

**Monthly Report:
Disinformation
Trends and Social
Media Monitoring in
Ethiopia**

February 1–28, 2026

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1. Executive Summary

This report presents MultiFact Check's (MFC) monitoring of Ethiopia's digital information environment between February 1 and February 28, 2026. During this period, online discussions were heavily shaped by regional geopolitical tensions, debates around media freedom, and emerging election-related disputes. These developments contributed to a highly polarized information environment in which competing narratives circulated widely across major social media platforms.

Several high-profile political and geopolitical events generated significant engagement online. These included debates surrounding the 39th African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, escalating tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and controversy following a Reuters investigation alleging Ethiopian involvement with Sudan's Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The revocation of media accreditations by the Ethiopian Media Authority (EMA) also triggered extensive debate about media freedom and regulatory authority.

Domestically, political discourse intensified around election-related developments, particularly the House of Federation and National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) decision concerning disputed territories between the Amhara and Tigray regions. Legal challenges to this decision further amplified political discussion and speculation online.

In addition to these political developments, the monitoring identified recurring disinformation tactics, including recycled conflict footage, fabricated screenshots falsely attributed to international media outlets, and the increasing use of AI-generated images designed to resemble authentic news visuals.

Overall, the findings indicate that Ethiopia's digital information environment remains highly contested and vulnerable to manipulation, particularly in the context of rising regional tensions and the approaching election cycle. The likelihood of coordinated narrative manipulation is expected to increase as political competition intensifies.

2. Key Findings

- Regional tensions dominated online discussions, particularly narratives surrounding Ethiopia-Eritrea relations and alleged involvement in the Sudan conflict.
- Media freedom became a major discussion topic, following regulatory actions by the Ethiopian Media Authority affecting international and domestic media outlets.
- Election-related narratives began gaining traction, particularly around disputed territories and the role of federal institutions in electoral decisions.
- Political commentary from prominent figures generated high engagement, including exchanges between major political actors and emerging online personalities.

- Disinformation tactics remained consistent, with recycled conflict footage, fabricated media screenshots, and AI-generated visuals widely circulating on social media platforms.

3. Scope

This report analyzes public conversations across Ethiopia’s digital ecosystem between February 1 and February 28, 2026. It focuses primarily on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, YouTube, and Telegram.

The report tracks viral narratives, political discourse, and coordinated disinformation patterns. It also reviews content from selected news outlets and verified fact-checking organizations to provide contextual understanding of Ethiopia’s online information environment.

4. Approach

MFC analyzed publicly available posts using advanced monitoring tools and manual verification methods. We tracked emerging narratives through Feedly, TweetDeck, Telegram monitoring, and Google News. This approach allowed us to identify emerging rumors quickly and observe how they evolved into misinformation or disinformation.

We compared the narratives collected against verified information from credible media outlets, official government statements, and fact-checking partners. This cross-verification ensured accuracy and limited the influence of unverified claims in our analysis. When a narrative lacked evidence, we labeled it as a claim. This practice reinforces transparency and helps readers distinguish fact-based reporting from unverified or speculative commentary.

5. Disclaimer

This report analyzes publicly available digital content. It does not promote, endorse, or support any political actor, institution, or ideological position. Screenshots, links, and examples reflect patterns in misinformation and are included strictly for research purposes. Their inclusion does not imply agreement or amplification. Verified claims always take precedence. Unverified stories remain clearly marked to avoid confusion and preserve editorial integrity.

6. Introduction and Context

Ethiopia's information environment in February 2026 was shaped by escalating regional tensions, domestic political maneuvering, and the country's approaching national election cycle. These overlapping dynamics have intensified political polarization and increased the circulation of contested narratives across both traditional and social media platforms.

Relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea remain fragile despite the temporary alignment that emerged during the 2020 conflict in northern Ethiopia, when Eritrea supported the Ethiopian federal government against the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). The two countries have a long history of hostility, including the destructive 1998-2000 border war, and the underlying mistrust between their leaderships has never been fully resolved.

Following the 2022 Pretoria Agreement, relations between Addis Ababa and Asmara have again shown signs of strain. Disagreements over post-war political and security arrangements in northern Ethiopia, combined with Ethiopia's increasingly assertive rhetoric regarding access to the Red Sea, have heightened tensions between the two governments. Ethiopian officials have framed Red Sea access as a strategic economic and security priority, while Eritrea has interpreted some of these statements as potential challenges to existing regional arrangements.

Regional instability has further complicated the situation. Both Ethiopia and Eritrea have faced accusations of involvement in the ongoing conflict in Sudan, reinforcing mutual suspicion and contributing to a broader

climate of geopolitical uncertainty in the Horn of Africa.

Domestically, Ethiopia is moving toward another election period. However, the political landscape remains fragmented, with several prominent opposition figures absent from the electoral process due to exile, imprisonment, or involvement in armed movements. Despite these constraints, the electoral cycle has intensified political debate and mobilization, particularly across social media platforms.

Taken together, these regional tensions and domestic political developments have created fertile conditions for the spread of misinformation and disinformation. Competing political actors and online networks are increasingly using digital platforms to shape narratives, mobilize supporters, and contest the legitimacy of political developments. As a result, Ethiopia's information space remains highly contested, with public trust in online information continuing to face significant challenges.

7. Viral Topics and Discussion Issues

During February, Ethiopia's social media environment was dominated by discussions related to regional security tensions, media freedom, and emerging electoral disputes.

This section highlights conversations that captured national attention and generated extraordinary engagement across major platforms.

7.1 *High-Traction Non-Election Conversations*

7.1.1 *AU Ordinary Summit 2026*

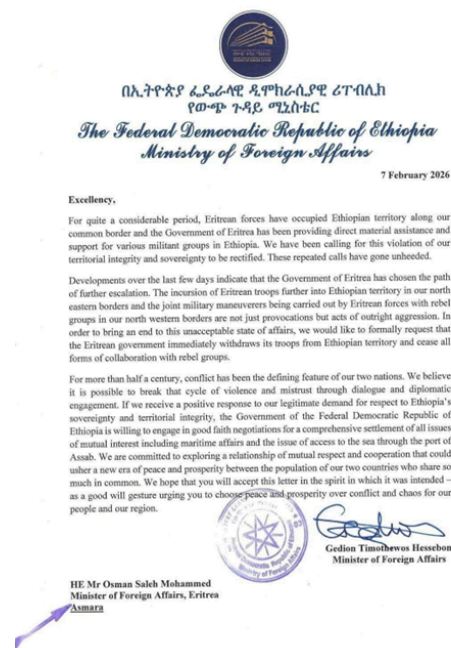
The 39th Ordinary Session of the African Union Summit, [held in Addis Ababa](#) on

February 14-15, generated significant online engagement.

Government-aligned voices highlighted Ethiopia's continued diplomatic relevance and its role as host of the African Union headquarters. In contrast, opposition commentators argued that Ethiopia's regional influence has weakened in recent years. These competing interpretations circulated widely across social media platforms.

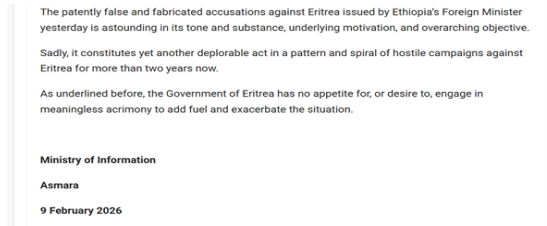
7.1.2 Ethiopia Accuses Eritrea of Military Aggression

A February 7 letter from Foreign Minister Gedion Timothewos [accused Eritrea](#) of occupying Ethiopian territory and supporting armed groups.



(Image: Statement by the FDRE Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Eritrean officials rejected the accusations as “false and fabricated.” The exchange triggered intense debate across Facebook and X, with nationalist rhetoric increasing on both sides.



(Image: Screenshot taken from a [press release by the Eritrea Ministry of Information](#))

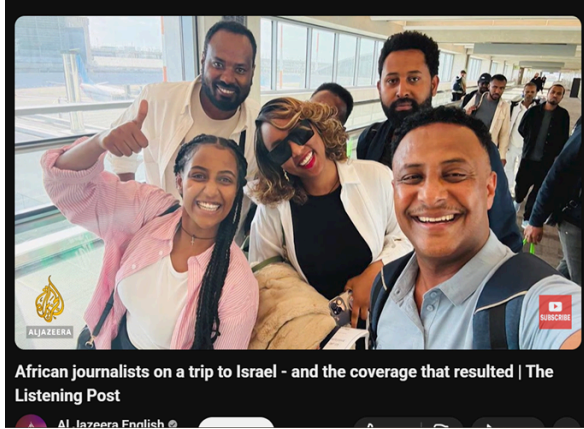
7.1.3 Reuters Report on Alleged RSF Training Camp

A Reuters [investigation](#) published on February 10 alleged that Ethiopia was hosting a secret training camp for Sudan's Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

The report sparked widespread online debate. Government supporters questioned the credibility of the report, while critics cited it as evidence of Ethiopian involvement in regional conflicts. The controversy escalated further after [authorities revoked Reuters](#) journalists' accreditation.

7.1.4 EMA Revokes Accreditations and Licenses

The Ethiopian Media Authority (EMA) declined to renew accreditation for three [Reuters](#) journalists and [revoked Addis Standard's](#) license. Earlier in January, Wazema Radio's license had also been revoked.



(Image: Screenshot taken from [Al Jazeera YouTube channel](#))

The report triggered intense debate about media ethics and journalistic independence.



(Image: Screenshot taken from a viral Ustaz [Ahmedin Jebel Facebook post](#))

Some journalists faced online backlash, while religious commentators and public figures engaged in broader discussions about the ethical implications of the trips.

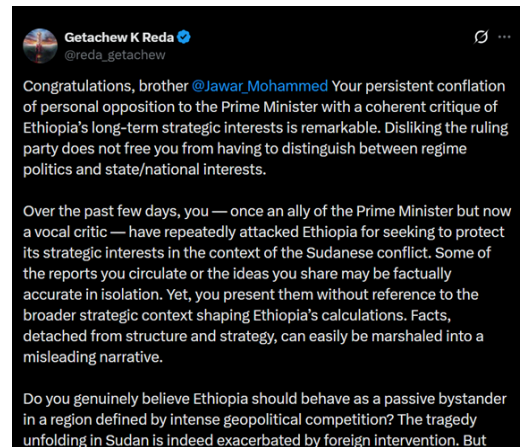
7.1.8 Jawar Mohammed - Getachew Reda Exchange

A prolonged exchange on X between Jawar Mohammed and Getachew Reda generated substantial engagement.



(Image: Screenshot taken from [Jawar Mohammed's post on X](#))

Jawar accused the Ethiopian government of undermining national security by allegedly cooperating with Sudan's Rapid Support Forces. Getachew Reda rejected the accusations, arguing that Ethiopia's policies reflect long-term national security interests.



(Image: Screenshot taken from [Getachew Reda's post on X](#))

The exchange lasted several days and mobilized large online audiences aligned with both political figures.

7.2 Election-Related Conversations

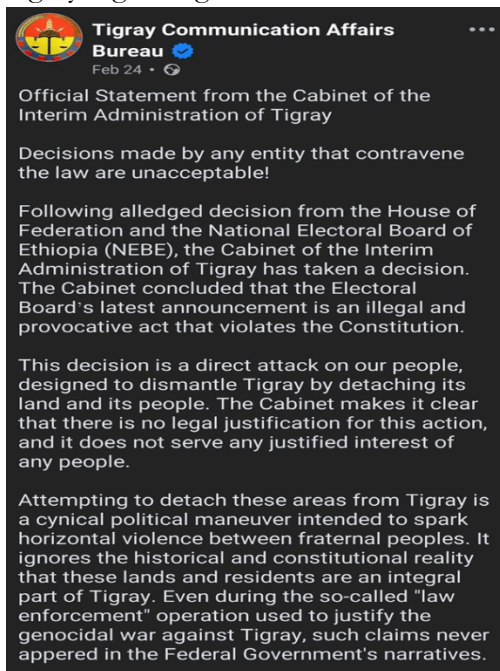
7.3 House of Federation and NEBE Decision

A decision [announced](#) by the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) regarding disputed territories between the Amhara and Tigray regions generated widespread debate.



(Image: [NEBE's statement](#))

The announcement stated that parliamentary elections in several contested districts - including Humera, Adi Remets, Korum Afla, Tselemet, and Raya Alamata - would be administered outside the jurisdiction of the Tigray regional government.



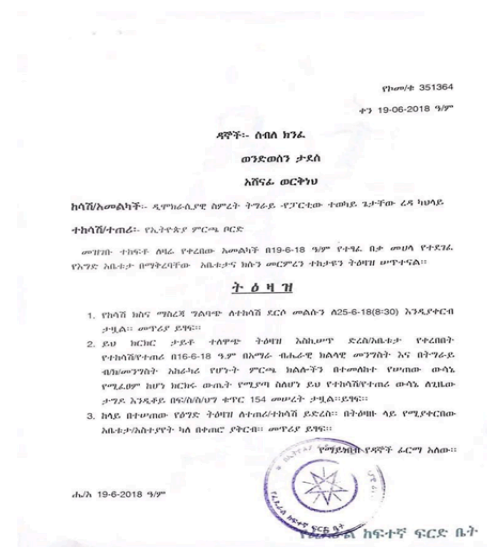
(Image: Statement by [Tigray Interim Administration](#) on NEBE's statement)

The decision sharply divided online audiences. Supporters of the decision viewed it as recognition of Amhara administrative claims, while critics, including the [Tigray Interim Administration](#), and the [Simret Party](#) led by Getachew Reda - condemned it as politically motivated.

7.4 Simret Party Court Injunction

On February 26, the Federal High Court issued a temporary injunction suspending NEBE's decision pending further review.

The legal challenge was filed by the Tigray Democratic Solidarity Party (Simret) led by Getachew Reda.



(Image: the Federal Higher Court decision)

The ruling triggered widespread discussion online. Supporters framed the decision as a legal victory for Tigrayan political representation, while critics suggested the situation reflected political maneuvering ahead of the election cycle.

7.5 Gashaw Mersha BBC Amharic Interview

A [BBC Amharic interview](#) with Gashaw Mersha generated significant online discussion after he accused the broadcaster of bias and ended the interview abruptly.



(Image: Screenshot taken from BBC News Amharic Website)

His claim that 95% of the Amhara region is peaceful, combined with criticism directed at several political figures, fueled polarized discussion across social media.

7.6 The Mistre Selassie Agenda

Activist Mistre Selassie Tamerat gained increased online visibility during February.



(Image: Screenshots from some posts against and pro Mistre Selassie)

Her outspoken criticism of the ruling party attracted support from opposition-leaning audiences, while supporters of the Prosperity Party launched counter-campaigns challenging her credibility and political motivations.

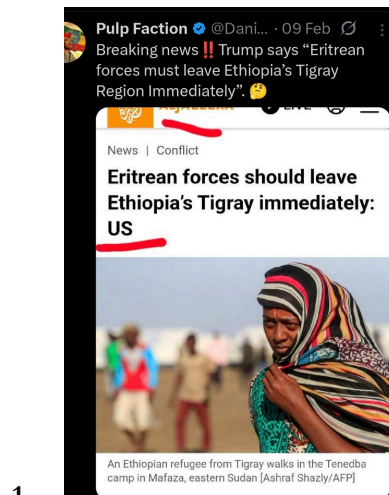
8. Disinformation Trends

Several recurring disinformation tactics were observed across Ethiopia's digital information environment during February.

8.1 Recycling Old Footage

One of the most common tactics involved reusing old images and videos from past conflicts and presenting them as current events. This pattern was particularly visible in posts related to alleged troop movements and regional tensions.

Documented Examples from Social Media Monitoring



1. (Image: Screenshot taken from an X post sharing an old report as if it were new.)



2. *(Image: A viral photo shared on social media claiming to show recent scenes from Asmara, Eritrea. However, the image was actually taken in Nigeria a year ago.)*



3. *(Image: An outdated and unrelated image circulated while claiming it was recent and related to a different topic.)*

8.2 Fabricated Screenshots

Fake screenshots falsely attributed to international media outlets circulated widely across Facebook and Telegram. These fabricated visuals were used to lend credibility to unverified political claims.

Documented Examples from Social Media Monitoring



(Image: One of the false screenshots circulated on X)

8.3 AI-Generated Images

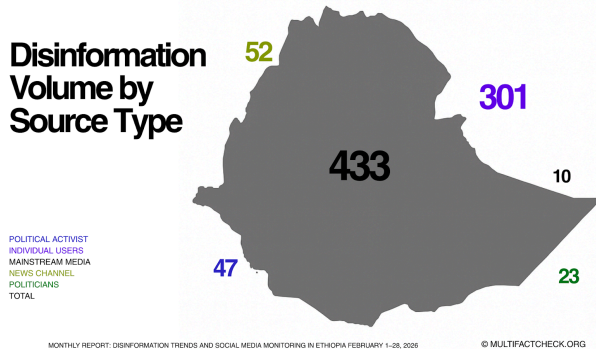
The use of AI-generated visuals continues to increase. Fabricated military imagery and manipulated political scenes circulated widely online, often designed to resemble authentic news photographs.

This trend suggests growing technical sophistication among disinformation actors operating within Ethiopia's digital space.

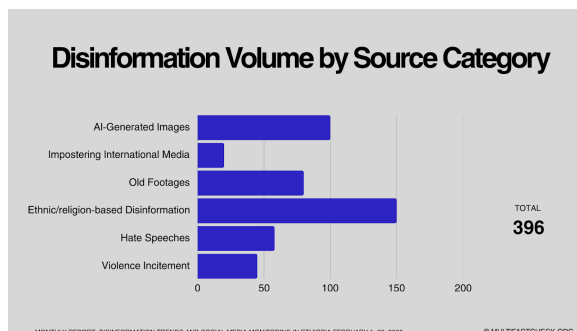
9. Data Collection Overview

During the February 1–28, 2026 monitoring period, the MFC team documented a substantial volume of disinformation circulating across Ethiopia's digital information ecosystem. In total, **433 disinformation instances** were identified and systematically analyzed throughout the month. The dataset is examined from three key analytical perspectives: **Disinformation Volume by Source Type, Disinformation Volume by Source Category, and Disinformation Distribution Across Social Media Platforms.** This multi-dimensional approach allows the monitoring team to better understand not only the scale of harmful

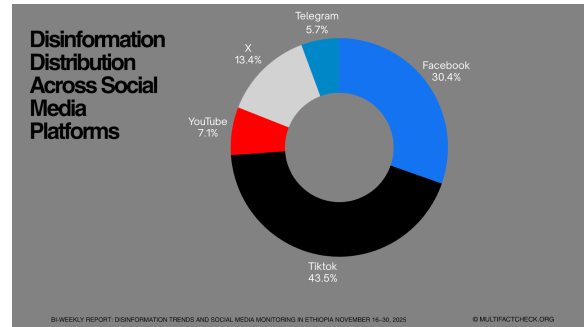
content but also the actors producing it, the narratives being amplified, and the digital spaces where these narratives gain the most traction.



Analysis of **source types** indicates that **Individual Users** remained the dominant producers of disinformation, accounting for **301 recorded instances**, representing the overwhelming majority of monitored cases. This pattern reinforces the growing role of decentralized actors in the spread of misleading or manipulated content online. **Political Activists** followed as the second most prominent source, contributing **52 instances**, suggesting continued politicization of online narratives and coordinated messaging within polarized discussions. Smaller but still notable contributions came from **Mainstream Media outlets (47 instances)**, **News Channels (23 instances)**, and **Politicians (10 instances)**.



Although these actors generated comparatively fewer pieces of disinformation, their institutional visibility and credibility can amplify the reach and perceived legitimacy of misleading narratives once they enter public discourse.



From a **content category perspective**, several recurring forms of disinformation were observed. The most prevalent forms included **AI-generated images**, manipulated or **out-of-context old footage**, and **ethnic or religion-based disinformation**, which together constituted the largest share of the monitored material. Additional categories such as **impersonation of international media outlets**, **hate speech**, and **violence-inciting narratives** also appeared within the dataset, highlighting the increasingly diverse tactics used to shape online discourse. In terms of **platform distribution**, **TikTok emerged as the leading vector**, hosting **43.5%** of all documented cases, followed by **Facebook (30.4%)** and **X (13.4%)**. Smaller proportions were identified on **YouTube (7.1%)** and **Telegram (5.7%)**. This distribution reflects the growing influence of short-form video platforms in shaping information flows in Ethiopia and underscores the need for continued monitoring of highly viral, algorithm-driven environments where visual manipulation and emotionally charged narratives can spread rapidly.

10. Conclusion

February 2026 demonstrated that Ethiopia's online information environment remains highly contested and vulnerable to manipulation.

Geopolitical tensions, media freedom disputes, and emerging election dynamics combined to create a fertile environment for disinformation. False visuals, recycled footage, and fabricated media screenshots continued to mislead audiences and deepen political polarization.

As the national election cycle approaches, the risk of coordinated information manipulation and narrative warfare is likely to increase. Continuous monitoring, rapid fact-checking, and stronger digital literacy efforts will be essential to protect the integrity of Ethiopia's information environment.

Independent fact-checking organizations, responsible media institutions, and informed digital citizens will play a critical role in reducing the harmful impact of disinformation in the months ahead.

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.