



By: TA | AP Brief

The ruling party expected to win Ethiopia's election



Polls opened Monday in Ethiopia in an **election** that is widely expected to be won by the ruling party.

A heavy military presence was observed in the capital, Addis Ababa, as observers called for a peaceful election in the country that is Africa's second-most populous and hosts the headquarters of the African Union.

Long queues began forming before the 6 a.m. opening time, with voters eager to cast their ballots and make their voices heard.

Ethiopians are choosing more than 500 members of the House of Representatives, who will subsequently vote to select the prime minister.

Prime Minister **Abiy Ahmed's** Prosperity Party is expected to secure a majority of seats, paving the way for him to retain office for another term.

About 50 million people, out of Ethiopia's estimated population of 130 million, are registered to vote. Voters are also electing members of local government councils. Results are expected later on Monday.

Opposition parties have raised concerns over what they describe as a shrinking political space, alleging that they were prevented from actively campaigning and persuading voters.

Human rights abuses

Ethiopia has also faced criticism over reports of human rights abuses targeting government critics and journalists.

A human rights defender, Noah Yesuf, said the election was illegitimate "from the beginning."

"The fairness of an election is judged by whether there is a level playing field for the opposition and a conducive environment for citizens to freely participate," he told The Associated Press.

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Senait Dereje, a 37-year-old shopkeeper, is certain her vote matters.

"I have registered to vote. I am not sure if my vote will bring the change that I want and that will help change my livelihood," Dereje told the AP. "I know many friends refuse to vote as they have given up on the politicians but I have not and I see it as a referendum like vote on the mixed record of the government."

This year's election themes include national reconciliation due to the fighting seen in regions such as Tigray, Oromia, and Amhara, and there is also a development theme as the government pledges to undertake major projects.