

RESEARCHED AND COMPILED BY THE REFUGEE DOCUMENTATION CENTRE OF IRELAND ON THE 23 OCTOBER 2024

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COI QUERY RESPONSE

ETHIOPIA - INFORMATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION ISSUES

Voice of America News in October 2024 states that: "The announcement of the operation came on the day human rights group Amnesty International accused Ethiopia's army of conducting "mass arbitrary detentions" in the Amhara region. Amnesty's regional director for East and Southern Africa, Tigere Chagutah, alleged that hundreds have been detained, including members of the academic community, in major towns across the Amhara region since Sept. 28. "The Ethiopian army and police's ongoing campaign of arbitrary mass detentions in Amhara region is yet more evidence of the government's total disregard for the rule of law," the director said in a statement. "Eyewitnesses have stated that authorities came with a 'list' and failed to obtain arrest and search warrants before detaining hundreds of civilians across the region. Those detained have largely not been brought before a court of law within 48 hours, as required by the country's national laws and constitution."."¹

In September 2024 *Afrobarometer* points out that: "...violence against women and girls continues to be a public health and human rights concern in the country"²

The *New Humanitarian* in September 2024 notes that: "In late July, Yared Melese, a 30-year-old NGO worker, checked into a hotel in North Wollo zone, part of Ethiopia's troubled Amhara region. He had gone to assess humanitarian needs on behalf of Action for Social Development and Environmental Protection Organisation (ASDEPO), an Ethiopian non-profit. That night he and three colleagues were abducted by armed men. The kidnappers let the others go but demanded a ransom for Yared's release. Mediation by local elders failed. On 9 August, it was confirmed that Yared was dead. Yared was the sixth humanitarian worker to be killed this year in Amhara, where government forces are fighting local

¹ Voice of America News (3 October 2024) Ethiopian military boosts operations in Amhara region

² Afrobarometer (23 September 2024) Ethiopians condemn violence against women but consider domestic violence a private matter

militias known as Fano. The UN also counts eight incidents of kidnap involving UN or NGO staff, nine incidents of robbery, and four where UN vehicles have been commandeered.”³

A report issued by *Human Rights Watch* in September 2024 states that: “Last week, the Ethiopian government finally released seven long-detained senior members of the Oromo Liberation Front, an opposition political party. Abdi Regassa, Dawit Abdeta, Lammi Begna, Michael Boran, Kenessa Ayana, Gaada Oljira, and Gaada Gebissa should never have been arrested, let alone jailed. They spent four years in detention without charge while the government ignored multiple court orders for their release. The authorities repeatedly violated their rights, as Human Rights Watch’s research found. For months at a time, they were forcibly disappeared or held incommunicado, leaving their lawyers and families with no knowledge of their whereabouts. Authorities frequently moved the men between makeshift and official detention sites, including a police training camp and a poultry farm where they were kept in a storage room with no light or water supply. Kenessa Ayana and Gaada Gebissa suffered serious health conditions in detention.”⁴

The *Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect* in September 2024 mentioned that: “Intense fighting continues in Amhara, with security forces killing dozens in Central Gondar, East Gojam, North Shewa and West Gojam zones.”⁵

The *Ethiopian Human Rights Commission* in July 2024 notes that: “Incidents of armed conflicts, attacks or violent clashes, as have been recorded in most parts of Ethiopia during the reporting period; civilian suffering, including death and injuries, resulting from measures taken by government forces or armed groups remains the most pressing human rights concern.”⁶ The same report further states that: “EHRC’s May 28, 2024 report for example showed that instances of unlawful/arbitrary killing, including extrajudicial killings by government forces, indiscriminate attacks against civilians, attacks targeting civilians, and abductions (including for ransom), took place in conflict affected areas of North, West and East Gojjam Zones, as well as Bahir Dar City and nearby areas, South Gondar Zone and North Shewa and Oromia Special Zone of Amhara Region, and in North, South, West, Southwest and East Shewa Zones, Horo Gudru Wollega, West Guji Zone and West Arsi Zone in Oromia Region.”⁷ The report further mentioned that: “EHRC received numerous complaints from victims and families of persons detained in non-regular detention places, such as converted schools and warehouses, from Addis Ababa and Amhara Region, relating to lack of water, sanitation and other basic services supplies, denial of visitation rights, lack or inadequate provision of food, sleeping and medical care, exposure to various health problems, as well as harassment, abuse, beatings and other inhumane treatment.”⁸ The report further points out that: “Numerous instances of arbitrary detentions, including of media personnel, civil society organizations and political party members, which were carried out within the context of the state of emergency but outside the orders of the Command Post established to oversee

³ The New Humanitarian (19 September 2024) Aid workers risk death and kidnap in Ethiopia’s troubled Amhara region

⁴ Human Rights Watch (9 September 2024) Ethiopia Frees Seven Long-Held Opposition Politicians

⁵ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (1 September 2024) Responsibility to Protect (R2P) Monitor: September 2024, Issue 70 [Ethiopia excerpt]

⁶ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission.” (Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (5 July 2024) Annual Ethiopia Human Rights Situation Report (June 2023 - June 2024): Executive Summary

⁷ ibid

⁸ ibid

the implementation of the emergency decree, have been recorded in Addis Ababa, and Amhara, Central Ethiopia, Oromia, Sidama and Southern Ethiopia regions.”⁹ The same document stated that: “On February 1, 2024, the Ethiopian Disaster Risk Management Commission (EDRMC) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) jointly reported that as of April 2024/25, the total number critically food insecure people reached 10.8 million.”¹⁰ The report further notes that: “It is to be recalled that EHRC, based on evidence gathered from various sources, including government health institutions, reported findings of human rights violations against women and children in armed conflict areas, specifically highlighting incidents in the Amhara region where hundreds sexual and gender-based and sexual violence (SGBV) cases have been recorded.”¹¹

In June 2024 *Voice of America News* reported that: “The situation in Amhara and Oromia regions remains worrying, with ongoing fighting between government forces against Amhara militia and Fano and the Oromia Liberation Army respectively,” Liz Throssell, U.N. human rights spokesperson, told journalists in Geneva. The report cites a litany of human rights violations and abuses committed by government security forces and armed groups, including arbitrary arrests and detentions, followed by killings of civilians, torture, enforced disappearances, and attacks on civilian property. It also says at least 1,351 civilians were killed in Ethiopia last year in attacks reportedly carried out by government forces, Eritrean troops, anti-government militias, and some unknown actors.”¹²

The *European Union* in May 2024 points out that: “Civic space continued to erode in the country, with the federal government tightly controlling the environment for reporting on critical issues. Authorities have harassed and detained critical voices, forcing journalists, opposition members, and civil society activists into silence or exile. Currently, eight journalists are imprisoned (source: Committee to Protect Journalists) as well as five politicians.”¹³

The *Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO)* in May 2024 notes that: “Article 30 of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia's Constitution provides that “everyone has the right to assemble and to demonstrate together with others peacefully and unarmed, and to petition.” This right has not been respected in the case of the Oromo and other minorities, such as the Ogaden, who are severely punished and arbitrarily arrested during peaceful protests.”¹⁴ This same report points out that: “Despite Articles 14, 17, 19, 20, 25 and 37 of the Ethiopian Constitution allowing for liberty, protection against arbitrary arrest, prompt legal processes, equality before the law, and the right to have a judicial matter decided by a competent judicial power, the Ethiopian government continues to arbitrarily arrest Oromo activists and holding them indefinitely and incommunicado, often on fabricated charges of terrorism. Oromo students too have been detained and jailed without trial for their political beliefs and ethnicity.”¹⁵ The report further mentioned that: “The UNPO expresses deep concern over the continuing State-driven violence against women belonging to minority communities

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² *Voice of America News* (14 June 2024) Human rights violations, abuse threaten reconciliation, peace in Ethiopia

¹³ European Union (29 May 2024) EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World: 2023 Country Updates – Ethiopia

¹⁴ Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) (2 May 2024) The Oromo People in Ethiopia (Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review)

¹⁵ *ibid*

such as the Oromo and Ogaden. Specifically, Ethiopian government forces are guilty of systematic rape and sexual violence in their continued oppression of the Ogaden people. The scale and pattern of the cases of rape have led to the Ogaden Women Relief Association to label sexual violence as 'a weapon of war'.¹⁶ The document also states that: "On the subject of health and an adequate standard of living, measles outbreaks remain a serious issue across the country, especially affecting the Oromia region. Measles is one of the most contagious diseases and requires maintaining high and equitable population immunity. Measles outbreaks can thus serve as a tracer indicator (a sort of "canary in the coal mine") of health inequities and can help identify gaps in immunization programmes and primary health care (PHC) systems. The UNPO is deeply concerned by the lack of adequate prevention and health support systems available to the Oromo community especially given measles outbreaks related to deaths across the Oromia region."¹⁷

The US *Department of State* Country Reports on Human Rights Practices in April 2024 mentioned that: "Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: arbitrary or unlawful killings, including extrajudicial killings; enforced disappearance; torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment by the government; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest or detention; political prisoners or detainees; serious abuses in a conflict, including reportedly unlawful or widespread civilian deaths or harm, enforced disappearances or abductions, forcible transfers of civilian populations, torture, physical abuses, conflict-related sexual violence or punishment; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including violence or threats of violence against journalists, unjustified arrests of journalists, censorship, and the existence of criminal libel and slander laws; serious restrictions on internet freedom; substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and association, including overly restrictive laws on the organization, funding, or operation of nongovernmental and civil society organizations; serious government corruption; serious government restrictions on or harassment of domestic and international human rights organizations; extensive gender-based violence, including rape and sexual violence; crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting members of racial or ethnic minority groups; and laws criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults, which were enforced."¹⁸

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¹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁷ *ibid*

¹⁸ US Department of State (22 April 2024) 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia

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