



## **Active Genocide Alert**

### **Ethiopia - Amhara Region**

The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention is issuing an Active Genocide Alert for Ethiopia's Amhara people after the September 3rd massacre of Amhara civilians in Majete and the surrounding areas of the Amhara region in Ethiopia.

On September 3, 2023, the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF), under the direction of Ethiopian Prime Minister, Mr. Abiy Ahmed Ali, and assisted by fighters of the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) from the neighboring Oromo Special Zone, also located in the Amhara region, engaged in the deliberate killing of Amhara civilians. As of the date of publication of this Active Genocide Alert, the exact number of victims is yet to be independently determined. However, available sources estimate that between 33 and [over 70 civilians have been murdered](#). Prioritizing the younger men in the area, the armed personnel carried out a door-to-door massacre. Eyewitnesses also reported the looting of the victims' property and livelihood during the killings, including cattle, grains, and fertilizer. Moreover, rural communities were indiscriminately shelled while extrajudicial executions were carried out by ENDF soldiers. After the massacre ended, the victims were buried by the survivors. As of September 7, 2023, the [Amhara Association of America](#) has identified 31 of the victims, all of whom were identified as unarmed farmers by surviving eyewitnesses.

The September 3rd Massacre is tied to the conflict between government forces and the Fano, an Amhara regional militia and former ally of Prime Minister Abiy's regime during the 2020-2022 genocidal conflict against the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). After the TPLF had retreated to its home region, on May 30, 2022, the government initiated an [intensive crackdown](#) against the Fano as part of a broader effort to disarm and demobilize the militia. On November 2, 2022, a [ceasefire agreement](#) was signed by the TPLF and government representatives. However, the deal was reported to have been met with suspicion among the Amhara [as they were excluded from the peace talks](#), despite the fact that the Fano and Amhara Special Forces fought alongside the federal army during the war.

The Lemkin Institute recalls its April 24, 2023, “[Red Flag Alert for Genocide](#)”, following the announcement of Prime Minister Abiy’s intention to integrate all regional special armed forces into Ethiopia’s federal forces on April 6, 2023, and the ensuing increase in violence, particularly in the Amhara region, where many Amhara people were killed in violent clashes with federal forces. The government’s decision was feared by Amhara representatives, as it would have left the region without armed forces capable of defending its inhabitants, and thus would have rendered the overall region at the mercy of hostile neighbors and federal armed forces.

The Lemkin Institute also warned about the escalating violence against the Amharas in Ethiopia’s Oromia region, where government forces, the Oromia Special Force, and local armed groups, namely the OLA and Qeerro (ultranationalist Oromo youth), continued to target Amharas and perpetrate ethnic-based massacres. On February 3, 2023, in its statement on “[Ongoing Ethnic Massacres of the Amhara People in the Oromia Region of Ethiopia](#)”, the Lemkin Institute had already issued a warning, emphasizing that the evidence indicated that “[...] all Oromia armed forces are conducting what appears to be a systematic policy of erasing the Amhara presence [...]” via actions such as massacres, looting, burning of victims’ houses, sexual violence, and other forms of persecution. The Lemkin Institute also noted that “[a]ccording to organizations closely monitoring the killings and other human rights abuses against the Amhara, at least 1,566 Amhara people were killed and 239 were injured in the Oromia region in 2022.”

In its April 24, 2023, “[Red Flag Alert for Genocide](#),” the Lemkin Institute issued a warning. It concluded that Ethiopia was “[...] facing a possible genocide against Amhara people, who are increasingly finding themselves marginalized within the existing political structure. The Abiy regime appears to be fanning the flames of anti-Amhara activities while publicly calling for calm. The Amhara, who are accused in political propaganda of being an elite group and who are held responsible for the historical resentments of Tigrayans and Oromos, among other groups, are in a perilous discursive position that could easily devolve into genocide.” In addition, the Lemkin Institute noted that the Abiy administration had shown itself capable of committing genocide in Tigray and of pitting regional identity groups against one another to further its agenda. Therefore, there was no reason to believe that the Abiy regime would not do so in Amhara as well.

Conflict erupted between ENDF and Fano forces in the Amhara region [in late July 2023](#). As a result, on August 4, 2023, the Council of Ministers of Ethiopia [declared a nationwide state of emergency](#), endowing authorities with broad powers to conduct arrests without court orders, enforce curfews, and ban public gatherings.

On August 10, 2023, the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia released a [statement](#) expressing deep concern regarding the deteriorating security situation in the north-western region of Ethiopia, especially in Amhara. The Commission took note of the August 4 declaration and warned that previous states of emergency had been accompanied by violations of human rights. As a result, it urged the Ethiopian government to strictly adhere to

the principles of necessity, proportionality, and non-discrimination in accordance with its legal obligations under Article 4 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

On August 29, 2023, the Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights also [expressed her concerns](#) about the deteriorating human rights situation in some regions of Ethiopia. “In [the] Amhara Region,” the statement stated, “following a flare-up in clashes between the Ethiopian military and the regional Fano militia, and the declaration of a state of emergency on 4 August, the situation worsened considerably. At least 183 people have been killed in clashes since July, according to information gathered by the UN Human Rights Office.” It further explained that the UN had received reports that more than 1,000 people had been arrested across Ethiopia under the state of emergency. Of particular concern was the fact that many of those arrested were identified as young people of Amhara ethnicity simply suspected of being Fano supporters. The UN statement highlighted that these detainees had allegedly been placed in improvised detention centers that lacked basic amenities.

On September 5, 2023, federal forces [were reported](#) to have fired mortars and anti-air guns at residential areas in the town of Delgi and the surrounding *kebeles* (wards) of Takussa Woreda, Central Gonder Zone, in the Amhara region. During the attack, 5 civilians were killed while 17 others were injured. As of September 11, 2023, the Amhara Association of America has identified 4 of the victims, including two 35-year-old pregnant women.

On September 6, 2023, the [Amhara Association of America](#) received reports of extrajudicial killings presumably committed by government forces in Debre Markos, East Gojjam Zone, in the Amhara region. Among the victims was said to be a Debre Markos University Instructor.

The next day, a [post](#) emerged on the social media platform “X”, previously known as Twitter, containing leaked footage purportedly depicting Amhara detainees in what was described as a “makeshift concentration camp.” According to the included statement, the Amharas had been abducted from Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa Zuriya, Debre Zeyit, Nazreth and Mojo. Likewise, the statement mentioned that, in Mojo and Dukem, many of the detainees were feared to have been killed while others contracted cholera and suffered from diarrhea and vomiting. Many of the victims were said to have been abducted by Oromo soldiers under the orders of the Mayor of Addis Ababa, Mrs. Adanech Abiebie, from the aforesaid city and placed in a concentration camp located in the Southern Police College in Yirgalem, South Gedeo Zone.

On September 9, 2023, [a similar update](#) emerged on X, depicting a large group of purportedly Amhara individuals who had been detained in a factory which had been turned into a makeshift concentration camp. The location of the camp was reported to be “Sidamo Awash” near the town of Gelan on the outskirts of Addis Ababa. The accompanying statement also reported that the ethnic Amharas had been abducted by order of Mrs. Adanech Abiebie. Likewise, it explained that among the detainees were women and children, who were being held in unsanitary conditions and without proper access to food. Lastly, the update also reported inhumane treatment and ambulances transporting the remains of those who perish on a daily basis while in detention.

[Information](#) on another concentration camp emerged on the same site on September 13, 2023. The contents were shared by the Amhara Association of America. The concentration camp is purportedly located in “Tulu Dimtu” and is said to house Amhara detainees who are currently facing an outbreak of an unknown communicable disease. The update contained photographic material depicting young men being treated by healthcare personnel in unsanitary conditions, most of whom are using personal protection equipment and masks.

The Lemkin Institute was unable to independently confirm the authenticity of the information in the social media posts or the photographic and videographic material included therein. Nevertheless, given the radicalization of violence against the Amhara in the past month, as well as the genocidal rhetoric against the Amharas that is deeply ingrained in Ethiopian society, the Lemkin Institute believes that there is evidence of an ongoing process of genocide in the country against Amhara citizens. We reiterate our support from our February 3rd, 2023, statement in “[Support of an International Investigation of Abiy Ahmed’s Crimes in Ethiopia](#)” “[...] call[ing] on the international community to refer [Abiy Ahmed’s] crimes to the ICC for investigation”. We also call on the international community to exert pressure on the government of Ethiopia to declare a ceasefire in Amhara, to shut down any concentration camps that currently exist, and to allow an independent, international fact-finding mission into the country to assess the situation on the ground.

President Abiy Ahmed seems to be using genocidal tactics to solve political problems involving many different identity groups who themselves are represented by armed factions that have committed or are committing atrocity crimes. Ethiopia is in desperate need of inspirational, responsible leadership and a transformational justice process that can reweave badly torn social ties between identity groups before these overlapping genocidal processes result in nationwide civil war and a winner-take-all fight of absolute destruction.