



**“WE THOUGHT THEY WOULD FIGHT WITH THOSE
THEY CAME TO FIGHT WITH, NOT WITH US”**

EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS IN BAHIR DAR BY ENDF SOLDIERS

RESEARCH
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Within the context of the armed conflict between ENDF and Fano militias in Ethiopia's Amhara region, ENDF soldiers extrajudicially executed six civilians in Bahir Dar city. In this briefing, Amnesty International urges ENDF to halt civilian targeting, calls for an immediate investigation by Ethiopian authorities and to bring perpetrators to justice.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



An overview map of Bahir Dar and areas where fighting was reported or evidence of fighting documented with satellite imagery and open source media. © Amnesty International

In August 2023, an armed conflict broke out in Amhara region between the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) and Fano militias. Previously they fought together against the Tigrayan forces, now they had turned foes. Tension between the federal government and the Amhara Regional Special Police began after the federal government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) signed the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) in November 2022. In April 2023, the federal government decided to integrate regional special forces into federal forces. Disgruntled by this decision, members of the Amhara Special Police Force (ASPF) joined Fano militia. Subsequently, conflict broke out between Fano militia and the ENDF, with key cities in Amhara region taken by Fano militia and retaken by the ENDF. The human rights impact of the conflict in Amhara region has been

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slow to emerge due to an internet shutdown, partial communications blackouts under the state of emergency, and fear of reprisals by survivors and witnesses. While it will take time to establish broader trends, this briefing – Amnesty International’s first on this armed conflict – documents how ENDF forces killed at least 11 civilians and one person who is either a civilian or was *hors de combat*¹, in violation of international human rights and international humanitarian law (IHL) in Bahir Dar, Amhara’s regional capital. Many of the extrajudicial executions documented in this briefing may also amount to crimes under international law.

The briefing documents how ENDF soldiers extrajudicially executed six civilians in Abune Hara and Lideta neighbourhoods of Kebele 14 area on 8 August 2023. Subsequently, on 10 and 11 October 2023, members of the ENDF extrajudicially executed six men, including at least five civilians and one person who is either civilian or was hors de combat, in the city’s Seba Tamit neighbourhood.

Amnesty International carried out its investigation, the findings of which are presented in this briefing, from 1 November to 18 December 2023, with one additional interview on 6 January 2024. 32 remote interviews were conducted in Amharic via telephone with eyewitnesses, family members of victims, healthcare professionals and community and religious leaders. Unless otherwise indicated, names have been anonymized and identifying details removed given the risk of reprisals by authorities.

Amnesty International’s Crisis Evidence Lab provided contextual information through analysing satellite imagery, photographs, and video evidence.

On 9 February 2024, Amnesty International shared its preliminary findings with the Ministry of Justice with a copy sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. At the time of writing, the organization had not received a response.

Fighting between the Fano militia and ENDF soldiers erupted on 5 August 2023, initially around Mulugeta Real Estate in Abune Hara, in Bahir Dar. According to residents, a Fano militia leader, Zemene Kassie, used to live in the development. From 5 August, Fano militia captured several parts of Bahir Dar, including kebeles (sub-cities) 14, 16, 13, 7, 8, and Kebele 11 (also known as Abay Mado). They withdrew from these areas on 9 August 2023. Amnesty International verified the extrajudicial executions of six civilians by ENDF soldiers in Abune Hara and Lideta neighbourhoods on 8 and 9 August.

Two months after the first fighting in Bahir Dar, fighting broke out again in the city, mainly in Seba Tamit area, on 10 October 2023. In this neighbourhood, Amnesty International verified the extrajudicial executions of five civilians and one patient in a health centre by ENDF soldiers on 10 and 11 October. ENDF soldiers also beat and threatened health workers at gunpoint in the same health centre. Three of the victims in this area were brothers from one household.

Under international humanitarian law, killing of persons not taking a direct part in hostilities, including fighters who are *hors de combat* due to sickness or injury, constitutes the war crime of murder. Extrajudicial executions are also an arbitrary deprivation of life and violate the right to life protected under international human rights law.

Amnesty International calls on the ENDF to stop targeting civilians and Ethiopian authorities to investigate these allegations and hold perpetrators accountable. In Ethiopia, systemic impunity continues to embolden perpetrators of crimes under international law and places all communities at risk. Without credible justice and accountability for these crimes and those in Amnesty International’s previous reports, including on Tigray, civilians will continue to be targeted and their rights more broadly, including to health and education, impacted by conflict.

¹ The French term *hors de combat* is used under international humanitarian law to designate a wounded or sick fighter. Individuals in such a state are presumed incapable of participating in combat and, as a result, are afforded protection from attacks.

BACKGROUND

In 2018, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the dominant party in the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) coalition that had ruled Ethiopia from 1991, ceded power. Having governed with an iron grip, denying civic freedoms² and repressing dissent³, from 2015 onwards, the EPRDF faced sustained protests in Oromia and then Amhara regions.⁴ The alliance between Oromo protesters and Amhara resistance began to be reflected within the ruling coalition's Oromo and Amhara blocs publicly.⁵ This culminated in Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn's resignation and the appointment of Abiy Ahmed from EPRDF's Oromia wing as his successor.⁶

After his appointment, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed announced a series of reforms in the government and within the ruling coalition, including the dissolution of EPRDF and the establishment of the Prosperity Party in December 2019.⁷ Declining to join the new party, the TPLF formally withdrew from central power.⁸ Tensions between the TPLF, leading Tigray region, and the Ethiopian federal government further escalated when the government postponed the 2020 national election, citing COVID-19 concerns.⁹ Despite this, the Tigray regional administration conducted elections for the regional council in September 2020, which the TPLF won with a landslide.¹⁰ A month later, the House of Federation, the upper house of Ethiopia's legislature, suspended budget subsidies to Tigray region, asserting that the regional election was unconstitutional and the regional government illegitimate.¹¹ This series of events led Tigray region and the federal government to sever ties.

In November 2020, these tensions escalated into a full blown armed conflict with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed announcing a "law enforcement operation" against TPLF-led security forces in Tigray region.¹² Amhara Special Forces (ASF) allied with the federal government to fight Tigray forces.¹³ In Ethiopia, every regional state had its own special force following the establishment of the same structure in the

² Human Rights Watch, "Journalism Is Not a Crime": Violations of Media Freedoms in Ethiopia, 15 January 2015, [hrw.org/report/2015/01/21/journalism-not-crime/violations-media-freedoms-ethiopia](https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/01/21/journalism-not-crime/violations-media-freedoms-ethiopia)

³ Amnesty International, "Ethiopia: Release prisoners of conscience immediately and unconditionally", 21 July 2014, [amnesty.org/ar/documents/afr25/004/2014/en/](https://www.amnesty.org/ar/documents/afr25/004/2014/en/)

⁴ Amnesty International, "Ethiopia: Ethnic Oromos arrested, tortured and killed by the state in relentless repression of dissent", 28 October 2014, [amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2014/10/ethiopia-ethnic-oromos-arrested-tortured-and-killed-state-relentless-repress/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2014/10/ethiopia-ethnic-oromos-arrested-tortured-and-killed-state-relentless-repress/)

⁵ Addis Standard, "Oromo and Amhara: The quest for transethnic solidarity and its discontents," 21 December 2022,

[addisstandard.com/op-ed-oromo-and-amhara-the-quest-for-transethnic-solidarity-and-its-discontents/](https://www.addisstandard.com/op-ed-oromo-and-amhara-the-quest-for-transethnic-solidarity-and-its-discontents/)

⁶ BBC News, "Ethiopia election: Abiy Ahmed wins with huge majority," 11 July 2021,

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-57791868>

⁷ BBC News, "Ethiopia's Abiy Ahmed gets a new ruling party", 22 November 2019, [bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-50515636](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-50515636)

⁸ Addis Standard, "News: TPLF cites legal, procedural shortfalls to decline merger", 21 November 2019, [addisstandard.com/news-tplf-cites-legal-procedural-shortfalls-to-decline-merger/](https://www.addisstandard.com/news-tplf-cites-legal-procedural-shortfalls-to-decline-merger/)

⁹ Reuters, "Ethiopia postpones August election due to coronavirus", 31 March 2020, [reuters.com/article/idUSKBN21I2S6/#:~:text=ADDIS%20ABABA%20\(Reuters\)%20%2D%20Ethiopia,by%20some%20key%20opposition%20parties](https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN21I2S6/#:~:text=ADDIS%20ABABA%20(Reuters)%20%2D%20Ethiopia,by%20some%20key%20opposition%20parties)

¹⁰ Reuters, "Tigray holds regional election in defiance of federal government", 9 September 2020, [reuters.com/article/us-ethiopiapolitics-idUSKBN25Z35S/](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopiapolitics-idUSKBN25Z35S/); Addis Standard, "News: TPLF wins regional election by landslide", 11 September 2020, [addisstandard.com/news-tplf-wins-regional-election-by-landslide/](https://www.addisstandard.com/news-tplf-wins-regional-election-by-landslide/)

¹¹ Al Jazeera, "Ethiopian parliament votes to cut ties with Tigray region leaders", 7 October 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/7/ethiopia-parliament-votes-to-cut-ties-with-tigray-region-leaders>

¹² CNN, "Ethiopia's Nobel laureate leader vows 'military confrontation' with restive region", 4 November 2020, edition.cnn.com/2020/11/04/africa/ethiopia-military-tigray-region-intl/index.html

¹³ Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, Ethiopia: "We will erase you from this land": Crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing in Ethiopia's Western Tigray Zone (Index: AFR 25/5444/2022), 6 April 2022, [amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/5444/2022/en/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/5444/2022/en/)

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Somali region in 2007.¹⁴ Until about mid-2023, the Fano militia controlled Western Tigray, which shares an administrative boundary with the Amhara region since November 2020, alongside other civilian and security units from Amhara region.¹⁵ For decades, Western Tigray has been a site of unaddressed boundary disputes and tensions over language and identity.

During the war in Tigray region, civilian authorities from the Amhara region, civilians, Fano militia and Amhara police in Western Tigray, with the acquiescence and possible participation of Ethiopian federal forces and the Eritrean Defence Forces, committed a widespread and systematic attack against the Tigrayan civilian population. These ethnic cleansing attacks on the Tigrayan community of the zone, amounted to crimes against humanity and war crimes, as documented by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.¹⁶

After the CoHA on 2 November 2022, between the federal government and TPLF, the alliance between federal forces and Amhara security forces and militia began to crumble. Individuals from Amhara region questioned the CoHA’s legitimacy because it did not involve Amhara regional representatives.¹⁷ A few months later, in April 2023, the federal government announced plans to dismantle regional special police forces nationwide and to integrate them into federal forces, including the ENDF and the Federal Police Force.¹⁸ This was met with opposition in Amhara region, including from a significant section of the regional ruling party, as well as regional security forces.¹⁹ According to the Ministry of Peace, more than 50% of ASPF members refused to disarm or be integrated and instead defected to join the “Armed Groups” [widely known as Fano].²⁰ Additionally, some opposition political party leaders, and former ENDF members joined Fano.

On 1 August 2023, the ENDF issued a public warning to a group it addressed as “disturbing the country’s peace in the name of Fano.”²¹ On 2 August 2023, there were clashes between the ENDF and Fano militia, according to a report by Reuters.²² Multiple cities across Amhara region, including parts of Bahir Dar, fell under control of Fano militia. According to two Bahir Dar residents interviewed

¹⁴ European Institute for Peace, “The Special Police in Ethiopia,” October 2021, eip.org/publication/the-special-police-in-ethiopia/

¹⁵ Human rights Watch, “Ethiopia: Ethnic Cleansing Persists Under Tigray Truce”, 1 June 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/06/01/ethiopia-ethnic-cleansing-persists-under-tigray-truce>

¹⁶ Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, Ethiopia: “We will erase you from this land”: Crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing in Ethiopia’s Western Tigray Zone (Index: AFR 25/5444/2022), 6 April 2022, amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/5444/2022/en/

¹⁷ Amhara Page, “የዶክተር ደሳለኝ ጫኔ ሆምጩጭ ያለ የፓርላማ ጥያቄ! እናመሰግናለን ዶ/ር ደሳለኝ”, June 14 2022, [youtube.com/watch?v=mONZqNTdEKg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mONZqNTdEKg); BBC Amharic, “የፋኖ ኃይል በአንድ ዕዝ ሥር አለመሆን ከመንግሥት ጋር ለሚደረግ ድርድር እንቅፋት መሆኑን አምባሳደር ተሾመ ቶጋ ተናገሩ”, 11 December 2023, [bbc.com/amharic/articles/c6px2kwl7xxo](https://www.bbc.com/amharic/articles/c6px2kwl7xxo); BBC Amharic, “የፋኖ ኃይል በአንድ ዕዝ ሥር አለመሆን ከመንግሥት ጋር ለሚደረግ ድርድር እንቅፋት መሆኑን አምባሳደር ተሾመ ቶጋ ተናገሩ”, 16 August 2023, [bbc.com/amharic/articles/c6px2kwl7xxo](https://www.bbc.com/amharic/articles/c6px2kwl7xxo)

¹⁸ Reuters, “Ethiopia to Dismantle Regional Special Forces in favor of ‘centralized army’”, 6 April 2023, [reuters.com/world/africa/ethiopia-dismantle-regional-special-forces-favour-centralized-army-2023-04-06/](https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/ethiopia-dismantle-regional-special-forces-favour-centralized-army-2023-04-06/)

¹⁹ BBC, “Ethiopia’s Amhara region hit by protests over move to dissolve regional forces”, 10 April 2023, [bbc.com/news/world-africa-65194146](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-65194146)

²⁰ Ethiopia Insider, “ከተበተኑ የአማራ ክልል የልዩ ኃይል አባላት መካከል፤ “አብዛኛዎቹ” ታጣቂ ቡድኖችን መቀላቀላቸውን የሰላም ሚኒስትሩ ገለጹ”, 15 Aprile 2023; “ከተበተኑ የአማራ ክልል የልዩ ኃይል አባላት መካከል፤ “አብዛኛዎቹ” ታጣቂ ቡድኖችን መቀላቀላቸውን የሰላም ሚኒስትሩ ገለጹ”, 15 Aprile 2023, ethiopiainsider.com/2023/11795/ - Search (bing.com)

²¹ Addis Standard, “Army warns to take actions against actors “disturbing peace” in the name of “Fano”; admits members ambushed in Amhara region”, 1 August 2023, [addisstandard.com/news-army-warns-to-take-action-against-actors-disturbing-peace-in-the-name-of-fano-admits-members-ambushed-in-amhara-region/](https://www.addisstandard.com/news-army-warns-to-take-action-against-actors-disturbing-peace-in-the-name-of-fano-admits-members-ambushed-in-amhara-region/)

²² Reuters, “Ethiopian military clashes with militia in Amhara, injuries reported”, 2 August 2023, [reuters.com/world/africa/ethiopian-military-clashes-with-militia-amhara-residents-say-2023-08-02/](https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/ethiopian-military-clashes-with-militia-amhara-residents-say-2023-08-02/)
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by Amnesty International, most parts of the city were controlled by Fano from 5 to 8 August 2023,²³ including Kebeles (sub-cities) named 14, 16, 13, 7, 8, and Kebele 11 (also known as Abay Mado). Fano later withdrew from these areas on 9 August 2023.²⁴

This information is corroborated by images shared on social media. Pictures posted on 5 August 2023 and verified by Amnesty International's Crisis Evidence Lab show the presence of armed men, likely militants, riding white pick-up trucks in Bahir Dar.²⁵ Photos and videos²⁶ posted between 5 and 7 August show fire and roadblocks in several areas of the city.²⁷ On 8 August, photos²⁸ show a Chinese NORINCO Type 89 infantry fighting vehicle, normally used by Ethiopian ground forces, on the streets.²⁹



Satellite imagery from 15 August 2023 shows burn marks along a main road in the area of the reported fighting, likely caused by the fires seen in earlier videos. © Amnesty International

²³ Interviews by voice calls, Bahir Dar, 1 and 3 November 2023.

²⁴ Interviews by voice calls, Bahir Dar, 3, 10, 11 November 2023.

²⁵ Amhara Times, Telegram post, 5 August 2023, <https://t.me/Amharatimes1/2395>: “Fano fighters are entering Bahir Dar city. They are overtaking major institutions, including the office of the regional state president and Amhara Media Corporation. The fighting lasted throughout the day while many of the ENDF commandos were destroyed. The fighting still continues” (translation from Amharic by Amnesty International).

²⁶ Ashara Media, Facebook post, 5 August 2023,

[facebook.com/asharamedia24/posts/pfbidOMMCf2xtuf7dxhaHeAcEBURBpTXXiBF3zwnWqbf9mD7jmqCpiuMvEKhaptcYDga7PI](https://www.facebook.com/asharamedia24/posts/pfbidOMMCf2xtuf7dxhaHeAcEBURBpTXXiBF3zwnWqbf9mD7jmqCpiuMvEKhaptcYDga7PI); Inside Gambella, Facebook Post, 5 August 2023,

[facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid0UBR4R1S9wY2tfStekF8xKwBGgTnrQXbMvw4TyqWgCmgV7wdn47mr2SaPUTtimfXPI&id=100071005686304](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid0UBR4R1S9wY2tfStekF8xKwBGgTnrQXbMvw4TyqWgCmgV7wdn47mr2SaPUTtimfXPI&id=100071005686304); Gambella Today, Facebook Post, 6 August 2023,

[facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid02QGatrqx6HWQj4Jtu3e8P1CZN8pj5a7hxGh4uzWmVymzMLj8uoMSrJacS9pHh5rr4I&id=100093493272792](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid02QGatrqx6HWQj4Jtu3e8P1CZN8pj5a7hxGh4uzWmVymzMLj8uoMSrJacS9pHh5rr4I&id=100093493272792); Xotrin, Facebook Post, 7 August 2023,

[facebook.com/watch/?v=851546126335137](https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=851546126335137); Tadele Tibebe, Facebook Post, 7 August 2023,

[facebook.com/tadeletibebe/posts/pfbid02DvasjPSHpouQQyJoGuxZAqAetFRwDDzs7u7tyy7xNDZFbuxPTgwSQjTPMcNNjFhI](https://www.facebook.com/tadeletibebe/posts/pfbid02DvasjPSHpouQQyJoGuxZAqAetFRwDDzs7u7tyy7xNDZFbuxPTgwSQjTPMcNNjFhI)

²⁷ Ashara Media, Facebook Post, (previously cited); Inside Gambella, Facebook Post (previously cited); Gambella Today, Facebook Post (previously cited); Xotrin, Facebook Post (previously cited); Tadele Tibebe, Facebook Post (previously cited).

²⁸ Tadele Tibebe, Facebook Post, 8 August 2023,

[facebook.com/tadeletibebe/posts/pfbid0hAcc5zpfC79m7LcVvYrvbJVyzPW3JQAvpVMYQprSyppnpvApyJn92AQ7A5SSfBcx3I](https://www.facebook.com/tadeletibebe/posts/pfbid0hAcc5zpfC79m7LcVvYrvbJVyzPW3JQAvpVMYQprSyppnpvApyJn92AQ7A5SSfBcx3I); Asteraw Kebede, X Post, 8 August 2023,

twitter.com/RasAsteraw/status/1688971661234868225

²⁹ Tadele Tibebe, Facebook Post (previously cited); Asteraw Kebede, X Post, 8 August 2023 (previously cited).



An armoured vehicle is photographed on a street surrounded by trees. Four individuals in military fatigue walk alongside it. © Tadele Tibebe, Facebook, 8 August 2023.

Even though parts of Bahir Dar were under Fano control during these days, witnesses said fighting between the ENDF soldiers and the Fano continued in and around the city.³⁰

Fano militia also had control over the cities of Gondar, Lalibela, Debre Brehan and other towns in the region in early August 2023.³¹ On 9 August 2023 the federal army announced that they had pushed back the Fano militia and recaptured these cities.³²

Just days after the conflict began, the federal government declared a six-month state of emergency on 4 August 2023, which was subsequently endorsed by the House of Peoples' Representatives – the

³⁰ Interviews by voice calls with four people, Bahir Dar, 1, 3, 10, and 11 November 2023.

³¹ US News, "Ethiopia's Government Says It Lost Control of Some Areas in the Amhara Region to Militia Fighters", 7 August 2023, [usnews.com/news/world/articles/2023-08-07/ethiopias-government-says-it-lost-control-of-some-areas-in-the-amhara-region-to-militia-fighters](https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2023-08-07/ethiopias-government-says-it-lost-control-of-some-areas-in-the-amhara-region-to-militia-fighters)

³² Al Jazeera, "What's behind the crisis in Ethiopia's Amhara region? A simple guide", 10 August 2023, [aljazeera.com/news/2023/8/10/whats-behind-the-crisis-in-ethiopias-amhara-region-a-simple-guide](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/8/10/whats-behind-the-crisis-in-ethiopias-amhara-region-a-simple-guide)

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federal legislative council – on 14 August 2023.³³ This gave the government sweeping powers to apprehend suspects without a court warrant, impose curfews, restrict freedom of movement, and prohibit public gatherings or associations. Amhara region was placed under the control of a command post led by the National Intelligence and Security Services chief, reporting to the Prime Minister.³⁴ The state of emergency was further renewed on 2 February 2024 for another four months.³⁵

Seven months into the conflict, Amhara region has been significantly impacted by the fighting. According to the Amhara Bureau of Education, two million out of six million students in the region are out of school because of the conflict.³⁶ Transportation, health and other essential public services are reported to have been heavily interrupted.³⁷

THE AUGUST EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS IN ABUNE HARA AND LIDETA

Fighting between the Fano militia and ENDF soldiers broke out on 5 August 2023 in Bahir Dar, according to three residents.³⁸

A local government official, who coordinated the burials of victims, told Amnesty International that intense fighting occurred in Bahir Dar’s Kebele 14 area, resulting in civilian casualties.³⁹ According to the same official, a civil society member monitoring incidents and a journalist, the neighbourhoods of Lideta (named after St. Lideta Orthodox Church) and Abune Hara were particularly affected.⁴⁰

Initially, fighting broke out around what community members described as a “wealthy neighbourhood in the city”, Mulugeta real estate in Abune Hara. Two residents who live around this real estate said that months before the fighting started, people in the neighbourhood reported that one of the Fano militia leaders, Zemene Kassie, stayed there.⁴¹ One of them recalled, “but we have never seen him”.⁴² In the same area, both parties fought to capture the hill where Lideta church is located, which is a strategic location to access its surroundings, according to three different Bahir Dar residents.⁴³

Two residents said the fighting lasted until the next day, followed by calm on 7 August, and then another round of fighting began on 8 August 2023 around 2 am.⁴⁴

³³ The Guardian, “Ethiopia declares a state of emergency in Amhara amid increasing violence”, 4 August 2023, [theguardian.com/global-development/2023/aug/04/ethiopia-declares-a-state-of-emergency-in-amhara-amid-increasing-violence](https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/aug/04/ethiopia-declares-a-state-of-emergency-in-amhara-amid-increasing-violence)

³⁴ Amnesty International, “Authorities must grant independent investigators, media unfettered access to Amhara region to probe violations under state of emergency”, 18 August 2023, [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/](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/)

³⁵ Reuters, “Ethiopia extends state of emergency in Amhara”, 2 February 2024, [reuters.com/world/africa/ethiopia-extends-state-emergency-amhara-2024-02-02/](https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/ethiopia-extends-state-emergency-amhara-2024-02-02/)

³⁶ TIKVAH-ETHIOPIA, “ከ2 ሚሊዮን በላይ ተማሪዎች ከትምህርት ውጭ ናቸው”, 26 December 2023, <https://rb.gy/wslo1g>

³⁷ Addis Standard, “በአማራ ክልል “የየብስ ትራንስፖርትን ሙሉ ለሙሉ ለማስጀመር” እየተሠራ መሆኑን የክልሉ መንግስት አስታወቀ” 1 January 2024, <https://rb.gy/d9w8ju>

³⁸ Interviews by voice calls with three residents, Bahir Dar, 2, 10, 11 November 2023.

³⁹ Interview by voice call with a local official, Bahir Dar, 3 November 2023.

⁴⁰ Interview by voice call with a local official, Bahir Dar, 3 November 2023; Interview by voice call with a CSO member, Bahir Dar, 11 November 2023; Interview by voice call with a media worker, Bahir Dar, 10 November 2023.

⁴¹ Interviews by voice calls with two residents, Bahir Dar, 2 and 11 November 2023.

⁴² Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 2 November 2023.

⁴³ Interviews by voice calls with three residents, Bahir Dar, 3, 10, 11 November 2023.

⁴⁴ Interviews by voice calls with two people, Bahir Dar, 2 and 10 November 2023.

“WE THOUGHT THEY WOULD FIGHT WITH THOSE THEY CAME TO FIGHT WITH, NOT WITH US”
EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS IN BAHIR DAR BY ENDF SOLDIERS

Amnesty International verified extrajudicial executions of six civilians – five men and one 53-year-old woman - in Abune Hara and Lideta neighbourhoods by ENDF soldiers on 8 August 2023.⁴⁵ According to eyewitnesses and family members, the victims were shot at close range.⁴⁶

Yitateku Ayalew was shot and killed by an ENDF soldier at her home near Lideta on 8 August 2023, according to Biniyam, a 17-year-old relative who witnessed her death.⁴⁷ Biniyam said Yitateku was baking injera when they started to hear gunshots on the morning of 8 August. He said, “he saw the soldiers who shot towards Yitatek,”, and he added that they had a red bonnet and an ENDF uniform. He recounted the event:

“We started hearing gunshots around 8 am from the Mulugeta real estate side. People in the compound asked Yitateku to stop baking injera in the compound and return home. She said, “My son has no breakfast, and I must finish”. She refused to listen. Around 9.15 am, a group of soldiers came running. I think they were chasing someone on the street. Then they started to shoot towards the compound and hit Yitateku and one other person. They shot through a hole on the fence and left.”⁴⁸

Yitateku’s relative, Wondwossen said her young son, who witnessed the killing, saw the soldier:

“He told me that she didn’t see the soldier, but he did. He told me, “I called her “Please *etatey*, please *etatey*”⁴⁹ so that she can take cover. Then he shot her”. She was baking *injera*⁵⁰ in the compound.”⁵¹

Wondwossen said that the ENDF and Fano were fighting around Yitateku’s neighbourhood that day and it was not possible for him to go from the city centre to rescue her after he received a call saying that his sister had been shot.⁵²

Biniyam said Yitateku was shot between her stomach and her leg. He said:

“I have never seen so much blood coming out from a person. She was talking with us for at least an hour after she was shot. But she started to only respond with her eyes after around 10 am. She was asking us to take her to a hospital. But we couldn’t as we heard the ENDF is shooting people who are taking the wounded to a hospital.”⁵³

Two community leaders told Amnesty International that, based on information they gathered from family members and people in the area, they concluded that Yitateku was killed by an ENDF soldier.⁵⁴

In the same vicinity was 55-year-old Ayenew Defresh, a prominent trader who had sold *berbere* spice in Bahir Dar for many years before he was killed. According to a priest who had known him for years, Ayenew lived near Abune Hara and used to own a section inside the area’s open-air-market.⁵⁵ The priest said Ayenew employed around 30 people.⁵⁶

⁴⁵ Interviews by voice calls with eight people, Bahir Dar, 3-13 November 2023; Interviews by voice calls with five people, Bahir Dar, 7 and 8 December 2023.

⁴⁶ Interviews by voice calls with 14 people, Bahir Dar, 3-13 November 2023, and one more interview on 6 January 2024.

⁴⁷ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 6 January 2024.

⁴⁸ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 6 January 2024.

⁴⁹ A common way for children in the area to refer to their mother.

⁵⁰ Injera is an Amharic term for Ethiopian bread; a sour fermented pancake like flatbread, traditionally made from teff flour.

⁵¹ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 7 November 2023.

⁵² Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 7 November 2023.

⁵³ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 6 January 2024.

⁵⁴ Interviews by voice call with two community leaders, Bahir Dar, 8 November 2023.

⁵⁵ Interview by voice call with a religious leader, Bahir Dar, 13 November 2023.

⁵⁶ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 13 November 2023.

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On the morning of 8 August, Ayenew, accompanied by his sons Kassahun Ayenew and Abraham Ayenew, attended church as it was the *Filseta fasting season*⁵⁷ observed by followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church, said Genene, a family member.⁵⁸ Another family member said Ayenew and his children were killed on their way home from church, on the street.⁵⁹ The family member recounted calling Abraham, one of Ayenew's sons, on the phone and speaking with an individual they believed to be from the ENDF:

“When they stayed for so long, I rang Abraham’s phone. An ENDF soldier picked his phone up. When I asked him “Where is Abraham?”, he said “He had fallen down in Abune Hara.” When I asked him if he was shot, he told me, “It was a small accident.” Later, family members brought all three bodies home.”⁶⁰

Genene, who reclaimed the body from the street, recalled:

“When I ran to Abune Hara church, I found his body and the bodies of Kassahun and Abraham too. They were killed by ENDF. Initially three ENDF soldiers said we cannot reclaim the bodies, but they changed their minds immediately. All three of them were shot on their head.”⁶¹

Melaku was few metres away from the scene where Ayenew and his sons were killed.⁶² He told Amnesty International that he survived the attack in which Ayenew and his sons were killed. He recounted that ENDF soldiers had concealed themselves on top of buildings, targeting and shooting at men walking on the streets.⁶³ Melaku said he took cover near a truck and witnessed ENDF soldiers apprehending other men from a three-wheeled motor vehicle, known as a *Bajaj*, and shooting and killing them. He told Amnesty International that he saw Abraham sitting down some metres away and called his phone to warn him of the danger:

“I called Abraham and warned him about the ongoing shootings of people walking. A short while later, when I redialled his number, someone else answered the call.”⁶⁴

Melaku told Amnesty International that he had been shot in the neck himself but survived.⁶⁵ He said he had to wait until the following day to seek medical help as ENDF soldiers were shooting at individuals seeking medical assistance.⁶⁶ Another resident of Bahir Dar reported that ENDF soldiers shot and killed two of his neighbours while they were on their way to a health centre.⁶⁷

Lemlem's 20-year-old son was also killed the same day. On 8 August 2023, around 2 am, fighting broke out close to her home near Mulugeta Real Estate. Lemlem and her family spent the night sleeping on the floor after hearing several gunshots, taking shelter in case bullets came their way.⁶⁸

On the morning of 8 August, Lemlem, her family and neighbours went outside and sat at the entrance of their compound. Daily life was interrupted, and no one went to work or school.⁶⁹ She recounted that later that day, ENDF soldiers came running and randomly shot at people sitting outside.⁷⁰ She

⁵⁷ “Filseta” is a fasting period followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church observe from 7 to 22 August, every year. Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church Sunday School Department, “Filseta: The Fast of the Assumption of St. Mary” 7 August 2015, eotcmk.org/e/filseta-the-fast-of-the-assumption-of-st-mary-2/

⁵⁸ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 9 November 2023.

⁵⁹ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 13 November 2023.

⁶⁰ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 13 November 2023.

⁶¹ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 9 November 2023.

⁶² Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 13 November 2023.

⁶³ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 13 November 2023.

⁶⁴ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 13 November 2023.

⁶⁵ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 13 November 2023.

⁶⁶ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 13 November 2023.

⁶⁷ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 6 January 2024.

⁶⁸ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 2 November 2023.

⁶⁹ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 2 November 2023.

⁷⁰ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 2 November 2023.

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recognized the ENDF from their uniforms and added that she had seen Fano fighters days before her son was killed, leading her to differentiate them from ENDF.⁷¹

Lemlem recounted how everyone ran back to their homes to escape the shooting:

“All of a sudden, they came running. They shot people. My son was shot in the head. He died on the spot. They shot at us while we were running to our home from the main gate. We thought they would fight with those they came to fight with, not with us.”

Lemlem said her son was running behind her and she made it home, but her son did not.⁷²

“My son was 20 years old. He dropped out of school to support me. He has never been involved with any of the forces.”

A religious leader, who has known Lemlem's son since childhood, said the young man was not part of the warring parties.⁷³ According to him, Lemlem's son was a dedicated member of the church who contributed his technical skills. He recounted that Lemlem's son was laid to rest alongside 32 other Orthodox Christians on 8 August.

THE OCTOBER EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS IN SEBA TAMIT

Two months after the first fighting in Bahir Dar, fighting broke out again in parts of the city on 10 October 2023, mainly in Seba Tamit area. Two residents recalled that during the first round of fighting in this area, Fano militia broke⁷⁴ into the city's largest prison and let prisoners go.⁷⁵

Amnesty International has verified the killing of five civilians and one man who was either a wounded civilian or *hors de combat* by ENDF soldiers in Seba Tamit on 10 and 11 October. Three of the victims were brothers from one household, while one victim was executed inside a health centre by ENDF soldiers, who also assaulted medical staff during the incident.

On the morning of 11 October, ENDF soldiers entered Tadesse Mekonen's home. Three different people interviewed by Amnesty International said that ENDF soldiers killed Tadesse's three sons and one person who rented a room inside his compound on 11 October 2023, around 9 am.⁷⁶

Tadesse, 69-year-old, is well-known amongst the community in Seba Tamit. His relative Yeshitela told Amnesty International that he had a borehole that provided water for his neighbourhood.⁷⁷ He also added that he had a shop and was known for dairy farming with his first-born son, Tesfaye, who was killed.⁷⁸

Menalu, Tadesse's neighbour interviewed by Amnesty International said that three out of Tadesse's four sons were killed - Tesfaye Tadesse Mekonnen, Habtamu Tadesse Mekonnen, Dagnachew Tadesse Mekonnen.⁷⁹

On 11 October, Tadesse and his family, including his four sons, were in their home when they heard gunshots. Kassa, a family member present, told Amnesty International:

⁷¹ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 2 November 2023.

⁷² Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 2 November 2023.

⁷³ Interview by voice call with a religious leader, Bahir Dar, 8 December 2023.

⁷⁴ Interviews by voice calls with two residents, Bahir Dar, 10 and 11 November 2023.

⁷⁵ Robel Alemu, X post, 9 August 2023,

x.com/TheFitawrari/status/1689102330510061568?s=20: “Fano took control of #Sebatamit Prison, the largest & most heavily guarded prison in the region.”

⁷⁶ Interviews by voice calls with three people, Bahir Dar, 1, 2 and 6 November 2023.

⁷⁷ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 2 November 2023.

⁷⁸ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 2 November 2023.

⁷⁹ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 6 November 2023.

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“One day before the incident, on 10 October, there was fighting between the Fano and the ENDF, off the main road until the Fano left. Then it was so peaceful the entire evening. The next day they [the ENDF] came and knocked on our door.”⁸⁰

Kassa said they opened the door for the soldiers, and they [ENDF soldiers] escorted all male family members outside their compound, including Tadesse, his four sons, and one man who rented a house inside their compound.⁸¹ He reported that the ENDF soldiers started to cane the men before one of the soldiers began to speak on the phone and said, “Don’t leave anyone; shoot all of them”.⁸² Kassa told Amnesty International that the soldiers shot three of Tadesse’s sons and the person who rented a house inside the compound in their heads. One of Tadesse’s sons survived after running and jumping into a sorghum farm, according to Kassa.⁸³

All three interviewees said the third son, Dagnachew, was only 14 years old and an 11th-grade senior high school student.⁸⁴ The firstborn, Tesfaye, was 34 and a father of four.⁸⁵ The other son, Habtamu Tadesse, was 32 years old, and two of the witnesses said that he had served in the ENDF for the past eight years and was visiting family on official leave.⁸⁶

“They killed him before he even completed his leave. He carried his ID card that is often given for ENDF members when they are on leave. They saw it.”⁸⁷

Kassa said that the ENDF soldiers did not interrogate the men before killing them but asked them to “speak” for minutes before they shot them in the head.⁸⁸

According to Kassa, ENDF soldiers initially banned the family from recovering the bodies and the family only managed to recover them after the soldiers left.⁸⁹ Three witnesses said the bodies were lying on the street from 9 am to 4 pm.⁹⁰ The family buried them at Gordema St Gabriel Church the same day. Kassa said the family had to hide and bury the bodies at a different church, instead of a closer church where they are members of the congregation.⁹¹

Amnesty International obtained a list of 10 people buried at Seba Tamit Orthodox Church on 11 October, including Tadesse’s sons, from an individual who had a role in the burials.⁹² Another list was also provided to Amnesty International of 16 people buried at the same church after the initial round of killing on 8 August.⁹³ An interviewee knowledgeable about burial practices in the area told Amnesty International that the ENDF would only allow the church to bury civilians, and the church only conducted burials of civilians in religious burial sites in the Seba Tamit area.⁹⁴

We asked every interviewee how they identified perpetrators as ENDF. Most of them said that the ENDF had been active in Bahir Dar for three months before the fighting broke out and that they could recognize their uniform. Additionally, most interviewees said that they could differentiate between the anti-riot police, the city police, and the ENDF before the conflict. Some

⁸⁰ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 1 November 2023.

⁸¹ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 1 November 2023.

⁸² Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 1 November 2023.

⁸³ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 1 November 2023.

⁸⁴ Interviews by voice calls with three different people, Bahir Dar, 1, 2 and 6 November 2023.

⁸⁵ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 1 November 2023.

⁸⁶ Interviews by voice call, Bahir Dar, 1 and 6 November 2023.

⁸⁷ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 1 November 2023.

⁸⁸ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 1 November 2023.

⁸⁹ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 1 November 2023.

⁹⁰ Interviews by voice calls with three people, Bahir Dar, 1, 2 and 6 November 2023.

⁹¹ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 1 November 2023.

⁹² On file with Amnesty International.

⁹³ On file with Amnesty International.

⁹⁴ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 13 November 2023.

said the ENDF asked questions such as "Bring the weapon; do you support Fano?" to victims or their families.⁹⁵

In the same neighbourhood, Zemen Muche, a 43-year-old resident of Paris, France, was killed and buried at Seba Tamit church.⁹⁶ According to two family members and his former wife, Zemen was extrajudicially executed by ENDF soldiers on 10 October 2023.⁹⁷

Zemen had lived in Paris since 2018 and came to Bahir Dar to visit his family.⁹⁸ Kana, a family member, told Amnesty International that he was killed one week before his wedding day, which was scheduled to be celebrated alongside the baptism of his three-month-old daughter.⁹⁹

Kana said three ENDF soldiers banged on the door asking them to open, and Zemen refused to hide even though family members urged him to do so.¹⁰⁰ Kana added that the soldiers took him around 2 pm, minutes after they arrived. She said the soldiers were searching the neighbourhood and appeared to have come to their family randomly during house-to-house searches.¹⁰¹

Another family member, Menalu, said that the soldiers asked for Zemen's ID and he showed them his passport saying that he did not live in Bahir Dar.¹⁰²

Kana added that after the soldiers took Zemen, another group of ENDF soldiers searched the house, took 50,000 Birr from the cabinet, 8,000 birr from his pocket and his mobile phone. She said:

"They [ENDF soldiers] took him around 2 pm. [...] we thought they took him [Zemen] to the prison. They [ENDF soldiers] kept coming to the house asking for weapon."¹⁰³

Both family members said that they only found out the next morning that he had been killed.¹⁰⁴

Menalu recounted:

"He was killed around 3 pm on 10 October. But we were all hiding in our homes, and we didn't know. They arrested many people, so we assumed they arrested him too. But he was shot dead in front of the petrol station. People who survived told us that he was beaten before they shot him."¹⁰⁵

The family members also added that ENDF soldiers banned them from recovering the body until after 4 pm on 11 October.¹⁰⁶ Menalu told Amnesty International:

"When we arrived at where he was killed in the morning, we found ENDF soldiers guarding the body."¹⁰⁷

Kana said ENDF soldiers did not allow the family to recover Zemen's body and reported that they said, "Our bodies [ENDF soldier's bodies] were burned,¹⁰⁸ in reference to reports of a Fano attack a few days earlier on a pick-up vehicle carrying the bodies of ENDF soldiers. She said the soldiers told the

⁹⁵ Interviews by voice calls with 18 people, Bahir Dar, 2 November 2023 to 6 January 2024.

⁹⁶ On file with Amnesty International.

⁹⁷ Interview by voice call, Paris, on 6 November 2023; Interviews by voice calls with two people, Bahir Dar, 6 and 7 November.

⁹⁸ Interview by voice call, Paris, 6 November 2023.

⁹⁹ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 7 November 2023.

¹⁰⁰ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 7 November 2023.

¹⁰¹ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 7 November 2023.

¹⁰² Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 6 November 2023.

¹⁰³ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 7 November 2023.

¹⁰⁴ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 6 and 7 November 2023.

¹⁰⁵ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 6 November 2023.

¹⁰⁶ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 6 and 7 November 2023.

¹⁰⁷ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 6 November 2023.

¹⁰⁸ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 7 November 2023.

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family “You will not bury or have a funeral when our bodies [the ENDF soldiers' bodies] are set on fire”. She added that they banned them from having funeral gatherings for a month. She said:

“They told us “We [ENDF soldiers] also have mothers, wives and a family that mourns for us as well. Our bodies were burned when you buried your bodies [Zemen's body].”¹⁰⁹

Fasika Muche [not a pseudonym] is Zemen’s former wife, and a mother of their three-year-old son. Fasika told Amnesty International that Zemen’s family in Bahir Dar were prevented from having a proper funeral until one month later 5 November 2023.¹¹⁰ In Ethiopia, particularly within Christian communities, it is customary for members of the community to come together to offer support to grieving families for 40 days following a death. During the initial three days, large numbers of community members convene and remain at the home of the mourning family as a show of solidarity and support.¹¹¹ Fasika shared that she had collected him from the airport when he returned to visit family:

“After we amicably separated, we maintained our communication. He had no political connection with any armed group. I am the political one, not him. He often goes back home because he has nothing to fear.”

Zemen’s family said that he was later buried at Abo church.¹¹²

Another young man, 20-year-old Yibeltal Alemneh, was executed by an ENDF soldier in a health centre in Seba Tamit on 10 October 2023, according to his relative and a health centre employee who witnessed the killing.¹¹³ According to Endale, Yibeltal’s relative, Yibeltal had been taken to the health centre after sustaining a bullet wound when bathing by a river.¹¹⁴

A staff member said a bullet grazed Yibeltal’s skin rather than penetrating his body and that the staff on duty stitched and dressed his wound.¹¹⁵ Some 30 minutes later, ENDF soldiers came and shot Yibeltal in the head, said the medical staff and his relative who were forced to kneel with him when the killing happened.¹¹⁶

“When they came they said, “this one must have been fighting against us all day” and shot him.”¹¹⁷

A medical staffer at the centre, speaking anonymously for fear of reprisal, stated that the soldier who killed Yibeltal initially aimed his gun at one of his colleagues. He reported that a commander then arrived and instructed a soldier to leave the medical staff and to shoot the patient.¹¹⁸

He narrated the assault on the medical staff:

“The soldiers began banging on the door, and when we opened it for them, they ushered the staff, patients, and the families of the patients outside into the clinic's compound. They ordered us to kneel, and without any questions, they started assaulting all of us.”¹¹⁹

Before the soldiers arrived, the staff member said they were hesitant to close the clinic, even though there was fighting in the area, as they had two infant children on fluids. Just moments before the soldiers entered, they began to hear gunshots. The medical staff recounted:

¹⁰⁹ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 7 November 2023.

¹¹⁰ Interview by voice call, Paris, France, 6 November 2023.

¹¹¹ Frazer Consultants, “Cultural Spotlight: Ethiopian Funeral Traditions”, 25 August 2017, frazerconsultants.com/2017/08/cultural-spotlight-ethiopian-funeral-traditions/

¹¹² Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 6 November 2023.

¹¹³ Interviews by voice calls with one health worker and a relative, Bahir Dar, 6 and 7 November 2023.

¹¹⁴ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 6 November 2023.

¹¹⁵ Interview by voice call with a medical staff, Bahir Dar, 7 November 2023.

¹¹⁶ Interviews by voice calls with a medical staff and an eyewitness, Bahir Dar, 6 and 7 November 2023.

¹¹⁷ Interview by voice call, Bahir Dar, 6 November 2023.

¹¹⁸ Interview by voice call with a witness, Bahir Dar, 7 November 2023.

¹¹⁹ Interview by voice call with a witness, Bahir Dar, 7 November 2023.

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“The soldiers accused us of providing treatment to the Fano, coincidentally, we had never treated either the Fano or the ENDF soldiers since the conflict had erupted. Then, one of the soldiers pointed his gun at our colleague, and another soldier, I think their commander, came to the compound carrying a radio. He ordered the soldier to stop and, instructed him to shoot one of the patients, Yibeltal. Then he shot him on the head and the chest.”¹²⁰

Amnesty International has not been able to establish definitively whether Yibeltal was a civilian, but his extrajudicial execution – either as a civilian or *hors de combat* – constitutes the war crime of murder.

VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW AND INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

Since early August, the armed conflict between Fano militias and the ENDF can be classified as a non-international armed conflict due to the intensity of the fighting and the organization of Fano militias fighting against one adversary, the ENDF. Consequently, the conduct of the parties to the conflict is governed by IHL along with international human rights law standards.

IHL aims to limit the effects of armed conflict and protect civilians and fighters who have ceased to take active part in hostilities. Ethiopia is a party to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and to Additional Protocols I and II.¹²¹ The armed conflict in Amhara region between the ENDF and Fano militias is governed by Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, and customary IHL. Both the ENDF and the Fano militias are bound by applicable IHL rules. Parties to the conflict are also required to comply with international human rights law which continues to apply during armed conflicts.

Under IHL, medical units and objects specifically assigned to medical purposes shall be protected and respected with an obligation to collect and care for the wounded and sick. It is implicit in this guarantee that medical personnel must be respected and protected. Therefore, harassing or punishing medical personnel for the provision of medical services to wounded or sick persons constitutes a violation of IHL.¹²²

Moreover, under IHL, people taking no active part in hostilities, including members of armed forces not involved in hostilities due to wounds or sickness, are entitled to protection from violence to their life. By not taking part in hostilities, they are a person protected from direct attack.¹²³

Serious violations of IHL, as documented in this briefing, may amount to war crimes which are a crime under international law. The government of Ethiopia has an obligation to protect and suppress violations of humanitarian law, including by effectively investigating violations and, where there is sufficient evidence, prosecuting those reasonably suspected of committing the violations – in line with international fair trial standards and without recourse to the death penalty.

In this briefing, Amnesty International verified the extrajudicial execution of 11 men and 1 woman by the ENDF in the conflict in Amhara region. At least 11 of them were civilians and the other – a patient in a hospital - was either a civilian or a wounded fighter. Killing civilians or those who are *hors de combat* amounts to the war crime of murder if committed with awareness of the context of the armed

¹²⁰ Interview by voice call with a medical staff, Bahir Dar, 7 November 2023.

¹²¹ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), “IHL Treaties - Treaties and States Parties”, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/treaties-and-states-parties>

¹²² Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, para. 2; Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), Article 12; and Customary International Humanitarian Law, Rule 28.

¹²³ Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, para 1.

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conflict.¹²⁴ Extrajudicial executions further constitute an arbitrary deprivation of life and violate the right to life protected under international human rights law.¹²⁵

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The violations documented in this briefing represent a small fraction of allegations of IHL and human rights violations emerging from the Amhara region.

In Bahir Dar, ENDF soldiers executed civilians and, in some cases, denied family members the right to bury their loved ones. In one instance, a body was left on the street overnight. Family members also endured further pain as they were denied the opportunity to conduct appropriate funerals – a practice that holds special significance in the traditions of Ethiopia. As documented in this report, ENDF soldiers executed a 14-year-old boy. They also executed a 20-year-old man who was receiving treatment inside a health centre.

Since the end of 2020, Amnesty International has extensively documented violations of IHL and human rights laws, that might also amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, within the context of armed conflicts in northern Ethiopia. The organization has urged the Ethiopian and Eritrean authorities and Ethiopia's international partners to prioritize justice and accountability.

Over one year after the armed conflict in Tigray ended, the ENDF continues to commit war crimes in another armed conflict setting.

Amnesty International reiterates its call for justice and accountability in Ethiopia emphasizing that impunity remains a key driving factor for persistent gross violations of human rights and the ongoing pain and suffering of civilians.

To the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia:

- Give independent media, regional and international human rights organizations unfettered access to the region.
- Lift the internet ban on Amhara region and the communications blackout in some zones of the region.
- Ensure that allegations of violations of crimes under international law since the end of 2020 perpetrated by the ENDF and allied forces are investigated, prosecuted and brought before a court of law.
- Extend an invitation, at the earliest opportunity, to the UN (United Nations) Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions to visit Ethiopia's Amhara region to investigate allegations of extrajudicial executions in Bahir Dar and more broadly violations of human rights in the ongoing armed conflict in Amhara region.

To member states of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC)

- Take immediate steps to resume the Council's scrutiny of the human rights situation in Ethiopia and establish a process to follow up on the findings of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE).

To the AU Peace and Security Council:

¹²⁴ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Article 8(2)(c)(i); The International Criminal Court, Elements of Crimes, Article 8(2)(c)(i)-1.

¹²⁵ ICCPR, Article 6; ACHPR, article 4; Human Rights Committee, General Comment No.36 on article 6: right to life, 3 September 2019, UN Doc. CCPR/C/GC/36, para. 12

"WE THOUGHT THEY WOULD FIGHT WITH THOSE THEY CAME TO FIGHT WITH, NOT WITH US"
EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS IN BAHIR DAR BY ENDF SOLDIERS

- Step up public and private engagement on the ongoing conflict in Amhara region, including through placing the situation on its agenda.
- Call on the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights' Working Group on Death Penalty, Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Africa to investigate allegations of extrajudicial executions in Bahir Dar and report its findings and recommendations to the Peace and Security Council.

To Ethiopia's development partners:

- Engage with all Ethiopian counterparts to end abuses.
- Push for scrutiny at the HRC and follow-up on ICHREE's last report recommendations.
- Consult and support Ethiopian civil society organizations and human rights defenders and engage with the government to stop harassing civil society organizations, human rights defenders and the media who have an essential role in human rights work in Ethiopia.

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