

Summary

The Amhara region is further deteriorating as splintered Fano militias join together and advance into urban areas. In response, Ethiopia has extended the state of emergency by 4 months and the Ethiopian military has ramped up its drone attacks which has affected the civilian population. The situation is further exacerbated by power-outages resulting from the ongoing conflict and large-scale kidnappings. In Addis Ababa, Fano and OLF members were arrested, and guns were seized which were planned to be used for attacks in the capital.

Recent events and developments

The situation in the Amhara region remains unstable which prompted the Ethiopian government to extend the state of emergency by 4 months on the 2nd of February. On the 29th of February the Fano militia captured Bahir Dar, the capital of Amhara. The splintered Fano militias have unified into the Gojam Amhara Fano, which might explain the rapid advancement. Fighting has also reached other urban regions, which has increased civilian casualties. On the 19th of February an army drone reportedly killed 30 people in Sasit town. The fighting has also led to power outages. Damage to civilian infrastructure has also been reported as on the 5th of March a high-power transmission line was targeted, resulting in blackouts. Furthermore, in March a large kidnapping of more than 200 labourers also took place in the East Gojam zone. The conflict in the Amhara region, along with the counterinsurgency operation in Oromia, were collectively responsible for a 65% increase of clashes in February compared to January. The Amhara conflict is also affecting Addis Ababa. On the 24th of February the Federal Police seized 166 guns and ammunition at the Tulu Dimitu checkpoint in Akaki-Kalit sub-city of Addis Ababa. The guns were intended to be used for attacks in Addis Ababa and the surrounding areas. Furthermore, in the first week of March, the Federal police arrested 37 OLF and 16 Fano members who fled the conflict into Sheger and Lideta in Addis Ababa, along with weapons and ammunition. Both incidents occurred in region 14 of Addis Ababa.

Impact assessment

With the extension of the state of emergency and Fano advances in the Amhara region, an improvement of the situation seems unlikely. The state of emergency limits movement, bans public gatherings and allows for individuals to be arrested without a court warrant. On the 24th of February, the army closed the Dessie - Shewarobit - Debre Birhan Road to all types of vehicles as a consequence of government effort to combat Fano militia in the south of Amhara. It is expected that more roads will be closed as the conflict continues. The conflict is also transitioning from rural to urban in the region. In its efforts to fight the Fano militia, the Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) has been accused of targeting civilians in urban territories. Since May of last year there has been at least 70 drone attacks that caused civilian casualties, and as the conflict is becoming more urbanized in Amhara, further civilian casualties are to be expected, along with further damage to civilian infrastructure and blackouts. The situation is further exacerbated by large-scale kidnappings which indicates that the militias will not discriminate between high and low-profile victims. Furthermore, it can be observed that region 14 of Addis Ababa is becoming more dangerous due to an inflow of militia fighters from different factions, as well as weapons intended for attacks inside the capital. Although the attacks have been foiled for now, it can be expected that more attempts will be made as the militias become emboldened by their gains in Amhara.

Advice from Forth Global

- Ensure that all employees travelling to Ethiopia receive a three-day HEAT training prior to deployment.
- Employees should avoid dangerous regions of Addis Ababa, specifically Akaki-Kalit, Sheger, and Lideta in region 14.
- Employees should not travel to Amhara due to the high intensity of conflict.
- Employees should refrain from sharing their opinion on internal Ethiopian politics in public.

Customized advice

Please contact us for specific advice:

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