

Echoes of Violence: Analyzing Hate Speech in the Ethiopian Broadcast Media

Journal of Communication Inquiry

1–21

© The Author(s) 2024



Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/01968599241276513

journals.sagepub.com/home/jci

Hagos Nigussie¹ ,
Gebru Kiflu², and
Bereket Desta³

Abstract

This paper examined hate speech in Ethiopian broadcast media (2020–2022), focusing on the people of Tigray. The rationale for selecting this period was the heightened media polarization and intensification of hate speech in Ethiopia. We analyzed hate speeches delivered by influential individuals, including government officials, religious leaders, and other elites. We chose to examine these individuals because of their dominant media presence and their considerable influence within the country. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, high-ranking government officials, religious leaders, and other elites labeled the people of Tigray as “enemies of Ethiopia” a state-led violent campaign. Broadcast media extensively covered hate speeches, as a strategy for declaring war on Tigray. Religious leaders (from all denominations) spread hate speeches, including in religious revels, and publicly declared their support for the Ethiopian National Defense Forces. This study highlights the increasing role of political leaders, religious leaders, or other elites, and broadcast media in fueling hate speech and violence in ethno-polarized Ethiopia.

Keywords

broadcast media, Ethiopia, hate speech, polarization, Tigray

¹Department of Media Studies, Paderborn University, Paderborn, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany

²Adigrat University College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Adigrat, Tigray, Ethiopia

³Mekelle University College of Social Science and Languages, Mekelle, Tigray, Ethiopia

Corresponding Author:

Hagos Nigussie, Department of Media Studies, Paderborn University, Warburger Str.100, 33098 Paderborn, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany.

Email: hkahssay@mail.uni-paderborn.de

Introduction

Ethiopia is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in Africa, with a multitude of ethnicities, customs, and complex historical legacies (Nigussie, 2017). The Ethiopian population is approximately 128.6 million, out of which the people of Tigray represent 7.2 million (Worldometers, 2024). However, it is challenging to obtain official government statistics, because Ethiopia has not conducted a census since 2007. From 1991 to 2018, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) coalition government implemented a federal system based on ethnicity and language. Each regional state named after an ethnic group, except for the Southern region, referred to as the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region.

The Ethiopian constitution (FDRE, 1995) grants equality to all ethnicities. However, ethnic tensions have arisen in several regions of the country since 2018, starting in Oromiya and spreading to the Amhara region. The conflict in the Amhara region targeted the people of Tigray, including forced eviction from Gondar, who had become targets of hostility in different parts of the country. Despite this, the Abiy administration failed to manage violence against civilians and blamed others to instigate and exacerbate ethnic conflicts that led to widespread anger and polarized views. The proliferation of ethnic-based broadcasting stations has been hostile among various ethnic groups (Kiflu et al., 2021).

Hate campaigns begin with us and them framing of collective identities (George, 2021). van Dijk's (2006, pp. 735–739) categories of ideological analysis emphasize the representation of "Us" versus "Them" as:

- *Actor description*: the ways we describe actors are based on our ideologies, for example, the description of ingroup as positive and out-group as negative.
- *Authority*: mentioning authorities to support one's argument.
- *Categorization*: classifying people into different groups and attributing them positive or negative characteristics.
- *Lexicalization*: the expression of lexical items creating an overall ideological strategy for negative presentation.
- *Polarization*: categorizing people in and out-group and assigning good attributes to us and bad attributes to them.
- *Victimization*: emphasizing the "bad" nature of the out-group by telling horrible stories about them.

van Dijk's ideological analysis is highly relevant for analyzing the increased polarization and hate speech on the people of Tigray, mainly focusing on "categorization" and "victimization." This is considered a negative form of propaganda since it promotes "an ideology that incites prejudice and intolerance against the targets" (Guillén-Nieto, 2023, p. 95). We analyzed traditional state-funded television stations such as the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), Walta, and Amhara TV, as well as privately funded U.S.-based stations like Ethio 360 Media and Ethiopian Satellite

Television (ESAT). Studies in various countries, including Rwanda (Fowler, 2008; Thompson, 2007), the United States (Noriega & Iribarren, 2012), and Canada (Perry et al., 2017), have demonstrated the impact of traditional media on the spread of hate speech, targeting specific ethnic groups. It has become increasingly evident that hate speech against the people of Tigray is institutionalized at the state level mainly in the political discourse labeling them as “enemies of Ethiopia.” This study examines hate speeches in Ethiopian broadcast media, focusing on the following questions:

RQ1. To what levels do the Ethiopian broadcast media disseminate hate speech?

RQ2. What are the most used hate speeches in Ethiopian broadcast media?

RQ3. What are the consequences of hate speech in Ethiopia?

We focused on hate speeches in Ethiopian broadcast media (2020–2022). The rationale for selecting this period was the heightened media polarization and intensification of hate speech in Ethiopia. It was marked by transitional change aspirations and threat desperations that were unparalleled in the preceding years (Kiflu et al., 2022). Another reason is that these channels broadcast in Amharic (the federal government’s working language), which is accessible to most Ethiopians. We did not include media houses in Tigray as they did not operate from 2020 to 2022 because of state-led region-wide information blackouts. In addition, there is no evidence that Tigray focused overseas media disseminate hate speech against ethnic groups in Ethiopia.

Conceptualizing Hate Speech

Hate speech lacks a universally agreed-upon definition (Carlson, 2021; Guillén-Nieto, 2023; Hietanen & Eddebo, 2023; Paz et al., 2020). It is defined differently in different contexts. The Ethiopian Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation, for instance, defines hate speech as “speech that deliberately promotes hatred, discrimination, or attack against a person or a discernible group of identity, based on ethnicity, religion, race, gender, or disability” (Federal Negarit Gazette, 2020, p. 2).

Carlson (2021) relates hate speech to a structural phenomenon in which those in power use it to maintain their existing social order through assaults and offensive imagery. Hate speech involves vilifying an identifiable group to stigmatize its members and cause harm (George, 2021). Waldron (2012) characterized hate speech as targeting ascriptive characteristics, such as ethnicity, race, or religion, which should disqualify someone from being treated as a member of society. Despite these definitions, Guillén-Nieto’s (2023) definition perfectly captures the focus of this study. Based on Guillén-Nieto, hate speech refers to

negative forms of conduct intended to publicly incite hatred and violence against groups identifiable by legally protected characteristics ... a type of negative social behaviour, is

likely to harm the dignity and equality of the target groups, keep them marginalised from mainstream society and ultimately destroy social cohesion and peace (p. 21).

Hate speech is aimed at targeting others, which Canales (2010) explains as a process known as “othering.” This occurs when people perceive differences such as race, religion, and culture as negative aspects. It involves an exclusionary process, leading to violence and discrimination against certain groups, which are referred to as “othered” or outgroups (Canales, 2010). Various factors trigger hate speech across different contexts. In Egypt, xenophobic, political, religious, and cultural factors have been found to contribute to hate speech (Elliot et al., 2016). In Rwanda, the Tutsi and Hutu ethnic groups were divided into oppressors and oppressed, which ultimately resulted in a massacre of approximately 800,000 Tutsis by the Hutu majority (Fowler, 2008). In Kenya, the introduction of multiparty politics has been linked to hate speech, and in South Africa, Apartheid has become a major cause of hate speech (Elliot et al., 2016). However, in Cyprus, hate speech is related to intercommunal, intergender, and xenophobic sentiments toward migrants (Dilmaç et al., 2021).

In recent years, hate speech in Ethiopia has been related to the discernment that one ethnic group has been privileged over the past 27 years of the EPRDF rule, which has become a dominant media agenda. This divide is fueled by disagreements over the past, as ethnicity is associated with power, history, culture, religion, and language issues (Muluken et al., 2023). Most hate speech-related studies in Ethiopia have focused on online platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (European Institute of Peace, 2021; Gilbert, 2020; Mulugeta, 2019). Although there has been a significant increase in online hate speeches compared with previous trends, both online and offline hate speeches are still prevalent in Ethiopia (European Institute of Peace, 2021). These conversations often involved stereotypes and discrimination, with some ethnic groups considered the foundation of Ethiopia, while others were labeled as migrants. While religion-based hate speech remains common in Ethiopia, there has been a significant surge in ethnic-based speech (Muluken et al., 2023). This trend has had serious consequences, including ethnic violence, across different regions of the country (Mulugeta, 2019). The political reform in 2018, which saw Abiy Ahmed become the Ethiopian Prime Minister, has been criticized as merely a leadership change rather than a genuine reform. Abiy Ahmed was a member of the Oromo People’s Democratic Organization, one of the four parties in the EPRDF coalition government, and took office with full support from the EPRDF. In 2019, he established the Prosperity Party (PP). Abiy Ahmed considers himself the “seventh king of Ethiopia” and has sought to centralize power. This has further increased polarization, divisions, and violence within the country and further divisions among the Ethiopian diaspora communities.

Media Polarization in Ethiopia

Over the years, a high level of polarization has characterized the Ethiopian media landscape in online and offline contexts. Ethnically affiliated polarization and political

parallelism prevail in the Ethiopian media (Behailu et al., 2022). Media polarization results from an unstable political landscape (Kiflu et al., 2021). Ethnically affiliated and regional state media tend to nurture themselves alongside the ethnic groups they presume to represent. This has been intensified by political contestations among regional state government politics ascribed to identity politics (Behailu et al., 2022). Public broadcasters of intercommunal tensions broadcast conflict-escalating reports, whereas regional and community broadcasters prefer to remain silent on the outbreak of intercommunal violence.

Ethiopian media represents high levels of polarization, involving progovernment and proopposition blocks. Since 2018, media polarization has further increased by four as it encompassed “ethnic interest” (fulfilling the interest of a specific ethnic group), and “unionism” (those promoting unity without diversity; Mulatu, 2019, p. 20). Media houses are often accused of taking sides along political and ethnic lines, which suggests that ethnicity is becoming an overriding principle in journalism and is becoming increasingly polarized along ethnic lines. While focusing on ethnic lines cannot be a problem in itself, promoting hatred and polarized views affects the peaceful coexistence of people in the country. The media are also being criticized for exacerbating this polarization (Behailu et al., 2022). Under the current Ethiopian leadership, the ethnicization of the newsroom, which is largely influenced by external political factors, is identified as the main challenge facing the media.

In Ethiopian media, historical events are politicized and negatively portrayed, blaming ethnic groups for causing conflict and insecurity in the country. This has threatened the inclusiveness and diversity of views across the media. While opponents argue that polarized and extreme forms of nationalism result from ethnic federalism, supporters claim that failing to recognize ethnic diversity could jeopardize the peaceful coexistence of different ethnic groups (Kiflu & Nigussie, 2023).

Method and Materials

Although hate speech is pervasive in various regions of Ethiopia, we have focused on the people of Tigray. This is because the Abiy administration encouraged hate speech to classify, categorize, and label the people of Tigray as “enemies of Ethiopia.” The Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), the ruling party in the Tigray region, supported the federal system and the constitution. Nevertheless, Abiy Ahmed claimed that the TPLF and the people of Tigray opposed his “political reform” and labeled them as “antireformists.” His government disseminated hate speech through state and private television stations. Tigray was further marginalized from the federal system, including delays in federal budget allocations (Corey-Boulet, 2020; Crisis Group, 2020) and arbitrary arrests of civilians (Amnesty International, 2021; United Nations, 2021). However, this was not the case for other ethnic groups.

Individual interviews and critical discourse analysis (CDA) were used to examine the level and frequency of hate speech in broadcast media against the people of Tigray. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants. The purposeful

sampling approach is useful because it allows researchers to select information-rich cases (Patton, 2002). Information-rich cases are individuals, events, or settings from which researchers can obtain extensive information on the issues under investigation (Liamputtong, 2013). In purposive sampling, decisions must be made regarding who or what is sampled, the type of sampling that should be used, and the number of people or sites sampled (Creswell, 2013). Individual interviewees, written messages, and video samples were purposefully selected. Purposive sampling focuses on the characteristics of the population of interest that best answer the proposed research questions (Rai & Thapa, 2015).

Individual Interviews

Interviews are useful for gathering the thoughts and experiences of individuals regarding hate speech in broadcast media. They are valuable in obtaining information about an individual's social world (Gubrium et al., 2012). Interviews provide insights into the experiences, meanings, and perspectives of participants, often from a unique viewpoint (Hammarberg et al., 2016). We conducted 15 individual semistructured interviews that allowed interviewees to express their views freely (Flick, 2002) and generate potentially rich data (Hansen & Machin, 2013). The interviewees were chosen from seven Ethiopian state universities based on their academic backgrounds in communication and media studies. These individuals were well suited to provide insights into pervasive hate speech against the people of Tigray. Moreover, their perspectives were valuable for a broader understanding of how individuals beyond the Tigray population perceive hate speech directed toward the region. The interviewees represented four ethnic groups: Tigray, Amhara, Oromo, and Afar. Ten interviews were conducted face-to-face and five over the phone. The interviews were conducted in both Tigrigna (a regional working language) and Amharic (a state working language). Unfortunately, no female participants were available due to security concerns. To maintain confidentiality, we did not disclose details of the interviewees, including their names or workplaces.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis is a type of discourse analysis that examines how power, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted through text and speech in social and political contexts (van Dijk, 2003, p. 353). Specifically, CDA focuses on the transparent structural relations of dominance, discrimination, power, and control that manifest in language (Wodak, 2001, p. 2). It also considers contextual situations that help identify discourse qualities and examine the circulation of power, domination, shared beliefs, attitudes, and ideologies. CDA focuses on aspects such as emphasis, modes of utterance, arrangements, forms of words, choices of topics (content or gist of the communicative event), illocutionary acts, intentions, and ways of arguing (van Dijk, 2001).

The data for the CDA were gathered from hate speeches delivered by government officials, religious leaders, and other elites, which were broadcast on selected media outlets. In addition, some messages were posted on the Prime Minister's Facebook page. We collected 35 videos of incendiary remarks made by these individuals between 2020 and 2022. To ensure the authenticity of the videos, we obtained them from the YouTube pages of selected media outlets that included both public and private broadcasters.

Data Analysis Procedure

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview data. Thematic analysis identifies and interprets ideas in data as themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Interview audio clips in Tigrigna and Amharic were transcribed into English, and responses were coded in a matrix that contained different categories. Tabulated responses were thematically ranked from the most frequently mentioned to the least frequently mentioned from verbatim interviews with recurring themes. Finally, tabulated interview responses were carefully analyzed so that sensible meanings emerged from the recurring themes for the analysis. For the CDA analysis, we focused on the words of the selected individuals to identify the level of hate speech, commonly used hate speech, and their consequences in Ethiopia.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The Levels of Hate Speech Dissemination in the Ethiopian Broadcast Media

Since 2018, Ethiopia has been plagued by widespread hate speeches. Muluken et al. (2023, p.225) examining the Facebook pages of selected Ethiopian television stations found that an overwhelming 95.98% of messages were offensive, while 3.14% were a direct incitement to violence, and 0.88% were a call to genocide. The United Nations Human Rights Council (2020) also reported that 86 people were killed during protests in October 2019 due to interethnic clashes in the Oromia Regional State. The country has experienced escalation in hate speech due to different factors. First, ethnicity-driven politics, false historical narratives of political gains, and power struggles are the main drivers of hate speech in Ethiopia (Muluken et al., 2023). These historical narratives have dominated the Ethiopian political landscape, leading to widespread stereotypes and hate toward the targeted "other."

Second, the proliferation of information disorders, including fake news, misinformation, and disinformation, exacerbated false narratives, thereby increasing the likelihood of violence and instability within a nation (European Institute of Peace, 2021; Gilbert, 2020). This phenomenon highlights the detrimental impact of social media in disseminating hate speech, which played immense roles in fueling past genocides (Lingaas & Bartoszko, 2023). Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed was at the forefront of spreading hate messages against the people of Tigray, and Facebook removed his statement, emphasizing that it

incited violence.¹ Some of the hate speeches by Abiy Ahmed against the people of Tigray included “enemies of Ethiopia,” “Junta,” “Daylight hyena,” “cancer,” and “invasive weed.”

Hate speech from influential figures, such as government officials, religious leaders, or other elites, contributes to the dynamics of atrocity crimes by identifying and labeling a homogenous group (ethnic, religious, etc.) as the “enemy other” (Murer, 2009). The absence of effective control measures hinders efforts to mitigate the negative impact of hate speech on society. The lack of regulations for malicious content on Facebook has been linked to increased violence against civilians (Rapp, 2021). The lack of hate speech-controlling policies in Ethiopia has exacerbated ongoing or emerging conflicts and genocidal situations. Abiy Ahmed and high-ranking government officials have disseminated hate speech through various platforms. An interviewee designates this as

In Ethiopia, hate speech is deliberate, structural, and top-down. It involves different actors, including the Prime Minister’s Office, Justice, and Court institutions, who organize and distribute scripts of hate speeches to the media. One best example is the speech of Adanech Abebe, a former Supreme Court Executive who labeled the suspects as ‘Tigrigna Tenagariwoch’ (Tigrigna speakers) when Hachalu Hundesa (an Oromo musician) was assassinated. (Expert Interviewee C, 2023)

The Ethiopian media framed Tigray as an outsider “enemy” that threatens the sovereignty of the country. An interviewee laments this as

... On national media, you watch the prime minister saying, ‘Our national army is attacked even by Tigrayan priests; our army has sustenance when in the Amhara region.’ This has created differences and divisions among the people. The media used different personalities, including artists, to target Tigrayans. Following the Prime Minister, Debebe Eshetu is the best example, pointing against the people of Tigray labeling the people of Tigray as [daylight hyenas]. (Expert Interviewee J, 2023)

Media institutions are under complete government control in terms of what should be covered and prioritized. An interviewee describes this as

The authority orders government-affiliated media channels to broadcast controversial programs that polarize differences targeting ethnic groups at the same prime-time. One example is the ‘Yefith Seqoqa’ program, broadcast on three national television channels: EBC, FBC Walta, and other state-controlled television stations. The Authority punishes media houses that adversary the government and praises media houses that become the government’s mouthpiece. (Expert Interviewee F, 2023)

The above views highlight deliberate and state-sponsored hate speech in broadcast media. Third, utilizing “big lies” has been prevalent in Ethiopia (Birhane, 2021;

Niekerk, 2023). The Abiy government and its supporters labeled the people of Tigray as enemies, claiming that they threatened the security of the country. One of the biggest lies was the attack on the “Northern Command,”² a call to mobilize all Ethiopians for war on Tigray. Ethio 360 media predominantly covered lies that did not exist on the ground, including Tigray’s war preparations to attack Ethiopia, and advised Abiy Ahmed to prepare in advance for a looming war. Another lie came from the minister of democratization, who denied the presence of Eritrean forces in Tigray.³ The “big lies” were a concern for the international community, who publicly declared that Ethiopia should tell the truth to the world.⁴

Fourth, religious leaders (across all denominations) glorified the Abiy government, advocating Abiy as a “God-elect” to transform the country. They emphasized that “Ethiopia was in the dark” under the EPRDF leadership and blamed the people of Tigray. Religious institutions have publicly supported the war on Tigray and reaffirmed their status as “ከመከላከያ ጎን አቆማለሁ,” meaning “I stand with the Ethiopian National Defense Forces,”⁵ and induced their respective followers to stand with the Abiy government. This violates the Ethiopian constitution (FDRE, 1995), articles (11) and (27) stipulating the separation of state and religion, the role of religious institutions, and the freedom of speech vested in them. However, the Abiy government had neither the readiness nor commitment to alleviate such accounts.

The Ethiopian Constitution prohibits propaganda for war and the public expression of opinions that undermine human dignity (FDRE, 1995). Nevertheless, hateful rhetoric and violence against the people of Tigray has predominately been showcased on different television shows. This indicates that political regimes frequently disregard the principle of free speech, and instead employ hate speech for intimidation (Paz et al., 2020). The Ethiopian media houses disseminated unjustified accusations that Tigray benefited from the EPRDF leadership, although the facts on the ground reveal differently. This was to convince Ethiopians to despise the people of Tigray. The majority of the Amhara elites were pivotal in their support of Abiy Ahmed and disseminating hate speech against Tigray. Agegehehu Teshager, the former president of the Amhara regional state, proclaimed on Amhara TV that the people of Tigray are “...enemies of the people of Ethiopia.”⁶ This highlights the roles of the Ethiopian media in using “belligerent and paranoid language depicting Tigrayans as traitors and agents of foreign powers” (Ibreck & de Waal, 2022, p. 86).

One of the most organized and widespread provocations of ethnic hatred was “Drain the Sea,”⁷ broadcasted on the ESAT (August 2016). This was a call to Ethiopians to attack the people of Tigray in the name of the TPLF, reiterating that 95% of Ethiopians could quickly annihilate the 5% in Tigray-weaponization of numbers to declare genocide. The statement urged the Afar and Amhara people in nearby regions to obstruct the roads that connect Tigray to these regions and the capital, Addis Ababa, and disrupt the delivery of goods and services. Additionally, Tilahun Yilma (a professor at the University of California)⁸ expressed violent language and referred to the people of Tigray as “Cancer” while also advocating for their complete eradication as

After surgery, cancer is additionally treated with radiation and chemicals to eradicate possible remnant cells; if even one cell endures, it will replicate and destroy the host. Woyane is like invasive cancer. We must devise a sophisticated program to eradicate each of them, ensuring that none should survive.

Tilahun used the most toxic language, which was broadcasted on EBC, a state television. Similarly, Walta TV labeled the people of Tigray as non-Ethiopian and referred to them as “Northern Biafras,”⁹ linking them with the Biafra ethnic group in Nigeria. In its “Negarit Program,” Amhara TV characterized the people of Tigray as a “criminal enterprise,” urging the Ethiopian government to criminalize the name “Tigray.” Andargachew Tsige, a British national and ESAT manager, delivered another inflammatory and hateful message, calling on Ethiopian defense forces and Amhara regional forces to commit genocide against the people of Tigray (EBC, November 29, 2021). He stated, “You must not hesitate to resort to the most barbaric cruelties when facing them ... You must be merciless; you must act beyond what our [ethnic] Amhara or Ethiopian cultural values permit.”¹⁰ All of these points emphasize that the media coverage of “othering” vividly illustrates the state’s support for publicizing hatred, a strategy developed during the Nazis in the 1940s and the Rwanda genocide in 1994. Since then, the United Nations and other Human Rights Organizations have declared “Never again,” a promise that remains unfulfilled.

The Commonly Used Hate Speech Terms in the Ethiopian Broadcast Media

The war on Tigray was politically motivated, but the Abiy government utilized hate speech as a primary strategy to declare it (Plaut & Vaughan, 2023; UN, 2022). Abiy Ahmed proclaimed that Ethiopia would progress without the people of Tigray, labeling them as “enemies of Ethiopia.”

Spreading extreme views and hate speech can result in a substantial risk of mass atrocities. A UN (2022) report indicated that the Abiy government primarily targeted the people of Tigray using different hate speeches that debase them. This indicates that hate speech has become a state-authorized tool for terrorizing the people of Tigray, and Abiy Ahmed was at the facade.¹¹ Interview results showed that Abiy Ahmed used hate speech as a pretext to launch a genocide against the people of Tigray. He launched a campaign that labeled the people of Tigray with derogatory terms like “daytime hyenas that are famished to devour the natives as well as the vegetation, which must be eliminated.” On July 18, 2021, Abiy Ahmed made a public statement referring to the people of Tigray as “the cancer of Ethiopia.” He stated that the “enemy we confronted was Ethiopian cancer,” and went on to assert that the “Junta”¹² was “the only political group in history that had used its power to disintegrate its own country.” He warned that “a known devil is hard to eradicate,” and thus, the “Junta” was clinging on desperately. However, Abiy was confident that unity would enable the removal of the “Junta,” ensuring that it did not resurface. The campaign “Let us clean our neighborhoods of

garbage, and the Junta” in Addis Ababa and other regions exemplified this sentiment, equating the people of Tigray with the garbage that needed to be eliminated.

Yohannes Bualew, a politician from Amhara, also contributed to heightening the hatred against the people of Tigray. He believed that escalating hatred would lead to victory on the battlefield. Yohannes Bualew proclaimed, “Our animosity toward them (the TPLF and the people of Tigray) ought to be ingrained. Hatred is one of the factors that can lead to victory in warfare.” This hatred aimed to misguide Ethiopians and motivate them to assault the people of Tigray in any location. Another poisonous statement from Daniel Kibret, the Social Advisor to Abiy Ahmed, advocated for the complete extermination of the people of Tigray. Daniel Kibret suggested three ways to eliminate the people of Tigray. The first entailed “eliminating them from physical existence.” His second view emphasized eliminating the notion of “Woyane” and accentuated that it was unacceptable to denounce oneself or to be bound by the mention or thought of it as

...the (very) idea of Woyaneness must never exist. Even in a clue ... Woyane should be seen as a monster; we shall teach our children Woyane to be monsters and devils. When people say ‘Woyane,’ one ought to say, ‘in the name of the Holy Father’ and cross his arms to curse and scare away the devil....

The third is to erase the people of Tigray from the history of Ethiopia as

...under any circumstances, its history should not continue and have a place in Ethiopian history. It must not have a history under all circumstances. In the future, when a country changes, all traces of it that would make it recall must be erased; no trace should be left behind. ... the names of places, institutions it has given, the ones it named, the ones who make it remembered must be erased ... so we may never remember it.

Genocide begins with labeling and concludes with denial. Daniel made an open statement declaring genocide on the people of Tigray in various forms, including the erasure of history. The destruction of religious sites, such as churches and mosques, and the looting or burning of religious manuscripts, manifests such acts, which can be labeled as “cultural genocide.” The international community condemned the trade of religious manuscripts from Tigray in eBay. Likewise, Kadir Juhar, the Mayor of Dire Dawa in eastern Ethiopia, on the EBC claimed that the people of Tigray are “not created as humans”¹³ and advocated for their annihilation, asserting that they should be erased from the surface of the planet. Kadir referenced verses from the Qur’an to support his claims. Daniel Kibret holds a comparable viewpoint as

...These people (the populace of Tigray and its leaders) and their ilks should not be reiterated. Satan was the last of its kind when it vanquished, and it was not reiterated; these individuals, too, shall be the last of their kind ... a realm that yields a weed-like growth shall not persist ... they should be obliterated, even from recollection.

In line with the views of Kadir Juhar and Daniel Kibret, the Secretary and Archbishop of the Ethiopian Orthodox Synod from the Amhara Regional State reiterated that the people of Tigray should be baptized with fire.¹⁴ He advocated that

...The Ethiopian government has demonstrated great patience toward these individuals; however, they have ultimately given in ... It is crucial, then, that we priests take the necessary steps to baptize them with fire if they refuse to accept cold-water baptism.

The above view denotes the role of the Orthodox Church in the Tigray genocide, although the Church did not apologize for its involvement. Worku Aytenew, an Amhara elite suggested incinerating the people of Tigray and made an abnormal advice involving cannibalism. He said, "Hey, heroes, you should kill them and sacrifice yourself. Roasting them like a goat, eating them, and offering them will be a fantastic achievement."¹⁵ Besides to the abovementioned hate speeches, Abiy Ahmed has utilized a variety of tactics, such as starvation, rape, siege, and information blackouts, as weapons of war, ethnic cleansing, and forced displacement of citizens. Furthermore, he has diverted food aid for his own use, which has resulted in a significant scandal and has caused diplomatic rifts between Ethiopia, USAID, and other international donors.¹⁶

The Consequences of Widespread Hate Speech in Ethiopia

Hate speech threatens the dignity and standing of both individuals and communities, undermining their self-worth and social status (Waldron, 2012). In Ethiopia, hate speeches on broadcast media not only dehumanized the people of Tigray but also sparked a genocidal war. Prior research has documented the harmful effects of the media in fueling violence, as in the Rwandan genocide (Adeyanju, 2018; Thompson, 2007), ethnic conflicts in Burundi and parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo (Vollhardt et al., 2007), armed violence in Nigeria and Kenya, and the Balkan wars (Adeyanju, 2018). Despite the dangers posed by the Ethiopian broadcast media on Tigray, Ethiopians have overlooked them. One of the primary reasons for this is that institutions are either weakened or manipulated. This included a legal system that ratified the postponement of the national election due to COVID-19, although the Ethiopian Ministry of Health endorsed to undertake the national election. The accusation that Abiy Ahmed was attempting to prolong his stay in power beyond the constitutional deadline leveled the decision to postpone the election (Davis, 2020; Zecharias, 2020).

Ethiopia introduced the Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation (Federal Negarit Gazette, 2020). However, it is largely aimed at suppressing dissenting voices and critics. The Ethiopian media functions as an extension of the government, amplifying Abiy Ahmed's leadership and portraying the people of Tigray as opposing his leadership. This highlights the restraints on public awareness and the ability of democratic institutions and civil society to address emerging threats (Mesenbet, 2018). Abiy Ahmed has allied with internal and external forces

to declare a genocidal war on Tigray. External allies comprised the Eritrean forces and Somali troops who actively participated in the war, and the UAE, Iran, Turkey, Russia, and China provided technological and financial support (Nigussie & Kiflu, 2024). Internally, Abiy has encouraged ethnic nationalism to eliminate the people of Tigray (Touatti, 2023). The “Oromara alliance” between the Oromo and Amhara (the two largest ethnic groups) in Ethiopia symbolized such calls. This shows that the war was intended to wipe out the people of Tigray.¹⁷ Human Rights organizations emphasized similar claims, calling for an independent investigation (Human Rights Watch & Amnesty International, 2022). The Human Rights Watch (2023) report calls for the Abiy government to investigate two officials, Col. Demeke Zewdu and Belay Ayalew, who were previously implicated in the abuse and continued to be involved in the arbitrary detention, torture, and forced expulsion of civilians, mainly in Western Tigray. The war on Tigray claimed the lives of more than one million civilians, millions displaced, and others still in concentration centers in different parts of Ethiopia. Evidence shows targeted killings of Tigrayan men and boys, and more than 230 sites of mass killing (Annys et al., 2021). Killings were carried out in the context of a siege, during which the Ethiopian and Eritrean forces deliberately interrupted food and medical supplies and cut off essential services, including banking, telecommunications, electricity, and trade (UN, 2023). Still, the Irob people in eastern Tigray and Kunama people in western Tigray are under the Eritrean forces who committed all forms of crimes, including killing and abducting civilians.

Hate speech led to genocide on the people of Tigray. Likewise, it has had several consequences in Ethiopia. First, as Antonio Gutierrez (UN, 2022) indicated, the “social fabric is being ripped apart,” creating mistrust between citizens and the government. Most Ethiopians have realized that the country has neither won the war nor diplomacy, as the international community demanded a peaceful settlement of the deadliest war. The Abiy government signed a permanent Cessation of Hostilities (CoH) with the TPLF in November 2022. However, the suffering of the people of Tigray continues in different forms, including the deprivation of access to essential services. Equally, Tigray is not represented in the federal political system, the military, or other major institutions in the country.

Most of the Amhara elites and Eritrean forces rejected the CoH, future peace plans, and political dialog with Tigray. The Archbishops and Bishops of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church from 11 dioceses in America and Canada, rejected the call for a peaceful dialog.¹⁸ Second, the war resulted in a significant diplomatic rift between the Abiy administration and the international community, with the latter emphasizing that Ethiopia should be held responsible for the atrocities committed against the people of Tigray. Third, a report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SPIRI, 2022) revealed that expenditures for the military campaign amounted to one billion USD, marking an 88% increase in 2022. This is hefty military spending for a nation that requests budget support from donors and development partners. The Reporter (2023) indicated that war-related damage totaled 22 billion USD (20.4% of GDP), whereas economic losses totaled six

billion USD (5.5% of GDP). Ethiopia faces several crises, including 2.5 billion USD in federal budget deficits, deferred development projects, hyperinflation, and unemployment rates, leading to food insecurity across different regions. Fourth, war and insecurity continue in different parts of the country, including the Oromiya, Amhara, and Benishangul regions.

Conclusion

This paper examined hate speeches in Ethiopian broadcast media (2020–2022), focusing on the hate speeches of government officials, elites, and religious leaders. The coverage of hate speech in Ethiopian media has extensively focused on the speeches of these individuals that promote “othering” against the people of Tigray, resulting in the “we” and “they” dichotomy. The most frequently hate speeches against the people of Tigray included “enemies of Ethiopia,” “Junta,” “Daylight hyena,” “cancer,” and “invasive weed.” The dominant label assigned to the people of Tigray was that they are “enemies of Ethiopia” who aimed to dismantle the country. This led to a war that resulted in genocide, and caused serious consequences for all Ethiopians, including insecurity, increased polarization, conflicts across regions, and a nationwide economic crisis. Furthermore, the country faced a diplomatic crisis as the Abiy government committed genocide but failed to ensure accountability. Ethiopia must adhere to international laws to prosecute perpetrators. In addition, the government must tackle hate speech through introducing laws. Although there is no specific strategy to witness the impact of a state-led hate speech on Tigray, a formal apology and justice for victims can lead to sustainable outcomes. Rwanda serves as the best example for Ethiopia to learn about the next chapter following a genocidal war. Realizing this requires inward-looking and collective effort from various actors, including political leaders, the media, religious leaders, and civic organizations, to demonstrate desire, commitment, and civility.


Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Hagos Nigussie  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7540-0058>

Notes

1. Facebook removes posts from the Ethiopian prime minister as it incites violence. Details available at: <https://www.voanews.com/a/facebook-removes-ethiopian-prime-minister-s-post-for-inciting-violence/6299595.html>
2. The attack on the “Northern Command” has been a dominant agenda across the Ethiopian media. However, evidence has shown that Abiy Ahmed had war preparations in advance together with the Eritrean dictator Esayas Afewerki. Supporting evidence is available at:
 - Washington Post (Filsan Abdullahi Ahmed-Former Ethiopian Minister of Children, Women, and Youth). Filsan was in Abiy Ahmed’s cabinet as war on Tigray broke out. Details available are at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/12/30/ethiopia-abiy-tigray-war/>
 - The New York Times (The Noble Peace Prize That Paved the Way for War): Details available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/15/world/africa/ethiopia-abiy-ahmed-nobel-war.html>
 - European Union (Ethiopia at Crossroad: The Role of Eritrea in the Tigray War). Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/356790836_Ethiopia_at_Crossroad_the_Role_of_Eritrea_in_the_Tigray_War?channel=doi&linkId=61adc4cfaade5b1bf50b4394&showFulltext=true
3. Zadig Abraha, in his interview with DW’s Conflict Zone, indicated, “Abiy is a man of peace, and 1001% can assure you that no Eritrean forces are operating in Tigray.” Available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/zadig-abraha-on-conflict-zone/video-55965391>.
4. The European Union reiterated that Ethiopia is providing contradictory and misleading information to the world and emphasized that it is time for the country to tell the truth. Details available at: <https://euobserver.com/world/151150>
5. Religious leaders from all denominations advocated a hate speech against the people of Tigray and encouraged Ethiopians to join the military. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spozgYuxfp4>
6. Agegnehu Teshager on Amhara TV labeled the people of Tigray as “enemies of all Ethiopians.” Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SuFGjRvF0j0>
7. ESAT declared the extermination of the people of Tigray, emphasizing that this would bring “lasting solutions for the problems in Ethiopia.” The rest of the 95% Ethiopians to exterminate the 5% Tigrayans.
8. Toxic and hateful rhetoric against Tigray comes from the Tilahun Yilma (University of California). Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/TigrayUpdate/videos/a-university-of-california-davis-professor-tilahun-yilma-says-in-state-televisio/617328979348092/>.

9. Walta Television associated the public struggle in Tigray with the failed struggle of Biafra in Nigeria (1967–1970) and labeled Tigray as the “Biafras of northern Ethiopia.” Details are available at: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1146007802934213>
10. Andargachew Tsige opined for merciless actions against the people of Tigray, an open call for genocide. Details available at: <https://www.ethiopiancitizen.com/2021/11/andargachew-tsige-inspired-ethiopian-forces-but-the-telegraph-perverted-his-words.html>
11. Despite his strong allegiance to the Abiy government, journalist Tamrat Negera reiterated that the Prime Minister was the main source of hate speech and fake news, and that his cabinet was a hate speech monger.
12. “Junta” was the term Abiy Ahmed used to label TPLF and the people of Tigray. The Ethiopian media widely publicized it to authorize whatever actions against Tigray.
13. The Mayor of Dire Dawa City associated the people of Tigray with the devil and echoed that they should be obliterated from the earth. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/TigrayUpdate/videos/21st-december-genocide-of-tigrayans-ethiopia-is-ruled-by-insane-people-on-nation/452340753178680/>
14. An Amhara priest of the Orthodox Church emphasized that it was the priests’ responsibility to baptize the people of Tigray with fire. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGRwmnfCAE&list=UU-N202ImlPZVnhggu0PYo6g&index=90>
15. Members of the Ethiopian military force and Amhara paramilitary groups burned Tigrayan alive and discussed cannibalism. Available at: <https://www.tghat.com/2022/03/12/ethiopian-security-forces-burn-tigrayans-alive-talk-about-cannibalism/>
16. The Abiy government used deliberate mass starvation in Tigray through “food aid diversion,” exporting it to neighboring countries. Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/06/08/ethiopia-usaid-scandal-cutoff-food/>
17. Pekka Haavisto, Finland’s Foreign Minister and a European Union special envoy, after his talks with Abiy Ahmed and his ministers reiterated, “They are going to wipe out the Tigrayans for 100 years.” Details available at: <https://apnews.com/article/europe-ethiopia-africa-ffd3dc3faf15d0501fd87cafe274e65a>
18. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church Archbishops and Bishops met members of the U.S. Congress and resisted the U.S. role in the Tigray peace process. Details available at: <https://waltainfo.com/archbishops-of-ethiopian-orthodox-church-in-america-canada-asks-u-s-govt-to-stop-pressuring-ethiopia/>

References

- Adeyanju, G. C. (2018). The mass media and violent conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of Liberty and International Affairs*, 4(3), 72–87.
- Amnesty International (November 2021) Ethiopia: Tigrayans targeted in fresh wave of ethnically motivated detentions in Addis Ababa. Retrieved from: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/11/ethiopia-tigrayans-targeted-in-fresh-wave-of-ethnically-motivated-detentions-in-addis-ababa/>

- Anny, S., Vandenbrempt, T., Negash, E., De Sloover, L., & Nyssen, J. (2021). Tigray: Atlas of the humanitarian situation. *Journal of Maps*, 1–97. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349824181_Tigray_Atlas_of_the_humanitarian_situation.
- Behailu, A., Adem, C., & Mulatu, A. (2022). Ethnic orientation over ethical underpinnings: Emerging trends of the Ethiopian media landscape. *Journalism Practice*, 17(9), 1919–1936. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.2024083>
- Birhane, G. M. (2021). *The crisis in Tigray: A war covered by fog of lies and the truth behind it*. Tigray Online. <http://www.tigraionline.com/articles/truth-behind-tigray-war.html>.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Canales, M. K. (2010). Othering: Difference understood? A 10-year analysis and critique of the nursing literature. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 33(1), 15–34. <https://doi.org/10.1097/ANS.0b013e3181c9e119>
- Carlson, C. R. (2021). *Hate speech*. MIT Press.
- Corey-Boulet, R. (2020). *Ethiopian lawmakers vote to slash funds for Tigray*. Available <https://www.barrons.com/news/ethiopian-lawmakers-vote-to-slash-funds-for-tigray-01602081006>.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage.
- Crisis Group. (2020). *Steering Ethiopia's Tigray crisis away from conflict*. Crisis Group Africa Briefing. Available at <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/ethiopia/b162-steering-ethiopias-tigray-crisis-away-conflict>.
- Davis, K. (2020). *Ethiopia delays elections: Is COVID a valid excuse?* The Africa report. <https://www.theafricareport.com/37721/ethiopia-and-cote-divoire-delay-elections-is-covid-a-valid-excuse/>.
- Dilmaç, J. A., Kocadal, Ö., & Tringides, O. (2021). *Public discourses of hate speech in Cyprus*. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. <https://www.fes.de/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=61609&token=738ecec3ea93de074b535825bdac5a839475d3a6>.
- Elliott, C., Chuma, W., Gendi, Y. E., Marko, D., & Patel, A. (2016). *Hate speech, key concept paper*. MeCoDEM. <http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/117296/>.
- European Institute of Peace. (2021). *Fake news, misinformation and hate speech in Ethiopia: A vulnerability assessment*. <https://www.eip.org/new-publication-fake-news-misinformation-and-hate-speech-in-ethiopia-a-vulnerability-assessment/>.
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. (1995). *The constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia*. Berhanena Selam Printing Enterprise.
- Federal Negarit Gazette. (2020). *Hate speech and disinformation prevention and suppression proclamation No.1185/2020*. Federal Negarit Gazette, 26th Year, Art 2(2). Addis Ababa: Berhanena Selam Printing Enterprise.
- Flick, U. (2002). *An introduction to qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Fowler, C. (2008). *Never again? The failure of the international community and the media during the Rwanda Genocide* [MA Thesis]. Tufts University.
- George, C. (2021). Hate propaganda. In H. Tumber, & S. Waisbord (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to media disinformation and populism* (pp. 80–91). Routledge.

- Gilbert, D. (2020). *Hate speech on Facebook is pushing Ethiopia dangerously close to genocide*. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/xg897a/hate-speech-on-facebook-is-pushing-ethiopia-dangerously-close-to-a-genocide>.
- Gubrium, J. F., Holstein, J. A., Marvasti, A. B., & McKinney, K. D. (2012). *The Sage handbook of interview research: The complexity of the craft* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Guillén-Nieto, V. (2023). *Hate speech: Linguistic perspectives*. De Gruyter.
- Hammarberg, K., Kirkman, M., & de Lacey, S. (2016). Qualitative research methods: When to use them and how to judge them. *Human Reproduction*, 31(3), 498–501. <https://doi.org/10.1093/humrep/dev334>
- Hansen, A., & Machin, D. (2013). *Media and communication research methods*. Palgrave.
- Hietanen, M., & Eddebo, J. (2023). Towards a definition of hate speech—with a focus on online contexts. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 47(4), 440–458. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01968599221124309>
- Human Rights Watch. (2023). *Ethiopia: Ethnic cleansing persists under Tigray truce*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/06/01/ethiopia-ethnic-cleansing-persists-under-tigray-truce>.
- Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. (2022). *Ethiopia: “We will erase you from this land”: Crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing in Ethiopia’s Western Tigray Zone*. Available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/5444/2022/en/>.
- Ibreck, R., & de Waal, A. (2022). Introduction: Situating Ethiopia in genocide debates. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 24(1), 83–96. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2021.1992920>
- Kiflu, G., Adem, C., & Nigussie, H. (2021). The challenges of hosting televised deliberations in Ethiopian media. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 28(1), 184–200. <https://doi.org/10.1177/19401612211020267>
- Kiflu, G., Adem, C., & Nigussie, H. (2022). Media and the public sphere in Ethiopia: Mediated deliberations in public and commercial television programs. *Journalism*, 24(5), 1109–1129. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849211048288>
- Kiflu, G., & Nigussie, H. (2023). Habermasian ethical discourses in the ethno-polarized Ethiopia. *Journalism Practice*, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2023.2191865>
- Liamputtong, P. (2013). *Qualitative research methods* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Lingaas, C., & Bartoszek, A. (2023). Dangerous individuals: Erasing or enhancing genocidal perpetrators in social media GIFs. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2023.2205685>
- Mesenbet, A. T. (2018). *The dangers of hate propaganda and why Ethiopia needs democratic militancy*. Social Science Research Network. doi.10.2139/ssrn.3714171
- Mulatu, A. M. (2019). *Rapid assessment of Ethiopian media during the transition period*. https://fr.unesco.org/sites/default/files/rapid_assessment_of_ethiopian_media_during_the_transition_period.pdf.
- Mulugeta, A. (2019). *Mapping online hate speech among Ethiopians: The case of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube* [MA thesis]. Addis Ababa University
- Muluken, A., Mulatu, A., & Biset, A. (2023). Social media hate speech in the walk of Ethiopian political reform: Analysis of hate speech prevalence, severity, and natures. *Information*,

- Communication & Society*, 26(1), 218–237. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2021.1942955>
- Murer, J. S. (2009). Constructing the enemy-other: Anxiety, trauma and mourning in the narratives of political conflict. *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society*, 14(2), 109–130. <https://doi.org/10.1057/pcs.2008.3>
- Niekerk, P. V. (2023). *Ethiopia's Tigray war and the 'big lie' behind the century defining 600000 civilian deaths*. Daily Maverick. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2023-02-22-ethiopias-tigray-war-and-the-big-lie-behind-the-century-defining-600000-civilian-deaths/>.
- Nigussie, H. (2017). *Folk media forms and their potential for food security communication in eastern Tigray, Ethiopia* [Ph.D. diss.]. The University of Queensland.
- Nigussie, H., & Kiflu, G. (2024). Framing the war on Tigray: The case of CNN and Al Jazeera. *Journalism*, 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849241252017>
- Noriega, C. A., & Iribarren, F. J. (2012). Toward an empirical analysis of hate speech on commercial talk radio. *Harvard Journal of Hispanic Policy*, 25, 69–96.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Paz, M. A., Montero-Díaz, J., & Moreno-Delgado, A. (2020). Hate speech: A systematized review. *Sage Open*, 10(4), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020973022>
- Perry, B., Mirrlees, T., & Scrivens, R. (2017). The dangers of porous borders: The “trump effect” in Canada. *Journal of Hate Studies*, 14(1), 53–76. <https://doi.org/10.33972/jhs.124>
- Plaut, M., & Vaughan, S. (2023). *Understanding Ethiopia's Tigray war*. Hurst.
- Rai, N., & Thapa, B. (2015). *A study on purposive sampling method in research*. Kathmandu School of Law.
- Rapp, K. (2021). Social media and genocide: The case for home state responsibility. *Journal of Human Rights*, 20(4), 486–502. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14754835.2021.1947208>
- The Reporter. (2023). *Conflict pushes 3 million deeper into poverty*. <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/34088/>.
- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. (2022). *SIPRI Military Expenditure Database*. <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>.
- Thompson, A. (2007). Introduction. In A. Thompson (Ed.), *The media and the Rwanda genocide* (pp. 1–11). Pluto Press.
- Touatti, C. (2023). *The Ethiopian government has encouraged ethnic nationalism to eradicate Tigrayans*. Olhares do Mundo. <https://olharesdomundo.wordpress.com/2023/04/28/ethiopian-government-has-encouraged-ethnic-nationalism-to-eradicate-tigrayans-says-historian-charlotte-touatti/>.
- United Nations. (2022). *Hostilities in the Tigray region of Ethiopia must end now*. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/10/1129602>.
- United Nations Human Rights Council. (2020). *Report of the special rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression on his visit to Ethiopia* (A/HRC/44/49/Add.1). www.unhcr.org/refugees/pdf/A_HRC_44_49_Add.1_E.pdf
- United Nations Human Rights Council. (2021). *Situation of human rights in Eritrea Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea* (A/HRC/47/21). <https://daccess-ods.un.org/tmp/5396589.63680267.html>.

- United Nations Human Rights Council. (2023). *Report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia*. UN Human Rights Council (54th session). https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/chreetiopia/A_HRC_54_55_AUV.pdf.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2001). Discourse, ideology and context. *Folio Linguistica*, 25, 11–40.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2003). Critical discourse analysis. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, & H. E. Hamilton (Eds.), *The handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 352–371). Wiley.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2006). Politics, ideology, and discourse. In R. Wodak (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of language & linguistics* (2nd ed., pp. 728–740). Universit t Pompeu Fabra.
- Vollhardt, V., Coutin, M., Staub, E., Weiss, G., & Deflander, J. (2007). Deconstructing hate speech in the DRC: A psychological media sensitization campaign. *Journal of Hate Studies*, 5(15), 15–35. <https://doi.org/10.33972/jhs.40>
- Waldron, J. (2012). *The harm in hate speech*. Harvard University Press.
- Wodak, R. (2001). *Methods of critical discourse analysis*. Sage.
- Woldometers. (2024). *Ethiopian population*. <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/ethiopia-population/>.
- Zecharias, Z. (2020). *Ethiopia's decision to delay its election for COVID will have consequences for its democratic goals*. Quartz. <https://qz.com/africa/1870457/ethiopias-abiy-election-delay-infuriates-opposition-on-democracy>.

Author Biographies

Hagos Nigussie (PhD) is an Alexander von Humboldt Fellow at the Department of Media Studies, Paderborn University, Germany. Formerly, he served as an assistant professor at the Department of Journalism and Communication, Mekelle University, Ethiopia, actively participating in teaching, research, and leadership roles. He earned his PhD 2017 in Communication for Development and Media Studies at the University of Queensland, Australia. He has been published in various international peer-reviewed journals, including the *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, *Journalism*, *International Journal of Press/Politics*, *Journalism Practice*, *Frontiers in Communication*, *Communication Research and Practice*, and *Media, War, and Conflict*. His research interests include folk media, media studies, journalism, and communication on development-related topics.

Gebru Kiflu (PhD) works at 104.4 Radio FM Mekelle as a General Manager and as an assistant Professor at the Department of Journalism, Media, and Communication Mekelle University, Ethiopia. He teaches courses related to Media and Democracy, Media and Society, and related courses at graduate and undergraduate levels. His research interests include the media and public spheres, freedom of expression, and associated research areas. He earned his PhD in Media and Communication in 2021 from the Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia. Gebru has been published in various international peer-reviewed journals, including the *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, *Journalism*, the *International Journal of Press/Politics*, *Journalism Studies*, and *Media, War, and Conflict*.

Bereket Desta (MA) is an assistant professor and works at the department of Journalism and Communication, College of Social Sciences and Languages, Mekelle University. He teaches different courses related to journalism, communication and media studies at the graduate and undergraduate levels. In addition, he participates in research and community engagement programs in Tigray. Besides his academic position, he has actively participated in different leadership positions. He currently serves as an assistant to the president of Mekelle University.