

**AUGUST/SEPTEMBER TRENDS**

Following months of growing anger in Amhara region toward the government, clashes between Amhara militants and federal forces intensified, exacting a high toll on civilians. Tigray region’s interim president claimed that the federal government had agreed to dismantle Amhara’s administration in disputed Western and Southern Tigray. Fighting in Oromia region persisted.

**WHAT TO WATCH IN THE COMING WEEKS AND MONTHS**

**1 Clashes between Amhara militants and federal forces will likely persist**

Amhara nationalist militia known as Fano will likely continue clashing with federal forces in rural areas of Amhara.

Federal and regional forces will probably continue heavy military operations to try to quash rebellion.

Defectors from Amhara Special Forces/other disgruntled Amharas will likely continue to back rebel forces.

PM Abiy set to continue relying solely on military approach, increasing Amhara suspicions he is promoting an Oromo nationalist agenda.

**TO WATCH** Any federal plans to return disputed territories to Tigray’s control could lead Amhara rebels to launch more attacks; violence toward Amhara populations (eg, in Oromia) risks stoking ethno-nationalist sentiment further; political killings of federal/regional targets could

perpetuate ongoing federal military activity in Amhara region; perceived federal government/ Abiy support for Oromo nationalist groups could fuel tensions.

**Potential Consequences**

Forceful federal response risks further alienating an already aggrieved population in Amhara and stoke insurgency, causing more killings and mass displacement.

**2 Tensions between Amhara rebels and Tigrayans could rekindle Tigray conflict**

Tigray/Amhara regional leaders/Federal government will likely seek implementation of 2022 Tigray peace deal, including resolution of western and southern Tigray dispute.

Amhara rebels could seek to disrupt potential loss of territorial control if there are any federal efforts to dissolve Amhara’s administrations in disputed areas controlled by Amhara.

Any steps to return displaced Tigrayans to western Tigray could lead to potential clashes with Amhara populations.

Eritrea will likely continue to support Amhara control of western Tigray, could intervene militarily to prevent Tigray leaders from recouping the disputed area, which it regards as strategic because of its proximity to Sudan.

**TO WATCH** Federal plans to control or hold a referendum on disputed areas could fuel tensions; greater Eritrean military involvement could escalate violence.

**Potential Consequences**

Escalating tensions between Tigray and Amhara raise the risk of spreading violence in Ethiopia’s north and atrocities against civilians.

Eritrean involvement could tip PM Abiy and Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki’s fraying détente into outright hostility.

**3 Violence could spread, further destabilise the country and the wider region**

Fano and other groups could seek ways to topple Abiy.

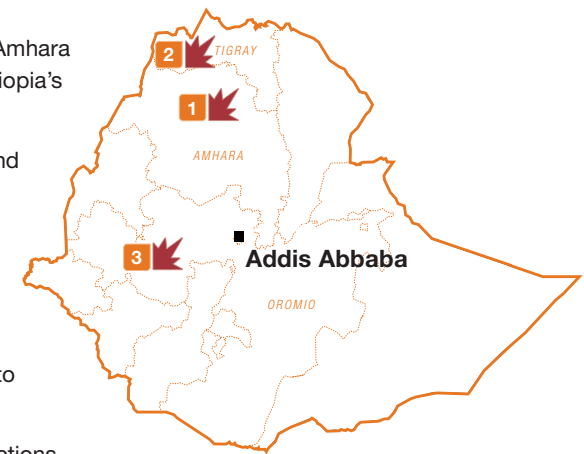
Tensions between Amhara and Oromo factions of Abiy’s ruling Prosperity Party could rise, increasing factionalism in military and other federal institutions.

Oromo militants’ killings of Amharas in Oromia region or by Fano militia of Oromos could worsen intercommunal violence.

**TO WATCH** Any alliance between rebel group the Oromo Liberation Army and Oromo authorities against Amhara militias would make situation highly dangerous (though no signs yet of such an intra-Oromo pact).

**Potential Consequences**

Ethiopia’s two biggest communities, the Amharas and the Oromos, could turn further against each other. Most concerning scenario is that burgeoning power struggle could erupt into conflict and lead to nationwide civil war if ruling party, military and other federal institutions split along Amhara-Oromo lines. Fighting could draw in regional powers, especially Eritrea, Egypt and Sudan, and further destabilise region.



**Flashpoint**

**Published October 2023**

On the Horizon offers a snapshot into emergent conflicts and crises in the next three to six months in a clear, accessible format, identifying triggers, key dates to watch and potential behaviour of conflict actors, to support global conflict prevention efforts.



Methodology: The information provided above relies on our monthly global conflict tracker, CrisisWatch, and qualitative assessments provided by Crisis Group’s analysts based in or near conflict areas. The selection is not exhaustive, and should be read in conjunction with country/regional reports and other early warning products, all available at [crisisgroup.org](https://crisisgroup.org).