

Monthly Report: Disinformation Trends and Social Media Monitoring in Ethiopia

April 1–30, 2026

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1. Executive Summary

The digital information environment in Ethiopia visibly became more complex and active in April 2026. The month offered a blend of social and political happenings that together made the country's online landscape a lively ground for narrative debate, identity-based movements and organized disinformation, with the general election scheduled for June 2026.

During the monitoring period of April 1-30, a total of 709 cases of disinformation were recorded, an increase compared to 584 cases in March. This is indicative of the sensitivity of the political climate and the steady pace of synthetic media production. One major reason for this growth was the album *Ethiorika* by artist Teddy Afro released on 16 April 2026. Following the album's political lyrics, which some saw as a critique of the administration, there were several arrests, security measures and studio raids that generated significant social media engagement. In this context, manufactured and AI-generated images spread through channels, blurring the line between recorded truth and fabricated stories.

Tensions in the Tigray region also remained high after Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed extended the mandate of the Tigray Interim Administration, a move rejected by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) as a violation of the Pretoria Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. Amid these political divisions, disinformation based on identity increased, especially around religious events in the city of Axum. A conflict between Christian and Muslim communities led to administrative restrictions on Islamic public expressions which led to public concern and edited imagery across digital platforms.

Internationally, domestic social media discourse was given an international dimension by an increase in the violence against Ethiopian and other African migrants in South Africa. The reported detention of Addis Standard managing editor Million Beyene and the visible scar that appeared on the face of intelligence chief Redwan Hussein both generated online discussion and disinformation activity. Activists' commentary on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter) and Telegram frequently referenced gang-related violence in cities in Oromia, attributing it to the '120 gang group'.

Electoral-wise, the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) estimated the number of registered voters at more than 50.5 million citizens, but the main opposition figures said participation was low, with some parties describing the electoral environment as uneven. Electoral tensions were compounded in the last weeks of April when the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) announced a call for peaceful demonstrations across the country on May 8.

From a disinformation methodology perspective, April 2026 was confirmation of the dominance of AI-generated imagery as the primary means for producing false narratives, with 300 of the 709 documented cases. The second most common category was disinformation based on ethnicity and religion, which highlights how identity is often used in Ethiopia's fractious information environment. Facebook continued to be the top distribution platform with 42.8% of cases, followed by TikTok and X with 25.7% each. False content was still most often spread by individual users, but political activists and news channels still played a role in spreading false content. These trends point to a period of increased risk to Ethiopia's information integrity in the lead-up to the June election.

2. Key Findings

- *Cultural flashpoint as disinformation trigger:* The release of Teddy Afro’s album *Ethiorika* triggered one of the largest one-off disinformation spikes of 2026, with fake images, recycled videos and false arrest stories going viral on all tracked platforms.
- *AI-Generated Content Dominance:* Synthetic imagery comprised 300 of the 709 documented cases, echoing the trend seen in March and further confirming that AI-generated visuals have emerged as the preferred tool for disinformation actors within Ethiopia’s digital landscape.
- *Tigray Political Fault Lines:* The TPLF’s rejection of the unilateral extension of the Tigray Interim Administration’s mandate as a violation of the Pretoria agreement unleashed a sharp wave of identity-based disinformation and speculative online discourse with real-world polarization potential.
- *Religious Tensions in Axum:* Following the clashes, administrative orders that effectively banned Islamic public expression in Axum accelerated the rapid spread of AI-generated illustrations and manipulated content, deepening ethno-religious divisions online.
- *Press Freedom Under Attack:* The abduction of journalist Million Beyene and Ethiopia’s drop to 148th in the 2026 World Press Freedom Index are symptoms of a deteriorating environment for independent reporting, which directly allows disinformation to fill the information vacuum. It is a sustained assault on press freedom.
- *Deteriorating electoral information environment:* Key opposition parties have proposed limited or conditional participation in upcoming elections, and EPRP has called for nationwide protests setting up a climate of institutional uncertainty that is ripe for narrative manipulation.
- *Gang Violence as Viral Content:* Alleged Atrocities by ‘120 gang group’ in Oromia documented, leading to proliferation of unverified, inflammatory content, with prominent activists and politicians spreading claims on various platforms.
- *Distribution Patterns of Platforms Stable:* Facebook was the leading distributor at 42.8%, with TikTok and X tied equally at 25.7% each, consistent with March trends and evidence of the multi-platform nature of Ethiopia’s disinformation ecosystem.

3. Scope

This report presents an analysis of public discourse in Ethiopia’s digital ecosystem between April 1 and April 30, 2026. The analysis is based on highly engaged platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, YouTube and Telegram. The MFC team provides a structured, evidence-based overview of the ever-changing digital landscape, tracking viral narratives, political rhetoric and coordinated disinformation campaigns. The report links social media trends with content from established news organizations and verified fact-checking organizations to provide a nuanced, contextually grounded understanding of the current information climate.

4. Approach

Using a hybrid approach that blends sophisticated digital monitoring techniques with thorough manual verification, MFC examined posts that were accessible to the public. Google News, TweetDeck, Feedly, and Telegram monitoring channels were used to monitor emerging storylines. The team was able to track the trajectory of emergent rumors from original claim to complete misinformation cycle by using an integrated strategy that allowed them to recognize and interpret them almost instantly.

The gathered narratives were methodically compared to verified data from reliable media sources, official government declarations, and fact-checking partners. This multi-source verification procedure lowers the impact of unverified assertions on the final evaluation and guarantees analytical accuracy. A narrative was categorized as an unsubstantiated assertion if it lacked supporting evidence. This procedure maintains the editorial integrity of the publication, strengthens transparency, and assists readers in differentiating fact-based reporting from speculative stuff.

5. Disclaimer

Digital content that is accessible to the public is examined in this report. It does not sponsor, encourage, or endorse any political figure, organization, or ideology. The inclusion of screenshots, links, and illustrative samples is solely for research and documentation reasons; it does not indicate endorsement or amplification of the content they represent. Claims that have been verified are always given priority. To avoid confusion and maintain analytical integrity, unverified narratives and claims are clearly indicated throughout the research.

6. Introduction and Context

One of the most important months in Ethiopia's pre-election digital history was April 2026. With the nation's seventh general election set for June, the already precarious information ecology entered a time of extreme strain, defined by the collision of unusually intense cultural, political, and security trends. The speed at which natural political occurrences were appropriated, misrepresented, and turned into weapons for narrative warfare on social media platforms was what set April apart from previous months, even as the amount of misinformation also hit a new monthly high.

The release of Teddy Afro's eagerly anticipated album *Ethiorika* served as the catalyst that most effectively defined the month. The album's overtly critical lyrics struck a chord well beyond the music industry in a nation where popular music has traditionally been seen as a gauge of political sentiment. A reported raid on the singer's studio, the detention of more than 130 young people accused of listening to the music in connection with alleged extremist ties, and the arrests of people connected to the singer were the results of government authorities' interpretation of several tracks as attacks on national unity and the ruling administration. Synthetic media swiftly magnified these actual events: AI-generated photos showing the arrests, fake video purporting to show large-scale demonstrations, and fake international news reports spread widely, making it more challenging to discern between real events and fake content.

Disinformation found a comparable and equally fertile home in the political tensions emanating from the Tigray region. Deep-seated concerns about the longevity of the peace process and the likelihood of free and fair elections in the region were rekindled by

the Prime Minister's unilateral extension of the Tigray Interim Administration's term, which the TPLF condemned as a breach of the Pretoria Agreement. As partisans on both sides used the conflict to promote opposing narratives about legitimacy, sovereignty, and political betrayal, these fears directly transferred into online division.

In Ethiopia's multicultural society, religious fault lines are rarely far from the surface. In Axum, overlapping Good Friday and Friday Jumma services resulted in deadly conflicts. Communities far outside the old city were incensed by the government's response, a broad order that essentially outlawed Islamic public expression, including the headscarf in schools, the call to prayer, and mosque gatherings. AI-generated graphics and out-of-context pictures were used by social media users in response, condensing intricate local dynamics into emotionally charged images that quickly gained traction and increased mistrust between religions.

April offered a series of secondary flashpoints in addition to these main narratives. Million Beyene, the managing editor of Addis Standard, was kidnapped, signaling an ongoing crackdown on independent media and fostering an environment where misinformation flourishes unchecked by thorough reporting. An insightful glimpse into the conspiratorial undertones of Ethiopian political discourse was provided by the widely shared controversy around Redwan Hussein's head scar. Additionally, the growing public record of gang-related violence in Oromia, which was linked to the ill-defined "120 group," showed how selective amplification and unsubstantiated accusations can turn localized security issues into national social media debates.

In terms of technology, April 2026 maintained the dominance of AI-generated material that

had originally emerged in March. In the context of an upcoming election, the normalization of synthetic imagery as a disinformation tool is especially concerning because it seriously undermines the prerequisites for informed democratic participation when citizens are unable to consistently discern between authentic documentation and fake evidence. The problem is made worse by Ethiopian newsrooms' and civil society groups' comparatively poor AI-detection capabilities, as well as the fact that major social media platforms have made little effort in content moderation for Amharic, Afaan Oromo, Tigrinya, and other Ethiopian languages.

In light of this, April 2026 serves as a warning about what the weeks leading up to Ethiopia's June election might entail - a time of convergent pressures when the dangers of coordinated narrative manipulation, identity-based incitement, and institutional delegitimization are at their peak. Ethiopia's democratic infrastructure and civil society's ability to deliver reliable information on a large scale will be put to the test in the coming months.

7. Viral Topics and Discussion Issues

High-stakes political, cultural, and security developments dominated Ethiopia's social media scene in April 2026. The stories that sparked the most public participation on the main platforms throughout the observation period are listed in this section.

7.1 High-Traction Non-Election Conversations

7.1.1 Teddy Afro's Album Release: *Ethiorika*

On April 16, 2026, renowned Ethiopian musician Teddy Afro released his eagerly awaited album *Ethiorika* following an eight-year break from full-length studio

productions. With over 50 million views on YouTube in just its first week, the 18-track album became an instant cultural and political phenomenon. This remarkable number reflected both the artist's ongoing appeal and the tense environment in which the album was released.

Some songs provoked public debate. The song "*Das Tal (Ansaw)*," whose title alludes to a traditional mourning tent, became particularly contentious due to its lyrics, which are generally understood to bemoan a "lost" nation and lament Ethiopia's current socio-political trajectory. "*Jember*," another song, struck a similar chord with listeners aware of the nation's escalating political unrest. Before the general election in June 2026, the administration quickly suppressed the album's reception, [interpreting its content](#) as a direct challenge to the Prime Minister and a threat to national unity.



Image: The Thumbnail of the controversial Track - *Das Tal*

7.1.2 The Arrests

Security personnel started attacking the singer's closest friends and family within days of the album's release. [Security officers](#) detained Yusuf Yasin (Yoseph), a close associate and lifelong personal friend, and Mahlet Solomon, Teddy Afro's assistant manager and publicist. Social media discussion quickly focused on these arrests. The government was allegedly trying to

“suffocate” the artist by keeping him from leaving the nation, according to a number of well-known social media users. A surge of AI-generated photos that purported to dramatically depict the ongoing crackdown started making the rounds on Facebook and Telegram after the arrests.

When reports spread that the Ethiopian authorities had [detained at least 130 young people](#) in the nation’s capital, Addis Ababa, on suspicion of listening to Teddy Afro’s recently released music, the situation worsened. [The administration justified](#) the widespread detentions by asserting that the people detained had reportedly planned to “disrupt the impending national election” and had suspected ties to “terrorists and extremists.” Opposition commentators and human rights monitors dismissed this explanation, characterizing the arrests as a politically motivated attempt to stifle public outcry over the album’s critical content.

7.1.3 The Studio Raid

The singer’s recording studio [was allegedly raided](#) by armed people wearing federal police uniforms in a major and highly denounced escalation. Several stories state that the burglars destroyed property inside the compound in addition to seizing equipment. During the forced entry, a security person on the property is said to have been attacked. Many users and observers saw the raid as a clear act of state intimidation against artistic expression, which sparked a new wave of social media indignation and critical criticism.

Due to the limitations on independent reporting, it was still difficult to verify the entire scale of the raid, but the convergence of several sources gave the primary account credence.

7.2 Tigray Political Tensions

7.2.1 PM Extends Tigray Interim Administration Mandate

Lieutenant General Tadesse Werede, President of the Tigray Interim Administration (TIA), was given a [one-year extension](#) by Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, which went into effect on April 9, 2026. The decision came after Tadesse Werede reportedly gave the Prime Minister a report on regional development over the previous 12 months during a performance assessment that took place in Addis Ababa. That report’s precise metrics and contents were not made public. With the TIA’s mandate to concentrate on the return of internally displaced people to their places of origin, the mandate extension also has the practical impact of postponing planned municipal and federal elections in Tigray.



Image: Tadesse Werede, TIA President

7.2.2 TPLF Officially Opposes the Extension

[Formally opposing](#) the one-year mandate extension, the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) said that the federal government’s unilateral decision violated the Pretoria Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA). The party contended that acting without such engagement compromises the

fundamental principles of the CoHA, which expressly mandates bilateral political discourse for appointments and institutional changes impacting Tigray’s government. The Prime Minister’s Office responded by [telling the BBC](#) that the extension was completely lawful since it was implemented in compliance with laws passed after the CoHA. Mistrust between the federal government and the TPLF was further exacerbated by this divergent understanding of the terms of the peace accord.

and reportedly decided to [restore the pre-war status quo](#), thereby reinstating the regional council elected in 2020 as the legitimate governing authority of Tigray. Tadesse Werede was publicly pushed to relinquish his post by the party’s spokesperson, Michael Asgedom, who presented the request as a fulfillment of the TPLF’s previous resolution. Rival parties quickly denounced the news, which deepened rifts within Tigrayan political circles.



Image: Screenshot taken from TPLF’s Facebook pages (A statement issued on 19th April, 2026)

7.2.4 Opposition Reactions

[Salsay Weyane Tigray](#), the opposition party in Tigray, denounced the TPLF’s position as a “irresponsible move” and demanded that it be promptly reversed. Salsay Weyane claimed in its statement that the TPLF’s internal strife and political scheming have “crippled public services” in Tigray while also enabling the federal government to further marginalize the area. The party reaffirmed its long-standing call for a transitional government that is inclusive of all Tigrayan political groups, as opposed to a single-party government operating under either the TIA or the TPLF.

7.2.3 Tadesse Werede’s Response

Lieutenant General Tadesse Werede [openly refuted the objections raised against the mandate extension](#), arguing that it was both lawful and essential for maintaining regional stability. Werede responded by urging critics to use formal, institutionalized procedures for any attempts to contest or change the current leadership of the Tigray Interim Regional Administration and calling for discussion as the proper means of settling political problems. His words were widely covered in Ethiopian media and provoked significant criticism across social media platforms, with opinions strongly divided along factional lines.



Image: A statement issued by SAWET party

The TIA arrangement established under the Pretoria agreement was directly rejected when the TPLF’s central committee met in Axum

7.3 Xenophobia in South Africa

By mid-April 2026, xenophobic violence and anti-immigrant sentiment had sharply increased in South Africa, with targeted attacks, harassment, and killings occurring in several provinces against foreign nationals from all across Africa, [especially Ethiopians](#). A number of African countries protested diplomatically about the violence, and migrant groups were widely warned to seek urgent protection.



Image: Violence in South Africa, Image credit Getty Images

The timing was extremely ironic: April, which was officially declared [“Freedom Month” in South Africa](#) to mark the end of apartheid, turned into a time of intense anxiety for foreigners as vigilante groups accused migrants of causing economic hardship, increased unemployment, and overburdened public services. The violence had both immediate humanitarian repercussions and substantial social media ramifications for the Ethiopian diaspora and migrant community. Graphic footage and survivor testimonies circulated extensively on Ethiopian digital platforms, intensifying grief, rage, and calls for government intervention. A portion of this content was either unverified, recycled from previous events, or taken out of its appropriate context - a pattern that is consistent with disinformation trends seen over the course of the monitoring period.

7.4 Arrest of Journalist Million Beyene

On April 15, 2026, Million Beyene, the managing editor of Addis Standard, one of Ethiopia’s most well-known independent media sites, [was kidnapped](#) from the newsroom of the newspaper in Addis Ababa by unidentified people dressed in normal clothing. In apparent violation of fundamental due process principles, he was transported to a secret and unofficial detention facility without access to legal representation or his family.

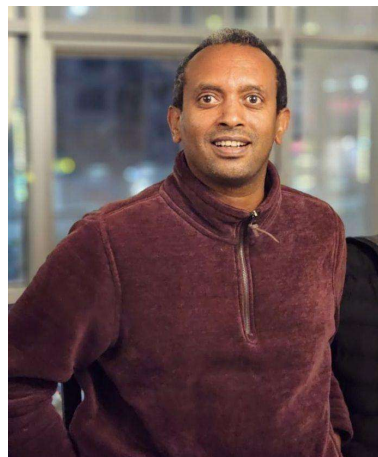


Image: Journalist Million Beyene

After being detained for around two weeks, Beyene was released to his family and legal team on April 28, 2026. Amnesty International and the [Committee to Protect Journalists \(CPJ\)](#) both voiced serious concerns about his detention, pointing out that it seemed to be directly related to his journalistic activity and was in line with a larger trend of press repression in the nation. He was one among many journalists and media professionals who were arrested during the month, according to reports. Ethiopia dropped to 148th place in the 2026 World Press Freedom Index, a score that highlights the serious and worsening restrictions on press freedom in the nation.

7.5 The Scar of Redwan Hussein

One of the most popular topics on social media in April was Redwan Hussein, the Director General of Ethiopia's National Intelligence and Security Service, who had a noticeable scar on his skull. Redwan's appearance at a public gathering with a noticeable scar and shorn head sparked a flurry of rumors and conspiracy theories on Facebook, X, and Telegram right once. Using the scar as apparent proof of a high-level security event that had been purposefully hidden from the public, opposition social media leaders claimed that Redwan had secretly traveled to Europe for medical treatment after an alleged attack.



Image: the New face of Redwan Hussain

[Redwan Hussein responded](#) to the rumors directly on his personal social media account, providing the unremarkable explanation that the scar was caused by being hit by a piece of wood in his mother's house. Although his explanation did little to stop the rumors in opposition circles, it did serve as a springboard for supporters, such as Tigray Interim Administration President [Getachew Reda](#), who responded to the more extreme conspiracy theories on social media with a noticeably caustic defense of the intelligence chief. The story provided an insightful example of how Ethiopia's security

establishment's opacity and the country's hostile political environment can turn even small-scale personal occurrences into significant sources of online misinformation.

7.6 The '120 Gang Group' Agenda

Social media sites were overrun in April with posts detailing alleged crimes committed by an unofficial criminal organization known as the "120 Gang." Along with many activists and community leaders, politicians like [Jawar Mohammed](#) started publicly exposing what they described as a persistent pattern of extortion, rape, kidnapping, beatings, killings, and other crimes committed by loosely organized groups with purported connections to government officials and security personnel. The Oromia region's cities and zones - Ambo, Adama, Borena Zone, Burayu, and Shashemene - were the main focus of this viral video.



Image: Screenshot taken from [this video](#)



Image: Screenshot taken from [this video](#)

The majority of the conversations took place on Facebook, X, and Telegram, where activists shared documentation, videos, and testimony from victims. The government’s response was uneven; some of the group’s putative members were detained, while others apparently ran away or went into hiding. A chaotic and contentious online information environment was created when a number of people connected to the suspected gang group started directly defending themselves on social media, which was an unusual move. Serious concerns regarding state capability, accountability, and the hazy distinctions between political violence and organized crime in regional Ethiopia were brought up by the incident.

7.7 Religious Tensions in Axum

A precarious interfaith balance was upset on April 10, 2026, when the simultaneous commemoration of Good Friday and Friday Jummah prayers resulted in violent altercations in the historic city of Axum, which is regarded as the spiritual center of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity. There were

injuries and property damage as a result of the conflicts between the city’s Muslim minority, which makes up around 10% of the population, and the majority Orthodox Christian community.

Following the incident, local authorities issued a broad administrative order that essentially made practicing Islam in public inside Axum’s borders illegal. The directive closed mosque premises that had been operating out of rented spaces, forbade Islamic funeral processions on major roads, banned the wearing of the hijab in all public schools, and silenced the Azan (call to prayer) by forbidding the use of loudspeakers for Islamic worship, according to [reports supported by social media](#) commentary. The actions, according to rights activists and representatives of the Muslim community, are the most recent phase of a decades-long cycle of repression in which Axum’s Muslim population has been gradually driven to the periphery of public life due to repeated limitations on mosque construction and religious expression.

As the news circulates on Ethiopia’s digital platforms, it causes intense indignation, especially among Muslim communities, and inspires the production and dissemination of AI-generated graphics intended to illustrate the situation and raise awareness of the problem. Even if these pictures weren’t actual documentary evidence, they did represent real public grief and led to a dramatic increase in online interfaith conversation, with ramifications that went well beyond Axum.

Election-Related Topics

8.1 EPRP Call for Peaceful Protests

On May 8, 2026, the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Party (EPRP) formally called for nonviolent protests across the country,

focusing on key cities such as Addis Ababa, Mekelle, and Bahir Dar. The ruling Prosperity Party’s preparations for the June 2026 election were described by the party in its call to action as a “pseudo-election” that lacked the democratic requirements for free, fair, and credible participation. In order to guarantee the integrity and security of the voting process, the EPRP called for real government-led talks with armed groups and demanded an immediate end to the ongoing conflicts throughout the nation.

The party notably emphasized the growing pressure on the press as a crucial structural issue, pointing out that journalists encounter substantial and exacerbating challenges that essentially impede open reporting on Ethiopia’s unstable political environment. On social media, the protest appeal was extensively circulated and discussed, eliciting both statements of support and cautions about possible disruptions prior to the election from pundits allied with the administration.

8.2 Voter Registration Update

By the deadline of April 22, 2026, over 50.5 million voters have registered for the next 7th General Election, [according to Melatwork Hailu](#), Chairperson of the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE). With 5.5 million digital registrations made using the “*Mirchaye*” mobile application, the figure marks an important turning point in Ethiopia’s electoral process and indicates a substantial move toward digital civic engagement. Members of the armed forces and internally displaced individuals are not included in the total; their participation framework is still governed by different rules.



Image: Melatwork Hailu, Chairperson of the NEBE

The announcement came after a protracted process of voter registration, which was backed by a strong civic and logistical framework that included the deployment of over 1,100 credentialed media nationwide and 169 recognized civic groups. Preparations for inter-party discussions and the creation of campaign conduct standards were already in progress while the board worked to complete registration data, demonstrating NEBE’s dedication to an open and participatory election process. Opposition parties and civil society organizations reacted cautiously to the announcement, with some questioning whether the process had been carried out in an environment of true freedom and equal access.

8.3 Merera Gudina’s Interview

The Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) Chairman, Professor Merera Gudina, revealed the party’s official evaluation of the impending election in an open and extensively discussed conversation with [The Reporter](#). Merera claims that in order to assess whether the current circumstances allowed for a free and fair election campaign in the party’s primary seats, the OFC’s Central Committee had a number of talks with representatives from Addis Ababa and the Oromia region.



Image: Merera Gudina (Prof.), Chairperson, OFC

After these discussions, the OFC came to the conclusion that the political climate was still essentially unsuitable for a truly competitive election. However, the OFC announced a strategy of limited and selective participation, fielding candidates only in specific areas of Addis Ababa/Finfinne, while maintaining its overall assessment that the upcoming election is unlikely to advance national peace or political stability. This was done in recognition of the legal limitations that prevent the party from formally boycotting the election in its entirety and acknowledging that the underlying structural issues remain unresolved. Both fans and detractors of Merera's interview analyzed its implications for the larger electoral landscape, drawing extensive media and online criticism.

Disinformation Trends

The main misinformation strategies noted in earlier months continued and became more intense in April 2026, with the addition of significant political and cultural events serving as new fuel for the dissemination of false and deceptive content. The expansion of AI-generated visual content and the deliberate resurfacing of old video and debunked narratives were the two main methodological trends that were noted.

9.1 AI-Generated Images

9.1.1 Disinformation Related to the Album Release

There was an instant and ongoing demand for visual content that dramatized the government's response following the release of Teddy Afro's *Ethiorika* album. In this context, AI-generated pictures that purported to show the arrested people, the purported studio raid, and protests that were allegedly happening in Addis Ababa went viral on Facebook and Telegram. The most popular of these photos, according to MFC's monitoring team, was fake, produced using generative AI algorithms, and disguised as genuine documents.



Images: Widely circulated AI-generated images right after Mablet Solomon and Yusuf Yasin were arrested

9.1.2 AI-Generated Images Related to Religious Conflict

In an effort to raise awareness of the issue and increase its emotional and political impact, social media users produced and shared AI-generated illustrations after religious tensions in Axum erupted and news of the administrative directives limiting Islamic practice spread. Many of these pictures were

shared and viewed as though they showed real occurrences, even though their makers obviously considered them to be illustrative rather than documentary. MFC recorded several incidents when AI-generated images of mosque closures, conflicts, and prohibited religious celebrations were displayed online without due credit or context, escalating interfaith tensions.



Image: An AI-Generated image widely circulated on social media platforms claiming “Axum incident”

9.2 Resurfacing Old Footage

9.2.1 Fabricated Protest Videos

Recirculating outdated films with accusations of large-scale public demonstrations in Addis Ababa connected to the Teddy Afro CD was one of the most effective disinformation strategies used in April. Several films from earlier events - some from different nations - that were repackaged with fresh subtitles and audio commentary that falsely claimed that huge protests were taking place in the Ethiopian capital were found by MFC. These videos demonstrated the ongoing problem of “false context” misinformation in a fast-paced news environment by gaining substantial traction on Facebook before they could be confirmed and refuted.



Image: A screenshot from a false claim verified by MFC

9.2.2 Conflict-Related Old Footage

Archival video continued to be recycled in Ethiopia due to ongoing crisis circumstances. In April, MFC recorded several incidents where recordings from previous military operations, neighborhood conflicts, or other places were reposted on social media as proof of ongoing violence. This strategy takes advantage of Ethiopian internet spaces' limited ability for quick visual verification as well as the sense of urgency that viewers experience during current crisis coverage. Overall, social media users trying to comprehend rapidly evolving security developments saw a constant amplification of dread, uncertainty, and divisiveness.

Data Collection Overview

The MFC team observed a notable and persistent increase in disinformation

throughout Ethiopia's digital ecosystem between April 1 and April 30, 2026 - the highest monthly total to date in 2026. Compared to the 584 cases reported in March, a total of 709 examples of disinformation were found and thoroughly examined. Both the increased political sensitivity of the pre-election time and the explosive impact of cultural and security events that dominated national debate throughout the month are reflected in this increasing trend. Three crucial analytical lenses were used to analyze the dataset: Disinformation Distribution Across Social Media Platforms, Disinformation Volume by Source Type, and Disinformation Volume by Source Category. When combined, these frameworks show the changing strategies used by different players to sway public perceptions and pinpoint the online environments where lies were most prevalent.

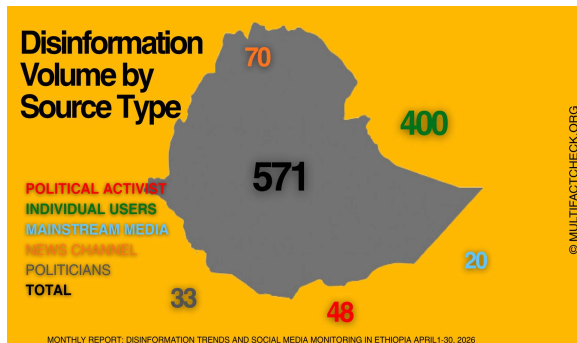
10.1 Disinformation Volume by Source Type

With 400 recorded instances - the vast majority of all documented cases - individual users continued to be the primary disseminators of misinformation in April, according to an analysis of source types. This data highlights the crucial and ongoing role that non-institutional, decentralized individuals play in spreading and promoting questionable content on Ethiopia's digital platforms. It also illustrates the extent to which disinformation spreads and gains traction mostly through regular social media users rather than organized propaganda networks.

With 48 instances, Political Activists was the second most active source category, followed by News Channels and Politicians with 70 and 33 times, respectively. With 20 cases, mainstream media outlets were linked to the least amount of misinformation. The reach and perceived credibility of institutional actors, media organizations, politicians, and

news channels give disproportionate legitimacy to the narratives they amplify, potentially extending the downstream impact of their contributions well beyond what the raw numbers suggest, even though they produced a smaller absolute volume of disinformation content.

The core monitored dataset is represented by the sum of 571 instances recorded under the Source Type framework, while the comprehensive figure of 709 includes all categories, including borderline and cross-platform cases that require further verification.



10.2 Disinformation Volume by Source Category

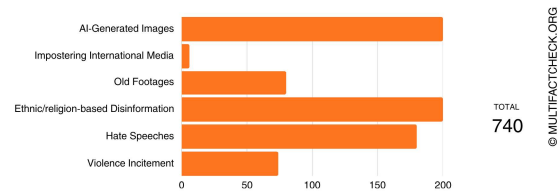
Within the recorded misinformation content, the monitoring team found multiple distinct false formats. With 300 cases reported during the month, AI-Generated Images once again became the most common technique for creating and disseminating misinformation. This result shows a notable qualitative increase in the sophistication of disinformation strategies and validates the concerning trend initially reported in March. Synthetic imagery proved to be a particularly powerful tool of narrative manipulation since it was easily shareable, emotionally resonant, and resistant to quick verification. This was notably true of images associated with the

Teddy Afro album debacle and the religious tensions in Axum.

Disinformation based on ethnicity or religion was the second most common category, with almost 200 cases reported. The Axum religious conflict, the political tensions in Tigray, and the ongoing intercommunal conflicts throughout the nation are all directly linked to the persistent and active weaponization of identity-based narratives, as is reflected in this image. About 180 incidents of hate speech were reported, which is a significant rise from the 70 in March and may be related to the increased tensions brought on by the album issue as well as the month's security and religious events.

Given the limited visual verification capabilities available to regular users, Old Footage, which was recorded at about 80 occasions, remained to constitute a substantial portion of documented deception. Violence incitement accounted for over 70 cases, while impersonating international media accounted for about 10. This is a significant increase that is consistent with the inflammatory content created around gang violence in Oromia and the Axum riots. Fact-checkers and platform moderators in Ethiopia's digital realm face a multifaceted issue, as evidenced by the presence of AI-driven material and the continuation of identity-based and incitement-oriented disinformation.

Disinformation Volume by Source Category



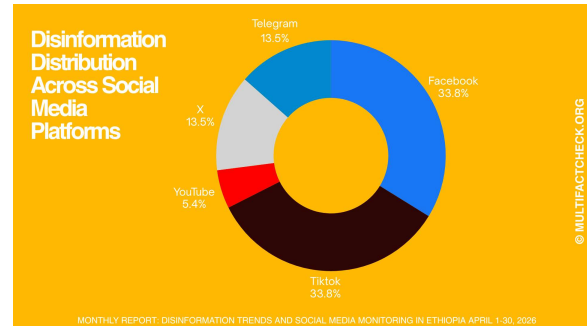
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10.3 Disinformation Distribution Across Social Media Platforms

In terms of platform distribution, Facebook retained its position as the primary vector for disinformation dissemination in April, accounting for 33.8% of all documented cases. While this is a slight shift from the 42.8% recorded in March, Facebook's continued dominance reflects the platform's unparalleled reach among Ethiopian users and its persistent role as the main arena for political discourse, news sharing, and narrative amplification in the country.

TikTok emerged as co-dominant with Facebook in April, matching it at 33.8%, a striking development that reflects the short-form video platform's growing influence as a vehicle for emotionally charged, easily shareable, and rapidly virilized disinformation content. The fact that TikTok has risen to parity with Facebook signals a significant shift in the disinformation landscape that demands increased attention from both fact-checkers and platform accountability advocates.

Telegram and X (formerly Twitter) each accounted for 13.5% of documented disinformation distribution, reflecting their sustained roles as platforms for organized political commentary, group-based content sharing, and real-time news amplification. YouTube recorded 5.4% of cases, a modest but notable increase from previous months, consistent with the use of the platform to host and distribute longer-form fabricated or misleading video content. This multi-platform distribution pattern confirms that disinformation in Ethiopia's digital ecosystem is not concentrated on a single channel but is instead adapted to the distinct affordances and audiences of each major platform.



Conclusion

Ahead of the June general election, April 2026 confirmed that Ethiopia's information ecology is about to face its most perilous period. This month's 709 misinformation incidents - the largest monthly total in 2026 to date - represent both a quantitative record and a qualitative change in the threat's sophistication and intentionality. The Teddy Afro record controversy, political unrest in Tigray, religious strife in Axum, a declining environment for press freedom, and an increase in gang violence in Oromia all came together to create a particularly target-rich environment for misinformation players operating at all levels of sophistication.

AI-generated imagery, which accounted for 300 of the 709 recorded cases, cemented its status as the predominant disinformation strategy and proved especially challenging to resist given the speed at which it was produced and the emotional impact of its visual content. Because short-form video content is intrinsically more viral, less textually verifiable, and more likely to be repeated without critical inspection than traditional written or image-based deception, TikTok's climb to parity with Facebook as a key distribution platform raises additional concerns.

Individual users continue to be the main source category, making up 400 out of 571 core instances. This indicates that Ethiopia's misinformation threat is organic and decentralized rather than only the result of coordinated state-affiliated activities. Traditional top-down content control is inadequate as a stand-alone solution because of this structural reality. Increased AI-detection capabilities in Ethiopian newsrooms and civil society organizations, large-scale investments in digital and media literacy, and a proactive rather than reactive approach from electoral institutions like NEBE are all necessary to counter the threat.

In particular, identity-based agitation, fake proof of electoral fraud or violence, and attempts to undermine independent media and the political process are among the identified disinformation categories that MFC expects to continue to escalate as the June election approaches. Ethiopia's ability to protect its information environment and guarantee that its citizens have access to reliable, verifiable information necessary for meaningful participation in democratic life will be put to the test in the upcoming weeks. As the election draws near, MFC will keep an eye on, record, and report on these developments.

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.