

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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Ethiopia Summary 27 October 2025

The National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) proposes holding the 2026 general election on 1 June 2026. This election will be particularly significant, as it will be the first election since 2015 to take place in all 12 of Ethiopia's regions. In 2021, the election was not held in the Tigray region due to the Tigray War (2020-2022) taking place at the time. Ethiopia's relationship with Eritrea has deteriorated further as the two countries accuse one another of fomenting war. Ethiopia's military claims that denying the country access to Eritrea's Port of Assab is equivalent to banditry. The conflict in the Amhara region is continuing; Amhara nationalist (Fano) militants claim to have captured more territory and killed dozens of government soldiers. Construction begins on a new oil refinery in the Somali region.

Government proposes election date

The **National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE)**, on 20 October, [proposed](#) 1 June 2026 as the date for the next general election to select the **House of People's Representatives** (Ethiopia's lower legislative house). As the House of People's Representatives selects the country's prime minister, this election will also be the vote to decide the head of government. Under Ethiopia's political system, the prime minister controls the government and armed forces while the president is a largely ceremonial position.

It should be noted that the 1 June 2026 date is tentative and subject to change, given that Ethiopia's government still needs to formally approve the date. However, President **Tayé Atske Selassie** (2024-present) [revealed](#) on 6 October that the government intends to hold the general election before the end of July. The House of People's Representatives approved amendments to the Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration, and Electoral Code of Conduct Proclamation in July this year. The NEBE proposed these amendments and the passage of these reforms paved the way for it to begin election preparations.

The upcoming election is particularly significant as it will be the first since 2015 to take place in all 12 of Ethiopia's regions. In 2021, the election was not held in the **Tigray** region due to the **Tigray War (2020-2022)** taking place at the time. However, the NEBE will face challenges organising the election in the Tigray region; specifically, it will encounter resistance from both the **Tigray Interim Administration** and the **Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)**, which is the dominant political force in the region. In May, the NEBE stripped the TPLF of its official federal recognition as a political party (see *ARC Briefing Ethiopia May 2025*). The NEBE did this following a dispute related to the TPLF's refusal to reregister as a political party and the contention around its elective conference. Central to this is the NEBE's refusal to recognise the outcomes of the TPLF's dispute conference in August 2024, which resulted in the re-election of **Debretsion Gebremichael** as TPLF chairperson. The TPLF has also rejected the NEBE's insistence that it re-register as a party following the end of the Tigray War; the NEBE maintains that the party's actions in the war resulted in it being removed from the list of political parties in Ethiopia.

Neither side appears willing to capitulate on their position, and as such, the TPLF is set to be excluded from the 2026 general election ballot. As a consequence, the TPLF is unlikely to accept the election result and may even attempt to physically prevent the election from taking place in the Tigray region. Unsurprisingly, the build-up to the election is expected to exacerbate the already heightened tensions between the TPLF and the federal government. Relations between the two have deteriorated over the past year amid numerous disagreements over the implementation of the November 2022 Pretoria

peace accords, which ended the war, the repatriation of displaced Tigrayans, the TPLF's failure to disarm, and the continuing animosity from the war itself. Although the TPLF and the federal government writ large are eager to avoid another conflict, there are hardliners within both parties who are agitating to reignite the war. As such, the tensions arising from the general election will elevate the possibility of a renewed conflict.

Eritrea and Ethiopia accuse one another of warmongering

The security situation in the Tigray region is further complicated by the continued deterioration in Ethiopia's relationship with **Eritrea**. Eritrea was once part of Ethiopia but secured independence in 1991 following a protracted war. The rhetoric between the two neighbouring countries has grown increasingly hostile, with both sides alleging that the other is plotting to instigate a war. Any such conflict will draw in the Tigray region, given that the region is located along the border between the two countries.

Reports on 8 October revealed that Ethiopia's foreign minister, **Gedion Timothewos**, had written to **United Nations (UN)** secretary-general **Antonio Guterres** and [accused](#) Eritrea of planning to instigate a war with Ethiopia. According to Gedion, the Eritrean government is colluding with the TPLF to form an alliance against the Ethiopian government. Gedion further accused Eritrea of funding and directing armed groups in the **Amhara** region. This appears to reference the Amhara nationalist (**Fano**) militia groups, which are currently fighting the **Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF)** in the Amhara region.

A day after Gedion's letter was made public, Eritrea [denied](#) these allegations on 9 October. Eritrean information minister **Yemane Ghebremeskel** accused Ethiopia of "*provocative sabre-rattling*" and harbouring "*irredentist ambitions*". Eritrea further accused Ethiopia of planning to invade its territory, pointing to Ethiopia's repeated public claims that it wants to secure access to the **Red Sea**.

Ethiopia has repeatedly confirmed that it views securing coastal access as a central foreign policy and security goal. The country believes gaining access to the Red Sea is a matter of existential importance for both the country's national security and economic future. This stated ambition has alarmed Ethiopia's neighbours, as this goal presents a potential threat of invasion. This is especially the case since Ethiopia appears to have dropped its plans to secure a coastal land lease in **Somaliland** on which to build a port and naval base in return for formally recognising Somaliland as a sovereign state (see *ARC Briefing Ethiopia Jan 2024*).

In recent months, Ethiopia's rhetoric has focused on a historical claim to Eritrea's port of **Assab**. Illustrative of this rhetoric, the ENDF [posted a statement](#) on its official social media accounts claiming that the loss of the port of Assab diminished Ethiopia's dignity. The ENDF further denounced any effort to deny Ethiopia access to the port as banditry. Such statements by the military will be interpreted by Eritrea as hostile positioning.

Ethiopia is also hosting anti-Eritrean militia in its territory. On 22 October, the Ethiopia-based **Red Sea Afar Democratic Organisation (RSADO)** [announced](#) that a new group of its fighters had completed training. RSADO accuses Eritrea's government of oppressing ethnic Afar communities in Ethiopia and has pledged to wage an armed insurgency to topple the government. As yet, the group has not carried out any confirmed attacks in Eritrea, but its presence in Ethiopia will further undermine relations between the two countries.

While a war between Ethiopia and Eritrea is not considered imminent, such a conflict would be potentially devastating to both countries. The increasingly hostile rhetoric between the two governments and the likelihood that both governments are fomenting insurgencies within each other's borders, means that some form of conflict incident or even a full-scale war cannot be discounted over the medium term (<3 years).

Conflict continues in the Amhara region

Ethiopia can ill-afford a conflict with its northern neighbour, given the fact that the government is still combating armed insurgencies in both the Amhara and **Oromia** regions. The fight against the Fano militia groups is the most severe of these, especially given the growing cohesiveness of the various Amhara nationalist groups.

Underscoring this threat, Fano militant groups have reportedly taken control over several new areas in the Amhara region as of 18 October, [including](#) the **Checheho, Zebit, Geregera, and Aflakit** areas in the **South Gondar** and **North Wollo** zones. In addition, the **Amhara Fano National Force (AFNF)** militant group [claimed](#) on 15 October to have captured the town of **Genete** in the **South Wollo** zone.

Fano militias have also announced significant battlefield successes in recent weeks. [On 17 October](#), the militants claimed that they had killed and/or wounded over 100 ENDF soldiers in the North Wollo region. The veracity of the group's territorial gains and battlefield successes is difficult to verify, given that Ethiopia has restricted media access to the areas impacted by the conflict. However, even if the AFNF and other Fano groups are exaggerating their successes, it is evident that nationalist militia groups are managing to gain and hold territory in the Amhara region despite the ENDF's efforts to defeat the groups.

The ENDF has made its own victory claims. On 19 October, it [announced](#) that it had killed 48 Fano fighters and wounded 40 others in operations carried out across the **West Gojjam, North Gojjam, and Awi** zones in the Amhara Region on 18 October.

The claims made by both the Fano groups and the ENDF underscore the numerous casualties arising from this conflict and the fact that it is steadily escalating as the Fano forces become more battle-hardened. The ongoing conflict will pose another challenge to the NEBE, as it will be difficult to hold any form of electoral activity in the areas held or contested by the militant groups.

Oil refinery is being developed in Somali region

Although Ethiopia's security situation is deteriorating and further conflicts are possible over the medium term, the country's economic fortunes continue to improve. In another positive economic development, the government [announced](#) on 9 October that construction had begun on a new \$2.5 billion oil refinery in the **Somali** region. This project is called the **Gode Oil Refinery** and will process crude oil and condensate from Ethiopia's **Hilala** oil fields. According to officials, the project is expected to provide around 3.5 million tonnes of fuel every year. The refinery is being developed by **China's Golden Concord Group Limited (GCL Group)** and will be built in two phases with the first expected to be completed by the end of 2027. This refinery will enhance Ethiopia's ability to produce its own fuel for the market, significantly boosting the country's energy independence. This will advance Ethiopia's economic security, given its current dependence on imported fuel.

The project will dovetail with [a nearby urea fertiliser plant](#) that is being developed through a partnership between the state-owned **Ethiopian Investment Holdings** and **Nigeria's Dangote Group**. This fertiliser plant is expected to cost \$3 billion and produce 3 million metric tons of fertiliser per annum.

Both projects will help to advance the government's goal of strengthening Ethiopia's independence by reducing its dependence on exports for its essential goods. This is particularly noteworthy given that the bulk of Ethiopia's fuel and fertiliser is imported from abroad via **Djibouti Port**. This means that Ethiopia is heavily dependent on Djibouti, and its supply of these products is vulnerable to any renewed conflict in the Tigray and **Afar** regions.

Planner

1 June 2026 (**Ethiopia**) general election (expected);

Chronology

25 Oct 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *FANA MC*. Prime minister **Abiy Ahmed** visits the **Koyscha Hydroelectric Dam Project**, which is being developed in the **South West Ethiopia People's Region**, to tout Ethiopia's numerous hydroelectric projects;

24 Oct 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *The Reporter*. **National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE)** (central bank) announces that it will be targeting businesses and individuals that conduct transactions through personal and third-party bank accounts to evade tax;

23 Oct 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *ENA*. State foreign affairs minister **Hadera Abera** meets with his **Romanian** counterpart, **Clara Staicu**, to discuss areas for improved bilateral cooperation;

23 Oct 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Borkena*. The **Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF)** releases a statement claiming to have killed 62 **Amhara** nationalist (**Fano**) militants in offensives in the **Gojjam** area of the Amhara region;

21 Oct 2025 **Moscow (Russia)** *Addis Standard*. Foreign minister **Gedion Timothewos** meets with his Russian counterpart, **Sergey Lavrov**, during a working visit to Moscow;

20 Oct 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Borkena*. Over 100,000 people attend the funeral of **First Hadji Mufti Umar Idris**, the former president of the **Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council**, in Addis Ababa;

20 Oct 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Borkena*. At least 15 people are killed and over 27 others are injured in a train derailment in the **Somali** region;

19 Oct 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Addis Standard*. At least 25 people are killed in an attack by suspected **Fano** militants in the **Nono** district, **West Shewa Zone** of the **Oromia** region;

18 Oct 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *The Reporter*. The **Ministry of Water and Energy** unveils plans for a new development corridor around the **Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)** in the **Benishangul-Gumuz Region**;

15 Oct 2025 **New Delhi (India)** *Addis Standard*. **Ethiopia** and India hold the first joint defence cooperation meeting between the two countries in New Delhi;

13 Oct 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Borkena*. The **Oromo Liberation Army (OLA)** militant group carries out an attack targeting government offices in the town of **Metekel** in the **Benishangul-Gumuz** region;

13 Oct 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Borkena*. The **Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF)** carries out an airstrike in the **Adet Robe Gebeya** area of the **Amhara** region, reportedly killing civilians;

12 Oct 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *ENA*. Prime minister **Abiy Ahmed** hosts **Somalia's** president, **Hassan Sheikh Mohamud**, at his office in Addis Ababa;

12 Oct 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Addis Standard*. Members of the **Tigray Defence Forces** stage protests over pay and benefits;

10 Oct 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Borkena*. Suspected **OLA** gunmen kill four people and kidnap ten others in an attack in the **Gurage** zone of the **Central Ethiopia Region**;

10 Oct 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Borkena*. **Fano** militants hand over 16 injured **Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF)** soldiers to the **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** in the **Amhara** region;

10 Oct 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Andalou Agency*. The **United Nations (UN) World Food Program (WFP)** warns that refugees and displaced persons in Ethiopia face rising hunger rates due to funding shortfalls;

9 Oct 2025 **Nairobi (Kenya)** *ENA*. Prime minister **Abiy Ahmed** attends the 24th Summit of the **Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)** heads of state and government in Nairobi;

4 Oct 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Addis Standard*. The **National Conference of the Tigrayan People** is held in **Mekelle**, attended by delegates from the **Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)**, the **Tigray Interim Administration** and various community stakeholders;

4 Oct 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *France24*. The Ethiopian government releases a statement denying **Egypt's** allegations that the **Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)** is responsible for the recent flooding in **Sudan** and **Egypt**;

2 Oct 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *ENA*. Foreign minister **Gedion Timothewos** meets with his **Norwegian** counterpart, **Espen Barth Eide**, and **Denmark's** state secretary of foreign policy, **Lotte Machon**, to discuss areas of mutual interest and potential increased investment in Ethiopia by the Nordic states;

30 Sep 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Borkena*. Health officials in the **Tigray** region reveal that at least 11 people have died in an ongoing cholera outbreak;

27 Sep 2025 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Addis Standard*. At least four people are killed in a drone strike in the **Gubalafto** area of the **Amhara** region, which destroyed a local health post;

26 Sep 2025 **Geneva (Switzerland)** *The Reporter*. Ethiopia's trade minister, **Kassahun Gofe**, reveals that Ethiopia is hoping to join the **World Trade Organisation (WTO)** by March 2026.

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