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# Over 80 civilians killed in latest west Ethiopia massacre: EHRC

*Age of victims of attack in Metekel zone in Benishangul-Gumuz region ranged between two and 45, says Ethiopian Human Rights Commission.*



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More than 80 civilians, including children as young as two years old, have been killed in the  
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Aaron Maasho, spokesman and senior adviser for the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), told Al Jazeera the massacre took place on Tuesday between 5am and 7am in the region of Benishangul-Gumuz, which borders Sudan and South Sudan.

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“We received information that over 80 people died whose ages range from 2 to 45 years old,” he said from the capital, Addis Ababa.

There was no claim of responsibility and no immediate information about the identity of the attackers. “We can confirm that the perpetrators of the attack have not been apprehended by the authorities yet,” Maasho said.

The attack took place in an area called Daletti, in the Metekel zone of Benishangul-Gumuz, which has been plagued by recurring violence in recent months that has left hundreds of people dead.

Some 207 people were killed in one attack on December 23 alone.

Maasho said “thousands of people” have been displaced due to the continuing violence in Metekel.

“We call on the federal and regional authorities to strengthen the coordination and measures, including at the district level, to prevent similar attacks against civilians,” added the spokesman of the EHRC, a government-affiliated but independent body.

### **‘They burned my house’**

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has struggled to impose order in Metekel or explain what is driving the violence, despite visiting the area in December and empowering a command post to take charge of security there.

Opposition politicians have described the violence in Metekel as ethnically motivated, alleging a targeted campaign by ethnic Gumuz armed groups against members of other ethnic groups in the area, including the Amhara, Ethiopia’s second-largest group.



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One survivor of the latest attack, Ahmed Yimam, told AFP news agency on Wednesday that he had counted 82 bodies and said 22 people were wounded.

“The attack was carried out mostly using knives although arrows and firearms were also used,” he said.

Worke Ahmed, 60, told Reuters news agency by telephone that men involved in Tuesday’s attack were armed and that he saw more than 100 of them. Some wore uniforms that he could not identify, he said.

“They burned my house and my brother’s house, with 200 cattle and 11 goats inside,” he said.

Africa's second-most populous nation has been grappling with regular outbreaks of deadly violence since Abiy was appointed in 2018 and accelerated democratic reforms that loosened the state's iron grip on regional rivalries.

Elections due this year have further inflamed simmering tensions over land, power and resources.

In a separate part of the country, Ethiopia's military has been fighting rebels in the northern Tigray region for more than two months, in a conflict that has displaced some one million people.

The Ethiopian government said on Wednesday that three officials with Tigray's former ruling party, including ex Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin were [killed](#) after they refused to surrender to the military.

The deployment of federal troops in Tigray has raised fears of a security vacuum in other restive regions.

Ethiopia is also experiencing unrest in the Oromia region and faces long-running security threats from Somali fighters along its porous eastern border.