Home Office

# Country Policy and Information Note
## Ethiopia: Sufficiency of protection

**Version 3.0**

**October 2026**

# Executive summary

In general, the state is both willing and able to offer sufficient protection to persons fearing non-state, including 'rogue' state, actors. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.

Ethiopia has a constitution and other laws that protect fundamental human rights and penalise criminal activity. There is a functioning police force and judiciary, which are generally accessible.

However, the availability and effectiveness of protection may vary depending on the person's profile, location and other circumstances. In areas affected by armed conflict, post-conflict insecurity, weak state presence or contested territorial control, the availability and effectiveness of protection may be reduced. It may also be difficult to access protection in rural areas. Availability and effectiveness of protection may also be reduced for perceived critics of the government, including political opponents, activists and journalists. Protection may be difficult to access for women.

See the relevant Ethiopia Country Policy and Information Notes for specific guidance and information on the willingness of the state to protect those of Amhara, Oromo or Tigrayan ethnicity and actual or perceived members and supporters of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), Fano and Amhara political opposition groups and the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF).

Each case must be considered on its individual facts. The onus is on the person to demonstrate that they are not able to obtain sufficient protection from the state.

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# Assessment

Section updated: 14 October 2026

## About the assessment

This section considers relevant evidence – including country information, refugee and human rights law and policy, and case law – to assess **whether**, **in general**:

- the state (or quasi-state bodies) can provide effective protection.

Each case must be considered on its individual facts.

For details on how CPIT makes its assessments, gathers and presents country information, its research methodology and disclaimers and explainers on coverage, source selection, maps, translations and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in developing CPIT products, see About country policy and information notes.

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## 1. Material facts, credibility and other checks

1.1.1 Decision makers must:

- assess credibility (see the Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status).
- 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).
- 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)).
- consider language analysis testing, where available, in cases where there are doubts surrounding a person's claimed place of origin (see the Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis).

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**Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section**

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## 2. Exclusion

2.1.1 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.

2.1.2 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.

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

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## 3. Protection

3.1.1 In general, the state is both willing and able to offer sufficient protection to persons fearing non-state, including 'rogue' state, actors. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.

3.1.2 Ethiopia has a constitution and other laws that protect fundamental human rights and penalise criminal activity. There is a functioning police force and judiciary, which are generally accessible. However, the availability and effectiveness of protection may vary depending on the person's profile, location and other circumstances. In areas affected by armed conflict, post-conflict insecurity, weak state presence or contested territorial control, the availability and effectiveness of protection may be reduced. It may also be difficult to access protection in rural areas. Availability and effectiveness of protection may also be reduced for perceived critics of the government, including political opponents, activists and journalists. Protection may be difficult to access for women.

3.1.3 Although Ethiopia maintains a monopoly on the use of force in principle, armed groups continue to challenge state authority and exercise control or influence, including through control of territory. In parts of Amhara and Oromia, Fano and the OLA reportedly exercise control. Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) data indicate that non-state armed actors accounted for 57.8% of all violent incidents and 64.0% of the fatalities between 1 January 2024 and 9 October 2026. They also accounted for 64.9% of civilian targeting incidents and 54.8% of associated fatalities. ACLED defines civilian targeting as events in which civilians are the only or primary target of attack. Their continuing activity, particularly in areas where armed groups challenge state control, may also suggest reduced practical capacity of law-enforcement institutions to provide protection (see Non-state armed actors).

3.1.4 Decision makers should also consult the relevant Ethiopia Country Policy and Information Notes for specific guidance and information on the willingness of the state to protect those of Amhara, Oromo or Tigrayan

ethnicity and actual or perceived members and supporters of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), Fano and Amhara political opposition groups and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF).

3.1.5 Ethiopian security forces, both national and regional, are implicated in violence against civilians and other human rights violations. ACLED data shows that state actors—the Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF), federal police and state police—were responsible for 35% of reported civilian-targeting incidents and 45.2% of the associated fatalities. State actors also contributed to 42.2% of all violent events and 36% of associated fatalities (see Violence against civilians and ACLED data on forced disappearances/abductions).

3.1.6 Ethiopia has a legal and institutional framework to protect human rights and investigate, prosecute and punish criminal acts constituting persecution or serious harm. The Constitution provides for equality before the law, personal liberty and security, and protection from torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The Criminal Code criminalises a range of offences, including unlawful arrest and detention. Ethiopia has ratified several key international and regional human rights instruments (see Legal Framework). However, corruption, resource constraints, insecurity, limited judicial independence and alleged human rights abuses by some state actors hamper the effectiveness of protection in practice but does not mean that protection is generally unavailable. Women seeking protection may face inaccessible facilities, language barriers, limited police understanding of gender-based violence, victim-blaming, inadequate shelter and rehabilitation services, and customary justice mechanisms in which women are underrepresented, and gender equality is not consistently upheld. These barriers are likely to be greater in rural, remote and conflict-affected areas and where the alleged perpetrator is connected to the authorities or local power structures (see Human rights violations by security forces, Rule of law and judiciary, Law enforcement and institutions and Courts).

3.1.7 Ethiopia has constitutionally defined federal and regional security and law enforcement structures, including the federal and regional police commissions, federal and regional police forces, the Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) and intelligence services. The Federal Police Commission is responsible for investigating federal crimes, executing court orders, maintaining public order in specified circumstances and supporting regional law enforcement where authorised, while regional police have responsibility for local crime and immediate response within their jurisdictions. The ENDF may provide internal security support in some circumstances. Prosecution of federal cases falls primarily to the Ministry of Justice, while State Justice Bureaus have similar functions at regional level (see Prosecution and investigation and Security forces).

3.1.8 Reliable and comprehensive national crime statistics are not publicly available, partly because Ethiopia lacks a national criminal information database. Nevertheless, available sources indicate that crime and insecurity remain significant concerns in parts of the country. Reported criminal activity includes robbery, assault, banditry, cattle raiding, kidnapping for ransom, human trafficking and migrant smuggling, with higher levels of insecurity reported in conflict-affected areas of Amhara, Oromia and Tigray. Survey

data also suggests that concerns about personal safety are widespread, with a significant proportion of respondents reporting feeling unsafe in their neighbourhoods or fearing crime in their homes. Data on violence against civilians indicates that both state and non-state actors continued to be responsible for a substantial number of incidents and fatalities during the reporting period. While the available data points to a decline in recorded civilian-targeting incidents and fatalities between 2024 and 9 October 2026, violence remained at a significant level and varied considerably between regions (see Levels of crime and violence).

3.1.9 Ethiopia has a functioning law-enforcement system with trained personnel and specialised structures for addressing particular forms of criminality, including human trafficking and organised crime. However, challenges in identifying victims and protecting victims and witnesses, as well as corruption and official complicity in human trafficking crimes, affect the prosecution of trafficking cases. The authorities have taken steps to strengthen institutional capacity through human rights and professional training for police, prosecutors, judges, security personnel and prison staff. Sources indicate that law-enforcement agencies can investigate and prosecute criminal offences in some circumstances, although much of the available reporting on institutional capacity consists of statements by government officials rather than independent assessments (see Security forces and Capacity and effectiveness of law enforcement agencies).

3.1.10 Survey data indicates mixed public perceptions of the police, with many respondents able to access assistance when needed but fewer considering police officers to act professionally and with respect for citizens' rights. Allegations of excessive use of force, particularly during arrests and public demonstrations, also indicate ongoing concerns regarding police conduct. The overall effectiveness of law enforcement is further affected by insecurity in conflict-affected areas, the presence of non-state armed groups, corruption, resource constraints and weaknesses in the rule of law. Consequently, the ability of the authorities to provide effective policing and protection is likely to vary depending on the location and the prevailing security situation (see Capacity and effectiveness of law enforcement agencies and Non-state actors).

3.1.11 Corruption is widespread and affects the effectiveness of state protection, but it does not prevent the functioning of the criminal justice system. The government has established a legal and institutional framework to combat corruption and has taken enforcement action against public officials. However, sources consistently report that corruption persists within law enforcement, public administration and the judiciary. Bribery involving police officers and court officials has been reported, and perceptions of corruption within these institutions remain relatively high. Survey data indicates that 35% of those who sought police assistance had to pay a bribe, give a gift or do a favour to obtain it. Government anti-corruption measures have had some effect but have not eliminated systemic corruption (see Corruption).

3.1.12 Although Ethiopia's constitution and legal framework provide for an independent judiciary, and recent reforms have sought to strengthen judicial autonomy, judicial independence remains limited in practice. The judiciary continues to face political influence over appointments and decision-making, executive interference, corruption, and pressure on judges and prosecutors.

There are also concerns that the courts have contributed to impunity for members of the security forces, particularly in cases involving political detainees. Between December 2024 and February 2025, judges in the Amhara region were reportedly arrested in connection with judicial decisions, while other judicial officials reportedly resigned due to threats, insecurity, and inadequate protection. The effectiveness of the justice system is further undermined by shortages of judicial personnel, limited training and resources, delays in case processing, and difficulties in enforcing some court rulings (see Judicial independence).

3.1.13 Ethiopia has a functioning and multi-layered judicial system comprising federal and regional courts, as well as Sharia courts, customary courts and Community Justice Centres. Customary and community-based mechanisms play an important role in dispute resolution, particularly in rural areas and in regions where indigenous justice systems are widely recognised and used. These mechanisms appear to increase access to justice for some individuals and resolve a significant proportion of disputes. However, demand for justice continues to exceed the capacity of existing institutions, with around 5 million of an estimated 7 million legal problems arising annually remaining unresolved. The high volume of cases handled by prosecutors and the reported conviction rate suggest that the formal criminal justice system remains operational. Nevertheless, case backlogs, resource constraints and concerns regarding the operation of some customary justice mechanisms indicate that access to effective remedies and timely justice is uneven across regions and types of disputes. Access to justice is further limited for certain groups, including persons with disabilities and non-Amharic speakers (see Courts, Access).

3.1.14 Ethiopia's legal framework provides safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention and guarantees due process and fair trial rights, including judicial oversight of detention, access to legal representation, the presumption of innocence and the right of appeal. However, these protections are not consistently upheld in practice. Reported concerns include arbitrary detention, delays in bringing detainees before a court, non-compliance with some court orders, and limited access to legal safeguards from the outset of detention. Questions have also been raised regarding respect for due process and fair trial standards, particularly in cases involving government critics and other politically sensitive matters. The Committee against Torture stated that torture was routinely used to obtain confessions and that such confessions had been admitted as evidence in criminal proceedings. In addition, shortages of judicial personnel and resources contribute to delays in case processing and undermine the timely administration of justice (see Rule of law and Fair trial).

3.1.15 Legal aid services are available through a range of government institutions, statutory bodies, universities, professional associations and civil society organisations. In 2023 Ethiopia adopted a National Free Legal Aid Strategy to improve the coordination, quality and accessibility of legal assistance, particularly for vulnerable groups. The number of individuals reported to have received legal aid through federal and regional institutions indicates that such services are operating in practice. Nevertheless, legal aid provision remains constrained by limited resources and uneven geographical coverage, with access reportedly more restricted in some rural and remote

areas. The Human Rights Committee noted that legal aid is currently mandatory only for persons accused of serious crimes (see Legal aid).

3.1.16 Ethiopia has a comprehensive legal and institutional framework for witness protection, including safeguards against intimidation and retaliation, a broad range of protective and support measures, and a dedicated directorate within the Ministry of Justice to assess applications and oversee protection. These provisions apply principally to serious crimes and are reinforced by specific legislation covering terrorism, corruption, trafficking and smuggling. Protection measures are used in practice, including victim support, video testimony and child-friendly interview facilities. However, the Ministry of Justice has reported that the witness protection proclamation currently in force contains fundamental legal gaps and problems with its implementation. Ethiopia scored 3.00 out of 10 on victim and witness support, non-state actors remain the primary providers of support for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, and protection services reportedly remained limited, with concerns about reprisals discouraging some victims from participating in criminal proceedings (see Witness protection).

3.1.17 Ethiopia retains the death penalty and has not established an official moratorium, although no executions have been carried out since 2007. About 130 people were under sentence of death as of April 2025, with more than 5 death sentences imposed during 2025. The death penalty remains available for offences that do not involve intentional killing, including under counter-terrorism legislation for acts causing serious damage to property, historical or cultural heritage or the natural environment. Ethiopia has not joined the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR and its position on abolition is unchanged (Death penalty).

3.1.18 Detention conditions in Ethiopia are generally poor and are characterised by overcrowding and inadequate living conditions. Despite measures aimed at improving prison infrastructure and detainee welfare, concerns remain regarding sanitation, healthcare, food provision and accommodation in some facilities. There are also allegations of torture and ill-treatment, alongside concerns about unofficial detention sites and limited safeguards for vulnerable detainees. However, conditions appear to vary between prisons and detention centres, and recent government initiatives suggest some efforts to address longstanding deficiencies (see Prison capacity and Detention conditions).

3.1.19 Ethiopia has a legal framework that prohibits torture, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrest and detention, and enforced disappearance, and provides safeguards intended to protect fundamental rights. However, state and non-state actors reportedly engage in torture and ill-treatment, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary and prolonged detention, and enforced disappearances. These violations occur more frequently in conflict-affected areas and against persons perceived as opposing the government, including political opponents, journalists, human rights defenders, activists, academics, real or suspected supporters of armed groups, and members of certain ethnic groups. Legal safeguards are not consistently respected in practice and accountability for violations remains limited. Legislation passed in June 2025 grants undercover agents advance immunity for crimes committed during operations (see Torture and ill-treatment and Extrajudicial killings and excessive use of force and Arbitrary arrest and detention).

3.1.20 Ethiopian law prohibits enforced disappearance and provides legal protections for liberty and personal security. However, sources report that state actors, including the police, intelligence services and the military engage in enforced disappearances particularly of individuals perceived as government critics, political opponents, journalists, activists and members of certain ethnic groups, specifically Amhara and Oromos. At the same time, available data indicates that non-state armed actors also engage in abductions and forced disappearances. ACLED recorded 262 abduction/forced disappearance events from January 2024 to July 2026, involving at least 2,033 people. OLA was responsible for 22.9% of the events, Fano for 21.0% and government security forces for 11.1% of the events (see Enforced disappearance).

3.1.21 Ethiopia adopted a Transitional Justice Policy in April 2024 to support accountability, truth-seeking, reconciliation and reparations for violations committed during conflict. However, implementation has been slow and, despite some investigations, prosecutions and convictions, impunity for serious human rights violations remains widespread and accountability is limited relative to the scale of reported abuses (see Accountability for violations committed during conflict).

3.1.22 Ethiopia has formal mechanisms for the oversight of public administration and human rights, including the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and the Office of the Ombudsman. These institutions investigate allegations of maladministration and human rights violations and provide avenues for complaints and redress. However, sources reported limitations in the effectiveness of these oversight mechanisms. Complaint procedures available to detainees were described as lacking independence and effectiveness, and complainants were reported to face intimidation or reprisals. Sources also indicated that independent monitoring of places of detention is limited, with the EHRC not always granted unrestricted access to detention facilities. In addition, resource constraints, the absence of a National Preventive Mechanism to monitor places of detention, and concerns regarding the EHRC's operational independence were identified as factors affecting the ability of oversight bodies to provide effective scrutiny and accountability (see Oversight mechanisms).

3.1.23 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status.

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# Country information

## About the country information

The COI provides the basis for the assessment and the executive summary. Decision makers must use relevant COI as the evidential basis for decisions.

The cut-off date for COI included in this note is **15 October 2026**.

For details on how CPIT gathers and presents country information, its research methodology and disclaimers and explainers on coverage, source selection, maps, translations and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in developing CPIT products, see About country policy and information notes

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## 4. State institutions

### 4.1 Overview

4.1.1 The Bertelsmann Stiftung, a German private foundation that supports evidence-based non-profit projects, publishes the Transformation Index (BTI). The BTI 2026, which is based on country-expert analysis of Ethiopia's progress towards democracy and a market economy from 1 February 2023 to 31 January 2025, observed: 'The separation of powers and associated checks and balances exist in principle in Ethiopia but face significant challenges in practice. Ethiopia is a federal parliamentary republic with a legal framework that specifies the separation of powers among the executive, legislative and judicial branches.'

4.1.2 For background information to state and political institutions see archived CPIN Ethiopia: Actors of protection 2024.

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## 5. Legal Framework

### 5.1 Constitution

5.1.1 The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was adopted on 8 December 1994 and entered into force on 21 August 1995. Article 13(1) of the Constitution states that all federal and state legislative, executive and judicial organs have a duty to respect and enforce the provisions of Chapter 3, which contains the Constitution's fundamental rights and freedoms provisions[1].

5.1.2 Chapter 3 protects fundamental rights and freedoms including:

- the right to security of the person and liberty (Article 14)
- the right to life (Article 15)
- right against bodily harm (Article 16)
- prohibition against arbitrary arrest, and detention without a charge or conviction
- protection against cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment,

[1] FDRE, Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 21 August 1995

prohibition against slavery, servitude, human trafficking, and forced or compulsory labour (article 18)

- rights of persons arrested, including the right to be informed promptly of the reasons for arrest and any charges, to remain silent, to be brought before a court within 48 hours, to challenge the legality of detention, to release on bail except in circumstances prescribed by law and prohibition against compelled confessions and the use of evidence obtained through coercion (Article 19)
- rights of persons accused of a criminal offence, including the right to a public trial within a reasonable time, to be informed of the charges against them, and to be presumed innocent until proven guilty and protection against self-incrimination, access to evidence and witnesses, legal representation, appeal, and interpretation services where required (Article 20)
- rights of persons held in custody and convicted prisoners - the right to be treated with respect, to communicate with, and receive visits from, family members, friends, religious advisers, medical professionals and legal counsel (Article 21)
- non-retroactivity of Criminal Law - no person may be convicted for an act that was not a criminal offence at the time it was committed, nor subjected to a heavier penalty than that applicable when the offence occurred
- prohibition against double jeopardy - no person may be tried or punished more than once for the same offence where they have already been finally convicted or acquitted in accordance with the law (Article 23)
- right to equality - all persons are equal before the law and entitled to the equal protection of the law without discrimination on grounds including race, nationality, ethnic origin, sex, language, religion, political opinion, property, birth or other status (Article 25)[2].

5.1.3 Chapter 9 of the Constitution outlines the structure and powers of the courts including judicial independence (Article 78)[3].

5.1.4 For information on structure of security forces see law and structure.

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## 5.2 Criminal Code

5.2.1 The Criminal Code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 2004 came into force on 9 May 2005[4].

5.2.2 Article 4 of the Criminal Code provides that criminal law applies equally to all persons without discrimination, including on grounds of race, nationality, ethnic origin, sex, language, religion, political opinion, property, birth or other status[5].

[2] FDRE, Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 21 August 1995
[3] FDRE, Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 21 August 1995
[4] FDRE, Criminal Code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 2004 (para 1), 9 May 2005
[5] FDRE, Criminal Code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 2004 (para 1), 9 May 2005

5.2.3 The Criminal Code criminalises a range of acts that may amount to persecution or serious harm. These include:

- war crimes against the civilian population, including killing, torture and inhuman treatment; the compulsory movement or dispersion of the population; compulsion to acts of prostitution, debauchery or rape; and recruiting children who have not attained the age of eighteen years as members of defence forces to take part in armed conflict (Article 270)
- illegal search (Article 422)
- unlawful arrest or detention (Article 423)
- the use of violence, threats or other improper methods by public officials during investigations and interrogations (Article 424).
- offences against life and physical integrity, including homicide (Article 538), serious bodily injury (Article 553) and assault (Article 560)
- rape (Article 620), and sexual outrages on minors between the ages of 13 and 18 years (Article 626).
- domestic violence (Article 564) and harmful traditional practices, including female genital mutilation (Articles 565 to 570)[6].
- In addition, trafficking in persons is criminalised under separate anti-trafficking legislation[7].

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## 5.3 International conventions

5.3.1 Ethiopia has ratified or acceded to 7 of the 9 core international human rights treaties, as well as 2 optional protocols to those treaties. It has also ratified 3 regional human rights instruments adopted under the African Union framework[8].

5.3.2 The table below, based on information from the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, the national human rights institution, established by law and accountable to parliament to monitor and report on human rights conditions[9], shows the international and regional human rights instruments Ethiopia has ratified:

| Core international human rights treaties | Date ratified |
|---|---|
| Convention against Torture and other Cruel or Degrading Treatment (CAT) | 1994 |
| International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR) | 1993 |
| Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) | 1981 |
| International Convention on the Elimination on all Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) | 1976 |
| International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) | 1993 |

[6] FDRE, Criminal Code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 2004, 9 May 2005
[7] FDRE, Criminal Code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 2004, 9 May 2005
[8] EHRC, Ethiopia's Ratification Status of International & Regional Human Rights …, 6 October 2022
[9] EHRC, Who we are, no date

| | |
|---|---|
| Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) | 1991 |
| Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) | 2010 |
| **Optional protocols** | |
| Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (CRC-OP-AC) | 2014 |
| Optional Protocol to the Convention on the rights of the Child on the sale of children child prostitution and child pornography (CRC-OP-SC) | 2014 |
| **African human rights instruments** | |
| African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (Banjul Charter) | 1999 |
| African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child | 2002 |
| Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) | 2018 |
| Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa | 2020 |
| African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention) | |

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5.3.3 The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) is a Geneva-based international non-governmental organisation that works to prevent torture and other serious human rights violations. It conducts research, advocates for victims, and publishes country reports and updates through its global network of partner organisations[11]. The OMCT October 2025 Ethiopia factsheet noted:

'Ethiopia has not ratified several critical international instruments, including the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the Optional Protocol of the Convention against Torture, the International Criminal Court, or the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR aimed at abolishing the death penalty. Additionally, the government has yet to accept the competence of the Committee Against Torture (CAT) to receive individual complaints under Article 22 of the UN CAT.'[12]

5.3.4 For more information on the law relating to enforced disappearance, see Enforced disappearance.

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## 6. Law enforcement and institutions

### 6.1 Prosecution and investigation

6.1.1 The article 'Introduction to the Ethiopian Legal System and Legal Research', by Ethiopian lawyer Alemayehu B. Bekele, published in January/February 2024 by GlobaLex, an electronic legal research publication of New York

[10] EHRC, Ethiopia's Ratification Status of International & Regional Human Rights …, 6 October 2022
[11] OMCT, Who we are, no date
[12] OMCT, Global Torture Index 2025: Ethiopia Factsheet, 2025

University School of Law[13] (Bekele 2024), noted:

'The Ministry of Justice is part of the executive branch of the Federal Government. The Ministry of Justice has the primary authority of prosecution of cases falling under the jurisdiction of federal courts. According to Article 40 (1) of Definition of Powers and Duties of the Executive Organs Proclamation No. 1263/2021 … powers given to Federal Attorney General under the Federal Attorney General Establishment Proclamation No. 943/2016 … are passed to the Ministry …

'… According to Article 17 (2) of Federal Attorney General Establishment Proclamation No. 943/2016 […] prosecutors shall be accountable to the Attorney General as well as to their immediate superior and division head. As the ultimate superior of all prosecutors, the Attorney General may thus initiate a specific criminal investigation or stop another. The Attorney General also has the authority to reverse a decision of a prosecutor or to dismiss a pending case.'[14]

6.1.2 The same source further observed: 'The State Justice Bureaus mirror the Federal Attorney General in their structure and mandate. The State Justice Bureaus are part of the executive branch of the State government. They have similar powers and functions with that of the Ministry of Justice. The head of a State Justice Bureau has similar powers with the Federal Minister of Justice.'[15]

6.1.3 Freedom House Freedom in the World 2025 report covering events in 2024 stated: 'Prosecutors, meanwhile, face pressure from politicians … The attorney general's office was placed under the Ministry of Justice in 2021, giving the ministry considerable powers over investigations and limiting prosecutorial independence.'

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## 6.2 Police and prison commissions

6.2.1 Bekele 2024 further noted that the Federal Police Commission, accountable to the Prime Minister, is Ethiopia's principal federal law enforcement body. Its responsibilities include, among others, preventing and investigating crimes that threaten the Constitution, constitutional order, state security, and human rights, investigating offences within federal jurisdiction, executing court orders and supporting law and order operations in regional states upon federal authorisation[16].

6.2.2 The same source further observed that the Federal Prisons Commission, accountable to the Ministry of Justice, is responsible for administering the federal prison system and enforcing court-imposed sentences and orders. Its mandate includes ensuring prisoners' rights and welfare[17]. According to the same source, regional states are allowed to establish their own Prison Commissions, which are accountable to State Justice Bureaus. While these commissions operate with functional independence, they are required to cooperate with the federal prison authorities to support improvements in

[13] GlobaLex, About GlobaLex, no date
[14] Bekele, A B, Introduction to the Ethiopian Legal System … (para 4.1.1), January/February 2024
[15] Bekele, A B, Introduction to the Ethiopian Legal System … (para 4.1.3), January/February 2024
[16] Bekele, A B, Introduction to the Ethiopian Legal System… (para 4.1.2), January/February 2024
[17] Bekele, A B, Introduction to the Ethiopian Legal System … (para 4.1.3), January/February 2024

prison conditions nationwide[18].

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# 7. Security forces

## 7.1 Law and structure

7.1.1 Article 51 of the Constitution provides for the powers and functions of the federal government. Article 51(6) states the Federal government 'shall establish and administer national defence and public security forces as well as a federal police force.'[19]

7.1.2 Article 51(14) stipulates that the federal government 'shall deploy, at the request of a state administration, Federal defence forces to arrest a deteriorating security situation within the requesting State when its authorities are unable to control it.'[20]

7.1.3 Article 52 provides for the powers and functions of states. Under Article 52(2)(g), states have powers to 'establish and administer a state police force, and to maintain public order and peace within the State.'[21]

7.1.4 The Defense Forces Proclamation dated 19 September 2023, provides the legal framework for the Ethiopian National Defence Force. Its preamble states that the Defense Forces are organised 'to safeguard the country's sovereignty, to embody the equitable representation of nations, nationalities, and peoples, and to carry out its functions free of any partnership to any political organization', and that the Proclamation was issued because 'it has become necessary to revise and consolidate the existing legal framework of the Defense Forces of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.'[22]

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## 7.2 Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF)

7.2.1 For background information on the ENDF, see the archived CPIN Ethiopia Actors of Protection 2024.

7.2.2 Global Firepower (GFP) is an independent online military analysis platform that publishes an annual ranking of the military capabilities of states worldwide[23]. The 2026 Global Firepower ranked Ethiopia 47 of 145 out of the countries reviewed and assigned it a PwrIndx score of 0.8525[24]. The rankings assess a country's conventional war-fighting potential using more than 60 indicators, including manpower, military equipment, defence spending, logistics, natural resources and geographic factors. Countries are assigned a Power Index (PwrIndx) score on a scale of 0 to 1, with lower scores indicating greater assessed military capability. The index is intended as a comparative measure of military strength and does not fully account for factors such as combat effectiveness, leadership, doctrine, political will or alliance commitments[25].

[18] Bekele, A B, Introduction to the Ethiopian Legal System … (para 4.2.2), January/February 2024
[19] FDRE, Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 21 August 1995
[20] FDRE, Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 21 August 1995
[21] FDRE, Criminal Code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 2004 (Art 17 (2)), 9 May 2005
[22] FDRE, Defense Forces Proclamation No. 1286/2023, 19 September 2023
[23] GFI, Global Firepower 2026, 2026
[24] GPI, 2026 Ethiopia Military Strength, 2026
[25] GFI, Global Firepower 2026, 2026

7.2.3 The same source estimated Ethiopia's total military manpower at 641,000 personnel, comprising approximately 503,000 active personnel and 138,000 reserve personnel. The armed forces included an estimated 626,000 army personnel, 5,000 air force personnel and 11,500 navy personnel[26].

7.2.4 On 22 February 2026, the Ethiopian News Agency (ENA), the national wire news centre[27], reported comments by the Chief of General Staff of the Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF), who stated that comprehensive reforms had 'established a modern, reliable and versatile military institution strengthened by skilled manpower, professionalism and advanced technology'. The Chief of General Staff further stated that new commands and specialised units had been established, including the Special Operations Command, which he described as an elite, nationally representative formation with enhanced operational capabilities, and the Republican Guard[28].

7.2.5 Sources indicate that the Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) is deployed in several conflict-affected regions of Ethiopia, including Tigray, Amhara and Oromia. In Tigray, sources reported ENDF involvement in clashes with Tigrayan Defence Forces (TDF) in 2026, including military operations in north-west Tigray and drone attacks in Mekelle, the Tigray capital. Cedoca, the Belgian Office for the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons COI research unit, in their COI Focus dated 26 March 2026, based on a range of sources noted that the ENDF and other state security forces continued operations against Fano armed groups in Amhara, with violence concentrated in parts of North and South Wello, West and East Gojjam, North Shewa, and Central and South Gondar. The same source reported that government forces controlled the main urban centres, while Fano groups retained influence in some rural areas. In Oromia, sources reported the continued involvement of the ENDF, alongside regional security forces, in operations against the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA). Amnesty International stated that the armed conflict between the OLA and the ENDF, together with allied Oromia security forces, had continued since 2019. For more information on ENDF deployment in Amhara and Oromia see CPIN Oromos, the Oromo Liberation Front and the Oromo Liberation Army, and CPIN Amhara and Amhara opposition groups.

7.2.6 The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), a US-based non-profit organisation that collects disaggregated data on political violence, demonstrations, and select related non-violent developments around the world [29] reported that between August 2025 and August 2026 it recorded 2,007 security incidents involving ENDF[30].

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## 7.3 Intelligence services

7.3.1 For information on intelligence services, see the archived CPIN Ethiopia Actors of Protection 2024.

[26] GPI, 2026 Ethiopia Military Strength, 2026
[27] ENA, , About us, no date
[28] ENA, Ethiopian National Defense Forces Undergoes Historic Modernization … 22 February 2026
[29] ACLED, About ACLED, no date
[30] ACLED, Export tool, 6 August 2026

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## 7.4 Ethiopian federal and state police

7.4.1 The Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC), a U.S. State Department administered public-private partnership that provides security reports, risk assessments and travel-related security information[31], noted in its 2025 reporting on Ethiopia (OSAC 2025 report):

'The Ethiopian Federal Police (EFP) are responsible for investigating crimes that fall under the jurisdiction of federal courts, including any activities in violation of the Constitution that may endanger the Constitutional order, public order, hooliganism, terrorism, trafficking in persons, or transferring of drugs. The EFP also maintains law and order in any region when there is a deteriorating security situation beyond the control of the regional government and a request for intervention is made, or when disputes arise between two or more regional governments and the situation becomes dangerous for the security of the federal government. The EFP, along with Ethiopia's National Intelligence and Security Service, safeguards the security of borders, airports, railway lines/terminals, mining areas, and other vital institutions of the federal government. The EFP delegates powers, when necessary, to regional police commissions. Regional police handle local crime under their jurisdiction and provide officers for traffic control and immediate response to criminal incidents.

'Although EFP and regional police forces are responsible for law enforcement and maintenance of order, the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) and the Ethiopian Air Force (ETAF) provide internal security support. The EFP report to the Prime Minister Office, while the ENDF and ETAF report to the National Defense Ministry. The regional governments (equivalent to a U.S. state) control regional security forces, which are independent from the federal government. Civilian authorities maintain effective control over the security forces. Members of all security forces have reportedly committed abuses.'[32]

7.4.2 According to ACLED data for the period August 2025 to August 2026, federal and regional police forces featured in a number of recorded security incidents in Ethiopia. The Oromia Regional State Police was associated with 77 recorded incidents, followed by the Amhara Regional State Police (62) and Addis Ababa Police (51). The Ethiopian Federal Prison Service was involved in a further 37 incidents. The data indicates that regional police forces, particularly in Oromia and Amhara, remained important actors in the country's security environment during the reporting period[33].

7.4.3 For information on federal and state police forces see archived CPIN Ethiopia Actors of Protection 2024.

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## 7.5 Special forces

7.5.1 For background information on special forces, see archived CPIN Ethiopia Actors of Protection 2024.

[31] OSAC, About us, no date
[32] OSAC, Ethiopia Country Security Report, 9 October 2025
[33] ACLED, Export tool, 9 September 2026

7.5.2 In April 2023, the federal government formally abolished the separate regional special-force command structure. The policy offered personnel transfer to the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF), federal police or regular regional institutions, alongside return to civilian life; it was expressly described at the outset as reorganisation rather than general disarmament[34]. A February 2025 Rift Valley Institute (RVI) report noted: 'On 15 April 2023, the chief of staff of the Ethiopian National Defense Force announced the dissolution of the regional special forces: 'From today there is no organization and structure called regional special force' in Ethiopia.'[35]

7.5.3 An October 2023 RVI report observed:

'The disbanding of the Amhara Special Forces (ASF)—part of a nationwide, albeit unevenly implemented, reorganization of regional forces—in April 2023 provoked armed resistance in the Amhara region. Amhara nationalists considered it a conspiracy to reduce their forces' influence …

'The Amhara Fano insurgency followed the disbanding of regional special forces with significant portions of the ASF defecting and joining the Fano to fight the ENDF, which made substantial deployments to disarm Fano in the region.'[36]

7.5.4 In respect of the Somali Region, Hiiran Online, a Canada-based Somali news website that reports on political, security, humanitarian and social developments in Somalia and the Horn of Africa, reported on 13 April 2023 that President Mustafa Omar Cagjar stated that the Liyu Police Force would not be disbanded, with officers retaining their salaries, ranks and job security. He explained that planned reforms would instead formalise and rebrand the force as an official regional police body, end its military role in border operations and introduce new uniforms. Some Liyu Police officers reportedly welcomed the reforms, indicating that the reorganisation would provide a clearer mandate focused on maintaining regional security and law-enforcement functions.

7.5.5 A February 2025 RVI report noted: '… on 10 April 2023, Gambella region announced the dissolution of its regional special force—one of the first regions to do so. Unlike other regions (for example, Amhara) where the dissolution was resisted, in Gambella the dissolution was smooth but not without scepticism. That is, it was widely believed the dissolution of the Gambella regional special force aimed to weaken the regional government … Regardless of the motives for the dissolution, the process itself did not give rise to violence, as did occur in Amhara. Nonetheless, the disappearance of the regional special force created a huge security vacuum, reinvigorating existing ethnic tensions.'[37]

7.5.6 With respect to Tigray, a March 2026 RVI report noted that the Pretoria Agreement and Nairobi Declaration provided for the disarmament of the Tigray Defence Forces (TDF). According to the report, the TDF began handing over heavy weapons in January 2023, but the force, later renamed the Tigray Security Force (TSF), resisted disarmament. A Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programme launched in November

[34] FANA, Reforms on regional special forces started simultaneously in all regions: Gov't, 7 April 2023
[35] RVI, Conflict trends in Gambella State (2018-2024) (page 7), February 2025
[36] RVI, Ethiopia Conflict Trends analysis: Amhara region, (page 1) October 2023
[37] RVI, Conflict trends in Gambella State (2018-2024) (page 7), February 2025

2024 to process more than 270,000 former fighters was suspended the following month amid concerns over unresolved security, territorial and displacement issues. Although the programme resumed in April 2025, it reportedly stalled again from June 2025 as tensions between Tigrayan and federal authorities increased.

7.5.7 Reports published in 2026 by Addis Standard, an independent trilingual media outlet that publishes content in English, Afaan Oromo and Amharic, cited residents, opposition groups and Human Rights First Ethiopia (HRFE) as alleging that the TDF engaged in coercive recruitment campaigns across parts of Tigray. In June 2026, draft mobilisation legislation reported by Addis Standard and The Reporter Magazine proposed compulsory military service for eligible Tigrayans and penalties for evading mobilisation or obstructing recruitment efforts.

7.5.8 In a report published on 6 July 2026, HRW stated that regional authorities had 'been abducting and unlawfully recruiting civilians, including children as young as 15, for their forces since at least April 2026', with men and boys taken 'on the street, in offices, and in nighttime house-to-house searches, as well as from gold-mining sites'. HRW documented 6 cases of forced recruitment, drawing on remote interviews with 18 people in June 2026, and reported that new recruits were 'first arbitrarily held in administrative offices, jails, or schools then transferred to military camps'. Two people interviewed said that Tigray forces and local officials in Northwestern Zone had detained family members of those who evaded service. The TPLF denied allegations of forced recruitment, stating that those defending the region were serving voluntarily[38].

7.5.9 CPIT did not find information on the status of special forces from other regions in the sources consulted (see Bibliography).

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## 7.6 Kebele communal militia (local militia)

7.6.1 For information on local (kebele) militia, see archived CPIN Ethiopia Actors of Protection 2024.

7.6.2 ACLED recorded that, between 1 January 2024 and 9 October 2026, kebele communal militias were involved in 69 civilian-targeting incidents, resulting in 74 associated fatalities (see section on Violence against civilians).

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## 7.7 Non-state armed actors

7.7.1 The BTI 2026 report stated that, although Ethiopia's monopoly on the use of force was established nationwide in principle, it was challenged by opposition groups and rebellions in many parts of the country. According to the report, armed anti-government groups continued to challenge the state's authority and large areas of the country were under the control of forces not aligned with the government. While the federal government strengthened its control in Tigray following the November 2022 peace agreement, insurgent activity in Amhara and Oromia resulted in the loss of significant territory to non-state actors. The report noted that Fano militias had expanded operations in Amhara and were active in most zones within the region, while

[38] HRW, Ethiopia: Tigray Authorities Forcibly Recruiting Civilians, 6 July 2026

the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) remained active in Oromia and, like Fano in Amhara, controlled many rural areas. The report assessed that both Fano and the OLA challenged the state's monopoly on the use of force in areas under their control or influence, including through the control of strategic locations, the collection of taxes on agricultural products and the coercion of support from local populations.

7.7.2 Between 1 January 2025 and 9 October 2026, ACLED reported 4,793 violent incidents in Ethiopia, resulting in 11,967 fatalities. Incidents involving non-state actors as the primary actor—including Fano, OLF/OLA, TDF, ethnic and communal militias, unidentified armed groups, other armed groups, and foreign actors—accounted for 2,768 incidents (57.8%) and 7,662 fatalities (64.0%). This indicates that non-state actors were responsible for the majority of both recorded violent incidents and associated fatalities during the reporting period.

7.7.3 The table below, based on ACLED data[39], shows events and fatalities by actor between January 2025 and 9 October 2026:

| **Actor** | **Events** | | **Fatalities** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **2025** | **2026** | **2025** | **2026** |
| State Actors – ENDF, police | 1,193 | 832 | 2,618 | 1,686 |
| Fano | 821 | 815 | 2,603 | 2,919 |
| OLF/OLA | 182 | 166 | 538 | 551 |
| TDF | 41 | 110 | 53 | 44 |
| Ethnic/communal militias | 96 | 134 | 226 | 204 |
| Armed groups | 169 | 186 | 222 | 261 |
| Foreign actors | 30 | 18 | 36 | 6 |
| **Total** | **2,532** | **2261** | **6,296** | **5,671** |

7.7.4 CPIT has compiled the table below based on ACLED data, showing non-state actors, including foreign actors, by region between 1 January 2025 and 9 October 2026. The number of actors identified column shows distinct ACLED Actor 1 labels recorded in each region, rather than a count of personnel or organisations:

| **Region** | **No. of actors identified** | **Actor types recorded** | **Events involved** | **Associated fatalities** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Amhara | 18 | Ethnic/communal militias; Fano; Foreign actors; OLF/OLA; Other armed groups; TDF; Unidentified armed groups | 1,603 | 5,015 |
| Oromia | 13 | Ethnic/communal militias; Fano; Foreign actors; OLF/OLA; Other armed groups; Unidentified armed groups | 679 | 1,868 |
| Tigray | 11 | Ethnic/communal militias; Fano; Foreign actors; Other | 221 | 153 |

[39] ACLED, Export tool, 14 October 2026

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | armed groups; TDF; Unidentified armed groups | | |
| Benishangul-Gumuz | 13 | Ethnic/communal militias; Fano; Foreign actors; OLF/OLA; Other armed groups; TDF; Unidentified armed groups | 73 | 270 |
| South Ethiopia Region | 9 | Ethnic/communal militias; OLF/OLA; Unidentified armed groups | 71 | 71 |
| Gambela | 8 | Ethnic/communal militias; Foreign actors; Unidentified armed groups | 44 | 154 |
| Afar | 9 | Ethnic/communal militias; Foreign actors; Other armed groups; TDF; Unidentified armed groups | 41 | 33 |
| Central Ethiopia | 8 | Ethnic/communal militias; Fano; OLF/OLA; Other armed groups; Unidentified armed groups | 28 | 83 |
| Somali | 7 | Ethnic/communal militias; OLF/OLA; Other armed groups; Unidentified armed groups | 12 | 25 |
| Sidama | 2 | Ethnic/communal militias; Fano | 9 | 10 |
| Addis Ababa | 5 | Other armed groups; Unidentified armed groups | 7 | 1 |
| South West Ethiopia | 2 | Ethnic/communal militias | 5 | 10 |
| Dire Dawa | 2 | OLF/OLA; Unidentified armed groups | 2 | 7 |

7.7.5 CPIT analysis of the table indicates that non-state armed actors were present across all regions, but the scale and intensity of activity varied significantly between regions. The highest levels of non-state actor activity and associated fatalities were recorded in Amhara, Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz and Tigray. The presence of non-state armed actors across multiple regions indicates that the state's ability to exercise an uncontested monopoly on the use of force continued to be challenged.

7.7.6 For more information on Fano see Ethiopia: Amhara and Amhara opposition groups.

7.7.7 For more information on OLA see Ethiopia: Oromos, the Oromo Liberation Front and the Oromo Liberation Army.

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## 8. Capacity and effectiveness of law enforcement agencies

### 8.1 Reform and training

8.1.1 Interpeace[40], an international peacebuilding organisation working in partnership with the United Nations, published a paper in November 2024 setting out lessons from the first phase of the Ethiopia Community Policing

[40] Interpeace, About, no date

Programme, implemented with the Ethiopian Police University between March 2021 and December 2023. It observed:

'In 2020, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) published its first ever Ethiopian Police Doctrine. The Doctrine was part of an institutional reform to promote peace and democratic governance. The central reform agenda stipulated in the Ethiopian Police Doctrine is to 'Demilitarise, Depoliticise, Decentralise and Democratise' the police and ensure police conduct is guided by four key values: police professionalism, respect for human rights, integrity, and respect for diversity. The anticipated method to achieve reform is the establishment of a community policing approach characterised by openness, fairness, community involvement, and prevention. It also describes a new approach to police accountability and oversight - making it clear that the police should operate with public consent and their performance be measured by levels of public satisfaction and confidence, rather than measuring crime levels and arrest rates. As part of the implementation strategy – the doctrine has a strategy to develop two types of community-police collaboration structures. The Independent Advisory Groups (IAGs) have an oversight function over the police and are a structure designed to work with the police to identify priority problems at the community level. This structure operates at all of Ethiopia's administrative levels (federal, regional, zonal and Woreda level). The second structure are neighbourhood watch groups. These structures are meant to assist police with patrols and implementation of action plans to improve community security, and these operate only at the Woreda level. These structures have since been formed in many parts of the country, but without support, their effectiveness is limited.'[41]

8.1.2 In its August 2024 submission to the UPR, Ethiopia stated that the Ministry of Justice had provided basic human rights training to 9,250 police officers, public prosecutors, judges, civil servants and members of the public. According to the report, 3,064 police officers and members of the security forces had also received training on conflict mitigation. Additionally, regional justice bureaus had provided human rights training and that 19,450 prison administrators and leaders had received training on prisoners' rights aimed at preventing human rights violations and promoting accountability. The report also noted that a training manual on human trafficking and migrant smuggling had been developed and that more than 3,500 security, law enforcement and judicial officers had received training based on this manual[42].

8.1.3 On 17 January 2025 All Africa, a news aggregation and publishing platform that reproduces and distributes content from a range of African media outlets, governments and organisations[43], citing the Addis Standard reported that the Ethiopian Federal Police Commission had inaugurated an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Simulation Training Centre at its headquarters. According to the source, the centre forms part of the Commission's use of drone technology, which Commissioner General

[41] Interpeace, Strengthening Collaborative Security Management in Ethiopia…, November 2024
[42] HRC, National report submitted pursuant to Human Rights … (paras 44, 46,121) 23 August 2024
[43] All Africa, About us, no date

Demelash Gebremichael stated would support urban security, border protection, contraband control and efforts to address human trafficking[44].

8.1.4 On 9 April 2025, the Ethiopian News Agency (ENA), the Ethiopian government's official news agency, reported that a delegation from the Nigerian Military Resource Centre visited the headquarters of the Ethiopian Federal Police to observe ongoing police reform initiatives. According to ENA, Ethiopian Federal Police officials outlined institutional operations and reform activities, and demonstrated policing infrastructure and equipment, including communication systems, a command and control centre, a public reporting service (991), the Ethiopian Federal Police mobile application (EFPApp) and surveillance technology. The visit was presented by ENA as an opportunity to showcase developments in police capacity and policing infrastructure.

8.1.5 According to the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), Ethiopia's state-owned public broadcaster, whose reporting on government institutions and policies may reflect official perspectives[45], the Ethiopian Federal Police's five-year strategy, announced in July 2025, included objectives to expand community policing, strengthen training and capacity building, increase cooperation with international law enforcement partners, and adopt additional technological tools for crime prevention and investigation. EBC also reported that the strategy emphasised transparency, accountability and human rights standards[46].

8.1.6 On 11 July 2025 CIVIPOL, a French government-linked technical cooperation agency that implements and supports international projects in the fields of security, policing, border management and justice reform[47], reported the inauguration of a Crime Scene Examination (CSE) Training Centre focusing on trafficking in persons (TiP) and the smuggling of migrants (SoM) at the Ethiopian Police University (EPU) in Sendafa on 10 July 2025. According to CIVIPOL, the centre was established through cooperation between the EPU, the European Union-funded Better Migration Management (BMM) Programme, and the EU-funded Support to Criminal Justice Reform in Ethiopia Project. The facility includes classrooms, reconstructed crime-scene training rooms, a forensic laboratory and outdoor training areas for practical exercises. CIVIPOL stated that the centre builds on a TiP/SoM investigation curriculum endorsed by the EPU in 2021 and crime-scene management procedures endorsed by the Ethiopian Federal Police Commission in 2022. The source further reported that the centre is intended to support training on the investigation and management of trafficking and migrant smuggling cases and forms part of wider efforts to strengthen institutional training capacity[48].

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## 8.2 Effectiveness

8.2.1 The USSD Trafficking in Persons 2025 report noted that Ethiopia maintained specialised anti-trafficking investigation and prosecution units at federal

[44] All Africa, Ethiopian Federal Police Launch Drone Simulation Training Center, 17 January 2025
[45] State Media Monitor, Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), 28 April 2026
[46] EBC, Ethiopian Federal Police Aims For Top Five Status in Africa by 2027, 23 July 2025
[47] CIVIPOL, Our missions and values, no date
[48] CIVIPOL, Inauguration of the Crime Scene Examination Training Centre on …, 11 July 2025

level, while regional authorities had delegated powers to investigate and prosecute trafficking offences within their jurisdictions. According to the report, specialised investigators and prosecutors received training on victim-centred investigations and evidence gathering. However, the report noted continuing challenges in identifying victims and providing protection services for victim-witnesses, which affected the prosecution of trafficking cases. The report also noted cooperation with neighbouring and regional states on cross-border trafficking investigations[49].

8.2.2 The same source further noted that Ethiopia did not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but was making significant efforts to do so. According to the report, the government increased efforts to investigate and prosecute trafficking offences, including cases involving allegedly complicit officials, identified more potential trafficking victims, expanded oversight of private employment agencies, introduced labour inspection guidelines intended to improve cooperation between labour inspectors and law enforcement personnel during criminal investigations, and operationalised its first government-run shelter for trafficking victims in Dire Dawa. The report stated that, during the reporting period, authorities investigated 470 trafficking cases, while a further 103 investigations initiated in previous reporting periods remained ongoing. The government prosecuted 697 individuals for trafficking-related offences, with prosecutions involving an additional 274 individuals from previous reporting periods also remaining ongoing. Courts convicted 340 traffickers, with sentences reportedly ranging from one year to life imprisonment, in addition to fines[50].

8.2.3 A 21 June 2025 report by Fana Media Corporation (FMC), an Ethiopian media organisation that reports on government activities, public policy and national affairs[51], stated that, at a graduation ceremony at the Ethiopian Police University, President Taye Atske-Selassie said that the Ethiopian Police had expanded their institutional capacity through the use of modern technology and regional training initiatives. According to FMC, the President stated that the Ethiopian Federal Police had adopted technological tools to support crime prevention and criminal investigations. He also highlighted the role of the Ethiopian Police University in training police personnel, including students from neighbouring countries, and said that these initiatives supported regional cooperation in addressing crime and security challenges[52].

8.2.4 On 21 September 2025, ENA reported the Commissioner General of the Ethiopian Federal Police, Demelash Gebremichael, stating that recent reforms had led to changes in the organisation and operation of the Federal Police. He stated that the Federal Police had expanded its use of technology, including drones, digital communication radio systems, a command and control centre, and a public reporting application (EFPApp). ENA further reported that the Commissioner General said the Federal Police had a presence throughout the country and was working with other security agencies and international law enforcement organisations, including Interpol,

[49] USSD, 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report: Ethiopia (prosecution), June 2025
[50] Africa Organized Crime Index, Ethiopia 2025
[51] FMC, About us, no date
[52] FMC, Prez. Prez. Taye acclaims Ethiopian police's leap forward in technology … , 21 June 2025

the African Police Cooperation Mechanism (AFRIPOL) and the Eastern Africa Police Chiefs Cooperation Organisation (EAPCCO)[53].

8.2.5 On 9 February 2026 Ethio Negari, an Addis Ababa based private media organization[54] reported that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed inaugurated Ethiopia's first 'smart' police station in Addis Ababa. According to the source, the facility allows members of the public to report crimes, submit information and request police documents through automated systems without direct interaction with police officers. Ethio Negari reported that the station operates continuously and is equipped with camera and sensor technologies supported by artificial intelligence (AI). The source stated that government officials presented the initiative as part of the Digital Ethiopia 2030 strategy to expand the use of digital technologies in public services. Ethio Negari noted that the implementation of automated policing systems may face challenges, including dependence on reliable electricity and internet connectivity, varying levels of digital literacy among users, and concerns relating to data privacy and the storage and use of personal information.[55]

8.2.6 Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance and quality of life[56]. In January 2025, Afrobarometer published a report based on a special module included in its Round 9 survey (2021-2023), examining public experiences of and perceptions of police professionalism across Africa, including Ethiopia. The Ethiopia survey was conducted between May and June 2023 and was based on interviews with 2,400 adults[57] (Afrobarometer January 2025 report). The report noted:

'One in nine citizens (11%) say they requested police assistance during the previous year. Four times as many (43%) encountered the police in other situations, such as at checkpoints, during identity checks or traffic stops, or during an investigation.

'Among citizens who asked for help from the police, half (50%) say it was easy to get assistance, but 35% say they had to pay a bribe. Among those who encountered the police in other situations, 17% report paying a bribe to avoid problems.'[58]

8.2.7 The same Afrobarometer report also noted: 'A majority (57%) of Ethiopians say they trust the police "somewhat" or "a lot." ...Only one-third (34%) of citizens say the police "often" or "always" operate professionally and respect all citizens' rights...A majority (58%) of Ethiopians are critical of the government's performance on reducing crime.'[59]

8.2.8 The Africa Organised Crime Index 2025 report noted: 'With regard to law enforcement, Ethiopia has implemented various reforms to combat organized crime, establishing specialized police and justice units targeting among other things human trafficking. Despite these advancements, challenges such as corruption, impunity, ethnic tensions and gaps in law

[53] ENA, Ethiopian Federal Police Modernizes Operations with Advanced, …, 21 September 2025
[54] Ethio Negari, About us, no date
[55] Ethio Negari, Ethiopia Launches First Unmanned 'Smart' Police Station in …, 9 February 2026
[56] Afrobarometer, About, no date
[57] Afrobarometer, Ethiopians trust the police, but see them falling short … (page 2), 14 January 2025
[58] Afrobarometer, Ethiopians trust the police, but see them falling short … (page 2), 14 January 2025
[59] Afrobarometer, Ethiopians trust the police, but see them falling short … (page 2), 14 January 2025

enforcement persist, undermining public trust and hindering the effectiveness of policing efforts.'[60]

8.2.9 On 8 June 2026, Fana Media Corporation (FMC) reported that the Commissioner General of the Ethiopian Federal Police, Demelash Gebre-Michael, stated that reforms implemented since 2018 had strengthened the Federal Police's crime prevention and investigative capacity. According to FMC, he stated that the Federal Police had increased efforts to address human trafficking and other transnational crimes, strengthened cooperation with international law enforcement partners, and continued to modernise its operational systems in response to evolving security challenges[61].

8.2.10 The OSAC October 2025 report stated that local law enforcement may have limited capacity to respond to serious crimes[62].

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## 8.3 Accessibility

8.3.1 The Afrobarometer January 2025 report observed:

'One factor that might affect people's sense of security is the presence of security forces. As part of their data collection process, Afrobarometer field teams make on-the-ground observations in each census enumeration area (EA) they visit about services and facilities that are available in the area. Since the EAs visited are selected to represent the population of the country as a whole, these data provide reliable indicators of infrastructure and service availability.

'In Ethiopia, Afrobarometer field teams found police stations in or within easy walking distance of about half (48%) of the EAs they visited. They saw police officers or police vehicles in 21% of the EAs. Other signs of security-related activity were less common, including soldiers or other military (17%), roadblocks by the police or army (15%), customs checkpoints (11%), and roadblocks by private security or the local community (9%).'[63]

8.3.2 The same source further reported that 'Only one in nine respondents (11%) say they requested police assistance during the previous year. About four times as many (43%) encountered the police in other situations, such as at checkpoints, during identity checks or traffic stops, or during an investigation…

'Experience of police support is mixed. Among citizens who asked the police for help, half (50%) say that getting assistance was easy, while the other 50% say it was difficult.'[64]

8.3.3 A 2016 report by the Netherlands Institute of International Relations (Clingendael) noted that the Ethiopian Federal Police estimated its own size at around 30,000 personnel. CPIT did not find current estimates of federal police personnel in the sources consulted (see Bibliography).

8.3.4 In 2025 the International Journal of Police Science, Justice and Development (IJPSJD), a peer-reviewed journal published annually by the

[60] Africa Organized Crime Index, Ethiopia 2025
[61] FMC, Federal Police Building Modern Force to Match Ethiopia's Changing Security …, 8 June 2026
[62] OSAC, Ethiopia Country Security Report, 9 October 2025
[63] Afrobarometer, Ethiopians trust the police, but see them falling … (pages 5 to 6), 14 January 2025
[64] Afrobarometer, Ethiopians trust the police, but see them falling … (pages 5 to 6), 14 January 2025

Oromia Police College[65] published a study examined practices, challenges, and prospects of crime investigation in Oromia Police. According to the study as of 2024 Oromia had a police force of 59,528 officers. With a population of 40,884,000 this translated to one police officer to 687 people[66]. CPIT did not find information on police numbers in other regions in the sources consulted (see Bibliography).

8.3.5 On 15 July 2025, ACAPS, an independent non-profit organisation providing analysis and needs assessments on humanitarian crises[67], published a secondary data review on gender-based violence in Ethiopia. Citing the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and UN Women, the review stated:

'Facilities within the justice system lack the capacity to provide comprehensive, survivor-centred support for survivors. Barriers include inaccessible infrastructure for people with disabilities, language challenges, and gaps in legislation ensuring survivors' access to shelter, rehabilitation centres, and essential services. A report by the Ethiopian and Human Rights Commission found that, despite requirements for OSCs to house police, prosecutors, and health professionals, only medical and psychological services were available in Addis Ababa, Harar, and Jimma. In Addis Ababa, police and prosecutor offices were also inaccessible to non-Amharic speakers. This creates barriers to accessing justice because police and prosecutor offices do not provide translation or interpretation services, limiting survivors' ability to seek justice and support'[68].

8.3.6 The same source further stated: 'Those who seek justice often face a system that can cause secondary trauma, with reported gaps in police capacity and GBV understanding. Misconduct such as victim blaming, minimising incidents…further undermines survivors' access to justice and support.'[69]

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## 8.4 Corruption

8.4.1 The BTI 2026 report observed:

'Corruption exists in various forms, including, but not limited to, clientelism, kleptocracy, rent-seeking and state capture. While anti-corruption laws remain strong in principle, they are not adequately implemented. In 2022, a National Anti-Corruption Committee was established by the prime minister, and many public officials accused of corruption were arrested in 2023 and 2024. Some regional governments also established similar committees following the committee's establishment at the federal level. However, some actions taken against public officeholders for abuse of office appear to have been politically motivated.

'At lower levels, woreda judges are often accused of taking bribes from wealthy individuals in exchange for favorable rulings, a problem most visible in the newly created regions of the former Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region. Public officials at lower levels (woreda, kebele) are often accused of blocking government-provided resources such as fertilizer

[65] IJPSJD, Scope of the Journal, no date
[66] Ewentu, et al, IJPSJD, The Practices, Challenges, and Prospects of Crime … (page 20), 2025
[67] ACAPS, Who we are, no date
[68] ACAPS, Ethiopia – Gender-based violence: secondary data review, 15 July 2025
[69] ACAPS, Ethiopia – Gender-based violence: secondary data review, 15 July 2025

and water to further their political aims. The public has responded positively to anti-corruption efforts by the government but has expressed reservations, fearing that officials loyal to the government will not be held accountable for abuses of power.'[70]

8.4.2 The USSD trafficking in persons 2025 report noted:

'Corruption and official complicity in trafficking crimes remained significant concerns, inhibiting law enforcement action. Reports of corruption, including the solicitation of bribes and production of fraudulent documentation to facilitate trafficking crimes, among police, immigration officers, and judicial officials remained pervasive. In March 2025, eight military officials and one police officer were convicted and sentenced to eight years and five months in prison, with a monetary fine of 10,000 birr ($75.17), for transporting potential trafficking victims along the border using an Ethiopian Defense Force military vehicle. In 2023, the government investigated and charged more than 60 immigration officials, including the former Deputy Director General of Immigration and Citizenship Services, for facilitating potential human trafficking and migrant smuggling crimes by providing falsified approval letters for citizens to work abroad; officials initiated prosecutions of some of the officials, however, the legal proceedings remained ongoing at the end of the reporting period …'[71]

8.4.3 The FH 2025 report stated that petty bribery and corruption remained widespread in Ethiopia, including among local officials and police. It noted that corruption within the justice system continued to be a significant challenge and reported allegations that corruption accusations were sometimes used by the ruling Prosperity Party against public servants and opposition figures. The report also cited allegations by the Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission that federal and regional officials had dismissed anti-corruption personnel after they exposed misconduct by senior officials[72].

8.4.4 Transparency International (TI) noted: 'The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) is the most widely used global corruption ranking in the world. It measures how corrupt each country's public sector is perceived to be, according to experts and businesspeople.' The TI Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2025 scored Ethiopia 38/100 and ranked it 96/180 globally. TI explained: 'A country's score is the perceived level of public sector corruption on a scale of 0-100, where 0 means highly corrupt and 100 means very clean. A country's rank is its position relative to the other countries in the index. Ranks can change merely if the number of countries included in the index changes.'

8.4.5 The Afrobarometer January 2025 report observed:

'Among those who asked for help from the police, more than one in three (35%) say they had to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour for a police officer in order to get the assistance they needed.

'Among Ethiopians who encountered the police in situations such as checkpoints, during identity checks or traffic stops, or during an investigation,

[70] BTI, Ethiopia Country Report 2026 (page 11)
[71] USSD, 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report: Ethiopia (prosecution), June 2025
[72] FH, Freedom in the World 2025 Ethiopia (section c 2), 2025

one-sixth (17%) say they had to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour to avoid problems.'[73]

8.4.6 The same source added:

'Considering the relatively small proportion of citizens who say they paid bribes to the police, it may be surprising that more than four in five Ethiopians (82%) believe that at least "some" police officials are corrupt …

'About one-third (32%) of citizens say that "most" or "all" police are corrupt – the sixth-worst rating among 11 institutions and leaders the survey asked about, though scoring better than civil servants (38%), business executives (36%), city councillors (35%), tax officials (34%) and judges and magistrates (34%).

Perceptions that most/all police are corrupt are slightly more common among men than women (34% vs. 30%) and among urbanites than rural residents (35% vs. 31%) …

Citizens with post-secondary qualifications (40%) are more likely to perceive widespread police corruption than those with less education (29%-33%), as are young adults (33%) compared to those over age 55 (28%) …

'Findings also suggest possible links between perceptions of police corruption and interaction with the police (Figure 11). Citizens who live in EAs where field teams saw police officers or police vehicles are somewhat more likely to say that most/all police are corrupt than their counterparts (36% vs. 31%). Similarly, citizens who "often" encountered police are slightly more likely to see most/all police as corrupt than those who had no encounters with police (33% vs. 30%).' [74]

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# 9. Levels of crime and violence

## 9.1 Crime rates

9.1.1 The MoJ October 2025 report identified the absence of a national criminal information database as one of the major gaps in the criminal justice system[75].

9.1.2 The World Bank reported that in 2012 (latest available figure) Ethiopia had approximately 8.5 intentional homicides per 100,000 population[76]. The MoJ October 2025 report reported 11.9 intentional homicides per 100,000 population during 2024/2025[77] but did not report an overall crime rate.

9.1.3 The Global Organised Crime Index (GI-TOC) is a global assessment tool produced by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) that measures levels of organised crime and state resilience across 193 countries. The Index draws on quantitative and qualitative data and expert assessments to evaluate criminal markets, criminal actors and resilience to organised crime[78]. The 2025 (latest) GI-TOC ranked Ethiopia 50th out of 193 countries globally, 14th out of 54 African countries and 6th

[73] Afrobarometer, Ethiopians trust the police, but see them falling … (pages 5 to 6), 14 January 2025
[74] Afrobarometer, Ethiopians trust the police, but see them falling … (pages 8 to 9), 14 January 2025
[75] GoE MoJ, Ministry of Justice 5-Year Strategy (2018-2022) (section 2.3.1), 28 October 2025
[76] World Bank, Intentional homicides (per 100,000 people), no date
[77] GoE MoJ, Ministry of Justice 5-Year Strategy (2018-2022), (section 3.4.3), 28), October 2025
[78] GI-TOC, About the Index, no date

out of 9 East African countries on criminality. On resiliency, it ranked Ethiopia 111th out of 193 globally, 17th out of 54 African countries and 2nd out of 9 East African countries. The Index scored Ethiopia 6.03 out of 10 on criminality and 4.50 out of 10 on resilience. Ethiopia's criminality score indicates a comparatively high level of organised criminal activity relative to other African countries while its resilience score indicates a moderate capacity to prevent, investigate and respond to organised crime. The criminality score is derived from assessments of 15 criminal markets and 5 types of criminal actors[79].

9.1.4 The Afrobarometer January 2025 report observed:

'While a majority of Ethiopians say they never felt unsafe while walking in their neighbourhood (54%) and never feared crime in their home (67%) during the previous year, substantial proportions of the population report a different experience … Almost half (46%) say they felt unsafe in their neighbourhood at least once, including 26% who did so "several times," "many times," or "always." One in three (33%) report fearing crime in their home at least once.

'Feelings of insecurity in the neighbourhood or at home have increased marginally (by 4 percentage points each) since 2020 …

'The poorest citizens are considerably more likely to experience both forms of insecurity than their better-off counterparts. Respondents experiencing high lived poverty are more than twice as likely to report feeling unsafe at least "several times" in their neighbourhoods (42% vs. 18% of those with no lived poverty) and to fear crime in their home (35% vs. 14%) … Feelings of insecurity are also more common among men than women (by 6 and 3 percentage points on the respective indicators).'[80]

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## 9.2 Nature of crime

9.2.1 The USSD 2024 country report noted:

'… In August [2024], Addis Standard, BBC Amharic, and other local media reported rising occurrences of kidnapping in Amhara Region … The EHRC revealed a range of actors, including government security forces, organized criminal groups, and armed forces, were involved in the abductions.

'Eritrean forces reportedly continued to abduct Tigrayans in northern Ethiopia where the two countries share borders and the EDF maintained its forces. On April 26, the mayor of Zalambessa, a town along the Eritrean Ethiopian border, reported to the Addis Reporter EDF troops kidnapped more than 100 residents.'[81]

9.2.2 Freedom House Freedom in the World 2025 report covering events in 2024 (FH 2025 report) observed: 'Media outlets and other monitors described a sharp increase in the number of kidnappings in Amhara and Oromia throughout 2024, with victims frequently alleging that officials or security forces were involved and had taken a share of high ransoms. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission attributed the abductions to both criminal gangs

[79] GI-TOC, Ethiopia, 2025
[80] Afrobarometer, Ethiopians trust the police, but see them falling … (pages 2 to 3), 14 January 2025
[81] USSD, 2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia (section 2 c), 12 August 2025

and members of the government security forces.'[82]

9.2.3 The July 2025 ACAPS secondary data review on gender-based violence in Ethiopia stated:

'Forced bride kidnapping or abduction refers to a longstanding tradition where a man abducts, hides and rapes a girl or woman and then asserts his right to marry her as the father of her potential child. This practice occurs mostly in rural areas and is a culturally accepted way of marriage in some communities … There is no recent data on the prevalence of forced bride kidnapping or abduction across the regions nor on how current humanitarian crises influence this HTP [harmful traditional practice]. Despite the absence of recent data, however, it is believed to remain a widespread practice rather than rare. In cases of forced abduction or kidnapping, girls and women have no say in the matter. For example, in southern regions, a woman may be compelled to stay with her abductor and live as his wife without her consent. Those who resist are often forced to flee their families and communities, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation … Given the cultural significance placed on virginity prior to marriage, survivors also face stigma and are forced to marry their abuser to preserve family honour or avoid exile.'[83]

9.2.4 The MoJ October 2025 report identified several priority crime categories for prevention, investigation and prosecution including organised and transnational crime, corruption and bribery, terrorism and terrorist financing, trafficking in persons, migrant smuggling, crimes committed against women and children and intentional homicide[84].

9.2.5 According to the October 2025 OSAC report, criminal activity in Ethiopia included petty theft, robbery, violent assault, banditry, cattle raiding and kidnapping for ransom[85].

9.2.6 The 2025 Africa Organised Crime Index noted that insecurity in parts of Oromia, Amhara and Tigray facilitated crimes such as kidnapping, extortion, arms trafficking and human smuggling, and observed that corruption remained pervasive with state actors often implicated in criminal activity[86]. On human trafficking, the index stated:

'Ethiopia's human trafficking market has evolved in recent years, exacerbated by conflicts in Tigray, Amhara, and Oromia, which have led to increased displacement. Although the most intense phase of the crisis has passed, many Ethiopians – particularly young women – continue to migrate under precarious conditions, often falling victim to trafficking...Ethiopia remains a source and transit hub, with trafficking routes expanding to Western Asia and Europe. The market involves networked groups, foreign operatives and corrupt officials facilitating illicit flows.'[87]

9.2.7 The 2026 Human Rights Watch report, covering events in 2025, further reported that government forces and Fano militia in Amhara were responsible for war crimes and other serious abuses, including drone strikes causing civilian harm, abductions, killings, restrictions on humanitarian

[82] FH, Freedom in the World 2025 Ethiopia (section c 2), 2025
[83] ACAPS, Ethiopia – Gender-based violence: secondary data review, 15 July 2025
[84] MoJ, Ministry of Justice 5-Year Strategy (2018-2022 EC) (pages 19 to 20, 23 to 25), October 2025
[85] OSAC, Ethiopia Country Security Report 9 October 2025
[86] Africa Organized Crime Index, Ethiopia, 17 November 2025
[87] Africa Organized Crime Index, Ethiopia, 17 November 2025

access, kidnappings for ransom and torture, while also noting that Eritrean troops in Tigray committed rape and other forms of sexual violence against women in areas under their control[88].

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## 9.3 Violence against civilians

9.3.1 The ACLED database records reported incidents of civilian targeting and associated fatalities. Civilian-targeting variable identifies events in which civilians were the main or sole target and does not include events in which civilians were incidentally harmed. Civilian-targeting incidents include attacks, abductions or forced disappearances, sexual violence and other forms of violence directed against civilians by state or non-state actors.

9.3.2 CPIT analysis of the ACLED data indicates that, between 1 January 2024 and 9 October 2026, ACLED recorded 1,797 civilian-targeting incidents, which resulted in 4,366 fatalities.

9.3.3 The table below, based on ACLED data, shows civilian-targeting incidents by actor reported between 1 January 2024 and 9 October 2026:

| Actor | 2024 | 2025 | 9 Oct 2026 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ENDF | 260 | 136 | 76 | 472 |
| Federal police | 4 | 3 | 6 | 13 |
| State police | 44 | 53 | 48 | 145 |
| TDF | 4 | 16 | 41 | 61 |
| TPF | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Prosperity Party | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| OLF/OLA | 121 | 93 | 65 | 279 |
| Fano Youth Militia | 154 | 71 | 53 | 278 |
| Unidentified Armed Groups | 109 | 129 | 69 | 307 |
| Other armed groups | 3 | 2 | 2 | 7 |
| Ethnic militia | 45 | 26 | 27 | 98 |
| Kebele Militia | 28 | 24 | 17 | 69 |
| Rioters / protestors | 11 | 15 | 8 | 34 |
| Cross border | 8 | 17 | 6 | 31 |
| **Total** | **792** | **587** | **418** | **1,797** |

9.3.4 CPIT analysis of the table indicates that civilians were exposed to protection risks from a range of state and non-state actors. The ENDF was responsible for the largest share of reported civilian-targeting incidents (26.3%), but significant numbers of incidents were also attributed to unidentified armed groups (17.1%), the OLA/OLF (15.5%) and Fano militias (15.5%), with state and federal police also implicated. State police accounted for 8.1% of incidents and federal police for 0.7%. The involvement of multiple actors, including state security forces, suggests that protection risks were driven by broader insecurity rather than the actions of a single group and, in some areas, may have limited the availability of effective state protection.

9.3.5 During the period under review, from 1 January 2024 to 9 October 2026, ACLED recorded 4,366 civilian-targeting fatalities.

| Actor | 2024 | 2025 | 9 Oct 2026 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|

[88] HRW, World Report 2026; Ethiopia, 4 February 2026

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ENDF | 990 | 517 | 188 | 1,695 |
| Federal police | 0 | 2 | 5 | 7 |
| Unidentified Armed Groups | 152 | 186 | 115 | 453 |
| Other armed groups | 2 | 13 | 16 | 31 |
| OLF/OLA | 329 | 237 | 144 | 710 |
| Fano Youth | 430 | 140 | 144 | 714 |
| AFNF | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| State police | 83 | 97 | 92 | 272 |
| Ethnic militia | 176 | 66 | 76 | 318 |
| Kebele Militia | 19 | 33 | 22 | 74 |
| TDF | 1 | 5 | 7 | 13 |
| Rioters / protestors | 8 | 19 | 3 | 30 |
| Cross border | 13 | 24 | 12 | 49 |
| TPF | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total** | **2203** | **1339** | **824** | **4,366** |

9.3.6 The ACLED data suggests that:

- State actors were a significant source of civilian fatalities, even though fatalities attributed to them declined over time. The ENDF was responsible for 1,695 fatalities (38.8% of all recorded fatalities), making it the most frequently reported actor, despite a reduction from 990 fatalities in 2024 to 188 in 2026. State and federal police accounted for a further 279 fatalities (6.3% of all recorded fatalities) during the period.
- Non-state armed actors accounted for 54.9% of fatalities, of which OLF/OLA and Fano Youth were each responsible for 16.3%, unidentified armed groups for 10.4% and ethnic militias for 7.3%.

9.3.7 CPIT has produced the table below, based on ACLED data, showing civilian-targeting incidents and fatalities by event sub-event type and year between 1 January 2024 and 9 October 2026:

| **Sub-event type** | **Events** | | | | **Fatalities** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **2024** | **2025** | **2026** | **Total** | **2024** | **2025** | **2026** | **Total** |
| Attack | 553 | 413 | 283 | **1,249** | 1,874 | 1,115 | 718 | **3,707** |
| Abduction/forced disappearance | 103 | 104 | 80 | **287** | 0 | 0 | 0 | **0** |
| Sexual violence | 46 | 20 | 9 | **75** | 12 | 8 | 11 | **31** |
| Air/drone strike | 30 | 14 | 22 | **66** | 224 | 145 | 39 | **408** |
| Shelling/artillery/ missile attack | 21 | 14 | 13 | **48** | 71 | 34 | 42 | **147** |
| Grenade | 24 | 6 | 2 | **32** | 12 | 18 | 7 | **37** |
| Mob violence | 3 | 10 | 7 | **20** | 0 | 17 | 2 | **19** |
| Excessive force against protesters | 8 | 6 | 1 | **15** | 8 | 2 | 1 | **11** |
| Landmine/IED | 4 | 0 | 1 | **5** | 2 | 0 | 4 | **6** |
| **Total** | **792** | **587** | **418** | **1,797** | **2,203** | **1,339** | **824** | **4,366** |

9.3.8 CPIT analysis of the table shows:

- A consistent decline in civilian targeting incidents and fatalities between 2024 and 2025, with recorded events falling from 792 to 587 and fatalities from 2,203 to 1,339. As of October 2026, ACLED recorded 418 incidents and 824 fatalities.
- Attacks were by far the most common form of civilian targeting, accounting for 1,249 incidents (69.5%) and 3,707 fatalities (84.9%), indicating that direct attacks on civilians remained the primary driver of civilian harm.
- Abductions and forced disappearances were also widespread, with 287 incidents, although these events were not associated with reported fatalities.
- Air/drone strikes (66 incidents, 408 fatalities) and shelling/artillery attacks (48 incidents, 147 fatalities) were less frequent but often highly lethal.
- Incidents of sexual violence were comparatively limited (75 events) but persisted throughout the period.

9.3.9 Regarding the number of recorded sexual violence events, ACLED notes that recorded incidents are likely to represent only a fraction of actual cases. The dataset captures only conflict-related and political violence, excludes domestic and other non-political forms of sexual violence, and records incidents rather than the number of victims. ACLED further highlights that sexual violence is often underreported due to stigma, fear of reprisals, legal barriers and trauma. Consequently, the number of recorded sexual violence incidents should be treated as indicative rather than as an actual count.

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## 10. Rule of law and judiciary

### 10.1 Judicial independence

10.1.1 The Africa Integrity Indicators (AII), a governance monitoring initiative developed by Global Integrity in partnership with the Mo Ibrahim Foundation that covers all African countries[89], noted in its 2026 assessment covering developments as of June 2025[90] that Ethiopia's Constitution establishes a separation of powers between the executive, legislative and judicial branches and provides that judicial authority is vested in independent and impartial courts. It further stated that the Federal Courts Proclamation No. 1234/2021, together with regional legislation, reinforces judicial independence by setting out the structure and functioning of the judiciary and providing a legal framework intended to ensure that judicial decisions are based on the law rather than political influence[91].

10.1.2 Ethiopia stated in its August 2024 UPR submission that the Federal Courts Proclamation No. 1234/2021 introduced judicial self-administration and granted the courts greater autonomy over budgetary and human resource matters, which the government described as measures aimed at enhancing judicial independence[92].

[89] AII, About the Africa Integrity Indicators, no date
[90] Africa Integrity Indicators, Methodology
[91] Africa Integrity Indicators, Africa Integrity Indicators 2014-2025 (Ethiopia), 2025
[92] HRC, National report submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council … (para 88) 23 August 2024

10.1.3 The FH 2025 report also stated:

'The constitution guarantees judicial independence, but courts face political interference and lack autonomy in practice. Recent reforms have embedded structural flaws and institutional biases, such as granting military courts exclusive jurisdiction over crimes involving military personnel, which contradicts international standards and undermines prosecutorial independence. Judges who attempt to exercise independence face removal from cases or arrest … Courts remain complicit in ensuring impunity for security forces, especially in relation to the treatment of political prisoners.'[93]

10.1.4 On 19 October 2024 Addis Standard reported on a statement issued on 18 October 2024 by the Amhara Region Judges' Association. According to Addis Standard, the Association:

'… condemned the ongoing detention of judges across the restive Amhara region, reporting that over 35 judges were "unjustly detained and later released" in the past year, with eight judges still in detention … the detention of judges in the Amhara region has reportedly escalated, with some incidents "resulting in fatalities." The Association described the practice as "dangerous," stating that it "undermines judicial independence," and added that it not only interferes with judicial functions but also compromises the professional integrity of the judiciary … The Association said most of these arrests were made "in connection with their professional duties" and condemned the practice of "publicly arresting and detaining judges while they are actively serving." Despite ongoing dialogue efforts between the Association's leadership and court officials to address the issue, the problem "persists," the statement said.'[94]

10.1.5 On 22 January 2025 Addis Standard reported that the Yaya Gulele District Court in North Shewa Zone of the Oromia region had suspended its operations following the reported beating and intimidation of two judges by government security forces[95].

10.1.6 The Africa Integrity Indicators 2025 assessment scored Ethiopia 25/100 on judicial independence on a scale of 0 to 100, where a score of 0 indicates no meaningful independence, 50 partial independence and 100 full independence[96]. The same source commented:

'During the research period [September 2023 to June 2025], several cases have emerged that raise concerns about the independence of judges. In the Amhara region, 36 judges were arrested between December 2024 and February 2025, primarily due to the rulings they made based on Ethiopian legal documents. Judges faced interference from the executive branch when referencing existing laws, proclamations and policies.

'A significant issue is the lack of regional legislation in Amhara that ensures judicial immunity, which court officials have long criticized for jeopardizing the freedom and impartiality of justice. Although conditions vary across regions, judges face considerable insecurity in areas with high security risks. From November 2023 to March 2024, a total of 103 judges resigned, leaving 937 vacancies in the Amhara region. The main reasons for this exodus

[93] FH, Freedom in the World 2025 - Ethiopia (Section F1), 27 August 2025
[94] Addis Standard, News: Over 35 judges detained 'unjustly' in Amhara region…, 19 October 2024
[95] Addis Standard, News: Yaya Gulele district court in Oromia suspends…, 22,January 2025
[96] Africa Integrity Indicators, Africa Integrity Indicators 2014-2025 (Ethiopia), 2025

include insufficient protection for their rulings and threats from both the government and organized insurgent groups …'[97]

10.1.7 The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) compilation report prepared for the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on Ethiopia, dated 29 August 2024 (OHCHR August 2024 Ethiopia UPR report) noted: 'The Committee against Torture expressed concern about reports regarding the lack of independence of the judiciary and its susceptibility to political pressure, which might contribute to impunity. That concern was compounded by shortcomings in the justice system, such as a shortage of resources, including a dearth of judges and lawyers and a lack of basic training for them, delays in processing cases and a failure to enforce some court decisions …'[98]

10.1.8 The BTI 2026 report noted that, although Ethiopia's constitutional and legal framework provides for a separation of powers between the executive, legislature and judiciary, these checks and balances face significant challenges in practice. The report stated that, while Ethiopia is a federal parliamentary republic with formal mechanisms intended to ensure institutional oversight, political power is often concentrated within the ruling party and the Prime Minister's Office, limiting the effectiveness of legislative and judicial scrutiny[99].

10.1.9 The Africa Organised Crime Index 2025 noted that although Ethiopia's judiciary is formally independent, it has historically been perceived as aligned with government policies[100]. Similarly, FH 2025 report observed that prosecutors faced pressure from politicians and the placing of the attorney general's office under the Ministry of Justice in 2021 gave the ministry considerable powers over investigations and limited prosecutorial independence[101].

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## 10.2 Appointment and removal of judges

10.2.1 Bekele 2024 observed:

'The FDRE Constitution provides that the President and Vice-President of the Federal Supreme Court shall be appointed by the House of Peoples' Representatives [HPR] upon the recommendation of the Prime Minister; other federal judges are appointed by the HPR from a list of candidates selected by the Federal Judicial Administration Council.

The FDRE Constitution prohibits the removal of judges before retirement age except for violation of disciplinary rules, gross incompetence or inefficiency, or illness that prevents the judge from carrying out his responsibilities. Such determinations are made by the Federal Judicial Administration Commission, which likewise decide issues of appointment, nomination, promotions, disciplinary complaints, and other conditions of employment.

The Federal Judicial Administration Council is a 15-member body comprising of eight Federal judges, two members of the HPR, the Chief Registrar of the

[97] Africa Integrity Indicators, Africa Integrity Indicators 2014-2025 (Ethiopia), 2025
[98] HRC, Compilation of information prepared by the Office of the United … (para 31), 29 August 2024
[99] BTI, Ethiopia Country Report 2026 (Rule of Law), 26 March 2026
[100] Africa Organized Crime Index, Ethiopia 2025
[101] FH, Freedom in the World 2025 - Ethiopia (Section F2), 27 August 2025

Federal Supreme Court, the Minister of Justice, one practicing lawyer from the Ethiopian Bar Association, one legal academician and one distinguished citizen. The Council is composed of the following members.'[102]

10.2.2 The same source further observed with respect to state judges: '[T]he President and Vice-President of the State Supreme Court are recommended by the President (Chief Executive Officer) of the states and appointed by the State Council; all other State judges are appointed by the State Council based upon recommendations made by the State Judicial Administration Council. Similar guarantees of tenure of judges exist in State Judicial Administration Council.'[103]

10.2.3 The BTI 2026 report observed: 'Judicial appointments are subject to political influence: The House of Peoples' Representatives appoints federal judges based on recommendations from the prime minister, while state councils appoint regional judges. Despite reforms since 2018 aimed at enhancing judicial independence, the realities of political interference, corruption and weak law enforcement continue to undermine the judiciary, especially at the regional level.'[104]

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## 10.3 Rule of law

10.3.1 The World Justice Project's (WJP) Rule of Law Index measures the rule of law based on the experiences and perceptions of the public and in-country legal practitioners and experts worldwide[105]. The Index measures rule of law performance across eight areas: constraints on government powers, absence of corruption, open government, fundamental rights, order and security, regulatory enforcement, civil justice, and criminal justice[106].

10.3.2 The WJP 2025 Index ranked Ethiopia 132/143 countries globally and 30/34 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and scored the country 0.36/1.00 on adherence to the rule of law on a scale from 0.00 (weakest adherence) to 1.00 (strongest adherence). Under the criminal justice indicator, which assesses factors such as the effectiveness and impartiality of the criminal justice system and the extent of corruption, the Index ranked Ethiopia 104/143 countries globally with a score of 0.34 a slight decrease from 0.35 in 2024. The WJP also reported that Ethiopia's overall rule of law score decreased by 2.4% in 2025, with declines recorded in criminal justice, civil justice, order and security, absence of corruption, and constraints on government powers[107].

10.3.3 A 5 June 2025 commentary by Ethiopia Insight, an independent news analysis website covering Ethiopian affairs[108] stated:

'Ethiopian courts don't have the authority to interpret the Constitution or review government actions for legality. Instead, that power sits with the House of the Federation—a political body, not a court. It lacks judicial expertise and operates under political influence. This creates a dangerous

[102] Bekele, A B, Introduction to the Ethiopian Legal System and … (para 2.3.1.2), February 2024
[103] Bekele, A B, Introduction to the Ethiopian Legal System and … (para 2.3.1.2), February 2024
[104] BTI, Ethiopia Country Report 2026 (Rule of Law), 26 March 2026
[105] WJP, The WJP Rule of Law Index no date
[106] WJP, WJP Index 2025 Ethiopia (Ethiopia overall score 2025), 2025
[107] WJP, Ethiopia (Criminal justice for Ethiopia, 2015-2025), 2025
[108] Ethiopia Insight, About, no date

vacuum. When unconstitutional laws are passed or executive actions go unchecked, there's no neutral referee. The result? Rights are violated, institutions are politicized, and citizens have nowhere to turn.'[109]

10.3.4 The Advocates for Human Rights (The Advocates), a non-governmental organisation that promotes international human rights standards and the rule of law[110], and the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty (WCADP), an international network of organisations advocating for the abolition of the death penalty[111], in a joint report submitted to Ethiopia Universal Periodic Review on the death penalty, dated 8 April 2024 (The Advocates/WCADP April 2024 stakeholder report), stated:

'The ongoing conflicts between the government and ethnic groups within Ethiopia have resulted in a rise in arbitrary detention of civilians and combatants. There are credible reports of the government torturing detained civilians and combatants, and the government does not always comply with court orders for the release of detainees. The government also has a track record of harassing human rights defenders through legal and extra-legal means and of impeding or outright blocking them from accessing conflict zones.'[112]

10.3.5 The BTI 2026 report observed: 'In many regions, people are often arrested without due process and are not brought before a court within the legally required time frame. Security forces sometimes ignore court orders to release prisoners. Numerous reports indicate that security forces have detained activists and government critics, leaving their whereabouts unknown for days or longer …… Law enforcement forces have frequently disregarded court rulings, particularly in cases of extended political detentions. Figures detained for political reasons are often ordered released by court rulings, only to be rearrested upon release.'[113]

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## 10.4 Fair trial

10.4.1 The OHCHR August 2024 Ethiopia UPR report noted:

'[The Committee against Torture] expressed concern about consistent reports indicating that persons in custody had not been routinely afforded all fundamental legal safeguards from the outset of deprivation of liberty. It stated that Ethiopia should guarantee all fundamental legal safeguards, both in law and in practice, for all detained persons from the outset of their deprivation of liberty …'[114]

10.4.2 The FH 2025 report observed: 'Due process rights are generally not respected. The right to a fair trial is often not respected, particularly for government critics. In civil matters, due process is hampered by the limited capacity of the judicial system, especially in the peripheral regions where

[109] Ethiopia Insight, Empowering Ethiopia's Judiciary, 5 June 2025
[110] The Advocates, Who we are, no date
[111] WCADP, Wo we are, no date
[112] The Advocates/WCADP, Ethiopia Joint Stakeholder Report for the United … (para 3) 8 April 2024
[113] BTI, Ethiopia (Rule of Law), 26 March 2026
[114] HRC, Compilation of information prepared by the Office of the United … (para 32), 29 August 2024

access to government services is weak. As a result, routine matters regularly take years to be resolved …'[115]

10.4.3 In an update published on 26 May 2026, EHRC reported improvements in some police stations in the Amhara region, including the presentation of most detainees in South Wollo Zone, Dessie and Kombolcha before a court within the legally prescribed 48-hour period and the conduct of criminal investigations in accordance with the Criminal Procedure Code. However, the EHRC also identified ongoing concerns, including arrests without court orders, failures to bring detainees before a court within 48 hours, and cases where individuals detained in connection with the "current/ongoing situation" had remained in detention for up to seven months without appearing before a court[116].

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## 10.5 Legal aid

10.5.1 A November 2023 report by the Ethiopian Monitor, an online news and analysis platform covering political, legal, economic and social developments in Ethiopia[117], stated that the MoJ had adopted a National Legal Aid Strategy aimed at improving coordination and collaboration among organisations providing free legal aid services. According to the report, legal aid services were provided by a range of actors, including the MoJ, regional justice bureaus, public defenders, private lawyers, law schools and civil society organisations such as the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association. The report noted that the strategy was developed in accordance with the MoJ's statutory mandate to oversee and coordinate the provision of legal aid and entered into force on 24 October 2023. The strategy was intended to improve access to justice for persons unable to obtain legal assistance because of socio-economic, cultural or other barriers[118].

10.5.2 The GoE August 2024 UPR report noted: 'In October 2023, Ethiopia adopted the National Free Legal Aid Strategy aimed at provision of comprehensive, accessible, and quality free legal aid services, for all vulnerable groups, including [persons with disabilities] PWDs.'[119] According to the report among the beneficiaries of free legal aid 'are victims of trafficking'[120] and 'survivors of sexual violence, most particularly women and girls.'[121]

10.5.3 The OHCHR August 2024 UPR report observed: 'The Human Rights Committee expressed its regret that legal aid was currently mandatory only for persons accused of serious crimes and stated that Ethiopia should ensure, in law and in practice, that all persons without means who were brought before a court had access to legal aid and that members of the public were made aware of the existence of such legal services.'[122]

[115] FH, Freedom in the World 2025 - Ethiopia (Section F2), 27 August 2025
[116] EHRC, Amhara: Discussion on the Protection of the Human Rights of Suspects…, 26 May 2026
[117] Ethiopian Monitor, About us, no date
[118] Ethiopian Monitor, Justice Ministry Adopts National Legal Aid Strategy, 6 November 2023
[119] HRC, National report submitted pursuant to Human Rights … (para 165), 23 August 2024
[120] HRC, National report submitted pursuant to Human Rights … (para 115), 23 August 2024
[121] HRC, National report submitted pursuant to Human Rights … (para179), 23 August 2024
[122] HRC, Compilation of information prepared by the Office of the United … (para 34), 29 August 2024

10.5.4 A January 2026 article by the Human Rights Research Center, an international volunteer-led human rights research organisation[123], stated that Ethiopia's legal aid sector is underfunded and unevenly distributed across the country. These limitations affected access to legal assistance, particularly for people living in rural areas and those on low incomes[124].

10.5.5 Million African Women Speak (50MAWS), a digital platform supporting women's economic empowerment in Africa[125], identified a range of state and non-state providers of free or affordable legal aid services in Ethiopia. According to 50MAWS, legal aid in criminal proceedings is provided by state institutions, including the Public Defender's Office (PDO) and regional justice bodies, through mechanisms such as public defenders, court-appointed counsel and publicly funded private representation. The source also noted that the EHRC had established 111 free legal aid centres nationwide for vulnerable groups. In addition, legal aid services were reportedly provided through law faculties and legal clinics at more than 15 public universities, pro bono schemes operated by lawyers and bar associations, the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA), which supports women who are victims of gender-based violence, and the Ethiopian Lawyers' Association (ELA), which provides legal assistance to economically and socially disadvantaged persons[126].

10.5.6 The Civil Society Innovation Fund (CSIF), a multi-donor initiative that supports new and emerging civil society organisations (CSOs) in Ethiopia[127], stated in an undated entry on its website that it supported a project aimed at improving access to justice through the provision of legal aid services in police stations in Adama (Oromia Region), Hawassa (Sidama Region) and Wolayta Sodo (South Ethiopia Region). According to CSIF, the project is led by Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR) in partnership with Mizan Young Lawyers Center (MYLC) and Advocates Ethiopia[128].

10.5.7 Transparency International Ethiopia (TIE), the Ethiopian chapter of Transparency International[129], noted on its undated website that it operates a Free Legal Aid Programme which provides legal advice to members of the public, including victims and witnesses of corruption[130].

10.5.8 The GoE MoJ reported that free legal aid services were provided through both federal and regional institutions. According to the MoJ's October 2025 report, regional states provided free legal aid services to 75,770 people during 2024/2025[131], while federal institutions assisted a further 8,309 individuals[132].

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[123] HRRC, About us, no date
[124] HRRC, Access to Justice as a Human Right in Ethiopia: Challenges and … 28 January 2026
[125] 50MAWS, About us, no date
[126] 50MAWS, Access to legal aid services for women in Ethiopia, No date
[127] CSIF, The Civil Society Innovation Fund Ethiopia, no date
[128] CSIF, CSIF Ethiopia Projects, no date
[129] TIE, Who we are, no date
[130] TIE, Advocacy and Legal Aid Centers (ALAC), no date
[131] GoE MoJ, Ministry of Justice Five-Year Strategy (2018-2022 EC) (page 29) October 2025
[132] MoJ, Ministry of Justice Five-Year Strategy (2018-2022 EC) (page 23), October 2025

## 10.6 Witness protection

10.6.1 Article 20(4) of the Constitution guarantees the right of an accused person to examine witnesses and access evidence presented against them[133].

10.6.2 However, the Protection of Witnesses and Whistleblowers of Criminal Offences proclamation provides for the protection of witnesses, whistleblowers and certain family members. Under Article 3(1), protection measures apply in relation to testimony, information or investigations concerning offences punishable by death or by rigorous imprisonment of 10 years or more[134].

10.6.3 The Criminal Procedure Code includes measures intended to safeguard witnesses during criminal proceedings. Article 67(c) provides that bail may be refused where an applicant is likely to interfere with witnesses or tamper with evidence[135].

10.6.4 Article 4 of the Protection of Witnesses and Whistleblowers of Criminal Offences Proclamation sets out a range of protective measures that may be provided to witnesses, whistleblowers and other protected persons. These include physical protection, secure accommodation and relocation, concealment or change of identity, restrictions on contact by accused persons, protection of confidentiality, and the use of in camera proceedings or alternative methods of giving evidence. The proclamation also provides for financial, medical, educational and counselling assistance, compensation for harm resulting from retaliation, support for family members where a protected person dies, protection against retaliatory administrative action, and immunity from prosecution in certain circumstances where information is provided[136].

10.6.5 Article 6 of the proclamation allows an eligible person to apply directly for protection or, where they are unable to do so, through an investigator, prosecutor or another interested person acting on their behalf[137].

10.6.6 Various laws criminalise attacks, threats and other forms of retaliation against witnesses, whistleblowers and persons who provide information to the authorities.

- Article 444(1) of the Criminal Code provides that a person who assaults, suppresses or harms an individual for giving information or evidence, or for acting as a witness in a criminal case, is punishable by 5 to 20 years' imprisonment or a fine[138]. Article 444(2) adds that where the crime 'has entailed grave harm to the body or health of the victim or his death, the relevant provision concerning such matters shall apply concurrently.'[139]
- Article 455(2) of the Criminal Code provides that a person who, 'by violence, intimidation or by promising or offering or giving undue advantage causes another to make false accusation or give false testimony or obstructs, through interference, the giving of testimony or the production of evidence in relation to a crime punishable with rigorous

[133] FDRE, Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 21 August 1995
[134] FDRE, Protection of Witnesses and Whistleblowers of Criminal Offences …, February 2011
[135] FRDE, Criminal Procedure Code 1961, 1961
[136] FDRE, Protection of Witnesses and Whistleblowers of Criminal Offences …, February 2011
[137] FDRE, Protection of Witnesses and Whistleblowers of Criminal Offences …, February 2011
[138] FDRE, Anti-Terrorism Proclamation No. 652/2009, August 2009
[139] FDRE, The Criminal Code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia…, May 2005

imprisonment for more than two years or obstructs law enforcement officials or public servants while exercising their official duties in relation to the same crime, is punishable with rigorous imprisonment not exceeding seven years.'[140]

- Article 53 of the Anti-Corruption Special Procedure and Rules of Evidence Proclamation criminalises reprisals against whistleblowers and witnesses and requires government offices to establish procedures to protect employees from retaliation[141].
- Article 12 of the Terrorism Proclamation criminalises interference with intimidation of, inducement of, or violence against witnesses, whistleblowers and persons closely connected to them in terrorism-related cases, providing for penalties of 3 to 7 years' rigorous imprisonment[142].
- Article 16 of the Prevention and Suppression of Terrorism Crimes Proclamation No. 1176/2020 provides that [w]here the life, wellbeing of property [sic] of any person or his family is endangered for being a witness or whistleblower of terrorist crimes, he shall be given protection in accordance with the Protection of Witnesses and Whistleblowers of Criminal Offences Proclamation No.699/2010.' Article 16(2) provides that, without prejudice to that sub-article, 'the court hearing the case may take the following measures: a) Change the Venue; b) Cause not to publish or record the court proceedings in part or in whole or to be released in any form.' Contravening such an order is punishable with simple imprisonment, or, where the act 'hinders the judicial proceedings or endangers the witness', with 'rigorous imprisonment from one year to seven years and with fine not exceeding Birr fifty thousands'.[143]
- Article 14 of the Trafficking and Smuggling Proclamation criminalises intimidation, interference, violence, threats and other reprisals against witnesses, whistleblowers and related persons in trafficking and smuggling cases, with penalties of 3 to 7 years' rigorous imprisonment[144].

10.6.7 With respect to implementation of witness protection programmes the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has established a Witnesses and Whistleblowers Protection Directorate. According to information published by the MoJ, the directorate is responsible for assessing applications for protection, deciding whether protection should be granted, overseeing implementation of protection measures, and protecting witnesses and whistleblowers from threats, intimidation and reprisals linked to their testimony[145].

10.6.8 The Ministry of Justice reported on 22 March 2025 on a study of the witness protection law conducted by its Witnesses and Whistleblowers Protection Directorate and on the resulting draft replacement proclamation. The report, in Amharic, stated (unofficial translation using AI translation tools):

‘Although Proclamation No. 699/2003 [2010] is Ethiopia's first witness and whistleblower protection proclamation, there are various problems in its

[140] FDRE, The Criminal Code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia…, May 2005
[141] FDRE, Revised Anti-Corruption Special Procedure and Rules of Evidence … , February 2005
[142] FDRE, Prevention and Suppression of Terrorism Crimes Proclamation, 25 March 2020
[143] FDRE, Prevention and Suppression of Terrorism Crimes Proclamation, 25 March 2020
[144] FDRE, Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of … , April 2020
[145] MoJ, Witnesses and Whistleblowers Protection Directorate, no date

implementation and circumstances that do not allow the duty to testify to be discharged… the proclamation currently in operation to protect the safety of witnesses has fundamental legal gaps, and therefore it was necessary to prepare a proclamation that accords with current and actual conditions and meets international witness protection standards…

'[T]he existing proclamation, by way of example, does not clearly specify to whom the power to implement the proclamation is given, does not indicate the territorial scope of application, does not specify in detail the composition of personnel — starting with the situation of the protection bodies, and the role of psychology, information technology and so on — and does not cover budget, the confidentiality of witness protection and related matters.'[146]

10.6.9 The Organised Crime Index scored Ethiopia 3.00 out of 10 on victim and witness support and noted: 'Despite improvements, victim assistance is inconsistent, with limited services for male victims and broader organized crime cases. Witness protection measures exist, but non-state actors remain the primary service providers for victims of conflict-related sexual violence, highlighting gaps in government support.'[147]

10.6.10 The USSD TiP Report 2025 stated that the government maintained a witness protection directorate and used measures including victim support during criminal proceedings, video testimony and child-friendly interview rooms for child witnesses. However, the report also stated that protection services remained limited and that concerns about reprisals and difficulties meeting travel costs reportedly discouraged some victims from participating in criminal proceedings[148].

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## 10.7 Death penalty

10.7.1 The Advocates and WCADP April 2024 Ethiopia UPR report noted:

'Ethiopia has not formally abolished the death penalty or implemented a moratorium on executions, nor has it limited the application of the death penalty to the "most serious" crimes. Although Ethiopia has not sentenced anyone to death or executed anyone in many years, capital punishment remains a possibility under Ethiopia's existing laws …

'As of 2023, Ethiopia has ten individuals under a death sentence. There is a de facto moratorium on the death penalty as Ethiopian authorities have not carried out any executions since 2007, but authorities have not established an official moratorium.

'Further, Ethiopia has asserts [sic] "that the general consensus of the public at this moment is not towards abolishing the sentence of death penalty particularly for serious criminal offences."'[149]

10.7.2 The same source added:

'According to Article 15 of the Ethiopian Constitution, a death sentence can be carried out only when an individual has been convicted of a serious crime. Yet Ethiopia retains the death penalty for both serious and less

[146] Ministry of Justice, Discussion Held on Draft Proclamation Based on Study…, 22 March 2025
[147] ENACT, Africa - Organised Crime Index (Ethiopia, Resilience), no date
[148] USSD, 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report: Ethiopia, 2025
[149] The Advocates/ WCADP, Ethiopia Joint Stakeholder Report for the …, (paras 2, 8), 8 April 2024

serious crimes. For example, in 2020, authorities passed Proclamation No. 1176/2020 on the Prevention and Suppression of Terrorism Crimes, which permits the death penalty for nonviolent crimes such as “causing damage to property” that results in harm to historical sites or the natural environment.

‘According to the Criminal Code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, a death sentence may only be passed in cases of grave crimes. In 2021, Ethiopia informed the UN Human Rights Committee that the sentencing guidelines of the Federal Supreme Court of Ethiopia were “a notable measure taken to [limit] the death penalty to only the most serious crimes.” Under Article 6, however, many offenses punishable by death do not meet the ICCPR's definition of “serious crime,” which requires intentional killing. A death sentence may be imposed for various offenses outside of intentional murder, including: (a) habitual gang armed robbery; (b) aggravated robbery; (c) threats or acts of treason; (d) committing economic crimes during wartime; (e) espionage; and (f) failure to provide proper medical treatment that causes the death of a wounded combatant. Moreover, a provision for aggravating offenses creates the possibility for a court to impose a death sentence for crimes that otherwise do not carry the death penalty.’[150]

10.7.3 The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR), in its concluding observations on Ethiopia's 7th–10th periodic report following the review on 9 and 11 May 2025, stated (ACHPR July 2025 report):

10.7.4 ‘The Report indicates that capital punishment under Ethiopian law is imposed for crimes strictly considered serious and prejudicial, and that numerous procedural limitations are established to limit the execution of death sentences.

10.7.5 ‘The Delegation informed that Ethiopia has not altered its position on the abolition of the death penalty or on joining the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Nevertheless, the draft Criminal Procedure and Evidence Code includes a provision that allows a death sentence to be commuted to life imprisonment if it is not executed within two years following the judgment.

‘Currently, as of April 2025, there are 130 convicts (125 men and 5 women) on death row. All of the convicts have been found guilty and sentenced to the death penalty for exceptionally serious crimes.’[151]

10.7.6 The 2025 Amnesty International report on death sentences and executions reported more than 5 death sentences were imposed in Ethiopia during 2025 but noted that no executions were carried out. The report classified Ethiopia as a ‘retentionist’ state, indicating that the death penalty remained provided for in law[152].

10.7.7 On 12 September 2024, Hands Off Cain, a Brussels based international NGO that advocates for the abolition of the death penalty and other forms of inhumane punishment[153] reported: ‘Ethiopia’s Defense Force announced on September 10, 2024, that it has pardoned 178 ethnic Tigrayan members of the Ethiopian Defense Force, who were sentenced to death by court martial

[150] WCADP, The Advocates, Ethiopia Joint Stakeholder Report for the …(paras 9 to 10), 8 April 2024
[151] ACHPR, Concluding Observations on the 7th – 10th Periodic Report … (paras 37 to 39), July 2025
[152] Amnesty International, Death Sentences and Executions 2025 (pages 33, 40), May 2026
[153] Hands Off Cain, About us, no date

in connection with the November 2020 attack on the Northern Command in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.'[154]

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## 10.8 Accountability for violations committed during conflict

10.8.1 The GoE August 2024 UPR report stated that the government permitted the joint Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) investigation into violations committed during the conflict in northern Ethiopia in 2021. According to the report, the findings and recommendations of that investigation informed the development of Ethiopia's Transitional Justice (TJ) Policy, which was adopted on 17 April 2024 and was being implemented at the time of reporting. The policy provides for grave human rights violations committed since 1995 to be addressed through transitional justice mechanisms to be carried out by independent institutions established under the policy[155].

10.8.2 The ACHPR July 2025 report noted that the Ethiopian delegation stated that, following the EHRC-OHCHR joint investigation into violations committed during the northern conflict, the government established an Inter-Ministerial Task Force to implement the investigation's recommendations. According to the delegation, the Task Force created four specialised committees and collected more than 10,000 victim and witness statements. The delegation also stated that agreement had been reached to establish an independent Special Prosecution Office and a dedicated special bench to deal with transitional justice cases involving serious human rights violations committed since 1995[156].

10.8.3 However, the Amnesty International State of the World's Human Rights 2025 report observed that the transitional justice process remained stalled and that there had been no justice or accountability for crimes under international law committed during the Tigray conflict[157]. HRW similarly stated in June 2026 that impunity remained widespread and that the promised transitional justice process had completely stalled[158].

10.8.4 The GoE August 2024 report to the UPR stated that the authorities had sought to hold perpetrators of grave human rights violations accountable through existing judicial mechanisms. According to the report, prosecutors filed 42 cases involving 2,117 defendants accused of extrajudicial killings and other crimes committed in the context of conflicts during the reporting period. The defendants reportedly included senior military officials, mid-level police and military officers, and local government officials. The report also stated that the Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF), through its military justice system, acted against 39 military personnel accused of serious human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings. Of these, 27 were convicted and received sentences ranging from two years' imprisonment to life imprisonment[159]. The GoE further reported that more than 90 officials

[154] Hands Off Cain, Ethiopia pardons 178 defense force members sentenced …, 12 September 2024
[155] HRC, National report submitted pursuant to Human Rights … (paras 91 to 94), 23 August 2024
[156] ACHPR, Concluding Observations on the 7th – 10th Periodic Report … (paras, 34, 36) July 2025
[157] Amnesty International, The State of the World's Human Rights; Ethiopia 2025, 21 April 2026
[158] HRW, HRW Oral Statement at the 62nd Session of the UN Human Rights Council, 16 June 2026
[159] HRC, National report submitted pursuant to Human Rights … (paras 74 to 75) 23 August 2024

from security institutions and the prison administration had been charged in connection with torture and related offences. The report stated that a number of those charged had subsequently been found guilty and convicted[160].

10.8.5 However, OHCHR August 2024 UPR report noted: 'The Human Rights Committee expressed concern about the impunity enjoyed by perpetrators of torture and ill-treatment, including high-ranking officers, and the slow progress made in providing effective remedies and rehabilitation to victims.'[161]

10.8.6 The HRC August 2024 UPR report stated that HRW and Physicians for Human Rights in their joint submission 'noted challenges in the investigation and prosecution of arbitrary killings and stated that the lack of accountability had contributed to the continued practice of arbitrary executions.'[162]

10.8.7 The 2026 Human Rights Watch world report covering events in 2025 noted: 'The government made little visible progress towards ensuring meaningful accountability for past and ongoing atrocities, while its transitional justice process effectively stalled …The EU led two joint statements at the UN Human Rights Council in March and September highlighting the lack of progress on transitional justice and an end to violations in conflict areas.'

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# 11. Courts

## 11.1 Structure

11.1.1 The BTI 2026 report observed:

'Ethiopia's judiciary operates at both the federal and regional levels, each with its own courts. The federal system includes the Federal Supreme Court, the federal high courts and first-instance courts, while regional states have equivalent courts. Shariah courts, which are limited to handling family law cases, exist at the three federal levels, requiring mutual consent from disputing parties. The Federal Supreme Court holds ultimate authority over federal cases, and state supreme courts oversee regional matters.'[163]

11.1.2 For further information on the court system, including the federal courts, state courts, municipal and religious courts and their functions, see archived CPIN Ethiopia: Actors of Protection 2024.

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## 11.2 Traditional courts and Community Justice Centres (CJCs)

11.2.1 The GoE October 2025 report stated that 5 regions had recognised customary justice systems during 2024/2025[164].

11.2.2 The Bekele 2024 article observed:

'Customary courts are not established by law, despite their constitutional recognition. They are only recognized, not created, by law. The authority of these courts stems from tradition and local customs. These courts have evolved from traditional elder councils, which do not have legal authority, but

[160] HRC, National report submitted pursuant to Human Rights … (paras 84) 23 August 2024
[161] HRC, Compilation of information prepared by the Office of the … (para 37 to 38), 29 August 2024
[162] HRC, Summary of stakeholders' submissions on Ethiopia: Report … (para 23), 26 August 2024)
[163] BTI, Ethiopia Country Report 2026 (Rule of Law), 26 March 2026
[164] GoE MoJ, Ministry of Justice 5-Year Strategy (2018-2022) (section 3.4.3), 28 October 2025

carry moral force and still operate widely as primary decision-makers in rural areas throughout Ethiopia. To name but a few of the customary courts: the Shemagelle in Amhara, the Bayito and Abo Gereb in Tigray, and the Luba Basa in Oromia. In addition, the choice [of] whether to take a dispute to regular courts or to one of those non-official forums is entirely left to the parties.'[165]

11.2.3 The Hague Institute for Innovation of Law (HiiL) is an independent Netherlands-based non-profit organisation specialising in access-to-justice research and justice-sector innovation[166]. In a report published in November 2024 (HiiL November 2024 report), HiiL observed:

'Customary courts in Oromia operate on a two-tiered system. The first instance customary courts are established at the 'Ganda' (local) level, while appellate customary courts are found at the 'Aanaa' (district) level. As of July 2023, a report from the Oromia Supreme Court indicates that there are approximately 6,252 first instance customary courts serving communities in 6,355 localities … Additionally, there are currently 355 appellate customary courts functioning at the district level in the Oromia region.

'The formalisation of customary courts in Oromia was achieved through Proclamation No.240-2021. To facilitate the effective operationalisation of these courts, the Oromia regional state also promulgated Regulation No. 10/2021, which provides comprehensive guidelines for their establishment and functioning throughout the region …'[167]

11.2.4 A November 2025 article by Tadesse Simie Metekia, a senior researcher at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), an independent African research institute that produces research and policy analysis on governance, security, justice and human rights issues across the continent[168], noted that traditional justice mechanisms remain a widely used form of alternative dispute resolution in Ethiopia, providing accessible, affordable and culturally accepted justice rooted in indigenous systems that predate the formal judiciary[169].

11.2.5 The same source noted that the Ministry of Justice's 2023 Model Law on Customary Courts aims to preserve indigenous justice mechanisms while aligning them with constitutional and international human rights standards. The model law provides for free and accessible services, restricts jurisdiction to cases where parties voluntarily consent to customary adjudication, prohibits discrimination and political interference, and requires the inclusion of at least one female judge in each customary court. However, the source also highlighted a gap between the law's objectives and implementation. Assessments of customary courts, including in Oromia, identified continuing concerns regarding human rights violations, the exclusion of women from decision-making roles, interference by local officials in proceedings, and the adjudication of matters that should fall within the jurisdiction of the formal justice system[170].

[165] Bekele, A B, GlobaLex, Introduction to the Ethiopian Legal … (para 2.4.6), January/February 2024
[166] HiiL, About us, no date
[167] HiiL, Legal impact assessment – Oromia customary courts (pages 4, 6), November 2024
[168] ISS, About, no date
[169] Metekia, T S, ISS, Ethiopia's unwatched customary courts, 17 November 2025
[170] Metekia, T S, ISS, Ethiopia's unwatched customary courts, 17 November 2025

11.2.6 Regarding Community Justice Centres, a September 2024 report by HiiL (HiiL September 2024 report) stated:

'The idea of Community Justice Centres (CJCs) emerged as a consensus response to increase resolution rates. The model was built on the successful experiences of the government with customary courts in the Oromia region and the widespread use of the shimagille, well-established community justice providers and preferred route to conflict resolution in both urban and rural areas. The CJC model allowed communities to resolve disputes locally while aligning with international human rights standards. Yonas Birmeta, a professor at Addis Ababa University Law School, described the CJC model as a "game-changer," blending Ethiopia's traditional dispute resolution practices with modern systems.'[171]

11.2.7 In April 2025, HiiL reported that Community Justice Centres (CJCs) operated in Afar, Sidama and Addis Ababa[172].

11.2.8 The Ministry of Justice reported on 16 July 2026 on the launch of the Shishinda model customary court in the South West Ethiopia Peoples' Region, supported by the Ministry together with UNDP and HiiL. The report, which is in Amharic (unofficially translated using online translation tools) stated that customary courts had been established in 700 kebeles in the region and that more than 1,700 case files had been heard in the budget year alone, and that the Ministry would continue working with its partners to maintain and strengthen them[173].

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## 11.3 Access to courts (generally)

11.3.1 An April 2024 article in The Reporter on a national judges' summit reported:

'Less than 2,200 judges and justices across the [Amhara] region's 220 courts (202 of which are First Instance courts) took on 826,000 civil and criminal cases last year, according to a report from the regional Supreme Court.

'The caseload is made even more daunting by the lack of peace and security in the region, according to AbiyeKassahun [sic], president of the Amhara Regional State Supreme Court. "As a result of the current security state of our region, courts cannot be reached when needed," he said…

'"Over the years, the Amhara Regional State budget is growing exponentially," said Abiye. "But, surprisingly, allocations to the courts are growing smaller and smaller."…

'Judges and justices across 363 of Oromia's courts (331 of which are First Instance) took on more than 600,000 cases last year, according to a survey conducted by the Oromia Supreme Court.'[174]

11.3.2 According to the HiiL September 2024 report, more than 7 million legal problems arise annually in Ethiopia and approximately 5 million remain unresolved each year. According to the source, customary courts in Oromia processed an average of 376,000 cases annually over the previous two

[171] HiiL, Ethiopia's journey towards people-centred justice, 25 September 2024
[172] HiiL, Community Justice Centres in Ethiopia: bridging traditional justice practices …, 1 April 2025
[173] Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Justice Pledges Continued Support…, 16 July 2026
[174] The Reporter, Courts of law creak under pressure amid latest attempt…, 14 April 2024

years and recorded high case-resolution rates[175]. The report did not provide information on the source of this data. In its November 2024 report, HiiL noted that estimated 43% of legal disputes were resolved through customary mechanisms. According to data from the Oromia Supreme Court's Annual Performance Report, the first-instance customary courts handled 361,685 cases and resolved 294,699 (81.5%), while appellate customary courts handled 18,429 cases and resolved 15,293 (83.0%)[176].

11.3.3 According to the GoE October 2025 report, prosecutors disposed of 69,480 criminal cases during the 2024/25 reporting period and achieved a criminal conviction rate of 97%. The same source stated that customary courts in Oromia resolved 1,133,374 cases. In South West Ethiopia Regional State, 713 elders reportedly resolved 1,230 cases through mediation, while Community Justice Centres (CJCs) in Afar and Addis Ababa handled 127 and 18 cases respectively[177] [178]. The same source reported that, in selected categories of serious criminal cases, the average period between the filing of a criminal complaint and the delivery of a court judgment was one year[179].

11.3.4 In a January 2026 article Human Rights Research Center (HRRC), an international, volunteer-led organization dedicated to making human rights research accessible beyond academic spaces[180], discussed a range of barriers to accessing justice in Ethiopia. According to the HRRC, these include legal and procedural obstacles such as complex court processes, language barriers for non-Amharic speakers, limited access to legal representation and judicial delays; economic constraints, including the cost of legal services and reportedly underfunded legal aid; geographical challenges affecting access to courts in rural and remote areas; social and cultural factors, including discrimination and the limited availability of translation services; and political and institutional concerns, including allegations of political interference, corruption and low public confidence in the judiciary. The HRRC also noted that restrictions on civil liberties may limit individuals' ability to seek redress and hold authorities accountable[181]

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## 11.4 Access to courts for women

11.4.1 The HiLL November 2024 report which examined the Oromo customary courts observed:

‘According to much of the literature on justice services, traditional justice mechanisms run the risk of not aligning with contemporary human rights standards, primarily due to their roots in local patriarchal societies where gender inequality is deeply embedded. In Ethiopia, there are growing concerns that the customary justice system falls short in safeguarding human rights, especially women's rights. However, this critique is not universal. Some elders of customary courts defend their institutions as embodying principles of equality and respect … Similarly, throughout the data, clients of these courts have reported experiences where human rights

[175] HiiL, Ethiopia’s journey towards people-centred justice 25 September 2024
[176] HiiL, Legal impact assessment – Oromia customary courts (page 16), November 2024
[177] GoE MoJ, MoJ webpage, no date
[178] GoE MoJ, Ministry of Justice Five-Year Strategy (2018-2022 EC) (sections 2.4), October 2025
[179] GoE MoJ, Ministry of Justice Five-Year Strategy (2018-2022 EC) (sections 3.4.3), October 2025
[180] HRRC, About us, no date
[181] HRRC, Access to Justice as a Human Right in Ethiopia: Challenges and …, 28 January 2026

and gender equality were purposefully respected. Occasionally, in some cases priority was given to vulnerable groups such as the elderly, pregnant women, and persons with disabilities, but without discrimination against others.

'Furthermore, during a validation workshop on the model law, representatives of [civil society organisations] CSOs underscored the insufficient participation of female judges in customary courts. This concern was further substantiated by the annual performance report of customary courts, which included visual documentation of customary court sessions across different regions of the country. The report revealed several instances where male judges dominated the proceedings, with female judges either absent or positioned in secondary roles, seated behind their male counterparts.

'Cultural institutions that promote gender sensitivity, such as the 'Siinqee Institution,' have supported the involvement of women elders in some areas, notably Arsi. However, this is far from the norm …

'In terms of equal treatment, female respondents of the impact assessment shared mixed experiences with customary courts …'[182]

11.4.2 The same source further observed that there was 'low level of use of customary courts among women with higher education (only 5% of women with university education or above reported resorting to customary courts compared to other potential avenues for help such as family members (40%), police (30%), or formal courts (15%) …'[183]

11.4.3 Amnesty International state of the world human rights report, Ethiopia 2025 noted: 'Women and girls continued to face conflict-related sexual violence amid the ongoing armed conflicts. No steps were taken to secure justice and reparation for survivors of such abuses in Tigray region. Outside the conflicts, women and girls experienced gender-based violence that worsened due to the collapse of the rule of law following prolonged conflict.'[184]

11.4.4 In an October 2025 position paper intended to raise awareness of barriers to justice and encourage help-seeking among women in Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia, the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA), a regional civil society network that works to advance women's rights and gender equality in countries across the Horn of Africa[185], noted that women in Ethiopia faced structural and societal barriers to obtaining justice and accountability. SIHA reported that the coexistence of customary, religious and statutory legal systems made it difficult for women to identify the applicable legal process, and that the absence of state family laws in the Somali and Afar regions limited women's ability to seek justice within those regions. It further cited research indicating that customary dispute-resolution processes in Tigray favoured men and powerful members of society; religious courts required women to be represented by a male guardian; police did not always treat reports of gender-based violence seriously and sometimes requested bribes to process or investigate cases; and the

[182] HiLL, Legal impact assessment – Oromia customary courts (pages 19 to 20), November 2024
[183] HiLL, Legal impact assessment – Oromia customary courts (page 28), November 2024
[184] Amnesty International, The State of the World's Human Rights; Ethiopia 2025, 21 April 2026
[185] SIHA, About us, no date

requirement for female representation in Oromia's social courts was not always observed in practice. SIHA further noted that Ethiopian law does not criminalise marital rape and does not fully recognise certain forms of gender-based violence, including economic and psychological violence within marriage[186].

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## 12. Detention

### 12.1 Prison capacity

12.1.1 The World Prison Brief, no date, reported that as of 2015 there were 126 prisons – 6 federal and 120 regional prisons. The source, citing the US State Department, further noted the existence of many unofficial prisons. The brief recorded no figure for the official capacity of the prison system, and on occupancy level stated: 'No official figures have been traced but according to the U.S. State Department human rights report for 2016 severe overcrowding is common.'[187]

12.1.2 The ACHPR July 2025 report stated: '… [T]he figures provided by the Delegation on prison infrastructure (121 prisons nationwide, including 6 federal prisons and 115 distributed across regions) and prison population (a total of 102,428 prisoners, including 2-4% women) don't indicate the occupancy rate, which is a very determinant indicator in this area. Additionally, the Commission cannot find any detail on the duration of pre-trial detention respect [sic] in Ethiopia.'[188]

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### 12.2 Detention conditions

12.2.1 The Government of Ethiopia's report to the Working Group on the Universal Period Review, dated 23 August 2024 (GoE August 2024 UPR report), stated:

'The GoE built two prison facilities in Dire Dawa and Ziway prison centres as per international standards acceptable to conditions of detention. The construction of two new prison facilities of Aba-Samuel [in Addis Ababa] and Shewarobit [in Amhara] is also being finalized, with modern cells, administrative blocks, and academic and vocational schools.

'A significant increase in the daily subsistence budget per prisoner has been witnessed during the period under review. This includes a raise in the daily meal budget, provision of basic sanitary materials, and healthcare expenditure for prisoners. Similar initiatives are also underway in regions.

'Federal and regional correction centers have separate quarters/zones for women inmates and juvenile offenders who are above the age of 15 years. Similarly, a Rehabilitation Center for Children in Conflict with the Law between the ages of 9 to 15, with a capacity of holding 700 inmates, has been rebuilt in Addis Ababa and became operational in September 2022. The center has 17 blocks with rooms, workshops for vocational training,

[186] SIHA, Breaking Barriers Enhancing Women's Access to Gender … (page 4), October 2025
[187] WPB, Ethiopia, no date
[188] ACHPR, Concluding Observations on the 7th – 10th Periodic Report … (para 46), July 2025

classrooms, meeting halls, a library, rooms for psycho-social support, and sports facilities.'[189]

12.2.2 The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), in the English executive summary of its August 2025 Annual Human Rights Report covering the period from June 2024 to June 2025 (EHRC August 2025 report), noted some improvements in detention conditions, including a reduction in inhuman treatment of detainees, an increase in the food budget allocated to prisoners, and the expansion of prison infrastructure to help address overcrowding and poor sanitary conditions[190]. However, the same source observed:

'Many of the challenges regarding conditions of detention of prisoners and detainees have either persisted or became worse …

'The major gaps identified during EHRC's detention centers monitoring include the fact that detainees are not provided with food in many police stations; prisoners are not provided with sufficient, quality and nutritious food although some regions have raised the daily prisoners' food budget; detainees are subjected to torture and ill treatment in some police stations and that there is no complaint procedure in place. Children in conflict with the law are detained with adults and there are gaps in the application of the principle of separate detention for other categories of detainees. While there have been efforts to expand prison and police station infrastructure in some regions, overcrowding, poor hygiene, and a lack of basic necessities continue to be major problems across many regions. In many prison facilities, there was a severe shortage of beds and mattresses, forcing detainees to sleep on the floor in unsanitary and uncomfortable conditions. Access to healthcare and quality education services also remains insufficient in most detention centers. Furthermore, the EHRC identified serious gaps in the provision of support to prisoners with special needs.'[191]

12.2.3 In an August 2025 article on the same EHRC report, The Reporter noted: 'The Commission found that while the treatment of detainees in prisons in Afar, Benishangul-Gumuz, and Sidama has improved, the situation elsewhere is worrying.'[192]

12.2.4 The OMCT 2025 report observed:

'Detention conditions in Ethiopia significantly compromise the right to freedom from torture. Facilities are critically overcrowded, with occupancy rates exceeding 120%, leading to inadequate sanitation, poor ventilation, insufficient lighting, and limited access to food, clothing and medical care. Upon arrival, detainees rarely receive mental health assessments or adequate medical attention. Medical examinations following the use of force are typically insufficient, lacking thorough documentation and judicial reporting obligations.

'Punitive and degrading practices, such as corporal and collective punishment, denial of family contact, restrictive diets and restricted drinking water are frequently employed against detainees. Solitary confinement lacks adequate safeguards and is routinely applied, potentially affecting vulnerable

[189] HRC, National report submitted pursuant to Human Rights … (paras 85 to 8), 23 August 2024
[190] EHRC, Executive summary: Annual Ethiopia human rights … (paras 12), 22 August 2025
[191] EHRC, Executive summary: Annual Ethiopia human rights … (paras 13 to 14), 22 August 2025
[192] The Reporter, Rights Commission Condemns Unlawful Military Rule…, 9 August 2025

groups such as pregnant women and mothers with infants. Ethnic groups, notably Tigrayan and Amhara detainees, are regularly subjected to discriminatory and intrusive body searches.'[193]

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## 13. Human rights violations by security forces

### 13.1 General

13.1.1 For information on human rights violations by the security forces in the context of conflict and post-conflict insecurity, see the following CPINs: Oromos, the Oromo Liberation Front and the Oromo Liberation Army, Amhara and Amhara opposition groups, and Tigrayans and the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front.

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### 13.2 Torture and ill-treatment

13.2.1 The OHCHR August 2024 UPR report observed: 'The Committee against Torture expressed concern about reports indicating that torture was routinely used to extract confessions and that confessions obtained through torture had been admitted as evidence of guilt in criminal trials. The Human Rights Committee expressed concern about reports that objections to the admissibility of forced confessions as evidence were frequently rejected during trials, particularly in terrorism trials …'[194]

13.2.2 A July 2025 Viewpoint article in Ethiopia Insight by Adam Denekew Mekonnen, a former lecturer of law at Bahir Dar University, noted:

'On 18 June, the Ethiopian Parliament passed a law which amends the country's Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorist Financing framework. The law introduces legal immunity for undercover agents who commit crimes deemed "beyond their control" during operations…

'Article 33(4) of Proclamation No. 1387/2025 grants agents advance immunity for crimes committed while conducting undercover operations. But what exactly counts as "beyond control"? Without a specific legal definition, it could cover a vast array of abuses, from coerced confessions and illegal surveillance to violence against civilians.

'Furthermore, the term "undercover agent" lacks a clear statutory limit. It could be expansively interpreted to include not only trained intelligence personnel but also plainclothes officers, unvetted informants, or even politically motivated civilians acting under unofficial orders…

'Ethiopia's existing Criminal Code accounts for such instances. Article 57 exonerates criminal liability in cases involving accident or force majeure. Article 58 provides protection where outcomes were neither intended nor reasonably foreseeable… By contrast, Article 33(4) offers a blanket advance waiver—sidestepping courts entirely.'[195]

13.2.3 The ACHPR July 2025 report noted that that 'The Delegation informed that the Government of Ethiopia has drafted legislation on Fundamental Crimes Committed in violation of International Law, which includes a definition of

[193] OMCT, Global Torture Index 2025: Ethiopia Factsheet (section II), June 2025
[194] HRC, Compilation of information prepared by the Office of the United … (para 36), 29 August 2024
[195] Ethiopia Insight, Legalizing Torture: The Brutal Reality of Ethiopia's New Bill, 1 July 2025

torture in line with Article 1 of the Convention against Torture.' The Commission recommended that Ethiopia 'Finalize the adoption process of the draft Criminal Procedure and Evidence Code and ensure the inclusion of a definition of torture and the inadmissibility of any evidence gathered through coercion or torture.'[196]

13.2.4 The USSD 2024 report observed:

'Although the constitution prohibited such practices, there were reports security officials tortured and otherwise abused detainees.

'According to the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), HRW, Physicians for Human Rights, Amnesty International, and numerous media reports, the government engaged in torture in its security operations and failed to hold government actors accused of torture accountable.

'In a May report submitted to the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, the OMCT and the [Ethiopia Human Rights Council] EHRCO [an independent, non-profit making, non-partisan human rights organization[197]] highlighted several incidents where federal government security forces, including regional police, committed acts of torture. The report stated that government security forces subjected civilians in the Kelafo District of the Somali Region to physical torture, such as flogging and covering their heads with plastic bags filled with pepper powder, resulting in permanent physical injuries and loss of eyesight.

'According to the EHRC, HRW, [Centre for the Advancement of Rights and Democracy] CARD [a civil society organization whose mission is to advance a conducive civic, media, and digital space for the respect of human rights and cultivation of democratic mass culture in Ethiopia[198]], and media reports, both the government and militias in Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray regions engaged in torture and mistreatment of civilians and captured combatants. Victims were reportedly beaten with electric cables and metal pipes, detained incommunicado, threatened with guns to their heads, and deprived of food and water. Civilians in western Tigray were reportedly tortured and mistreated mainly because of their ethnic identities. Elsewhere, captured soldiers and fighters, as well as civilian family members of combatants or government officials and those suspected of providing support to combatants or government officials, were reportedly tortured.

'According to the EHRC annual report, in Oromia Region a government militia, the Oromia Regional Police, and the ENDF … widely beat, tortured, and handcuffed inmates for inhuman periods of time.'[199]

13.2.5 The Global Torture Index (GTI), an expert-informed assessment tool that measures countries' vulnerability to torture and ill-treatment[200], reported in its 2025 Ethiopia factsheet:

'Torture remains widespread and systemic in Ethiopia, significantly fuelled by ongoing internal conflicts and political instability. For 2025, the Global Torture Index classifies the country as facing a very high risk of torture and ill

[196] ACHPR, Concluding Observations on the 7th – 10th Periodic Report …, July 2025
[197] EHRCO, About us, no date
[198] CARD, About CARD, no date
[199] USSD, 2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia (section 3 a), 12 August 2025
[200] OMCT, What is the Global Torture Index, no date

treatment, based on data collected in 2023 and 2024. Key areas of concern include police brutality, conditions within detention centres and abuses facilitated under emergency laws, particularly in conflict-affected regions such as Tigray, Oromia, Afar, and Amhara. Key violations involve psychological pressure, physical violence, and forced confessions during interrogations and detention. Victims, including political opponents, journalists, human rights defenders, lawyers, judges, religious leaders and various ethnic minority groups like Tigrayans and Amhara, regularly face discriminatory treatment. Torture methods include severe beatings, confinement in cramped spaces, enforced stress positions for long periods, prolonged solitary confinement in military camps, sleep and food deprivation, lack of access to medical care, detention in harsh climatic conditions and the alarming practice of incommunicado detention, all aimed at silencing dissent or extracting confessions.'[201]

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## 13.3 Extrajudicial killings and excessive use of force

13.3.1 The OHCHR August 2024 UPR report observed: 'The [Human Rights Committee] … expressed its concern that excessive use of force, including lethal force, by police and security forces remained widespread, notably in the context of protests, and that the existing legal framework for the use of force and firearms by State agents was inadequate.'[202]

13.3.2 In its August 2024 UPR report HRC reported that several stakeholders alleged an increase in extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary killings in Ethiopia since the previous review. The HRC noted that a joint submission by Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) alleged that government security forces and non-state armed groups had carried out extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions during armed conflict and periods of unrest. The HRC also reported that the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) stated that violations of the rights to life and personal security had been committed by both state and non-state armed actors. In addition, a joint submission by the Oromia Support Group UK and Oromia Support Group Australia alleged that government security forces and Fano militia were responsible for large numbers of extrajudicial killings of Oromo civilians, including persons suspected of links to the Oromo Liberation Army[203].

13.3.3 A January 2025 news report by The Reporter, a privately owned Ethiopian English-language news publication[204], reported that the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) had identified an increase in alleged extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances in several regions of Ethiopia. According to the report, the EHRC's findings were based on investigations conducted between September 2024 and January 2025, drawing on testimonies from victims, family members and local organisations. The EHRC reported cases in the Amhara and Oromia regions and other conflict-affected areas, and stated that many individuals remained unaccounted for, with families unable to obtain information about their

[201] OMCT, Global Torture Index 2025: Ethiopia Factsheet, June 2025
[202] HRC, Compilation of information prepared by the Office of the … (para16), 29 August 2024
[203] HRC, Summary of stakeholders' submissions on Ethiopia - … (paras 20 to 21), 26 August 2024)
[204] The Reporter, About us, no date

whereabouts[205].

13.3.4 In an August 2025 article on the EHRC's annual report, The Reporter noted:

'The 152-page report lists countless cases in which citizens are arbitrarily killed by government security forces, as well as armed forces like Fano in Amhara and OLF-Shene in Oromia…

'The Commission states that civilians have repeatedly been killed during clashes between government forces and armed groups in Amhara and Oromia. Civilians are often accused of supporting the other side by both Fano and government forces, with the accusations often ending in murder, according to the report.

'Similar scenarios have occurred in Oromia, where civilians are killed by government forces or OLF-Shene on suspicion of aiding the other side.'[206]

13.3.5 The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) is an independent, non-profit organisation that collects and analyses data on political violence, protest events and conflict-related developments worldwide. ACLED provides near real-time event data based on information gathered from a range of sources, including media reports, international organisations, NGOs and local partners. Its datasets are widely used by researchers, governments, international organisations and humanitarian actors to monitor patterns and trends of conflict and insecurity[207].

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## 13.4 Arbitrary arrest and detention

13.4.1 The USSD 2024 report noted that despite constitutional and legal safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention, such protections were not consistently observed in practice. According to the USSD, there were reports of widespread arbitrary detention, including the continued detention of thousands of ethnic Amhara and Oromo individuals following the end of the state of emergency in June 2024.The report also noted that authorities sometimes failed to comply with court orders for release by filing new charges, appealing bail decisions or transferring detainees to other jurisdictions. In addition, seven Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) leaders were reportedly released in September 2024 after being detained for more than four years without charge despite multiple court orders for their release[208].

13.4.2 The OHCHR August 2024 UPR report observed: 'The Human Rights Committee expressed concern about reports of large-scale arbitrary detention and stated that Ethiopia should investigate all allegations of arbitrary arrest and detention and ensure that alleged perpetrators were prosecuted and, if convicted, punished with appropriate penalties and should ensure that anyone who was detained arbitrarily was released without conditions and adequately compensated.'[209]

13.4.3 In a December 2024 article, The Reporter, citing findings from EHRC investigation in Oromia, reported that children as young as 11 were forcibly

[205] The Reporter, EHRC reports increase in extrajudicial killings, forced …, 25 January 2025
[206] The Reporter, Rights Commission Condemns Unlawful Military Rule…, 9 August 2025
[207] ACLED, About, no date
[208] USSD, 2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia (Section 2 c), 12 August 2025
[209] HRC, Compilation of information prepared by the Office of the United … (para 22), 29 August 2024

and arbitrarily detained as part of mobilisation efforts for regional military forces. According to the EHRC findings reported by The Reporter, children were rounded up and detained, including in Shashemene where they were held in a convention hall under the pretext of receiving military training. The report also documented the detention of mentally ill individuals and stated that police, military personnel and local militia forces were responsible for these detentions, often targeting people during their daily activities. The EHRC further stated that, because Ethiopia's national security forces did not accept unwilling recruits, the issue was not one of conscription but rather of arbitrary and unlawful detention[210].

13.4.4 The BTI 2026 report (covering events from February 2023 to January 2025) stated: 'Civil society groups and individuals alike are regularly arrested, intimidated and accused of supporting anti-government groups or agendas.'[211]

13.4.5 The EHRC 2025 report observed that arbitrary and prolonged detention remained a concern. The EHRC observed that, despite the lifting of the state of emergency in Amhara Region in June 2024, practices associated with the state of emergency continued, including mass arrests and detention in informal facilities, prisons, police stations and military camps without court appearances. Arbitrary and unlawful detention including arrests without warrants, detention without judicial oversight, and the transfer of detainees between police stations also occurred in Oromia in connection with the ongoing conflict[212].

13.4.6 The OMCT 2025 report observed:

'Several reports state that incommunicado detention is practiced in Ethiopia, often denying detainees access to lawyers and family members for weeks or even months. In politically motivated cases, the right to bail is often denied even after court decisions. Following the August 2023 state of emergency, thousands of individuals in the Amhara region, as well as ethnic Amhara people were reportedly detained arbitrarily. Moreover, the absence of mandatory video recording during interrogations or arrests makes the independent verification of police conduct difficult, further entrenching a culture of impunity. Complaints against law enforcement rarely result in accountability or disciplinary action, and investigations typically lack independence and effectiveness.'[213]

13.4.7 Sources reporting on media freedom in 2026 indicated the continued arrest and detention of journalists and media workers. In February 2026 HRW reported that journalists working for independent media outlets faced harassment, arbitrary arrest and periods of incommunicado detention, and documented cases of journalists and media workers being arrested, detained, abducted or otherwise restricted by the authorities in various parts of Ethiopia, including Addis Ababa and the Somali Region[214]. In May 2026, Amnesty International similarly reported a renewed crackdown on journalists, including detentions and alleged enforced disappearances, and cited the detention of Addis Standard managing editor Million Beyene, who was

[210] The Reporter, EHRC condemns unlawful detention of minors, extortion…, 7 December 2024
[211] BTI, 2026 Country Report: Ethiopia (Political participation), 26 March 2026
[212] EHRC, Executive Summary: Annual Ethiopia Human Rights ... (para 8), 22 August 2025
[213] OMCT, Global Torture Index 2025: Ethiopia Factsheet (section II), June 2025
[214] HRW, World Report 2026; Ethiopia, 4 February 2026

reportedly held for two weeks without access to his lawyer or family, with Amnesty assessing that the detention appeared to be linked to his journalistic work[215].

13.4.8 BBC Monitoring, citing The Reporter, stated in June 2026 that the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) had documented the continued occurrence of arbitrary arrests without court orders in several parts of the country, despite reporting that 2,143 detainees had been released during the previous 11 months[216]. Separately, HRW reported that authorities and security forces in Western Tigray continued to arbitrarily detain ethnic Tigrayans while also imposing severe restrictions on their freedom of movement, employment and access to services[217].

13.4.9 An August 2026 analysis by the Addis Standard reported arbitrary detentions linked to military recruitment in parts of Oromia including Sheger City near Addis Ababa. According to the report, families alleged that young people had been taken against their will, and, in some cases, money was demanded for their release. The report stated that the EHRC had opened an investigation into allegations of forced conscription and met senior ENDF officials in 2025 to discuss complaints received, although the outcome had not been made public. The Oromia regional government rejected allegations of widespread forced conscription and related abuses, describing such claims as unfounded propaganda.[218]

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## 13.5 ACLED data on arrests

13.5.1 The ACLED database contains data on reported arrests defined as events where state authorities detain a particularly significant number of individuals or conduct politically significant mass arrests[219]. From 1 January 2024 to 9 October 2026, ACLED recorded 121 incidents of arrest of which 48 occurred in 2024,46 in 2025 and 27 by 9 October 2026[220].

13.5.2 The table below, based ACLED data[221] shows the number of arrest events (incidents of arrest) by primary actor during the period under review:

| Primary arresting actor | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ENDF | 8 | 6 | 2 | **16** |
| Tigray Defence Force (TDF) | 0 | 0 | 5 | **5** |
| Federal Police | 6 | 7 | 5 | **18** |
| State police | 33 | 33 | 14 | **80** |
| Joint Peace and Security Task Force | 1 | 0 | 0 | **1** |
| Kebele Communal Militia | 0 | 0 | 1 | **1** |
| **Total** | **48** | **46** | **27** | **121** |

[215] Amnesty International, East and Southern Africa: Media freedom under attack amid…, 2 May 2026
[216] BBC Monitoring, Ethiopian rights body says over 2,100 detainees freed, abuses …, 24 June 2026
[217] HRW, Ethiopia: Persecution of Tigrayans Unrelenting, 22 June 2026
[218] Addis Standard, Forced conscription resurfaces across Oromia as Ethiopia…, 13 August 2026
[219] ACLED, ACLED Codebook (Arrests), no date
[220] ACLED, Export tool (Ethiopia/strategic development/arrests), 14 October 2026
[221] ACLED, Export tool (Ethiopia/strategic development/arrests), 14 October 2026

13.5.3 CPIT analysis of the ACLED data indicate that reported arrests were predominantly carried out by state security actors. State police accounted for around two-thirds of all arrest events (66.1%), Federal Police (14.9%) and the ENDF (13.2%).

13.5.4 The table below, based on ACLED data[222], shows arrest by region from 1 January 2024 to 9 October 2026.

| Region | 2024 | 2025 | Up to 9 Oct 2026 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Oromia | 18 | 11 | 3 | 32 |
| Addis Ababa | 6 | 9 | 7 | 22 |
| Amhara | 8 | 9 | 2 | 19 |
| Tigray | 1 | 3 | 10 | 14 |
| South Ethiopia Region | 8 | 1 | 1 | 10 |
| Other regions | 7 | 13 | 4 | 24 |
| **Total** | **48** | **46** | **27** | **121** |

13.5.5 CPIT analysis of the ACLED data indicate that arrests were concentrated in conflict-affected regions and Addis Ababa. Oromia accounted for the largest proportion of recorded arrest events (26.4%, 32 of 121 events), followed by Addis Ababa (18.2%, 22 events), Amhara (15.7%, 19 events), and Tigray (11.6%, 14 events). The remaining 24 events (19.8%) were distributed across other regions, including Benishangul-Gumuz, Somali, Afar, Sidama, Central Ethiopia, South Ethiopia, South West Ethiopia and Gambela.

13.5.6 The notes column in the ACLED dataset provides details such as who was involved, what happened, where the incident took place and where reported the stated reasons or context for the event. In the case of arrests and abductions/forced disappearances, the notes often include information on the number of people detained, the identity or affiliation of those arrested, and the justification given by authorities or sources. The notes may also reflect differing perspectives and therefore represent reported accounts rather than independently verified facts[223].

13.5.7 CPIT analysis of the narrative notes accompanying the arrest events identified at least 7,014 arrests. This figure represents minimum documented totals rather than the full number of individuals affected. Where ACLED notes use formulations such as ‘over 100’, ‘at least 50’, or ‘around 30 the stated figure was used, while events with completely unquantified terms such as such as dozens, scores, several, hundreds, many, multiple and unspecified number are not included in the totals. Only 52 of the 121 contained a numerical count in the notes. The remaining 69 arrest events did not provide a clear figure.[224],.

13.5.8 CPIT has collated the ACLED data and produced the table below showing the total number of arrest events, the number of events with quantifiable arrest figures, the number of events where arrests were reported but not

[222] ACLED, Export tool (Ethiopia/strategic development/arrests),14 October 2026
[223] ACLED, ACLED Codebook (Abduction and forced disappearance), no date
[224] ACLED, Export tool (Ethiopia/strategic development/arrests), 14 October 2026

quantified, and the minimum reported number of individuals arrested from 1 January 2024 to 9 October 2026:

| Year | Quantified events | Unquantified events | Minimum arrests reported |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2024 | 19 | 29 | 4,101 |
| 2025 | 16 | 30 | 2,044 |
| up to 9 October 2026 | 17 | 10 | 869 |
| **Total** | **52** | **69** | **7,014** |

[225]

13.5.9 ACLED does not record motives in a structured field. CPIT has conducted a thematic analysis of the free text notes accompanying each event to produce categories of motives for arrests. Some events involved multiple motives. The analysis indicates that during the period under review the main reported reason for arrest was security enforcement against individuals alleged to support, belong to, or collaborate with armed opposition groups, especially Fano and OLA/OLF (Shene). Political-expression and media-related arrests were also reported and became relatively more prominent in 2026[226].

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## 13.6 Enforced disappearance

13.6.1 The EHRC noted in its submission to the UN Human Rights Council's 57th session held between 9 September and 9 October 2024 that Ethiopian law provides safeguards against enforced disappearance. The Constitution protects liberty and security of person, while the Criminal Code criminalises enforced disappearance as an international crime and, in certain circumstances during armed conflict, as a war crime. Other domestic provisions also criminalise illegal restraint and abduction[227].

13.6.2 However, according to the same source over the previous three years, it had investigated and documented more than 200 cases that may constitute enforced disappearance. Some individuals were subsequently released or located after being held for up to eight months in irregular detention facilities or incommunicado. In its June 2024 annual report, the EHRC documented 42 people taken from Addis Ababa whose whereabouts remained unknown at the time of reporting. Witness accounts indicated that, in most cases, individuals were reportedly taken by government security authorities, including the police, national intelligence and military. The EHRC also identified a pattern of detainees disappearing from regular detention facilities following prolonged arbitrary detention, including alleged transfers to irregular facilities or military camps. In some cases, available evidence gave the EHRC reasonable grounds to believe that victims had been unlawfully killed, while the absence of arrest, detention and transfer records impeded investigation[228].

13.6.3 The USSD 2024 country report noted that there were enforced

[225] ACLED, Export tool (Ethiopia/strategic development/Abductions/Arrests/Notes), 14 October 2026
[226] ACLED, Export tool (Ethiopia/strategic development/arrests/notes), 6 August 2026
[227] HRC, Written submission by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (page 2), 17 August 2024
[228] HRC, Written submission by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (page 2), 17 August 2024

disappearances by, or on behalf of, government authorities in Ethiopia. It cited numerous cases involving government critics, including political commentators, journalists, activists and former military officers, as well as detention in informal or undisclosed locations where authorities reportedly concealed individuals' fate or whereabouts. In Tigray, enforced disappearances reportedly continued despite having decreased following the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA), with individuals allegedly abducted by government agents or groups acting with government authorisation, support or acquiescence. The report also noted that thousands of Tigrayans were reportedly arbitrarily detained at unknown locations in western Tigray[229].

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## 13.7 ACLED data on forced disappearances/abductions

13.7.1 ACLED records data on forced disappearance and abductions, which it notes refers to 'arrests by non-state groups and extrajudicial detentions by state forces.'[230]

13.7.2 From 1 January 2024 to 9 October 2026 ACLED recorded 287 incidents (events) of abduction/enforced disappearance and a minimum of 1,493 associated victims in Ethiopia. Of the recorded incidents, 122 events included quantifiable number of people abducted/forcibly disappeared and reported number while the rest (165) used vague unquantifiable terms.[231]

| Year | Total Events | Events with Figures | Vague / Unquantified Events | Minimum People Reported |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2024 | 103 | 52 | 51 | 657 |
| 2025 | 104 | 47 | 57 | 508 |
| 2026 | 80 | 23 | 57 | 328 |
| **Total** | **287** | **122** | **165** | **1,493** |

13.7.3 CPIT has collated the ACLED data and produced the table below showing number of abductions/forced disappearance events by actor:

| Main actor (Actor 1) | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Federal security forces | 6 | 6 | 1 | **13** |
| OLF/OLA | 31 | 20 | 17 | **68** |
| Fano Youth Militia | 26 | 22 | 6 | **54** |
| Amhara Fano National Force (AFN) | 0 | 1 | 0 | **1** |
| Tigray Defense Force (TDF) | 0 | 5 | 28 | **33** |
| Tigray Peace Force (TPF) | 0 | 1 | 0 | **1** |

[229] USSD, 2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ethiopia (section 2 c), 12 August 2025
[230] ACLED, ACLED Codebook (Abduction and forced disappearance), no date
[231] ACLED Export tool (Ethiopia/strategic development/arrests) 6 August 2026

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| State police | 8 | 2 | 3 | **13** |
| Kebele Communal Militia (Ethiopia) | 8 | 0 | 4 | **12** |
| Ethnic Militia | 1 | 5 | 2 | **8** |
| Military Forces of Eritrea | 3 | 0 | 0 | **3** |
| Military Forces of Sudan | 0 | 1 | 0 | **1** |
| Murle Ethnic Militia (South Sudan) | 1 | 0 | 0 | **1** |
| Unidentified Armed Group | 19 | 41 | 19 | **79** |
| **Total** | **103** | **104** | **80** | **287** |

13.7.4 The ACLED data indicate that abductions and enforced disappearances were overwhelmingly attributed to non-state actors. Of the 287 incidents recorded during the period, 90.9% (261 incidents) were attributed to non-state actors, compared with 9.1% (26 incidents) attributed to state actors at federal or regional level. Unidentified armed groups were the most frequently reported perpetrators, accounting for 27.5% of all incidents (79 events), followed by OLA/OLF (23.7%, 68 events), Fano Youth Militia (18.8%, 54 events), and the Tigray Defence Forces (11.5%, 33 events).

13.7.5 CPIT has produced the table below, based on ACLED data[232], showing abduction/ forced disappearance events by reported reason, from 1 January 2024 to 9 October 2026:

| **Motivation** | **2024** | **2025** | **Up to 9 Oct 2026** | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Unknown /unstated motive | 43 | 58 | 26 | **127** |
| Ransom, extortion | 34 | 25 | 9 | **68** |
| Support/ association with an armed group | 16 | 15 | 10 | **41** |
| Forced recruitment/ mobilisation | 4 | 1 | 34 | **39** |
| Political affiliation, activism or expression | 1 | 5 | 1 | **7** |
| Ethnic/communal targeting | 4 | 0 | 0 | **4** |
| Retaliation or reprisal | 1 | 0 | 0 | **1** |
| **Total** | **103** | **104** | **80** | **287** |

13.7.6 CPIT's analysis of the table indicates that the motive for abduction or enforced disappearance was unclear or not reported in 44.3% (127 of 287) of incidents recorded between 1 January 2024 and 9 October 2026. Where a motive could be identified, the most commonly reported reasons were ransom, extortion or financial gain (23.7%, 68 incidents), alleged support for or association with an armed group (14.3%, 41 incidents), and forced recruitment or mobilisation (13.6%, 39 incidents). A small number of incidents were linked to political affiliation or activism (2.4%, 7 incidents), ethnic or communal targeting (1.4%, 4 incidents), or retaliation and reprisal (0.3%, 1 incident).

[232] ACLED, Export tool (Ethiopia/strategic development/arrests), 6 August 2026

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## 14. Oversight mechanisms

14.1.1 For more information on oversight mechanisms including regulation, the EHRC, the office of the ombudsman, monitoring of detention centres and complaint systems, see the archived CPIN Ethiopia: Actors of protection, February 2024.

14.1.2 A report by the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) to the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), dated 23 August 2024, noted Proclamation No. 1307/2023 expanded the remit of the office of the ombudsman to include the investigation of administrative abuses committed by private entities[233].

14.1.3 The same source reported that in 2023/2024, the EHRC 'conducted 45 investigations and 32 systemic investigations related to government maladministration and 90% of administrative complaints have been resolved.'[234] The MoJ October 2025 report stated that between 2020 to 2025, criminal proceedings for human rights violations had been initiated against 19 police officers, resulting in 4 convictions[235].

14.1.4 The ACHPR July 2025 report noted that: 'The Commission notes with satisfaction that the EHRC is mandated to conduct regular and unannounced visits to all places of detention, including police stations and prisons, to assess compliance with human rights standards.'[236]

14.1.5 The MoJ October 2025 report stated that between 2020 and 2025 the MoJ monitored approximately 112,000 detainees and prisoners as part of its human rights protection activities[237].

14.1.6 The OMCT 2025 report noted that victims of torture in Ethiopia had limited access to effective remedies, with legal aid, psychological support and meaningful access to justice remaining limited. It assessed complaint mechanisms as largely ineffective and lacking independence, with complainants and detainees reportedly facing intimidation and reprisals. The OMCT also noted the absence of a National Preventive Mechanism [an independent body established under the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture with a mandate to prevent torture and ill-treatment through regular monitoring of places of detention[238]] and reported limitations on independent monitoring of detention facilities, including restrictions on access by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission.[239]

14.1.7 In an August 2025 article on the EHRC's annual report, The Reporter noted:

'In a surprising departure from protocol, Commissioner Berhanu Adelo, who replaced Daniel Bekele (PhD) this year, disclosed EHRC was not called to present its annual report to Parliament this time around…

'The Commission reports it received 1,258 appeals and complaints from individuals and groups during the year, of which 416 are from Addis Ababa.

[233] HRC, National report submitted pursuant to Human Rights … (paras 27 to 28), 23 August 2024
[234] HRC, National report submitted pursuant to Human Rights … (para 30), 23 August 2024
[235] MoJ, Ministry of Justice Five-Year Strategy (2018-2022 EC) (page 23 footnote 13), October 2025
[236] ACHPR, Concluding Observations on the 7th – 10th Periodic Report …, July 2025
[237] GoE MoJ, Ministry of Justice 5-Year Strategy (2018-2022 EC) (page 23), 28 October 2025
[238] OHCHR, Optional Protocol to the Convention against … (Articles 3, 18 to 19) 18 December 2002
[239] OMCT, Global Torture Index 2025: Ethiopia Factsheet (sections I, III), June 2025

More than half of the complaints concerned breaches of political and civic rights, according to the report…

'The report states the government has opposed the Commission's attempts to visit detention and prison facilities in the Amhara region. Its officers managed to visit just five facilities in the region during the reporting period.'[240]

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[240] The Reporter, Rights Commission Condemns Unlawful Military Rule..., 9 August 2025

# Terms of Reference

The ‘Terms of Reference’ are the main topics and issues relevant to the scope of this note and provides the framework for the country information. In this note, they were:

- Legal framework – relevant laws and policies
  - Constitution
  - Criminal code
- Judiciary
  - Structure, size and composition
  - Judicial independence
  - Selection process for judges
  - Fair trial and due process
  - Legal aid and other assistance
  - Resourcing
  - Accessibility
  - Customary and religious courts
- Organisations responsible for law enforcement
  - Federal security apparatus - Ethiopian National Défense Forces, intelligence services, Ethiopia Federal Police
  - Prison system
  - Regional security forces - state police, local militias
  - Effectiveness
  - Accessibility
  - Corruption
- Human rights violations
  - Torture and ill treatment
  - Arbitrary arrest, detention
  - Enforced disappearances
  - Extra-judicial killings
  - Sexual and gender-based violence
- Oversight bodies of security forces
  - Police oversight / complaints mechanisms
  - Judicial remedy
  - Ethiopian human rights commission
  - Office of the ombudsman
  - Witness protection

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# Version control and feedback

## Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **3.0**
- valid from **26 October 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

The current CPIN provides newer evidence, more quantitative analysis and a more explicit assessment of how protection varies by profile and location. However, the overall policy position has not fundamentally changed: in general, the state is considered able to provide effective protection from non-state or rogue state actors, but protection may be unavailable where the feared actor is the state and may be limited for particular profiles or in conflict-affected areas.

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The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support them in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

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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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