POSITION · ICAI-POS-2026-003

Protecting civilians and securing accountability in the Amhara conflict

Date: 16 October 2026 · Version 1

Every party to the conflict in Amhara must stop harming civilians, and every party must answer for the harm it has done. Detainees must be charged before a court or released; monitors and aid must reach the region; schools and health care must be protected; and an independent international mechanism must cover Amhara since August 2023.

Status: Proposed · Version 1 · Adopted: · Resolution The Board

Full text Civilians in Amhara have been harmed by every armed party, and almost no one has answered for it. Unrest in the Amhara region began in April 2023 and became armed conflict between federal forces and Fano militias in August 2023 [18][1]. OHCHR recorded 740 civilian deaths in Amhara in 2023, most of them attributed to government security forces. They included 248 people killed in 18 drone strikes between 4 August and 31 December 2023 [1]. Human Rights Watch has documented killings by government forces in Merawi in January 2024 [2] and found that the Ethiopian military's attacks on medical care in the region "may amount to war crimes" [19]. OHCHR also reported killings of civilians and attacks on medical personnel and ambulances by Fano, and Fano's military use of schools in some locations [1]. Human Rights Watch reports that teachers were abducted and threatened by Fano to keep schools closed, and that gunmen killed four teachers in Merawi whom they accused of breaking a Fano-called strike [3]. The record of the wider northern war is no different. The International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia found reasonable grounds to believe that Tigrayan and allied fighters committed war crimes in Amhara between July and December 2021. It found the same of many violations by federal and Eritrean forces and allied regional forces, including Amhara Special Forces and Fano, in Tigray and against Tigrayans elsewhere [4]. We name these findings because a protection agenda that counts only some victims will protect none of them. The conflict has widened since September 2026. The High Commissioner reported on 25 September that a mortar strike in Kobo, "reportedly by the ENDF", caused civilian deaths. He also deplored forced mass recruitment of civilians, including children, by the TPLF, and cited "disturbing reports of arbitrary conscription by government forces" [5]. At least 52 civilians were reported killed around Alamata, in Raya, in three days of fighting from 26 to 28 September. Responsibility for those deaths has not been independently established [6]. In the Menz area of North Shewa, civilians, among them a ninth-grade student, were reported killed by stray bullets in fighting between federal and Fano forces that began on 7 October [7]. On 9 October the Secretary-General named Amhara among the regions of renewed fighting [10]. Detention has outlived the emergency that once excused it. The state of emergency declared in August 2023 suspended judicial review of detentions; it expired in June 2024 [1][2]. Arrests continued. In May 2026 the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission reported arrests without court orders, and suspects not brought before a court within 48 hours, in police stations in Amhara [9]. Its annual report,

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presented on 9 October, says unlawful detentions "have persisted" in conflict-affected parts of Amhara, including a "widespread practice" of detaining people accused of being "Fano cells", and records complaints of enforced disappearance [8]. No international mechanism is examining this conflict. The experts' commission ended in 2023 and its findings concerned the 2020–22 war [4]. The Human Rights Council's 63rd session closed on 7 October without a resolution on Ethiopia [12]. Thirty-six organizations have since asked the Council for a special session and an expert panel [11]. Our position. Global Amhara Knowledge Hub holds that: Civilian protection is owed to every civilian, whoever the victim and whoever the perpetrator. We will name harm by federal forces, Fano forces, Tigrayan forces, the Oromo Liberation Army, Eritrean forces and militias alike, and we will say so when Amhara armed actors are accused. We support the aims of no armed group, including the Alliance for Survival and its members. Fano is not a designated terrorist organization [21], and calling it one does not license harm to civilians. Rebellion does not license it either. Accountability means independent investigation, with findings that are published and lead to prosecution and remedy, applied to every party. The test of any party's commitment is conduct that can be checked, not statements. The demands below are written so that anyone can check whether they have been met. Sources OHCHR, Update on the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia in 2023 (June 2024). Evidence: Confirmed. HRW, World Report 2025: Ethiopia (state of emergency expired June 2024; Merawi; mass arrests persisted). Evidence: Confirmed. HRW, World Report 2026: Ethiopia (2025 drone strikes; teachers abducted, threatened and killed). Evidence: Confirmed. ICHREE, report A/HRC/54/55 (2023). Evidence: Confirmed. OHCHR, High Commissioner Türk press release, 25 Sep 2026 (live page 403; read via archive.org snapshot 20261008174453). Evidence: Confirmed. Ethiopia Observer, 'More than 50 civilians reportedly killed in around Alamata', 30 Sep 2026 (BBC hospital sources); BBC report via The Star (Kenya), 30 Sep 2026, 'at least 52', fighting Saturday to Monday (26–28 Sep): https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/africa/2026-09-30-medic-ethiopia-fighting-escalates-in-tigray-killing-52-civilians. Evidence: Confirmed (deaths) / Contested (perpetrator). Ethiopia Observer, 'Heavy fighting in Menz leaves civilians dead and injured', 8 Oct 2026 (relaying DW Amharic). Evidence: Fair. EHRC, Executive Summary: Annual Ethiopia Human Rights Situation Report, June 2025 to June 2026 (English; released 9 Oct 2026; PDF via the download button). Press coverage: The Reporter, 10 Oct 2026, https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/53373/. Evidence: Confirmed. EHRC, Amhara: discussion on the protection of the human rights of suspects in police custody, 13 May 2026. Evidence: Confirmed. UN Secretary-General, statement attributable to the Spokesperson on Ethiopia, New York, 9 Oct 2026 (posted on ethiopia.un.org 10 Oct). Evidence: Confirmed. HRW, joint letter of 36 organizations calling for an HRC special session, 8 Oct 2026 (page 9 Oct). Evidence: Confirmed. UN Geneva, 'Human Rights Council Concludes Sixty-Third Regular Session after Adopting 34 Resolutions, Two Decisions and One President's Statement', 7 Oct 2026 (no Ethiopia text). Evidence: Confirmed. UMD Media, Alliance for Survival press conference, 27 Sep 2026. Evidence: Single-source. Borkena, 'NAMA Accuses Tigray Peace Force of Violence in Raya; TPF Rejects Claims', 12 Oct 2026. Evidence: Contested. UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (Ozonnia Ojielo), statement on the northern Ethiopia situation, 30 Sep 2026 (at least 10 humanitarian vehicles seized by armed groups in 2025–26). Evidence: Confirmed. UN noon briefing, 25 Sep 2026. Evidence: Confirmed. OFAC, recent actions 18 Sep 2026 (EO 14046 programme ended). Evidence: Confirmed. ACLED, Fact sheet: crisis in Ethiopia's Amhara region (unrest from April 2023). Evidence: Confirmed. HRW, 'If the Soldier Dies, It's on You': Attacks on Medical Care in Ethiopia's Amhara Conflict, 3 Jul 2024. Evidence: Confirmed. UN News, 'UN chief gravely concerned by renewed fighting in northern Ethiopia, warns against escalation', 10 Oct 2026 (Kobo returns suspended). Evidence: Confirmed. House of Peoples' Representatives designation of TPLF and 'Shene' (OLF-Shene), 6 May 2021 (Embassy of Ethiopia release); TPLF delisting, 22 Mar 2023 (Al Jazeera:

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https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/22/update-1-ethiopia-removes-terrorist-designation-from-dominant-tigray-party
Evidence: Confirmed (designations and delisting); no Fano designation found.

Demands

No.	Demand	Addressee	Status
D1	Within 30 days, bring before a court everyone held in connection with the Amhara conflict, and charge them with a recognizable offence or release them. Notify families of each detainee's place of detention, and give the EHRC the list of all places of detention. Met when: the EHRC reports that the backlog has been cleared and lists all places of detention [8][9].	Federal Government of Ethiopia, ENDF and Amhara regional government	Open
D2	Grant the EHRC, OHCHR and any mechanism the Human Rights Council creates unimpeded access to Amhara, including places of detention. Investigate the 23 September mortar strike on Kobo and publish the findings within 90 days [5]. Met when: access is confirmed by the bodies themselves, and an investigation report is public.	Federal Government of Ethiopia and ENDF	Open
D3	Agree, through the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, safe passage for humanitarian convoys, for displaced people returning home from Kobo, and for displaced people in Wag Hemra and North Shewa. Return seized humanitarian vehicles and supplies [15][16]. Met when: the UN reports that access arrangements are in place and that returns from Kobo have resumed [20].	Federal Government of Ethiopia, Fano forces including the AFNM, and all other armed parties	Open
D4	Publish written orders prohibiting attacks on civilians, use of schools and health facilities, threats against teachers and health workers, abduction for ransom and seizure of aid. Allow the EHRC to investigate allegations against Fano units, including those in its annual report [1][3][8]. Met when: the orders are public, and the EHRC confirms it has had access.	Fano forces, including the AFNM	Open
D5	End the recruitment of children, which OHCHR has reported [5]. Cooperate with an independent investigation into civilian deaths in Alamata, Kobo and the wider Raya area. That includes the allegations against the Tigray Peace Force, which it denies [6][14]. Met when: the UN or the EHRC reports cooperation or verifies the release of children.	Tigrayan forces, including the TPLF and the government-aligned Tigray Peace Force	Open

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D6	Publish in full the code of conduct described at the Alliance's 27 September press conference [13], and add a binding commitment to international humanitarian law, civilian protection and cooperation with investigations. Met when: the text is public and contains those commitments.	members of the Alliance for Survival	Open
D7	Convene a special session and establish an independent expert mechanism. Its mandate must expressly cover the conflict in Amhara since August 2023, the conduct of all parties, arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance, attacks on schools and health care, and humanitarian access [11]. Met when: a resolution with that scope is adopted.	UN Human Rights Council member states	Open
D8	The Peace and Security Council should hold a session on Ethiopia that addresses Amhara before the end of 2026. The United States, the European Union and the United Kingdom should publicly support the mechanism in demand 7, and should tie any security cooperation with any party to civilian-protection measures that can be checked [17]. Met when: the session is held and the statements of support are on the record.	African Union Peace and Security Council; the United States, the European Union and the United Kingdom	Open

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