

# **Biweekly Report: Disinformation Trends and Social Media Monitoring in Ethiopia**

**November 1–15, 2025**

**Compiled  
By  
MFC Team  
MultiFact Check, Inc (MFC)**

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## 1. Executive Summary

Ethiopia’s digital environment between November 1–15, 2025 remained volatile and polarized. Social media platforms such as Facebook, X, TikTok, and YouTube amplified unverified claims, emotionally charged narratives, and coordinated disinformation campaigns. Major events - including the passing of historian Professor Lapiso Delebo, competing military claims in Amhara and Oromia, and escalating tensions with Eritrea - dominated online discussions. At the same time, the confirmed Marburg virus outbreak and opposition warnings about the 2026 election fueled widespread debate and heightened public anxiety.

Disinformation tactics grew more sophisticated during this period. AI-generated images and videos circulated widely, fabricating evidence of military movements and migration crises. Old footage resurfaced as “breaking news,” misleading audiences during politically sensitive moments. Health misinformation mirrored earlier crises, with recycled COVID-19 content repurposed as Marburg coverage and false cures promoted online. Hate speech also intensified, targeting Ethiopia’s Women’s National Football Team and escalating ethnic hostility through derogatory slurs linked to regional disputes.

These developments underscore the urgent need for continuous monitoring and timely fact-checking. False information spreads rapidly, exploiting political tension, health fears, and regional conflict to deepen divisions and erode trust. Strengthening digital literacy, encouraging responsible reporting, and promoting respectful dialogue are critical to countering these harmful narratives. Verified institutions and independent fact-checking organizations remain essential in safeguarding Ethiopia’s information space and supporting democratic resilience.

## 2. Scope

This report analyzes public posts and conversations across Ethiopia’s digital ecosystem. It focuses on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, and YouTube. In addition, it tracks narratives from key news outlets and fact-checking organizations. Together, these sources provide a broad view of Ethiopia’s online discourse during the reporting period.

## 3. Approach

We analyzed public posts from major platforms and verified fact-checks from established organizations. We also reviewed news from selected agencies. Furthermore, we used advanced search techniques and monitoring tools such as Feedly, TweetDeck, and Google News to track narratives in real time.

We compared these narratives against verified fact-checks and official statements. We prioritized fact-checks from initiatives such as PesaCheck, AFP Fact Check, and Ethiopia Check. We also relied on our own investigations published on [multifactorcheck.org](http://multifactorcheck.org).

Throughout the report, we label unverified stories as “claims.” This distinction helps readers separate verified information from narratives still under review.

#### **4. Disclaimer**

This report synthesizes open-source content and verified fact-checks. It does not endorse any political actor, institution, or narrative. Screenshots, links, and examples appear strictly for analytical purposes. They do not serve as promotion or support. Verified fact-checks always take precedence over unverified posts or commentary. We consistently label unverified narratives as “claims.”

## 5. Introduction and Context

This biweekly report covers disinformation trends and social media dynamics in Ethiopia from November 1–15, 2025. Ethiopia’s information environment remains volatile and polarized. Social media now serves as a primary arena where political and conflict narratives compete.

Platforms such as Facebook, X, TikTok, and YouTube strongly influence public opinion. They frequently host unverified claims, coordinated disinformation campaigns, and emotionally charged content. Many narratives intersect with long-standing domestic conflicts and regional geopolitical tensions. Therefore, continuous fact-based monitoring is essential. It helps track the speed, reach, and real-world impact of false or misleading stories.

During this reporting period, several major events converged. Together, they intensified online polarization and created new opportunities for disinformation.

- The passing of historian Professor Lapiso Delebo reignited debates about his legacy and historical interpretations.
- State and non-state actors issued competing claims of military gains in Amhara and Oromia. These claims fueled confusion and hardened political divides.
- Tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea escalated. Ethiopia accused Eritrea of sovereignty violations and emphasized its strategic goal of securing access to the Assab Port.

These highly emotive issues created fertile ground for politically charged narratives and outright false information. They also challenged public trust in institutions and media.

Beyond security and politics, two additional developments shaped online debate. The confirmed Marburg virus outbreak in South Ethiopia triggered a surge of fear-driven health misinformation. This pattern mirrored earlier outbreaks and the COVID-19 period. At the same time, a coalition of ten opposition parties warned that the 2026 election risked becoming “a calendar without democracy.” This warning sparked intense discussions about political freedoms, institutional neutrality, and Ethiopia’s democratic future. Digital amplification of these issues deepened polarization and eroded trust in both state and non-state institutions.

Moreover, we observed a clear shift in disinformation tactics. Actors increasingly used AI-generated images and videos. They fabricated visual “evidence” to support claims about military movements, foreign diplomacy, and migration.

In parallel, we recorded a rise in hate speech. Users employed targeted slurs amid rising regional tensions. They also directed abusive commentary at a specific demographic group following unverified allegations about players in Ethiopia’s Women’s National Football Team.

This report documents these viral topics, tracks evolving disinformation methods, and highlights the prevalence of hate speech. It provides a concise, yet comprehensive snapshot of Ethiopia’s contested digital space .

## 6. Viral Topics and Discussion Issues

During this reporting period, Ethiopia’s social media space was highly active and emotional. Political, social, and health events quickly became viral topics. These discussions revealed public anxieties and long-standing divisions. Users reacted in real time, shared opinions, and spread competing narratives. The following issues attracted the most attention, fueled misinformation, and deepened polarization.

### 6.1 Passing of Historian Lapiso Delebo

The [death of historian](#) Professor Lapiso Getahun Delebo, aged 87, drew significant online attention. Reports stated he died after a brief illness, though details were not disclosed.



Image: Prof. Lapiso G

Throughout his career, he authored influential works such as *የኢትዮጵያ ረጅም - የሕዝብና የመንግሥት ታሪክ* (*The Long History of the People and Government of Ethiopia*), *A Brief History of the Gedeo People*, *The Historical*

*Foundations and Instruments of Ethiopianism, and The Role of the Red Sea and the Abbay Valley.*

The government, including Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, shared condolences. Major institutions echoed these messages, amplifying visibility. Soon, social media users debated his legacy. Some praised his defense of Ethiopian unity. Others criticized perceived biases in his writing. His passing became a focal point for ideological disputes about history, identity, and state narratives.

### 6.2 Inter-Religious Council Findings on Arsi Killings

The Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE) [released initial findings](#) on killings in Arsi Zone. The Council concluded the attacks did not target followers of a specific religion.

The statement sparked immediate backlash. Critics accused the Council of downplaying religious motives. Supporters defended the findings. [Opposition parties](#) demanded an independent investigation.

This controversy deepened mistrust in official accounts. It fueled debate across Facebook, X, and Telegram. Many users framed the issue as evidence of institutional bias and weak accountability.

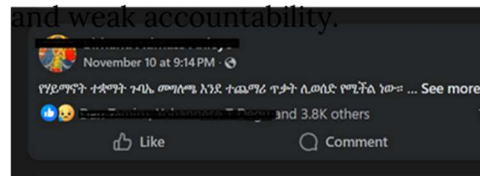


Image: Screenshot taken from Facebook

### 6.3 Claims of Military Gains in Amhara and Oromia

Amhara Fano forces claimed military [gains in South Wollo](#). They reported ambushing government forces moving from Tenta and Delanta. Their public relations unit stated ENDF units retreated in disarray. No casualty figures or verifiable evidence were provided. ENDF did not comment.

In Oromia, [ENDF announced](#) it had killed 44 members of the “extremist Shene group” in East Wollega and captured two others. It also reported seizing weapons and ammunition. These claims, like the Fano reports, could not

be independently verified. The Oromo Liberation Army did not respond.

This information gap encouraged speculation. Competing narratives gained traction online. Each side amplified its version while dismissing the other.



Image: Screenshot taken from Facebook

#### 6.4 *Renewed TPLF Protests Near the Eritrean Border*

TPLF-organized forces staged protests near Adigrat, close to the Eritrean border. Members of “[Army 15](#)” demonstrated over unpaid salaries and benefits. They echoed earlier protests in Mekelle. Protesters chanted slogans such as “We will not go to war again” and “We need land to live, not land to be buried in.”

These messages challenged narratives portraying renewed mobilization as inevitable. The protests followed reports of an ENDF drone strike on TPLF units along the Tigray–Afar border. TPLF sources confirmed casualties but withheld figures.

Videos and photos spread widely online. Some material remained unverified but still drove debate. Many users linked the protests to broader questions about the Pretoria Agreement and the long-term status of TPLF forces.

#### 6.5 *Marburg Virus Outbreak in Jinka*

The Ministry of Health [confirmed](#) a Marburg virus outbreak in South Ethiopia. Three days later, it reported deaths linked to the outbreak.

The news caused widespread alarm online. Users shared rumors, outdated footage, and misleading claims about transmission and treatment. The World Health Organization (WHO) released \$300,000 from its contingency fund. WHO also deployed protective gear and isolation tents.

Despite these efforts, misinformation persisted. Users circulated claims about government cover-ups, hidden cases, and false cures. The outbreak quickly became a central focus in health-related disinformation monitoring.

#### 6.6 *Ethiopia Accuses Eritrea of Violating Sovereignty*

Ethiopia accused Eritrea of supporting armed groups and occupying local administrative areas in northern Ethiopia. Foreign Minister [Gedion Timothewos](#) warned Ethiopia’s restraint “is not indefinite.” He cited Eritrea’s interference in internal affairs and its militarized governance model.

He emphasized Ethiopia’s right to self-defense while seeking to avoid regional destabilization. He also highlighted Ethiopia’s strategic goal of securing access to the Assab Port, linking it to broader Horn of Africa integration plans.

These remarks triggered intense online debate. Political actors and diaspora figures amplified

competing narratives. Many posts used nationalistic language, deepening tensions between communities.

### 6.7 TPLF Chairman Debretsion Accuses Federal Government

TPLF Chairman Debretsion Gebremichael accused the Federal Government of obstructing mediator-led talks on implementing the Pretoria Agreement. He argued that both TPLF and mediators requested discussions, but federal officials declined. He criticized mediators for offering “advice” rather than applying pressure.

Debretsion pointed to a leadership gap after U.S. Envoy Mike Hammer’s departure. He claimed this weakened the peace process. He rejected federal claims of TPLF collaboration with Eritrea. Instead, he accused the government of failing to withdraw non-ENDF forces from Western Tigray, preventing displaced persons from returning.

TPLF maintains the Pretoria Agreement faces serious threats. It claims federal actions undermine key provisions. These accusations fueled prolonged online debate, often packaged with disinformation and polarized framing.



Image: Screenshot taken from Facebook

### 6.8 Opposition Parties Warn of Flawed 2026 Election

A coalition of ten opposition parties issued a joint statement on the 2026 general election. They warned that, without reforms, the election could become “a calendar without democracy.” The coalition included OLF, OFC, Balderas, Arena Tigray, Hibir Ethiopia, and others.

They criticized the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia for preparing an election without democratic conditions. They called for dialogue, release of political prisoners, and reopening of opposition offices. They demanded credible security guarantees and freedom of movement in conflict-affected regions.

The parties also requested reforms to electoral laws and reconstitution of NEBE through consensus. They stressed the need for institutional neutrality in security and judicial sectors.

## 7. Disinformation Trend

During this reporting period, Ethiopia’s online space revealed several dangerous disinformation patterns. False visuals, recycled content, and hate speech spread rapidly. These tactics exploited political tension, public health fears, and regional conflict.

### 7.1 AI-Generated Images

One of the most notable trends involved AI-generated images and videos. Disinformation actors produced deep-fakes and fabricated photos to support political claims. MFC debunked several viral examples.

**Yemen Warning Video:** A viral clip claimed a Yemeni military spokesperson warned Oromo Ethiopians to leave Yemen. [MFC proved](#) the video was fully AI-generated. It featured Tanzania’s flag, incorrect uniforms, and a visible Gemini AI watermark. Reverse-image searches confirmed the speaker was not real.



Image: Screenshot taken from the deepfake video

**Red Sea Claim:** Another image alleged Ethiopian soldiers were 45 km from the Red Sea. [MFC confirmed](#) it was AI-generated. Similar visuals appeared across platforms. Political tensions over sea access fueled its spread, but authenticity checks failed.



Image: Screenshot taken from Facebook

**Migrants in Yemen:** A viral image claimed Ethiopian migrants were stranded in Yemen en route to Saudi Arabia. [MFC’s Analysis](#) with Decopy AI Image Detector revealed repetitive, artificial figures. The migration crisis is real, but this image was fabricated.

Image: Screenshot taken from Facebook



These cases show how AI tools now shape visual disinformation. They highlight the urgent need for early detection and public awareness.

## 7.2 Disinformation Around the Marburg Virus Outbreak

After the Ministry of Health confirmed Ethiopia’s first Marburg outbreak, misinformation surged online. This mirrored earlier health emergencies.

MFC debunked multiple false claims. One viral video reused footage from a [COVID-19 speech](#) by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, falsely presented as a new Marburg address. Other posts promoted ineffective remedies and alleged hidden outbreaks. These narratives exploited public anxiety and deepened confusion.

Image: Screenshot taken from Facebook



### 7.3 Hate Speech Trends

We observed a sharp rise in hateful and dangerous content.

**Women’s National Football Team:** A sports journalist claimed on radio that “80 percent of the team are lesbians.” The segment is widely spread online. Users flooded platforms with insults and abusive comments. Posts framed the team as immoral or unpatriotic. Despite interventions by the Ethiopian Football Federation, unverified allegations and hate speech persisted.



Image: Screenshots taken from comments under a TikTok video

**Ethnic Slurs:** As tensions with Eritrea escalated over the Red Sea and Assab Port, pro-Eritrean accounts increasingly used the derogatory slur “ጋላ” (Galla). The term appeared frequently on X and TikTok. Its growing visibility signaled rising ethnic hostility and normalization of hate speech in mainstream debates.



Image: Screenshot taken from X

### 7.4 Old Footage Recycled as Breaking News

Between November 1 and 15, we recorded a strong trend of old videos and photos repackaged as fresh news. This tactic remains highly effective. Short clips spread quickly, and most viewers lack tools to verify context.

In one case, a 2020 photo resurfaced online labeled as evidence of a “current conflict in Tigray.” MFC confirmed the image predated the claim by years and came from an unrelated event.

Recycled materials created confusion and heightened anxiety, especially during politically sensitive moments. Their circulation shows that old-content recycling remains a key disinformation method in crisis environments.

## 8. Data Collection Overview

The Number of Monitored Contents Identified as False or Inflammatory

<i>Social Media Accounts/pages</i>	<i>Count</i>
<i>Activists/Influencers</i>	45
<i>Individual Users</i>	300
<i>Mainstream media</i>	15
<i>Junk news/Content source</i>	60
<i>Politicians</i>	20
<b><i>TOTAL</i></b>	<b>440</b>

The Number of Monitored Contents Identified as False or Inflammatory

<i>Category of labelled contents</i>	<i>Count</i>
<i>AI-Generated false Images</i>	70
<i>Deepfake videos</i>	3
<i>Ethnic/religion-based Disinformation</i>	27
<i>Technology Facilitated GBV</i>	40
<i>Hate speeches</i>	17
<i>Violence incitement</i>	13
<b><i>TOTAL</i></b>	<b>170</b>

The Number of Monitored Contents Identified as Disinformation in Different Platforms

<i>Categories of social media</i>	<i>Count</i>
<i>Facebook</i>	62
<i>TikTok</i>	45
<i>YouTube</i>	10
<i>X (Twitter)</i>	53

## 9. Conclusion

Ethiopia's online space demonstrated how quickly false information spreads. Political tension, health concerns, and regional conflict acted as accelerants.

Many viral posts involved unverified claims, AI-generated visuals, or recycled footage. These formats are highly shareable. They confuse audiences and escalate fear. Hate speech also increased, targeting ethnicity, politics, and gender. Such harmful narratives deepen divisions and erode trust.

Because of these challenges, continued monitoring and timely fact-checking remain essential. Strengthening digital literacy helps users question suspicious content. Encouraging responsible reporting and respectful dialogue reduces the spread of misinformation and hate speech.

Although Ethiopia's online space remains polarized, consistent and accurate information can build trust. Verified institutions and independent fact-checking organizations play a crucial role. This report underscores the need for sustained attention to disinformation. It aims to support communities, media professionals, and policymakers as they navigate a rapidly changing information landscape.

MultiFact Check (MFC) is an independent fact-checking organization dedicated to investigating claims that spread misinformation and disinformation, and publishing fact-checked reports to inform the public. Our work is geographically focused, with primary emphasis on nations in the Horn of Africa and their diaspora communities. With a presence in various regions of Africa, Europe, and North America, MFC leverages a team of professionals with diverse expertise to deploy best practices in journalism and scholarships, identifying, investigating, and publishing accurate facts