

# Ethiopia

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Conflict in Ethiopia continued to impact access to education for millions of children. GCPEA identified a sharp increase in the reported number of schools being used for military purposes, which may reflect an increase in attacks or an increase in reporting. Attacks on schools continued at a high rate, and attacks on students and staff, and attacks on higher education, also continued.

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## Context

Armed conflict persisted across Ethiopia during the reporting period, with violence concentrated in Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray regions.<sup>1</sup> Despite a cessation of hostilities agreement with the Tigray People's Liberation Front in November 2022, insecurity continued in the Tigray region.<sup>2</sup> In Oromia, clashes between the Oromo Liberation Army and federal forces persisted through 2025, contributing to widespread insecurity, as reported by the UN.<sup>3</sup> Reported fighting between federal forces and Fano militias in Amhara increased in 2024, with repeated drone and artillery strikes on civilian areas, extrajudicial killings, and reports of sexual violence, arbitrary detentions, and abductions for ransom,<sup>4</sup> with fighting continuing throughout 2025.<sup>5</sup> While sexual violence tends to be underreported, a *BBC* report found 2,697 documented cases of rape in Amhara region between 2023 and 2025, reportedly perpetrated by both the Ethiopian army and Fano.<sup>6</sup> Human Rights Watch reported that in January 2024, dozens of civilians were killed by government forces, in Merawi town, Amhara region. Subsequently, the military returned a month later and killed additional civilians.<sup>7</sup> Human Rights Watch also reported that Eritrean troops in Tigray continued to commit rape, abduction, and other grave violations.<sup>8</sup>

Human Rights Watch reported that the federal government extended a state of emergency in Amhara until mid-2024, enabling mass arrests and movement restrictions.<sup>9</sup> Access restrictions, particularly in Amhara and Tigray regions, severely impeded humanitarian response. Ethiopia's overlapping crises further strained humanitarian response and basic services.<sup>10</sup> By the end of 2024, the UN estimated that 21.4 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance, an increase of over a million since March 2024, including 12 million children, and over four million internally displaced persons.<sup>11</sup> By early 2025, nearly 16 million people were facing acute food insecurity, exacerbated by climate shocks such as El Niño–related drought and flooding.<sup>12</sup>

Children were among the most affected by the ongoing crises. The UN verified 844 grave violations against children in Ethiopia in 2024, including killings, maiming, sexual violence, and recruitment by armed groups.<sup>13</sup> This included the abduction of 180 children by unknown perpetrators, the Ethiopian National Defense Forces, and the Eritre-

an Defense Forces.<sup>14</sup> Approximately 1,500 reported grave violations and 1,182 reported instances of the military use of schools were pending verification. Insecurity and displacement repeatedly disrupted the provision of education, with schools damaged, destroyed, or occupied by military actors.<sup>15</sup>

Education needs were particularly severe: as of early 2025, more than nine million children were out of school nationwide, with the highest numbers in Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray regions.<sup>16</sup> Exam cancellations and low pass rates underscored the deepening education crisis in conflict-affected areas, with nearly 680,000 secondary students directly impacted in Amhara and Oromia.<sup>17</sup> Vulnerable groups bore the brunt of these intersecting crises; according to the UN, nearly 10,000 children with disabilities were affected by school closures and disruptions, compounding existing barriers to accessing education and psychosocial support.<sup>18</sup>

The UN reported that more than 9,000 schools were closed or destroyed in affected regions.<sup>19</sup> In Amhara alone, over 4,000 schools were closed in April 2024 due to continued hostilities.<sup>20</sup> Despite efforts by the Ministry of Education and partners to reopen schools, recurrent violence, damaged infrastructure, and resource shortages limited safe and consistent access to education across the country into 2025.<sup>21</sup>

## Attacks on schools

During the 2024-2025 reporting period, around 100 attacks were reported in Ethiopia. However, as a result of monitoring and reporting challenges, it is difficult to know an exact number. GCPEA identified at least 90 attacks during the previous reporting period which covered 2022 and 2023.<sup>22</sup>

In 2024, the UN reported 16 attacks against schools.<sup>23</sup> Separately, GCPEA identified at least five attacks. It was unclear how many attacks from the UN overlapped with reports collected by GCPEA. For example:

- On May 12, 2024, a drone attack reportedly hit Gulo Primary School in North She-wa zone, Kewet woreda, Amhara Region, killing two civilians and injuring nine, including a female teacher, as reported by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC).<sup>24</sup>
- On October 1, 2024, outside Midre-Genet Primary School in Alamata town, Tigray region, alleged members of an armed group reportedly shot at residents who were protesting the reopening of schools, according to local media *Addis Standard* and ACLED.<sup>25</sup> Two people were reportedly killed, and 11 more were injured, although it was unclear from reports whether any of these were students or staff. No damage to the school was reported.
- On November 5, 2024, in Zibsit, South Achefer woreda, Amhara region, an airstrike allegedly struck a school and a health center, as reported by international media

the *BBC* and *DW*.<sup>26</sup> Scores were reportedly killed, including children, although it was not possible to establish whether any were students or staff at the school.

In 2025, the Education Cluster and the UN reported, in March 2025, that 100 schools had been damaged during the first three months of 2025, most in Oromia region, and many as a result of conflict.<sup>27</sup>

Separately, GCPEA identified at least two attacks, both of which occurred in Amhara region:

- As reported by the *BBC* and *Addis Standard*, on April 17, 2025, in Gedeb town, East Gojam, Amhara region, a drone attack allegedly struck near Gedeb Primary School, reportedly killing over 100 civilians who were volunteering at the school, and injuring many more, although GCPEA was unable to establish whether any were students or teachers.<sup>28</sup>
- Between August 17 and 19, 2025, in Gelegu town, West Gondar, Amhara region, suspected members of an armed group allegedly attacked a school, as reported by regional media *Daily News Egypt*.<sup>29</sup>

## Attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel

GCPEA identified at least seven attacks on school students, teachers, and other personnel during the reporting period, a similar rate as compared to the previous reporting period, when GCPEA identified at least seven attacks in 2023, and three in 2022.<sup>30</sup> In attacks during 2024 and 2025, at least 12 teachers and students were reportedly killed, and at least 15 were abducted.

The UN verified four attacks on school students, teachers, and other personnel in 2024.<sup>31</sup> Separately, GCPEA identified at least two attacks. Since it was unclear whether attacks from the UN overlapped with reports collected by GCPEA, the latter were not included in the total number of attacks on school students, teachers, and other personnel for this report, to avoid double counting.

- On an unknown date in 2024, in Tigray region, a 16-year-old student stepped on an unexploded ordnance while walking home from school, severely injuring his hands and leading to the amputation of his leg, as reported by the *BBC*.<sup>32</sup>
- On September 18, 2024, in Senan woreda, Amhara region, alleged members of an armed group reportedly killed two teachers from Irob Gebeya General Secondary School, as reported by ACLED and local and international media.<sup>33</sup> Reports indicated that the teachers were targeted because of their profession.

GCPEA identified three attacks in 2025:

- On February 12, 2025, at Kore Elementary School in North Gojam, Amhara region, suspected members of an armed group reportedly abducted five male and eight female teachers, as reported by local media *Addis Standard*.<sup>34</sup>
- On March 6, 2025, in Raya Alamata, Southern Tigray, Tigray region, during an attack on the church, four students and one teacher were reportedly killed, and five other students were injured, as reported by local media *Borkena*.<sup>35</sup>
- On March 20, 2025, in Merawi town, West Gojjam zone, Amhara region, alleged members of an armed group reportedly killed five teachers because they continued to teach against the group's orders, as reported by local media *Addis Standard*.<sup>36</sup>

## Military use of schools and universities

The number of cases of the military use of schools increased sharply during the 2024-2025 reporting period. In 2024 and 2025, reporting indicated that approximately 1,200 schools were being used for military purposes.<sup>37</sup> In comparison, GCPEA identified six reports in 2022 and ten in 2023.<sup>38</sup> It was not possible to establish whether this rise is a result of increased reporting, or increased use of schools. Separately, GCPEA identified at least two cases of military use:

- In January 2024, a drone strike reportedly struck near a school in Merhabete woreda, Amhara region, allegedly targeting the base of an armed group that was stationed very close to the school, as reported by *BBC Amharic*.<sup>39</sup> The school administration reported that the school was in session at the time, and that several students sustained injuries in their panic to escape. According to reports, over 2,600 students were registered at the school, and students did not return to school after the attack.
- As reported by *BBC Amharic* on December 10, 2024, in West Gojjam zone, Amhara region, alleged members of an armed group reportedly detained over 100 people, including members of state forces, at a primary school, amid fighting.<sup>40</sup>

The Education Cluster reported, in March 2025, that the number of schools being used for non-educational purposes had increased during the first three months of 2025 by 239, to a total of 1,527 schools.<sup>41</sup> The report added that in most cases, they were being used for military purposes.<sup>42</sup> Separately, GCPEA identified one incident of the military use of a school:

- On March 13, 2025, in Derji, South Gonder zone, Amhara region, a school was reportedly occupied, leading to armed clashes with rival forces, as reported by local media *Addis Standard*.<sup>43</sup>

## Attacks on higher education

Sporadic attacks on higher education continued during the 2024-2025 reporting period, when GCPEA identified at least five attacks, compared to one in 2023 and five in 2022.<sup>44</sup>

GCPEA identified three attacks on higher education students in 2024:

- On April 5, 2024, police reportedly used violent force to disperse a peaceful student protest; some protesters were also reportedly arrested, according to Scholars at Risk.<sup>45</sup> Students from Mekelle University were protesting graduation delays and reportedly marched from the campus into Mekelle city, in Tigray region.
- On July 2, 2024, alleged members of an armed group reportedly abducted approximately 100 students from Debarak University near Garba Guracha town in Oromia region, while they were travelling from university in Amhara region to Addis Ababa, as reported by international media *DW*, the *BBC*, and *University World News*.<sup>46</sup>
- On August 18, 2024, in Debre Markos town, Amhara region, an armed clash between the military and an armed group allegedly took place near a teachers' college, as reported by ACLED and the *BBC*.<sup>47</sup> It was not clear whether the building sustained damage.

GCPEA identified two attacks on higher education in 2025:

- On May 14, 2025, in Addis Ababa, during a partial strike demanding improved employment conditions, two medical interns and one medical student were allegedly detained, as reported by local media *Addis Standard*.<sup>48</sup>
- On July 3, 2025, at an unspecified location in or near Degem, North Shewa, Oromia region, suspected members of an armed group reportedly ambushed ENDF soldiers who were escorting students home from exams at Selale University in Degem, as reported by local media *Wazema*.<sup>49</sup>