

## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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# ETHIOPIA: FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MUST PAUSE THE CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECT AND END FORCED EVICTIONS

Ethiopia's federal government must immediately pause the Corridor Development Project (CDP), an urban development project across at least 58 cities, until a human rights impact assessment is conducted, those forcibly evicted are provided with effective remedy, and safeguards are implemented to ensure any evictions comply with international human rights standards.

Amnesty International makes this call after a new investigation, which found that at least 872 people were forcibly evicted from Bole and Lemi Kura sub-cities in November 2024 by the Addis Ababa City Administration. These include 254 people evicted from homes they owned across 47 households, including 114 children and 13 older people, as well as 618 tenants. Officials failed to conduct adequate consultation with the impacted population, did not provide sufficient notice, and none of those impacted reported receiving any compensation.

The scale of forced evictions – the removal of people against their will from their homes without legal protections and other safeguards – resulting from the implementation of the CDP, is unprecedented in Ethiopia. The sudden and forced eviction of a large number of people has also left millions of residents in cities where the CDP is currently being implemented living in fear, uncertain if they will be the next to be displaced.

## CONTEXT

The CDP – a project that authorities stated would link different development initiatives from late 2022 onwards – was approved by Addis Ababa's highest executive council on 23 February 2024.<sup>1</sup> An advisor to Addis Ababa's city administration described the CDP as "an urban transformation" project<sup>2</sup> aiming to "improve infrastructure, housing, and public spaces to attract investment, create jobs, and enhance residents' quality of life."<sup>3</sup>

The CDP's first phase focuses on central parts of Addis Ababa, including the city's old town, Piassa, a neighbourhood that has undergone similar projects since mid-2023.<sup>4</sup> Development projects that preceded the CDP faced public outcry, particularly due to demolition of historic buildings and cultural heritage sites.<sup>5</sup> As of October 2024, the second CDP

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<sup>1</sup> Addis Ababa City Communication, Facebook post: (የአዲስ አበባ የመንገድ ኮሪደር ልማት ፕሮጀክት ግንባታ እየተፋጠነ ነው፤) ["The construction of Addis Ababa Road corridor development project is speeding up"], 12 March 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1GiZ6KCczA/> (in Amharic).

<sup>2</sup> Kedir Adem Bedasso, "Confronting urban challenges by tackling housing, transport, and green space deficits head-on", 18 February 2025, Addis Standard, <https://addisstandard.com/transforming-addis-confronting-urban-challenges-by-tackling-housing-transport-and-green-space-deficits-head-on/>

<sup>3</sup> Kedir Adem Bedasso, "Confronting urban challenges by tackling housing, transport, and green space deficits head-on" (previously cited).

<sup>4</sup> Rachel Dubale, "Goodbye Piassa", 4 February 2024, [https://africasacountry.com/2024/04/goodbye-piassa](https://africasacountry.com/2024/04/goodbye-piassa;); Ethiopian Business Review, "A City Without Its Past", September 2023, <https://ethiopianbusinessreview.net/a-city-without-its-past/>

<sup>5</sup> The economist, "The historic heart of Addis Ababa is being demolished", 25 April 2024, <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2024/04/25/the-historic-heart-of-addis-ababa-is-being-demolished>

phase was expected to double in geographic size.<sup>6</sup> It involves the creation of eight corridors covering a total of 131.99 km.<sup>7</sup> This includes a 10 km-long project impacting households where Amnesty International conducted this research.<sup>8</sup>

In recent months, reports have emerged about the launch of the CDP in major towns across Ethiopia, including Arba Minch, Hawassa, Dessie, Jimma, Adama, and Jigjiga. Minister Chaltu Sani, Minister of Urban and Infrastructure Development, confirmed in parliament in January 2025 that 58 cities and urban centers are implementing CDPs.<sup>9</sup> The media has reported forced evictions in Jigjiga, Somali region, citing individuals who reported being evicted from their shops without prior notice.<sup>10</sup>

## METHODOLOGY

Amnesty International conducted research for this investigation from 17 January to 10 February 2025. The organization surveyed 47 homeowners affected by forced evictions in the Bole and Lemi Kura sub-cities of Addis Ababa through a questionnaire and interviewed eight victims and community leaders. Their names have been changed and identifying details omitted in Amnesty International's reporting for their security. The geographical scope of this research only covers a fraction of Addis Ababa, a city widely impacted by evictions linked to the CDP.

Amnesty International's Crisis Evidence Lab analyzed satellite imagery between early November 2024 and early February 2025. This confirmed that at least 29 hectares of densely built-up areas in Bole and Lemi Kura underwent structural clearing during this period, correlating with data provided by victims regarding the location and timeframe of the evictions. The Crisis Evidence Lab also confirmed that the cleared land remained empty at least until early February, which is consistent with the testimonies gathered.

Amnesty International has not been able to determine the total number of people affected by forced evictions in the Bole and Lemi Kura sub-cities as part of the evictions that occurred in November. However, it is highly likely that the number of forcibly evicted individuals in these two sub-cities could be much higher than the findings of this research. This possibility arises from the fact that at least 29 hectares of land were cleared in Bole and Lemi Kura sub-cities during November. Additionally, thousands of individuals were called to meetings with officials to discuss the potential evictions. In addition, Amnesty International also interviewed an individual who had documented a list of 180 evicted homeowners in the area<sup>11</sup>. Considering these factors, it is possible that thousands of persons may have been impacted by forced evictions in this locality in early November.

On 1 April 2025, Amnesty International shared its preliminary findings with the Ethiopian government but has yet to receive a response.

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<sup>6</sup> Fana Broadcasting Corporate, "Addis Ababa To Launch 2nd Phase Of Corridor Dev't Works This Week", 8 October 2024, <https://www.fanabc.com/english/addis-ababa-to-launch-2nd-phase-of-corridor-devt-works-this-week/>

<sup>7</sup> Fana Broadcasting Corporate, "Addis Ababa To Launch 2nd Phase Of Corridor Dev't Works This Week" (previously cited).

<sup>8</sup> Fana Broadcasting Corporate, "Addis Ababa To Launch 2nd Phase Of Corridor Dev't Works This Week" (previously cited).

<sup>9</sup> The Reporter, "MPs question arbitrary execution of corridor development projects across nation", 25 January 2025, <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/43500/>

<sup>10</sup> Asham Tv, "የለ ማስጠንቀቂያ ሱቆቻችን እየረረሱብን ነው ። - የጅግጅጋ ከተማ ነጋዴዎች" [Our shops are being demolished without any warning" – Vendors of Jigjiga city], 2 November 2024, <https://rb.gy/s6a2bl> (translation from the original Amharic into English by Amnesty International).

[https://youtu.be/oJs\\_CyoD2IY?si=fTF1bHmSNc82-mxi](https://youtu.be/oJs_CyoD2IY?si=fTF1bHmSNc82-mxi), do we have the minute where they talk about eviction of shop owners?

<sup>11</sup> Interview by voice call, Addis Ababa, 10 February 2025.

## EVICTED WITHOUT ADEQUATE CONSULTATION OR ANY COMPENSATION

Representatives of all 47 households surveyed in Lemi Kura and Bole sub-cities of Addis Ababa stated that one week before the forced eviction, government officials of the city administration called a large number of people to a meeting to discuss the potential eviction in the area. One individual who attended the meeting and was later forcibly evicted, estimated that around 5,000 people attended the meeting and reported that this was the first time that they learned about potential evictions from their homes.<sup>12</sup> The person told Amnesty International that officials said the area was needed for the CDP and that they were committed to further consultations, without specifying whether the participants' homes would be directly affected. He added that participants asked questions, and the officials said that "they would take the concerns to relevant authorities and come back with answers". One person who was forcibly evicted and later interviewed by Amnesty International said they were not invited to this meeting, and the first time they learned they would be evicted was when the oral notice was given.<sup>13</sup>

According to all 47 respondents to the questionnaire and individuals impacted by the evictions interviewed by Amnesty International, one week after the consultation meeting, members of the city administration went door-to-door, telling people to leave their homes within three days and warning that their homes would be demolished by the authorities.

The 47 surveyed respondents stated that their homes were demolished within 24 to 72 hours after officials delivered the door-to-door notice.

All the surveyed households, previously homeowners, stated that they did not receive any compensation and are all now sheltered in rented houses. All of them confirmed that the registration status of their houses were *Sened Alba* houses, which are attached to legally possessed land recognized by various government organizations, but lack a certificate of ownership.<sup>14</sup> During the implementation of the second phase of the CDP in late October 2024, areas with a large number of *Sened Alba* settlements were demolished.<sup>15</sup> Two individuals, one who was forcibly evicted and another who recorded the evictions, stated that the reason they were not granted any compensation was due to this status.<sup>16</sup>

One community leader who documented the eviction stated that they had collected data from 180 households evicted in this neighborhood and none of them received any compensation.<sup>17</sup> Local media reported that those with certificates of private property ownership received compensation though properties were reportedly undervalued by authorities.<sup>18</sup>

Tefera is among the 47 household representatives. Like other household representatives, he had multiple small rooms that he rented out, and the income was his primary means of supporting his extended family. As a result of the forced evictions, Tefera lost both his monthly income and his home. He told Amnesty International that his children have dropped out of school because he cannot afford to pay their school fees.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Interview by voice call, Addis Ababa, 23 January 2025.

<sup>13</sup> Interview by voice call, Addis Ababa, 23 January 2025.

<sup>14</sup> Ethiopia, Addis Ababa City Administration Circular, *Sened Alba* Circulars of 2006-2008,

<https://www.scribd.com/document/363152125/Sened-Alba-Circulars-of-2006-2008>;

University of Twente, *The impact of urban land acquisition on pre-urban tenure security: the case of bole sub city Addis Ababa*, March 2015, 84671\_nesir.pdf;

Due to the limitations of land acquisition regulations in rural and urban areas, there is a noticeable trend where the outskirts of major cities - such as Addis Ababa - exhibit broader variations in land ownership status compared to the older, central parts of the city. When the city expands and includes surrounding rural lands, often previously designated as farmland, residents who have settled in these areas may experience a change in their land ownership status. This transition can involve a lengthy bureaucratic process that may take years to complete.

<sup>15</sup> In major towns, particularly in Addis Ababa, these homeownership arrangements are expected to transition to fully certified status over different phases, often leaving homeowners waiting for decades.

<sup>16</sup> Interview by voice call, Addis Ababa, 21 January 2025; Interview by voice call, Addis Ababa, 23 January 2025.

<sup>17</sup> Interview by voice call, Addis Ababa, 10 February 2025.

<sup>18</sup> Addis Standard, "Dual Faces of Addis Abeba's Corridor Project: Tales of transformation, displacement", 13 January 2025, [https://addisstandard.com/dual-faces-of-addis-abebas-corridor-project-tales-of-transformation-displacement/#google\\_vignette](https://addisstandard.com/dual-faces-of-addis-abebas-corridor-project-tales-of-transformation-displacement/#google_vignette)

<sup>19</sup> Interview by voice call, Addis Ababa, 23 January 2025.

Another individual said their entire family was forced to relocate to a rented house outside Addis Ababa. They fear that they will soon run out of money and will not be able to pay the rent. They explained that two family members were forced to drop out of school after the loss of their monthly rental income which had covered most of their expenses.<sup>20</sup>

All the surveyed households reported a sudden loss of rental income due to the demolition of the units they used to rent out. The homeowners told Amnesty International that they previously earned between 800 ETB and 70,000 ETB (approximately 7 to 564 USD) monthly.

## **BROKEN SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY BASED SUPPORT SYSTEMS**

Beyond the visible demolition of houses, the forced eviction had an impact on people's livelihoods, children's education and on social and community networks that many people relied on for support in their day-to-day lives. In Ethiopia, communities form local social institutions that are essential for their daily life, such as *Idir* - a traditional welfare association present in most neighbourhoods across the country. It is also common for communities, particularly women and older persons, to form other welfare associations linked to their respective religious institutions for additional social support. Research has shown that forced evictions in the context of previous urbanization projects in Ethiopia have caused sudden disruption to social cohesion, a loss of social security and livelihoods, and has further exacerbated existing inequalities.<sup>21</sup>

- "I am now evicted from my *Idir* and my children are dealing with mental health challenges" another individual stated.

Individuals impacted by forced evictions explained the social and psychological impact this had on them. Four respondents shared how their young children had been affected.

- One said "My child is faced with mental health issues – and my entire family. We lost hope on the government."
- "My child is suffering because his school is now too far. We are dealing with mental health issues too. Our social life is ruined. Life has also gotten expensive due to additional transport and house rent costs," another said.
- "I have faced problems with my social life, mental health. I am also struggling to afford rent," a member of another household said.

Another victim – Manyazewal – said he is part of a government task force that is carrying out the evictions in another part of the city. "I am both a victim and a perpetrator. I was born and raised in this area. My umbilical cord was buried here [an expression of an ancestral land]," he told Amnesty International.

Amnesty International asked those forcibly evicted how they felt about this and what they wanted to happen now. Two of them responded as follows:

- "What is the point of justice if it works only [serves] the wealthy? If justice works [favors] politics [a specific political group, individuals], [serves] a specific ethnicity [ethnic group], [serves] money [a specific economic group, individuals with higher financial status] - it is useless to me. Justice should serve humanity. ... Those who evicted us - we know them ... they live among us. While our children are now dropping out of school, their children are going to expensive schools in expensive cars."
- "What I am asking at the moment is for them [government officials] to give me a paper proving that I am not Ethiopian. Then I will go to Kenya or any other country. Where am I supposed to live? Are they telling us to go to Kenya or Sudan? If so, they [authorities] should tell us", said the victim who was forcibly evicted from a house that he lived in for 20 years.

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<sup>20</sup> Interview by voice call, Addis Ababa, 21 January 2025.

<sup>21</sup> Marco Di Nunzio, "Evictions for development: creative destruction, redistribution and the politics of unequal entitlements in inner-city Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), 2010–2018", October 2022, Political Geography, Volume 98, <https://research.birmingham.ac.uk/en/publications/evictions-for-development-creative-destruction-redistribution-and>; Oakland Institute, We Say the Land is Not Yours: Breaking the Silence Against Forced Displacement in Ethiopia, 7 April 2015, <https://www.oaklandinstitute.org/we-say-land-not-yours-breaking-silence-against-forced-displacement-ethiopia>

## RISKS OF SPEAKING UP

In addition to reports of individuals being arrested<sup>22</sup> for sharing concerns over development projects in Addis Ababa, Amnesty International also received reports from journalists, including two who were interviewed for this research. They stated that they have faced harassment when attempting to report on the CDP and are aware of similar stories from other journalists who told them that they had received threats for doing so.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the escalating crackdowns against human rights organizations, documented by Amnesty International in 2024, has a direct impact on the underreporting of human rights issues related to the CDP.<sup>24</sup> Amnesty International has also previously documented and expressed concern over the arbitrary detention of human rights defenders who tried to document forced evictions in the Oromia region.<sup>25</sup>

## VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

The implementation of development projects may sometimes require evictions from particular areas. However, due to the severe negative impacts – including human rights violations – that evictions can have on the lives of those affected, governments are required to explore all possible alternatives to avoid or minimize such actions. Evictions should be considered only as a last resort and only after all necessary safeguards under international human rights law are in place. If these safeguards are not met, the eviction is classified as a forced eviction, which is prohibited under international human rights law and constitutes a violation of the right to adequate housing among other rights.<sup>26</sup>

Various international and regional human rights treaties require governments to refrain from and put an end to forced evictions.<sup>27</sup> These legal standards are reflected in multiple treaties and conventions to which Ethiopia is a party. For instance, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), under Article 25, recognizes the right to adequate housing and an acceptable standard of living. Similarly, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which Ethiopia has ratified, guarantees the right to adequate housing under Article 11. Furthermore, the Kampala Convention - to which Ethiopia is also a party - explicitly states in Article X that state parties have a duty to prevent displacement resulting from projects conducted by both the private and public sectors.

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), the expert body that provides authoritative guidance on the implementation of the ICESCR defines forced evictions as “the permanent or temporary removal against their will of individuals, families and/or communities from the homes and/or land which they occupy, without the provision of and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection”. It also lists key legal and procedural safeguards that must be put in place before any evictions are carried out. These include genuine consultation with the affected communities, provision of adequate and reasonable notice prior to the eviction, provision of information about the proposed eviction and

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<sup>22</sup> Addis Insight, “Renowned Artist Azeb Worku Arrested for Criticism of Development Projects”, 19 September 2024, [https://addisinsight.net/2024/09/19/renowned-artist-azeb-worku-arrested-for-criticism-of-development-projects/#google\\_vignette](https://addisinsight.net/2024/09/19/renowned-artist-azeb-worku-arrested-for-criticism-of-development-projects/#google_vignette);

Azeb Worku, Facebook Post, 14 September 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1ASpwFfhXE/>

<sup>23</sup> Interview by voice call, Addis Ababa, 27 January 2025; Interview by voice call, Addis Ababa, 30 January 2025.

<sup>24</sup> Amnesty International, “Suspension of three human rights organizations highlights growing crackdown on civic space”, 26 November 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/11/ethiopia-suspension-of-three-human-rights-organizations-highlights-growing-crackdown-on-civic-space/>

<sup>25</sup> Amnesty International, “Human rights defenders held for documenting forced evictions must be released immediately”, 10 January 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/01/ethiopia-human-rights-defenders/#:~:text=The%20Ethiopian%20authorities%20must%20immediately%20and%20unconditionally%20release,all%20charges%20against%20them%2C%20Amnesty%20International%20said%20today>

<sup>26</sup> UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), General Comment 7: The right to adequate housing (Art.11.1): forced evictions, 20 May 1997; UN Basic principles and guidelines on development-based evictions and displacement, 5 February 2007, UN Doc. A/HRC/4/18.

<sup>27</sup> African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), Article III, 6 December 2012.

provision of legal remedies and legal aid for those who need it.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, governments have a duty to ensure that no one is left homeless and vulnerable to other human rights violations as a result of evictions.<sup>29</sup>

By failing to put in place key legal and procedural safeguards to prevent forced evictions, the government of Ethiopia has violated the evictees' human rights – Including the right to adequate housing - through three key steps:

### 1. Failure to hold meaningful consultations

According to all participants in this research, no meaningful consultation took place before the eviction. Additionally, evictees were not provided with information about the eviction process or any proposed alternative uses for the land. By neglecting this duty, authorities denied affected individuals the opportunity to propose alternatives to the eviction. Furthermore, while authorities are obligated to fully consult affected people on resettlement options, they failed to do so. Rather, evictees were not provided with any resettlement. The federal government of Ethiopia failed to fulfill its obligation to explore all feasible alternatives to eviction through genuine consultation with affected individuals.

### 2. Failure to follow due process of law

Ethiopian authorities are obliged to ensure that all affected individuals receive adequate prior written notice of eviction. In the surveyed areas in Bole and Lemi Kura sub-cities, authorities failed to fulfill their duty to follow the due process of law - among other things – as they only provided a short oral notice to evictees.

### 3. Failure to provide alternative housing

Authorities also failed in their duty to ensure alternative housing and adequate living conditions for evictees who are unable to provide for themselves. The government has a duty to provide alternative housing for those who cannot secure it themselves, along with compensation for any losses incurred. These efforts must ensure that no evictee is left homeless, and that the relocation process is properly managed to secure adequate living conditions.

## **GOVERNMENT PUBLIC POSITION ON FORCED EVICTIONS RELATED TO THE CDP**

In January 2025, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed was reported in the media as having said that “15,000 evictees in Jimma town have not demanded compensation”<sup>30</sup> in reference to evictions in Jimma, Oromia Region. These comments undermine the government's obligation to provide fair compensation following home demolitions, regardless of whether those impacted request it.

Minister Chaltu Sani, Minister of Urban and Infrastructure Development, responsible for implementing the CDP nationally, was reported as having informed parliament in January 2025 that demolitions were top of the agenda in the recent Prosperity Party Central Committee meeting and that they had decided to halt property demolition.<sup>31</sup>

Given public statements made by senior Ethiopian government officials, consistent reports of sudden evictions with limited or no notice, and a lack of fair compensation, as well as the findings of Amnesty International's own investigation, there appear to be recurrent human rights violations associated with the CDP.

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<sup>28</sup> CESCR General Comment 7, paragraph 15.

<sup>29</sup> UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-based evictions and displacement (previously cited).

<sup>30</sup> Ethiopia Observer, “PM Abiy visits Jimma as 15,000 homes demolished for redevelopment”, 25 January 2025, <https://www.ethiopiaobserver.com/2025/01/24/pm-abiy-visits-jimma-as-15000-homes-demolished-for-redevelopment/>; The Reporter, “Ethiopia’s Corridor Development Project Epidemic: Progress or Calamity?”, 1 February 2025, <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/43550/>

<sup>31</sup> Ethiopia Observer, “PM Abiy visits Jimma as 15,000 homes demolished for redevelopment”, 25 January 2025, <https://www.ethiopiaobserver.com/2025/01/24/pm-abiy-visits-jimma-as-15000-homes-demolished-for-redevelopment/>; The Reporter, “MPs Question Arbitrary Execution Of Corridor Development Projects Across Nation”, 1 February 2025, <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/43500/>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Ethiopian federal government:

- Immediately stop forced evictions.
- Temporarily suspend the CDP until an independent investigation into its human rights consequences is conducted and adopt a moratorium on mass evictions until adequate safeguards are put in place to ensure that all evictions comply with international human rights standards.
- Ensure that evictions are only carried out in full compliance with international human rights law, as a last resort, and after all other feasible alternatives to eviction have been explored in genuine consultation with all affected people.
- Provide adequate alternative housing to all people being evicted who are unable to provide for themselves.
- Ensure that all victims of forced evictions have access to effective remedies and the right to reparation, which includes restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, compensation, satisfaction and/or a guarantee of non-repetition.
- Respond positively, with no further delay, to the request for a country visit by the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing as a Component of the Right to an Adequate Standard of Living, and on the Right to Non-Discrimination in this Context sent in August 2024.

To Ethiopia's development partners:

- Engage with Ethiopian authorities to bring an end to the ongoing forced eviction crisis.

To the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR):

- Through its Country Rapporteur for Ethiopia and the Working Group on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights issue an urgent appeal to Ethiopian authorities to immediately stop forced evictions, temporarily suspend the CDP until an independent investigation into its human rights consequences is conducted, and adopt a moratorium on mass evictions until adequate safeguards are put in place to ensure that all evictions comply with international human rights standards.
- Engage with Ethiopia on its compliance with the ACHPR's Resolution 231 on the right to adequate housing and protection from forced evictions (ACHPR/Res. 231 (LII) 2012) and the 2011 Guidelines and Principles on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights during its upcoming review of Ethiopia's combined 7<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> periodic state party report.