

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING Ethiopia Monthly Briefing May 2026

Ethiopia Summary 27 May 2026

The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) chairperson, Debretsion Gebremichael, is sworn in as the Tigray regional president and holds his first cabinet meeting, essentially displacing the Tigray Interim Administration (TIA) and taking control of the Tigray Region. Ethiopia is set to hold its general election on 1 June amid an elevated security environment, forcing the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) to cancel voting in at least 46 constituencies. Regardless, the ruling Prosperity Party is expected to keep its supermajority in the House of Representatives. Nigeria's Dangote Group increases its investment in its planned fertiliser plant in Ethiopia's Somali Region to over \$4 billion from \$2.5 billion and expands the project scope. Relations with Sudan deteriorate amid mutual allegations of supporting anti-government groups in one another's territory.

TPLF leader 'sworn in' as president holds cabinet meeting

The **Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)** chairperson, **Debretsion Gebremichael**, was [sworn in](#) as the Tigray regional president on 4 May after the recently restored **Tigray Regional Council** formally elected Debretsion in April. It should be noted that the federal government does not recognise the reconstituted Tigray Regional Council nor Debretsion's return as regional president is recognised by, and still contends that the **Tigray Interim Administration (TIA)** is the official regional government. Last month, the TPLF refused to accept prime minister **Abiy Ahmed's** (2018-present) order extending the TIA's mandate and declared that the post-war interim period laid out in the **Pretoria Peace Accords** that ended the 2020-2022 **Tigray War** had concluded.

In a display of the TPLF's continued power in the Tigray Region, Debretsion [held](#) his first cabinet meeting on 8 May in the regional capital, **Mekelle**. According to a statement released by Debretsion's office, the cabinet meeting focused on discussions around ongoing post-conflict recovery efforts, the rebuilding of regional government institutions, administrative affairs, and service delivery.

Dejen Hall is the official regional state president's office and the TPLF's ability to assert its control over government spaces such as Dejen Hall confirms that the TIA no longer has any practical control over the region. Interim Tigray president, **Tadesse Werede** (himself a TPLF member), was reduced to [denouncing](#) the move as "*illegal*" and warned that it could lead to the resumption of war in the region, but was unable to prevent Debretsion's takeover of the government. Similarly, the federal government's lack of response suggests that it currently has limited capacity or is at least unwilling to take action to thwart the TPLF's takeover.

The TPLF's muscular takeover of the regional government confirms that the party has no intention of releasing its control over Tigray. The development also sent a warning that the party is serious about its opposition to the 1 June general election and its refusal to recognise the results of that vote. The TPLF is not contesting the upcoming election as the **National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE)** officially revoked its legal status as a political party due to a dispute over party registration and a contested elective conference (*see ARC Briefing Ethiopia May 2025*). In the face of the TPLF's open opposition to the election, the NEBE [announced](#) on 26 May that voting would not take place in any of Tigray's 38 constituencies. This is a practical and symbolic victory for the TPLF and highlights the federal government's limited power in the region at present.

However, the absence of an election in Tigray and the federal government's refusal to recognise Debretsion's government do threaten a constitutional crisis. Given the TPLF's inflexibility, the only

way the state can displace the TPLF would be through federal military action. Such a move will almost certainly reignite the long-standing conflict between the TPLF and the federal government. Ethiopian authorities are wary of such an action, as any renewed conflict risks rapidly escalating, aggravating the existing conflict in the **Amhara Region**, and even drawing in neighbouring **Eritrea**, which is believed to be supporting the TPLF's actions.

General election to take place amid an elevated security environment

The prospect of a renewed war in Tigray is not the only concern overshadowing the upcoming elections. Authorities will need to organise a general election amid numerous security concerns, including ongoing insurgencies in both the Amhara and **Oromia** regions. In Amhara, the **Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF)** is engaged in armed conflict with Amhara nationalist militia groups (known as **Fano**). These militants have proven resilient in their efforts to capture territory and are known to be active in at least eight of the region's ten zones. The group also [recently claimed](#) to have launched an offensive just outside of the regional capital, **Bahir Dar**. Fano militants are expected to actively try to disrupt the election from taking place in areas in which they have control, and the threat of attacks on polling stations extends throughout the region. As a consequence, the NEBE has [cancelled voting](#) in at least eight constituencies in Amhara.

Oromia is experiencing a similar, albeit not as severe, nationalist insurgency. However, the security environment in the region's rural areas is highly unsafe. This was underscored by an incident on 19 May, in which armed men [intercepted](#) a passenger bus and abducted as many as 50 people.

Federal authorities will need to heighten security measures across the country to ensure that the election concludes without major incidents. This is expected to include the widespread deployment of additional ENDF forces, especially in areas near voting stations.

Despite these serious security concerns, the ruling **Prosperity Party (PP)** is expected to secure a landslide victory and maintain its super majority in the **House of Representatives**, meaning Abiy will be re-elected for another five-year term. The PP, and its predecessor, the **Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)**, has always maintained tight control over the Ethiopian state. It is also the only party with the resources and personnel to contest all constituencies in the country; at least 64 electoral districts have [no opposition candidates](#) on the ballot. Further, opposition parties have accused the government of political harassment and alleged that the pre-election period has been marred by numerous irregularities.

Major new planned investments announced

Nigeria's Dangote Group announced on 17 May that it had [increased](#) its investment in its planned fertiliser plant in Ethiopia's **Somali Region** to over \$4 billion from \$2.5 billion as the project scope has expanded, and now, in addition to the three million tonnes per annum urea plant, will include a 110km pipeline, a 120MW power plant, a polypropylene packaging facility and a two million tonne NPK (nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium) blending plant. This project will be majority owned (60%) by the Dangote Group while Ethiopia's sovereign wealth fund, **Ethiopian Investment Holdings (EIH)**, will hold 40%.

The planned 110km pipeline will connect the gas and oil-producing areas of Somali to **Djibouti Port** and will also bolster Ethiopia's ambitions to become a hydrocarbon-producing and exporting nation. In an effort to advance the development of the pipeline, EIH CEO **Brook Taye** [met](#) with Djibouti's President **Ismail Omar Guelleh** (1999-present) on 20 May to discuss the project. Notably, it is the second of two planned pipelines intended to connect Ethiopia and Djibouti; the first will involve the development of a pipeline to transport refined petroleum products from Djibouti Port to Ethiopia's **Daweleh** logistics hub, located just inside the border between the two countries. This pipeline will increase the speed and reliability of fuel supplies to Ethiopia and reduce dependence on road and rail freight to transport petroleum products.

Military and diplomatic tensions increase with Sudan

Ethiopia has [traded accusations](#) with **Sudan** as tensions between the two countries continues rising. Sudan's military has suspected Ethiopia of providing refuge and assistance to the paramilitary **Rapid Support Forces (RSF)**, even allowing the RSF to carry out attacks from Ethiopian territory (*see ARC Briefing Ethiopia Mar 2026*). The Sudanese military and the RSF have been engaged in a civil war since 2023. On 5 May, the Sudanese government accused Ethiopia of being behind an attempted drone [attack](#) on **Khartoum International Airport** on 4 May. It further claimed that it had evidence of Ethiopia's involvement in several other such drone strikes and [recalled](#) its ambassador from **Addis Ababa**. Ethiopia's foreign ministry [responded](#) to these allegations by accusing Sudan of supporting "mercenaries" affiliated with the TPLF and other "various anti-Ethiopian forces".

Following the recall of its ambassador, Sudan reportedly began [deploying](#) troops along the border with Ethiopia. Reports indicate that the majority of these reinforcements are in Sudan's **Al Qadarif State**. Sudan likely believes that allocating resources to the border will help disrupt RSF supply lines and help intercept more attacks emanating from Ethiopian territory. However, this will further elevate tensions between the two countries and increase the likelihood of an armed altercation between the Sudanese army and the ENDF.

Attacks have reportedly continued to occur. On 23 May, Sudan claimed to have shot down a drone near the city of **Damazin (Blue Nile State)**, which borders Ethiopia. If these alleged attacks do continue, the possibility that Sudan will attempt to strike RSF positions inside Ethiopia cannot be discounted. Such an event could trigger an interstate border war. In the meantime, Sudan will likely seek to respond in kind and will likely provide support to either the TPLF or Fano militants in an effort to destabilise Ethiopia.

Planner

26 – 27 Apr 2026 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** 8th African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum

1 Jun 2026 **(Ethiopia)** general election;

Chronology

26 May 2026 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Borkena*. Renewed border clashes erupt along the boundaries of the **Oromia** and **Sidama** regions, affecting districts in the **East Sidama** and **Arsi** zones;

23 May 2026 **London (United Kingdom)** *Borkena*. Ethnic **Amhara** members of the Ethiopian diaspora in the United Kingdom (UK) stage a demonstration in London condemning the alleged systemic violence towards the Amhara people by the Ethiopian government;

22 May 2026 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *The Reporter*. Foreign affairs ministry reveals that Ethiopia and **South Africa** have agreed to form a joint team to investigate anti-immigrant attacks targeting Ethiopian nationals in South Africa;

21 May 2026 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Addis Standard*. Foreign ministry spokesperson, **Nebiat Getachew**, accuses **Egypt** of adopting an encirclement strategy towards Ethiopia, referencing Egypt's growing security ties with **Somalia** and **Eritrea**;

16 May 2026 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *The Reporter*. The **Council of Ministers** approves the establishment of the **Ethiopian Fire and Other Rapid Onset Disasters Service**, which will be tasked with both acting as a first responder service as well as introducing standards, codes and national systems to respond to disasters;

13 May 2026 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Africa News*. France's President **Emmanuel Macron** conducts an official visit to Ethiopia during which he meets with prime minister **Abiy Ahmed** and attends a trilateral meeting with **United Nations (UN)** secretary general **Antonio Guterres** and **African Union (AU) Commission** chairman **Mahmoud Ali Youssouf**;

11 May 2026 **Washington, D.C. (United States)** *Borkena*. The United States (US) government lifts its arms embargo on Ethiopia, paving the way for controlled defence exports to the country;

11 May 2026 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Borkena*. **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** director **Kristalina Georgieva** praises Ethiopia's "*impressive progress*" on its ambitious economic reform programme during a meeting with prime minister **Abiy Ahmed**;

4 May 2026 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Borkena*. An audit by the Ethiopian federal government uncovers a massive corruption scandal involving the misappropriation of approximately 98 billion Ethiopian birr (\$853m), which accounts for nearly 5% of the national budget;

2 May 2026 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *ENA*. Prime minister **Abiy Ahmed** claims that Ethiopia is on track to generate a record \$10 billion in export earnings in the current fiscal year;

2 May 2026 **London (United Kingdom)** *The Reporter*. The **London Court of International Arbitration** dismisses most of the \$979.9m claim filed by **Turkish** company **Yapi Merkezi Insaat** against the **Ethiopian Railway Corporation (ERC)** over losses incurred during the construction of the **Awash-Kombolcha-Woldia-Hara Gebeya** railway project;

1 May 2026 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Borkena*. **Amhara Fano National Movement (AFNM)** dismisses claims by regional officials that over 33,000 militants had surrendered;

29 Apr 2026 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Borkena*. **Ahmara** nationalist militants claim to have launched an attack on the town of **Densa**, located outside the Amhara regional capital, **Bahir Dar**;

27 Apr 2026 **Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)** *Club of Mozambique*. **Mozambique's** President **Daniel Chapo** conducts a two-day visit to Ethiopia during which he meets with prime minister **Abiy Ahmed** and oversees the signing of cooperation agreements.

About Africa Risk Consulting:

Africa Risk Consulting (ARC) is a pan-African consulting company that provides timely, relevant information and advice that enables its clients to take informed investment decisions and to safeguard their reputations.

ARC's core consulting services include integrity due diligence and corporate investigations, political advisory and country assessments, opportunity monitoring and reputation risk management. Most relevant to private equity firms is ARC's integrity due diligence and corporate investigations capability. Specifically, ARC offers pre-deal integrity checks to highlight red flags before negotiations start; full detailed multi-jurisdictional reputation due diligence; and supplier and senior hire vetting and repeat due diligence for compliance programmes. ARC is unique in that it offers a 10-day delivery for a routine integrity due diligence. ARC also offers a suite of corporate investigations services from immediate investigation, evidence gathering, e-discovery, forensic accounting and whistleblower support on one end to crisis media management and regular monitoring on the other.

www.africariskconsulting.com

About ARC Briefing:

ARC Briefing is ARC's essential business information service.

Companies at any stage in their Africa expansion, whether building or communicating an Africa strategy, investing directly, expanding current operations, financing other investors, doing the legal leg-work or researching the Africa growth trend, need ARC Briefing.

ARC Briefing is an information service keeping you:

- Up to date with Country Chronologies of business-critical events
- In the know via Country Briefings on political, economic, business and operating trends. Written in-country, ARC experts analyse and comment
- Ahead with Country Planner which details future elections, budgets, regulatory changes etc.

www.africariskconsulting.com

Getting in touch

Please contact us by email info@africariskconsulting.com

Africa Risk Consulting (ARC) Pty Ltd expressly forbids the collection of information and content from ARC Briefing as data to train generative artificial intelligence models.

© Africa Risk Consulting (ARC)