

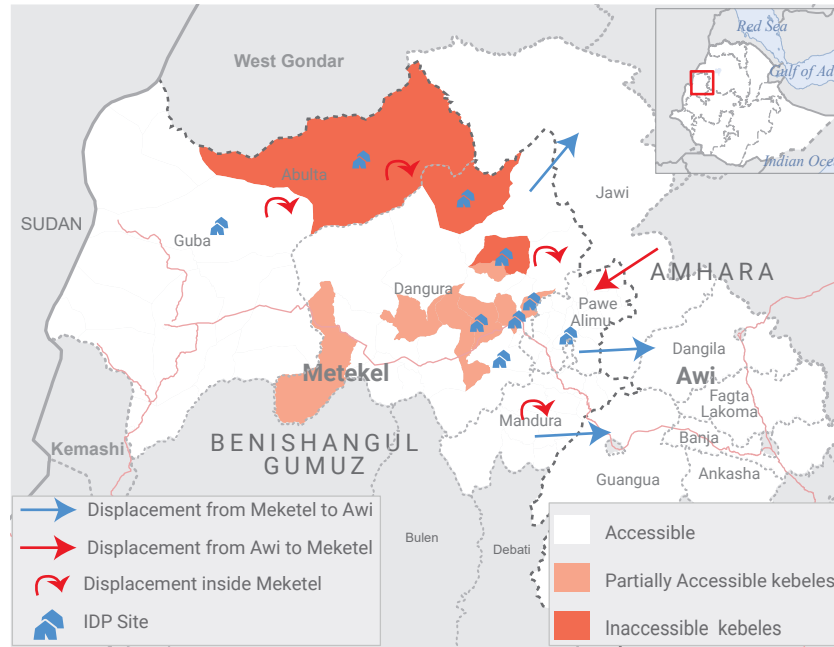


Ethnic violence between ethnic-Gumuz and Amhara spread out in Metekel zone in April following one incident in Dangura woreda, causing many casualties and displacing thousands within Metekel (Benishangul Gumuz)

and to Awi zone (Amhara), and the destruction of 1,800 houses. The security situation in the sub-region has improved since then due to the presence of a command-post, however, sporadic violence and killings continue along border areas. **IDPs on both sides cite safety and security concerns in areas of origin as the main reason for not returning and preferring being relocated in current areas of displacement.** Overall, fear of further violence exacerbated by rumors and unverified reports, and limited reconciliation initiatives continue to polarize the population.

**In Metekel, near 11,000 people remain displaced** in public buildings, host communities, and in fourteen spontaneous sites with sub-standard makeshift shelters and no access to services. An assessment team recently reached Abuta IDP site (Guba Woreda) in a hard-to-reach area about 100km from the kebele center and hosting 2,300 IDPs, who used to live in border areas with Amhara. From June to October, access to some sites has been cut off by the rains and the poor state of roads in rural areas due to lack of maintenance

**The humanitarian response in Metekel has been extremely limited**, due its geographical remoteness, and lack of partners permanently present in the zone. In Gelge Beles town, a recently inaugurated high school is being used as a collective center hosting 1,200 Ethnic-Gumuz IDPs who used to live in Jawi zone (Amhara). The presence of IDPs causing the rapid deterioration of the school facilities and local children forced to walk long distances to attend a school nearby. According to zonal authorities, food security prospects for 2020 in Metekel zone are a concern, **limiting the affected population's access to assistance.** Vast farm lands have been abandoned and unharvested, with the overall production in 2019 expected to reduce by one third.



In April 2019, thousands of IDPs - mainly Amharas - fled Metekel zone (BGR) into Awi zone (Amhara) following violence with Gumuz. Initially, IDPs settled in Gungua Woreda and Chagni towns, later scattered into 12 woredas. At the time of writing, an estimated 17,000 remain displaced and prefer to be relocated within Awi zone or in border areas instead of returning due to security concerns. **There are very few partners present in Awi zone, and IDPs have received very limited assistance.** These IDPs are farmers who used to rent land in Metekel and are surviving out of whatever savings and coping mechanisms left, with very limited access to services such as health. In Gungua woreda, a spontaneous site hosting 500 IDPs ('Ranch' site) is at imminent risk of forced eviction by a private investor.

Regional authorities in both Amhara and BGR are working to support the return of IDPs across the regional boundary to the areas where they used to live. However, this is being done without consideration of IDPs preferences (voluntariness) and their security concerns. In Jawi woreda, Amhara authorities are building houses for Gumuz IDPs who fled to Metekel, while de facto denying assistance to those who did not return in Awi. In June, authorities transported food to Mandura woredas (Metekel) to incentivize returns, excluding Gumuz IDPs in place, which constitutes a case of instrumentalization of aid that risks fueling tensions between communities. In September authorities dismantled previous IDP sites in Awi to trigger the return of IDPs to Metekel.

Overall, the **narrative of 'avoiding aid dependency' and of an eventual 'pull factor of assisting IDPs'** has dominated discussions in the sub-region. The delivery of aid following political considerations and contravening the principles of neutrality and impartiality, risks increasing inter-community tensions ("do not harm") and goes against international standards and norms

