



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

Ethiopia: Oromos, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA)

Version 2.0

March 2026

Executive summary

Abiy Ahmed became Prime Minister in 2018 and secured a second five-year term after his Prosperity Party (PP) won a landslide victory in the June 2021 general election. The next general election is expected to be held in 2026.

The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) campaigns for Oromo self-determination and while recognised as a political party in November 2019, its ability to effectively participate in the political sphere has been limited. In January 2026 the OLF announced it intends to contest the general election due later in the year.

The Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), formerly the OLF's armed wing, split from the OLF in 2018 after refusing to disarm and has been designated a terrorist organisation in Ethiopia since May 2021. The OLA operates mainly in rural Oromia, although its territorial control is fluid and limited, and it has not established governance structures in areas it has occupied. The exact nature of the current relationship and/or separation between the OLF and the OLA is uncertain, with some sources suggesting that the OLF and OLA continue to be closely linked.

The number of arrests, imprisonment and extra judicial killings of OLF/OLA members or supporters are uncertain due to difficulties in obtaining reliable information, particularly from conflict zones. ACLED data indicates that during 2024 and 2025 security forces arrested more than 1,910 persons in Oromia and Addis Ababa on suspicion of having links to OLF/OLA. This comprised of 892 members and supporters and 480 family members in Oromia and 538 supporters and family members in Addis Ababa. In September 2024, 7 OLF leaders were released after being detained since 2020, despite earlier court orders directing their release. While the Ethiopian government has publicly attempted to separate the OLF from the OLA, there have been reports of arrests and extrajudicial killings of people who have been accused of having links to the OLA, but who deny any involvement.

A person with a significant history of actual or perceived membership of or support for the OLF-OLA is likely to be at risk of persecution or serious harm from the state.

Whether a person's association with the OLF is 'significant' is fact sensitive. Decision makers must consider the country guidance case of [AAR \(OLF - MB confirmed\) Ethiopia CG \[2022\] UKUT 00001 \(IAC\)](#), heard 24 February 2021, promulgated 29 December 2021 which continues to apply.

A person of Oromo ethnicity is unlikely to be at risk of persecution or serious harm from the state for that reason alone. Oromo's population in 2025 was estimated at 42.7 million. During 2024 and 2025 a total of 600 incidents of political violence against civilians were recorded resulting in 1,293 civilian deaths equivalent to 0.003% of the regional Population. Government security forces were responsible for 38.5% of the incidents and 34.0% of the civilian deaths alongside 27 arrest incidents.

Where a person fears the state, protection is unlikely to be available and internal relocation is unlikely to be reasonable. Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

All cases must be considered on their individual facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate they face persecution or serious harm.

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Assessment

Section updated: 21 January 2026

About the assessment

This section considers the evidence relevant to this note – that is the [country information](#), refugee/human rights laws and policies, and applicable caselaw – and provides an assessment of **whether, in general**:

- a person faces a real risk of persecution and or serious harm by the state because of their Oromo ethnicity and or their actual or perceived association with the Oromo Liberation Front or Oromo Liberation Army.
- the state (or quasi state bodies) can provide effective protection
- internal relocation is possible to avoid persecution/serious harm
- a claim, if refused, is likely or not to be certified as ‘clearly unfounded’ under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Decision makers **must**, however, consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case’s specific facts.

In this note, the Oromo Liberation Front political party is referred to as OLF and the breakaway Oromo Liberation Front armed group is referred to as the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) or OLF-Shene.

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1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

1.1 Credibility

- 1.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)
- 1.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 1.1.3 Decision makers must also consider making an international biometric data-sharing check, when one has not already been undertaken (see [Biometric data-sharing process \(Migration 5 biometric data-sharing process\)](#)).
- 1.1.4 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person’s claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider language analysis testing, where available (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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1.2 Exclusion

- 1.2.1 In July 2018, the Ethiopian government removed the OLF from its list of designated terrorist organisations. After this date, a faction of the OLF refused to lay down arms and the organisation split. The splinter group, known as the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) or OLF-Shene or Shene, was re-designated as a terrorist group by the Ethiopian government in May 2021 (see [Terrorist designation](#)).
- 1.2.2 Although the UK has not proscribed the OLA as a terrorist group, the organisation has been connected to human rights violations, including attacks on civilians. Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons to apply one (or more) of the exclusion clauses. Each case must be considered on its individual facts (see [Overview of the fighting and Violence against civilians by actor during 2024 and 2025](#)).
- 1.2.3 The country guidance case of [AAR \(OLF - MB confirmed\) Ethiopia CG \[2022\] UKUT 00001 \(IAC\)](#), heard 24 February 2021, promulgated 29 December 2021, considered that ‘Whether any such persons are to be excluded from recognition as refugees or from the grant of humanitarian protection by reason of armed activities may need to be addressed in particular cases.’ (paragraph 103)
- 1.2.4 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 1.2.5 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention, Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

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2. Convention reason(s)

- 2.1.1 Actual or imputed political opinion and/or race or nationality.
- 2.1.2 Establishing a convention reason is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of an actual or imputed Refugee Convention reason.
- 2.1.3 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds, see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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3. Risk

3.1 OLF and OLA

3.1.1 A person with a significant history of actual or perceived membership of or support for the OLF is likely to be at risk of persecution or serious harm from the state.

3.1.2 However, OLF has splintered with some factions signing a peace with the government and even joining the ruling Prosperity Party (see [Structure](#) and [Size and support](#)). Senior members and supporters of such factions are unlikely to be at risk of persecution or serious harm from the state.

3.1.3 Whether a person's association with the OLF is 'significant' is fact sensitive and each case must be considered on its individual merits, with the onus on the claimant to demonstrate that they face a risk of persecution. The meaning of 'significant' in this context is set out by the caselaw, below.

3.1.4 The country guidance case of [AAR \(OLF - MB confirmed\) Ethiopia CG \[2022\] UKUT 00001 \(IAC\)](#), heard 24 February 2021, promulgated 29 December 2021 applies. In AAR the Upper Tribunal held that:

1. 'In broad terms, [MB \(OLF and MTA – risk\) Ethiopia CG \[2007\] UKAIT 00030](#) still accurately reflects the situation facing members and supporters of the OLF if returned to Ethiopia. However, in material respects, it is appropriate to clarify and supplement the existing guidance.
2. 'OLF members and supporters and those specifically perceived by the authorities to be such members or supporters will in general be at real risk if they have been previously arrested or detained on suspicion of OLF involvement.
3. 'Those who have a significant history, known to the authorities, of OLF membership or support, or are perceived by the authorities to have such significant history will in general be at real risk of persecution by the authorities.
4. "Significant" should not be read as denoting a very high level of involvement or support. Rather, it relates to suspicion being established that a person is perceived by the authorities as possessing an anti-government agenda. This is a fact sensitive assessment.' (para 103)

3.1.5 While the UT in [AAR](#) did not explicitly provide country guidance on the treatment of members or supporters of the OLA, its assessment of risk faced by OLF supporters and members also applies to those perceived to be or actually associated with the OLA.

3.1.6 Abiy Ahmed became Prime Minister in 2018 and secured a second five-year term after his Prosperity Party won a landslide victory in the June 2021 general election. The next general election is expected to be held in 2026. Prior to 2018, the dominant party in the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) coalition, which governed for almost 3 decades, was the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). After a year in power, Abiy dissolved the EPRDF coalition and created a new party, the Prosperity Party (PP) (see [Ruling Party](#)).

- 3.1.7 While Abiy was quick to make well-received reforms – such as the release of political prisoners – his attempts to move away from a federal to a unitary system of governance (with a strong central government) have met with resistance from Oromo opposition parties and from other ethno-regional groups (see [Oromo grievances](#)).
- 3.1.8 The relationship between the OLF and the OLA, and the relationship between these 2 organisations and successive Ethiopian governments, is complex and spans several decades. For a summary of the main events and their significance (see the archived [CPIN Ethiopia: Oromos, the Oromo Liberation Front and the Oromo Liberation Army](#) and [OLF and OLA: timeline](#)).
- 3.1.9 Prior to 2018, the OLF was designated a terrorist organisation and its members lived in exile. The terrorist designation was lifted in July 2018 and the OLF were welcomed back from exile to Ethiopia. Disagreements over disarmament in October 2018 resulted in the OLF splitting into a political wing (the OLF) and an armed wing (the OLA). Since the OLF-OLA split, other factions have formed within the OLF (see [Internal divisions](#)).
- 3.1.10 The OLF campaigns for Oromo self-determination. While recognised as a political party in November 2019, its ability to effectively participate in the political sphere has been limited (see [Ability to OLF to function as a political group](#), [Internal divisions](#)). The party withdrew from the 2021 elections, alleging the arrest of leaders, members and supporters had left it unable to effectively organise although sources note it was also due to internal power struggles and divisions. The election campaign was dominated by Abiy's ruling PP, which ran in 103 out of 170 constituencies in Oromia uncontested. Sources note the splintering of the OLF in recent years, including key leaders moving to the ruling Prosperity Party (PP). The OLF announced it intends to contest the general election due in 2026 (see [Leaders and senior/high profile members](#) and [Political stance and objectives](#)).
- 3.1.11 While the Ethiopian government has publicly attempted to separate the OLF from the OLA, there have been reports of arrests and extrajudicial killings of people who have been accused of having links to the OLA, but who deny any involvement. In September 2024, 7 OLF leaders were released after being detained since 2020, despite earlier court orders directing their release (see [State treatment of OLF](#)).
- 3.1.12 The OLA was designated as a terrorist organisation in May 2021 (see [Terrorist designation](#)) and has continued its armed opposition to the government (see [Aims and objectives](#)). The exact nature of the current relationship and/or separation between the OLF and the OLA is uncertain, with some sources suggesting that the OLF and OLA continue to be closely linked (see [Distinction between OLF and OLA](#)).
- 3.1.13 The OLA's numerical strength is difficult to verify, while government sources claim about 8,000 the OLA itself has asserted up to 80,000. Recruitment has been fuelled by disaffected Oromo youth, former Qeerroo activists, and those seeking security or economic opportunity amid widespread instability. Popular support is mixed. While few Oromos have strong ideological ties to the OLA, harsh government crackdowns and lack of political alternatives

have increased sympathy in some areas, particularly western Oromia. The OLA claims it receives financial backing from local communities and the diaspora, with weapons largely seized from government forces. In December 2024 an unspecified number, although believed to be in the hundreds, of OLA fighters were reported to have entered government rehabilitation centres aimed at reintegrating militants (see [Size and support](#)).

- 3.1.14 The OLA operates primarily in rural Oromia, with strongholds in North Shewa, East Wellega, Horo Gudru Wellega, Aris and Guji however its territorial control is fluid and limited, and it has not established governance structures in areas it has occupied (see [Areas of operation](#)).
- 3.1.15 Sources indicate that civilians in Oromia suspected of links to the OLA including hiding fighters, providing food and other logistical support or having familial relations to OLA affiliated persons faced adverse reaction from the state authorities including arrests, detention and even extra-judicial killings. Criticism of the authorities, or real or perceived sympathy for opposition groups, can heighten the likelihood of adverse attention, particularly for a person with influence or capacity to mobilise others. The number of arrests, imprisonment and extra judicial killings of OLF/OLA members or supporters are uncertain partly due difficulties in obtaining reliable information, particularly from conflict zones. ACLED data indicates that between during 2024 and 2025 security forces arrested more than 892 people suspected of being members, supporters or collaborators OLA and over 480 OLA family members and relatives in Oromia. In addition, Security forces arrested over 538 people linked to OLA in Addis Ababa. In September 2024, 7 OLF leaders were released after being detained since 2020, despite earlier court orders directing their release. Detainees were denied access to a fair trial and that the security committee, or Koree Nageenyaa, interfered in the justice system (see [State treatment of the OLA](#) and [Civilian-State interaction](#)).

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3.2 Oromo ethnic group

- 3.2.1 A person of Oromo ethnicity is unlikely to be at risk of persecution or serious harm from the state for that reason alone. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.
- 3.2.2 Ethiopia is home to over 80 ethnic groups and 11 ethno-linguistically based regional states. Oromia is the largest and the most populous region and is organised into 21 administrative zones and 3 city administrations. Oromo are the largest ethnic group nationally with a population estimated at 42.7 million (38% of national population in as of 2025 (see [Administrative division and size of Oromia](#) and [Population size](#)). For further information on background including political context see CPINs on [Internal relocation](#), [Amhara and Amhara opposition groups](#), [Tigrayans and the Tigrayan People](#) and [Actors of protection](#).
- 3.2.3 During 2024 and 2025 ACLED recorded 600 incidents of political violence against civilians in Oromia resulting in 1,293 civilian deaths equivalent to 0.003% of the regional population. Government security forces were responsible for 38.5% of the incidents and 34.0% of the civilian deaths

alongside 27 arrest incidents. The data suggests that most incidents involving state security forces were linked to victims' real or suspected association with the OLF or OLA, rather than indiscriminate targeting. ACLED records that 46% of incidents and 45% of civilian fatalities were motivated by the victims' perceived links to the OLF or to OLA fighters or family members, indicating that risk is concentrated among those suspected of affiliation rather than affecting the wider civilian population (see [Political violence events in Oromia](#), [Violence against civilians by the state](#), [Abduction/forced disappearances, arrests and looting/destruction of property by security forces](#), [OLA fighters, members, and supporters](#), [OLA family members](#), [Civilian-State interaction](#)).

- 3.2.4 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)

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4. Protection

- 4.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to obtain protection.
- 4.1.2 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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5. Internal relocation

- 5.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to internally relocate to escape that risk.
- 5.1.2 For further guidance on internal relocation and factors to consider, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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6. Certification

- 6.1.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 6.1.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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Country information

About the country information

This section contains publicly available or disclosable country of origin information (COI) which has been gathered, collated and analysed in line with the [research methodology](#). It provides the evidence base for the assessment which, as stated in the [About the assessment](#), is the guide to the current objective conditions.

The structure and content follow a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to the scope of this note.

This document is intended to be comprehensive but not exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned this does not mean that the event did or did not take place or that the person or organisation does or does not exist.

The COI included was published or made publicly available on or before **25 January 2026**. Any event taking place or report published after this date will not be included.

Decision makers must use relevant COI as the evidential basis for decisions.

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7. Use of datasets

7.1.1 To understand the level and nature of human rights violations in Oromia, and to identify trends over time, this CPIN has drawn upon data collected by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), ‘an independent, impartial global monitor that collects, analyses, and maps data on conflict and protest.’¹

7.1.2 According to the ACLED Codebook:

‘ACLED collects reported information on the type, agents, location, date, and other characteristics of political violence events, demonstration events, and other select non-violent, politically relevant developments in every country and territory in the world. ACLED focuses on tracking a range of violent and non-violent actions by or affecting political agents, including governments, rebels, militias, identity groups, political parties, external forces, rioters, protesters, and civilians.

‘ACLED data are derived from a wide range of local, national, and international sources in over 75 languages. The information is collected by trained researchers worldwide ...

‘ACLED data are coded in real time and published on a weekly basis following a multi-stage internal review process. Data can be downloaded through the [export tool](#), [curated data files](#) (which include regional data files and files for specific subsets like violence targeting civilians), or [API](#) with a free account.²

7.1.3 ACLED further explained:

¹ ACLED, [About ACLED](#), no date

² ACLED, [ACLED codebook](#), no date

'ACLED data collect information on six types of events, both violent and non-violent, that constitute political disorder. These include:

1. 'Battles: Violent interactions between two organized armed groups;
2. 'Explosions/Remote violence: An event involving one side using remote weapons (e.g. artillery). These events can be against other armed actors, or used against civilians;
3. 'Violence against civilians: Violent events where an organized armed group deliberately inflicts violence upon unarmed non-combatants;
4. 'Protests: Public demonstrations in which the participants are not violent;
5. 'Riots: Violent events where demonstrators or mobs engage in destructive acts against property and/or disorganized acts of violence against people;
6. Strategic developments: Strategically important instances of non-violent activity by conflict actors and other agents within the context of conflict or broader political disorder. These can include recruitment drives, incidents of looting, and arrests are some examples of what may be included under this event type. Note that strategic developments are coded differently from other event types, and hence users must remember that they should be used differently from other event types in analysis.³

7.1.4 In addition to ACLED, this CPIN also uses data collected by the United Nations including those found in the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reports.

7.1.5 This CPIN uses the data alongside qualitative evidence to describe the current situation and to understand how the situation has changed over time.

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8. Background

8.1.1 For general background information on Ethiopia including ethnic composition, political and economic information see CPINs on [Internal relocation](#), [Amhara and Amhara opposition groups](#), [Tigrayans and the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front](#), and [Actors of protection](#) .

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9. Ethnic context

NOTE: The maps in this section are not intended to reflect the UK Government's views of any boundaries.

9.1 Administrative division and size of Oromia

9.1.1 In March 2024, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), Ethiopia's national human rights institution mandated to promote and protect human rights, published a National Inquiry report into deprivation of liberty in four regions including Oromia⁴ (EHRC March 2024 report). It noted:

'Oromia is the largest and the most populous region in Ethiopia. The capital of the region is Finfinne (Addis Ababa) [Finfinne also spelt Finfinnee is the

³ ACLED, [ACLED codebook](#), Last updated 1 November 2023

⁴ EHRC, [National inquiry into persons deprived of liberty](#) (page i), 26 March 2024

Oromiya name for Addis Ababa]. The official language of the region is Afan Oromo. The region is organized into city administrations and zones.’⁵ [See below map of Oromia].



Map 2: Zones of Oromia (additional zones have been added in recent years)

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9.1.2 In 2025 the Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers (NOAS), an independent NGO that advocates for the rights of asylum seekers⁷ published a report on the situation Oromia that drew on publicly available information, official documents, and in-depth interviews conducted in Ethiopia from August to December 2024⁸ (NOAS 2025 report). It observed:

‘... Oromia is the largest of the regional states of Ethiopia, both in terms of population and size, covering a total of approx. 290,000 sq.km [by comparison the United Kingdom is 243,000 Sq. Km⁹) ... The region is divided into 21 administrative zones and three special zones. The Oromo people constitute the vast majority of the region, whereas the largest minority group is the Amhara ... Oromia’s capital is Addis Ababa (or Finfinne, as it is called in Afaan Oromo) which is also the seat for the region’s administration ...

‘The Oromo are religious [sic] heterogenous where approximately 50 percent are Muslim, 27 percent Orthodox Christian, 18 percent Protestant Christian, and four percent Waqeffana (the traditional Oromo religion) ...’¹⁰

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⁵ EHRC, [National inquiry into persons deprived of liberty](#) (page 80), 26 March 2024

⁶ NOAS, [Maintaining control through lawlessness: The security and human ...](#) (page 9), 2025

⁷ Union of International Associations, [Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers \(NOAS\)](#), no date

⁸ NOAS, [Maintaining control through lawlessness: The security and human...](#) (page 7), 2025

⁹ BBC, [United Kingdom country profile](#) 9 July 2024

¹⁰ NOAS, [Maintaining control through lawlessness: The security and human...](#) (pages 9 to 10), 2025

9.2 Population size

- 9.2.1 Estimates of the population of Oromia vary. As of 2025 the Ethiopian Statistics Service (ESS), a government department which collects, compiles and analyses data from surveys, censuses and administrative records¹¹ estimated it at 42.7 million (38 % of the total national population estimated at 111.7 million)¹². However, the International Database (IDB), a global demographic resource maintained by the U.S. Census Bureau estimated the population of Oromia to be 48.1 million (39% of the total population which it estimated at 124.2 million)¹³.
- 9.2.2 Ethiopia is ethnically diverse with over about 80 ethnic groups¹⁴ and about 100 languages¹⁵. The Encyclopaedia Britannica has provided the following information about the main ethnic groups based on 2012 estimates: ‘Oromo 35.3%, Amhara 26.2%, Somali 6.0%, Tigray 5.9%, Sidamo 4.3%, Guragie 2.7%, Welaita 2.3%, 17.3%¹⁶.

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10. Political context

10.1 Background

- 10.1.1 For information on the political history including the appointment of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in 2018, see the archived country policy and information note [Ethiopia: Oromos, the Oromo Liberation Front and Oromo Liberation Army](#).

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10.2 Ruling Party

- 10.2.1 The Encyclopaedia Britannica noted: ‘The [Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front] EPRDF, a coalition comprising primarily Amhara, Oromo, and Tigray parties, was the ruling party since the formation of the new republic in 1995—until the party was dissolved in 2019. It was replaced by the Prosperity Party, which included some Amhara and Oromo groups that had been part of the EPRDF as well as several smaller regional ethnic-based parties.’¹⁷
- 10.2.2 The Bertelsmann Stiftung’s Transformation Index (BTI), a global collaboration of country and regional experts analyses and compares transformation processes towards democracy and inclusive market economy worldwide¹⁸, 2024 report (BTI 2024 report) noted:
- ‘The EPRDF comprised four political parties: the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM, renamed the Amhara Democratic Party, ADP, in 2018), the Oromo Peoples’ Democratic Organization (OPDO, renamed the Oromo Democratic Party,

¹¹ ESS, [About ESS](#), no date

¹² ESS, [National population projections – Ethiopia \(2025\)](#), August 2025

¹³ IDB, [Subnational population: Oromiya](#), 2025

¹⁴ NOAS, [Maintaining control through lawlessness: The security and human...](#) (page 8), 2025

¹⁵ Encyclopaedia Britannica, [Ethiopia](#) (People), updated 17 February 2026

¹⁶ Encyclopaedia Britannica, [Ethiopia](#) (People), updated 17 February 2026

¹⁷ Encyclopaedia Britannica, [Ethiopia](#) (People), updated 17 February 2026

¹⁸ BTI, [who we are](#), no date

ODP, in 2018) and the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM). This coalition party was replaced by the Prosperity Party on December 1, 2019, with its founding members including three former EPRDF parties: the ADP, ODP and SEPDM, along with five other former sister parties of EPRDF. Notably, the TPLF, the founder of the EPRDF, declined to join the Prosperity Party.¹⁹

According to the BBC monitoring report 28 January 2024 the PP was formed on 1 December 2019 from a merger of 3 out of the 4 parties which were original members of the EPRDF (excluding the TPLF), together with new regional members that included: Afar National Democratic Party (ANDP), Benishangul-Gumuz People's Democratic Unity Front ((BGPDUF), Democratic Party (BDP), Oromo Democratic Party (ODP), Amhara Democratic Party (ADP), Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM) Somali Democratic Party (SDP), Gambela Peoples Democratic Movement (GPDM) and Harari National League (HNL)²⁰ .

10.2.3 The BBC Monitoring report 6 October 2025 noted: 'Abiy Ahmed Ali was sworn in for a second term as Ethiopia's prime minister on 4 October 2021, following a landslide win by his ... PP in the June 2021 election. He was first elected to office in April 2018. He previously served as the chairman of the ... EPRDF political coalition from 2018 until it was dissolved in November 2019, when he formed the PP. He was re-elected as chair of the party in 2022 and 2025.'²¹

10.2.4 For more information on the 2021 elections see the archived country policy and information note [Ethiopia: Oromos, the Oromo Liberation Front and Oromo Liberation Army](#)

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10.3 State of emergency

10.3.1 In August 2023 the government imposed a state of emergency related to the conflict in Amhara region that applied nationwide including in Oromia region²². However, there has not been a state of emergency declared exclusively for Oromia region.

10.3.2 For more information on the state of emergency see CPINs on [Internal relocation, Ethiopia](#), and [Amhara and Amhara opposition groups, Ethiopia](#).

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11. Oromo grievances

11.1.1 A January 2023 report by The New Humanitarian, an independent, non-profit news and analysis organisation specialising in reporting on humanitarian crises, conflict, displacement, aid policy, and humanitarian governance worldwide²³ noted: 'Activists claim the Oromo remain insufficiently represented at the highest levels of government and business, despite comprising Ethiopia's largest ethnic group. Other flashpoints include border

¹⁹ BTI, [Ethiopia Country Report 2024](#) (History and characteristics), 19 March 2024

²⁰ BBC Monitoring, [Prosperity Party \(PP\)](#), 28 January 2024

²¹ BBC Monitoring, [Biography Ethiopia Abiy Ahmed Ali](#), 6 October 2025

²² USSD, [2024 Country reports on human rights practices: Ethiopia](#) (section 1 c), 12 August 2025

²³ The New Humanitarian, [About us](#), no date

disputes with Amhara, allegations of land grabs, and the status of Addis Ababa.’²⁴

- 11.1.2 A March 2023 analysis by the Rift Valley Institute (RVI) an independent, non-profit organization that work across eastern and central Africa to advance knowledge about the social, political and economic development in the region²⁵ (RVI 2023 report) noted:

‘Oromo nationalists and activists, including the OLA’s high command and spokespersons, maintain that their fight is not directed against any ethnic group but mainly against the central government, its unitarian ideology (sometimes referred to as ethiopiawinet) and a repressive administrative system in Oromia that, according to their recently published political manifesto, violates ‘the Oromo people’s right to self-determination’. Attacks against civilians, they repeatedly claim, are perpetrated by Amhara.’²⁶

- 11.1.3 A March 2023 commentary by German Institute for International and Security Affairs noted ‘The root cause is ... the distribution of power between regions and the centre.’²⁷ The report added

‘Although they are the largest ethnic group in the country, accounting for about one-third of the population, Oromos have never had a leading role in Ethiopia’s history. Large parts of today’s Oromia state only became part of the Ethiopian empire in the second half of the 19th century. Abiy himself comes from Oromia, where he worked in the regional government. However, many young people who were drivers of the pre-2018 reform protests see Abiy’s unitarism as a return to accommodation with Amharic-style centralism.’²⁸

- 11.1.4 Ethiopia Insight, an independent media outlet²⁹ reported on 17 October 2024 that political violence in Oromia is rooted in long-standing Oromo demands for meaningful political representation and recognition of their rights. Tensions intensified after the government’s 2018 breach of an agreement with the Oromo Liberation Front regarding to its return from exile which contributed to the expansion of the OLA insurgency in western and southern Oromia. Many Oromo groups and opposition parties have historically felt marginalised. According to Milkessa Gemechu, a former Oromo Democratic Party (ODP) official now in exile, the dissolution of the EPRDF’s regional parties and the creation of the Prosperity Party (PP) centralised authority and weakened promised democratic reforms. He argues that, despite Oromo leaders occupying senior roles, the ruling party does not adequately advance Oromo interests, and core demands such as genuine power-sharing and respect for rights remain unfulfilled³⁰.

- 11.1.5 In February 2024 article by Bizuneh Yimenu, a teaching fellow at the University of Birmingham, for The Conversation, an independent, non-profit organisation that publishes articles by academic experts and professional

²⁴ The New Humanitarian, [As violence subsides in Tigray, Ethiopia’s Oromia...](#), 12 January 2023

²⁵ RVI [About RVI](#), no date

²⁶ RVI, [Ethiopia conflict trend analysis Western Oromia](#) (page 5), March 2023

²⁷ SWP, [Sustaining peace in Ethiopia](#) (page 5), 14 March 2023

²⁸ SWP, [Sustaining peace in Ethiopia](#) (page 5), 14 March 2023

²⁹ Ethiopia Insight, [About](#), no date

³⁰ Ethiopia Insight, [Peace—and justice—remain elusive in Oromia](#), 17 October 2024

journalists,³¹ stated noted: ‘The underlying causes of conflict in Oromia are deeply rooted and complex. They stem from a combination of ‘historical injustices, marginalisation under previous regimes, ethnic tensions and competition over resources.’³²

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12. Oromo political parties

- 12.1.1 In a May 2020 report, the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS), Addis Ababa University Ethiopia (IPSS May 2020 report) noted: ‘Although there are several parties operating in the region, presently the most dominant/influential ones are Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Oromo National Party (ONP).’³³
- 12.1.2 The same source further noted with respect to the OFC: ‘OFC is a coalition formed in 2009 by the Oromo People’s Congress (OPC) and the Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement (OFDM). The party aims to peacefully struggle for the rights of the Oromo people through the full realization of ethnic federalism. OFC has a sizeable support-base in the Oromia region ... and is currently one of the largest legally registered opposition political parties in the region’³⁴
- 12.1.3 A February 2023 Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre (Landinfo) report, which drew on open sources, interviews conducted during a fact-finding mission to Ethiopia in November 2022, and discussions with various academic sources via digital platforms³⁵ (Landinfo 2023 report) observed:
- ‘The OFC was established in 2012 as a result of the merger of smaller parties based in Oromia. The party has the strongest support in West Shewa, but after the prominent Jawar Mohammed joined the party in 2019, the party has expanded its electoral base to eastern parts of Oromia. The party boycotted the June 2021 election, as it considered impossible to campaign in a situation where its members were harassed by regional authorities and the party’s leaders were imprisoned.
- ‘OFC has had a great appeal to young people in Oromia as an alternative to OLF. However, the party has kept a low profile since Jawar Mohammed and other imprisoned OFC leaders were released from prison in January 2022.’³⁶
- 12.1.4 The same source further explained that that ‘... [T]he first Oromo opposition party was the Oromo National Congress (ONC) established in 1996 ... ONC changed its name to Oromo People’s Congress (OPC) after the elections in 2005, before merging with the Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement (OFDM) and becoming the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC). OFC is still led by Merera Gudina and the party has participated in some elections and boycotted others.’³⁷

³¹ The Conversation, [Who we are](#), no date

³² The Conversation, [Oromia makes up a third of Ethiopia’s landmass and is key ...](#), 18 February 2024

³³ IPSS, [Ethiopia conflict insight](#) (page 8), May 2020

³⁴ IPSS, [Ethiopia conflict insight](#) (pages 8 to 9), May 2020

³⁵ Landinfo, [Armed conflict and political opposition in Oromia](#) (page 6), 24 February 2023

³⁶ Landinfo, [Armed conflict and political opposition in Oromia](#) (pages 9), 24 February 2023

³⁷ NOAS, [Maintaining control through lawlessness: The security and ...](#) (page 11), 2025

12.1.5 The IPSS 2020 report noted that ‘ONP ... is a party established on 4 November 2018 by Kemal Gelchu, a former senior OLF figure.’³⁸ However, according to the NOAS 2025 report, ONP is now defunct³⁹.

12.1.6 The NOAS 2025 report commented:

‘Similar to Ethiopia’s general political dynamics Oromo politics revolve around ethnic identity, and all Oromo opposition parties view themselves as defenders of Oromo rights and champions of self-determination in Oromia. What self-determination actually means may be vague, yet intrinsic to this is emphasis on self-governance of Oromia and control over the region’s resources: “It is all about Oromo first, and then Ethiopia. If we are able to govern and build Oromia, then we can build Ethiopia” [Interview, Oromo elder, Robe, 19 February 2020].

‘The key terms used repeatedly by Oromo politicians are blisumma (freedom) and qabso Oromo (the Oromo struggle) ...

‘Oromo opposition parties have always been weak in terms of organizational structure, many lack any clear and detailed party programs, and they have largely been unsuccessful in disseminating their policies among the electorate. Individual party leaders are therefore often more important than the parties themselves and these leaders’ main constituency tend to be their home areas and the branch of Oromo they belong to.’⁴⁰

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13. Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)

13.1 Political stance and objectives

13.1.1 The Landinfo 2023 report noted:

‘The Oromo Liberation Front (Adda Bilisumma Oromoo, ABO) was founded in 1973, with the aim to liberate the Oromo people from what they perceived as a “abessinian colonial rule”, dominated by Amharas and Tigrayans ... OLF was long banned and branded as a terrorist organisation, but in 2018 OLF signed a peace agreement with the government and committed to conducting a peaceful fight for the Oromo people. In November 2019 OLF became a legally registered party...’⁴¹

13.1.2 A January 2024 Ethiopia Insight article noted: ‘According to the OLF, its objective is to exercise the Oromos’ inalienable right to national self-determination, to terminate over a century of oppression and exploitation, and to form, where possible, a political union with other nations on the basis of equality, democracy, respect for mutual interests, and the principle of voluntary association ...’⁴²

13.1.3 A 2025 article by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), a research initiative based at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University which collects and analyses global data on organized

³⁸ IPSS, [Ethiopia conflict insight](#) (pages 9), May 2020

³⁹ NOAS, [Maintaining control through lawlessness: The security and ...](#) (page 16 note 27), 2025

⁴⁰ NOAS, [Maintaining control through lawlessness: The security and ...](#) (page 11), 2025

⁴¹ Landinfo, [Armed conflict and political opposition in Oromia](#) (pages 9 to 10), 24 February 2023

⁴² Ethiopia Insight, [Peace in Ethiopia’s Oromia will only come through genuine ...](#), 8 January 2024

violence and armed conflict⁴³ observed:

‘OLF’s primary goal was “the realization of national self-determination for the Oromo people and their liberation from oppression and exploitation in all forms”, which would be achieved via the creation of an independent Oromiya state. The group thus claimed to represent the Oromo, who despite being Ethiopia’s largest ethnic group had been systematically socioeconomically, culturally, and politically excluded and discriminated against by the Ethiopian government. It should be noted that OLF did not radically change its demands against the Government of Ethiopia, despite several regime changes...’⁴⁴

- 13.1.4 The NOAS 2025 report opined: ‘OLF is the only party who still keeps independence of Oromia as a political option.’⁴⁵
- 13.1.5 The Freedom House Freedom in the World 2025 Report covering events in 2024 (FH 2025 report) noted that key opposition groups including the OLF boycotted the 2021 elections, citing electoral mismanagement and harassment by the ruling party⁴⁶.
- 13.1.6 On 11 January 2026 Oromedia, a US based Oromo focused diaspora media outlet which operates as a non-profit independent media organisation registered⁴⁷ reported that the OLF announced its intention to participate in Ethiopia’s Seventh General Election, scheduled in five months. The statement marks the group’s declared shift from its historical armed struggle toward full engagement in peaceful electoral politics. OLF officials indicated that the party is finalising the legal and procedural steps required by the National Election Board of Ethiopia to register and compete in the election⁴⁸

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13.2 Internal divisions

13.2.1 Landinfo 2023 observed:

‘OLF has undergone many divisions throughout history but was relatively united when the party returned to Ethiopia in 2018. The political party OLF is today characterised by [an] internal power struggle and is divided into several factions. The party’s vice-chairman Ararso Biqila is said to have taken power in the party, which has been considered by many as an infiltration attempt by the PP. Former OLF leaders, such as Dima Nago and Lencho Bati, have left OLF for PP...

‘The OLF is now a wing-cut party. It is kept under scrutiny by the authorities, and the fact that key leaders have left the party and moved to the PP, according to the academic source B ... means that the party is ineffective today.’⁴⁹

⁴³ UCDP, [The Uppsala Conflict Data Program \(UCDP\)](#), no date

⁴⁴ UCDP, [OLF](#), 2025

⁴⁵ NOAS, [Maintaining control through lawlessness: The security and human ...](#) (page 11), 2025

⁴⁶ FH, [Freedom in the world 2025 – Ethiopia](#) (section B2), 27 August 2025

⁴⁷ Oromedia, [About us](#), no date

⁴⁸ Oromedia, [Seventh general election: OLF’s strategic shift to politics](#), 11 January 2026

⁴⁹ Landinfo, [Armed conflict and political opposition in Oromia](#) (page 10), 24 February 2023

- 13.2.2 The Conversation February 2024 article observed: ‘Over time, the Oromo Liberation Front has splintered into at least eight different groups. These include the Oromo Liberation Army, the Oromo Liberation Front, a secret grouping known as Abba Torbe and Oromo Democratic Front, which denounces the use of violence.’⁵⁰
- 13.2.3 The undated ACLED Ethiopia actor profile report noted: ‘The OLF did not participate in the sixth general election of Ethiopia [partly] due to an internal struggle among its leadership ... The OLF’s vice chairman, Ararso Bikila, now leads a splinter faction of the party that is recognized by the National Election Board of Ethiopia.’⁵¹
- 13.2.4 The October 2024 Danish Immigration Service (DIS) report that drew on open sources and interviews conducted during a fact-finding mission in Addis Ababa between 11 and 17 May 2024⁵² (DIS 2024 report):
- ‘The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) is an Oromo nationalist opposition political party. The organisation is not homogenous and characterised by factionalism. The most recent split within the OLF came after the peace agreement with the government in 2018. One faction subsequently registered as a political party under the name OLA on 15 November 2019. The Ethiopian government refuses to call the OLA by its chosen name, instead referring to it as Shene or OLF-Shene.’⁵³
- 13.2.5 The same source added: DIS 2024 report noted:
- ‘... A research institution interviewed for this report highlighted that for many ethnic Oromos, the OLF has remained a symbol of resistance, but the OLF does not constitute a cohesive unit. To a greater extent, it is a ‘societal form of resistance,’ so it is difficult to demarcate its members from members of the community. At the same time, as an organisation, the OLF is characterised by the presence of various factions and internal disputes. In various instances, its different sub-groups have operated as on a “franchise basis” rather than as a centralised organisation.’⁵⁴

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13.3 Support for OLF

- 13.3.1 There is no information about the exact size of the OLF. However, Landinfo 2023 report observed:
- ‘As OLF did not participate in the 2021 election, the party’s support among Oromia voters is not known ... The OLF enjoys support in Oromia because of its historical role in the Oromo people’s liberation struggle. Many people therefore have some sympathy for the party, but it is unclear whether they would vote for the party in elections. Support for the party varies, however, in the different parts of Oromia ... [T]he OLF has the strongest support in Wellega and Guji, but the party is challenged by the OFC in Shewa, Bale,

⁵⁰ The Conversation, [Ethiopia's peace pacts with the Oromo Liberation Front...](#), 20 February 2024

⁵¹ ACLED, [Ethiopia Actor Profiles](#) (Oromo Liberation Front), no date

⁵² DIS, [Ethiopia Security situation in Amhara, Oromia and Tigray ...](#) (page 7) October 2024

⁵³ DIS, [Ethiopia Security situation in Amhara, Oromia and Tigray ...](#) (page 10), October 2024

⁵⁴ DIS, [Ethiopia Security situation in Amhara, Oromia and Tigray...](#) (page 45), October 2024

Haraghe and Arsi.⁵⁵

- 13.3.2 On 19 July 2023, The Reporter, an Ethiopian privately-owned online news outlet, published an interview with Jabessa Gabisa, a member of the executive committee and Director of Political Affairs for the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) who stated when asked about the current size of OLF membership: “It is mandatory to have at least 10,000 founding members to establish a political party, per the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) regulation. We submitted well over that number. We have between 500,000 and one million members. With free political space, we could have mobilized millions more. But the political climate in the country is not suitable for that. Many of our supporters and members suffer imprisonment.”⁵⁶

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14. State treatment of OLF

14.4 Ability to OLF to function as a political group

14.4.1 The DIS 2024 report observed:

‘In 2018, the authorities removed the OLF from the national terrorist list and formally integrated into the legal political architecture of Ethiopia ...

According to the international researcher, the federal authorities has de facto ‘decapitated’ OLF, who cannot in reality function as an actual opposition party. As an example of this, they highlighted the assassination of prominent OLF member, Bate Urgessa, and the discovery of his body in the town of Meki on 10 April 2024, only a month after his release from prison. The researcher stressed that it is unclear who was responsible for the assassination of Urgessa, and the uncertainty about the identity of the perpetrators contributed to a climate of fear within the political sphere in Ethiopia – even amongst government officials. The researcher described the targeting of political figures in the country as arbitrary to an extent that no one can predict who will be under attack next and for what reasons. The academic researcher also pointed out the authorities placed the long-time chairperson of the OLF, Dawud Ibsa, under house arrest in 2021, only to release him in March 2022.⁵⁷

- 14.4.2 On 9 June 2025, the Addis Standard, an independent online Ethiopian news outlet reported: ‘The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) has officially regained access to its headquarters in Finfinne (Addis Abeba), which it had been unable to use since August 2020 ...after Addis Abeba police raided the premises ...’⁵⁸

- 14.4.3 FH 2025 report observed: ‘Continuing detentions, harassment, and other restrictions has left the opposition with little ability to take part in meaningful political activity in 2024. The Prosperity Party has accused opposition officials and government critics of having links with rebel groups or state enemies, hindered their political participation. Key opposition groups including the ... OLF boycotted recent elections, citing electoral

⁵⁵ Landinfo, [Armed conflict and political opposition in Oromia](#) (page 10), 24 February 2023

⁵⁶ The Reporter, [“For Oromos, nothing has changed” – Jabessa Gabisa executive ...](#), 29 July 2023

⁵⁷ DIS, [Ethiopia Security situation in Amhara, Oromia and Tigray ...](#) (pages 44 to 45), October 2024

⁵⁸ Addis Standard, [OLF regains access to its Finfinne HQ after four-year forced closure](#), 9 June 2025

mismanagement and harassment by the ruling party.’⁵⁹

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14.5 Leaders and senior/high profile members

- 14.5.1 FH 2025 report noted: ‘In April 2024, Bate Urgessa, an OLF spokesperson and outspoken critic of the federal government’s policies, was killed by an unknown attacker in Oromia. The OLF and Urgessa’s family claimed that Urgessa was killed by government security officers. Oromia regional authorities denied involvement. Previously, in February, he had been detained for conspiring to incite unrest after speaking to a foreign journalist.’⁶⁰
- 14.5.2 The DIS 2024 report noted: ‘Although the authorities now formally recognise OLF as a legal opposition party, all the interlocutors consulted on this topic agreed that there is a risk that the federal authorities will target OLF members and people affiliated with the OLF.’⁶¹ (see also [Ability to OLF to function as a political group](#))
- 14.5.3 The January 2024 Government of the Netherlands (GoN), general country report, covering developments in Ethiopia from December 2022 to December 2023, that drew on public and confidential sources and findings from a 2023 fact-finding mission⁶² (GoN 2024 report): ‘During the reporting period, seven leaders of the OLF remained imprisoned, despite the fact that the court had ruled that they should be released. According to a confidential source, at least ten Oromo leaders were imprisoned.’⁶³
- 14.5.4 The EHRC July 2024 report noted: ‘Seven people, who are leaders of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), have been detained since 2022. EHRC is monitoring their detention and found during the current fiscal year, February 2024, that the detainees were still in prison without a court order. EHRC is monitoring their detention and found during the current fiscal year, February 2024, that the detainees.’⁶⁴ However, on 9 September 2024, Human Rights Watch reported that the Ethiopian authorities released the seven senior OLF who had been unlawfully detained for four years without charge and in defiance of court order⁶⁵.
- 14.5.5 According to an August 2025 written submission by the Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa, a non-profit, non-political human rights organization that works to monitor, document, and advocate against human rights violations across the Horn of Africa, with particular attention to Ethiopia and neighbouring countries⁶⁶, to the UN Human Rights Council (HRC September 2025 report): ‘No impartial investigation has addressed the extrajudicial killings of political figures, including the assassination of Mr. Bate Urgessa, a senior Oromo Liberation Front official, shot dead in his hometown ‘Maki, East Shawa, on April 9, 2024. Authorities blocked the

⁵⁹ FH, [Freedom in the World 2025 - Ethiopia](#) (section B2), 27 August 2025

⁶⁰ FH, [Freedom in the world 2025 - Ethiopia](#) (section B1), 27 August 2025

⁶¹ DIS, [Ethiopia Security situation in Amhara, Oromia and Tigray ...](#) (page 44), October 2024

⁶² GoN, [General country of origin information report on Ethiopia](#) (page 7), 31 January 2024

⁶³ GoN, [General Country of Origin Information Report on Ethiopia](#) (pages 56), 31 January 2024

⁶⁴ EHRC, [Annual Ethiopia human rights situation report \(June 2023 to...](#) (page 45), 5 July 2024

⁶⁵ HRW, [Ethiopia frees seven long-held opposition politicians](#), 9 September 2024

⁶⁶ HRLHA, [About HRLHA](#), no date

Ethiopian Human Rights Commission from investigating his murder. Dozens of similar killings remain unpunished, leaving families in anguish and fear.⁶⁷

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14.6 Members, supporters and family members

14.6.1 The Landinfo 2023 report observed:

‘... [T]he relationship between the political party OLF and the armed groups that go under the name OLA/OLF Shene is complex and unclear. Several sources believe that it is difficult to assess whether the OLF has actually

broken with the armed groups, or whether they have only distanced themselves from them to protect the political leadership of the OLF, and still maintain contact.

‘The unclear distinction between OLF and OLA is reflected in the manner in which regional and Federal government interact with the legal political party OLF and its leadership, supporters and sympathisers. In many cases, the government thus interprets support for the political party OLF as support for the armed group OLA. The extent to which the authorities react to people with assumed support to the OLA, in what contexts and in what way, is unclear.

‘Academic source B ... is of the view that members and supporters of political opposition parties such as the OLF and the OFC are not particularly susceptible to reactions or imprisonments after the 2021 election (at least not long-lasting reactions), on the basis of their political activity alone. According to the source, real or attributed suspicion of support for the OLA is the main reason for arrests today ...

‘To what extent, and under what circumstances, the authorities “draw the OLA card” to frame political opposition is unclear, but the ICG (as quoted in The Danish Immigration Service 2022, p. 46) points out that such unpredictability is an effective tool for creating a general fear climate that in turn limits political opposition. Academic source D also confirms that critical voices are labelled as OLF supporters, which is indirectly interpreted as support for OLA⁶⁸

14.6.2 The same source concluded: ‘It is Landinfo’s clear understanding that reactions against people whom the authorities, in some cases wrongly, believe that have links with the OLA, are mainly taking place in areas of Oromia, where the OLA is militarily active, as in Western and South Oromia, and that there is less risk of being charged with a connection to the OLA in Addis Ababa, where the OLA poses no immediate military threat, and where the authorities have territorial control.’⁶⁹

14.6.3 The GoN 2024 report explained:

‘Several factors, especially when combined, could lead to problems with the authorities. Criticism of the authorities combined with membership of or sympathy for an opposition party or group could together pose a risk of

⁶⁷ HRC, [Written statement submitted by Human Rights League of the ...](#) (page 3), 3 September 2025

⁶⁸ Landinfo, [Armed conflict and political opposition in Oromia](#) (pages 23 to 24), 24 February 2023

⁶⁹ Landinfo, [Armed conflict and political opposition in Oromia](#) (page 25), 24 February 2023

negative attention from the authorities. This risk was further amplified for those who had the capacity to mobilise people in the process, as in the case of journalists and social media influencers. Finally, ethnicity could also be an amplifying factor ...

‘Members and sympathisers of political opposition parties — including the OLF, the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) ... had no reason, in that capacity, to anticipate problems with the federal authorities.’⁷⁰

14.6.4 The DIS 2024 report observed:

‘Although the authorities now formally recognise OLF as a legal opposition party, all the interlocutors consulted on this topic agreed that there is a risk that the federal authorities will target OLF members and people affiliated with the OLF.

‘The researcher described the targeting of political figures in the country as arbitrary to an extent that no one can predict who will be under attack next and for what reasons ...

‘Despite these high-profile cases of politically motivated targeting of OLF members [see [Leaders and senior/high profile members](#)] two sources consulted in Addis Ababa for this report agreed that low-ranking members of the OLF are more likely to be victims of assassinations and kidnapping compared to high-ranking members of the OLF. It is associated with a higher risk for the perpetrator to target a well-known high-ranking official whereas low-ranking members are perceived to be without any form of protection and therefore easier targets ...

‘The EHRC stated that Oromia is the region with the highest number of arrests and detentions of people the authorities perceive to support or affiliate with the armed groups. The prolonged nature of the conflict compared to the conflict in Amhara explains in part the high number. There are no data to indicate whether politically motivated targeting of politicians in Ethiopia, including the members of the OLF, has increased or decreased in recent years ...’⁷¹

14.6.5 A 17 September 2024 statement by the Advocacy for Justice for the Oromo People (AJOP), an Oromo human rights advocacy organisation⁷² stated:

‘Particularly troubling is the Ethiopian government’s refusal to release accurate data on the number of political prisoners, especially in Oromia, despite reports of widespread arrests.’⁷³

14.6.6 Regarding OLF family members, the DIS 2024 report noted: ‘An academic researcher stated that if the family of OLF members talk about the violence that their spouses, siblings or children experience, or otherwise voice their opinion, the family itself is at risk.’⁷⁴

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⁷⁰ GoN, [General country of origin information report on ...](#) (pages 52 to 53, 54), 31 January 2024

⁷¹ DIS, [Ethiopia Security situation in Amhara, Oromia and Tigray...](#) (pages 44 to 45), October 2024

⁷² Advocacy for Oromia, [Mission](#), no date

⁷³ AJOP, [Statement on the Human Rights Violations in Ethiopia](#), 17 September 2024

⁷⁴ DIS, [Ethiopia Security situation in Amhara, Oromia and Tigray ...](#) (page 45), October 2024

15. Oromo Liberation Army (OLA)

15.1 Who are the OLA?

- 15.1.1 The Landinfo 2023 report observed: ‘The Oromo Liberation Army (Waraana Bilisumma Oromoo, WBO), often referred to as OLF Shene/Shane, or simply Shene, by Ethiopian authorities, was originally the armed wing of the Oromo Liberation Front. OLF and OLA split in April 2019, partly due to disagreements related to the disarmament of OLF fighters when they returned from prolonged exile at the invitation of Ethiopian government after the change of power in 2018.’⁷⁵
- 15.1.2 The GoN 2024 report noted: ‘The Oromia Liberation Army (OLA) was established in 2018 by members of the Oromia Liberation Front (OLF) who refused to disarm when Prime Minister Abiy recognised the OLF as a legal political party. The Ethiopian authorities gave the OLA the name OLF-Shene, a designation which the OLA opposed.’⁷⁶
- 15.1.3 The DIS 2024 report observed: ‘In July 2018, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed removed Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) from the national terrorist list and formally recognised the organisation as a political party in Ethiopia. In return, the OLF leadership agreed to disarm. However, parts of the OLF did not wish to disarm and broke out to form the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), who broke ties with the OLF and launched an insurgency against the federal authorities October 2018.’⁷⁷
- 15.1.4 The EHRC, March 2024 report observed:
‘Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), also known as Shane, is an armed movement [that] emerged after the 2018 political reform in Ethiopia. As part of the reform, the House of Peoples’ Representatives removed the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and other armed groups from terrorist list on 5 July 2018. The OLF ended its armed struggle and registered as a political party to compete in elections peacefully for political power. However, some OLF fighters rejected the demobilization and reintegration process and decided to continue armed movement, calling their armed group OLA.’⁷⁸

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15.2 Terrorist designation

- 15.2.1 In May 2021, Al Jazeera reported that Ethiopia’s council of ministers, chaired by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, approved a resolution designating the OLF-Shene (OLA) as a terrorist organisation following repeated attacks on civilians and public infrastructure, a move enabling the arrest and prosecution of its members, supporters, and those deemed to collaborate with or promote its ideology⁷⁹.
- 15.2.2 The Landinfo 2023 report observed: ‘In May 2021, the Ethiopian Parliament put the OLA (under the name Shene) on the list of terrorist organisations ... This means that persons participating in activities for the OLA fall under the

⁷⁵ Landinfo, [Armed conflict and political opposition in Oromia](#) (pages 10 to 11), 24 February 2023

⁷⁶ GoN, [General country of origin information report on Ethiopia](#) (page 11), 31 January 2024

⁷⁷ DIS, [Ethiopia Security situation in Amhara, Oromia and Tigray ...](#) (page 39), October 2024

⁷⁸ EHRC, [National Inquiry into Persons Deprived of Liberty](#) (page 80), 26 March 2024

⁷⁹ Al Jazeera, [Ethiopia to designate TPLF, OLF-Shene as ‘terror’ groups](#), 1 May 2021

anti-terrorism legislation, which gives the authorities further powers and higher penalties than in ordinary criminal law.’⁸⁰

- 15.2.3 FH 2025 report noted: ‘In 2021, the House of Peoples’ Representatives designated the TPLF and OLA terrorist organizations, accusing them of carrying out acts of politically motivated violence against government officials and civilian targets based on their ethnic identity. Consequently, thousands of Tigrayans and Oromos accused of being affiliated with the TPLF and OLA faced arrest and other pressure. The government removed TPLF from its list of terrorist groups in March 2023.’⁸¹

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15.3 Structure

- 15.3.1 The Landinfo 2023 report observed:

‘... [T]here is little verifiable information about OLA’s structure. The group is led by Commander Jaal Marroo. According to academic source B ... the structure of OLA is decentralised and fragmented, and the command structures are unclear. The individual groups are built up around military leaders, and the degree of coordination between them is unclear. It is also unclear to what extent the individual groups receive orders from an [sic] superior leadership, or whether they operate alone ...

‘The dividing lines between the OLA and various criminal gangs and rogue elements are unclear ... The existence of several different groups calling themselves OLA is also referred to by OLA itself. In a leaked recording of a phone call, Jaal Marroo stated that there are four OLAs: The “real” OLA, criminals who use the OLA name for self-interest, government infiltrators, and “naive recruits manipulated by the two false factions” ...’⁸²

- 15.3.2 The RVI March 2023 report observed:

‘The structure of the OLA itself is highly decentralized and is organized into multiple, semi-autonomous regional commands. The western command under OLA Commander-in-Chief Jaal Marroo Diriba is the most significant, but a similar structure exists for the southern command under Deputy Commander Gemechu Aboye, and the central regional command under Sagni Negassa. The regional structures and hierarchies are however relatively clandestine and are only loosely connected to and directed by a so-called ‘OLF-OLA High Command’. While other splinter groups claim to represent or to be affiliated with the OLA, the high command spokesperson, Odaa Tarbii, believed to be based abroad, routinely denies such associations. For example, one breakaway group – often referred to as Shene mootummaa under the command of former OLF member Fekade Abdisa – operates in the rural areas of East Wollega and Horo Guduru, apparently outside of OLA’s command structure.’⁸³

- 15.3.3 A 2025 UCDP article on OLA noted: ‘The group is led by its commanders, and its supreme decision-making body is its high command, at the head of

⁸⁰ Landinfo, [Armed conflict and political opposition in Oromia](#) (page 11), 24 February 2023

⁸¹ FH, [Freedom in the world 2025 – Ethiopia](#) (section B1), 27 August 2025

⁸² Landinfo, [Armed conflict and political opposition in Oromia](#) (pages 12 to 13), 24 February 2023

⁸³ RVI, [Ethiopia Conflict Trends Analysis: Western Oromia](#) (page 7), March 2023

which is Commander-in-Chief [Kumsa Diriba] Jaal Marroo (his nom de guerre) [Jaal means comrade in Afaan Oromo⁸⁴]. Before the split from OLF, Jaal Marro, whose birth name was Miliyon Diriba, was the commander-in-chief of the group's Western Command. With a background as deputy commander of OLA's southern front, Gammachiis Aboye was appointed Deputy Commander-in-Chief in 2021.^{'85}

15.3.4 The NOAS 2025 report observed:

'Although there are some uncertainties as to the internal organization of the movement, the OLA seems structured with the ... High Command [OLF-OLA High Command] at the top and is further divided into the Western Command (Wollega), Central Command (Shoa), and Southern Command (Guji). The leader of the High Command is Jaal (comrade) Maro who also is the leader of the Western Command. Jaal Gammachu Aboye is the leader of the Southern Command, while the Central Command was led by Jaal Sagni Nagasa until he made an agreement with the government in November 2024 ... The current leader of the Central Command is said to be Jaal Abdi Dhuga, yet the leadership situation seems to be fleeting. While the OLA is said to be organized into commando units, platoons, etc. it is hard to determine how rigid these structures are, and it is reasonable to believe that the different units operate independent of each other, making OLA quite decentered [sic] and fractured. Lack of internal cohesion became evident in August-September 2024, when internal disagreement between Jaal Sagni and Jaal Marro turned violent, leading to an unknown number of casualties.'⁸⁶

15.3.5 In May 2024 Cedoca, the Belgium government country of origin information research unit of the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS)⁸⁷ published a report: Ethiopie Veiligheidssituatie in Oromia (Ethiopia Security Situation in Oromo). The report's English summary noted: 'Internal strife within the OLA erupted into violent clashes in August and September 2024. In September 2024, a faction led by Sagni Nagasa broke away ... On 1 December 2024, the regional government of Oromia announced the signing of a peace agreement with the OLA splinter group under Sagni.'⁸⁸

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15.4 Aims and objectives

15.4.1 The Landinfo 2023 report observed:

'In January 2023, the OLF/OLA published a manifesto in which they explained their goals and means. In the manifesto it states, among other things, that OLF/OLA fights against political exclusion, economic exploitation, and sociocultural marginalisation of the Oromos. According to OLF/OLA, armed struggle is the only remaining means to "free ourselves from the ravages of tyranny and rebuild our humanity and identity, which have been shattered through a century of degradation and dehumanisation".

⁸⁴ Ethiopians Today, [Who is Kumsa Diribia \(Alias Jaal Marroo\)](#), 8 November 2023

⁸⁵ UCDP, [OLA](#), 2025

⁸⁶ NOAS, [Maintaining control through lawlessness: The security...](#) (pages 22 to 23), 2025

⁸⁷ Cedoca, [Ethiopie Veiligheidssituatie in Oromia](#) (page 1), 14 May 2025

⁸⁸ Cedoca, [Ethiopie Veiligheidssituatie in Oromia](#) (page 3), 14 May 2025

However, OLF/OLA states that they are open to negotiations with the Ethiopian state ...⁸⁹

15.4.2 An undated ACLED Ethiopia Actor profile report noted: ‘OLA wings across various locations in Oromia say they seek to ensure the right to self-determination of the Oromo peoples, protect human rights, and end the marginalization of ethnic Oromos.’⁹⁰

15.4.3 A January 2024 Ethiopia Insight article noted:

‘The OLA claims to fight for the Oromo people’s right to self-determination, with the aim to free the Oromo people from political exclusion, economic exploitation, and socio-cultural marginalization.

‘According to its manifesto, the OLA resorted to armed struggle because it is the sole means left to free the Oromo people from “the ravages of tyranny” and rebuild their humanity and identity that it claims have been pulverized by over a century of cultural degradation and dehumanization.’⁹¹

15.4.4 In an October 2024 article the same source added: “Another key OLA demand is the recognition of autonomous Addis Ababa/Finfinnee as an integral part of Oromia. The group argues that the city holds deep historical and cultural significance to Oromos and that the current administrative structure and the treatment of Oromos are unjust ...”⁹²

15.4.5 The UCDP 2025 article on OLA observed:

‘The ultimate goal of OLA remained the same as its mother organization [OLF]: “the realization of national self-determination for the Oromo people and their liberation from oppression and exploitation in all forms.” Expanding on the issue, leaders of the group stated that OLA fought to liberate Oromiya, after which the Oromo would be able to vote on their future, with a right to choose independence. Furthermore, the group declared on a number of occasions, that it would engage in total war to reach its goals.’⁹³

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15.5 Size and support

15.5.1 The Landinfo 2023 report observed:

‘According to [Ethiopia Peace Observatory] EPO the OLA had about 2,800 fighters in 2018. Oslo Analytica and Østebø and Tronvoll state that the number was estimated to be 7,000 fighters in 2020, but emphasise that the number is difficult to verify. According to Africa Confidential, OLA recruited and trained a significant number of new fighters from the summer of 2020 ...

‘International organisation A ... claims that the OLA has the largest demographic base in Ethiopia to recruit from, as the Oromos make up the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia. A diplomatic source ... states that the OLA today will be able to mobilise hundreds, potentially thousands of fighters in limited periods in the areas where they are strongest, mainly in West and

⁸⁹ Landinfo, [Armed conflict and political opposition in Oromia](#) (page 11), 24 February 2023

⁹⁰ ACLED, [Ethiopia actor profiles](#) (Oromo Liberation Army), no date

⁹¹ Ethiopia Insight, [Peace in Ethiopia’s Oromia will only come through genuine ...](#), 8 January 2024

⁹² Ethiopia Insight, [Peace—and justice—remain elusive in Oromia](#), 17 October 2024

⁹³ UCDP, [OLA](#), 2025

Kellem Wellega, but at the same time, the diplomatic source stresses that this is uncertain. OLA has recently recruited people who were previously associated with the Qeerroo movement [an Oromo-based youth movement that played an important role in the protest against the EPRDF from around 2014, ending with a regime change in 2018⁹⁴]. According to academic source B, the recruits are poorly trained and equipped.

‘An Ethiopian civil society organisation ... stated that it was challenging to quantify the number of OLA fighters, since in some areas the OLA is mixed with the population and cannot be clearly distinguished from it.’⁹⁵

15.5.2 Regarding support for OLA the same source noted:

‘According to academic source B ... the OLA enjoys some popular support, but the real support of the population is unknown. International organisation A ... refers to the fact that only very few Oromos have an ideological connection to the OLA, but that the support for and recruitment to the OLA probably have grown due to the government’s harsh conduct in West Oromia. This view is shared by a diplomatic source ... which points out that some have probably been radicalised as a result of the hard-handedness of the security forces in combating the OLA. Widespread discontent with the OLF and the OFC’s lack of visibility over the past few years, and the lack of perceived political alternatives, may also have led to more support for the OLA in some areas.

‘Others have, according to the source, economic motives to support or join OLA. In some parts of Oromia, the authorities are incapable of ensuring the safety of their citizens, and some therefore support the OLA which can offer some degree of security in the absence of the authorities.

‘According to the OLA itself ... the group is financed by the population, including the Ethiopian diaspora. The supply of weapons occurs mainly through seizures from government forces and their allies, but authorities suspect, according to Africa Confidential, that weapons are also entered through the porous borders with Sudan and South Sudan.’⁹⁶

15.5.3 The New Humanitarian reported in a January 2023 article:

‘The OLA got a further boost in 2020 following the murder by unknown individuals of Hachalu Hundessa, an Oromo pop icon ... “The major influx of young people into the OLA happened after Hachalu’s death,” said the analyst of Oromo politics. People were angry and the OLA was portrayed as the champion of the Oromo cause.’⁹⁷

15.5.4 On 22 February 2022 Prime Minister Abiy told the House of Representatives: Although security forces are deployed throughout the area, Shene avoids engaging in direct combat but rather slaughters innocent people. They appear strengthened since they had found a lot of trainers and hide amongst communities. We need to approach the communities in which they are

⁹⁴ Landinfo, [Armed conflict and political opposition in Oromia](#) (page 12 note 10), 24 February 2023

⁹⁵ Landinfo, [Armed conflict and political opposition in Oromia](#) (pages 11 to 12), 24 February 2023

⁹⁶ Landinfo, [Armed conflict and political opposition in Oromia](#) (page 13), 24 February 2023

⁹⁷ The New Humanitarian, [As violence subsides in Tigray, Ethiopia’s Oromia...](#), 12 January 2023

embedded, hold discussions and work out solutions.’⁹⁸

15.5.5 The 10 December 2024 ACLED Ethiopia weekly update noted: ‘Following a peace agreement signed on 1 December [2024] between the Oromia regional government and a faction of the OLA/OLF-Shane loyal to former central zone commander Sanyi Nagasa, hundreds of fighters entered government rehabilitation camps during the past week.’⁹⁹ On 18 December 2024 the ACLED reported that: ‘Members of the OLA/OLF-Shane faction led by Sanyi Nagasa have continued to enter ‘rehabilitation centers’ in the Oromia region, following a peace agreement signed on 1 December between the Oromia regional government and Sanyi Nagasa. Last week, an unspecified number of OLA/OLF-Shane fighters hailing from West Wollega, North Shewa, and South West Shewa zones entered the facilities.’¹⁰⁰

15.5.6 The UCDP 2025 article on OLA noted:

‘... It is difficult to estimate the size of OLA. Little neutral information is available, and the task is made even more problematic given the fact that some OLF fighters did report for [Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration] DDR, but later went back to the bush to rejoin OLA because of the treatment they received. The exact number who made this decision is unknown. Estimates that do circulate as to the size of the group are vague and range from 1000 to 100,000. Developments within OLA in 2024 made it even more difficult to estimate its size. In September of that year, it became clear that a faction of the group under the leadership of Yadesa Negassa, also known as Sagni Nagasa, former commander of the OLA’s central zone and a member of its executive committee, had broken away or been expelled, opinions diverge. The exact number of fighters following him was not clear, but it was reportedly at least in the hundreds, and potentially in the thousands.’¹⁰¹

15.5.7 The NOAS 2025 report observed:

‘It is difficult to estimate the numerical strength of OLA. It early attracted new recruits among the Qeerroo who refused to be co-opted by Abiy Ahmed, and many joined OLA to avoid prison. Oromo students who left universities outside Oromia due to ethnic violence during 2020 also flocked to the OLA. A general lack of security and high youth unemployment have helped OLA to continuously attract new recruits, while the security forces’ clampdown on real and imagined OLF supporters has contributed further to youth joining the OLA. OLA has claimed that it has 80,000 fighters, while government sources put the number to 8,000. Other sources have put the number to more than several hundred thousand, but that seem too high.’¹⁰²

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15.6 Areas of operation

15.6.1 The RVI March 2025 report observed:

⁹⁸ FDRE Office of the PM, [Key summary of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's ...](#), 22 February 2022

⁹⁹ ACLED, [Ethiopia Weekly update \(10 December 2024\)](#), 12 December 2024

¹⁰⁰ ACLED, [Ethiopia Weekly update \(17 December 2024\)](#), 18 December 2024

¹⁰¹ UCDP, [OLA](#), 2025

¹⁰² NOAS, [Maintaining control through lawlessness: The security and ...](#) (page 21), 2025

'Up to now, the conflict in Western Oromia has mostly been focused on four zones – East Wollega, Horu Guduru Wollega, Kellem Wollega and West Wollega. More recently however, following a government counterinsurgency in the second half of 2022, the OLA was increasingly forced to retreat from towns and villages in these areas and is now mainly present in rural areas and forests across central Oromia, particularly East and West Shewa, North Shewa, parts of South West Shewa, and also West Guji zones.'¹⁰³

15.6.2 The BTI 2024 report noted:

'In the Oromia region, the OLA challenges the state's monopoly on the use of force. The group is active in Kellem Wollega, Horo Guduru Wollega, East Wollega, West Wollega, West Shewa, East Shewa, North Shewa, East Guji and Guji zones in Oromia. The OLA managed to gain control of some rural areas within these zones. For instance, as per the National Security Council press statement released on August 8, 2022, the OLA controlled 1,739 kebeles (the lower administration level in Ethiopia) in Oromia. However, it is unclear when the group gained control of these kebeles. Since September 2022, the OLA group has challenged the state's monopoly on the use of force in Oromia. For instance, in November 2022, the OLA managed to control 11 out of 21 woredas in the East Wollega zone and took control of large amounts of rural territory in the West Wollega zone, including most of the kebeles within the Gimbi woreda.

'Basic administrative structures have also failed in areas in the Oromia region where OLA members are active, particularly in western Oromia.'¹⁰⁴

15.6.3 The GoN 2024 report noted: 'During the reporting period, large parts of western Oromia region and parts of Central Ethiopia region were no longer under the control of Ethiopian authorities ... The road from Dera to Addis Ababa was closed by the rebels.'¹⁰⁵

15.6.4 A July 2025 Netherlands Institute of International Relations (Clingendael) policy brief (Clingendael 2025 brief) noted: 'The OLA ... maintains a presence in large parts of the region despite years of coordinated anti-insurgency campaigns by the army and regional security forces.'¹⁰⁶

15.6.5 During 2024 and 2025 ACLED recorded 953 political violence events (battles, explosions and remote violence and violence against civilians¹⁰⁷) in Oromia involving OLA. Of these 642 (67%) occurred in 2024 and 311 (33%) in 2025. ACLED did not record any political violence event involving OLA in Addis Ababa in either year. The chart below shows political violence events involving OLA across different zones during 2024 and 2025¹⁰⁸:

¹⁰³ RVI, [Ethiopia conflict trend analysis: Western Oromia](#) (page 8), March 2023

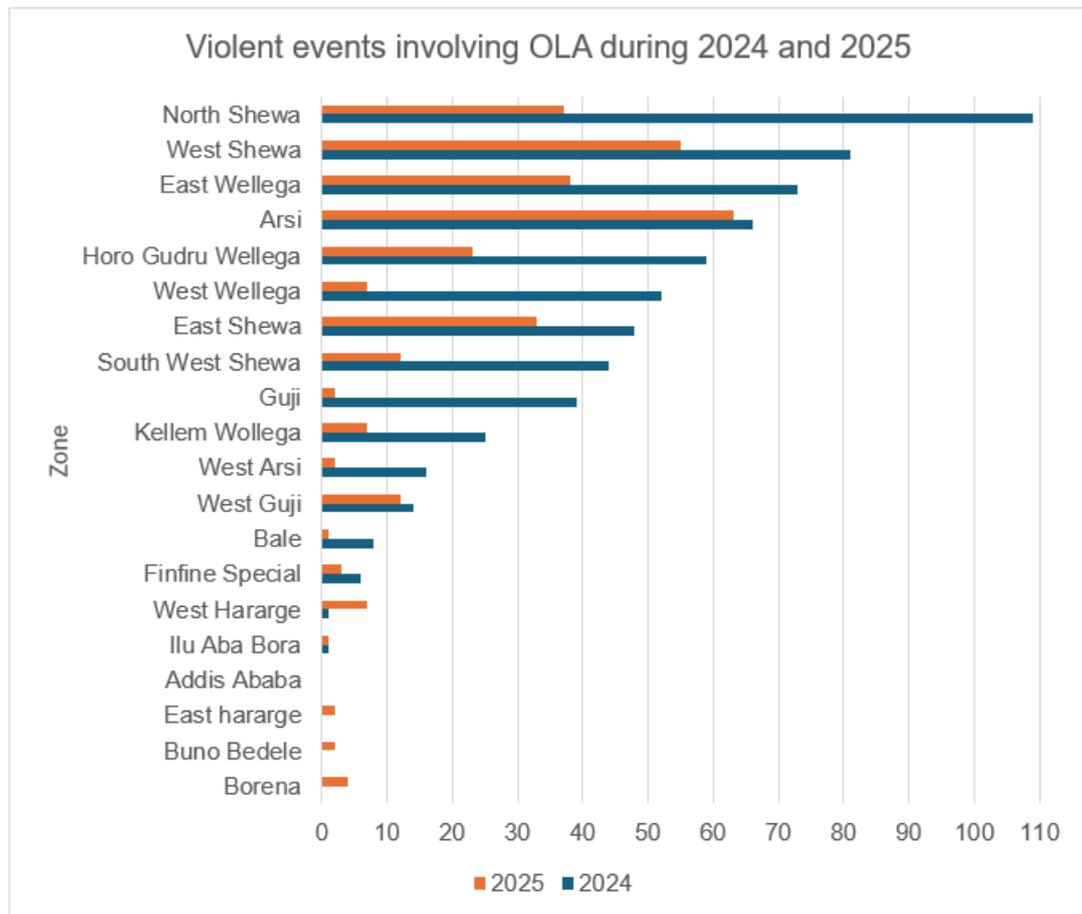
¹⁰⁴ BTI, [Ethiopia Country Report 2024](#) (Stateness), 24 March 2024

¹⁰⁵ GoN, [General country of origin information report on Ethiopia](#) (pages 30), 31 January 2024

¹⁰⁶ Clingendael, [Rethinking Ethiopia's national dialogue](#) (page 3), July 2025

¹⁰⁷ ACLED, [ACLED codebook](#), no date

¹⁰⁸ ACLED, [Export tool](#), downloaded 22 January 2026



15.6.6 The chart shows:

- OLA was most active in both 2024 and 2025 in the North Shewa, West Shewa, East Wellega, Arsi, and East Shewa zones of Oromia.
- a general downward trend of the numbers of violent events involving the OLA recorded in 2025 compared to 2024
- Low levels of violence (under 10 events) in 2025 and a reduction from 2024 in the areas of Guji, West Wellega, Kelem Wollega, West Arsi, East Hararge, Bale and Finefine Special.

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16. State treatment of the OLA

16.1 OLA fighters, members, and supporters

16.1.1 The Landinfo 2023 report indicated that federal actors—including the Ethiopian Federal Police, intelligence bodies NISS and INSA, and the ENDF—place particular emphasis on individuals and groups suspected of planning “acts of terror”, notably the OLA (Shene), whose cases fall under federal anti-terrorism legislation. Based on available sources, Landinfo assessed that thousands of people in Oromia are imprisoned for activities linked to political opposition, including activism, party membership, or real or perceived support for the OLA. An academic source told Landinfo that actual or attributed suspicion of OLA support is now the primary driver of arrests, allowing for imprisonment in areas of active conflict—mainly Wellega and

Guji—and, to a lesser extent, in other parts of Oromia. The report noted significant uncertainty regarding the scale of arrests and extrajudicial detentions due to a challenging information environment¹⁰⁹.

16.1.2 A 23 February 2024 Reuters investigative report noted:

A 23 February 2024 Reuters investigative report revealed that a secretive committee of senior-officials in Oromiya—known as the Koree Nageenyaa (Security Committee)—has ordered extrajudicial killings and illegal detentions as part of efforts to suppress the OLA insurgency, with more than 30 officials, judges, lawyers and victims interviewed and local documents reviewed showing the committee has operated since shortly after Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed took office in 2018. Five current and former government officials attributed dozens of killings and hundreds of arrests to the committee, including a 2021 massacre of 14 shepherds previously blamed on the OLA, while EHRC head Daniel Bekele confirmed the committee’s existence and stated it had overreached its purpose by interfering in the justice system and committing widespread human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions, torture and extortion¹¹⁰.

16.1.3 The GoN 2024 report observed:

‘According to several confidential sources ... the authorities engaged in less ethnic profiling of Oromo than was the case for Amhara and, in the past, Tigrayans. This relatively lesser attention that was directed towards the Oromo was said to be mainly a matter of capacity; the authorities were prioritising the conflict in Amhara ...

‘According to various sources, suspicion of support for the OLA and affiliated groups in particular gave rise to an increased risk of human rights violations, including detention and extrajudicial killings by government forces ...

‘In the Oromia region, as well as in Addis Ababa, there were large numbers of arrests and detentions of Oromo citizens, especially men, who had been accused of links to the OLA. Such accusations could be prompted by suspicions or indications of financial or logistical support to the OLA. According to an example given by a confidential source, a restaurant owner could get in trouble for serving OLA fighters. In August 2023, an Ethiopian news agency spoke of some two thousand arrests, without clarifying whether this had happened recently or over a longer period of time. According to the International Commission of Human Rights Experts, arrests were mainly made by Oromia federal and regional police, Oromia special forces and, in some cases, by the federal army. They were often accompanied by beatings and torture ...’¹¹¹

16.1.4 The same source further noted:

‘... The OLA was still classified as a terrorist organisation ... and fighters could thus be prosecuted for terrorism. In practice, members and

¹⁰⁹ Landinfo, [Armed conflict and political opposition in Oromia](#) (pages 20, 22 to 23), 24 February 2023

¹¹⁰ Reuters, [In Ethiopia, a secret committee orders killings and arrests to crush ...](#), 23 February 2024

¹¹¹ GoN, [General country of origin information report on Ethiopia](#) (page 51), 31 January 2024

sympathisers of armed groups (such as the OLA ...) were at risk of arbitrary detention and extrajudicial executions ...

'In Addis Ababa, the authorities were particularly looking for individuals who were mobilising financial or logistical support for the armed groups or who were gathering information for them. These could be members of political parties, as well as businesspeople or other groups. According to a confidential source, mass arrests were used to filter out these individuals.'¹¹²

16.1.5 The EHRC's July 2024 report covering the period from 4 August 2023 to 4 June 2024 noted that its September 2023 report highlighted mass arrests in Addis Ababa, Sheger, Bishoftu, Adama and other cities in Oromia, where individuals were detained in both formal and informal locations without orders from the Command Post [a temporary emergency governing body established by the federal government to enforce and oversee a State of Emergency]. It further noted that following the State of Emergency declared on 4 August 2023, numerous media workers, political party members and civil society actors were arrested in Addis Ababa and Oromia, with some detentions carried out on Command Post orders and others conducted without such authorization, often justified broadly as being "linked to the State of Emergency" or on allegations of contact with or support for armed groups.'¹¹³

16.1.6 The same source further observed that in Benishangul-Gumuz, regional authorities carried out mass arrests under the pretext of security concerns, with individuals identifying as Oromo subjected to harassment, arbitrary arrest, and restrictions on their activities, allegedly for having links to the armed group OLF-Shene. Similarly, in Oromia, the EHRC recorded a pattern of mass detentions, movement restrictions, and arrests of political party members, justified by officials as responses to the "ongoing situation" or suspicions of aiding armed groups, including cases in Sheger city where suspected OLF-Shene members were reportedly detained for months without charge¹¹⁴.

16.1.7 The DIS 2024 report noted:

'... The EHRC further elaborated that Oromia is the region with the highest number of arrested and detained people who are suspected by the security forces of supporting or being affiliated with the armed opposition groups.

'In most cases, detained people have been denied access to fair trial and justice systems. The authorities have established informal detention centres as there are too few formal detention centres compared to the high number of detained persons ...

'The OLA is currently the only group left on the Ethiopian list of terrorist organisations. It is difficult to assess the scale of the federal authorities' targeting of persons affiliated with the OLA due to the limited flow of information from the conflict zones in Oromia. However, it is clear to one of the interviewed researchers that the authorities imprison many OLA affiliates and subject many to torture while incarcerated. The researcher further added

¹¹² GoN, [General country of origin information report on Ethiopia](#) (pages 53 to 54), 31 January 2024

¹¹³ EHRC, [Annual Ethiopia human rights situation report ...](#) (pages 39, 40, 41 to 42), 5 July 2024

¹¹⁴ EHRC, [Annual Ethiopia human rights situation report ...](#) (pages 43, 45), 5 July 2024

that the fact that the authorities officially define OLA as a terrorist organisation in Ethiopia means that the amount of evidence required to arrest alleged OLA members is very low. Any affiliation with the OLA at any level places the individual at risk of the federal authorities persecuting them. The academic researcher interviewed for this report stated that if a person is perceived to be affiliated with the OLA, e.g. via posts on social media suggesting that the person supports the resistance, he runs a high risk of being detained. The federal police fired the State Minister of Peace, Taye Dendea, on accusations of conspiring with the OLA. He was a member of the Prosperity Party, but rumours against him led to his arrest.¹¹⁵

- 16.1.8 FH 2025 report noted: ‘... [T]housands of ... Oromos accused of being affiliated with ... OLA faced arrest and other pressure ... Oromo civilians still face pressure over suspected ties to the OLA.’¹¹⁶
- 16.1.9 A 23 April 2025 New Humanitarian article stated: ‘The government or its militias “can accuse anyone of being OLA and try to get money from them. If you don’t pay, you’ll be put in prison, and unless you pay you won’t get out,” Østebø [Terje Østebø, a professor at the University of Florida] told The New Humanitarian.’¹¹⁷
- 16.1.10 On 24 November 2025, Addis Standard reported that prosecutors had filed three additional charges against former State Minister of Peace and Oromia Regional Council member Taye Dendea, arising from comments he made during a media interview; these included a charge under Criminal Code Article 257(A) and (G) alleging that he undermined the Constitution by disseminating propaganda supportive of the armed groups Shene and Fano. Earlier in November, the Federal High Court had acquitted him of two previous accusations—collaborating with Shene and Fano, and providing propaganda and other support to help overthrow the government. Taye has remained in detention since December 2023, when authorities arrested him a day after he publicly criticised Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed¹¹⁸.
- 16.1.11 ACLED has provided data on reported arrests as a subevent under strategic development. According to ACLED ‘This sub-event type is used when state forces or other actors exercising de facto control over a territory either detain a particularly significant individual or engage in politically significant mass arrests.’¹¹⁹ Hence, arrest numbers are likely underestimates as they only cover important people and mass arrests and do not include cumulative individual civilians arrested. During 2024 and 2025 ACLED recorded over 892 arrests in Oromia that were linked to suspected membership, support, or collaboration with OLA. In addition, ACLED recorded other unspecified number of arrests based on suspicion of links to OLF-OLA in the hundreds¹²⁰. For information of arrests of OLA relatives and family members (see [OLA family members](#)) and for arrests OLF/OLA member and supporters in Addis Ababa see [Targeting of OLF/OLA in Addis Ababa](#)).

¹¹⁵ DIS, [Ethiopia Security situation in Amhara, Oromia and Tigray ...](#) (pages 43 to 44), October 2024

¹¹⁶ FH, [Freedom in the world 2025 - Ethiopia](#) (section B1), 27 August 2025

¹¹⁷ The New Humanitarian, [“I am going to Saudi Arabia, or my grave”: The exodus of ...](#), 23 April 2025

¹¹⁸ Addis Standard, [Prosecutor files three additional charges against former ...](#), 24 November 2025

¹¹⁹ ACLED, [ACLED codebook](#), no date

¹²⁰ ACLED, [Data export tool](#), downloaded 22 January 2026

16.1.12 The table below based on the aforementioned ACLED data details arrests based on links with OLA in Oromia during the period under review¹²¹.

Date	Location	Summary of notes on arrests
15 Mar 2024	East Shewa	Government forces arrested 239 people on suspicion of collaborating with OLF-OLA
23 Apr 2024	North Shewa	Government forces arrested several people on suspicion of supporting OLF-OLA
28 Apr 2024	West Arsi	Government forces arrested over 100 people on suspicion of supporting OLF-OLA
8 Jun 2024	Bale	Regional government forces arrested around 28 people on suspicion of having a direct relationship with and supporting OLF-OLA
21 Aug 2024	North Shewa	Government forces arrested several farmers on accusations of supporting OLF-OLA
15 Sept 2024	East Shewa	Regional forces detained multiple individuals on suspicion of having ties to OLF-OLA
19 Sept 2024	Arsi	ENDF arrested 41 individuals suspected of having ties to and supporting OLF-OLA
12 Oct 2024	Kellem Wollega	ENDF arrested 135 illegal gold miners on suspicion of supporting OLF-OLA
26 Oct 2024	North Shewa	Government forces arrested hundreds of ethnic Oromos on suspicion of ties to OLF-OLA
6 Jan 2025	East Shewa	Government forces arrested over 300 people, including Oromo traditional leadership for refusing to ask OLF-OLA fighters to surrender
6 Mar 2025	Arsi	Government forces arrested several residents on suspicion of having links to OLF-OLA
10 Apr 2025	Borena	ENDF arrested several alleged members of OLF-OLA engaged in kidnapping for ransom and armed robbery
10 Jun 2025	North Shewa	ENDF arrested individuals who transporting medical supplies for the OLF-OLA
4 Aug 2025	North Shewa	ENDF arrested 49 OLF-OLA informants

16.1.13 The table above shows that:

- out of the 892 quantified arrests, most occurred in East Shewa (539) followed by Kellem Wollega (153) and then West Arsi (100).
- out of the 14 arrest events recorded most were recorded in North Shewa (5) followed by East Shewa (3) with the rest recording one event each.

¹²¹ ACLED, [Data export tool](#), downloaded 22 January 2026

16.2 OLA family members

16.2.1 The GoN 2024 report observed: ‘... Family members of individuals suspected of having links to the OLA could also be subject to arrest and detention. Its purpose was to impose pressure on those suspected of having links with the OLA. Some of the female victims reported sexual violence.’¹²²

16.2.2 The DIS 2024 report noted:

‘...[T]wo researchers agreed that family members of actual or alleged OLA members also risk maltreatment. The international researcher assessed that the higher the position within the OLA – as well as the alleged position within the OLA – the higher the risk for the family members. To illustrate this point, the researcher highlighted that the authorities arrested the family members of a prominent OLF member, Bate Urgessa, a couple of days after his assassination. The authorities accused Urgessa of being a member of both the OLA and the OLF as well as being engaged in serious political opposition activities ...

‘A heavy-handed approach in a warzone means that there are mass arrests, and detention of family members of persons who the authorities suspect of sympathising with or being members of the armed resistance. By contrast, the international researcher assessed that there would be less risk of the federal forces arresting a low-level OLA fighter’s family.’¹²³

16.2.3 The EHRC 2024 report noted:

‘... The EHRC monitored detention centres across Oromia and received diverse testimonies about the practice of arresting family members of suspects in some areas, which includes arresting a father or mother to demand that they present their children who are suspected of being members or supporters of OLA or arresting a wife to present her husband suspected of association with OLA ...

‘The EHRC documented the practice of arresting and detaining family members in lieu of suspects in several zones of Oromia Region ...’¹²⁴

16.2.4 The Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa noted in the statement submitted to the Human Rights Council on 10 August 2025 that:

‘Family members of Oromo Liberation Army fighters are widely persecuted. Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa’s monitoring across zones, including East Guji, North Shawa, West Shawa, Horro Guduru Wellega, Arsi, Bale, East Shawa, and Kellem Wellega found approximately 5,500 individuals, mostly parents and siblings of Oromo Liberation Army members, detained in district police stations and military camps under dire conditions for several months without due process.’¹²⁵ The report did not provide details which period the arrests occurred.

¹²² GoN, [General country of origin information report on Ethiopia](#) (page 51), 31 January 2024

¹²³ DIS, [Ethiopia security situation in Amhara, Oromia and ...](#) (pages 44, 46), October 2024

¹²⁴ EHRC, [National inquiry into persons deprived of liberty](#) (pages 81 to 82), March 2024

¹²⁵ HRC, [Written statement submitted by Human Rights League of the ...](#) (page 2), 3 September 2025

16.2.5 During 2024 and 2025 ACLED recorded over 480 family members and relatives of suspected OLA fighters. Additionally, ACLED reported other unspecified number of arrests described as ‘several’, ‘dozens’, or ‘hundreds’¹²⁶. The table below which is based on the ACLED data, details of arrests of OLA fighters’ family members and relatives in Oromia during the period under review¹²⁷:

Date	Location	Summary of notes on arrests
15 Apr 2024	Horo Guduru Wellega	Regional government forces arrested over 130 individuals accused of having family ties with OLF-OLA members
26 Apr 2024	West Wellega	Oromia state police arrested over 150 civilians and ordered them to compel their sons, daughters, or siblings who had joined OLF-OLA to return
26 Apr 2024	West Hararge	Regional government forces arrested over 100 people accused of collaborating with OLF-OLA and refusing to persuade their OLF-OLA family members to disarm and surrender
8 Jul 2024	Horo Gudru Wellega	Regional police arrested over 100 people identified as close relatives and families of OLF-OLA
8 Oct 2024	Horo Guduru Wellega	Regional government forces arrested several individuals who are relatives of OLA members
8 Apr 2025	West Shewa	Government forces arrested dozens of people including family members of OLF-OLA fighters for refusing to force their OLF-OLA relatives to return
26 Apr 2025	East Shewa	Government forces arrested hundreds of people who are family members and close relatives of OLF-OLA fighters

16.2.6 The above table shows:

- out of the 480 specified arrests most occurred Horo Gudru Wellaga (230), West Wellega (150) and West Hararge (100).
- out of the 7 recorded arrest events 3 were in Horo Gudru Wellaga and one each in the other four zones.

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17. Targeting of OLF/OLA in Addis Ababa

17.1.1 The DIS 2024 report observed: ‘In December 2023, the authorities detained large numbers of young people and teachers in a house-to-house search in Addis Ababa ahead of a banned anti-war demonstration in the capital. The authorities accused some ... of being members of the OLA ...’¹²⁸

¹²⁶ ACLED, [Data export tool](#), downloaded 22 January 2026

¹²⁷ ACLED, [Data export tool](#), downloaded 22 January 2026

¹²⁸ DIS, [Ethiopia Security situation in Amhara, Oromia and Tigray ...](#) (page 46), October 2024

17.1.2 However, according to the same source:

‘According to a research institution, Addis Ababa is not a conflict zone and Oromos who are vocal about their political opinions would be relatively safe in the capital, especially if they are not engaged in mobilising their ‘constituencies’ for the so-called unlawful activities. A person’s safety depends on how prominent this person is and how dangerous the government perceives the person to be ... [I]f a person is perceived to be affiliated with the OLA, e.g. via suggestive social media posts, they will be detained. As an example of this, the research institution also pointed to the recent event where the State Minister of Peace was fired on accusations of conspiring with the OLA. He was a member of the Prosperity Party, but rumours against him led to his arrest.

‘The academic researcher further elaborated that in a mixed neighbourhood in Addis Ababa, being a vocal supporter of the Oromo cause in itself would not put you at risk vis-à-vis your neighbours. However, the authorities would perceive talking openly in favour of the OLA as very provocative.’¹²⁹

17.1.3 On 4 April 2025, Borkerna, an independent Ethiopian digital news media platform¹³⁰, reported that the Addis Ababa City Peace and Security Administration arrested over 900 people in Addis Ababa which 311 were linked to TPFL and OLA¹³¹.

17.1.4 During 2024 and 2025 ACLED recorded 3 events (2 in 2024 and 1 in 2025) of arrests in Addis Ababa resulting in 538 arrests based on alleged links to OLF/OLA¹³². The table below, based on ACLED data details OLF-OLA related arrests in Addis Ababa in 2024 and 2025¹³³.

Date	Location	Summary of notes on arrests
1 Feb 2024	Addis Ababa	Federal and Addis Ababa police arrested 37 OLF Shane members
12 Jul 2024	Addis Ababa	Oromia regional police arrested over 300 people suspected to be supporters and members of OLF-OLA
1 Mar 2025	Addis Ababa	security forces arrested 201 OLF-OLA members and sympathises

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18. Distinction between OLF and OLA

18.1.1 For a list of significant events relevant to understanding the formation, actions and situation of the OLF and OLA at the time of writing see BBC Monitoring [Oromo Liberation Front \(OLF\)](#) 26 January 2023 and BBC Monitoring [Oromo Liberation Army \(OLA\)](#) 1 September 2024. See also archived [Country policy and information note: Oromos, the Oromo Liberation Front and the Oromo Liberation Army, Ethiopia](#),

¹²⁹ DIS, [Ethiopia Security situation in Amhara, Oromia and Tigray ...](#) (pages 46 to 47), October 2024

¹³⁰ Borkerna, [Borkerna Ethiopian news editorial policy](#), 7 November 2024

¹³¹ Borkerna, [Ethiopia : Addis Ababa authorities arrest over 224 Eritreans](#), 4 April 2025

¹³² ACLED, [Data export tool](#), downloaded 22 January 2026

¹³³ ACLED, [Data export tool](#), downloaded 22 January 2026

18.1.2 The NOAS 2025 report observed:

‘The Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) – or the Waraanaa Bliisumaa Oromoo – has its inception been called the military wing of the OLF. However, since OLF was an armed movement, OLA was an indistinguishable part of OLF. When the OLF renounced armed struggle and returned to Ethiopia in 2018, the plan was that its estimated 1,500 unarmed soldiers would become integrated in the government’s military structure – more specifically into the Oromia regional forces. A small group of fighters already present in Wollega, western Oromia opposed this and vowed to continue armed struggle.

‘The leadership of OLF was reluctant to disavow the armed faction, and Dawud Ibsa, the chairperson of OLF, claimed that he had not agreed to disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration process (DDR) of these OLF fighters ...

‘After prolonged negotiations led by the Council of the Abba Gaddaa, Oromo activists, and intellectuals an agreement was reached in January 2019, and nearly 1,000 OLF fighters put down their arms ... This created a dilemma for OLF which sought to register as a legal party and participate in the upcoming elections, and in May 2019, Dawud Ibsa announced that OLF “disown[ed] any armed groups operating in its name.” OLA, on the other hand, had already in April announced that it had severed all ties with the OLF organization, and in October 2019 it set up the “High Command of OLA.”¹³⁴

18.1.3 Landinfo, 2023 observed: ‘... The OLA is said to have conducted a “general assembly” in West Wellega in the summer of 2022 ... in which they established OLF-OLA High Command. This indicates a certain degree of coordination between the groups. Joint training camps and so-called graduation ceremonies after completing military training are also a sign of coordination.’¹³⁵

18.1.4 On the relationship between OLF and OLA, Jabessa Gabisa, OLF executive committee member and Director of Political Affairs told The Reporter: ‘We have no ties with the OLA. We may share similar ideologies. OLA believes Oromo aims can be attained through armed struggle. We believe in peaceful political means. While our goals may align, we have different perspectives. There is no command-and-control linkage between us.’¹³⁶

18.1.5 A February 2024 article by Marew Abebe Salemot, a lecturer at Debark University, Ethiopia for The Conversation (The Conversation February 2024 article) noted that: ‘The extent to which the Oromo Liberation Front controls its armed wing is unclear.’¹³⁷

18.1.6 A joint OLF-OLA press release issued on 8 December 2024 at the end of the OLF-OLA nine-day regular session held from 28 November to 6 December 2024 stated that among other things: ‘The assembly reaffirmed the mission of the OLF-OLA to honour the sacrifices of our martyrs by unifying the goals of the OLF and OLA under a single leadership. This unity has bolstered the OLA, enabling it to extend its reach from rural Oromia to the outskirts of

¹³⁴ NOAS, [Maintaining control through lawlessness: The security and ...](#) (page 20 to 21), 2025

¹³⁵ Landinfo, [Armed conflict and political opposition in Oromia](#) (pages 12 to 13), 24 February 2023

¹³⁶ The Reporter, [“For Oromos, nothing has changed” – Jabessa Gabisa executive ...](#), 29 July 2023

¹³⁷ The Conversation, [Ethiopia’s peace pacts with the Oromo Liberation Front ...](#), 20 February 2024

Finfinne (Addis Ababa) and garner some international recognition for the Oromo cause.¹³⁸

- 18.1.7 On 27 July 2025 OLF-OLA High command issued a joint statement regarding Moyale and other border issues¹³⁹.

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19. Violence in Oromia

19.1 Overview of conflict between the OLA and state forces

- 19.1.1 The Ethiopia Peace Observatory (EPO), an ACLED initiative that provides real-time, verified data and analysis on conflict, protests, and peacebuilding efforts across Ethiopia noted in its January 2024 report:

‘Conflict between the OLA/OLF-Shane and the government security forces, has been ongoing since the OLA/OLF-Shane leadership broke off from the Oromo Liberation Front in April 2019 ...

‘Since the first round of peace talks, held from 27 April to 3 May 2023, different geographic locations of fighting, changing actors, and key political shifts have reshaped the conflict environment in Oromia. These changes have not brought the conflict any closer to resolution, and despite the high level of support for last month’s peace talks, neither side has proved willing to compromise on its demands. At the same time, neither side appears to be able to defeat the other militarily. To the disappointment of many, conflict in the Oromia region — now stretching into its sixth year — appears to have no end in sight ...

‘The second round of peace talks between the federal government and the OLA/OLF-Shane began early in [November](#) and ended on [21 November \[2023\]](#) ...

‘Talks ended without an agreement. The government attributed the failure to the “intransigence” of the OLA/OLF-Shane leadership. OLA/OLF-Shane commanders indicated that they had rejected “offers of power” and blamed government representatives for “failing to address the underlying issues affecting the country’s politics and security” ...

‘One of the most significant changes since the end of the first round of peace talks, held in April and May 2023, was to the forces the federal government uses to combat the OLA/OLF-Shane insurgency. Before the peace talks, the Oromo regional special forces — created to fight insurgencies — were the primary force engaged in battles with the OLA/OLF-Shane in Oromia region. In early April 2023, the Ethiopian government announced the [dissolution of the country’s regional special forces](#). By 13 April, it was announced that the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) and federal police had taken over security duties in Oromia.¹⁴⁰

- 19.1.2 The EHRC July 2024 report noted: ‘... the Oromia region in the north, south, west, south-west and east of Showa, Horo Gudru Welega, the western area

¹³⁸ QEERROO, [OLF-OLA Central Committee resolutions \(OLF-OLA press ...\)](#), 8 December 2024

¹³⁹ QEERROO, [Re: Moyale and other border issues \(OLF-OLA Press Release\)](#), 27 July 2025

¹⁴⁰ EPO, [November 2023 Monthly: An evolving conflict environment in Oromia ...](#), 5 January 2024

of Guji and the western area of Arsi are among the areas where armed conflict has taken place.’¹⁴¹

19.1.3 The DIS 2024 report observed:

‘The conflict in Western Oromia consists of a myriad of armed groups on both sides of the conflict. The federal authorities are present through both the ENDF and regional police. Non-state armed actors in Oromia include the OLA as well as OLA splinter groups, local Oromo militias, and ethnic militias from the neighbouring regional states of Amhara and Benishangul-Gumuz, as well as armed civilian groups often consisting of local farmers and youths.

‘The broad fault lines of the conflict lie between the OLA, Amhara militias, and federal authorities in a struggle for territorial and administrative control over parts of the region, with different views on the Ethiopian federation. An international researcher stated that it is often difficult to determine which actors are involved in violent incidents because of the very limited flow of information from the conflict zones. This leads to conflicting statements about who committed a given violent incident, leaving it unclear who is responsible.’¹⁴²

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19.2 Political violence events in Oromia

19.2.1 The RVI March 2025 report noted:

‘Western Oromia makes up about a third of Ethiopia’s largest regional state, Oromia. The seven zones generally considered to be part of western Oromia – Kelleme Wollega, East and West Wollega, Horru Guduru Wollega, Illubabor, Buno Bedelle and Jimma ... Since 2019, western Oromia has been the site of insurgencies, counter-insurgencies and cross-border attacks, leading to hundreds of deaths and thousands of people displaced. These conflicts are mostly, but not exclusively, related to the activities of the OLA and militia forces from the Amhara and Benishangul-Gumuz regions.’¹⁴³

19.2.2 A 10 May 2025 news report by The Reporter stated: ‘While international media and diplomatic circles focus on the Pretoria Peace Agreement that ended the two-year war in Tigray, Ethiopia’s most populous region of Oromia remains embroiled in an underreported conflict. Armed clashes between government forces and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) ... have led to widespread civilian casualties, mass displacement, and a deepening humanitarian crisis.’¹⁴⁴

19.2.3 During 2024 and 2025 ACLED recorded 1,577 political violence events (battles, violence against civilians, riots, explosions/remote violence¹⁴⁵) in Oromia of which resulted in 3,792 fatalities (both combatant and non-combatants). 908 (58%) of the events and 2400 (63%) of the fatalities occurred in 2024 while the remaining 669 (42%) events and 1,392 (37%) of

¹⁴¹ ECHR, [The Annual Ethiopia Human Rights Situation Report June ...](#) (page 14), July 2024

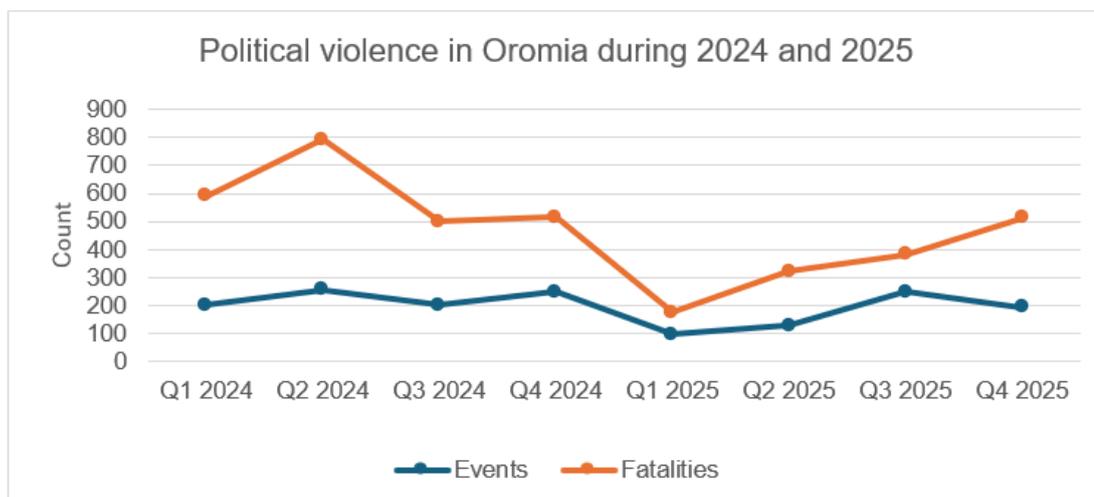
¹⁴² DIS, [Ethiopia Security situation in Amhara, Oromia and Tigray ...](#) (pages 39 to 40), October 2024

¹⁴³ RVI, [Ethiopia Conflict trend analysis Western Oromia](#) (page 2), March 2023

¹⁴⁴ The Reporter, [The silent conflict: What is really happening in Oromia?](#), 10 May 2025

¹⁴⁵ ACLED, [ACLED codebook](#), no date

the fatalities occurred in in 2025.¹⁴⁶ CPIT has collated the data and produced the chart below showing quarterly (Q) trends in political violence from Q1 2024 to Q4 2025¹⁴⁷.



19.2.4 CPIT analysis of the graph indicates:

- in 2024 the number of recorded political violence were stable, fluctuating between around 201 and 249 events per quarter. In 2025 the numbers rose from 97 in Q1 to 249 in Q3 before falling to 195 in Q4
- Q1 2025 recorded the lowest point in both events and fatalities over the whole period. ACLED noted this decline followed the signing of a peace agreement between the Oromia regional government and a faction of the OLA on 1 December 2024¹⁴⁸
- There was a gradual rise in political violence events over 2025 from 97 in Q1 to 249 in Q3 before falling to 195 in Q4. However, total fatalities followed an upward trend from 175 in Q1 to 512 in Q4 which represents 193 percentage rise
- average levels of political violence events in 2025 are lower than in 2024, with around a 26 % reduction
- fatalities in every quarter of 2025 are significantly lower than in 2024. The average number of fatalities in 2025 fell by roughly 42% compared with 2024.

19.2.5 During 2024 and 2025 ACLED recorded 600 events of violence against civilians resulting in 1,293 fatalities¹⁴⁹. ACLED defines violence against civilians as ‘violent events where an organized armed group inflicts violence upon unarmed non-combatants ... The perpetrators of such acts include state forces and their affiliates, rebels, militias, and external/other forces.’¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ ACLED, [Data export tool](#), data downloaded 22 January 2026

¹⁴⁷ ACLED, [Data export tool](#), data downloaded 22 January 2026

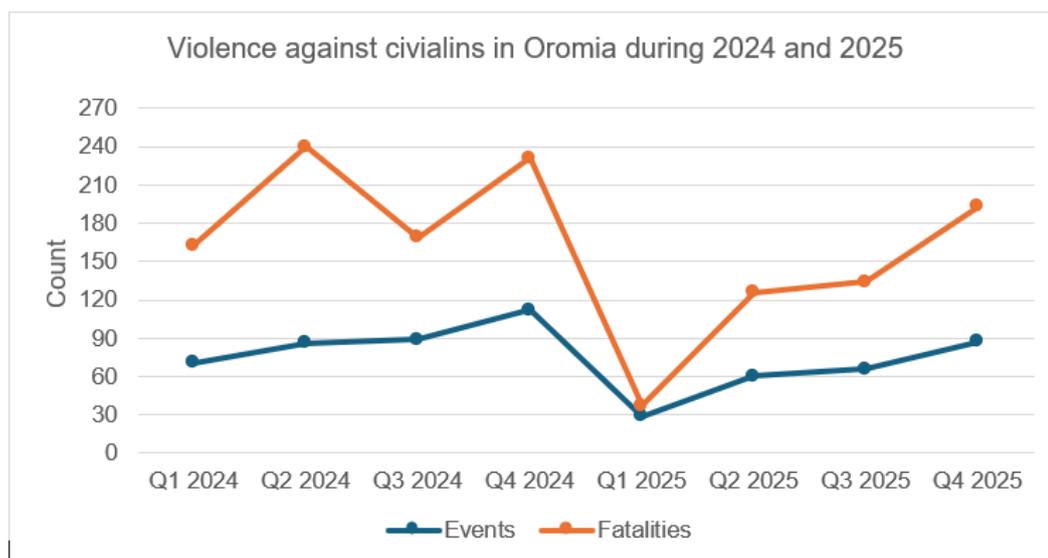
¹⁴⁸ ACLED, [Ethiopia situation update](#), 5 March 2025

¹⁴⁹ ACLED, [Data export tool](#), data downloaded 22 January 2026

¹⁵⁰ ACLED, [ACLED codebook](#), no date

Violence against civilians include sexual violence, attack, and abduction/forced disappearance¹⁵¹.

19.2.6 The chart below, based on the ACLED data, shows quarterly (Q) trends in violence against civilians during the period under review¹⁵²:



19.2.7 CPIT review of the chart indicate:

- 358 (60%) events occurred in 2024 and 242 (40%) in 2025
- 803 (62%) of the fatalities were recorded in 2024 and 490 (38%) in 2025
- Steady rise in events from Q1 2024 to peak in Q4 2024 followed by a dip Q1 2025 and thereafter steady rise in events. The dip in Q1 is explained by signing of peace agreement with an OLA faction
- A sharp fall in civilian fatalities from a high of 231 in Q4 2024 to a low of 37 in Q1 2025 and thereafter a constant rise in line with violence events

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20. Civilian-State interaction

20.1 Violence against civilians by the state

20.1.1 The GoN 2024 report noted:

‘In a communiqué in May 2023, the OLA accused Ethiopian authorities of using violence against civilians. More specifically, civilians were said to be forcibly recruited to local militias, and local officials were said to be forced to fund military operations. According to the communiqué, those who refused to cooperate with the authorities could face punitive action, from denial of fertiliser to extrajudicial execution. In October 2023, the OLF accused authorities of killing dozens of villagers in North Shewa zone. In the same month, the army was accused of burning down forty houses in the Arsi Zone

¹⁵¹ ACLED, [ACLED codebook](#), no date

¹⁵² ACLED, [Data export tool](#), data downloaded 22 January 2026

because the residents were suspected of harbouring OLA fighters. These reports could not be independently verified.¹⁵³

20.1.2 The EHRC July 2024 report noted: 'The armed forces involved in the armed conflict in Oromia ... carry out targeted attacks and extrajudicial killings on civilians.'¹⁵⁴

20.1.3 The DIS 2024 report observed:

'The conflict in Western Oromia consists of a myriad of armed groups on both sides of the conflict. The federal authorities are present through both the ENDF and regional police. Non-state armed actors in Oromia include the OLA as well as OLA splinter groups, local Oromo militias, and ethnic militias from the neighbouring regional states of Amhara and Benishangul-Gumuz, as well as armed civilian groups often consisting of local farmers and youths.

'... An international researcher stated that it is often difficult to determine which actors are involved in violent incidents because of the very limited flow of information from the conflict zones. This leads to conflicting statements about who committed a given violent incident, leaving it unclear who is responsible.'¹⁵⁵

20.1.4 The same source added:

'4 sources stated that it is difficult for both state and non-state actors to distinguish between friend and foe in the conflict. As a result, Oromia has been marked by widespread levels of crimes and attacks against civilians by armed groups and government forces ...

'A research institution elaborated that civilians are at risk of being perceived as combatants. According to media reports and credible institutions, such as the EHRC, the federal government applies 'a heavy-handed approach' to anybody who is perceived to be a combatant. A heavy-handed approach in a warzone means that there are mass arrests, and detention of family members of persons who the authorities suspect of sympathising with or being members of the armed resistance. Western and Southern Oromia have higher levels of resistance, and are particularly hard hit. The more resistance, the more brutal the government's response has been.'¹⁵⁶

20.1.5 The 2025 US State Department (USSD) country report of the human rights situation report covering events in 2024 (USSD 2024 report): noted

'Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), and the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) reported numerous cases of unlawful or extrajudicial killings within the context of continued conflicts in ... Oromia ... HRW documented several cases of executions of detainees.

'There were numerous instances when the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) and regional police forces reportedly used excessive lethal force against civilians within the context of conflict. On February 13, a Reuters investigative report revealed the Oromia Regional Government's Koree Nageenya (Security Committee in the Afaan Oromoo language)

¹⁵³ GoN, [General country of origin information report on Ethiopia](#) (pages 51 to 52), 31 January 2024

¹⁵⁴ EHRC, [The annual Ethiopia human rights situation report June](#) ... (page 32), July 2024

¹⁵⁵ DIS, [Ethiopia Security situation in Amhara, Oromia and Tigray...](#) (pages 39 to 40), October 2024

¹⁵⁶ DIS, [Ethiopia Security situation in Amhara, Oromia and Tigray...](#) (pages 45 to 46), October 2024

committed widespread human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, torture, and arbitrary detentions, particularly targeting ethnic and religious minorities and political opponents.

‘On April 9, unknown assailants killed Bate Urgessa, a prominent opposition politician, in Meki town, Oromia Region.’¹⁵⁷

20.1.6 The same source further observed:

‘In August 2023, the government imposed a state of emergency related to conflict in the Amhara Region that applied nationwide, under which numerous abuses were reported. Despite the expiration of the emergency decree on June 4, abuses continued in both Amhara and Oromia regions.

‘During the year, government counterinsurgency campaigns against ... the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) in Oromia Region [among other regions] ... continued, with numerous reports of unlawful killings, including killings of civilians ...

‘Between November 2023 and April, the EHRC documented numerous instances of unlawful and arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings by government forces in ... North, South, West, Southwest, and East Shewa zones, Horo Gudru Wollega, West Guji Zone, and West Arsi Zone in Oromia Region.’¹⁵⁸

20.1.7 The Landinfo 2023 report observed:

‘In May 2021, Ethiopian government forces, local police and kebele militia executed a 17-year-old boy in Dembi Dollo (Kellem Wellega) and detained his family and other residents of the city. A video of the murder was posted on social media by the authorities themselves. Before the murder, the boy was beaten by the security forces and then paraded in the streets as he was forced to say publicly that he was part of Abba Torbee, an armed group with unclear links to the OLA, and which OLA believes to be a group affiliated with the authorities. The population was forced to watch the execution and were warned that the same would happen to them if they attacked the security forces (Human Rights Watch 2021). According to locals, the boy was a school student unrelated to armed groups. Such summary executions occur rarely, but are an effective way to give the local population a warning of what might happen if it supports an armed group. Academic source C points towards the incident as an example of the fact that security forces in West Oromia can operate with impunity, and that they use such incidents to create fear amongst the local population.’¹⁵⁹

20.1.8 The February 2025 ACLED Ethiopia situation update noted: ‘... political violence — especially attacks targeting civilians by various groups, including government forces — has persisted.’¹⁶⁰

20.1.9 During 2024 and 2025 ACLED recorded a total of 231 incidents of political violence against civilians by government security forces (ENDF, police and kebele militia) resulting in 439 civilian fatalities. The data further indicated

¹⁵⁷ USSD, [2024 Country reports on human rights practices: Ethiopia](#) (section 1 a), 12 August 2025

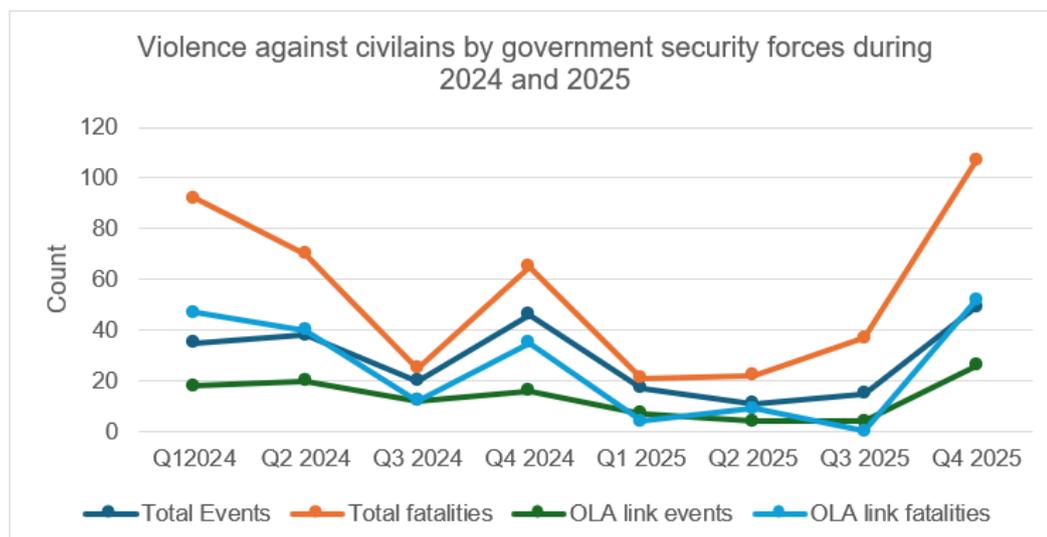
¹⁵⁸ USSD, [2024 Country reports on human rights practices: Ethiopia](#) (section 1 c), 12 August 2025

¹⁵⁹ Landinfo, [Armed conflict and political opposition in Oromia](#) (page 26), 24 February 2023

¹⁶⁰ ACLED, [Ethiopia situation update \(19 February 2025\)](#), 21 February 2025

that in 107 (46%) of the incidents and 199 (45%) of the fatalities the motive was the victims real or suspected links to OLF as supporter or family member of OLA fighters and members.

20.1.10 The below chart based on the ACLED data shows violence against civilians by government security forces and the proportion related to alleged links to OLA¹⁶¹:



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20.2 Abduction/forced disappearances, arrests and looting/destruction of property by security forces

20.2.1 The EHRC July 2024 report noted: 'It also noted the mass arrests of people on the grounds that they were helping an armed group operating in the region and also observed the obstruction of their right of movement.'¹⁶²

20.2.2 The ACLED data has been used to compile the table below, showing incidents of abductions/forced disappearances, arrests and looting/destruction of properties in Oromia by security forces including those due to suspected links to OLA:

	Abductions/ Forced disappearance	Arrests	Looting/ destruction of property	Total	Due to links to OLA
Q1 2024	0	0	6	6	5 (83%)
Q2 2024	0	7	2	9	8 (89%)
Q3 2024	0	5	0	5	5 (100%)
Q4 2024	7	4	0	11	3 (27%)
Q1 2025	0	3	5	8	5 (63%)
Q2 2025	0	6	2	8	6 (75%)
Q3 2025	0	2	1	3	2 (67%)
Q4 2025	1	0	8	9	8 (89%)
Total	8	27	24	59	42 (71%)

¹⁶¹ ACLED, [Data export tool](#), data downloaded 22 January 2026

¹⁶² EHRC, [Annual Ethiopia human rights situation report ...](#) (page 15 to 17), 5 July 2024

20.2.3 For information on number of arrests related to alleged links with OLF/OLA see [Arrests as a result of links with OLF/OLA](#)

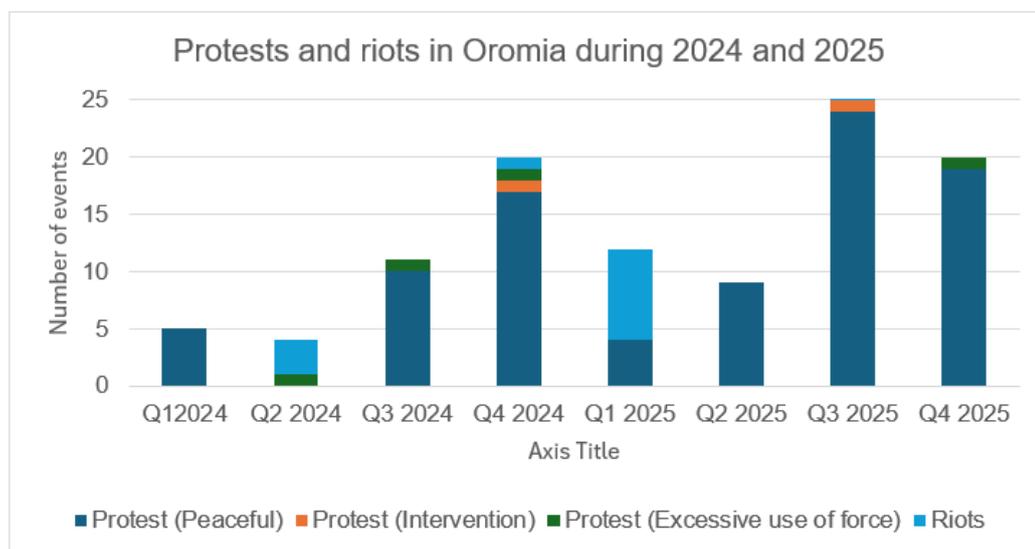
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20.3 Protests and riots in Oromia during 2025

20.3.1 ACLED defines a protest as: ‘an in-person public demonstration of three or more participants in which the participants do not engage in violence, though violence may be used against them.’¹⁶⁴ ACLED distinguishes 3 categories of protests: excessive force when protesters are targeted with lethal violence or violence resulting in serious injuries; protest with intervention when protesters are dispersed or suppressed without serious/lethal injuries and peaceful protest when demonstrators do not engage in any form of violence are not met with any sort of force or intervention¹⁶⁵.

20.3.2 ACLED defines riots as ‘violent events where demonstrators or mobs of three or more engage in violent or destructive acts, including but not limited to physical fights, rock throwing, property destruction, etc.’¹⁶⁶ ACLED distinguishes between violent demonstration ‘when demonstrators engage in violence and/or destructive activity’ and mob violence ‘when rioters violently interact with other rioters, civilians or their property, or armed groups outside of demonstration contexts.’¹⁶⁷

20.3.3 The chart below, based on ACLED data, shows the quarterly number of protests and riots recorded in Oromia by ACLED during 2024 and 2025¹⁶⁸.



20.3.4 A CPIT review of the graph, plus a review of the ACLED notes which provide details of each event, indicates:

¹⁶³ ACLED, [Data export tool](#), data downloaded 22 January 2026

¹⁶⁴ ACLED, [ACLED codebook](#) (protests), no date

¹⁶⁵ ACLED, [ACLED codebook](#) (protests), no date

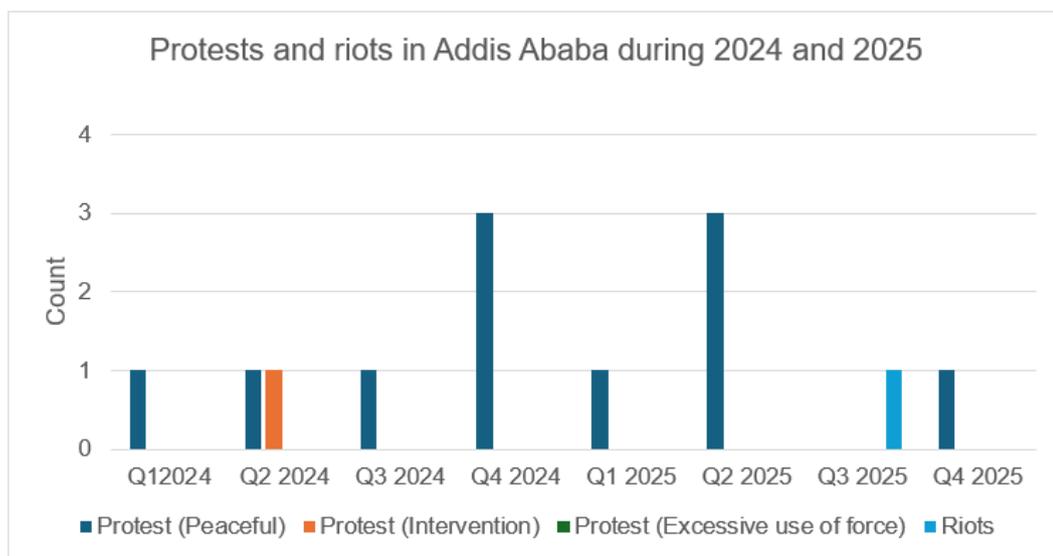
¹⁶⁶ ACLED, [ACLED codebook](#) (riots), no date

¹⁶⁷ ACLED, [ACLED codebook](#) (riots), no date

¹⁶⁸ ACLED, [Data export tool](#), data downloaded 5 December 2025

- Over the two-year period, three notable protest spikes were recorded. In 2024 Q3, 17 events occurred over two days as ethnic Oromo students demonstrated following the beheading of a young man by suspected Fano militias. In 2025 Q3, 21 protests took place across four days in several woredas of Borena zone in opposition to what residents viewed as territorial encroachment by the Somali regional government. A third spike in 2025 Q4 involved 13 student-led protests over two days against a Ministry of Education directive introducing mandatory one-year national service before completing undergraduate studies.
- Most of the protests recorded in 2024 32 (89%) were peaceful with excessive force recorded in 3 (8%) incidents.
- In 2025, out of the 58 protest events recorded 56 (97%) were peaceful with excessive force used in one event (2%).

20.3.5 The chart below based on ACLED data shows quarterly incidents of protests by category and riots reported in Addis Ababa during 2024 and 2025¹⁶⁹:



20.3.6 A CPIT review of the graph, plus a review of the ACLED notes which provide details of each event, indicates:

- 2 spikes in the 2-year period
- 2024 quarter 4 coincided with students protests against heading of a young Oromo man by suspected Fano militia
- On 23 May 2024 female members of the House of Representatives and Oromia regional council, Caffee Oromiya and Hada Sinqe staged a sit in in Oromia and Mesquel Square Kirkos and called for the OLF-OLA and the government to opt for peace and stop fighting
- On 21 and 22 November (3 events) ethnic Oromo students protested to demand justice for a young man beheaded by suspected Fano militias in Selekula on 27 August 2024

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¹⁶⁹ ACLED, [Data export tool](#), data downloaded 5 December 2025

20.4 Protests and unrest in Oromia and Addis Ababa: other sources

20.4.1 On 14 April 2024 Radio France Internationale (RFI), a French news and current affairs public radio station that broadcasts worldwide in French and in 16 other languages including English,¹⁷⁰ reported:

In Ethiopia, the killing of a senior politician from the Oromo Liberation Front has already led to protests and is likely to aggravate tensions in Oromia, the country's largest and most populous region ...

Bate Urgessa was shot at point-blank range and his body was found the next day on the side of a road outside the town of Meki, south of Addis Ababa...

Forty-one-year-old Battee Urgeessaa – the Oromo spelling of his name – was jailed and assaulted on numerous occasions because of his vocal defence of the rights of Oromo people.

'Bate was a veteran member of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), fighting for the Oromo's rights to self-determination and to establish an independent state of Oromia.

'A widely respected political figure, he was said to be a highly educated, peaceful man, who chose not to take arms to fight the federal government even after the 2018 failed peace agreement between the OLF and the Ethiopian Federal Government.'¹⁷¹

20.4.2 On 22 December 2024 Ethiopia News Agency (ENA), Ethiopia's official, state-owned national news agency¹⁷² reported:

'Peaceful demonstrations were held across various areas of the Oromia region to express gratitude to members of the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) who have embraced peace and to urge those remaining to follow suit.

'Residents of Southwest Showa, West Showa, East Showa, North Showa, West Guji, and East Welega Zones participated in the rallies, calling for peace for all armed groups ...

'Community leaders, including elders and religious figures, actively participated in the rallies, strongly emphasizing the importance of peace.'¹⁷³

20.4.3 The ACLED Ethiopia weekly update 26 November 2024 reported:

'Around 26 protests were held across many major towns in Oromia region and public universities across the country denouncing an online video of suspected Fano militia members beheading a young teenager in Dera woreda in North Shewa zone, Oromia region, in August. Demonstrations were held at Mizan Tepi University in South West Ethiopia region, Asosa University in Benshangul/Gumuz region, Addis Ababa University, Dire Dawa University, Jigjiga University in Somali region, and Siltie and Wachemo Universities in Central Ethiopia region. While the majority of the demonstrations ended peacefully, police forces in Ambo town in West

¹⁷⁰ RFI, [Who we are](#), no date

¹⁷¹ RFI, [Killing of politician from Ethiopia's Oromia region sparks fear of unrest](#), 14 February 2024

¹⁷² ENA, [About us](#), no date

¹⁷³ ENA, [Residents in Oromia Region Hold Rallies to Encourage Remaining ...](#) 22 December 2024

Shewa zone, Oromia, forcibly dispersed protesting students near Ambo University Campus, injuring several.¹⁷⁴

- 20.4.4 On 1 August 2025, Sheger365, an Ethiopian digital media outlet reported that a Somali Regional State Council resolution to restructure administrative units, including the creation of 14 new woredas, four zonal administrations, and 25 municipal leadership offices, triggered grassroots protests in both Somali and Oromia regions, intensifying long-standing border tensions particularly affecting the Borana community. The move drew strong opposition, with the OLF condemning it as an attempt to claim Oromo land and labelling it a “declaration of war”. The OLA also denounced the decision, linking it to an alleged effort by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to divert attention from increasing Oromo political mobilization. Widespread local protests followed, especially in the Borana and East Borana zones including Yabello, Nagelle Borana, and Dillo where demonstrators accused the Somali regional government of pursuing territorial expansion under the guise of administrative restructuring¹⁷⁵.
- 20.4.5 The ACLED situation update of 14 May 2025 reported at least 25 protests by health workers across the country, including in Addis Ababa, as staff in hospitals and health centres demanded salary increases and improved benefits such as free health insurance. Demonstrations continued through the weekend and into 12 May, reflecting long-standing frustrations over low pay that had been intensified by rising living costs. The report noted that health workers launched a social-media campaign around 8 April and submitted 12 demands to the government on 11 April, giving authorities 30 days to respond. These demands included salary adjustments, timely overtime payments, free insurance, housing or land allocations, and free transportation. The protests served as a warning that workers would proceed to strike if no action was taken by the 12 May deadline¹⁷⁶.
- 20.4.6 Borkena reported on 19 September 2025 that university students, primarily in Oromia, launched protests against a new national policy requiring undergraduates to complete one year of community service before graduation. The Ministry of Education planned to implement the programme in the upcoming academic year, obliging students to undertake the service after their third year of study. According to the report, students had been suspending classes and demonstrating against the directive since the start of that week¹⁷⁷.

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¹⁷⁴ ACLED, [Ethiopia Weekly Update \(26 November 2024\)](#), 27 November 2024

¹⁷⁵ Sheger 365, [Somali region’s controversial restructuring sparks grassroots...](#), 1 August 2025

¹⁷⁶ ACLED, [Ethiopia situation update \(14 May 2025\)](#), 16 May 2025

¹⁷⁷ Borkena, [University students protest compulsory national service program](#), 19 November 2025

Methodology

The country of origin information (COI) in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2024. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources

Commentary may be provided on source(s) and information to help readers understand the meaning and limits of the COI.

Wherever possible, multiple sourcing is used and the COI compared to ensure that it is accurate and balanced, and provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote.

Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

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Terms of Reference

The 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) provides a broad outline of the issues relevant to the scope of this note and forms the basis for the [country information](#).

The following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Context
 - summary of current political situation
 - historical relationship between the OLF and authorities
 - key events, including civil war
- OLF
 - size, structure, aims and activities
 - divisions, including the OLA
- OLA
 - size, structure, aims and activities
 - Treatment of OLF by state actors
 - registration, operation and participation in elections
 - harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention
 - profile of individuals subject to discrimination or human rights violations – senior leaders, members and/or supporters
- Treatment of OLA by state actors
 - Terrorist designation
 - Arrests
 - Extrajudicial killings
- General levels of violence in Oromia
 - perpetrators and victims
 - protests and riots
- security forces interaction with civilians in Oromia
 - killings
 - arrests/ abductions
 - protests

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Version control and feedback

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **2.0**
- valid from **11 March 2026**

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

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Changes from last version of this note

All the COI has been updated and the assessment reviewed in line.

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Feedback to the Home Office

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

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The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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