



Update on continued identity-based persecution of Amhara residents in various parts of Ethiopia (May 16th to 23rd, 2024)

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Overview

The Amhara Association of America (AAA) has documented ongoing identity-based persecution of ethnic Amhara residents including extrajudicial killing, inhumane treatment of detainees in remote facilities and arbitrary arrests between May 16th and 23rd, 2024 in various parts of Ethiopia. The incidents can be summarized as follows:

- the May 16th killing of senior bank employee Esayas Belay by regime security forces following his detention in Semera (Afar Region);
- a May 19th desert storm in the Awash Arba concentration camp (Afar Region) which has endangered dozens of Amhara prisoners of conscience, and
- the May 22nd arrest of journalist Wondimnew Admasu and May 23rd arrest of theatre producer Dagmawi Amelwork in Addis Ababa city.

The May 16th killing of senior bank employee Esayas Belay

On May 16th, 2024 an Amhara man named Esayas Belay was found dead following his abduction by regime security forces in April 2024. The late Esayas Belay was a senior expert in Information and Technology at Amhara Bank. His dead body was retrieved by his family at Menelik Hospital in Addis Ababa city. The late Esayas had been detained in a concentration camp in Semera town (Afar Region) located 590-km away from his place of residence in Addis Ababa city. On May 19th, 2024 the concentration camp where he was held in Semera was closed and the other detainees were transported to Addis Ababa city and denied contact with family members apparently to prevent spread of news of his fate. His family members were provided false information, being told he was being held in Awash Arba, an infamous concentration camp located 240-km away from Addis Ababa city.



Figure 1: The late Esayas Belay was found dead on May 16th, 2024.

Ongoing weather conditions endanger Amhara prisoners of conscience in the Awash Arba Concentration Camp

On May 19th, 2024 a desert storm struck at Awash Arba concentration camp where dozens of Amhara prisoners of conscience have been detained. Though no further injuries to detainees have been reported, several detention cells were destroyed and additional detainees were left without shelter. A similar storm occurred on February 16th, 2024

which left several detainees with serious injuries.¹ The harsh weather conditions including temperatures of 44 degrees Celsius and recurring storms have continued to endanger the detainees, and there have been no indications of plans to transfer the detainees to a safer site.

Arbitrary arrests of Amhara people in Addis Ababa city between May 22nd to 23rd

On the night of May 22nd, 2024, journalist Wondimnew Admasu was arrested by regime security forces from his residence in Abua area of Addis Ababa city. The timing of his arrest is considered a legally prohibited time for arrests. Journalist Wondimnew Admasu worked in the Media Division for opposition party Balderas for True Democracy Party. Initially, he was held at the Third Police Station (formerly known as Maekelawi), headquarters of the Addis Ababa Police Commission and an infamous prison facility since the rule of the *Tigray People's Liberation Front* (TPLF) dominated the *Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front* (EPRDF). The following day, on May 23rd, Wondimnew was transferred to the Federal Police Commission Headquarters, located in the Mexico Square area of the city. Most detainees brought to the infamous Awash Arba concentration camp were brought to this site before their departure. He is yet to be brought before a court.

¹Read the [report](#) from AAA published on February 22nd, 2024.



Figure 2: Journalist Wondimnew Admasu was arrested on May 23rd, 2024.

On May 23rd, 2024 a theatre producer named Dagmawi Amelwork was arrested and held in the Third Police Station without due process. Dagmawi’s theatre called “*Collective Madness*” allegedly produced artistic material which critiqued the political situation in the country and overall conduct of the government. Dagmawi was arrested when he went to the detention centre to visit detained theatre actor Amanuel Habtamu who worked in the same theatre. Amanuel was arrested on April 17th, at Bole International Airport when he was about to depart to Israel for a theatre performance.



Figure 3: Theatre producer Dagmawi Amelwork was arrested on May 23rd, 2024.

About the Amhara Association of America (AAA)

The Amhara Association of America (AAA) is a non-profit civic organization based in Charlotte, North Carolina that investigates and documents human rights violations in the context of conflict, violence and political repression in Ethiopia. AAA seeks to inform U.S. policymakers, international human rights organizations, journalists, researchers, 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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