



The attack and siege of Haro town by joint Oromia Special Forces (OSF) and Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) in Kiremu Woreda of East Wollega Zone in Oromia Region in Ethiopia

Executive Summary

Based on data collected from survivors and families of victims, the Amhara Association of America (AAA) has verified that **between December 18th and 26th, 2022, a coalition of Oromia Special Forces (OSF) and Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) militants killed at least 46 Amhara civilians and injured an additional 16 civilians in three separate incidents in Haro town of Kiremu Woreda in East Wollega Zone and the surrounding area (Oromia Region, Ethiopia).** The deadliest incident occurred on December 23rd, 2022 during which the joint OSF-OLA forces accompanied by *Qeerro* (ultranationalist youth) killed at least 32 Amhara IDPs and civilians and injured an additional 16 in Haro. The attacks also caused further displacement of Amhara IDPs and Haro town residents to the neighboring Amhara Region. The town hosted a large number of IDPs which faced secondary displacement as a result of the attack in addition to other residents who were also displaced. These IDPs are now facing multiple issues including lack of access to medicine, humanitarian aid, and essential public services. Three days after the massacre, on December 26th, 2022, another two Amhara civilians

who were in a nearby jungle seeking refuge were attacked and killed by OLA forces. Lastly, on December 18th, 2022, OLA forces killed 12 Amhara civilians in Haro Kebele including an old sick woman in Joj Kebele (Amuru Woreda, Horo Guduru Wollega Zone) in the same region while they were attempting to escape to the Amhara Region.

The December 23rd Attack on Haro Kebele

The first incident took place in Haro Kebele on December 23rd, 2022. Haro Kebele hosted an estimated 80,000 Amhara IDPs displaced from 19 surrounding kebeles in three woredas including Kiremu, Amuru and Jardega Jarte. The following kebeles were known to host large numbers of IDPs: Gudena Jiregna, Nachino, Chinina, Wolmay rural Kebeles, and Kiremu town, following successive identity-based attacks by the OLA and OSF since at least August 2021. Throughout this period, Haro was considered a relatively safe area for Amharas who were targeted on grounds of their identity in neighboring areas of Oromia Region. On December 23rd, 2022, beginning from 5:00 a.m., joint OSF-OLA militants were deployed in 6 truckloads and opened fire on residents of Haro town. The joint OSF-OLA forces were heavily armed and were able to overwhelm the ill-equipped Amhara farmers who tried to protect their families with whatever means they had. AAA's sources confirmed to investigators that perpetrators included the OSF by their distinctive uniforms from afar and added that some of the fallen invading militants had OSF identification cards while others were identified as OLA militants.

Eyewitnesses also informed AAA that they witnessed Qeerro collaborating with these forces including through tending to wounded fighters and providing rations and ammunition. The attack lasted for 11 hours until the assailants stopped firing on the town and its residents at around 4:00 p.m. Regarding the casualties, Tesfaye (name changed) who participated in the collection and burial of the dead told AAA's investigators, *"we counted 32 dead bodies so far. But, I do not know the exact number of people who were*

injured.” Another eyewitness by the name of Yesuf (name changed) confirmed this account to AAA as well as the dire situation faced by injured survivors who have been unable to receive medical care:

“We buried and collected thirty one dead bodies. But the number is rising each day since wounded survivors are dying due to lack of access to hospitals. The number of injured persons is not exactly known. I personally know sixteen people with injuries ranging from serious to moderate.”

Ahmed (name changed) who lost loved ones in the attack described the scale of the resulting casualties to AAA’s investigators:

“I heard the number of dead people is more than twenty five but it must be much higher. I personally lost four of my cousins and nephew. The injury should be up to thirty. We could know the exact number as the dead bodies and injured ones are scattered everywhere in jungles and rural areas of the kebele.”

Indiscriminate killings by gunfire

The assailants perpetrated the attacks using at least two methods of attack. **The first method of attack was by opening fire on the town which resulted in the indiscriminate death of residents and IDPs in Haro town.** After taking positions on a nearby hilltop, the assailants had been firing bullets from heavy machine guns toward the town that resulted in the indiscriminate death of civilians including IDPs, women, children, and elderly persons who were vulnerable to the attack. Among the civilians who were killed by heavy machinegun fire are 85-year-old Ibrahim Shibesh and 6-year-old Momina Adem Ali. A survivor by the name of Tesfaye spoke to AAA’s investigators describing the attack and the overall situation:

“They began attacking us at around 5:00 am in the morning. It was the special force (OSF), OLA, and even the local residents helping them. They are firing machine guns on us. I am just outside of the town. I can see smoke and fire inside it. The people are instinctively running out of it.”

A wounded survivor by the name of Mohammed (name changed) who fled during the recent attack from Kiremu town described it to AAA’s investigators:

“I barely survived their (OSF and OLA) attack in Kiremu [occurred since mid-November 2022]. But, they followed me even here. Finally, they injured me. Most of the people here are fleeing attacks like me. One of their militias shot me in the thigh. I could not access medical help. All roads are closed by them (OSF and OLA). I am bleeding now as I speak to you. Are we not Ethiopian? Should we not at least be allowed to have medication if not protection? I feel ignored and helpless. They (OLA and OSF) are on a hill and firing bullets from heavy machineguns at us in the middle of the town. They are also firing on Haro Primary School. It is being used as a shelter for us (IDPs). I saw 7 dead bodies with my own eyes killed in the middle of the town. Most of them (deceased victims) were women and children who were killed while running out of here.”

Another eyewitness and survivor, Yesuf described the situation two days following the attack:

“Haro is hosting an estimated 80,000 residents of 19 neighboring Kebeles who sought refuge there following attacks by Shenee (OLA). At around 5:00 a.m., they (OLA and OSF) began to fire on it from a hill near to the town. They (OLA and OSF) were using Dishk and other heavy machineguns. They killed many among us then. I personally lost my nephew, Issa Hassan, and my cousin, Mussa Molla.”

Abductions and Summary Executions of civilians

The second manner of killing is summary execution after abducting victims.

The OSF soldiers, as they did in Kiremu last November, seized and deliberately executed Amhara civilians including women. For instance, according to several eyewitnesses including Tesfaye and Yesuf, the OSF soldiers abducted four women (one of them underage) in the Nole area of the same Kebele in the morning around 7:00 a.m., while they opened fire on the Haro town. The women were originally displaced from Kiremu town (Kiremu Woreda, East Wollega Zone), and at the time of the abduction, they were working on another person's maize farm as daily laborers. Finally, while the perpetrators abandoned attacking Haro town at around 4:00 p.m., all four of the women were summarily executed by OSF soldiers using automatic gunshots at the same place they were abducted. The victims' names were Momina Adem (18-years-old), Momina Nega (25-years-old), Fatima Mohammed (13-years-old), and Hawa Mohammed (20-years-old).

The deceased victims were buried at seven sites, two of which are Muslim cemeteries located in Haro town and Bagin area of the same Kebele (Haro). The remaining five were burial sites for the deceased Orthodox Christian victims including church graveyards in Haro Addis Alem St. George's, Bagin St. Mary's, Woft St. George's, Bure St. Michael's, and Shehore St. Medhanialem Churchs graveyards located in the Haro Kebele.

Siege, Further Displacements and Killings

According to accounts from survivors and residents, it has been months since Haro town and the surrounding areas were encircled by joint OSF-OLA forces and effectively cut off from the outside world. During this period, vital public services including healthcare, electricity, and education have been cut off. The lack of access to hospitals and absence of life-saving medicine have caused mothers to die during childbirth, residents to die from curable diseases and for victims injured from attacks to die on a daily basis.

Ahmed whose family members were injured in the December 23rd, 2022 attack on Haro and eventually died from blood loss told AAA *“wounded victims die each day. My cousin Kasim Misganaw and my relative Belete Gashaw died today (on the next day of the attack, December 24th, 2022). They would have survived if they had access to hospital care.”* He also told AAA that a previously wounded survivor, Muluneh Melkie passed away four days after the attack on December 27th, 2022. Another resident of Haro town also spoke to AAA describing their ordeal, *“we have many wounded people. We are afraid of being attacked to seek out medical care. We only hope those who are wounded in their leg will survive. There are those whose full leg was cut off and wounded on their torso area and we do not have hope they will survive.”* The siege has also blocked delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need. Even though the number of IDPs in Haro and its surrounding area is estimated to be as high as 80,000, there is no form of humanitarian aid flowing in whatsoever. Previously, aid provided by humanitarian organizations and the government have been distributed in Kiremu town exclusively to non-Amhara IDPs.

The siege and the December 23rd, 2022 attack on Haro have caused further displacements to the neighboring Amhara Region, surrounding jungles and rural areas in the same kebele. One of the safe havens for Amhara IDPs has been the Amhara Region which borders the Oromia Region however passage has been difficult. Roads that lead to the Amhara Region have been manned by joint OSF-OLA forces at different points so Amharas could not use them as they would be targeted by both forces. The only way out for Amharas was walking on foot for hundreds of kilometers which would take days while avoiding the main roads. According to those who experienced the harsh and long journey such as Daniel (name changed) it is extremely unsafe due to risk of attack from joint OSF-OLA. For instance, according to eyewitnesses on December 18th, 2022, three days before the attack in Haro, the OLA opened an unprovoked and sudden attack on 30 Amhara civilians who were taking a sick and old woman to the Amhara Region just a few

yards from the Abay Bridge that connects the Amhara and Oromia Regions in Joj Kebele in Amuru Woreda and Jardega Jarte Woreda. Of the 30 Amhara civilians, 18 managed to escape while the remaining 12 including the frail old woman were shot and mutilated to death by the OLA militants. The victims were from Haro Kebele's rural part and their names have yet to be identified. Eyewitnesses including Haile (named changed) told AAA that they just buried eight of the deceased victims in a mass grave located in the same place they were killed while four other victims drowned in the Abay River by the assailants and their bodies are yet to be collected and buried. Three of the victims known by name are Abate Belayneh, Shegaw Assefa, and Getachew (last name unknown).

Amharas who survived large-scale massacres trying to cross to Amhara Region are at risk of further attacks. An unknown number of Amharas are also suspected to have drowned in the Abay (Blue Nile) River that borders the Amhara and Oromia Regions, when trying to swim and cross to the Amhara Region. They told AAA that those who are wounded are not allowed to use the bridge that connects the Amhara and Oromia Regions at the river being accused of fighting against the OSF. But, the reality is according to AAA's sources, most of the wounds were sustained as a result of attacks in cold blood or while acting in self-defense. Despite the intense risk, hundreds of Amhara civilians have been crossing into the Amhara Region each day.



Figure 1: Amhara civilians fleeing from Kiremu Woreda (East Wollega Zone, Oromia Region) to Amhara Region on foot through harsh paths outside the main roads. The picture depicts while they were crossing Gonka stream which borders the Amuru (Horo Guduru Wollega Zone) and Kiremu (East Wollega Zone) Woredas in the Oromia Region.

After they crossed into the Amhara Region, the IDPs often report that they do not receive any aid or attention from the federal and regional governments. Most of the IDPs have been temporarily sheltered somewhere in the region either in the host community or temporary IDP camps. One of the recently available temporary camps is located in Filakit town (North Wollo Zone, Amhara Region) where over 650 IDPs are sheltered. The IDPs have complained that it is the host community that has sustained them while the government and humanitarian organizations have not been providing aid to them. Therefore they have been concerned that the support from the community would not be sustainable or secure.



(a)



(b)

Figure 2: Amhara IDPs from Kiremu Woreda (East Wollega Zone, Oromia Region) gathered in a temporary IDP camp in Filakit town (North Wollo Zone, Amhara Region).

Besieged Amharas in Haro Kebele have been discouraged from crossing into the Amhara Region after hearing news of attacks like what happened on December 18th, 2022 that claimed the lives of 12 Amhara civilians who were trying to reach the Amhara Region. Most of the survivors of the December 23rd Haro attack (including women and children), were displaced to nearby jungles and rural kebeles where they are not safe either. Besides the lack of shelter, food, and other essential things to life they are also subject to further attacks there. Three days after the Haro attack on December 26th, the OLA forces suddenly opened fire on IDPs who were looking after their cattle and killed two of them including 90-year-old Sheikh Tahir Mohammed and Fisseha Goshu.

Below is a list of killed and injured victims by joint OSF-OLA forces between December 18th and 26th, 2022 in Haro Kebele (Kiremu Woreda, East Wollega Zone) and Joj Kebele (Amuru Woreda, Horo Guduru Wollega Zone) in Oromia Region.

No.	Victim name	Sex	Age	Outcome of attack
1	Momina Adem	F	18	Death
2	Momina Nega	F	25	Death
3	Fatima Mohammed	F	13	Death
4	Hawa Mohammed	F	20	Death
5	Tade Geta	M	35	Death
6	Gebeyew (last name unknown)	M	32	Death
7	Zenaw Tigabu	M	26	Death
8	Sisay Wondafrie	M	38	Death
9	Getahun Fetene	M	36	Death
10	Addisu Workye	M	32	Death
11	Addisu Yegoraw	M	40	Death
12	Belete Gashaw	M	32	Death
13	Mekash Kibret	M	42	Death
14	Atinafu Aragaw	M	33	Death
15	Isa Hassan	M	25	Death
16	Mussa Molla	M	28	Death
17	Hussein Getaneh	M	30	Death
18	Belete Adefris	M		Death
19	Kassim Misganaw	M		Death
20	Feleke Gashaw	M		Death
21	Ibrahim Shibesh	M	85	Death
22	Momina Adem Ali	M	6	Death
23	Adem Hussein	M	31	Death

24	Hassan Muluye	M	18	Death
25	Omer Kassaw	M	61	Death
26	Sheikh Tahir Mohammed	M	90	Death
27	Fisseha Goshu	M		Death
28	Mohammed Omer	M	40	Death
29	Yibrie Shibesh	M	38	Death
30	Mulat Abiye	M	41	Death
31	Demeke Molla	M	46	Death
32	Tadege Worku	M		Death
33	Muluneh Melkie		30	Death
34	Abate Belayneh			Death
35	Shegaw Assefa			Death
36	Getachew (last name unknown)			Death
37	Sheikh Adem Hassan	M	51	Injury
38	Wondimu Filate	M	48	Injury
39	Molla Dessalew	M	52	Injury
40	Kibret Getahun	M	45	Injury
41	Ebabu Filate	M		Injury
42	Dawid Hassan	M	15	Injury
43	Omer Kemal			Injury
44	Mussa Melkie		38	Injury
45	Mohammed Ebabu		25	Injury
46	Sayed Kindu		15	Injury
47	Ibrahim Wondie		22	Injury
48	Osman Demissie		14	Injury
49	Fentaw Gebnane		15	Injury
50	Getinet Belayneh		20	Injury

51	Adane Missaye	10	Injury
52	Kasim Legesse	16	Injury

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>

