

THE SILENT SUFFERING OF THE AMHARA PEOPLE IN ETHIOPIA



Abstract

In recent years, Ethiopia has experienced a significant escalation in human rights violations, further exacerbated by conflicts in the Tigray, Oromia, and Amhara regions. While these issues have garnered international attention, the extent of the abuses, specifically those inflicted upon the Amhara population, lacks sufficient coverage. This report to address this oversight by offering a thorough examination of the severe human rights challenges faced by the Amhara community.

The findings of this report reveal a troubling pattern of extensive human rights abuses against the Amhara people in Ethiopia, marked by recurrent incidents of massacres, extrajudicial killings, drone strikes, forced displacements and mass arrests. These acts are predominantly driven by ethnic and religious discrimination, leading to substantial casualties, and exacerbating conflicts within the country. The Ethiopian government's response to these violations has been critically insufficient, with many instances suggesting possible negligence or even direct state involvement in the human rights abuses. This ongoing crisis has inflicted severe humanitarian consequences on the Amhara population, including widespread displacement. Furthermore, the plight of the Amhara people has been largely overlooked on the international stage, indicating a critical need for increased global attention and action.

These violations not only qualify as crimes against humanity but also evince a systematic trajectory toward genocide. Given the gravity of these offenses, there exists an immediate imperative for an impartial investigation under the auspices of the United. This report aspires to catalyze such an inquiry and also to inform policymakers, human rights organizations, and the general public about the imminent risks facing the Amhara community.

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ECLJ – European Centre for Law and Justice / Centre européen pour le droit et la justice

4 Quai Koch

67000 Strasbourg

France

+33 3 88 24 94 40

secretariat@eclj.org

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I. Introduction

Ethiopia is a country located in the Horn of Africa. It is home to a diverse array of cultures, languages, and ethnicities. With a history that spans thousands of years, the nation has undergone significant social, economic, and political transformations throughout its existence.

Ethiopia is multifaceted and shaped by its rich history and its large ethnic diversity. Ethiopia is home to over 80 distinct ethnic groups, each with their own languages, customs, and traditions. The Oromo, Amhara, Somali, and Tigrayans are among the largest ethnic groups. While this diversity is a source of cultural richness, it has also been a source of tension and conflict, especially when it comes to the issues of political representation and resource allocation.

Religion plays a pivotal role in the social fabric of Ethiopia. The country has the second-largest Orthodox population in the world, numbering around 36 million people¹. With deep historical roots, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has profoundly influenced the values, norms and traditions of the nation. Islam, too, has played a similar role, especially in the eastern and southeastern regions where it's predominant. Other religions practiced in Ethiopia include Protestantism and, although not widespread, traditional African religions such as the *Waaqeffanna*.

Ethiopia has experienced rapid economic growth in recent decades, shifting from a primarily agrarian economy to an increasingly urbanized and industrialized one. However, problems such as poverty, unemployment and income inequality remain largely unresolved. The majority of the population still depends on subsistence farming, and there is a significant gap between urban and rural areas in terms of access to services and opportunities. Government initiatives to promote development have led to a series of controversies, particularly with regard to land rights and population displacement.

A. The Political Context of Ethiopia

Ancient Ethiopian civilizations such as the Axumite kingdom, the Zagwe dynasty or the Solomonic dynasty, were characterized by monarchic political structures. This longstanding monarchical tradition was disrupted in 1974 with the deposition of Emperor Haile Selassie I by the communist “Derg” regime. The Derg regime was characterized by a pronounced authoritarianism and widespread human rights abuses. Its rule came to an end in 1991 when the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) seized power. The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) was the dominant member of the EPRDF coalition and wielded significant influence over the political landscape of Ethiopia. Under this leadership, Ethiopia adopted a new constitution that established the country as a federal democratic

¹ Pew Research Center, "Orthodox Christians are highly religious in Ethiopia, much less so in former Soviet Union," by Travis Mitchell, published November 8, 2017, accessed September 15, 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/11/08/orthodox-christians-are-highly-religious-in-ethiopia-much-less-so-in-former-soviet-union/>

republic. The new political system divided the country into regional states based on ethnic lines, thereby intertwining ethnic identity and politics. While this structure aimed to address the diverse ethnic composition of the country, it has been a source of tensions and conflicts.

Under the governance of the EPRDF coalition, Ethiopia has witnessed significant strides in poverty reduction, infrastructure development, and sustained economic growth. However, these developmental achievements have been overshadowed by the government's authoritarian tendencies. The EPRDF systematically excluded its opponents from Ethiopia's political landscape and engaged in brutal repression against dissenters and public protesters. These actions sparked widespread civil unrest, with significant protests erupting nationwide from 2016 to 2018, calling for an end to authoritarian practices and advocating for political reform. This period of intense civil discontent led to a pivotal shift within the government, notably marked by the appointment of Abiy Ahmed, an ethnically Oromo leader, as Prime Minister in 2018.

After coming to power, Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed dissolved the EPRDF party to form the currently ruling Prosperity Party in 2019. Initially, he was regarded as a beacon of hope by many Ethiopians and received international support. Notably, he was awarded the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize for formalizing a peace treaty between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 2018.

Despite the early optimism, not all was positive in the aftermath of the transition. Under Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's leadership, serious human rights issues emerged. In the initial years of his tenure, the country grappled with atrocities where, oftentimes, security officials were criticized for their inadequate response in protecting civilians. Furthermore, in 2020, a grave conflict erupted in the Tigray region, the northernmost part of Ethiopia, pitting the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) against the federal government's Prosperity Party. This conflict eventually involved a number of players and led to a humanitarian crisis before ending with a truce in November 2022.

Nevertheless, the country continued to witness mass atrocities elsewhere in the country, predominantly targeting the Amhara ethnic group. These acts were primarily attributed to armed rebel factions, notably the "Oromo Liberation Army" (OLA). Amidst these tensions, in April 2023, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed announced plans to disband the Amhara regional security forces, known as the Amhara Special Forces (ASF), intending to integrate them into a centralized army. This decision was met with significant resistance from the Amhara community, who, already subjected to severe persecution, protested vehemently. They feared that the dissolution of the ASF would exacerbate their vulnerability and expose them to further violence. Following this decision, a considerable number of former ASF members defected to join 'Fano', a decentralized militia already operating in the region composed mainly of young volunteer fighters. This situation led to a significant deterioration of the security situation in the Amhara region, culminating in the declaration of a state of emergency in August 2023.

B. Background of the Amhara Population

The Amhara people are the second most populous ethnic group in Ethiopia and have played a significant role in the country's history. Most of the population resides in the Amhara Region, located in the north-central part of Ethiopia. They speak Amharic, which is arguably the second most spoken Semitic language in the world². Over time, the language has transcended its regional boundaries to become a lingua franca across Ethiopia.

In the medieval era, rulers from the Amhara ethnic group are credited for being pivotal to the creation of Christian kingdoms within Ethiopia. This influence continued into modern times, as Amhara leaders played a key role in shaping the political and administrative structure of a modern Ethiopia. Subsequently, they've had a considerable influence on the nation's politics and culture. However, this influence has been a source of tension as other ethnic groups, particularly the Oromos and Tigrayans, fostered a sense of marginalisation.

The grievances between the Oromo, Tigray, and Amhara ethnic groups have manifested themselves in deeply troubling ways, escalating to violence, ethnic cleansings, and mass atrocities. The situation has reached a critical level since the Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed came to power in 2018.

II. Ethnic Violence and Genocidal Tendencies in Ethiopia

The Amhara people have been subjected to recurring massacres, especially in the last five years. These acts of violence are orchestrated by armed groups and often involve the complicity or passive acquiescence of local authorities. Far from being isolated events, these massacres form part of a broader pattern of systemic violence aimed at the Amhara community.

A. The Burayu Massacre

Between September 14 and 16 in 2018, a series of violent events unfolded in the Burayu district near Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa³. These events coincided with the return of leaders from the exiled Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), a group advocating for the self-determination of the Oromo people. While the return of the OLF leaders was intended to mark a moment of reconciliation, it instead served as a backdrop for a surge in ethnic violence.

² Babbel Magazine, "All In The Language Family: The Semitic Languages," accessed September 15, 2023, <https://www.babbel.com/en/magazine/semitic-languages>. See also, Boston University Libraries, "Research: Language Learning - Amharic," accessed November 7, 2023, <https://library.bu.edu/amharic>

³ Reuters, "At least 23 die in weekend of Ethiopia ethnic violence," by Aaron Maasho, published September 17, 2018, accessed September 6, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-violence-idUSKCN1LX0VK>

Mobs of Oromo youth took to the streets, targeting the homes and businesses of all ethnic minorities, most of whom were Amharas. The mobs were heard chanting "leave our land" as they carried out acts of looting and violence. Illustrating the scale of the tragedy, Reuters quoted a witness as saying: "During the night, there were several corpses along the roads". Even though the numbers are suspected to be higher, the confirmed death toll of this massacre is of 23 people⁴.

Witnesses who spoke to the local media stressed their shock in regard to the barbaric violence as well as their frustration at the inaction of government authorities. During an interview on Ethiopian Broadcasting Service, a prominent Ethiopian media platform, one individual conveyed his dismay at the situation. He questioned, "What have we done, we're not politicians."⁵

Regarding the ineffectiveness of law enforcement, the same witness noted that although the police responded to calls for assistance, their actions upon arrival are markedly passive. Specifically, he stated that the officers remained in the periphery of the crime scenes, claiming that they lacked the authorization to intervene.

This event has profoundly unsettled the nation, marking a seminal moment as it may be the first instance of ethnic violence encroaching upon the vicinity of the capital. The subsequent incidents reveal a more targeted animus, particularly against the Amhara and Orthodox communities.

B. A Series of Attacks on Christians in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, 2018 and 2019 were marked by a worrying upsurge in arson attacks on churches. According to the Amhara Professional Union (APU), over the course of these two years, some 30 churches have been attacked across the country, with more than half burnt to the ground⁶. Most of the churches were burned down, mainly in eastern and southern Ethiopia. Elias Gebreselassie, a journalist based in Addis Ababa, gave his opinion on the matter to New African Magazine at the time and said⁷ "The burning of churches could lead to a wider distrust within society and could be a time-bomb. Also, in eastern and southern Ethiopia, many people associate the Orthodox Church with northern Ethiopia or specifically, ethnic Amharas, so it could deepen political polarization." Indeed, this led to a reinforcement of the attribution of the Orthodox faith in Ethiopia to the "Northerners."

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ ebstv worldwide, "አዲስ ነገር ወቅታዊ እና አዲስ መረጃ(የቡራይ አካባቢ ተፈናቃዮች)/Whats new breaking News sept 16," YouTube, published September 16, 2018, accessed September 15, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z15L5o3h72k&ab_channel=ebstvworldwide

⁶ "Global Issues, "Huge moment for Ethiopia as Abiy Ahmed wins Nobel Peace prize," published October 12, 2019, <https://www.globalissues.org/news/2019/10/12/25743>

⁷ New African Magazine, "Why are Ethiopia's churches under attack?" published October 9, 2019, <https://newafricanmagazine.com/20840/>

In October 2019, the event commonly known as the “October 2019 Ethiopian Clashes” proved to be highly revealing of the targeted victims. A prominent Oromo activist, strongly accused by the Amhara community of spreading hate speech and inciting massacres, had claimed that security forces were trying to orchestrate an attack against him. Following this statement published on his Facebook page, crowds of young Oromo took to the streets in protest. Very quickly, the demonstration turned into a riot that cost the lives of at least 67 people. According to a church spokesman who spoke to AFP, 52 of the dead were members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church⁸. These mob killings were seen as a direct attack on the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and prompted a reaction from the Vatican, with Pope Francis expressing his "closeness to this beloved Church and her patriarch", asking believers to pray for the persecuted Christians in Ethiopia⁹.

The efforts of certain Oromo factions to transpose ethnic tensions onto religious terrain reached a climax in January 2023 when three Oromo archbishops of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church rebelled and formed a new “Oromo” synod¹⁰. This schism was state sponsored, but widely rejected by the population. Therefore, it caused a massive social upheaval and extensive demonstrations with believers barring these bishops from presiding over their places of worship and conducting liturgical ceremonies. This led to the intervention of the Oromo special forces in support of the new synod which exacerbated the discord, culminating in violent encounters between security forces and churchgoers. These violent incidents resulted in the loss of multiple lives, most notably at St. Michael Church in Shashemene, where law enforcement resorted to the use of live rounds against the assembly on February 4, 2023¹¹.

In recent months, violent incidents targeting the faithful have intensified in number. On the 23rd and 27th November 2023, a series of attacks took place in three villages in the Arsi zone of the Oromia region¹². Over these two days, a total of 36 Orthodox Christians were forcibly taken from their homes and subsequently executed. The ages of the victims varied widely, from a 28-day-old infant to a 70-year-old elderly individual. A testimony provided to The Voice Of America (VOA) highlighted that the assailants targeted these individuals due to their Christian faith and their possession of Amhara associated names¹³.

⁸ France 24, "Orthodox Ethiopians criticise PM Abiy over deadly clashes," published October 27, 2019, accessed September 15, 2023, <https://www.france24.com/en/20191027-orthodox-ethiopians-criticise-pm-abiy-over-deadly-clashes>

⁹ Catholic News Agency, "Pope Francis asks for prayer for persecuted Christians in Ethiopia," accessed September 15, 2023, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/42711/pope-francis-asks-for-prayer-for-persecuted-Christians-in-ethiopia>

¹⁰ Reuters, "Ethiopian Orthodox Church reaches deal with breakaway Oromo synod," published February 16, 2023, accessed November 14, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/ethiopian-orthodox-church-reaches-deal-with-breakaway-oromo-synod-2023-02-16/>

¹¹ European Centre for Law and Justice, "Ethnic schism: A delicate way out of a crisis for Ethiopia," accessed November 14, 2023, <https://eclj.org/religious-autonomy/un/schisme-ethnique--delicate-sorite-de-crise-en-ethiopia>

¹² Voice of America Amharic, "በሺርካ ወረዳ ሃይማኖት የለየ በተባለ ጥቃት 36 ምእመናን ሲገደሉ ቀሪዎቹ እንደሸሹ ተገለጸ", published November 30, 2023, accessed March 13, 2024, <https://amharic.voanews.com/a/east-arsi-killing/7378932.html>

¹³ *Ibidem*.

The same region bore witness to another attack on December 4, 2023. This subsequent attack mirrored the previous in its approach, involving the abduction of individuals from their homes and their execution¹⁴. This incident resulted in 5 fatalities and the arson of 3 residential properties. Similarly to the previous attacks, a witness reported that the victims spoke Amharic¹⁵. While the identity of the perpetrators remains uncertain, the government has suggested the involvement of the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) in these acts¹⁶.

In the wake of these tragic events, the Patriarchate Head Office of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church issued a vehement condemnation of the attacks, calling for the government to enhance protective measures for the increasingly persecuted faithful and to conduct thorough investigations to ensure justice for the victims and their families¹⁷.

However, the violence did not abate. On December 28, 2023, Christian pilgrims were brutally attacked as they returned from the annual feast of the Archangel Saint Gabriel at Kulubi, a significant pilgrimage site in Ethiopia¹⁸. Near the town of Metehara, the group encountered gunmen who launched a sudden assault, resulting in eight deaths and ten abductions among the pilgrims. A witness recounted to Addis Standard, a national news magazine, that the assailants “torched vehicles and fired upon us as we were returning from the Kulubi St. Gebreal celebration¹⁹.”

Furthermore, on February 16, 2024, four clergymen were kidnapped from the Ziquala Debre Kewakibt Abune Gebre Menfes Kidus Monastery in the Oromia region²⁰. These individuals were Aba Teklemariam Asrat, the monastery's head administrator; Kidanemariam Tilahun, the secretary; Aba Gebremariam Abebe, a religious teacher and priest; and Hailemariam Woldesenbet, a monk²¹. Tragically, they were killed on February 17, 2024, and their bodies

¹⁴ Voice of America Amharic, "በሺርካ ወረዳ 'ሃይማኖት የተለየ' በተባለ ጥቃት ተጨማሪ አምስት ምእመናን እንደተገደሉ ተገለጸ", published December 5, 2023, accessed March 12, 2024, <https://amharic.voanews.com/a/arsi-more-killings/7385354.html>, See also, MK TV, "ዜና ተዋሕዶ || ትኩረት ያጣው የአርቶዳክሳውያን ግድያ," YouTube, published December 5, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VpE8ef_ta7g

¹⁵ Voice of America Amharic, "በሺርካ ወረዳ 'ሃይማኖት የተለየ' በተባለ ጥቃት ተጨማሪ አምስት ምእመናን እንደተገደሉ ተገለጸ", published December 5, 2023, accessed March 12, 2024, <https://amharic.voanews.com/a/arsi-more-killings/7385354.html> (timestamp from 1 :20 to 1:30).

¹⁶ Addis Standard, "News: 45 believers killed in two separate attacks in Arsi and Kellem Wollega zones, Oromia region," published December 1, 2023, accessed March 12, 2024, <https://addisstandard.com/news-45-believers-killed-in-two-separate-attacks-in-arsi-and-kellem-wollega-zones-oromia-region/>

¹⁷ Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Patriarchate Head Office, "በአርሲ ዞን አንዳንድ ወረዳዎች በአርቶዳክሳውያን ላይ የተፈጸመውን ግድያ የጠቅላይ ቤተክህነት አስተዳደር ጉባኤ አወገዘ።", published December 5, 2023, accessed March 13, 2024, <https://eotceth.org/a/2023/12/>

¹⁸ Orthodoxy Cognate PAGE, "Gunmen Target Ethiopian Orthodox Pilgrims Returning from an Annual Feast," published January 1, 2024, accessed March 14, 2024, <https://ocpsociety.org/gunmen-target-ethiopian-orthodox-pilgrims-returning-from-an-annual-feast/>

¹⁹ Addis Standard, "News: Eight killed, 10 more abducted as civilians return from St. Gabriel celebration in Kulubi," published January 2, 2024, accessed March 11, 2024, <https://addisstandard.com/news-eight-killed-another-10-abducted-as-civilians-return-from-st-gabriel-celebration-in-kulubi/>

²⁰ BBC Tigrinya, "ቤተ ክርስቲያን አርቶዳክስ ተዋህዶ ኢትዮጵያ፡ አርባዕተ ፈለስቲ ብዕጡቻት ከምዝተቐተለዎ ኣፍሊጡ", published February 24, 2024, accessed March 16, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/tigrinya/articles/c6pqeege3e2o>, See also, VOA Amharic, "የዝቋላ ገዳማውያንን በገደሉ ታጣቂዎች ላይ ርምጃ እየተወሰደ ነው - የአሮሚያ ክልል," published February 23, 2024, accessed March 16, 2024, <https://amharic.voanews.com/a/ziquala-monastery-killing/7500155.html>

²¹ Wazema, "Wazema Daily News, Feb 22" published February 22, 2024, accessed March 18, 2024, <https://wazema.substack.com/p/wazema-daily-news-feb-22>

were later recovered from a forest. They received a proper Christian burial on February 24, 2024. In response to this act, the church released a statement attributing the kidnapping and killings to the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and called upon the government to intensify its efforts in safeguarding the security of its citizens, emphasizing the urgent need for heightened vigilance²².

This issue of religious persecution has not been confined to the Orthodox community in Ethiopia. On November 24, 2023, a separate incident in the Gidami district of the Kellem Wollega zone highlighted the broader vulnerability of Christians in the country. Nine individuals, part of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), were kidnapped while participating in an overnight prayer service²³. According to Lalisa Daniel (PhD), head of the Evangelism and Theology department at the EECMY, who spoke to the BBC, the victims were church leaders and organizers engaged in prayers and preparations for the Sunday service²⁴. These individuals were abducted by unidentified armed men during their prayers and found deceased two days later.

C. The Shashemene Massacres

The “Shahsemene Massacres” revealed the ethno-religious character of this persecution. On June 29, 2020, a renowned Oromo singer and political activist was assassinated in Ethiopia, leading to massive protests that escalated into a premeditated massacre. In the subsequent weeks, a group identifying as “Queroo” (literally translating to youth in Oromo language) targeted Amhara and Orthodox believers in the Oromia region. Towns including Shashemene, Arsi, Dera, and Zeway witnessed significant destruction, with properties of non-Oromo ethnicities being vandalized and burned. The violence resulted in an estimated 239 casualties. A harrowing account from a survivor details the brutal killing of his nine-month-pregnant wife in front of their children. "They killed her because she is an Orthodox Christian" he recalls, "They said that Christian children should not be born, Amhara children should not be born"²⁵. According to the head of the Western Arsi diocese, the mob targeted Orthodox Christians of all

²² Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Patriarchate Head Office, "በታላቁ ዝቅላ ደብረ ከዋክብት አቡነ ገብረ መንፈስ ቅዱስ ገዳም የተፈፀመውን ጥቃት አስመልክቶ በምሥራቅ ሸዋ ዞን ዋና አስተዳዳሪ የተመራ ውይይት ተካሄደ," published February 23, 2024, accessed March 12, 2024, <https://eotceth.org/a/በታላቁ-ዝቅላ-ደብረ-ከዋክብት-አቡነ-ገብረ-መንፈስ-ቅዱስ-ገዳም-የተፈፀመውን-ጥቃት-አስመልክቶ-በምሥራቅ-ሸዋ-ዞን-ዋና-አስተዳዳሪ-የተመራ-ውይይት-ተካሄደ/>, See also, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Patriarchate Head Office, " በግፍ የተገደሉት የዝቅላ ደብረ ከዋክብት አቡነ ገብረ መንፈስ ቅዱስ ገዳም አባቶች አስከፊን ተረሽነው ከተቀበሩበት ከጊዳ ተክለሃይማኖት አካባቢ ተነስቶ በገዳሙ በክብር ሥርዓተ ቀብር ተፈጸመ," published February 24, 2024, accessed March 12, 2024, <https://eotceth.org/a/በግፍ-የተገደሉት-የዝቅላ-ደብረ-ከዋክብት/>

²³ Addis Standard, "News: 45 believers killed in two separate attacks in Arsi and Kellem Wollega zones, Oromia region," published December 1, 2023, accessed March 12, 2024, <https://addisstandard.com/news-45-believers-killed-in-two-separate-attacks-in-arsi-and-kellem-wollega-zones-oromia-region/>

²⁴ BBC Afaan Oromoo, "Gidaamitti 'amantoonni sagal waldaa keessaa baafamanii ajjeefaman' – Waldaa Makaana Yasuus," published December 1, 2023, accessed March 18, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/afaanoromoo/articles/c6pelpr46e9o>

²⁵ Justice&Peace4Ethiopia [@JP4Ethiopia]. (2020, August 16). "Translated in English: @amnesty @EthioHRC @humanrights1st @MinorityRights #justice4ethiopia #peace4ethiopia #Justiceandpeace4Ethiopia #Ethiopia", Twitter, Accessed September 15, 2023, <https://twitter.com/JP4Ethiopia/status/1294864026913169410>, See also, @GurageFirst. (2020, August 4), Twitter, Accessed September 15, 2023, <https://twitter.com/GurageFirst/status/1290682767097892865>

ethnicities in his area, giving the massacres a purely religious dimension. The NGO "Minority Rights Group" reported²⁶ that the attacks were well-prepared and that the rioters had a list of names and went from house to house checking ID cards and conducting massacres accordingly to the list. According to reports from the same NGO, police forces in these areas have been of no help, as they claimed they were not authorized to intervene. In cases where victims have attempted to defend themselves, the Oromia region's special forces have attacked them. This information points to clear complicity on the part of the government.

D. Amhara Massacres in Wollega

Several devastating incidents in Wollega have highlighted a pattern of severe human rights abuses against the Amhara community in the Oromia region of Ethiopia. One such incident occurred on November 1, 2020, in Gawa Qanqa, a village in the Guliso District of West Wollega Zone²⁷. As reported by Amnesty International, this atrocity saw the brutal massacre of at least 54 individuals from the Amhara ethnic group²⁸. This violent assault, allegedly carried out by the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), occurred just a day after the Ethiopian Defense Forces' sudden and enigmatic departure from the region. In a desperate bid for safety, local residents pleaded the leaving troops to stay, with some going to the extent of forcibly entering the departing military vehicles, afraid of the impending danger²⁹. The circumstances and timing of the military's withdrawal have sparked significant criticism and suspicion, suggesting the involvement of state actors in the orchestration of these massacres.

The attack was marked by its systematic and targeted nature, with assailants focusing on Amhara civilians, specifically women and children³⁰. Victims were forcibly extracted from their homes and herded into a local school. In a harrowing display of intimidation, the attackers showed the gathered victims graphic images of dismembered and decapitated individuals on their phones and laptops, ominously declaring, "Today is your turn" and "You will be finished"³¹ (our translation). The victims were then made to lie down, after which the assailants indiscriminately fired upon them with automatic rifles.

²⁶ Minority Rights Group International, "Recent violence in Ethiopia's Oromia region shows hallmark signs of ethnic cleansing, says MRG," published July 22, 2020, accessed September 15, 2023, <https://minorityrights.org/2020/07/22/ethnic-cleansing-oromia/>

²⁷ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, "Wollega zone: Massacre of civilians," published by November 2, 2020, accessed November 13, 2023, <https://ehrc.org/wollega-zone-massacre-of-civilians/>

²⁸ Amnesty International, "Ethiopia: Over 50 ethnic Amhara killed in attack on village by armed group," published November 2, 2020, accessed November 7, 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2020/11/ethiopia-over-50-ethnic-amhara-killed-in-attack-on-village-by-armed-group/>

²⁹ Amhara Media Centre, "ሰበር ዜና - በትምህርት ቤት ውስጥ ሰብስበው ጨረሷቸው", Youtube, published 2 November 2020, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrF2QToQeuE> (timestamp: 4:20 to 4:40).

³⁰ Amnesty International, "Ethiopia: Over 50 ethnic Amhara killed in attack on village by armed group," published November 2, 2020, accessed November 7, 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2020/11/ethiopia-over-50-ethnic-amhara-killed-in-attack-on-village-by-armed-group/>

³¹ Amhara Media Centre, "ሰበር ዜና - በትምህርት ቤት ውስጥ ሰብስበው ጨረሷቸው", Youtube, published 2 November 2020, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrF2QToQeuE>

Similarly, on June 18, 2022, the Amhara community in Wollega within the Oromia region of Ethiopia, was brutally slaughtered in what is now known as the Gimbi massacre³². The perpetrator was reportedly the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) terrorist group; however, the armed force has denied responsibility and claims that government forces are responsible for this killing. The victim count is between 400 and 554 people. According to an investigative report by the Amhara Association of America (AAA), 13 people were killed by being burned alive and "in at least two cases, pregnant women had their wombs cut open with a knife³³". A witness that spoke to Human Rights Watch reports hearing the gunmen say "We are heroes, and no one can escape from us. We will kill you all³⁴". The massacre lasted around 8 hours and government forces did not interfere despite the pleas of the people. They claimed they were unable to respond because the roads were closed³⁵. They only appeared hours after the attackers left the area³⁶.

On July 4th, 2022, just mere weeks after the Gimbi massacre, the OLA terrorist group committed another massacre in the same region within the Qelem Wollega zone³⁷. The victim count is between 150 and 308³⁸ people. The modus operandi remained the same, as they targeted and killed members of the Amhara ethnic group. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reported that the vast majority of the deceased were children and women³⁹. An eyewitness from a nearby town, upon witnessing the aftermath, described the scene as "beyond human comprehension⁴⁰," noting particularly that "Two-months and three-months old infants [...] were

³² Human Rights Watch, "Ethiopia: Civilians in Western Oromia Left Unprotected." published on August 31, 2022, accessed September 15, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/08/31/ethiopia-civilians-western-romia-left-unprotected>

³³ Amhara Association of America. (2022). "'It Seems Like The Whole Population Is Killed': An Interim Report on the June 18th, 2022 Amhara Massacre in the Tole Kebele, Gimbi Woreda, West Wollega Zone of Ethiopia's Oromia Region by Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) militants.", accessed September 15, 2023, <https://www.amharaamerica.org/post/june-18th-2022-amhara-massacre-in-the-tole-kebele-west-wollega-by-ola>

³⁴ Human Rights Watch, "Ethiopia: Civilians in Western Oromia Left Unprotected." published August 31, 2022, accessed September 15, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/08/31/ethiopia-civilians-western-romia-left-unprotected>

³⁵ Amnesty International, "Ethiopia: Authorities must investigate massacre of ethnic Amhara in Tole," published July 2022, accessed September 6, 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/07/ethiopia-authorities-must-investigate-massacre-of-ethnic-amhara-in-tole/>

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷ BBC Amharic. "ኦሎሚያ ክልል፡ በቁለም ወለጋ ዞን በተፈፀመ ጥቃት ቢያንስ 150 ሰዎች መገደላቸውን የዐይን እማኞች ተናገሩ." published July 5, 2022, accessed September 15, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/amharic/articles/cd1k52n7429o>

³⁸ Amhara Association of America, "They attacked us for the simple reason of being Amhara," published July 10, 2022, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://www.amharaamerica.org/post/they-attacked-us-for-the-simple-reason-of-being-amhara>

³⁹ BBC Amharic. "ኦሎሚያ ክልል፡ በቁለም ወለጋ ዞን በተፈፀመ ጥቃት ቢያንስ 150 ሰዎች መገደላቸውን የዐይን እማኞች ተናገሩ." published July 5, 2022, accessed September 15, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/amharic/articles/cd1k52n7429o> "የዐይን እማኞች [...] አብዛኞቹ የጥቃቱ ሰለጠኞች የወራት እድሜ ያላቸው ጨቅላ ሕጻናት፣ ሴቶች እና አረጋውያን መሆናቸውን ገልጸዋል" Our translation, "Eyewitnesses reported that most of the victims were infants, women and elderly people"

⁴⁰ *Ibidem* "ከዚያም ወደ ስፍራው ሲደርስ ያየውን ነገር 'ከአዕምሮ በላይ ነው' ሲል ገልጸዋል።" Our translation, "Once he got there, he described what he saw as 'Above human comprehension'"

cruelly massacred⁴¹”. The attack was characterized by the use of a variety of weapons, including bombs, guns, and bladed weapons, suggesting a level of preparation and premeditation. State actors are once again accused of complicity in this massacre, as security forces showed up only hours after the incident.

This distressing series of massacres—ranging from the Burayu massacre in 2018, the Shashemene massacre in 2020, to multiple incidents in 2020 and 2021 including the Mai Kadra, Metekel, Ataye, Chenna, Kombolcha, and Kobo massacres—bears testament to this ongoing crisis.

E. The Metekel Massacres

From 2020 to 2021, the Metekel Zone in Ethiopia's Benishangul-Gumuz region became the epicenter of massacres targeting the Amhara community along with other minorities. A notably severe attack took place on the night of December 22nd, extending into the early hours of December 23rd, 2020⁴². This assault, suspected to be the work of Gumuz fighters, led to an estimated 222 fatalities and displaced approximately 40,000 individuals⁴³. The village was reportedly “surrounded by up to 500 gunmen”⁴⁴ that night who inflicted several hours of terror upon the community. The executions were methodically carried out through the use of firearms, arrows⁴⁵ and the deliberate burning of houses as the “armed group shot at residents and set fire to their homes as they lay asleep”⁴⁶. This brutal massacre followed closely on the heels of another incident that occurred on November 14, 2020, targeting a bus traveling in the zone. During this earlier event, 34 people from the Amhara and Agew communities were killed by Gumuz militiamen⁴⁷. Amnesty International's analysis of the November incident highlighted

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.7 “የሁለትና የሦስት ወር ሕጻናት፣ [...] በግፍ ተገድለዋል።” Our translation, “Two-months and three-months old infants [...] were cruelly massacred”

⁴² Ethiopian Citizen, "Benishangul Gumuz Crisis: 207 civilians gruesomely slaughtered says Ethiopian rights group," published December 26, 2020, accessed November 3, 2023, <https://www.ethiopiancitizen.com/2020/12/207-civilians-gruesomely-slaughtered-says-Ethiopian-rights-group.html>

⁴³ Sky News, "Ethiopia: 222 killed in village massacre as ethnic tensions flare - Red Cross," published December 23, 2020, accessed November 3, 2023, <https://news.sky.com/story/ethiopia-222-killed-in-village-massacre-as-ethnic-tensions-flare-red-cross-12172583>

⁴⁴ Addis Standard, "News Alert: Eyewitnesses say more than 90 killed in fresh attack in Bulen Wereda, Benishangul Gumuz; region cautions civilians to join safe villages," published December 23, 2020, accessed November 3, 2023, <https://addisstandard.com/news-alert-eyewitnesses-say-more-than-90-killed-in-fresh-attack-in-bulen-wereda-benishangul-gumuz-region-cautions-civilians-to-join-safe-villages/>

⁴⁵ Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO), "Metekel case that requires an immediate, pragmatic, and lasting solution," December 25, 2020, accessed November 3, 2023, <https://ehrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Metekel-case-that-requires-a-quick-pragmatic-and-lasting-solution..pdf>

⁴⁶ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, "Benishangul-Gumuz region: Protection of civilians is the primary duty of the government," published December 24, 2020, accessed November 3, 2023, <https://ehrc.org/benishangul-gumuz-protection-of-civilians-is-the-primary-duty-of-the-government/>

⁴⁷ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, "Benishangul-Gumuz region: Swift coordinated action important to improve safety and security," published November 15, 2020, accessed November 3, 2023, <https://ehrc.org/benishangul-gumuz-region-swift-coordinated-action-important-to-improve-safety-and-security/>

that the assailants used the term ‘Qey,’ literally translating to ‘red,’ as an apparent epithet to denote the fair skin color of the victims, thereby accentuating the ethnically motivated nature of these attacks⁴⁸.

Tragically, these events are far from being isolated. Similar massacres occurred in September 2020, claiming 45 lives⁴⁹, and in October 2020, resulting in at least 14 fatalities⁵⁰. The relentless pattern of violence extended into the following year, with an attack on January 12, 2021, leaving 82 civilians dead and 22 injured⁵¹. The most recent reports from the region, recounts yet another atrocity, with 17 more individuals falling victim to these ongoing massacres on July 7, 2023⁵². This reminds us of the constant persecution faced by the Amhara people in the region.

The testimonies provided by survivors paint a bone-chilling and profoundly disturbing picture of the atrocities committed. The narratives relayed by survivors reveal a spectrum of brutality, encompassing decapitations and dismemberments, as well as the heinous act of cannibalistic consumption of the dead⁵³. The savagery of these acts did not discriminate, tragically affecting children as well. In a heartrending account shared with Reuters, a witness recounted the discovery of an infant, a mere six months old, who had been brutally slain in her home and "her little body thrown in a field"⁵⁴.

The ongoing violence and massacres in Metekel point to the government's failure to protect the Amhara community and other vulnerable minorities within the region. Despite persistent appeals for decisive action from both human rights organizations and local inhabitants, governmental responses have been notably insufficient. Disturbingly, eyewitness testimonies

⁴⁸ Amnesty International, "Ethiopia: At least 100 dead in surge of violence against ethnic minorities," published December 23, 2020, accessed November 3, 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2020/12/ethiopia-at-least-100-dead-surge-of-violence-against-ethnic-minorities/>

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁰ Euronews, "More than 100 killed in latest ethnic massacre in Ethiopia," published December 23, 2020, accessed November 3, 2023, <https://www.euronews.com/2020/12/23/more-than-100-killed-in-latest-ethnic-massacre-in-ethiopia>

⁵¹ Al Jazeera, "Over 80 civilians killed in latest west Ethiopia attack," published January 13, 2021, accessed November 3, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/1/13/over-80-killed-in-west-ethiopia-attack-rights-commission>

⁵² Genocide Prevention in Ethiopia [@GPEthiopia]. "Gumuz armed groups have carried out a horrific massacre against ethnic Amharas..." Twitter, July 7, 2023. Accessed November 3, 2023. <https://twitter.com/GPEthiopia/status/1678417364818206720>

⁵³ Amhara Professionals Union, "Call for Accountability and Justice", published February 14, 2022, accessed September 6, 2023, <https://www.ambapu.org/sites/default/files/202202/APU%20Press%20Release%20%5B2022-02-14%5D.pdf> p.2, "There have also been reports of cannibalism and drinking the blood of deceased victims [...]" See also, YouTube, "The horrific accounts of the ordeals of Amharas of Metekel, Ethiopia", by Crimewatch, published on 13 Apr 2021. Unlisted documentary on a massacre, containing extremely graphic content. Between 29 mins:45 secs and 30 mins:32 secs of the documentary, two men testify that acts of cannibalism took place during a massacre. Link available upon request, accessed September 6, 2023. See also, Twitter [@JP4Ethiopia]; posted on October 15, 2020, accessed September 6, 2023, <https://twitter.com/JP4Ethiopia/status/1316549559234031617>

⁵⁴ Reuters, "At least 12 people killed in western Ethiopia," by Dawit Endeshaw and Giulia Paravicini, published October 13, 2020, accessed November 3, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/article/ozatp-us-ethiopia-violence-idAFKBN26Y1UH-OZATP>

suggest a situation that transcends mere negligence. There are allegations indicating possible involvement or tacit approval by regional administration officials in these egregious acts⁵⁵. These grave allegations cast doubt on the integrity of regional governance and underscore the urgent necessity for an open investigation and the enforcement of accountability.

It is worth noting that the situation in Metekel has exacerbated the already dire humanitarian situation in Ethiopia, with UNOCHA reporting that at least 101,000 individuals have been compelled to flee their homes due to the unrest⁵⁶. Currently, these displaced persons remain within the country's borders; however, should the turmoil continue, it is likely to influence international migration trends, which are already under strain.

F. Forced displacement of the Amhara community

Since January 1, 2023, there have been consistent reports of the government orchestrating discriminatory displacements, targeting primarily non-Oromos, especially Amharas, in the vicinity of the capital⁵⁷. Tens of thousands of houses were demolished in this context⁵⁸. While the government justifies these actions by labeling the houses as "illegal settlements" needed for the “Sheger City” project, their motives come into question. Dr. Teshome Adugna, the mayor of Sheger City, when questioned about the selective nature of these demolitions, responded that they aimed to avoid displacing the "indigenous" people⁵⁹. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission found that the house demolitions included features of ethnic discrimination⁶⁰. This effectively creates a system of segregation in which certain citizens are accorded more rights than others.

⁵⁵ Genocide Prevention in Ethiopia [@GPEthiopia]. "Gumuz armed groups have carried out a horrific massacre against ethnic Amharas..." Twitter, July 7, 2023. Accessed November 3, 2023.

<https://twitter.com/GPEthiopia/status/1678417364818206720> See also, Justice & Peace for Ethiopia [@JP4Ethiopia]. "Amhara woman describing how the regional forces enforce the ethnic cleansing WITH SUBTITLES." Twitter, October 15, 2020. Accessed November 3, 2023.

<https://twitter.com/JP4Ethiopia/status/1316549795956359168>

⁵⁶ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Ethiopia: Benishangul Gumuz Region - Flash Update, 6 January 2021," accessed November 3, 2023,

<https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-benishangul-gumuz-region-flash-update-6-january-2021>

⁵⁷ Amhara Association of America, "Report on Home Demolitions and Forced Evictions of Amharas in the Newly Established Sheger City Administration of the Oromia Region: A City that Denies Amhara Existence in their Homeland of Ethiopia," published May 14, 2023, accessed September 15, 2023,

https://www.amharaamerica.org/files/ugd/e494ca_070ed9eaf6ee49ae82164cb626f34da4.pdf

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁹ EBC, "ብርቱ ወግ፡- በሽገር ከተማ ምስረታ ላይ ከከተማው ከጎቲባ ዶ/ር ተሾመ አዱኛ ጋር የተደረገ ቆይታ (ክፍል 2) Etv | Ethiopia | News," published June 20, 2023, accessed September 15, 2023,

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZWAnSBuTVk&t=301s&ab_channel=EBC

⁶⁰ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, "Newly formed Sheger City breaches human rights law: report – The Reporter Ethiopia," accessed September 15, 2023, <https://ehrc.org/newly-formed-sheger-city-breaches-human-rights-law-report-the-reporter-ethiopia/>

III. Military Operations in the Amhara Region

In response to escalating security issues in the Amhara region, Ethiopia's government instituted a state of emergency on August 4, 2023. Subsequent reports reveal a concerning pattern of human rights abuses since this declaration.

A. Drone Attacks on Civilians in the Amhara Region

There are several reports indicating the use of drones against civilians in the Amhara region since the declaration of the state of emergency. On Sunday, August 13, 2023, a drone attack took place in the central town of Finote Selam in the Amhara region, killing at least 26 civilians and injuring 55 others⁶¹.

While describing his experience in treating the victims of the drone attack, a hospital official informed the AFP news agency that all the individuals who arrived on Sunday were “wearing either casual civilian clothing or Sunday traditional clothes”⁶², indicating that the victims were most likely churchgoers. This attack, however, is far from being an isolated case.

On September 17, 2023, the Ethiopian government reportedly carried out drone strikes in the towns of Kuarit and Dembecha, located in the Gojjam zone of the Amhara Region⁶³. An eyewitness provided in his testimony that the strikes in the town of Kuarit targeted areas that were notably distant from any active conflict zones. To describe the indiscriminate nature of these strikes, he stated that “peaceful people travelling in large numbers have been targeted”⁶⁴ (our translation). The estimated casualties from the drone strike in Kuarit are 30 civilians. Concurrently, in Dembecha, another drone strike resulted in the tragic loss of 18 lives.

In a disturbing continuation of aerial attacks on civilians within the Amhara region, another drone strike occurred on October 16, 2023, this time targeting Berehet Woreda. Reports indicate that this assault resulted in the deaths of 35 Amhara civilians⁶⁵, including a 19-month-old

⁶¹ Le Monde with AFP, “Air strike kills at least 26 in Ethiopia's Amhara,” published August 15, 2023, accessed September 15, 2023, https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/08/15/air-strike-kills-at-least-26-in-ethiopia-s-amhara_6093248_4.html

⁶² George Wright, “Ethiopia Amhara: Air strike kills at least 26 in Finote Selam,” BBC News, published August 8, 2023, accessed November 9, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-66502937>

⁶³ Ethiopia Observer, “Air strike kills at least 30 in Dembecha, Quarit,” published September 19, 2023, accessed November 23, 2023, <https://www.ethiopiaobserver.com/2023/09/19/air-strike-kills-at-least-30-in-dembecha-quarit>

⁶⁴ BBC Amharic, “በምዕራብ ጎጃም በተፈጸሙ የድሮን ጥቃቶች ‘ከ30 በላይ ሰላማዊ ሰዎች መገደላቸውን’ ነጠራዎች ተናገሩ,” published September 19, 2023, accessed November 23, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/amharic/articles/cv21y38zy71o>. “በብዙ ተሰባስበው ይጓዙ የነበሩ ሰላማዊ ሰዎች ኢላማ ተደርገዋል”

⁶⁵ Amhara Association of America, “Abiy Ahmed Ali Regime's Drone Strikes: 35 Amhara Civilians Killed, 27 Injured in Berehet Woreda,” published October 17, 2023, accessed November 21, 2023, <https://www.amharaamerica.org/post/abiy-ahmed-ali-regimes-drone-strikes-35-amhara-civilians-killed-27-injured-in-berehet-woreda>

infant⁶⁶. Shortly after this incident, another drone strike occurred in the region on October 19, 2023, resulting in the death of eight civilians⁶⁷.

The ongoing drone strikes against civilians in the Amhara region have prompted a reaction from the international community. Seif Magango, the spokesperson for the UN Human Rights Office, recently addressed the severity of these incidents in a statement⁶⁸. He pointed out that on November 6, 2023, a drone strike targeted a primary school causing seven casualties, including three teachers. In a separate incident on November 9, 2023, a drone strike occurred at a bus station in Waber town, killing 13 people who were waiting to board a bus. Magango underlined in his statement that "Such attacks amount to arbitrary deprivation of life under international human rights law."

B. Extrajudicial and Summary Killings

While drone strikes have been a prominent concern, other grave human rights issues in the Amhara region demand attention. Among these, extrajudicial and summary killings have emerged as a significant and troubling pattern.

On August 18, 2023, Amnesty International claimed to have "received allegations of massacres and casualties in Finote Selam, Bahir Dar and Shewa Robit that merit further investigation⁶⁹". Moreover, a recent report by The Guardian⁷⁰ draws attention to accusations against Ethiopian federal troops. These troops are alleged to have committed mass killings and looting in Majete, a town in eastern Amhara. Witnesses describe the soldiers conducting house-to-house searches, forcibly rounding up, and executing unarmed farmers. The estimated death toll from these actions exceeds 70 civilians.

A particularly distressing eyewitness account, provided to The Guardian, sheds light on the brutality of these operations. A resident of Majete recounted how federal troops forcibly entered her home. "We were sitting in our house, locking the doors when the federal troops arrived," she said. "I hoped they would pass our house when we did not answer their knock. But they broke in and became angry [...] They shot dead my husband in front of me. Then they said to me to bury him, kicking his dead body as if he was not a human being."

⁶⁶ Reuters, "Conflict in Ethiopia's Amhara Kills Dozens, Rights Body Says," by Dawit Endeshaw, published October 30, 2023, accessed November 21, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/conflict-ethiopias-amhara-kills-dozens-rights-body-says-2023-10-30/>

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Ethiopia: Violence in Amhara region," statement by Seif Magango, November 17, 2023, accessed November 17, 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2023/11/ethiopia-violence-amhara-region>

⁶⁹ Amnesty International, "Ethiopian authorities must allow independent investigators, media access to Amhara region," published August 18, 2023, accessed September 15, 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/08/ethiopia-authorities-must-grant-independent-investigators-media-unfettered-access-to-amhara-region-to-probe-violations-under-state-of-emergency/>

⁷⁰ The Guardian, "Ethiopian troops accused of mass killings of civilians in Amhara region," published September 8, 2023, accessed September 15, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/sep/08/ethiopian-troops-accused-mass-killings-amhara-civilians-region-fano-militia>

These allegations of extrajudicial killings have been furthermore substantiated by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC). In a report published on September 15, 2023, the EHRC confirmed the occurrence of such incidents in the Amhara region⁷¹. The report details instances where individuals were accused of harboring Fano fighters or providing them with intelligence, leading to their immediate execution. A particularly disturbing aspect revealed in the report is the systematic nature of these executions, often occurring during door-to-door searches conducted by the Ethiopian National Defense Forces.

Further emphasizing the severity of the human rights crisis in the Amhara region, the EHRC released another significant report on October 30, 2023⁷². This document brings to light a particularly harrowing incident: the killing in *Filseta Debre Maryam Church* of 12 “*Abinet*” students, which are young students of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church⁷³. This killing is not an isolated incident, but part of a larger pattern of government actions assaulting the sanctity of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and its followers.

The EHRC report also documented other distressing incidents. For instance, in West Gojjam zone in the Amhara region, a man who had been wounded was seeking medical help. Aided by his mother and his sister, he took a Bajaj, a common rural transport vehicle, to reach a health facility. However, government security forces stopped their vehicle on the road. They accused the injured man of being a combatant and executed him. According to eyewitnesses, the security forces then indiscriminately executed his mother, his sister, and the Bajaj driver.

C. Mass arrests

The Amhara community in Ethiopia is facing an escalating wave of mass and arbitrary arrests. In May 2023 alone, the government reportedly detained over 4,500 ethnic Amhara individuals⁷⁴. This number surged following the declaration of the state of emergency on August 4, 2023, with claims suggesting that around 14,000 Amhara individuals have since been apprehended⁷⁵. Many of these detainees find themselves in makeshift detention centers, with schools being repurposed for this cause. Mothers were seen sitting on the porch of the

⁷¹ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, "አማራ ክልል ከትጥቅ ግጭት ጋር በተያያዘ አደጋዎች እና የሰዎች መገደል," published September 15, 2023, accessed November 14, 2023, <https://ehrc.org/አማራ-ክልል-ከትጥቅ-ግጭት-ጋር-በተያያዘ-አ/>.

⁷² Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, "አማራ ክልል ለውራት የቀጠለው የትጥቅ ግጭት እና የሰዎች መገደል," published October 30, accessed November 14, 2023, <https://ehrc.org/አማራ-ክልል-ለውራት-የቀጠለው-የትጥቅ-ግጭት>.

⁷³ Translated by Amhara Association in America, Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, "EHRC Press Release: Ongoing Human Rights Violations in Amhara Region's Armed Conflict," published October 30, 2023, accessed November 14, 2023, <https://www.amharaamerica.org/post/ehrc-press-release-ongoing-human-rights-violations-in-amhara-regions-armed-conflict>

⁷⁴ AP News, "Ethiopia's mass arrests show rift with former Amhara allies," published June 3, 2022, accessed September 15, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/politics-kenya-africa-ethiopia-arrests-324b72c41ce1d991db8ff222e8469887>

⁷⁵ APA News, "Security forces arrest thousands of people in Ethiopia's capital", published August 8, 2023, accessed September 6, 2023, <https://apanews.net/security-forces-arrest-thousands-of-people-in-ethiopias-capital/>

Dejazmach Wondirad secondary school in Addis Ababa, where many members of the Amhara ethnic group were detained. Anxiously hoping for the possible release of her son, one witness said: "It's been eleven days since they took him [...] He hasn't done anything wrong, we're very confused."⁷⁶

Pictures circulated by Amhara activists allegedly depict detainees held in conditions that violate human rights standards⁷⁷, with a notable presence of minors among those incarcerated⁷⁸. Immediate and unobstructed access to these individuals is imperative to verify these facts and to ascertain the well-being of the detainees.

IV. Recommendations

Given the severe human rights abuses against the Amhara people in Ethiopia, as detailed in this report, the following recommendations are proposed.

(1) Establishment of an Independent UN Investigation: It is imperative that the United Nations establish an independent and impartial investigation mechanism to thoroughly monitor and examine the human rights violations against the Amhara. This body should be mandated to collect evidence, document incidents, and provide a detailed assessment of the atrocities, ensuring that the global community is informed and responsive to the crisis.

(2) Ensuring Accountability and Justice: In response to the findings of the UN investigation, there must be a concerted effort to hold perpetrators accountable. This involves initiating fair legal proceedings and trials, ensuring that justice is served for the victims and their families. It is essential that those responsible, irrespective of their status or position, are brought to justice for their actions.

⁷⁶ Ethiopian Reporter / ሪፖርተር ኢትዮጵያ, "በአዲስ አበባ ቤተሰቦቻቸው የታሰሩባቸው ዜጎች ስቃይና እንግልት @ethiopiareporter," uploaded on August 16, 2023, accessed September 15, 2023, https://youtu.be/zMt498_tRLM?t=111.

⁷⁷ Twitter, "@_Gojjam" posted on September 10, 2023, accessed September 15, 2023, https://twitter.com/_Gojjam/status/1700669248870162667.

⁷⁸ Twitter, "@RasAsteraw" posted on September 10, 2023, accessed September 15, 2023, <https://twitter.com/RasAsteraw/status/1700937240933806490>.