



Ethnic conflict will continue to spread throughout Amhara and Oromia regions, exacerbated by the numbers still requiring humanitarian support, a fragile economy and a contested border with Sudan in the al-Fashaga region. The regional fallout from the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) will lead to further cyber-attacks against the dam infrastructure. **This document provides information, analysis and recommendations for aid organisations working in Ethiopia.**

## Overview

- Protests, mainly in the northern Amhara region, have reportedly led to towns being brought to a standstill at the end of June.
- **An unidentified armed group abducted an INGO aid worker on 27 June in Oromia and interrogated the staff member about their organisations' support for IDPs.**
- Sudan launched a small-scale offensive against Ethiopian positions along the contested al-Fashaga border area.
- Ethiopia's inflation hit 37% in May, its highest since April 2011, though it eased to 34% in June.
- Ethiopia's Information Network Security Agency (INSA), reported on 03 May that it had stopped at least 5,856 cyber-attacks in the previous nine months.

## Analysis

- Main Stream Media (MSM) and independent Ethiopia media sources claim that ethnic violence is once again increasing. Adding to the continuing tensions is the TPLF demand to regain parts of Western Tigray, which the Amharans currently hold and claim as their ancestral homeland.
- Analysis of reported violence shows very high levels of violence over the past six months in the Oromia region (279 reported incidents) and high levels in Amhara (66) and Afar (60), while reported incidents from Tigray have fallen to 26 - the same level of violence as reported from Benshangul/Gumuz and lower than numbers of reported incidents from SNNP region (34). **Any activity can be interpreted as suspicious in such an environment where tensions are high.**
- The Sudan – Ethiopia border dispute highlights the continued complexities of old historical grievances, as well as the need on both sides of the border for prime agricultural land, given the ongoing drought.
- A series of cyber-attacks over the past nine months have raised concerns over whether the GERD will be able to achieve planned electricity output.

## Outlook

- Conflict will continue - in Afar, Amhara, and Oromia in particular - exacerbated by economic pressures and the inability to access sufficient food domestically, requiring aid agencies to adapt effective mitigation strategies.
- **Aid organisations will need to invest in effective acceptance strategies to work successfully in such a challenging environment.**
- The ethnic violence and small-scale clashes between state military, police and ethnic militias across the region require aid agencies to monitor carefully and plan prevention, mitigation, and response to violence affecting aid operations.
- Although the Sudan–Ethiopia border clash has been resolved diplomatically for now, this is likely to reoccur within the next three months, creating further challenges for humanitarian agencies supporting refugees in Sudan. The economy will remain fragile, though will grow, if it can weather the effects from the ongoing conflict in the North and East, and the current drought in the East and South. Inflation continues to rise (it had fallen in June) and this will impact both staff wellbeing (due to wage pressure) and aid agency operational planning.
- The GERD will continue to attract cyber-attacks as Egypt and Sudan remain concerned over its impact on their share of the Nile water (though Sudan is less affected by the loss of water).



## Analysis

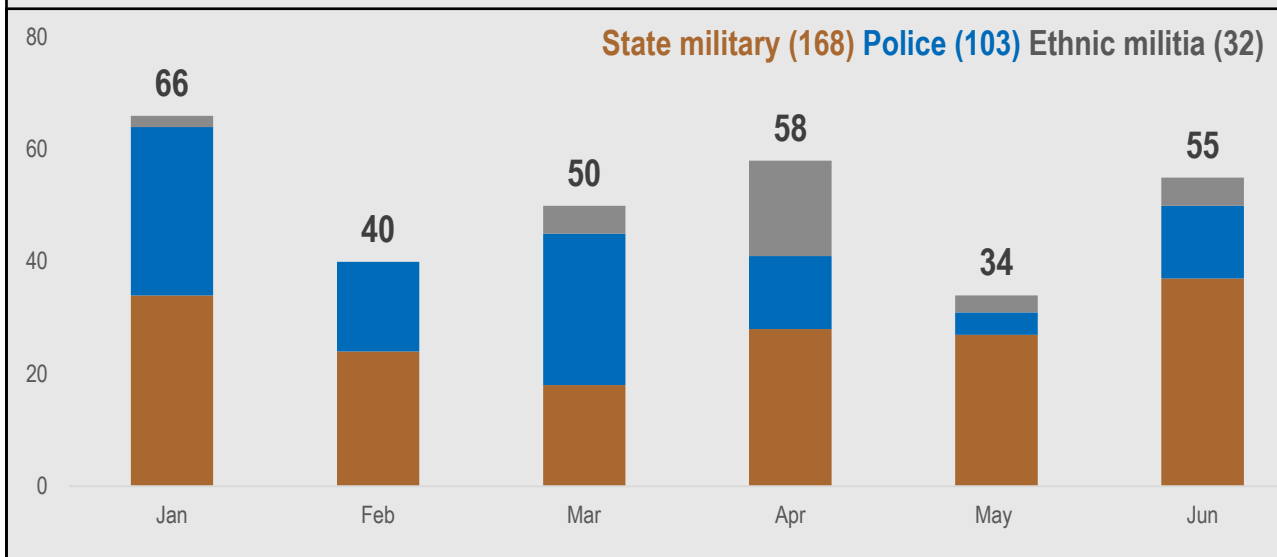
Protests, mainly in the northern Amhara region, reportedly led to towns being brought to a standstill at the end of June. The demonstrations in June were triggered by anger at a lack of action over a reported massacre in which it has been claimed that at least 100 Amharans were killed by the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) in the Oromia region. Since then, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and the OLA have exchanged accusations over a “new massacre” (PM Abiy’s twitter comment) on 04 July in Oromia. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC, state-sponsored) claims that the incident took place in two villages in the Kellelem Wollega zone, around 400 kilometres west of the capital, though this has not been verified.

Protests began in the capital Addis Ababa on 25 June, and spread to Gondar, and the capital of Amhara, Bahir Dar, by 01 July. Since then, there have been claims that up to 600 people were killed in the 18 June incident in Gimbi Woreda, East Wollega Zone, in Oromia bordering the Benishangul-Gumuz Region – though this has not been verified. All those reportedly killed in the 18 June and 03 July incidents come from the second largest ethnic group in Ethiopia – the Amhara.

This widely discussed incident is part of a wider pattern of violence. According to monitoring by the Armed Conflict and Location Event Dataset ([ACLED](#)), violence perpetrated by state military, police forces and many different ethnic militia has been higher over the past six months.

### Reported armed clashes and attacks on civilians, January to June 2022

Most incidents were attributed to Ethiopian state forces.



Source: Armed Conflict and Location Event Dataset ([ACLED](#)). Accessed 15 July 2022.

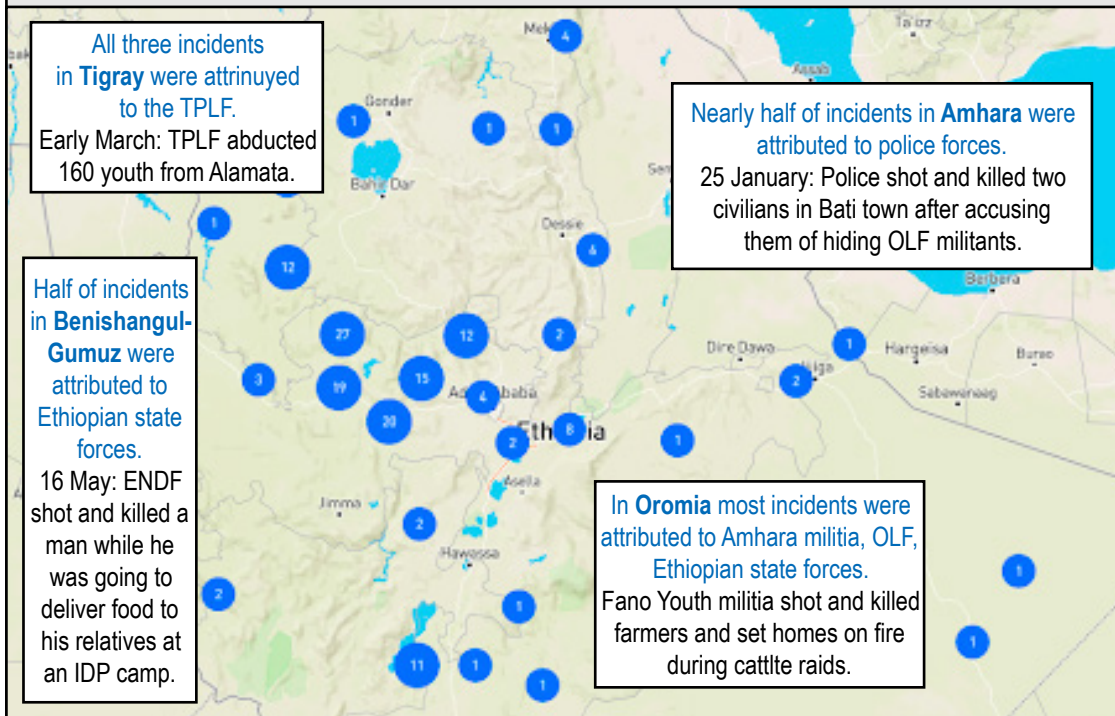
Note: Incidents have been classified as involving state or police forces if one actor was from a state force engaged in a clash or included one-sided violence against civilians. Incidents that only involved ethnic militia and no state force are classified as ethnic militia. When state forces clashed with ethnic militia this is classified as involving a state force.

Main Stream Media (MSM) and independent Ethiopia media sources claim that ethnic violence is once again increasing, which it compares to the number of incidents reported in May. Violence includes one-sided violence against civilians by armed actors, mob attacks and armed clashes between state military, police and ethnic militia.

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### Reported one-sided violence against civilians, January to June 2022

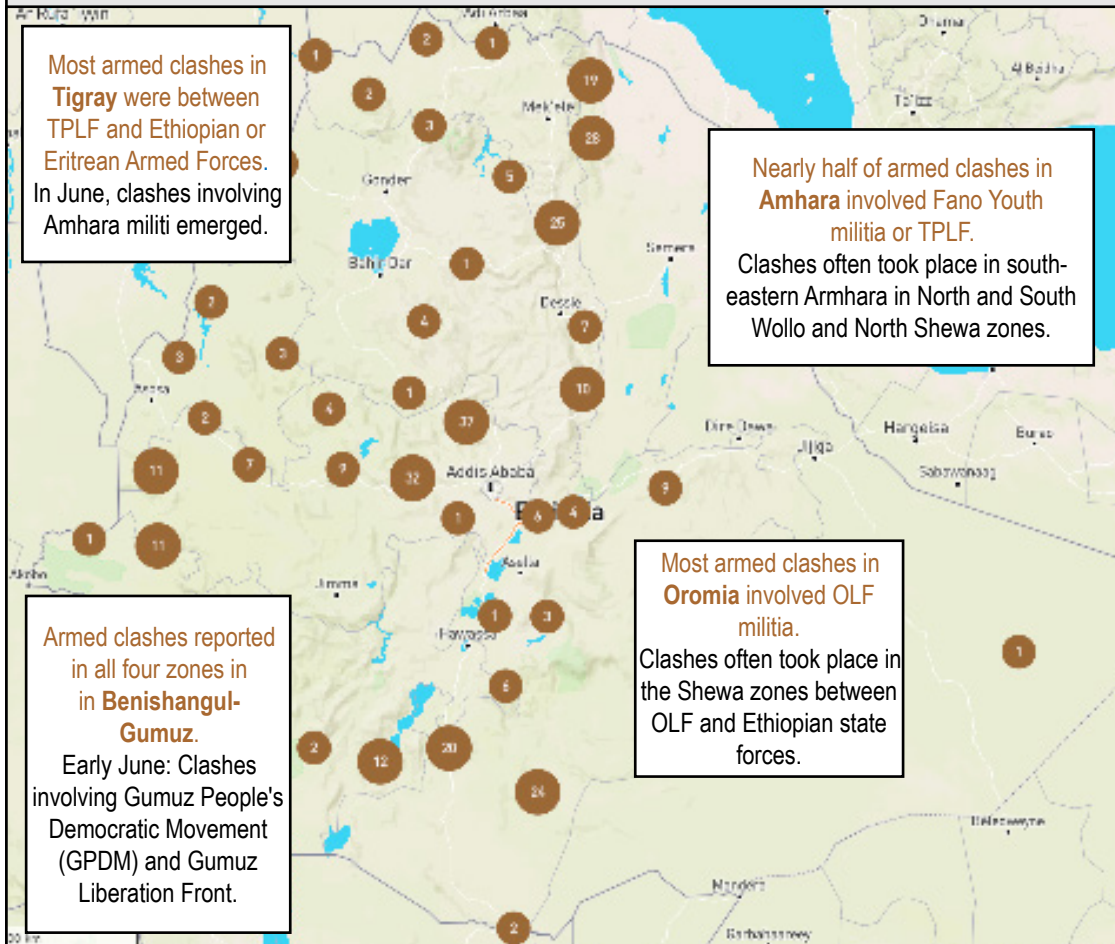
Most incidents were attributed to Ethiopian state forces and Amhara militia.



Source: Armed Conflict and Location Event Dataset ([ACLED](#)). Accessed 15 July 2022.

### Reported armed clashes January to June 2022

Most armed clashes in Oromia involved OLF militia.



Source: Armed Conflict and Location Event Dataset ([ACLED](#)). Accessed 15 July 2022.

Ethnic tension is without doubt growing. Twelve African civil society organisations wrote to UN Secretary General, António Guterres on 18 May stating their concern over the current inaction against reported atrocities in Ethiopia. They claimed that the UN had not learnt its lessons from the 1994 Rwanda genocide and warned that the “situation risks repeating itself in Ethiopia today”.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Abiy has maintained the truce (declared in March) with the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), despite an uptick in rhetoric between the two sides in May. Tigray has seen less violence against civilians in the latest six-month period; all reported incidents were attributed to the TPLF.

Clashes between the TDF and Eritrean forces along the Eritrea – Ethiopia border continue and in June the TDF also clashed with Amhara and Fano Youth militia in Southern Tigray. The truce has enabled the UN to deliver humanitarian supplies into the region with the UNICEF representative in Ethiopia, Gianfranco Rotigliano, confirming that over 170 trucks had reached areas within Tigray previously seen as inaccessible. However, long-term aid support remains very challenging in Tigray as well as throughout the country. In March 2022, local communities prevented a WFP convoy from reaching IDPs in Afar region, allegedly out of resentment and distrust, forcing it to return to Semera city. Meanwhile, highlighting the threat to INGOs in other regions, an aid worker was “kidnapped” by a unidentified armed group in Oromia (see box below).

### Ethnic and political tensions and suspicion about aid activities

**27 June 2022.** An INGO staff member was reportedly kidnapped by an unidentified armed group in Haro Limmu woreda, East Wellega zone, in Oromia Region. The group interrogated the staff member on whether humanitarian partners were operating to support the government and affiliates or Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). The group demanded that humanitarian partners should cooperate with armed groups and warned that they would continue to target people who refuse to cooperate with them. The staff member was released the following day, unharmed.

**Over 30 aid workers have been killed, 11 kidnapped, 108 arrested and six injured since November 2020. Download this data on [HDX](#).**

According to Rotigliano, over five million people require aid in Tigray alone, with an additional seven million in Amhara and Afar. It is with this background that Abiy is trying to maintain diplomatic communications with the TPLF, and with Amharan leaders, who blame the OLA (which has links to the armed unit of the TPLF – the Tigrayan Defence Force (TDF)), for the ongoing attacks against Amhara civilians.

Adding to the continuing tensions is the demand from the TPLF to regain parts of Western Tigray, which Amhara currently holds and claims as their ancestral homeland. Consequently, the Amhara Fano (an Amharan militia group that supported the Ethiopian Defence Forces (EDF) in the Tigray conflict) and the Ethiopian government are now at odds. Indeed, at the end of May the government arrested over 4000 Amhara nationalists, including Brigadier-General Tefera Mamo, who commanded the Amhara Special Forces during the Tigray conflict. Whilst initial reaction from the Amharan elite was muted over the arrests, protests are now growing against perceived attacks against Amharas, with the opposition party the National Movement of Amhara (NaMA) calling on 25 June for Abiy to explain in Parliament why he was “unable to stop the ongoing genocide against the people of Amhara”.

The same day one of Ethiopia’s independent media sites reported that the Political Parties Joint Council of Ethiopia “urged” the government to stop the killing of “innocent civilians” which the Council called “genocidal”. Any further moves against senior members of the





## Economic / Cyber

Ethiopia's inflation hit 37% in May, its highest point since April 2011, though it has eased to 34% in June. May's peak affected a mixture of food and non-food prices, amid increased consumer demand as a result of celebrations for both Ethiopian Orthodox Easter and Eid al-Fitr at around the same time. In January, Fitch Solutions revised Ethiopia's real GDP forecast from 3.5% to 5.6%; the African Development Bank suggested it could reach 8% in 2022. However, with high inflation, and a drought affecting seven million people in the southern and eastern regions, (see below), plus the knock-on effect on global supply chains from the conflict in Ukraine and the Chinese government's current lock-down strategy, the economy remains fragile.

That said, a 300 million USD grant from the World Bank and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into Ethiopia has slowly rebounded, now exceeding the first nine months of last fiscal year (Ethiopia's fiscal year runs from July 8, 2021 – May 2022) by 18.3%, bringing in just under 2.5 billion USD. Indeed, the Ethiopian government has signed several infrastructure projects with Chinese investors, whilst the Ethiopian parliament also approved a 6.3 million USD five-year military assistance deal with Turkey in May. However, alongside high inflation, unemployment has hampered Ethiopia's recovery, especially in urban areas, with 2.35 million currently unemployed nationwide, a rate of around 21.3% this year. Also adding to the pressures on Ethiopia's economy is the global shortage of fertiliser due to the Ukraine conflict which has led the government to prioritise certain crops, based on their value, and the consequent likelihood of much lower overall yields.

Meanwhile a series of cyber-attacks over the past nine months, including a recent one against the GERD and Ethiopia's financial institutions on 03 May, have raised concerns over whether the GERD will be able to achieve planned electricity output, if it subject to further frequent cyber-attacks. Ethiopia's Information Network Security Agency (INSA), reported on 03 May that it had stopped at least 5,856 cyber-attacks in the past nine months. This is a four-fold increase on reported incidents over the previous year, and includes one by an international actor against the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD).



## Outlook

### Conflict

- Ethnically driven conflict will continue across Ethiopia and high levels of violence are likely to continue in Afar, Amhara, and Oromia whilst ethnic tensions are likely to be exacerbated by economic pressures and the inability to access sufficient food domestically. Indeed, ethnic tensions remain high especially towards Tigrayans, many of whom are still experiencing some form of distrust by either neighbours, or authorities. Meanwhile the OLF's stated aim of self-determination for the Oromo people will lead to wider conflict with the Ethiopian government, especially within the Amhara region (part of which is historically claimed by the Oromo people).
- Abiy will likely continue to maintain relations with senior figures within the TPLF. The Ethiopian Government will continue to widen its moves to control both political opposition and the flow of news externally, as demonstrated by the arrests of Amhara political activists and journalists, a tension that Abiy will have to manage carefully following Amhara's support for him during the recent Tigrayan conflict.
- The Horn of Africa – Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia – is now experiencing one of the harshest droughts in forty years. The UN notes that up to 20 million people could face acute lack of access to water and food if the rains do not come this year. Although Ethiopia produces

the majority of its own wheat, the drought has led to a significant fall in production, leading to Ethiopia importing at least a quarter of its wheat last year. Most of the imported wheat comes from the US, but the war in Ukraine has left at least a third of global wheat supplies stalled in Ukraine and Russia, so this in itself will see strains on Ethiopia's wheat and food supply.

- Although the Sudan–Ethiopia border clash has been resolved diplomatically for now, this is likely to reoccur within the next three months. Sudan's economy in particular is suffering from a combination of security instability, climate change and a lack of imported grain due to the Ukraine–Russian conflict. The need to replenish agricultural stocks will remain central to General al-Burhan's political strategy, and therefore the al-Fashaga region will remain a flashpoint over the next few years.

## Economic / Cyber

- The economy will remain fragile, though it will grow – if it can weather the effects from the ongoing conflict in the North and East, and the current drought in the East and South. The country will continue to attract FDI, having launched Ethiopian Investment Holdings in February (aiming to attract at least 150 billion USD in FDI), and this combined with the government's new 10-year development plan will provide some much-needed cashflow into the country. That said, population growth will exacerbate increasing unemployment and rising inflation will strain the economy further, especially if farmers continue to concentrate on the domestic market, due to price pressures from lack of fertiliser and the global economic slowdown.
- The GERD will continue to attract cyber-attacks as Egypt and Sudan remain concerned over its impact on their share of the Nile water (though Sudan is less affected by the loss of water). Ethiopia started the next stage of concrete construction on the body of the GERD in April, ahead of the third filling of the dam's reservoir proposed for July. Negotiations with Egypt and Sudan have stalled, so another major cyber-attack against the GERD is highly likely within the next three months, not least because the UN, EU, and US are currently focusing on Ukraine, limiting the prospect for meaningful diplomatic negotiations.

## Challenges and mitigations for aid organisations

- **Continued ethnic tensions require careful human resource policies that support deescalation.** Continued violent attacks on civilians and violent clashes require careful programme planning in affected areas and well thought through mitigation strategies. Ensure staff are trained in how to deal with staff, beneficiaries and refugees who have been exposed to violence and are offered mental health support, to process what they have either seen or heard.
- **Maintain an acceptance strategy** and ensure that local ethnic and tribal dimensions are taken into account, both when hiring staff and also delivering humanitarian support.
- **Invest in effective communication** to strengthen your acceptance strategy to ensure that all actors understand your work.
- High inflation and drought will increase pressure on **livelihoods affecting staff and beneficiaries**. Take this into consideration in human resource policies and programme planning.
- **Attacks against food convoys** may increase and could become more violent.
- **Tension, conflict and armed clashes in the al-Fashanga triangle need to be carefully monitored.** Keep up to date information from local leaders – faith and tribal – on routes to use, and local tensions.