDF has opened fire in the area at around 6:00 a.m., in the Mafud, Rasa, and Salayish Kebeles of the Shewa Robit area. According to Ethio-News, the residents of the area were forced to defend themselves against these unwarranted attacks.
- The Voice of Amhara has reported that since May 17th, 2023, the ENDF has been firing ZU-23 on villages around Rasa, Salayish, Arada, Medina and Mafud areas of Shewa Robit and the surrounding area, resulting in civilian casualties including children and women. Several houses were struck by artillery shells and sustained extensive damages. The ENDF soldiers have also prohibited residents of Shewa Robit to go to the areas to bury the victims. Farm animals were also killed by heavy artillery shells fired by the ENDF.
- On May 19th, heavy gunfire continued in Mafud Merkorios and Madeya areas which are around Shewa Robit town. Ethio-News reported that at least three additional bodies were discovered in Abay Atir village, located near Rasa, bringing the casualties caused by ENDF in the area to ten. An additional two people were killed in Tarmaber after heavy artillery was heard.

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- Ethio-News reported that ENDF left Rasa on May 20th, after killing 10 and injuring 5 people including women and religious leaders.

Updates from North Wollo Zone, Amhara Region

- According to Voice of Amhara, the TPLF's Army 24 is mobilizing around Korem town to launch a full-scale invasion of the Raya area.³
- Ethio-News has reported on May 17th that security forces are harassing residents in the Leba Serte neighborhood in Mersa (North Wollo), accusing them of hiding Fano and asking them to locate the Fano.
- On May 18, 2023, local police and state militias were compensated to open an attack against Fanos in the Bilbala area of Lasta Woreda, in North Wollo Zone. The Voice of Amhara has reported that ENDF is being transported to Lalibela by air to provide support for the local security forces.
- The Voice of Amhara reported on May 18th that ENDF deployed in the North Wollo Zone are killing, harassing, beating, arresting residents, as well as looting and confiscating legally obtained firearms, and other items. Areas such as Tekulesh, Chobi Ber (Raya Kobo), Kebero Meda (Angot), and Estaysh (Gazo) areas are being targeted. Residents are also being coerced to locate Fanos as well as provide rations for ENDF.
- According to Ethio-News, illegal arrests continued in the Raya Kobo area, and detainees have been transported to Woldia. Among the arrested is, Fenta Chanie, a member of local elders council known as Ze-Wold, Gobeze Fentaw, a teacher at Kobo High School, Fentaw Akele, a teacher and member of Ze-Wold, Addis Tekuarie, a teacher and member of Zewold, Amanuel Assefa, a member of National

³See media [reporting](#) from Voice of Amhara on May 22, 2023

Movement of Amhara (NaMA) party, Nigus Abera, A member of Raya Youth Association, as well as Assefa (last name unknown), and Atola (last name unknown) are among the 18 detainees of the local administration.

Updates from East Gojjam and West Gojjam Zones, Amhara Region

- Voice of Amhara reported that ENDF launched an attack on residents around Mertolemariam town in East Gojjam Zone. The attack took place on May 18th, resulting in many farmers being injured. They have also harassed and looted private property in Motta and Gindewoyn towns. There are also reports of women and girls being raped by the ENDF soldiers.
- Acute fertilizer shortage is hindering farming activity in Gojjam as well. Ethio-News reported that only 30% of the needed fertilizer was provided to the West Gojjam Zonal administration.

Updates from Oromia Region

- According to reporting from Ethio-News as of May 22, 2023, the OLA has taken control of Fincha, Kombolcha towns and surroundings of Shambu town in Horo Guduru Wollega Zone.⁴ The OLA is inflicting abuses against civilians in areas it controls. In Jardega town (Jardega Jarte Woreda in the same zone, following the withdrawal of ENDF, the OLA militants entered and looted over 46 cattle. Some of victims claimed the looters were government forces. In Bokoji, Arsi Zone, OLA militants opened attack that result for the death of 24 people including security forces. The same thing has been happening in Wolenchiti, Debre Zeyt, Meki and Ziway towns (East Shewa Zone).

⁴See media [reporting](#) from Ethio-News on May 22, 2023

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- On May 16th, a fierce conflict erupted in the vicinity of Wolenchiti town, situated in the East Shewa Zone, as the OLA clashed with the ENDF. The intense fighting, which lasted from 4:30 to 7:00 p.m., resulted in the closure of the vital Djibouti-Addis Ababa highway. Tragically, reports from Ethio-News sources indicate that at least seven civilians lost their lives during the violence. In the aftermath, the OLA issued a press statement claiming victory while also accusing the ENDF of interfering with the Tanzania discussions.
 - Two days later, on May 18th, the OLA carried out an attack in the Dodota Woreda of the Arsi Zone. This devastating assault resulted in the loss of eight innocent lives, with an additional 50 civilians sustaining injuries. The incident was accompanied by acts of arson, rampant looting, and the theft of numerous cattle, causing further distress and turmoil in the affected area.
 - On May 19th, 2023, journalist Elias Meseret revealed that individuals found guilty of renting houses on behalf of or to those who had their homes demolished in Sheger City would face severe penalties.⁵ These penalties include a fine of 15,000 ETB and a three-month prison sentence. Previous reports had highlighted that victims of home demolitions were coerced into covering the costs through property confiscation if they were unable to pay in cash.
 - Disturbing reports have also emerged from the Jardega Jarte and Amuru Woredas in the Horo Guduru Wollega Zone. Male residents of Amhara descent in these areas have faced baseless accusations of being affiliated with the Fano group and subsequently had their firearms confiscated, leaving them defenseless against OLA attacks. Over the past three months, more than 60 Amhara men have been unlawfully detained, with the ENDF withdrawing from the region, effectively clearing the way for OLA activities. Consequently, many men who could have

⁵See reporting from journalist Elias Meseret on May 19th, 2023 on his personal [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)

defended the Amhara community against OLA aggression have been forced to abandon their homes to avoid arrest or have been disarmed by the ENDF. This dire situation places women and children at an imminent risk of being targeted and subjected to violence by the OLA. Additionally, Amhara coffee traders have fallen victim to kidnappings by OLA militants. In a further alarming development, OLA militants have entered the Kombolcha and Fincha areas of the Horo Guduru Wollega Zone, where they have harassed non-Oromo civilians, accusing them of supporting the Prosperity Party.

- The Amhara and Oromia Regional Governments have agreed to work together to maintain peace and fight extremism in both regions. They also claim to be working to stop extremist forces from crossing inter-regional borders to invade and annex territories by force.

Updates from Addis Ababa

- Four ethnic Amhara (federal) police officers, Tsegalem Deneke Alemu, Yalelet Mulugeta, Meku Assaye, and Habtamu Alehegn were accused of organizing Amhara businessmen and youths were released from custody on bail. Despite their release, they have not been reinstated to their positions, and have not been paid lost wages. Other ethnic Amhara police officers were also fired from work, harassed, and accused of collaborating with Fano.
- In Bole sub-city, Addis Ababa, Shimelis Abdisa laid a cornerstone to start construction for a luxurious palace to house the Oromia Regional Government. In his speech at the event, Shimelis noted how the construction of this castle is meant to represent the great victory of the Oromo struggle. It is also important to note that a \$15 billion palace is being constructed by Abiy Ahmed, all in the midst of the demolition of non-Oromo homes, businesses, as well as monuments in Addis Ababa

and the surrounding areas, resulting in mass displacement.

- In addition, Ethio-News reported that over 34 mosques were demolished by the Oromia Regional Government in the newly established Sheger City surrounding Addis Ababa. Within the last two days, an additional four mosques including Halima (in the Gelan neighborhood), Hamza (in Welete neighborhood), and Nur (in Furi) were all torn down. In response, The Ethiopian Islamic Supreme Council wrote a letter to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on May 18, 2023. The letter mentioned that the demolition of the mosques in the newly established Sheger City administration is increasing despite talks with the mayor and a promise from the president of Oromia Region, Shimelis Abdisa. six churches were also unlawfully demolished.
- The whereabouts of many unlawfully detained ethnic Amharas are still unknown for the 13th day including Aweke Sinshaw, an executive member of the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia workers association after being arrested by security forces.
- Abebaw Mamuye, who works in the Woreda 9 Culture and Tourism Bureau in Nefas Silk Lafto Sub-city, was arrested in Debre Birhan while he was there to visit his family on May 8, 2023 with his whereabouts still unknown.

Updates from the Amhara Prosperity Party General Assembly

On May 18th, 2023, the Amhara Prosperity Party (APP) convened a conference which is expected to have over 1,400 participants. The leader of APP, Dr. Yilkal Kefale, and Dr. Gashaw Awoke, the head of APP Organizational Office, said in their opening remarks that false information and the ignorance of the Amhara people's question resulted in exposure to conspiracy politics as well as extremism. He also said PP is working diligently to answer the complex grievances of the Amhara people.

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- The five day APP conference in Bahir Dar has witnessed the emergence of controversial questions from the lower-level leadership of the party. To safeguard sensitive information, participants have been prohibited from bringing their phones or any other electronic devices into the conference hall. Interestingly, there is a notable disparity between the views expressed by the lower-level and top-level leaders. While the lower-level members of APP appear to align themselves with the requests of the Amhara people, the leaders at the zonal level hold differing opinions.
 - Amongst the Zonal level closed meetings, the Central Gonder Zone held its meetings on May 13-15th, consisting of woreda level authorities including judges. Presidents of woreda and zonal Courts were also included in the meetings to determine a new directive focused on denying bail rights. The meeting was led by Mr. Worku Hailemariam who is the head of the Central Gonder Zone administration. According to our AAA sources, similar meetings will take place across most zones in the region as well as directing woreda level administrations to conduct pro-government rallies throughout the region in support of the government's campaign against Fano and Amhara Special Force. There is also a fear looming that the administration is preparing to launch a new campaign to disarm civilians, as well as target public prosecutors and judges.
 - The APP is quick to label those who diverge from the views of the top-level leadership as extremists. Furthermore, the party is making efforts to convince the public that they genuinely comprehend the concerns of the people and possess the capability to address Amhara-related issues independently. However, some leaders advocate for a broader perspective that includes external voices beyond the party's confines.
 - During the conference, a document was presented for discussion that mentioned that the Derg and EPRDF regimes have oppressed the Amhara people, however there is

no mention of the current crimes of the Prosperity Party against ethnic Amhara. The document emphasizes that the Amhara people are being treated in the same way other nations and nationalities in Ethiopia are being treated but mentioned the general disdain that ethnic Amharas have against the current constitution. The APP expresses that the Amhara people's current problems are not unique to it but rather general problems all Ethiopians face and can be addressed within the current framework under the leadership of the prosperity party. This document fails to mention the current human rights abuses the Amharas are experiencing in and outside the Amhara region (the killings and physical injuries by the ENDF and the detention of Amhara intellectuals and members of the youth). No mention is made about the illegal dissolution and disarmament of the Amhara Special Force. It places particular emphasis on how they will disarm members of the Fano in the Amhara Region.

Updates from Hibir Ethiopia Party

- The Hibir Ethiopia political party made a press statement on May 18th, 2023 that opposed the undergoing military measures taking place in the Amhara Region which shows the high level of political mistrust in the country.

Updates from Balderas for True Democracy (Balderas) Party

- According to Ethio-News, Balderas for True Democracy (Balderas) Party convened its general meeting yesterday, May 21, 2023.⁶ Amha Dagne is elected as president of the party. The party has also transformed into a nationwide party from its former status as a local party based in Addis Ababa.
- On May 18th, Haile Awoke, an English teacher at Repi Secondary School in Kolfe

⁶See media [reporting](#) from Ethio-News on May 22, 2023

Keranio sub-city and member of Balderas party, was arrested on May 18, 2023, at 9:00 a.m. from his home.

- In addition, Balderas party has announced that their general meeting will take place on May 20th, 2023 at Ethiopia Hotel in Addis Ababa.

Updates from Enat Party

- Enat Party released a press statement on May 18, 2023, on the current political situation in Ethiopia. The party urged the government to stop its recent campaign of arresting and harassing Amhara journalists, human rights activists, intellectuals, and Amhara voices critical of the Oromo Prosperity Party. Enat party also mentioned that the chief of their political division of the party, Dr. Assefa Adane, was arrested and subsequently granted bail, but he remains under police custody despite the court order.

Updates regarding the Amhara Students Association (ASA)

- Ezez Molla, an executive member at the *Amhara Students Association* (ASA) Addis Ababa branch and a third-year public administration student at Addis Ababa University, was arrested on May 11, 2023, in Addis Ababa. Five members have been arrested; Yohannes Alemayehu was released very recently. As a response, the ASA has released a press statement, reporting the detainment of its top leaders including Vice President Habtemariam Molla on April 16th, Sisay Melkamu, Yohannes from Addis Ababa University, and Molla Teshale. The statement also condemned the mass arrests of Amharas throughout the country and demanded their release. Habtemariam Molla was brought before Bahir Dar and its surroundings high court on May 19th after fifteen days of illegal arrest at Bahir Dar prison administration and was released on a 10,000 ETB bail amount. Apart from the

harassment of ASA members, their head office in Bahir Dar was reportedly looted by government forces on May 18th, 2023.

Updates on renewed attacks on the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC)

- According to Ethio-News as of May 22, 2023, government security forces have been harassing Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) fathers throughout the last weekend.⁷ The government is interfering to make the Holy Synod reappoint the unlawfully appointed monks in last January. Members of the Holy Synod were unnecessarily searched, black mailed and individually contacted by security and political leaders. The Mahibere Kidusan Media was temporarily suspended to broadcast contents by the Ethiopian Broadcast authority yesterday accusing it inciting intolerance and conflict. According to the countries media law it is not allowed to directly suspending a media without first warning. The organization filed a complaint to the authority today mentioning the accusation for suspension is untrue. It also mentions the procedural wrongness of the suspension. The government forces also called and warned managers of Balgeru, Hagerie and Asham televisions. Deacon Birhanu Addmasu, owner of Hagerie TV was arrested this morning in his office and released after a two hours detention. He is writing and sharing articles in his personal face book account regarding the appointment of new bishops.
- The EOTC fathers conducted a meeting with Oromia Regional President Shimelis Abdisa yesterday. He told the fathers that he believes only ethnic Oromo bishops should be appointed as bishops, otherwise the Oromia government will allow the illegally appointed fathers in late January to overtake the church's dioceses in Oromia. The appointment expected to take place today has been postponed to

⁷See media [reporting](#) from Ethio-News on May 22, 2023

Monday, May 22nd. On May 20th, EOTC Holy Synod general manager Abune Abraham, and secretary, Abune Petros threatened that they would resign from their responsibility if the undue meddling and violation of the church's canon law does not stop.

Recent Court Proceedings

- Over 45 detainees, such as journalists and intellectuals, who were arrested in connection with instabilities in the Amhara Region and subsequently charged with terrorism, conducted a three-day hunger strike as of Monday, May 15, 2023. The prisoners conducted a hunger strike to show their opposition to the illegal arrest of the journalists, Amhara intellectuals, and youth.
- Meskerem Abera and other Amhara detainees Saron Kebaw, Yordanos Aleme, Biset Teref, Dr. Assefa Adane, and Tadele Mengistu appeared before the Federal High Court Lideta branch on May 18th, 2023. Police changed the charge of Meskerem Abera from inciting violence to terrorism. Police requested an additional 14 days to detain them on remand. Meskerem pleaded before the court saying, *“I have been detained for the political reason that I criticized and opposed the government’s genocidal policies against the Amhara people.”* The court allowed police to 7 more days of remand for Meskerem as well the 6 other detainees.
- Renowned Religious teacher at Boru Selassie, and Wollo University Ge’ez language instructor Memhir Hailemariam Zewdu was arrested on May 12th, 2023 in Bahir Dar, and transported to Addis Ababa. On May 15th, police brought him before the Arada First Instance Court and remanded him for fourteen days of investigation. However, on May 17, 2023, he appealed to the appellate division of the federal high court, and was presented again before the First Instance Court in the Arada sub-city of Addis Ababa on May 19th. The court has adjourned the case for the coming

Monday, May 22nd if bail should be granted in this case. Memhir Hailemariam, mentioned that *“I’m a religious man and did not commit any crimes.”* The team of defense counsel expressed that there is no reason to give police 14 days of remand as the crime for which the teacher was charged was for inciting public violence via social media, and that they already have all of the information in their hands.

- Four ethnic Amhara (federal) police officers, Tsegalem Deneke Alemu, Yalelet Mulugeta, Meku Assaye, and Habtamu Alehegn were accused of organizing Amhara businessmen and youths were released from custody on bail. Despite their release, they have not been reinstated to their positions, and have not been paid lost wages. Other ethnic Amhara police officers were also fired from work, harassed, and accused of collaborating with Fano.
- On May 20th, 2023, Ethiopia Insider reported that journalist Temesgen Desalegn was taken from his residence by security personnel.⁸ The incident reportedly occurred at around 8:00 pm and the security personnel were reportedly wearing police uniforms. Temesgen was released after 2 hours in detention and was told to appear before the Federal Investigation Bureau on the morning of May 22, 2023. Authorities failed to disclose their reasoning for wanting him to return but said he would be wanted for further inquiries.

Other Developments

- On May 19th, 2023, the Amhara Association of Germany (Vereinigung der Amhara in Deutschland (VAD) e.V.) in collaboration with the International Amhara Movement (iAM) organized a protest in Berlin, Germany.⁹ Members of the Amhara-Ethiopian-German diaspora rallied to denounce the Abiy Ahmed led

⁸According to a Twitter post by [Ethiopia Insider](#) on May 20th, 2023, Temesgen was abducted by security forces.

⁹The protest in Berlin, Germany was covered by local media outlet [RBB 24 Abendschau](#)

Oromo Prosperity Party regime, condemned the regime's genocidal acts against the Amhara people, and called for the immediate release of all Amhara political prisoners.

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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