

world

Ethiopia army chief, officials killed amid regional 'coup' bid

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● "Coup attempt" was led by local security chief Asaminew Tsige

● Asaminew is still on the loose

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Ethiopia's army chief and a top local leader have been shot dead during an attempt to overthrow a regional government in northern Ethiopia, underscoring political instability in the country as Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed tries to push through reforms.

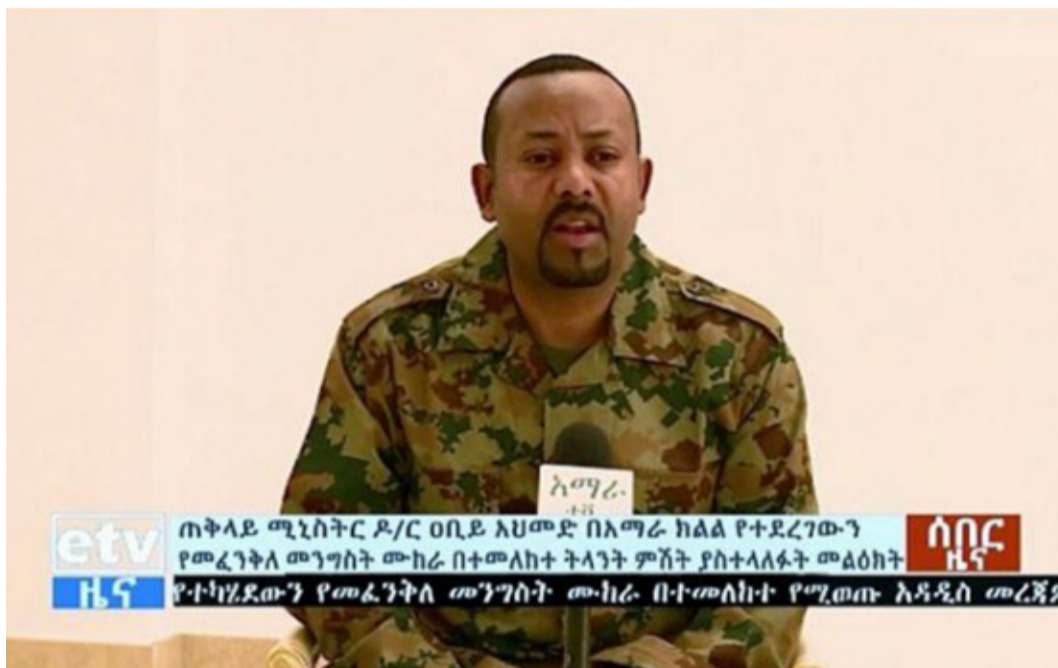
The latest unrest in the Horn of Africa nation flared on Saturday afternoon in Amhara, one of nine autonomous regions, when a "hit squad" attacked a meeting of top officials, Abiy's office said Sunday.

Spokeswoman Billene Seyoum told journalists the Amhara "coup attempt" was led by local security chief Asaminew Tsige, and resulted in state president Ambachew Mekonnen and his advisor being shot.

The men were "gravely injured in the attack and later died of their wounds," she said, adding that the regional attorney general had been seriously wounded.

"Several hours later in what seems like a co-ordinated attack, the chief of the staff of the national security forces Seare Mekonnen was killed in his home by his bodyguard" in the capital, she added.

Seare and a visiting retired general were shot dead in his home in the upmarket Bole dis-



Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed addresses the public on television after a failed coup.



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SPOKESWOMAN BILLENE SEYOUM

trict of Addis Ababa, home to diplomats, aid workers and expats.

The bodyguard has been apprehended while Asaminew is still on the loose, sources said.

According to the statement from Abiy's office, the situation in Amhara region is "currently under full control by the federal government in collaboration with the regional government."

The link between the two attacks and their motives were not immediately clear.

"We don't know what the broader intentions of the attackers were. It is not apparent that there was any organised plan to take over the regional government, but it is possible," International Crisis Group analyst William Davison told AFP.

"There are no clear signs of a broader coup attempt in Addis. The government has linked the assassination of the chief of staff to the Bahir Dar attack, but otherwise it appears to be an isolated incident, which suggests

there wasn't a concerted attempt at a national coup."

The internet has been cut nationwide since Saturday evening, after being severed for much of the previous week.

A journalist in the regional capital Bahir Dar told AFP shooting had begun shortly after sunset and continued for several hours before ceasing. On Sunday he described the city as a "ghost town".

The United States embassy issued alerts about reported gunfire in the capital Addis Ababa, and violence around Amhara's main city Bahir Dar.

Deep political crisis

Amhara, in Ethiopia's northern highlands, is the homeland of the ethnic group by the same name, and the birthplace of many of its emperors as well as the national language Amharic.

The Amhara are the second-largest ethnic grouping after the Oromo, and both spearheaded two years of an-

ti-government protests which led to the resignation of former prime minister Hailemariam Desalegn.

Abiy, an Oromo, took power in April 2018 and has been lauded for a string of efforts to reform a nation which has known only the authoritarian rule of emperors and strongmen.

He has embarked on economic reforms, allowed dissident groups back into the country, sought to crack down on rights abuses and arrested dozens of top military and intelligence officials

He also sealed a peace deal with neighbouring Eritrea, a longtime foe.

However the loosening of the reins has also unleashed a wave of unrest.

Ethiopia's 1995 constitution, written by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) after it unseated the Derg military junta in 1991, partitioned the country into nine autonomous regions with borders following ethnic lines.

The EPRDF itself is a coalition of four parties from Oromia, Amhara, Tigray and the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region.

Observers say that Abiy's plans to hold an election in 2020 has stirred up resentment in local politics and seen a rise in ethno-nationalism.

Longstanding tensions in a country of more than 80 ethnic groups have burst into the open, often over land and resources in Africa's second most-populous nation.

Over a million people have been displaced by ethnic clashes, which analysts attribute to multiple causes, such as the weakening of the once all-powerful ruling EPRDF and different groups trying to take advantage of opportunities presented by the political transition.

The security chief Asaminew, accused of being behind the attack in Amhara, was in 2018 released from prison after being held over a 2009 coup plot by the armed opposition group Ginbot 7.

He is seen as an Amhara hard-liner, particularly in regards to tensions with neighbouring Tigray region over disputed territory.

The coup attempt comes a year after a grenade explosion at a rally that Abiy was addressing left two people dead



US, Taliban to hold more talks on ending war

● Taliban have not negotiated with the internationally recognized govt in Kabul

Washington, United States

The United States and the Taliban will open fresh negotiations next week, the US negotiator said Saturday, as he voiced hope for progress in ending America's longest war.

Zalmay Khalilzad, the US special representative on Afghanistan, said the two sides would start their seventh round of talks on June 29.



Zalmay Khalilzad, the US special representative on Afghanistan

"Based on my recent visits to Afghanistan and Qatar, I believe all sides want rapid progress," Khalilzad wrote on Twitter.

The State Department, announcing Khalilzad's travel before the date of the latest talks were set, said the negotiations with the Taliban would take place as usual in Qatar.

Khalilzad is hoping to negotiate a deal under which the United States would withdraw troops first sent after the September 11, 2001 attacks.

In turn, the Taliban would guarantee that Afghanistan would not be used as a staging ground by Islamist extremists such as Al-Qaeda -- the main reason for the US invasion near-

ly two decades earlier.

The Taliban have refused US appeals to end the violence to improve the atmosphere of talks, instead pressing on with their insurgency.

Taliban leader Haibatullah Akhundzada in a message for the Islamic holiday of Eid al-Fitr earlier this month said that the Taliban's "resistance against the occupation is nearing the stage of success."

In another key sticking point, the Taliban have not negotiated with the internationally recognized government in Kabul, although a UN official confirmed that Germany and Qatar were working to organize an inter-Afghan meeting.

Sudan court orders end to internet blackout

Khartoum, Sudan

A Sudanese court yesterday ordered authorities to end a nationwide internet blockade imposed by the ruling generals after a deadly crackdown on protesters earlier this month, a lawyer said.

FINAL NOTICE OF DISSOLUTION UNDER THE BVI BUSINESS COMPANY ACT.

Ibdar Corporate Services Ltd.
Company No. 1483090 (In Voluntary Liquidation)

NOTICE is hereby given pursuant to Section 208, subsection 3 of the BVI Business Companies Act, 2004 that the Company was dissolved and struck off the Register of Companies with effect from 28 May 2019.

Dated 23 June 2019
Ahmed Mostafa Abdallah Osman
Voluntary Liquidator