

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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Prime minister Abiy Ahmed (2018-present) appoints Tadesse Worede as the new president of the Tigray Interim Regional Administration after dismissing Getachew Reda in an effort to ease political and security tensions in the Tigray region. United Nations (UN) agencies announce that they are scaling back their operations in Ethiopia due to a lack of funding, a move which will worsen the humanitarian situation in Ethiopia. This is a result of the United States' (US) decision earlier this year to drastically reduce the global humanitarian aid it provides. US president Donald Trump (2017-2021; 2025-present) imposes trade tariffs on Ethiopia. The Amhara conflict is intensifying as Ethiopian military operations become more indiscriminate, and Amhara militia groups continue to pursue increased unity and cooperation.

Prime minister replaces head of Tigray interim government

Prime minister **Abiy Ahmed** (2018-present) appointed **Tadesse Worede** as the new president of the **Tigray Interim Regional Administration** on 8 April.¹ Tadesse was previously the administration's deputy president. He replaces **Getachew Reda**, whom Abiy removed from the post on 26 March.²

Abiy dismissed Getachew in an effort to ease political tensions in the Tigray region, which had begun to threaten to turn violent (see *ARC Briefing Ethiopia- March 2025*). These tensions were rooted in the ongoing divide within the **Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)** between a faction loyal to Getachew and a larger faction that backs TPLF chairperson **Debretsion Gebremichael**. These tensions sharply escalated on 12 March, when forces loyal to Debretsion seized strategic key points in the Tigray region.³

Abiy was evidently reluctant to remove Getachew, as the premier had a good working relationship with him. However, Abiy appointed Getachew as his new minister for **East Africa** on 11 April.⁴ This move will keep Getachew within the cabinet but will further isolate him in Tigrayan politics, given the widespread antipathy towards Abiy and the federal government that persists after the **2020-2022 Tigray War**.

Abiy has sought to ease Tadesse's transition as interim president and extended the interim government's term until the next national general election, which is scheduled to take place in 2026.⁵ The new interim president has largely remained neutral amid the political standoff between Getachew and Debretsion, and it is possible that he will be able to navigate Tigray's challenging political environment.

Significantly, the Debretsion faction of the TPLF has welcomed Tadesse's appointment and pledged to work with his government.⁶ This commitment should ease political tensions within the region in the short term and reduce the threat of an armed coup by Debretsion's forces. However, Debretsion's TPLF faction accused the federal government of violating the **Pretoria Agreement**, signed on 2 November 2022, that ended the Tigray War.⁷ According to the TPLF, these violations include

¹ Business Day, 8 Apr 2025

² Addis Standard, 26 Mar 2025

³ Reuters, 12 Mar 2025

⁴ Borkena, 11 Apr 2025

⁵ Borkena, 21 Mar 2025

⁶ TPLF, 10 Apr 2025

⁷ Borkena, 14 Apr 2025

unilaterally deciding to extend the interim government's term, failing to assist internally displaced persons (IDPs), and failing to ensure that non-**Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF)** forces withdraw from the Tigray region.⁸

As such, it is evident that the reprieve granted by Tadesse's appointment is temporary and that tensions between the Debretsion faction of the TPLF and the federal government will persist. There is a real possibility that these tensions could lead to renewed conflict ahead of the 2026 general election.

United Nations agencies reduce operations amid funding shortfall

Any threat of renewed conflict in the Tigray region is a serious concern given the humanitarian cost of the Tigray War. Any new or renewed conflict would fuel increased displacements and overwhelm humanitarian aid agencies in the country. These agencies are already under severe strain amid serious funding constraints.

Indicative of this, the **United Nations (UN) World Food Programme (WFP)** announced on 22 April that it needs to scale back its operations in Ethiopia due to a lack of funding.⁹ This has resulted in the suspension of food aid for 650,000 people, mostly women and children. The WFP had initially planned to provide essential food aid to over 2 million people in Ethiopia in 2025, but has needed to scale back its operations globally after the **United States (US)** drastically reduced its official development assistance (ODA) and humanitarian funding (*see ARC Briefing Ethiopia Feb 2025*).

Furthermore, the **UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)** announced on 26 April that it needed to reduce its staff and cut back on operations in Ethiopia due to similar funding concerns.¹⁰ The UNHCR provides humanitarian support to the thousands of IDPs in Ethiopia. These people have been displaced by conflicts and natural disasters in the country and are reliant on external aid agencies for food and medical care.

Ethiopia's humanitarian situation is expected to worsen as a result of the reduction of aid operations in the country. According to the **UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)**, around 21.4 million people in Ethiopia need some form of humanitarian assistance, of which 15.8 million are food insecure.¹¹ There are also 4.4 million IDPs inside Ethiopia. The withdrawal and reduction of humanitarian support will worsen this situation and increase the risk of famine occurring in the most food-insecure areas of the country.

The worst-affected areas of the aid cuts are expected to be the Tigray and **Amhara** regions, where the majority of Ethiopia's IDPs are located. The ongoing political crises and conflicts in these areas are likely to deteriorate even further should the food security situation worsen, leading to further displacements.

US imposes tariffs on Ethiopia

Ethiopia's economic situation will be further undermined by the recent tariffs imposed on its exports to the US. On 2 April, US president **Donald Trump** (2017-2021; 2025-present) announced that the US would place a 10% tariff on nearly all imports from Ethiopia.¹² This formed part of Trump's wider so-called 'Liberation Day' announcement in which he declared that the US would place tariffs on nearly all imports into the country. These tariffs ranged from 10% to 50%, depending on the size of the trade difference the US had with that country. Trump eventually scaled back most of these tariffs before they came into effect on 9 April and replaced them with a flat 10%. However, as Ethiopia was already targeted by a 10% tariff, this latter development had little impact on the economic effect on the country.

⁸ Borkena, 15 Apr 2025

⁹ AFP, 22 Apr 2025

¹⁰ The Reporter, 26 Apr 2025

¹¹ OCHA, Feb 2024

¹² The Guardian, 9 Apr 2025

Ethiopia was only subjected to a 10% tariff as it maintains a trade deficit with the US. According to the US presidency's **Office of the US Trade Representative**, the US exported \$1 billion worth of goods to Ethiopia in 2024 and only imported \$465.8m.¹³

Ethiopia's largest exports to the US are coffee and garments; these industries are expected to be the worst affected by these tariffs. Even a 10% tariff will result in the cost of Ethiopian products in the US increasing, which will undermine Ethiopia's comparative competitiveness and reduce demand for its exports. The impact of agricultural sectors is especially concerning as these industries are the primary source of jobs in Ethiopia's rural areas. Any job losses resulting from the negative impact on these industries will exacerbate economic and food insecurity in the country. This is of particular concern to regions in Southwest Ethiopia where most of the country's coffee production is located.

Amhara conflict intensifies...

Although fears of a renewed conflict in Tigray persist, Ethiopia's largest security concern remains the ongoing conflict in the Amhara region, where the ENDF is fighting Amhara nationalist militia known as **Fano**. This conflict has intensified in recent weeks, in large part due to the ENDF adopting more aggressive and indiscriminate tactics.

Illustrative of this, scores of people were killed in a drone strike carried out by the ENDF in the town of **Gedeb** in the Amhara region's **East Gojjam** zone on 17 April.¹⁴ The exact number of casualties has not been confirmed, but local media outlets claim that as many as 100 people were killed in the strike. The strike occurred near the local primary school; as such, many of the fatalities were children.

The ENDF was believed to be targeting Fano militia fighters in the area; however, it is unclear whether the drone operators missed their intended target or whether the ENDF considered the large loss of civilian life to be acceptable collateral damage. Ethiopia's use of military-grade drones in its domestic conflicts has long been marked by high rates of civilian deaths due to both poorly trained operators misidentifying targets as well as the military's willingness to incur civilian casualties in its operations.

Regardless, the ENDF is intensifying its operations in the wider Gojjam area of the Amhara region. On 20 April, the ENDF released a statement claiming that it had killed over 300 Fano militants in a single day.¹⁵ This claim has not been independently verified, but it is somewhat supported by local reports of high-casualty battles taking place in the region.

The ENDF's aggressive tactics have done little to undermine the operating capacity of the various Fano militia. In fact, the high rate of civilian casualties acts as a powerful recruitment tool for these nationalist groups, which rely on anti-government sentiment to attract new fighters.

... amid growing unity amongst Fano militias

The protracted conflict in the Amhara region and the ENDF's indiscriminate tactics have led to increased cooperation and coherence among the various Fano militia groups. These organisations, which were previously a group of loosely affiliated nationalist militias, have begun working towards becoming a unified Amhara nationalist front.

Notably, the **Gojjam Fano** militia group claimed on 27 March that the process of unifying the Fano forces in the Amhara region is "90% complete".¹⁶ A unified and better-organised Amhara nationalist resistance presents a much more serious security threat to Ethiopia and could push the Amhara conflict into a civil war. Such a conflict would cause substantial economic damage to the country and amplify the humanitarian toll. It would also threaten to instigate other conflicts in the Tigray and **Oromia** regions.

¹³ USTR, 28 Apr 2025

¹⁴ Addis Standard, 24 Apr 2025

¹⁵ Borkena, 21 Apr 2025

¹⁶ Borkena, 28 Mar 2025

The growing unity among Fano groups is potentially the motivating force behind the ENDF's more aggressive and indiscriminate operations. The military likely wants to deal critical damage to these groups before they can properly form a united front.

Planner

2026 (**Ethiopia**) general election;

Chronology

28 Apr 2025 **Washington D.C (United States)** *Fana BC*. Finance minister **Ahmed Shide** meets with **World Bank** managing director for operations **Anna Bjerde** on the sidelines of the 2025 spring meetings;

28 Apr 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *The Reporter*. **National Rehabilitation Commission** reveals that only 17,000 combatants have completed the **Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR)** programme in the **Tigray** region despite the programme's target of 75,000 militants;

28 Apr 2025 **Washington D.C (United States)**. *Reuters*. **Ethiopia's** state finance minister, **Eyob Tekalign**, expresses confidence that the country will soon reach an agreement with the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** on the third review of the \$3.4 billion **Extended Credit Facility (ECF)** arrangement;

26 Apr 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *The Reporter*. State-owned telecommunication firm **Ethio Telecom** confirms plans to re-issue unsold shares on the **Ethiopian Securities Exchange (ESX)** after its initial share offering in October drew limited interest;

26 Apr 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *The Reporter*. Officials reveal that the Ethiopian and **Kenyan** governments have agreed to limit the number of cross-border business licences issued along the two countries' shared border.

24 Apr 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *The Reporter*. **United States**-headquartered global ratings agency **Fitch** maintains its Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating (IDR) for Ethiopia at 'Restricted Default' but upgrades Ethiopia's Long-Term Local-Currency IDR to 'CCC+' from 'CCC';

24 Apr 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *The Reporter*. Somali nationalist **Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF)** accuses Ethiopian security forces of harassing and detaining its members in **Jigjiga (Somali region)**;

24 Apr 2025 **Washington D.C (United States)**. *Reuters*. **National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE)** (central bank) governor **Mamo Esmelealem Mihretu** reveals in a session held on the sidelines of the 2025 **IMF-World Bank Spring Meetings** that the NBE expects inflation to fall to 10% in the coming financial year;

21 Apr 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Borkena*. Local media claim that **Fano** militia fighters killed a senior **Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF)** military officer in **South Gondar (Amhara region)**;

19 Apr 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *The Reporter*. State-owned airline **Ethiopian Airlines** reveals plans to spend ETB 30 billion (\$224m) to prepare the site for a planned new airport outside **Bishoftu (Oromia region)**;

9 Apr 2025 **Nairobi (Kenya)** *CPJ*. **Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)** releases a statement condemning the Ethiopian government for the recent arrest of seven journalists on terrorism charges;

4 Apr 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Borkena*. Finance ministry announces that it has reached a €240m (\$273m) grant agreement with the **European Union (EU)** under its **2024 Annual Action Programme**;

4 Apr 2025 **Nairobi (Kenya)** *Reuters*. A Kenyan court rules that **United States**-headquartered technology giant **Meta** can be sued in Kenya for the alleged role its **Facebook** social media platform played in fuelling ethnic violence in **Ethiopia**;

28 Mar 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Addis Standard*. Suspected **Fano** militia fighters attack the **Tullu Moti** village in the **Oromia** region, killing 20 people.

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