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POLICY BRIEF · ICAI-PBR-2026-003

# Humanitarian Access in Amhara (Mid-October 2026): Key Facts, Constraints, and Actionable Step

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## Recommendations

- the Federal Government of Ethiopia: Allow and facilitate rapid, unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief to civilians in North Wollo, Wag Hemra, South Wollo, North Shewa and North Gondar, as international humanitarian law requires of all parties.
- the Federal Government of Ethiopia: Restore and maintain telephone and internet services wherever they are disrupted in Amhara, and announce publicly any restriction and its legal basis.
- the Federal Government of Ethiopia: Agree with the UN the data needed for a published humanitarian response plan, and allow the UN to publish verified displacement figures for Amhara.
- the Federal Government of Ethiopia: Investigate, and publish the findings on, strikes that caused civilian harm, including the mortar strike in Kobo on 23 September that OHCHR said was carried out "reportedly by the ENDF" [12].
- the Amhara regional government: Ensure that the law enforcement operations that President Arega Kebede said on 1 October his administration would strengthen across all zones [22] do not obstruct relief convoys, health workers or civilians seeking care.
- the Amhara regional government: Support independent displacement tracking in Kobo, Sekota and Wollo, and make returns voluntary, safe and informed.
- the Amhara regional government: Provide aid without regard to the political affiliation of recipients or of their communities.
- Fano forces, including the Amhara Fano National Movement: Let relief convoys, health workers and patients pass on roads under your control or contested by you.
- Fano forces, including the Amhara Fano National Movement: Do not seize, tax or divert humanitarian vehicles, supplies or cash, and return any you hold [10].
- Fano forces, including the Amhara Fano National Movement: Commit publicly to international humanitarian law, and allow independent monitors to investigate allegations against your forces.
- Tigrayan forces (the Tigray Defence Forces and the government-aligned Tigray Peace Force): In Raya, allow civilians, including returnees, to move freely to and from Alamata, Korem and Kobo, and let health facilities in Alamata and Korem be resupplied.



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- Tigrayan forces (the Tigray Defence Forces and the government-aligned Tigray Peace Force): Respond publicly and verifiably to the allegations, made by the National Movement of Amhara (NaMA), of violence against returning civilians in Raya. The Tigray Peace Force has denied them [23]. Allow independent monitors access to investigate.
- UN OCHA and humanitarian agencies: Publish an updated national access map, with a note on the definition change and on what can and cannot be compared with the 2024 maps.
- UN OCHA and humanitarian agencies: Publish displacement estimates for Amhara as soon as they can be verified, with the method used, and report access incidents by zone.
- UN OCHA and humanitarian agencies: Give a public breakdown, by region, of the CERF allocation of 13 October.
- UN OCHA and humanitarian agencies: FEWS NET and IPC partners: carry out an IPC analysis for Wag Himra, North Wollo and North Gondar as soon as data allow.
- humanitarian donors: Fund health supplies, food assistance and protection services in north-eastern Amhara now, with flexible funding, and do not wait for a countrywide response plan.
- humanitarian donors: Ask recipient agencies to report Amhara-specific spending and coverage.
- humanitarian donors: Fund independent monitoring of connectivity and of access constraints.
- humanitarian donors: Raise access in Amhara bilaterally and multilaterally. Thirty-six organisations, including HRW and Amnesty, have called for a UN Human Rights Council special session and an expert panel [17]; any such mechanism should be able to examine obstruction of relief in Amhara.

Key takeaways Since fighting spread into north-eastern Amhara from 22 September 2026, OCHA has reported that facilities in Amhara "reportedly have run out of emergency supplies" and that "no verified displacement figures are available for Tigray and Amhara" (1 October) [4]. FEWS NET reports below-average harvests in Wag Himra and North Wollo, where the fighting in Amhara has been concentrated [7]. No IPC famine (Phase 5) classification has been published for Amhara, and FEWS NET's projection of Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes names no Amhara zone, although it includes unnamed "lowland woredas along the Tekeze River catchment" [7]. The most recent published national measure of access is OCHA's map of 31 October 2025, which placed 36 of Ethiopia's 41 hard-to-reach woredas in Amhara (the other five were in Oromia) [1]. OCHA changed its definition of "hard-to-reach" between its 2024 and 2025 maps, so whether access has narrowed or widened since 2024 cannot be shown from OCHA's own maps. Context The conflict in Amhara between federal forces and Fano militias began well before September 2026. The state of emergency declared in August 2023 expired in June 2024; through 2025, according to Human Rights Watch, aid agencies' access in Amhara "remained deeply restricted" [2]. The current phase is different because it overlaps with the renewed war on the Tigray front. On 25 September the UN reported that aid operations in the north, "particularly in parts of Amhara, are already facing significant constraints" [3]. Access in this brief means aid workers' ability to reach people in need, and people's ability to reach services. The brief draws only on published sources. It does not use operational data from agencies. What the evidence shows Health. On 1 October OCHA reported that "facilities in neighboring Amhara region reportedly have run out of emergency supplies" [4]. By then hospitals in Korem and Alamata had received 480 casualties [4]. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) reported that war-wounded patients received at those hospitals rose from about 180 over a 48-hour period to more than 420 between 22 and 25 September, and that its activities at Alamata Hospital had been suspended [5]. Alamata lies in Raya, which is administered as part of Southern Tigray and claimed by Amhara. This brief counts no victims there as Amhara or as Tigrayan. At least 52 civilians were killed in



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three days of fighting in and around Alamata, between Saturday 26 and Monday 28 September, according to hospital sources quoted by the BBC [18]. Residents told the BBC they could not determine who carried out the attacks, and no perpetrator has been independently established. Food. FEWS NET reports that the fighting has been concentrated in North Wollo and Wag Himra. It also reports a below-average meher harvest, with Wag Himra, North Gondar and North Wollo among the most affected areas [7]. In August 2026, white sorghum in Sekota cost nearly 75 percent more than the five-year average [7]. FEWS NET expects Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes in parts of South and East Tigray, in "lowland woredas along the Tekeze River catchment" and in East and West Hararghe; it names no Amhara zone [7]. No IPC famine classification has been made for Amhara. Classifications are made with data, and data from these zones are scarce. Displacement. On 1 October OCHA said that "no verified displacement figures are available for Tigray and Amhara" [4]. On 10 October the UN reported that a government-led effort to help displaced people return from Kobo to their home areas had been suspended after security there deteriorated [6]. Partial figures exist but are not totals: DW Amharic reported on 1 October that more than 36,000 residents of Alamata had been displaced to Kobo (single source) [14]. More than 56,000 people from five Wag Hemra districts had sheltered in Sekota, displaced by an armed group that held the area from April 2026, before the current fighting. On 5 October DW reported that families had begun returning to Abergele and Tsagbji [15]. More than 60,000 long-term displaced people in North and South Wollo face food shortages because aid groups have closed their projects, DW reported [15]. On 13 October, DW reported that combatants had told residents of Wegeltena, South Wollo, to leave the town [20]. These figures overlap and come from different dates. They should not be added together. Access and safety of aid workers. On 30 September the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator said that armed groups had seized at least ten humanitarian vehicles in 2025–26, of which only two had been recovered [10]. By 7 October, 19 aid workers (nine UN staff and ten from international NGOs) had been evacuated overland from Tigray to Gondar. Prince Bruce, the UN Department of Safety and Security's Chief Security Adviser for Ethiopia and Djibouti, said: "We had no flights, no safe roads, and unreliable communications" [11]. Commercial flights to Lalibela were suspended on 24 September [18]; we could not confirm whether they had resumed by 15 October. Communications. OHCHR reported on 25 September that internet and telecommunications had "reportedly been disrupted or are non-functional" in Mekelle and in parts of Amhara [12]. According to The Reporter, Amnesty International said on 2 October that communications blackouts across Tigray, Afar and Amhara were obstructing independent monitoring [13]. The current state of connectivity across Amhara has not been independently established. This brief does not claim a region-wide shutdown, but nor can it rule one out. Funding. On 13 October CERF released $8.5 million to "help address the urgent needs of more than 200,000 people across the northern regions"; the UN did not give a breakdown by region. In the same briefing OCHA said that "the security situation remains volatile in parts of Afar, Amhara and Tigray" [8]. EU humanitarian aid to Ethiopia in 2026 totals €61 million (subject to budgetary approval), and the Commission names Amhara among the regions where insecurity "continues to displace communities" [9]. According to ECHO, Ethiopia published neither a Humanitarian Needs Overview nor a response plan for 2025, because the authorities and humanitarian agencies disagreed over people-in-need figures [16]; we found no published countrywide plan for 2026. The public record does not show how much of either allocation will reach Amhara. What this brief does not claim No claim about corridors. We found no published source showing which roads carry most of the humanitarian supplies into Amhara, so this brief makes no such claim. ECHO places the most serious access problems in Amhara in North, West and South Gondar [16]; OCHA reported access deteriorating in South Wollo and North Shewa in September–October 2025 [1]; and since late September fighting has reached the area around Kobo [21]. No trend since 2024. We do not say access has narrowed since 2024, for the reason



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given in the takeaways above. It remains severely constrained. No famine claim. We do not say there is famine in Amhara. We say the harvest is short where fighting is heaviest, and that no classification has yet been made. Method and limits This brief uses only published sources available on 15 October 2026. Several primary pages (OCHA's daily updates, OHCHR and Amnesty International) could not be opened directly, and for these it relies on UN News, UN briefings, republications and reputable outlets that reported them. Figures are dated and attributed to whoever counted them. Where the record is silent, the brief says so rather than estimating. The Hub does not collect testimony; people who need to report an incident can use the organisations listed on our Report an Incident page. Prepared by the Global Amhara editorial team. Its views are not an official position of Global Amhara Knowledge Hub unless adopted by the Board. Sources UN OCHA, Ethiopia: National Access Map, 31 Oct 2025. Evidence: Confirmed. Human Rights Watch, World Report 2026: Ethiopia (Jan 2026). Evidence: Confirmed. UN noon briefing, 25 Sep 2026. Evidence: Confirmed. UN OCHA daily update of 1 Oct 2026, as reported by Xinhua (datelined 1 Oct, published 2 Oct) and democrata.es (2 Oct; https://www.democrata.es/en/international/the-un-denounces-a-massive-displacement-in-northern-ethiopia-following-th Evidence: Confirmed. MSF figures on war-wounded at Korem and Alamata, reported by Ethiopia Observer, 28 Sep 2026. Evidence: Confirmed. UN News, Secretary-General's statement on Ethiopia and humanitarian update, 10 Oct 2026. Evidence: Confirmed. FEWS NET, Ethiopia Key Message Update, September 2026 – January 2027 (information as of 30 Sep 2026). Evidence: Confirmed. UN noon briefing, 14 Oct 2026 (CERF allocation). Evidence: Confirmed. European Commission (ECHO), humanitarian funding for Ethiopia, 28 Sep 2026. Evidence: Confirmed. UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Ethiopia, statement of 30 Sep 2026. Evidence: Confirmed. The Reporter (via allAfrica), aid workers evacuated to Gondar, 7 Oct 2026. Evidence: Confirmed. OHCHR press release (Volker Türk), 25 Sep 2026 (ohchr.org returns 403; text read via the Mirage News republication, https://www.miragenews.com/turk-warns-of-civilian-toll-urges-ethiopia-de-1750629/), and UN News summary, 25 Sep 2026 (https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/09/1168450). Evidence: Confirmed. The Reporter, 3 Oct 2026, reporting Amnesty International's statement of 2 Oct to the AU PSC (paraphrase; amnesty.org 403). Evidence: Fair. DW Amharic, 1 Oct 2026, displacement from Alamata to Kobo (original opened; English translation by AAA). Evidence: Single-source. Mereja, 7 Oct 2026, citing DW Amharic (5 Oct) and FEWS NET, displacement in Sekota and Wollo. Evidence: Fair. European Commission (ECHO), Humanitarian Implementation Plan 2026: Greater Horn of Africa (covers Ethiopia), version 3, 25 Feb 2026. Evidence: Confirmed. Human Rights Watch and 35 organisations, call for an HRC special session, 9 Oct 2026. Evidence: Confirmed. BBC, via The Star, 30 Sep 2026, civilian deaths around Alamata, 26–28 Sep 2026. Evidence: Confirmed (deaths); Contested (perpetrator). Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, public statement on fighting on the Tigray–Amhara and Tigray–Afar borders, 25 Sep 2026. Evidence: Confirmed. DW Amharic, 13 Oct 2026, fighting in South Wollo, North Wollo and North Shewa (original opened). Evidence: Fair. Al Jazeera, how the fighting spread beyond Tigray, 2 Oct 2026. Evidence: Confirmed. Borkena, Amhara Regional Council re-elects Arega Kebede, 1 Oct 2026. Evidence: Fair. Borkena, NaMA accuses Tigray Peace Force of violence in Raya; TPF rejects claims, 12 Oct 2026. Evidence: Contested.



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