



Special Adviser on the Prevention of
Genocide
Office of the Special Adviser on the
Prevention of Genocide
United Nations Headquarters

August 29, 2023

**Subject: Urgent Action to Protect the Amhara People of Ethiopia Against Ethnic
Violence and Genocide**

Dear Madam,

The European Center for Law and Justice brings to your attention a deeply concerning situation unfolding in Ethiopia, specifically affecting the Amhara people. Reports reaching us indicate a series of severe human rights violations committed against the Amhara people. These include, but are not limited to, ethnic violences and genocidal tendencies.

The Oromo, despite being the most populous ethnic group, have historically felt marginalized and underrepresented in Ethiopian governance structures, which have been dominated largely by the Amhara. The Amhara's historical association with the Ethiopian monarchy and the Orthodox Christian Church has often been perceived as a form of cultural and political hegemony over other ethnic groups, especially the Oromos and Tigrayans.

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.¹ The situation has reached a critical level since an ethnically Oromo Prime Minister came to power in 2018.

The incident reports are profoundly disturbing. The nature of these acts covers a wide range of atrocities, from the disemboweling of pregnant women² to the cannibalistic

¹ Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention, 'Statement on Ongoing Ethnic Massacres of the Amhara People in the Oromia Region of Ethiopia,' published February 3, 2023, accessed September 6, 2023, <https://www.lemkininstitute.com/statements-new-page/statement-on-ongoing-ethnic-massacres-of-the-amhara-people-in-the-oromia-region-of-ethiopia>. See also, Eurasia Review, 'Ethiopia: Mass Atrocities, Genocide in Oromia Region Against Amhara People - OpEd,' accessed September 6, 2023, <https://www.eurasiareview.com/02072022-ethiopia-mass-atrocities-genocide-in-oromia-region-against-amhara-people-oped/>.

² European Country of Origin Information Network 'Statement submitted 136th session Human Rights Committee on Ethiopia Incidents targeting the Amhara community in 2022,' by CAP - Freedom of Conscience,

consumption of those killed³. Such acts go beyond mere expressions of discontent or political dissent; they indicate a deeply rooted hatred that has been manipulated and mobilized to justify heinous crimes. This level of animus is fueled by a combination of historical grievances, political manipulation, social conditioning, and widespread hate speech which together create a toxic environment ripe for the perpetration of mass violence.

These attacks target the Amhara community and the orthodox Christians with whom they are associated. The perpetrators appear to be the Qeerroo (translating literally to Youth in Oromo language), the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), Gumuz militiamen, the Tigray People's Liberation Front, and the currently leading Prosperity Party. The targeted and systematic nature of these attacks against the Amhara and Orthodox Christians reveals an intent to not just intimidate but to eliminate, either physically or culturally, a specific community. This is a hallmark of ethnic cleansing and possibly even genocide, both of which are crimes against humanity under international law.

In recent developments, the current Ethiopian government announced a state of emergency on August 4th due to the growing security issues in the Amhara region. Ever since then, the Amhara community in Ethiopia is facing an escalating wave of mass and arbitrary arrests. In May 2023 alone, the government had reportedly detained over 4,500 ethnic Amhara individuals⁴. This number surged following the declaration of the state of emergency with claims suggesting that around 14,000 Amhara individuals have since been apprehended⁵.

There are also reports indicating the use of drones against civilians, and of extrajudicial and summary executions⁶.

According to the spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, a minimum of 183 people have died in the conflict by August 29th.⁷ This situation is deeply

published March 2022, accessed September 6, 2023, <https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2079541.html>, p. 8, under the subtitle 'About the Victims,' 4th paragraph, "In at least two cases, pregnant women had their wombs cut open with a knife." See also, Amhara Association of America, "An Interim Report on the June 18th, 2022 Amhara Massacre in the Tole Kebele, Gimbi Woreda, West Wollega Zone of Ethiopia's Oromia Region", accessed September 6, 2023, <https://www.amharaamerica.org/post/june-18th-2022-amhara-massacre-in-the-tole-kebele-west-wollega-by-olf>.

³ Amhara Professionals Union, "Call for Accountability and Justice", published February 14, 2022, accessed September 6, 2023, <https://www.ambapu.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/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 the 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>.

⁴ AP News, "Ethiopia's mass arrests show rift with former Amhara allies", published June 3, 2022, accessed September 6, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/politics-kenya-africa-ethiopia-arrests-324b72c41ce1d991db8ff222e8469887>.

⁵ 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-ethiopia-capital/>.

⁶ Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, "The human rights impact of the armed conflict on civilians in Amhara Regional State," accessed September 6, 2023, <https://ehrc.org/the-human-rights-impact-of-the-armed-conflict-on-civilians-in-amhara-regional-state/>. See also, Le Monde, "Air strike kills at least 26 in Ethiopia's Amhara", published August 15, 2023, accessed September 6, 2023, https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/08/15/air-strike-kills-at-least-26-in-ethiopia-s-amhara_6093248_4.html.

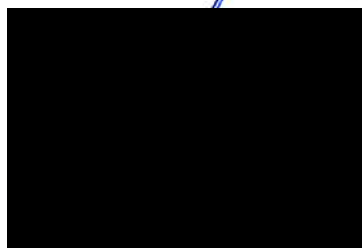
⁷ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Ethiopia: Deteriorating human rights situation", delivered August 29, 2023, accessed September 6, 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2023/08/ethiopia-deteriorating-human-rights-situation>.

alarming because the population affected by this conflict is the same population frequently targeted by acts of ethnic cleansing and other gross human rights abuses throughout the country.

Therefore, we first kindly request you commence a fact-finding mission at your earliest convenience. The objective of this mission would be to collect and verify information on the reported atrocities against the Amhara and Orthodox Christians starting from September 13, 2018⁸.

Secondly, we urge you to serve as an early warning mechanism by alerting the Secretary-General and, through him, the Security Council about the potential for these acts to escalate into genocide. This would trigger the international community's Responsibility to Protect and could lead to a timely intervention.

We trust that you will accord this matter the urgent attention it so critically requires. We look forward to your response and are available for any further discussions or clarifications you may require.



Grégor Puppinck
Director General

⁸ Despite the occurrence of atrocities prior to this period, it is our considered opinion that the Burayu massacre (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>.) that took place in September 2018 is the first of the current trend of massacres, hence why we recommend that investigations should commence from September 2018.

