



ETHIOPIA

WHAT HAPPENED IN FEBRUARY?

Prime Minister **Abiy met Tigray's leaders** for the first time since before war erupted in 2020. In Oromia, an Orthodox Church split fuelled deadly intercommunal tensions, while authorities and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) signalled **interest in a truce**.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Federal-Tigray relations continued to improve as **sides took concrete steps** toward consolidating peace. The crisis in the Orthodox Church reflects growing tensions between ruling Amhara and Oromo factions, which form Abiy's core political coalition, and could prove destabilising.

JANUARY TRENDS

Tigray's **peace process made notable progress** as the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) forces handed in heavy weapons, Eritrean troop withdrawals from Tigray accelerated and more services in Tigray resumed. Meanwhile, insurgent-government violence continued in Oromia.

1 ➡ Abiy met with Tigray leaders, Eritrean withdrawals continued

Prime Minister **Abiy met Tigray leaders** on 3 February. One day later, the government announced increased cash flows and daily flights to Tigray. On 12 February, the TPLF established a committee to form a regional interim administration. **Eritrean soldiers have mostly withdrawn**, though small units remain strategically placed in border areas.

On 28 February, over 60 human rights organisations urged the UN to block the **government's efforts to end a UN-mandated inquiry** into atrocities committed in Tigray.

2 ↘ Orthodox Church split stoked deadly intercommunal tensions

After three archbishops in Oromia accused the Holy Synod in Addis Ababa of discrimination and formed a breakaway synod, Abiy instructed his ministers on 1 February to remain neutral. **Abiy's stance angered the Holy Synod** and its mostly Amhara supporters, sparking protests on 4 February in Oromia's Shashemene town. Demonstrators clashed with regional forces backed by the breakaway faction, leaving scores dead.

Though the factions later agreed to resolve their disagreement peacefully, the crisis reflected **rising Oromo-Amhara tensions**, including within Abiy's political coalition.

3 ➡ Insurgent-government violence continued, sides signalled interest in truce

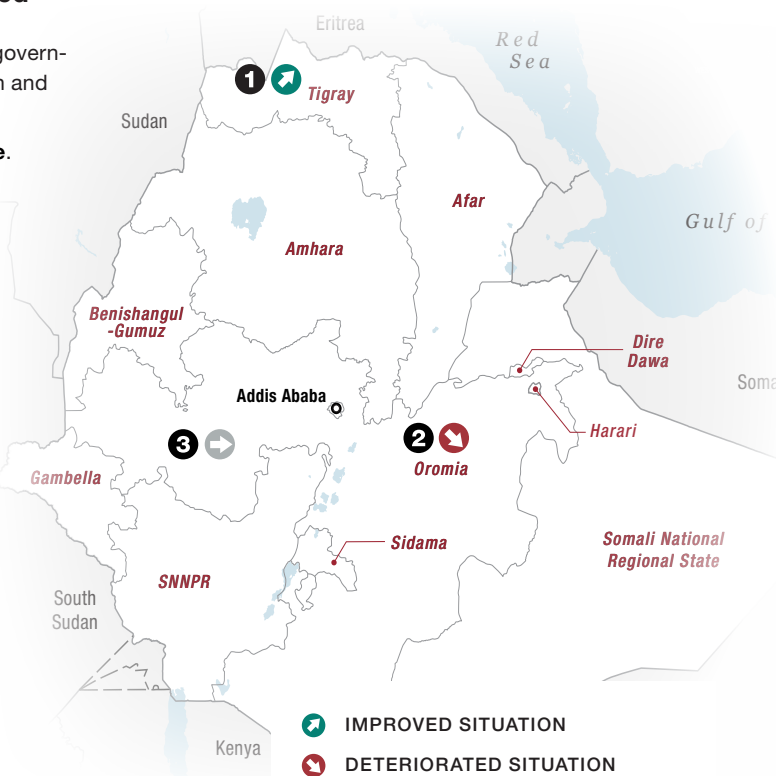
Hostilities continued in Oromia between government forces and the OLA in central, western and southern Oromia, impacting civilians.

Sides also hinted at their **interest in a truce**. Observers told Crisis Group that the OLA and Abiy engaged in informal indirect talks in February, while on 17 February, Oromia President Shimelis Abdissa urged the OLA to negotiate. The OLA responded the following day, expressing a readiness for talks but said a neutral foreign state would need to mediate.

WHAT TO WATCH

Federal and Tigray leaders may agree on an **interim administration**. The federal government could remove the TPLF's terrorist label, release the Tigray budget and integrate some TPLF officials into federal institutions. A federal plan could be devised to tackle the **issue of Amhara-controlled disputed territories**.

Notwithstanding February's informal talks, the federal government and OLA don't appear ready to negotiate a truce. The conflict will likely **exacerbate friction** within the ruling party's Oromo and Amhara factions.



- ➡ IMPROVED SITUATION
- ↘ DETERIORATED SITUATION
- ➡ UNCHANGED SITUATION
- ⚡ CONFLICT ALERT
- 🕒 RESOLUTION OPPORTUNITY

TRENDS TIMELINE

