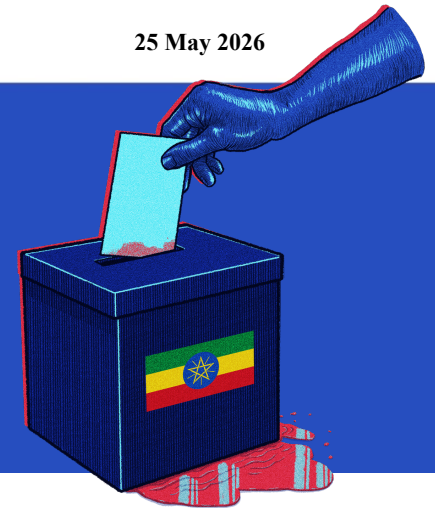


Pulse Report

Ethiopia electoral information and political landscape



*This **Pulse Report** offers a concise overview of information manipulation and interference within Ethiopia's digital ecosystem that may pose a risk of election interference. It identifies weaponised narratives and the key actors who undermine information integrity, and analyses the tactics or techniques used to subvert or polarise local audiences.*

1. Executive Summary

On 01 June 2026, Ethiopia will hold its seventh general elections, the first since the end of the devastating conflict in Tigray in 2022. Historically, Ethiopia's political landscape has long been shaped by ethno-political competition, particularly between Oromo and Amhara elites. When the prime minister came to power in 2018, there was initially cooperation between sections of the Oromo and Amhara political leadership. However, this relationship later [deteriorated](#), leading to growing mistrust and perceptions within the Amhara community that they were being politically marginalised under what they viewed as an Oromo-dominated administration.

The conflict between the Oromo and Amhara communities in Ethiopia is a complex and multi-layered struggle involving ethnic militias, regional forces, and federal security actors. The conflict is primarily driven by disputes over land, political representation, identity, and security, particularly in contested border areas between the Oromia and Amhara regions. The violence has resulted in large-scale civilian casualties, displacement, and recurring ethnic-based attacks, contributing to prolonged instability in the country.

When the current Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed, came to power after years of authoritarian rule, he was regarded as a reformist and the country's [best hope for stability](#) following several years of protests and instability. During [his first years in office](#), Ahmed signed a peace agreement with the neighbouring country, Eritrea, ending a longstanding conflict, and released thousands of political prisoners.

Despite Abiy's rhetoric of national renewal, over time, events in the country have caused security challenges in regions like Oromia, the most populous and Amhara, the second most populous region, which threaten to inhibit voting in several areas. As the election unfolds, its success and credibility will likely dictate whether Ahmed's legacy is seen as one of transformative and continued stability.

Public political grievances have been widely ethnicised in volatile states, with a series of protests denouncing the upcoming elections and posts labelling the Oromo community as illegal settlers in Ethiopia. In Ethiopia and the diaspora, these protests, organised by activist groups such as London Fano, cite human rights violations by the current government in the Amhara and Tigray regions. Posts argue that the re-election of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed amounts to crowning 'our killers with a voter's card', and some responses express support for the Fano militia group, which refers to itself as 'freedom fighters'.

Social media posts monitored between January and May 2026 signal these discussions, with accounts linked to the Amhara Fano National Movement (AFNM), a militia group, sharing unverified reports of a recent victory over

federal forces. Others decry media suppression with potential capital punishment for journalists accused of terrorism, with some misinterpreting an open letter to the 35th AU Summit as a warning of an imminent return of the Tigray-Ethiopian conflict. Female political aspirants and human rights activists continue to face gendered disinformation from AI-generated posts linking them to criminal groups like Fano, and another sexualising them, casting doubt on their competence to run for political positions.

Below is a detailed analysis of these narratives:

Notable narratives:

A narrative is a technique for presenting or understanding a situation or series of events that promotes a particular point of view. Information manipulators develop 'persistent' narratives that play on emotions, fears, or pre-existing beliefs to inject an ideological spin on the facts, manipulate public perceptions, and exploit cognitive biases that shape public opinion.

1. **Local and diaspora protests denounce upcoming elections:** coordinated networks are amplifying protests in the Amhara region and in the diaspora that reject the June 2026 elections as a mechanism to entrench state violence. These campaigns use slogans like "No ballot while bullets fly" to frame the electoral process as a way to prolong alleged genocide and injustices.
2. **Online posts amplify Fano militia claims of victory:** social media accounts, including those linked to the AFNM, were sharing unverified reports of major military victories over federal forces. These posts, often using cross-platform coordination techniques, claim hundreds of government soldiers have been captured or killed to delegitimise the national defence forces.
3. **The state is using force to suppress media freedom:** narratives highlight the long-term detention and potential capital punishment of journalists to portray the government as a repressive regime that criminalises journalism. Moreover, campaigns on TikTok use these cases to call for the release of political prisoners and to accuse the ruling party of committing atrocities, yet ignoring actual criminals.
4. **The Pretoria Agreement is dead:** actors misinterpreted an open letter from the TPLF chairman to falsely claim that the federal government had officially withdrawn from the 2022 peace deal. This narrative warns of an imminent return to war to fuel regional instability and mistrust in the peace process.
5. **Hate speech targeting the Oromo community:** the conflict between the Oromo and Amhara communities in Ethiopia, primarily driven by disputes over land, political representation, identity, and security, particularly in contested border areas between the Oromia and Amhara regions, has resulted in large-scale civilian casualties, displacement, and recurring ethnic-based attacks, contributing to prolonged instability in the country.
6. **Gendered attack on female candidates and activists:** three female candidates from the Ethiopian Citizens for Social Justice (Ezema) party and a human rights activist have been targeted in posts using AI-generated images, fake videos and false claims linking them to the Fano rebel group, questioning their qualifications as political aspirants.

Key actors:

An actor is a person, group, corporate or nation-state that acts with deliberate purpose. Information manipulators are viewed as bad actors who purposely and repeatedly engage in manipulative or disruptive behaviour, usually to radicalise, polarise or subvert the public. Bad actors often work covertly and routinely recruit proxies or 'sock puppets' as their agents.

- a. **@afnm_official:** A TikTok account with over 19,300 views and 5,775 followers posing as Fano's official account, and three other accounts on Facebook, X ([@afnm_official account](#), [@AFNM_FA](#), [Amhara Fano](#)

[National Movement](#)), often sharing pro-AFNM posts and forming part of the group's official communication channels.

- b. **@BashirHashiysf:** This [account](#), with 4,603 followers and 35,600 likes on TikTok, has visibility [on X](#) where it ignited claims that the Pretoria Agreement had been abandoned and that the Ethiopian federal government had withdrawn from the agreement.
- c. **@hornafricana:** This account has 280,600 followers and 2.3 million likes across all its videos. A significant number of videos by this account cast the Oromo people as foreigners who originated from Madagascar and migrated to the Horn of Africa ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#)).
- d. **thefitawrari**
<https://www.tiktok.com/@thefitawrari/video/7631287755426827538>

Noteworthy tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs):

TTPs are a way to describe the behaviour and strategies used by threat actors, with a focus on the structured frameworks or infrastructure they use for executing cyberattacks. Using TTPs, as defined by the Disinformation and Risk Management (DISARM) framework, to diagnose information manipulation allows investigators to develop early warning systems, and also allows watchdogs to identify vulnerabilities in influence operations that can be used to disrupt the attack.

1. **Amplify existing narrative:** The DISARM Framework [identifies](#) this tactic as one where an influence operation may amplify existing narratives that align with its narratives to support its objectives. Posts consistently accused the Ethiopian authorities of committing targeted human rights violations against the people in the Tigray region.
2. **Cross-posting:** This [tactic](#) is the deliberate sharing of identical or similar content across platforms to maximise reach and visibility. Posts amplifying the protests in Ethiopia and London, denouncing the upcoming elections, were shared across TikTok and amplified on other platforms like Facebook, X, to create visibility, reaching up to 125,737 views and 25,842 interactions on TikTok ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)) and 10,496 interactions on Facebook ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#)).
3. **Manipulating text:** Posts sharing details about protests denouncing the upcoming elections used altered words like 'g3noc*de!' (genocide), 'dr0ne-strikes' (drone strikes), 'mass gr4ves' (mass graves) ([1](#), [2](#)) to avoid detection. These posts accused the Ethiopian government of planning an election despite ongoing human rights violations in regions like Amhara.
4. **Develop AI-Generated Images:** These artificially generated images ([1,2](#)) were used to target three female aspirants, linking them to the Fano militia as well as framing them as being unfit to run for political positions. Similar videos were also used to target Elas Kebede, a human rights activist, labelling her as a 'traitor', 'prostitute', 'sex worker', 'bastard' and 'bitch', all derogatory terms paired with inappropriate visuals implying the same.

2. Weaponised words: The narratives shaping public discourse

This section highlights the 'meta' narratives amplified in relation to the electoral information environment in Ethiopia, citing specific examples. The section lists a selection of the most noteworthy incidents or narratives.

3. Local and diaspora protests denounce upcoming elections

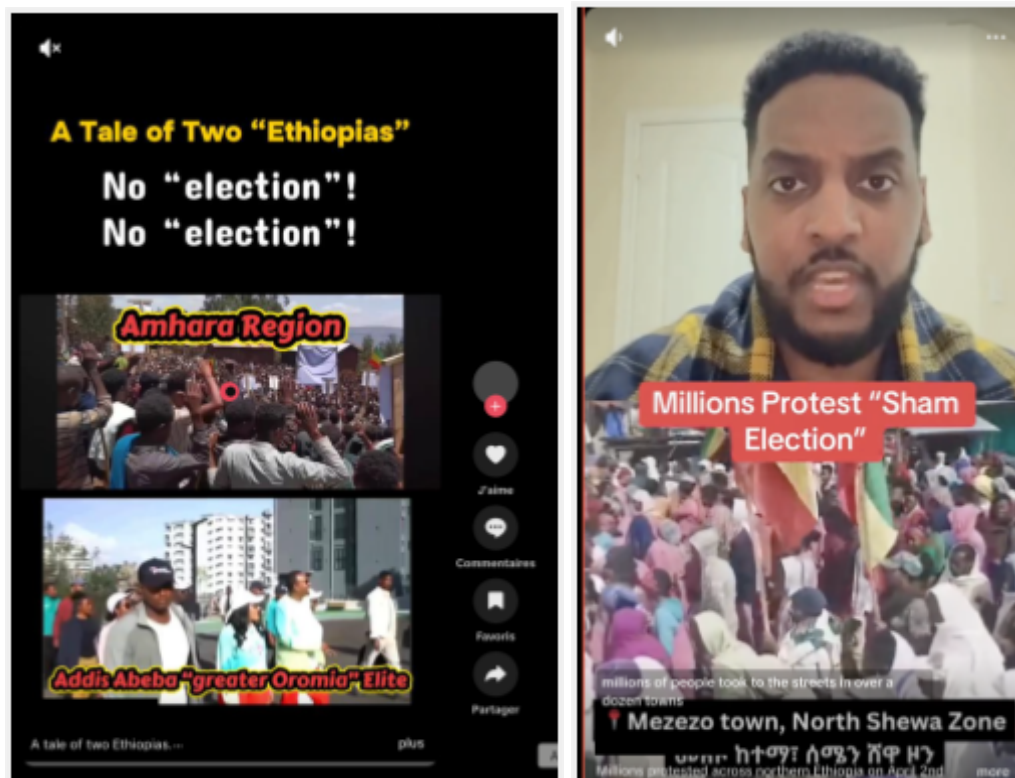
The recent protests reflect a [pattern of recurring unrest](#) observed since the mid-2010s. Since the ruling party, Oromo Prosperity Party, came to power, this pattern has continued in 2021, 2022, and 2023, often intensifying around 02 April, marked by protesters as a 'day of darkness' commemorating the regime's rise to power. Reports of violence, repression, and mass arrests have frequently accompanied

these protest cycles. Notably, during this recent protest, the demonstrators expressed support for the AFNM, which has engaged in over three years of fighting the armed forces. The local protests were concentrated mainly in the Amhara region, while diaspora-led Ethiopian demonstrations took place across major cities in the US, UK, and Australia.

a. Ethiopia

[Protests](#) experienced in the Amhara region on 02 April 2026, coinciding with prime minister Abiy Ahmed's eighth anniversary in power, reflect deepening public disillusionment and pre-election tensions, as demonstrators rejected the prospect of the upcoming elections, framing it as a mechanism that could entrench violence. Some of the placards carried read: 'There can not be an election when there is no peace'. Others read: 'No ballot while bullets fly.' Across social media platforms, this protest was amplified by several posts reaching thousands of interactions on TikTok.

Part of this included TikTok videos ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)) shared between 2 and 6 April 2026 with 125,737 views and 25,842 interactions, amplifying details of this protest. These posts held that the protests were allegedly [organised](#) by the militia group, Amhara Fano National Movement (AFNM), formerly Fano militia, some claiming that 'the elections are [extending the regime's lifeline](#)', and in others, featuring videos of protesters chanting slogans like '[no election, no election](#)'. Responses to one of these [posts](#) called for the amplification of the situation to the international community, and others appreciated the publisher of this post for reporting on the protest. These posts express disillusionment with an election they perceive will effectively prolong the country's injustices for another five years.



Screenshots of protests of upcoming elections ([1](#), [2](#)). (Source: CFA using TikTok)

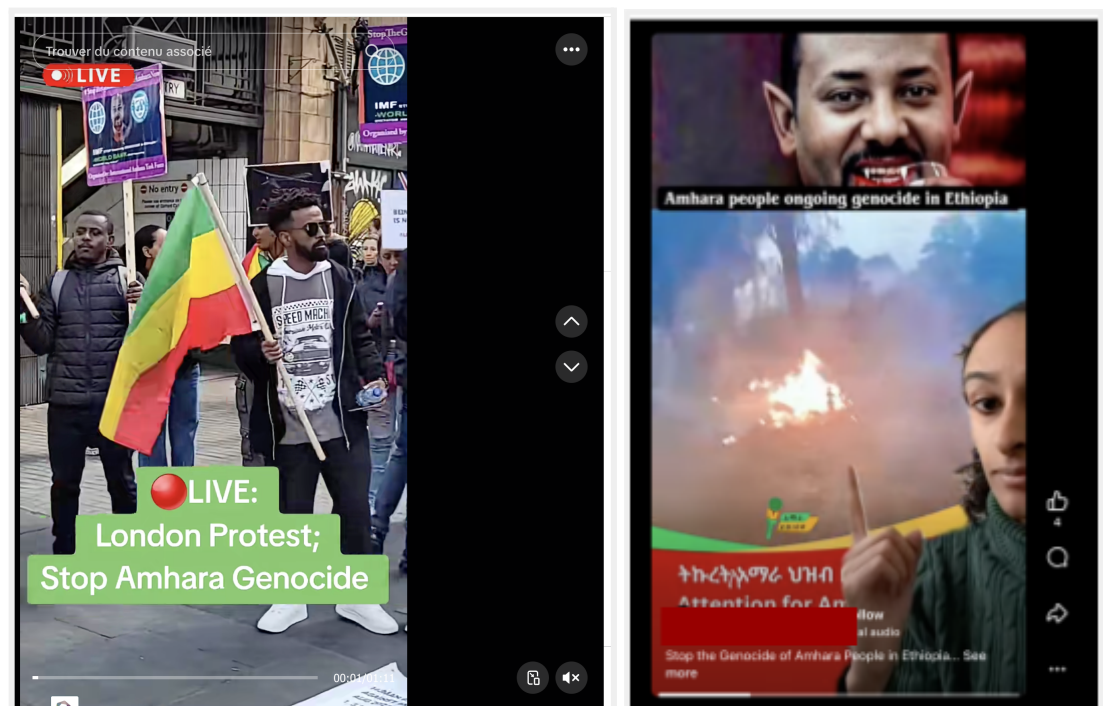
These videos share details of protests denouncing the upcoming elections and accusing the government of human rights violations, using text alteration on terms like ‘g3noc*de!’ (genocide), ‘dr0ne-strikes’ (drone strikes), ‘mass gr4ves’ (mass graves) ([1](#), [2](#)) to avoid detection and being flagged as harmful or content that violates TikTok’s policies.

b. London

Throughout 2025 and 2026, members of the Amhara diaspora and activist groups have staged a series of protests condemning alleged human rights abuses against Amhara civilians in Ethiopia, including claims of a genocide. Part of these protests organised by the [London Fano](#) group included a march outside the BBC headquarters in London in [August 2025](#), another [outside the United Arab Emirates \(UAE\) embassy](#) in London in December 2025, and the United Amhara Protest in March 2026 [outside the Scottish parliament](#). The common occurrences during these protests are accusations of systematic ethnic [violence](#) in the Amhara region, with significant support for the Fano militia.

Between October 2025 and 15 April 2026, a coordinated campaign was used to amplify and coordinate efforts and synchronise narratives [denouncing](#) alleged [human rights violations](#) targeting the Amhara people in Ethiopia. The posts accused the government of seeking to exterminate the Amhara ethnic group in posts shared on TikTok ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#)) with 1797 interactions and 9,637 views, including civil movements outside the country, specifically in London ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)), calling for an end to genocide.

Between 8 October 2025 and 30 March 2026, videos ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#)) on TikTok denounced [ethnocentrism](#) and military dictatorship in Ethiopia. The posts received 9,414 interactions and 129,080 views with strong support of the posts in comments, ‘ለነፃነት የሚደረግ ትግል ደፈርቶ ናቸዉ ልባል ኂኒኒ’ (You are heroes of the struggle for freedom). Part of the placards displayed during this protest read: ‘Stop Genocide Against Amhara In Ethiopia Now!’, ‘Stop The Drone Attack On Amhara’, with responses calling for the end of these alleged killings: ‘Stop killing Amhara people’, and a significant number responding using stickers of the Ethiopian national flag.



Screenshots of the protest video in London (Source: CFA using [TikTok](#), [Facebook](#) and [X](#))

c. Online posts amplify Fano militia claims of victory over the armed forces

As of early 2026, the security in Ethiopia's Amhara region [remains volatile](#), with the Fano militia continuing armed conflict against federal forces. These attacks include clashes in the South Gonder Zone in [February 2026](#) and another in [March 2026](#). These attacks also include the [execution of three women](#) in Debre Elias East Gojam zone. In January 2026, key developments involving this militia group took place. Major Fano militia factions merged to form the Amhara Fano National Movement (AFNM), a unified political and military organisation aiming to overthrow the Ethiopian government. Between 1 and 23 March 2026, posts shared claims that during a recent attack, 520 Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF) troops were captured in Amhara and over 100 weapons were seized. Part of this includes a [TikTok post](#) on 19 March 2026 by the Daily News Egypt (DNE), which had 530 views and 56 interactions. The video was later reposted by a [pro-Fano account](#) on March 23, 2026, targeting an Ethiopian audience. This repost received 3,935 interactions and 171,200 views—a significantly higher engagement rate than the original DNE video. Most of the comments on the reposted video consisted of love and smile emojis, signaling a celebration of the news. Another similar [post](#), shared on 7 March 2026, featured armed men interrogating individuals perceived to be members of the Ethiopian armed forces. A caption embedded in this video reads: 'Ethiopian army captured by Fano forces'.



Screenshot of captured Ethiopians Nationals Defense soldiers by Fano. (Source: CFA using [1,2](#)).

On 22 March 2026, the Ethiopian military stated that more than [300 Fano fighters were killed](#) during two days of fighting, while Fano representatives, [speaking to Reuters](#), disputed these numbers, claiming that 'the army had not killed even 30 of their fighters' and instead reported significant casualties among federal forces.

d. The state is using force to suppress media freedom

‘Four journalists have spent nearly three years detained for their reporting in Ethiopia and now face the possibility of capital punishment’, reads a [post on TikTok](#), highlighting the crackdown on journalists in Ethiopia. Between 25 February and 6 April 2026, three videos on TikTok ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#)) highlighted the case of [Genet Asmamaw](#), Meskerem Abera, Dawit Begashaw and Gobeze Sisay, who have been in detention since 6 April 2023. According to the TikTok [posts](#), these journalists were arrested as part of a widespread crackdown targeting reporting on the conflict in the Amhara region, who were [accused](#) of terrorism. A BBC [publication](#) also mentions that the journalists were arrested for inciting rebellion through their reporting.

One of the [videos](#) received 4387 interactions, 15,500 views with strong support of the journalists with responses holding that: ‘Ethiopia under the rule of the OPP... a country where journalists can be imprisoned, or even sentenced to death, simply for doing their job, telling the truth and standing up for victims of human rights abuses... whilst the criminals who commit the most brutal atrocities are ignored, or even rewarded at times. It is appalling. [#FreeAllJournalists](#) [#FreeAmharaPoliticalPrisoners](#), and that, ‘[Journalism is not a crime!!!](#)’

As of early 2026, authorities continue to suppress journalists through arbitrary arrests, detention and enforced disappearances, particularly targeting those covering the Amhara and Tigray regions. [Most recently](#), Million Beyene, the Addis Standard editor, was abducted by unknown individuals.



Screenshots of journalists arrested in Ethiopia. Source: CFA using TikTok ([1](#), [2](#))

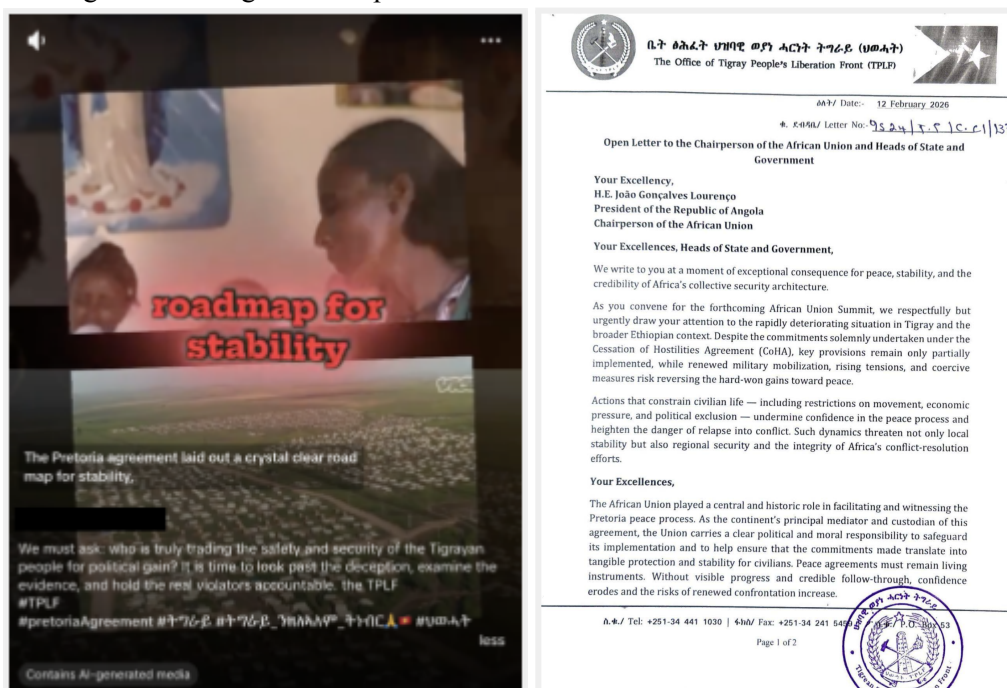
e. Pretoria agreement is dead (Analysis by Khattab Hamad)

Although the [Pretoria Agreement](#), signed in 2022, brought to an end active fighting between the Ethiopian government and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), its [implementation remains incomplete](#). In 2023, disputes within the TPLF resulted in the formation of two factions, one led by the current chairman, Debretsion Gebremichael, and the other by the former spokesman and the federally appointed president of the Interim Regional Administration of Tigray, Getachew Reda. A divide that poses a significant threat to the stability established after the agreement was signed.

CfA identified four (1,2,3,4) videos highlighting the Pretoria Agreement and the escalating tensions in the Tigray region, which could potentially cause the area to relapse into the 2022 war. One of the [videos](#) posted on 02 May 2026, analysing the Pretoria Agreement, held that the escalating political tensions and violence being experienced in the Tigray region are a result of the ‘dangerous defiance of the peace process.’ That, ‘the Pretoria agreement laid out a crystal clear roadmap for stability, a permanent end to hostilities, the complete disarmament of fighters, the restoration of federal authority and a strict halt to hostile propaganda, yet recent rhetoric and mobilisation efforts point towards a terrifying return to the abyss of war.’ This post, flagged as containing AI-generated media, then adds that the TPLF are the ‘real violators’ of this peace deal.

However, investigations [found that these claims are inaccurate](#). Reports show that Debretsion’s [open letter](#), following the 35th AU summit held in Addis Ababa, warned that federal forces were mobilising toward Tigray and that ‘the TPLF would not remain passive if federal troops launch an attack’. The statement held that the situation in Tigray was worsening and that key provisions of the agreement were not fully implemented. It held that: ‘military mobilisation, rising tensions and coercive measures risk reversing the hard-won gains towards peace.’

Part of the issues raised by TPLF, which it says constrains civil life, include ‘restrictions on movement, economic pressure, and political exclusion’ which undermine the confidence in the peace process and heighten the dangers of relapse into conflict.



A screen grab showing a post ([Left](#)) misinterpreting Debretsion’s statement ([Right](#)) (Source: CfA via TikTok and Facebook)

f. Gendered attacks on female politicians and activists

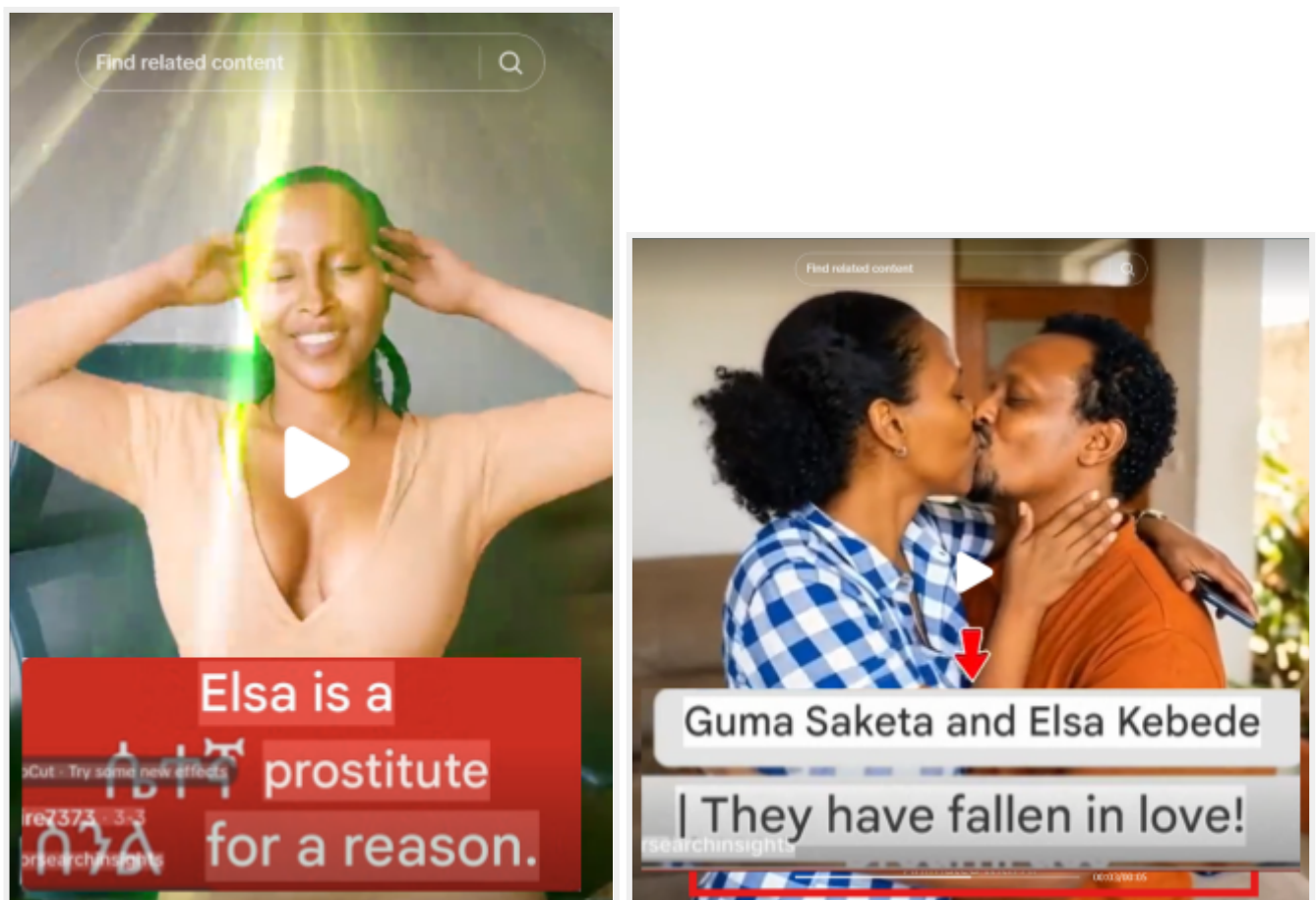
Gendered attacks across various social media platforms, which amount to tech-facilitated gender-based violence, are often heightened during election periods and amplified by these platforms. The nature of this kind of digital harassment is evolving quickly and in a sophisticated way. In addition to using derogatory references, posts targeting the political leaders identified in this analysis use AI tools to edit authentic images of these women and create AI videos, portraying them as immoral and linked to rebel groups.

a. Elsa Kebede is a traitor

Between 21 November and 22 May 2026, two TikTok accounts ([1](#), [2](#)) have repeatedly used AI-generated videos and derogatory language such as ‘traitor’, ‘prostitute’, ‘sex worker’, ‘bastard’ and ‘bitch’ to target Elsa Kebede, a lawyer and exiled human rights activist known for criticising officials in Harar and Dire Dawa, especially related to the upcoming election. Kebede has been arrested and detained [several times](#) by authorities for criticising the government.

The recent coordinated hate and disinformation campaign targeted at her is primarily orchestrated by [ilmadire7373](#) and [lidiya2777](#). These accounts use a mix of AI-generated images/videos or real videos of her with derogatory captions. Two of these posts feature AI-generated videos of Kebede with captions reading: ‘Elsa is a prostitute for a reason’, and ‘Guma Saketa and Elsa Kebede, they have fallen in love’, in one Kebede is featured dancing, and in another, kissing a man.

Although an online search of ‘Guma Saketa’, the man pictured in the second video, and his relation to Kebede provides no tangible results, these posts highlight the various faces of deep fakes and AI-generated image-based sexual abuse.



Screenshots showing weaponised words targeting Elsa (left, right)

A search on Elsa’s social media accounts shows that she is aware of this content shared about her. For example, on 08 May 2026, she [made a response](#) to one of the TikTok accounts [holding](#) that: 😂😂😂😂😂 Those of you who believe that this AI is Elsa are free from technology knowledge😂😂😂 Can't you even recognise my voice? And am I talking like a chewing gum? Come on 😂😂 and who's clothes is this? You made me docho, so it will be fixed.

b. Disinformation targeting EZeMa female candidates

On 19 May 2026, two videos ([1,2](#)) shared on TikTok were used to target three female candidates from the EZeMa party: Asefu Terefe, Harole Yoseph, and Tigest Damtie. All three women are running for seats in the Addis Ababa City Council. The account, which so far has only 5 likes, has only posted two AI-manipulated videos targeting the three candidates. The first [video](#) featured three AI-manipulated images of the three candidates.

It had a description saying: ‘ከማህበረሰብ የወጣ ድርጊት!!! ህዝብ ይፋረድ! የግንቦቱ 7 ወይዘሮች ምን እያደረጉ ነው ያሉት ብለን እንጠይቅ! ይህ ሰዋኑን የተፈጠረ ክስተት ነው _ ሪቮሉሽን ክለብ! @Ezema #ethiopia_tiktok’.

Translated as ‘Out-of-society act!!! Let the people be judged! Let's ask what the 7 ladies are doing! This is a recent event _ Revolution Club! @Ezema #ethiopia_tiktok’.



Screenshots showing gendered attack targeting EZeMa party female candidates (Source CFA via [TikTok](#))

The first image showed the three kissing in a club, wearing t-shirts with the phrase ‘vote EZeMa’ while holding alcoholic drinks. The screen behind the DJ booth also had the same phrase. The second image shows the three candidates in the same t-shirts dancing in a nightclub while holding the same drinks seen in the first image. The third image also shows the candidates dancing in a nightclub while holding drinks. A reverse image search of the manipulated images of the candidates in the video showed that the [original photo](#) of Asefu Terefe’s picture featured in the third image was posted on her Facebook page on 04 May 2026.

Harole Yoseph’s photo is also in the third frame of the video, which shows that it was originally [posted](#) on her Facebook profile on 27 February 2015. We were, however, unable to identify the origin of Tigest Damtie’s image used in the video. The images used in the video also contain a Gemini watermark at the bottom, showing that they are AI-manipulated. The video received four interactions and no comments. The video was also [posted](#) by the account [@gerdere8](#), which is the only video the account has posted so far.

A similar [video](#) by the same account was an extended version of the first video, this time adding a new image at the start. The image featured Harole Yoseph holding a pistol in the company of Fano soldiers, based on a badge in one of the men’s military clothing. The video had a caption saying: ‘Despite being registered candidates for the Ezema Party, these individuals are affiliated with Fano fighters in the armed

struggle. The @nebeofficial should disqualify them immediately.’ The video also used the same altered image of Yoseph used in the previous TikTok video. Although TikTok has already labelled the video as ‘contains AI-generated media’, generating 180 views and three interactions, these two posts highlight how this strategic use of manipulated images is used to create doubt in these women’s qualifications to run for political office. It deliberately exploits pre-existing gender stereotypes rather than challenging these candidates on policy.

c. **Tactics & techniques: Unveiling the actors’ modus operandi**

This section outlines the tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) used by information manipulation and interference actors to propagate harmful narratives about the Ethiopian electoral information environment.

1. Amplify Existing Narrative

The DISARM Framework [identifies](#) that an influence operation may amplify existing narratives that align with its narratives to support operational objectives. Posts and videos consistently promoted claims of a genocide against the Amhara, criticising the Ethiopian authorities for these atrocities. Content was shared across [TikTok](#) ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#)), increasing visibility and engagement.

2. Post across platforms

According to the DISARM framework, an influence operation may post content across platforms to spread narratives and content to new communities within the target audiences or to new target audiences.

- The same campaign content (genocide allegations, protest videos, and political criticism) is distributed across multiple platforms, including [TikTok](#), [Facebook](#), and [X](#), as well as diaspora-related posts from London, indicating coordinated cross-platform dissemination.
- Coordinated dissemination of identical anti-election narratives ([1](#), [2](#)) across multiple Facebook pages, X accounts, and [TikTok](#) videos between 2–9 April 2026, repeating the same themes of rejecting elections and referencing ongoing conflict conditions.
- AI-generated [videos](#) uploaded on TikTok targeting Elsa made their way to Facebook, where they were [reposted](#). Posting across platforms can also remove opposition and context, helping the narrative spread with less opposition on the cross-posted platform.

- 3. Manipulated text:** This [tactic](#) involves measures used by malicious actors to bypass content blocking or circumvent network security measures. Common strategies for bypassing content blocking include: - Altering IP addresses to avoid IP filtering - Using a Virtual Private Network (VPN) to avoid IP filtering - Using a Content Delivery Network (CDN) to avoid IP filtering - Enabling encryption to bypass packet inspection blocking - Manipulating text to avoid filtering by keywords - Posting content on multiple platforms to avoid platform-specific removals - Using local facilities or modified DNS servers to avoid DNS filtering. Posts about protests denouncing the upcoming elections used altered variations of the words ‘g3noc*de!’ (genocide), ‘dr0ne-strikes’ (drone strikes), ‘mass gr4ves’ (mass graves) to avoid detection, while accusing the government of ignoring human rights violations in the lead up to elections.

4. Develop AI-Generated Images (Deepfakes)

The [DISARM Framework](#) notes that an influence operation may use AI-generated falsified photos, videos, or soundbites (deepfakes) to depict an inauthentic situation by synthetically recreating an individual’s face, body, voice, and physical gestures. The TikTok account [@lommishare](#) posted two videos ([1,2](#)) with AI-manipulated

images depicting three EZeMa party candidates: Asefu Terefe, Harole Yoseph, and Tigest Damtie, to be involved in immoral behaviour such as kissing each other in nightclubs and being involved with the Faano militia.

Additionally, two TikTok (1,2) accounts repeatedly targeted Elsa using AI-generated videos (1, 2). These videos are tagged as AI-generated on the platform where they were first uploaded (TikTok) by the creators and also bear AI watermarks on them.

d. Actor spotlight: The people and organisations amplifying toxic content

This section highlights the key accounts, entities, or actors involved in amplifying toxic online content in relation to the Ethiopian electoral information space and provides an in-depth assessment of their identities and motivations.

a. Individual actors

1. @BashirHashiysf

On 12 February 2026, @BashirHashiysf became the primary ignition point of the "Pretoria Agreement is dead" narrative by framing a TPLF press release and Debretsion's speech as "BREAKING NEWS" on X, attributing to Chairman Debretsion Gebremichael the claim that "the Federal Government of Ethiopia has withdrawn from the Pretoria Agreement". The post got 21,000 views. However, our investigation found that the claimed text is inaccurate, as Debretsion spoke to local media, following a TPLF statement to the 35th AU summit, warning that federal forces were mobilising toward Tigray and that 'the TPLF would not remain passive if federal troops launch an attack'. Bashir has a TikTok account with 4,603 followers and 35,600 likes.

2. ilmadire7373 and lidiya2777

These accounts post similar AI-generated content videos targeting activists and political candidates. They both shared AI-generated videos (1,2) of Elsa Kebed 's arrest, alongside another deepfake targeting Dr. Habesha , an upcoming election candidate. Dr.Habesha videos (1,2) showed him drinking with women in a bar, framing him as unfit for office by violating conservative Ethiopian cultural norms. The account has accumulated 19,900 followers and 18,900 likes.

3. @thefitawrari

This account focuses on issues affecting the Amhara people and was one of the prominent users pushing the narrative that ongoing insecurity in the Amhara region makes holding elections impossible. It also played a critical role in amplifying the 'no peace, no election' campaign in April 2026. In addition to local protests, the account highlights the activities of the Ethiopian diaspora, including demonstrations against the Ethiopian government outside the country. The account has 11,900 followers and 102,200 likes on its videos.

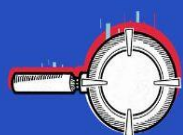
e. Recommendations: Strengthening TikTok's information integrity

The following recommendations suggest simple ways for TikTok to strengthen information integrity through enhanced transparency and data access mechanisms, particularly for content related to the Ethiopian electoral information space.

1. As Ethiopia approaches its first national elections since the cessation of hostilities, these and more emerging online narratives require constant monitoring and proactive communication strategies by state and non-state actors to prevent further escalation of inauthentic information during critical political periods.
2. Develop a monitoring system specifically designed to identify and flag accounts and content that glorifies militia groups and their activities. Some of these accounts, as established in this analysis, threaten to strain electoral processes.
3. Diaspora voices are equally playing an important role in shaping attitudes in the upcoming elections. It is important to map politically influential accounts and their amplification networks. These accounts shape narratives at scale by pushing election boycotts, delegitimising electoral institutions, and amplifying allegations of repression or fraud, potentially increasing polarisation and mistrust in the process. They can also inflame and incite masses through online mobilisation, especially if content is cross-posted.

*This report was co-written by iLAB data journalists **Nyakerario Omari** and **Evans Aziamor-Mensah**, based on analysis from iLAB's investigative data analysts **Khattab Hamad**, **Soumaré Modi**, **Agape Karashi**, **Eliud Akwei**, **Nirali Patel**, **Moffin Njoroge** and **Anita Igbine**. The report was edited and reviewed by investigative analyst manager **Jacktone Momanyi** and news editor **Caleb Ojewale**, and copy-edited by **Jacqueline Mahugu**. The online scams were debunked by PesaCheck CfA's PesaCheck editorial assistant, **Wendy Opiyo**. The report was reviewed by senior programme manager at CivicSignal, **Amanda Strydom**, and commissioned by CfA publisher, **Jessica Manim**.*

Do you have incidents of suspected information manipulation, coordinated influence operations or other forms of disinformation or weaponised toxic content that you think we should investigate? Share your leads with us, securely, on ilab@codeforafrica.org.



*This report contributes to a growing knowledge-base that documents African-focused information manipulation, influence operations and weaponised disinformation. The knowledge-base is curated by the **African Digital Democracy Observatory (ADDO)**. The research in this specific report was produced by analysts attached to ADDO member, Code for Africa (CfA), including CfA's **CivicSignal** media monitoring lab, its **iLAB** forensic investigation unit, and its **PesaCheck** fact-checking team.*

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