



## OLLAA'S CONCERNS ON THE DECLARATION OF STATE OF EMERGENCY IN THE AMHARA REGION

*Falls Church, Virginia (8/8/2023)* – On Friday, Aug 4, 2023, the Ethiopian government [declared a six-month state of emergency](#) (SoE) in the Amhara region of Ethiopia, effective immediately. This declaration came in the [wake of weeks](#) of violence by Amhara militia (Fano), an anti-peace group which is accused of committing serious international crimes including ethnic cleansing in [Tigray](#). The Fano group stated they had taken [control of several major cities](#), prompting a call by the Amhara regional government urging the federal government to take “appropriate measures based on the FDRE constitution.” The Chairman of the Command, Temesgen Tiruneh said, “Works are underway with a view of reinstating peace in the Amhara Region.” OLLAA is concerned for various reasons, including that such a move will allow the government and military groups to target civilians and/or use them as a shield.

OLLAA believes it is important to understand what is at stake and how the international community should view this latest violence in Ethiopia. The Amhara Fano is a well-known organization that is accused of committing ethnic cleansing, war crimes, and crimes against humanity in northern Ethiopia by the [U.S. Department of State](#) and [UN HRC](#) (ICHREE), and it is also accused of committing similar acts in the [Oromia region against civilians](#). This new conflict may allow the Fano group to target civilians in places like [Wollo Special Oromia Zone](#) in Amhara region and other surrounding areas. In addition, its control of major cities will allow the federal government, which is accused of serious human rights violations itself, to use disproportionate force that will eventually lead to further instability and human rights violations. OLLAA thus views the outbreak of additional violence between the government and Fano as a dire threat to peace in Ethiopia as both groups have a track record of violations against civilians, though it is the government's sole responsibility to protect Ethiopians, which it has failed to do.

OLLAA is also concerned that Fano, with its well-documented history of serious human rights violations, will use civilians as a shield or force civilians to fight against the Ethiopian Defense Force (ENDF). Furthermore, [Fano's claim of taking control](#) of Debrebirhan, a city near the Oromia region, with the aim of taking control of the capital city (Addis Ababa) at the heart of Oromia would trigger bloodshed that could eventually lead to all-out civil war between the largest two ethnic groups, Oromo and Amhara. OLLAA believes this will put the minority groups of Amharas living in Oromia at grave risk, while also putting Wollo and other Oromos bordering the Amhara region in the immediate path of the conflict. The addition of this conflict to the already existing conflict in Oromia would be devastating for the region and its people.

The rhetoric surrounding the recent violence is also alarming. OLLAA condemns in the strongest possible terms the dehumanization of the Oromo people by those in the diaspora, Amhara elites,



popular media outlets including [Ethio 360 media](#), and many guests that appear on that media. For example, Dawit Wolde, (@Dawit\_Giorgis on Twitter), who was accused of fleeing the country with stolen [USAID money in 1986](#) before seeking refuge in the US, recently posted a [statement on July 10th](#) that he met with foreign minister of Israel in Jerusalem in the capacity as Director of AISSS. In his post, he claimed that Oromumma is inherently Fascist and anti-Semitic and that he explained these (baseless) claims to the foreign minister. Earlier this year [OLLAA sounded](#) the alarm about this type of rhetoric, making the international community aware of the [dehumanization of Oromo](#), especially by various leading organizations, including [Amhara Association of America \(AAA\) leaders](#) that frequently claim Oromia belongs to the Amhara people and [spread misinformation](#). Many of these individuals appear on various media outlets agitating Amhara youth to start killing Oromo as a step to taking over Oromia, including by claiming that Oromos are foreign to Ethiopia.

It is unfortunate to see that the Amhara groups such as Fano that stood with the current Prime Minister as he waged war against the Oromo three years ago are now trying to claim this government is pro-Oromo. It is important to remember Fano's major grievance started with the Pretoria Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (peace agreement) between the federal government and the Tigray People Liberation Front. Their anger is allegedly with the Prime Minister for [what they perceive as Amharas' exclusion](#) from the peace agreement, but Fano continues to target innocent civilians rather than directing their ire toward the Prime Minister directly.

It is equally important to remember that since 2019, Amhara Fanos have held [hostage and killed dozens](#) of Oromo students, teachers, and other civil servants in the Amhara region. The latest, Mr. Tadesa Ababa, who was sent to administer the Grade 12 national exam, was killed last week on [August 3](#). We are seriously concerned that Oromo civilians within the Amhara region, including Wollo Special Oromia Zone, [where ethnic cleansing has been documented](#), will also face a surge of violence as Amhara Fano may target them. We are also concerned about the possible presence of foreign forces fighting alongside Fano. Numerous reports from [Tigray advocates indicate an increase in Eritrean forces](#) in cities in the Tigray region that are under the occupation of Eritrea.

Thus OLLAA condemns all attacks against civilians and urges the Ethiopian government and Amhara Fano to refrain from using civilians as shields or to fight. We note that, under international law, the Ethiopian government has a duty to respect human rights and to protect the lives of its citizens. We therefore urge the Ethiopian government to seek peaceful means to resolve the conflict. We further call on the international community to investigate any human rights abuses committed throughout the country.

*OLLAA is an umbrella organization that works in collaboration with dozens of Oromo communities around the world.*