



TO The Permanent Missions of the States joining the joint statements on the human rights situation in Ethiopia at the Human Rights Council

FROM Amhara Advocacy Group in Europe (AAGE)

DATE 26 September 2026

SESSION Sixty-third session of the Human Rights Council, Geneva, 7 September – 7 October 2026

RE Joint Statement on the human rights situation in Ethiopia, Item 2, 8 September 2026

Submission to the Delegations Joining the Joint Statement on the Human Rights Situation in Ethiopia (HRC63)

Subject: Addressing the Political and Human Rights Realities in Ethiopia

We welcome the continued engagement of the forty-one delegations that joined the [Joint Statement on the human rights situation in Ethiopia delivered on 8 September 2026](#) under Item 2 of the Human Rights Council.^[1]

We value the recognition that the situation in the Amhara region warrants attention. However, we are concerned that the statement does not adequately reflect the scale of the war and the political conditions that continue to fuel it.

For the first time in this series of joint statements, the Amhara region is distinguished rather than merely listed alongside Oromia and Tigray.^[2] The statement expresses concern regarding developments in Oromia and “[in particular Amhara regions](#).”^[3] However, the statement dedicates a full paragraph to Tigray, referencing [the Pretoria Agreement, the African Union mediation process, and the role of former President Obasanjo](#).^[4] But, no equivalent call for mediation or peaceful resolution of the war against the Amhara region is suggested. Instead, it is just referred to as “developments”.^[5] This characterisation by itself risks understating the scale and severity of the war.

The result is a troubling disparity. One region, where renewed conflict is feared, is accompanied by a diplomatic process and repeated international engagement. But, another region that has been under [sustained military operations since August 2023](#)^[6] received no comparable pathway toward political resolution.

This is not merely a difference in emphasis. It is a difference in international engagement.

The Amhara region continues to endure military campaigns, [civilian casualties](#), displacement, [restrictions on humanitarian access](#), and widespread atrocities. ^[4] [Violence also continues in parts of Oromia](#). ^[5] While the statement calls for the avoidance of future conflict in Tigray, it does not apply the same urgency to ending the conflicts that are currently taking place. ^[6] If dialogue is the appropriate solution for preventing conflict, then it should also be the preferred solution for ending conflicts that are already claiming lives.

The international community should, therefore, call explicitly for:

- An immediate cessation of hostilities in all conflict-affected regions.
- Inclusive political dialogue involving all relevant stakeholders.
- Independent monitoring of violations by all parties.
- Equal diplomatic attention to ongoing conflicts in Amhara and Oromia just as it is the case for Tigray.

We are also concerned by the statement's positive characterization of the 2026 elections in Ethiopia. ^[7] A [partial election that took place in some parts of the country](#) cannot be equated with democratic legitimacy. ^[8] Large areas of Ethiopia remain affected by conflict, insecurity, and [mass displacement](#). ^[9] Throughout 2025 the federal government conducted [widespread arrests of members of the Oromo Liberation Front](#). Leaders of the Oromo Federalist Congress operate largely from exile, and the party — which [held 206 offices across Oromia five years ago](#) — retained three at the time of the vote. ^[10] [About 300 Amhara politicians, journalists and public figures](#) were jailed on protracted, politically motivated terrorism charges for speaking against the ongoing conflicts and injustices in the country. ^[11] Activists, and [journalists have faced intimidation, arrest, detention](#), or exclusion from meaningful participation in public life. ^[12] The elections took place when significant portions of the population lived in areas affected by military operations. ^[13] Opposition parties faced restrictions that undermined their ability to compete on equal terms. ^[14] Such a process is not a free, fair, and inclusive democratic exercise and the result of such process should be null and void. Democratic legitimacy requires more than ballots. It requires an environment in which citizens and political actors can participate freely, safely, and without fear. That has not been the case in the 2026 election in Ethiopia.

Furthermore, unlike the [September 2025 statement](#), the current text does not specifically identify the categories of violation it then enumerated: ^[15]

- Civilian killings and injuries.
- Arbitrary arrests and detention.
- Torture and ill-treatment.
- Enforced disappearances.
- Sexual and gender-based violence.
- Attacks on civic infrastructure.
- Grave violations affecting children.

We further submit that one category has never appeared in any statement in this series, despite sustained documentation: attacks on places of worship, religious communities and religious leaders. In East Arsi Zone of Oromia, armed men have [targeted civilians and places of worship, killing at least thirteen people and burning a church to the ground](#). AAGE's Church Attacks Monitor records incidents of this kind across Amhara and Oromia, source-linked and available to delegations on request. ^[12]

We politely request that the co-sponsoring states support the extension of African Union good offices, mediation efforts, or an equivalent political process to the Amhara region.

If political dialogue is considered essential in Tigray, there is no principled reason why similar efforts should not apply elsewhere.

We urge that future statements apply the same standards of concern to all ongoing conflicts in Ethiopia. Warnings about future violence should not eclipse the realities of violence already occurring. Such statements should return to explicitly identifying categories of violations and abuses as [previous statements have done](#). ^[2]

Violations that are not named are less likely to be investigated, monitored, or addressed through accountability mechanisms.

The people of Ethiopia deserve an approach grounded in consistency, impartiality, and equal concern for all victims. We welcome international attention to the risks facing Tigray. We hope that with the international engagement the risk of renewed war is averted. We ask only that the same concern be extended to the people enduring conflict today in Amhara, Oromia, and across Ethiopia.

The objective should not merely be the prevention of future wars, but the resolution of current ones.

The National Dialogue that was supposed to have been established to foster national consensus, strengthen social cohesion, and provide a peaceful and inclusive forum for addressing Ethiopia's long-standing political and social challenges was used as a platform to push through the ruling party's agendas. ^[13] Such dialogues and elections should not be assessed solely by their existence, but by their legitimacy and inclusiveness. Sustainable peace will require more than political processes. It will require accountability, reconciliation, equal protection of civilians, and a genuine commitment to democratic participation for all. In the case of Ethiopia, both were used as political tools to strengthen the grip on power by the government rather than bring about meaningful change and reforms.

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Annex — Sources and References

All references verified as accessible on 18 September 2026. Where a claim rests on a single source, or where a figure is second-hand, this is indicated.

[1] The Joint Statement of 8 September 2026

European External Action Service, HRC63 – Joint Statement – Item 2: Joint Statement on the human rights situation in Ethiopia, delivered 8 September 2026 by H.E. Ambassador Rytis Paulauskas, Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations Office at Geneva, on behalf of a group of 41 countries.

https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-geneva/hrc63-joint-statement-item-2-joint-statement-human-rights-situation-ethiopia_en

Supports: the number of delegations; the date and agenda item; the phrase concerning Oromia and Amhara; the dedicated Tigray paragraph and its references to the Pretoria Agreement, African Union mediation and the High Representative; the characterisation of the Amhara situation; and the statement’s treatment of the 2026 elections.

[2] The series of joint statements on Ethiopia

The claim that the Amhara region is distinguished for the first time has been verified against every statement in the series published by the EEAS from October 2023 onward.

HRC54, Item 10 (10 October 2023, 45 countries) — flat list: Tigray, Amhara, Afar, Oromia. [Link](#)

HRC57, Item 10 (2024, 45 countries) — Amhara and Oromia grouped; Tigray treated separately. [Link](#)

HRC58, Item 2 (March 2025, 44 countries) — “especially in the Amhara and Oromia regions”, both regions together. [Link](#)

HRC60, Item 2 (9 September 2025, 42 countries) — flat list: Amhara, Oromia, Tigray. [Link](#)

HRC61, Item 2 (2 March 2026, 41 countries) — flat list: Amhara, Oromia, Tigray. [Link](#)

HRC63, Item 2 (8 September 2026, 41 countries) — Oromia “and in particular Amhara regions”.

In no earlier statement is the Amhara region singled out from Oromia. Where earlier texts give emphasis, they give it to the two regions jointly.

A further point of record. The HRC57 statement of 2024 and the HRC58 statement of March 2025 both called on all parties to engage in peaceful negotiations and dialogue in order to restore peace in Amhara and Oromia. No such call appears in the statements of September 2025, March 2026 or September 2026. The calls for dialogue in respect of Amhara were made by this group of states, and were subsequently withdrawn.

[3] Duration of the armed conflict in Amhara Region

Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2026 Country Report: Ethiopia, dating the expansion of Fano insurgent operations against the federal government to August 2023.

<https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/ETH>

A federal state of emergency covering Amhara Region was declared in August 2023 and remained in force until June 2024, its lifting being welcomed in the HRC57 joint statement (reference [2]).

Amnesty International, on the state-led campaign of mass arbitrary detention in Amhara Region from 28 September 2024, documenting detention sites at Dangla, Seraba (Chilga), Chorisa (Kombolcha) and Shewa Robit.

<https://allafrica.com/stories/202501300050.html>

Recommended before circulation: substitute the direct Amnesty International report URL, title and reference number in place of secondary coverage.

[4] Conditions in Amhara Region

Amhara Association of America, *War Updates from Amhara Region, Ethiopia: August 31 – September 6, 2026*. Records battle events and rights violations across more than sixteen woreda and city administrations in eight zonal administrations — North Wollo, North Shewa, East Gojjam, Bahir Dar, South Gondar, Central Gondar, North Gondar, and Welkait-Tegede-Setit Humera — with civilian casualties recorded at Alamata, Mida-Woremo and Efratana-Gidim.

<https://www.amharaamerica.org/post/war-updates-from-amhara-region-ethiopia-august-31st-to-september-6th-2026>

<https://www.amharaamerica.org/post/war-updates-from-amhara-region-ethiopia-august-24th-to-30th-2026>

<https://www.amharaamerica.org/post/war-updates-from-amhara-region-ethiopia-august-10th-to-16th-2026>

Note on the source: AAA is an advocacy organisation. Its weekly bulletins are incident-level, dated and geolocated, and are widely used by researchers, but they are not an independent monitoring mechanism. Delegations seeking an institutional counterpart should consult OHCHR and EHRC reporting.

Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2026*, Ethiopia chapter, on humanitarian access specifically. Records that aid agencies' access remained deeply restricted in Amhara, where aid workers faced high levels of violence including abduction for ransom; and that on 15 August gunmen abducted Honelign Fentahun, an Ethiopian Red Cross Society aid worker, together with two colleagues, in North Gondar Zone — he was tortured and died of his injuries.

<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2026/country-chapters/ethiopia>

Note for delegations: the killing of humanitarian workers is the only category of violation the Joint Statement of 8 September 2026 continues to name. This is the documented record behind that reference.

[5] Violence in Oromia

Amhara Association of America, preliminary report on identity-based violence in East Wollega Zone, Oromia Region, 18–29 August 2026. Documents attacks in Gida-Ayana, Limu-Gelila and surrounding areas, with more than 68 civilians confirmed killed, further injuries, and significant displacement.

<https://www.amharaamerica.org/post/aaa-statement-2026-09-01>

Recommended before circulation: verify the stable URL of the preliminary report itself, as distinct from the accompanying statement.

[6] The 2026 general election and the conditions in which it was held

ACCORD, *Ethiopia's 2026 Elections: An Autopsy of a Failed Transition to Democracy*, July 2026. Records that the Prosperity Party won 438 of the 486 House seats for which results were officially declared, the remaining forty-eight going to sixteen other parties and eight independent candidates; and finds that most opposition victories came in constituencies the ruling party chose not to contest, with several successful candidates holding ties to Prosperity

Party structures — an arrangement the analysis describes as managed pluralism rather than genuine electoral competition.

<https://www.accord.org.za/analysis/ethiopias-2026-elections-an-autopsy-of-a-failed-transition-to-democracy/>

FIDH and OMCT, Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, *Ethiopia's 7th General Election: Civic Space and Security at Risk*, 28 May 2026. Records approximately 1.9 million internally displaced persons in Ethiopia as of December 2025 per UNHCR, with continuing conflict driving further displacement; and identifies meaningful electoral participation in conflict-affected areas as a significant unresolved challenge.

<https://www.omct.org/en/resources/statements/ethiopias-7th-general-election-civic-space-and-security-at-risk>

Africa24, on the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia announcement of 21 June 2026, confirming 438 of 486 seats and noting that voting could not take place in several constituencies owing to insecurity.

<https://africa24tv.com/ethiopia-parliamentary-elections-prosperity-party-wins-438-seats-out-of-486/>

Recommended before circulation: obtain the NEBE final results announcement of 21 June 2026 as the primary source, including the official figure for constituencies in which no vote was held.

[7] Detention of opposition members and the position of opposition parties in Oromia

Critical Threats Project, *Africa File*, 4 June 2026. Records that the federal government conducted widespread arrests of members of the Oromo Liberation Front, one of the principal political parties in Oromia, throughout 2025.

<https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/ethiopia-abiy-isis-issp-iswap-nigeria-benin-niger-burkinafaso-africa-file-june-4-2026>

Journal of Democracy, *Ethiopia Is About to Hold Another Sham Election*, 2026. Records that officials of the Oromo Federalist Congress, the Oromo Liberation Front, the Tigray People's Liberation Front and the Ogaden National Liberation Front frequently endure harassment and arbitrary arrest, and that the OFC has been unable to operate outside Addis Ababa.

<https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/online-exclusive/ethiopia-is-about-to-hold-another-sham-election/>

Merera Gudina, chairman of the Oromo Federalist Congress, quoted in *Addis Standard*: the conditions for a free, fair and credible election do not exist; the party, which maintained 206 offices across Oromia five years ago, retained three — in Finfinne, Ambo and Assela.

Bertelsmann Stiftung, *BTI 2026 Country Report: Ethiopia*: key opposition figures were arrested and voting was cancelled in some areas because of conflict, excluding major political groups from the process.

<https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/ETH>

The number of candidates the OFC ultimately fielded is reported variously as six and as ten. No figure is cited here pending confirmation.

[8] Detention of prominent Amhara figures during the electoral period

BBC Amharic, 12 August 2026, examining the document presented to detainees in the pardon proceedings. Records that upwards of 300 politicians, journalists and others charged with terrorism fell within the scope of those proceedings, and that the process was conducted by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission from 8 June 2026.

<https://www.bbc.com/amharic/articles/ckg9pr0333zo>

Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2025*, Ethiopia chapter. Records that Amhara journalists and opposition politicians — including Christian Tadele and Yohannes Buayalew — detained as part of the broader crackdown of August 2023, remained in detention.

<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/ethiopia>

Note on the figure. The number is second-hand in both sources. CPJ attributes it to media reports, and it describes those who were asked to sign apology letters — politicians, journalists and others facing terrorism charges connected to the Amhara conflict. No official count has been published. Delegations should read it as an order of magnitude reported in the Ethiopian press, not as a verified total.

Note on tense. This sentence describes the conditions prevailing during the campaign and at the time of the Joint Statement’s assessment of the election. On 10 September 2026, after this submission was drafted, more than 600 federal detainees were released, among them Christian Tadele MP, Dr Kassa Teshager and Dr Chane Kebede. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission has acknowledged that a further group — reported as 28 — were not released, having declined to sign a document accepting responsibility for instability in Amhara Region. Several detainees who refused were transferred from Abba Samuel prison in late August and their whereabouts remain unknown.

<https://wazema.substack.com/p/ethiopia-releases-more-than-600-prisoners>

[9] Pressure on journalists

Committee to Protect Journalists, *In Ethiopia, 5 journalists pressured to apologize for “terrorism” to win release*, 13 August 2026.

<https://cpj.org/2026/08/in-ethiopia-5-journalists-pressured-to-apologize-for-terrorism-to-win-release/>

Documents the cases of Gobeze Sisay, Meskerem Abera, Genet Asmamaw, Dawit Begashaw and Abay Zewdu, detained since 2023 on terrorism charges in connection with their reporting on unrest in Amhara Region; the pressure exerted on them, through threats and separation from other prisoners, to produce statements accepting responsibility for the crisis; and the requirement that they undertake to cease working as journalists.

Judicial calendar. A federal court ruled in February 2026 that there was sufficient evidence for the joint case against Gobeze, Meskerem, Genet and Dawit to proceed; their defence hearing, repeatedly adjourned, is listed for 19 November 2026. The case against Abay Zewdu is separate and awaits a ruling on whether the prosecution has presented sufficient evidence to proceed, with his next hearing listed for 16 October 2026. On conviction, the charges carry life imprisonment or the death penalty.

Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2026*, on the intensified crackdown on independent media and civil society ahead of the 2026 elections, including the suspension and closure of prominent rights organisations and amendments to the media law centralising regulatory power under the executive.

<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2026/country-chapters/ethiopia>

Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, Ethiopia country page, on shrinking civic space documented ahead of the June 2026 elections, including harassment of journalists, activists and civil society organisations.

<https://www.globalr2p.org/countries/ethiopia/>

[10] Categories of violation named in the September 2025 statement

See reference [2], HRC60 joint statement of 9 September 2025. The categories enumerated in that text are: killings and injuries of civilians; torture; enforced disappearances; arbitrary arrests and detentions; attacks on civic infrastructure; sexual and gender-based violence; and

grave violations against children, including killing and maiming, sexual violence and abduction.

https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-geneva/joint-statement-hrc60-general-debate-item-2-joint-statement-human-rights-situation-ethiopia_en

[11] The National Dialogue

The plenary of the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission concluded on 22 August 2026. The Joint Statement of 8 September 2026 welcomes this conclusion as a significant milestone (reference [1]).

The characterisation of the process in the body of this submission is AAGE's assessment, not a claim of reported fact, and is presented as such.

[12] Attacks on places of worship and religious communities

Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, Ethiopia country page. Records that civilians and places of worship have been targeted in East Arsi Zone of Oromia, where armed men killed at least thirteen people and burned a church to the ground.

<https://www.globalr2p.org/countries/ethiopia/>

AAGE Church Attacks Monitor — incident-level dataset recording attacks on churches, monasteries, clergy and religious communities across Amhara and Oromia, each entry source-linked. Available to delegations and researchers on request at editors@amharaadvocacy.eu.

The absence of this category from every statement in the series is established by reference [2].

Further material available on request

EU-Led Joint Statements on Ethiopia: Amhara Language Tracker — comparative analysis across naming, categories of violation enumerated, political framing, civic space language and accountability architecture.

AAGE Drone Strike Monitor — incident-level dataset, source-linked.

Briefing note on the prisoner release of 10 September 2026 — full source apparatus, including the legal analysis of the pardon procedure under Articles 229 and 230 of the Criminal Code and Article 28 of the Constitution.

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