



Militancy/Terrorism

27

AUG

17:17 UTC

Ethiopia Alert: EHRC states at least 150 killed in ethnic violence in Gida-Kirimu, West Wollega Zone, Oromia Regional State per August 26 reports

Please be advised

- Reports citing an August 26 statement by Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) noted that at least 150 people have been killed in ethnic violence in Gida-Kirimu, West Wollega Zone, in Oromia Regional State on August 18.
- The EHRC stated that gunmen affiliated with the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), perpetrated the attacks on ethnic Amhara civilians after security forces withdrew from the area.
- Following this, at least 60 people were allegedly killed in reprisal attacks, with the EHRC declining to reveal the identity of the attackers.
- The EHRC has called for “immediate action” to prevent the instability from spreading further and an investigation into why security forces withdrew from the area.
- An OLA spokesperson later denied the EHRC accusations, stating that reports of the group’s involvement in the violence were a “gross distortion of the facts on the ground”.

Assessments & Forecast

1. This incident comes amid a backdrop of increasing intercommunal violence targeting ethnic Amhara’s across the country over the past few months, with the government repeatedly accusing the OLA of perpetrating these attacks. In this context, the scale and manner of the attack are indicative of prior planning by the OLA fighters, with the militia also taking advantage of the alleged withdrawal of federal military units to perpetuate the attack. Indeed the lack of security presence, after federal forces withdrew from the area allegedly in a routine rotation exercise underscores the scale of the volatility in Western Oromia.
2. While it remains unclear where the soldiers have been re-deployed to, the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) remain highly stretched, as they recapture battlefield momentum from the Tigrayan Defense Forces (TDF). The TDF who have launched offensives into neighboring Amhara and Afar regional states have necessitated that a constant supply of ENDF troops being sent to fight on various fronts in Northern Ethiopia, which has led to security vacuums in other areas of the country, most notably in West Wollega, where the OLA remain entrenched and have carried out previous such attacks.
3. That said, the fact that 60 people, likely ethnic Oromos, were killed in reprisal attacks by Amhara civilians and militia further highlights the highly volatile cyclical nature of ethnic and security dynamics in the area. Furthermore, the fact that civilians were willing to engage in reprisal attacks in an area, where they are the minority ethnic group is indicative of the distinct lack of confidence in the ability of federal forces in being able to protect locals against Oromo attacks.
4. **FORECAST:** In the immediate term, the large casualty count is likely to necessitate a forceful government response as federal and regional forces are likely to conduct joint security operations

against the suspected perpetrators over the coming days. In addition to increasing force deployments, the military is likely to increase roadblocks restricting movement in and out of the West Wollega Zone. Given the cyclical nature of these bouts of violence, there is a high possibility of revenge attacks in the coming days by Amhara self-defense groups in Oromia on ethnic Oromo, as well as by ethnic Amhara on Oromo living in Amhara state. These incidents will likely further escalate ethnic tensions, with the security environment in Oromia and Amhara remaining volatile over the coming weeks.

Recommendations

1. Travel to Addis Ababa may continue while maintaining heightened vigilance in crowded areas due to the high risks of non-violent personal property crime.
2. Those operating or residing in Oromia Region's West Wollega Zone are advised to maintain heightened vigilance over the coming days and be prepared to comply with additional or sudden security measures and checkpoints.
3. Avoid nonessential travel to non-touristic outlying areas of Ethiopia in light of the poor security presence.