

Background

The security situation in Addis Ababa and major towns is stable. However, there is sporadic violent conflict and civil unrest in other areas of Ethiopia, and the security situation may deteriorate without warning. Embassies are unlikely to be able to assist with departure from the country if the security situation deteriorates. Due to the potential for sporadic violent conflict and civil unrest throughout parts of Ethiopia, travel by CRS personnel is routinely assessed for additional restrictions.

Quick Facts

PASSPORT VALIDITY: 6 months..

BLANK PASSPORT PAGES: 1 page

TOURIST VISA REQUIRED: Yes (www.evisa.gov.et)

VACCINATIONS: Yellow fever certificate required if traveling from a country with risk of yellow fever transmission; recommended for all areas in Ethiopia except Afar and Somali regions.

CURRENCY RESTRICTIONS FOR ENTRY: 1,000 ETB for all travelers; 1000 USD or other foreign currency equivalent if person resides in Ethiopia; 3,000 USD or other foreign currency equivalent if person is not residing in Ethiopia. Excess currency may be confiscated.

CURRENCY RESTRICTIONS FOR EXIT: 1,000 ETB (4,000 ETB if travelling to Djibouti) and 3,000 USD or other foreign currency equivalent

Areas of Concern

- Tigray Region and border with Eritrea due to **sporadic violent conflict, civil unrest, and crime.**
- Afar-Tigray border areas **due** to sporadic violent **conflict, civil unrest, and crime.**
- Amhara north of (but not including) the A4 road in West Shewa Zone, and south and west of (but not including) the A3 in North Shewa Zone due to **sporadic violent conflict and civil unrest.**
- Gambella and Benishangul Gumuz Regions due to **crime, kidnapping, ethnically motivated violence, and sporadic violent conflict**
- Oromia Region – Specific areas due to **sporadic violent conflict, civil unrest, and ethnically motivated violence.**
- Southern Nations and National People (SNNP) Region due to **sporadic violent conflict, civil unrest, and ethnically motivated violence.**
- Border area with Somalia due to **terrorism, kidnapping, and landmines.**
- Border areas with Sudan, and South Sudan due to **crime, kidnapping, civil unrest, and sporadic violent conflict.**
- Border areas with Kenya due to the potential for **terrorism and ethnically motivated violence.**



Catholic Relief Services

SECURITY RISK ASSESSMENT

Classification: Confidential - Version 1

ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

Location	Ethiopia all areas emphasizing Addis Ababa
Program Type(s)	
Assessor(s)	Security Unit
Date	16-Aug-23

RISK SUMMARY

	Risk Category	Inherent Risk	Residual Risk
1	Conflict	HIGH	MEDIUM
2	Unrest	HIGH	MEDIUM
3	Militancy	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
4	Criminality	MEDIUM	LOW
5	Safety	HIGH	MEDIUM
6	Humanitarian	LOW	LOW
7	Gender	MEDIUM	LOW
8	Infrastructure	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
TOTAL		MEDIUM	MEDIUM

SECURITY RISK LEVEL

LEVEL 2 - MEDIUM

Level 2: The context is tense but stable. Institutions are challenged and there are demonstrations. Violence is localized and is either due to criminality and/or the actions of armed groups. There is a risk of disruption from governmental or non governmental actors.

High risk areas:

Oromia Region – Specific Areas –

Due to sporadic violent conflict, civil unrest, and ethnically motivated violence, the following zones in Oromia require pre-departure briefing to support humanitarian capacity and engagement efforts:

the entirety of **Horro-Guduru Wollega, East Wollega, West Wollega, Kelem Wollega, Illubabor, and Bale**. Other areas in Oromia include portions of **North, West, and Southwest Shewa** to the immediate **north and west of Addis Ababa**; the **Boset and Fentale woredas of East Shewa zone between Welenchiti and Awash**; portions of the **Borena zone** surrounding **Bule Hora**; and portions of **Guji zone** to the **east of Bule Hora**.

Southern Nations and National People (SNNP) Region – Specific Areas

Due to sporadic violent conflict, civil unrest, and ethnically motivated violence the following towns and areas in SNNP require pre-departure briefing to support humanitarian capacity and engagement efforts: **Gedeo, Konso zones and the Amaro and Derashe special woredas**.

Border Area with Somalia

Terrorists maintain a presence in Somali towns near the Ethiopian border, presenting a risk of cross-border attacks and kidnappings. Landmines are present in this region.

Border Areas with Sudan and South Sudan

Crime, kidnapping, the potential for ethnically motivated violence, and sporadic violent conflict exist near the Ethiopian borders with Sudan and South Sudan. This includes but is not limited to **the Nuer Zone** and the **Jore Woreda** of the **Agnuak Zone** in the Gambela region, and the **Pawe, Guba, Dangur, Dibati, and Bulen woredas, and the Metekel zone in the Benishangul Gumuz Region**.

Border Areas with Kenya

Terrorists, particularly Al-Shabaab, maintain a presence in this area, and ethnically motivated violence has been reported. This includes but is not limited to **the Borena zone** and surrounding areas.

Advisory:

There have been violent protests and clashes between security forces and informal militia across Amhara regional state since April 2023 including violent clashes in the major towns and cities of Bahir Dar, Gondar and Lalibela. Violence could emerge without warning. Travelers are at risk of being caught in crossfire. It is advisable that you shelter in place and if this is not possible that you proceed to a safe location and stay there until it is safe to leave. The government has announced a 19:00 curfew in the cities of Bahir Dar, Debre Markos, Debre Birhan, Lalibela, Gondar and Shewa Robit until 23 August. It also announced a ban on three wheeled (Bajaj) and motorcycle transport in those cities.

The Government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front signed a peace agreement to cease hostilities in Tigray in November 2022. Implementation of disarmament and reconstruction measures have begun. The situation in Tigray continues to be fragile and the possibility of isolated armed incidents remains.

In July 2022, Al-Shabaab fighters attacked the towns of Aato, Yeed and Washaaqo, near to the border between Somalia and Ethiopia. Al-Shabaab has indicated its intention to commit further attacks in the area and there may be further fighting. Travelers in Somali Regional State should always remain vigilant.

There have been reports of incidents along the Addis Ababa – Bahir Dar (A3) road, including those of armed men attacking vehicles. These usually take place in the early hours when there is poor visibility. You should exercise additional caution and avoid traveling in the dark or when visibility is poor. The A3 road can be subject to increased check points and/or closure by the Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF).

There has been an increase in sporadic conflicts between armed groups in Oromia region and Amhara region. These are mostly reported to be taking place in rural areas of Oromia region, with limited clashes in Amhara region, including in urban areas. Air strikes against armed groups in the West Shewa zone have been reported. You should exercise extreme caution when travelling and be aware that situations have potential to escalate quickly.

There are frequent incidences of civil unrest in Ethiopia, including protests and strikes. Some of these can cause temporary closure of roads, internet and mobile networks or disruption to local businesses and transport. In the past some protests have escalated into serious violence.

Terrorists are likely to try to carry out attacks in Ethiopia. Attacks could be indiscriminate, including in places visited by foreigners. You should be always vigilant, especially in crowded areas and public places like transport hubs, hotels, restaurants, bars and places of worship and during major gatherings like religious or sporting events. There is a threat of kidnapping in Ethiopia's Somali region, and on the southern border with Kenya.

Internet connections in Ethiopia, including mobile data, can be intermittent.

Ethiopia is primarily a cash based society and banking facilities, including card payments and ATMs are very limited outside major cities.

Travel in Ethiopia

Travel to the airport

Addis Ababa (Bole International) airport is fully operational. You should arrive at the airport at least two hours before your scheduled departure time. You will need a printed copy of your itinerary, e-ticket or boarding pass in order to be allowed to enter the airport terminal. You should comply with all local restrictions.

Safety and security

Crime

Addis Ababa and other major urban areas are comparatively safe compared to many African cities. However, the British Embassy has received increased reports of foreign nationals being targeted by groups of youths or scam artists. Petty theft and mugging is on the rise. There has been a smaller number of more serious incidents, including sexual harassment of women and robberies.

Be vigilant if approached by strangers seeking assistance - criminal gangs are known to use distraction techniques including begging, spitting or spilling food/drink on you or feigning illness. Take particular care when visiting crowded public places, especially at night. There has been an increase in violent robberies at parks and walking sites in Addis Ababa. If threatened, hand over your valuables without resistance.

Keep belongings on your person while travelling in taxis and keep valuables like cameras and passports out of sight. Be aware of the risk of pickpocketing, bag and jewelry snatching including from vehicles stopped at traffic lights in Addis Ababa. Keep car doors locked whilst in your vehicle, and when parking leave your car in a well-lit and guarded area. Consider fitting anti-shatter film to all windows on your vehicle.

Large crowds are common on key national and religious dates. These include Ethiopian Christmas on 7 January, Epiphany/'Timket' in January, Victory of Adawa on 2 March, Ethiopian Patriots' Victory Day on 5 May, Downfall of the Derg on 28 May, Ethiopian New Year on 11-12 September and The Finding of the True Cross/'Meskel' in September. Large crowds also gather on Ethiopian (Orthodox) Easter; Eid Al Fitr; Eid Al Arafa and the Birthday of the Prophet Mohammed. Various parts of the country also have local festivals which can lead to large gatherings, often celebrating Saints days.

There have been a small number of cases of arbitrary detention of expats in Ethiopia in recent years. There's a risk that this could reoccur – particularly where tensions are heightened (for example around major events, or in locations that might be deemed sensitive for security reasons). You should always carry copies of your passport. This may help if you're questioned or detained. However, you should be aware that the Ethiopian authorities will not necessarily notify embassies when foreign nationals are detained. Even if requested, adequate consular access is not always granted.

Road travel

Driving standards and vehicle maintenance are often poor and traffic accidents are a regular occurrence in Ethiopia, especially in Addis Ababa and on the Addis Ababa-Djibouti road. In Addis Ababa, it is advised to use either the metered yellow taxis or app based companies as they offer greater accountability and generally have higher standards of maintenance than the blue and white taxis. The quality of driving and vehicle condition can vary greatly.

Under Ethiopian law, drivers involved in car accidents can face severe punishments, including custodial sentences and fines. You should be very careful when travelling by car. If you're involved in a traffic accident you should remain in your vehicle and call the local police. You should avoid confrontation and await their arrival to resolve the matter.

In the past some localised demonstrations have led to temporary closures of roads or the targeting of public transport. However, not all reports on social media channels of such disruptions are accurate. If you're unsure, you should contact local authorities or reputable tour operators in the areas you're travelling to.

If you encounter a roadblock you should follow the advice of local authorities at the road block if they are present. If you encounter an unattended roadblock, turn around and don't attempt to pass it.

When travelling outside Addis Ababa, you should avoid driving after dark in rural areas: vehicles often have no lights and livestock may be roaming on the roads. There have been instances where buses from one region have been attacked when passing through another. Medical facilities outside the capital are extremely limited so carry a comprehensive medical pack. You should also consider communications – whilst mobile telephone services are increasingly widespread, connectivity cannot be guaranteed, and there have been multiple examples of mobile internet being closed down with no notice. You may wish to consider travelling in a party and leaving details of your travel itinerary with a reliable person.

Addis Ababa

You should comply with the law, including on carrying ID cards, possession of foreign currency and possession of weapons. You should avoid confrontation and follow the instructions of the authorities.

You should be alert to petty theft around Bole Addis Ababa International Airport, particularly pickpockets and bag snatches. When in or around the airport, keep valuables secure and out of sight. Only use buses or taxis from CRS and/or partners, or choose yellow or app based taxis rather than the blue and white ones.

There has been an increase in the level of reported crime against both expats and Ethiopian nationals in the Bole Medhanealem, Bole Atlas, Meskel Square, Yeka Hills and Entoto areas of Addis Ababa. These have included robberies at knife point and the choking unconscious of victims by their attackers. Don't travel alone in these areas if possible. You should exercise caution if travelling on foot, and consider using road transportation where possible, both during the daytime and especially after dark. If threatened, hand over your valuables without resistance.

Afar Region

You should exercise caution in these areas and remain alert to developments. Some flights across northern Ethiopia remain suspended. Domestic and international land borders may be closed. Mobile networks and internet connections may be disrupted. You should monitor local media for further information and comply with local authority instructions.

There are ongoing armed clashes between ethnic groups in Hanruka, Gela'alo, Gewane, and Adaytu Woredas of Afar region and the bordering areas of Somali Regional State and Dire Dawa. There are reports of road closures and

roadblocks in the area, including on the main Addis Ababa to Djibouti road. If you're travelling in the area, monitor local media and follow the advice of local authorities and your tour operator. If you encounter a roadblock you should follow the advice of local authorities at the road block if they are present. If you encounter an unattended roadblock, turn around and don't attempt to pass it.

If you're planning to visit the Danakil desert area, you should be aware of the risk of excessive heat and the difficult terrain in some areas, notably around the volcano of Erta Ale. Facilities are basic in Danakil; there is no running water and medical options are very limited.

Amhara Region

has been increased violence in the region characterised by informal Amhara militias "Fano" taking control of areas and Fano and Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) conflict in these areas. This has increased the risk to BNs in this region. The instability has been widespread across the region and has included violent clashes in the major cities of Bahir Dar, Gondar and Lalibela as well as more rural towns and villages. The government has announced a 19:00 curfew in the cities of Bahir Dar, Debre Markos, Debre Birhan, Lalibela, Gondar and Shewa Robit until 23 August. It also announced a ban on three wheeled (Bajaj) and motorcycle transport in those cities.

There have been violent protests and clashes between security forces in Amhara regional state since 7 April, resulting in an unknown number of deaths including of two NGO workers. Violence could emerge without warning. Travellers are at risk of being caught in crossfire. Roads can be subject to increased check points and/or closure by both ENDF and Fano militia. If you encounter a roadblock you should follow the advice of local authorities at the roadblock if they are present. If you encounter an unattended roadblock, turn around and don't attempt to pass it.

Some flights services across northern Ethiopia, are subject to suspension or cancellation at short notice. Domestic and international land borders may be closed. Mobile networks and internet connections may be disrupted. You should monitor local media for further information and comply with local authority instructions.

Gambella Region

Incidents of large-scale violence, inter-communal clashes and armed attacks occur regularly in the Gambella region, with heavy fire reported on multiple occasions recently. While foreigners have not been targeted, there's a significant risk of being caught up in violence.

Oromia Region

There have been repeated and serious instances of violence in these areas including clashes between armed groups and security forces, violent crime and roadside attacks.

There have been reports during late October of air strikes against armed groups in the West Shewa area. These could take place in a range of locations without prior notice. Extreme caution should be exercised when travelling in the West Shewa zone, in particular in rural areas.

There continue to be increased tensions and violence between armed groups and the security forces across Oromia region, particularly Shewa, Haraghe and Guji zones. You should avoid military, police and security installations, exercise extreme caution and follow the advice of local authorities.

Since November 2022, there has been a marked increase in incidents between armed groups in Oromia region, including the Oromo Liberation Army, the regional government-led Oromo Special Forces and informal Amhara

militias. These have primarily been reported in rural areas of Oromia region and areas bordering Amhara region. As these are not contained to specific areas in Oromia region, you should exercise caution when traveling, particularly between urban centres, and be aware that situations have potential to escalate quickly.

There is a threat of kidnapping in western areas of Oromia region, particularly West Wollega, East Wollega and Qellem Wollega Zones. Recent kidnaps have targeted the mining industry. British Nationals working in the area should avoid regular patterns of travel or movement, and aim to only travel during daylight hours.

There has been an increase in roadblocks across the Oromia region recently. If you encounter a roadblock you should follow the advice of local authorities at the roadblock if they are present. If you encounter an unattended roadblock, turn around and don't attempt to pass it.

Protests and demonstrations occur periodically in a range of towns across the Oromia region. Towns in the Wollega and Shewa Zones, and West Arsi Zone, including Ambo, Wolissa, Nekemte and Shashemene, have been particularly affected. Demonstrations have also been witnessed elsewhere including in the Bale Zone to the south-east. Some protests have turned violent and resulted in casualties; others caused severe disruption to road travel including major roads to and from Addis Ababa.

Ethiopian Somali Region

In July 2022, Al-Shabaab fighters attacked the towns of Aato, Yeed and Washaaqo, near to the border between Somalia and Ethiopia. Al-Shabaab has indicated its intention to commit further attacks in the area and there may be further fighting. Travellers in Somali Regional State should remain vigilant at all times.

There are ongoing armed clashes between ethnic groups in Hanruka, Gela'alo, Gewane, and Adaytu Woredas of Afar region and the bordering areas of Somali Regional State and Dire Dawa. There are reports of road closures and roadblocks in the area, including on the main Addis Ababa to Djibouti road. If you're travelling in the area, monitor local media and follow the advice of local authorities and your tour operator. If you encounter a roadblock you should follow the advice of local authorities at the road block if they are present. If you encounter an unattended roadblock, turn around and don't attempt to pass it.

There is local instability, lawlessness, military activity and a general risk of banditry in the Somali Region. Since the mid-1990s, insurgent groups, some affiliated with terrorist organisations, have clashed with government forces. Foreigners have been caught up in the violence or targeted. There have also been attacks on staff working for international NGOs.

Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region, Sidama Region, South West Region

Tensions are raised in western parts of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR) with sporadic armed clashes in Konso Zone and surrounding areas, which can flare up quickly and without notice. Clashes have led to a number of deaths.

There have been some instances of civil unrest in towns in the Sidama Region, including Hawassa, and clashes along stretches of the internal border with the Oromia region, especially in the Gedeo Zone. Whilst such disturbances have been less frequent than in several other areas of Ethiopia, a number have turned violent at short notice. You should familiarise yourself with the advice above about avoiding large gatherings, and should follow the advice of local authorities.

Tigray Region

The Government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front signed a peace agreement to cease hostilities in Tigray on 02 November 2022. Implementation of disarmament and reconstruction measures have begun. The situation in Tigray continues to be fragile and the possibility of isolated armed incidents remains.

Benishangul-Gumuz Region

Local tensions have led to ongoing violent clashes, including reported abductions and fatalities. Clashes remain frequent and unpredictable.

There have been occasional instances of civil unrest in and around Assosa. You should familiarise yourself with the advice above about avoiding large gatherings, and should follow the advice of local authorities and your tour operator.

Local laws and customs

The traditional Ethiopian calendar is different from the Gregorian calendar that is widely used internationally. New Year is in September and there are 12 months of 30 days followed by a 13th month of 5 days (or 6 in a leap year). The Ethiopian calendar is 7-8 years behind the Gregorian calendar. If dealing with official documents, you can expect the date to be written in the Ethiopian calendar.

Time of day is also counted differently by traditional Ethiopian mechanisms. Daytime hours are counted beginning from what would be 0600 using a globally standard 24-hour clock, and nighttime hours from 1800. "2am" on the Ethiopian clock is therefore equivalent to 0800. Most hotels and larger organisations' documents, including all airline tickets, are expressed using the global clock rather than the traditional Ethiopian clock. But many individuals and smaller organisations continue to use the Ethiopian clock. If you are not sure the time of a meeting or an event check with your host which clock is being used ('Ethiopian time' or 'Western time').

Ethiopia is a religiously diverse and largely tolerant country. However, many believers are devout in their respective faiths and you should make sure to respect local traditions, customs, laws and religions. Be aware of your actions to ensure that they do not offend, especially during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan or if you intend to visit religious sites of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Outside Addis Ababa, particularly in rural areas, women may wish to dress modestly to avoid the possibility of causing offence. Modest dress is a must when visiting religious sites.

Ethiopian Orthodox Christians fast each Wednesday, Friday and in several other periods. In predominantly Orthodox areas, at these times only vegan dishes are likely to be available except in larger hotels and restaurants catering to foreigners.

Ethiopia is one of the 54 countries in Africa where being LGBTQ is illegal and punishable by up to 15 years in prison. There are no discrimination protection laws in place and no institution recognizes same-sex union. LGBTQ persons may encounter harassment, violence, intimidation, and censorship of LGBTQ issues. As CRS, we respect the dignity of all persons regardless of age, gender, disability, and sexuality. However, we advise our visitors to be aware of the following:

- Being LGBTQ+ is against the law in Ethiopia and can result in serious consequences. Therefore, LGBTQ+ travelers should be careful not to reveal their sexual orientation or identity in any way that could attract unwanted attention or legal trouble. This includes being aware of the local laws and customs, as well as avoiding any activities or platforms that could expose their LGBTQ+ status.

- Ethiopia is a conservative society that does not tolerate LGBTQI+ expressions or rights. Therefore, any travelers should be respectful of the local culture and religion. Respect the dress codes and customs of the places you visit, especially in religious or conservative areas.
- Being LGBTQI+ and any related visibility can make travelers more vulnerable to crime and violence in Ethiopia. Therefore, all travelers should be cautious of strangers.

It is illegal to take photos near military zones or of military personnel; near the Presidential Palace in Addis Ababa and where signs clearly prohibit photography.

It is illegal to carry more than 3,000 Ethiopian Birr when entering or leaving Ethiopia. If you are travelling to Djibouti from Ethiopia you may carry up to 10,000 Birr. If you are found to be carrying cash in excess of these amounts it will be seized and you may face a prison sentence.

Visitors must declare on entry or exit any cash in excess of USD\$10,000 (or the equivalent in other foreign currency). Residents of Ethiopia must declare any cash in excess of USD\$4,000. Travellers leaving Ethiopia with cash in excess of these amounts must present the customs declaration form obtained at the point of entry, or the bank advice note if the currency was purchased locally. These documents are valid for 30 days from the date of issue.

If you are entering Ethiopia via a land border you must declare any cash exceeding USD\$500 (or the equivalent in other foreign currency).

You will need an export certificate to take antiques out of the country, otherwise the items are likely to be confiscated and you may face prosecution.

Owning ivory is strictly prohibited. A number of British nationals found with ivory jewellery have had their items confiscated by authorities and fined between 5,000 and 25,000 birr.

Drug offences are treated seriously in Ethiopia. Don't become involved with drugs of any kind. Khat is a legal drug in Ethiopia but it is an offence to take it out of the country. Bags are regularly searched at Addis Ababa Bole Airport and anyone found to be in possession of Khat is likely to face criminal prosecution.

Banned or restricted items

There are no guidelines covering the use of drones in Ethiopia. They may be confiscated at airports or at the border. Seek and carry written permission from the Ethiopian Government before using drones.

Satellite phones and binoculars cannot be imported to Ethiopia without prior approval. Seek advice from your travel provider on permissions required. Unapproved items may be confiscated by authorities.

Medical treatment

There are a number of hospitals in Addis Ababa but only private hospitals offer a reasonable standard of basic care for minor health problems. Dentistry options are especially lacking. Ambulance services are also limited. Outside the capital medical facilities remain extremely poor. You should carry a comprehensive medical pack when travelling out of Addis Ababa. Make sure you have adequate travel health insurance and accessible funds to cover the cost of any medical treatment abroad, evacuation by air ambulance and repatriation. You should contact your insurance / medical assistance company promptly if you are referred to a medical facility for treatment.

Money

Ethiopia is largely a cash based society. Credit cards are accepted at only a very few outlets in Addis Ababa and it is not normally possible to get currency advances against a credit card. International bank and debit cards are accepted at major banks' ATMs in the capital but there are very limited banking facilities in most other areas. Make sure you have an adequate supply of cash before travelling outside the capital.

If you change foreign currency into Birr, you should ensure that you keep your receipt, as without this you are unlikely to be able to change any left over money back at the end of your trip.