

**January 15, - February 15, 2021**

# **SOCIAL MEDIA HEALTH REPORT IN ETHIOPIA**

*A report compiled by the Center for  
Advancement of Rights and Democracy  
(CARD)*

# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
FINDINGS	2
KEY ISSUES OF THE MONTH	2
SECURITY CONCERNS IN TIGRAY REGION	2
RALLIES 'TO SUPPORT PM ABIY AHMED'	5
TWITTER CAMPAIGN WITH THE HASHTAG #OROMOYELLOWMOVEMENT AND #WEALLAREPRISONERSHENCETHEYELLOW	7
TWITTER CAMPAIGN WITH THE HASHTAG #UNITYFORETHIOPIAIO	
CONCLUSION	15

## **INTRODUCTION**

This social media health report construes the monitoring conducted in the working days between the 15<sup>th</sup> of January 2021 through the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2021. The *Health Report* is aimed at assessing mainly the key issues on social media, the overall dynamics of hate speech in the country, and what they mean for the socio-political development of Ethiopia.

The monitoring of this month includes the overall assessment of social media activities through the platform of Crowd tangle and Brandwatch. Key issues are determined based on the degree of interaction and the attention it received on social media.

# FINDINGS

## KEY ISSUES OF THE MONTH

During this period, the following issues were widely discussed:

- ***Security concerns in Tigray Region***

Parties namely the Tigray Independence Party (TIP), Salsay Weyane Tigray (SAWET), and the National Congress of the Great Tigray (Baytona) held a joint press conference on 2<sup>nd</sup> February on the current situation in Tigray. In a statement, they stated that the Eritrean army has provided technical support to the Amhara militias and mercenaries from Somalia and non-African actors. The press release was widely covered by the international media including the Associated Press and FRANCE 24. Eritrea denied allegations made by the US Embassy in Asmara.

**Social media reaction:** Following the varying information coming out, there were varying reactions on social media. Some were blaming the Amhara, Eritrean troop for what happened in Tigray naming it ‘a government facilitated genocide against the people of Tigray’ and ‘a betrayal by Ethiopians’. While there were calls for immediate intervention, fake images were being circulated as well.



Image 1: Post calling Ethiopians to leave Tigray or Tigray to wipe out the people

**Translation of post in Image 1:** “Ethiopia and its boss, Shabia<sup>1</sup>, have two options: to leave Tigray, or to be wiped out by the people of Tigray! Tigray’s victory is inevitable by all means!

1 The Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF), Shabia, was an armed Marxist-Leninist organization that fought for the independence of Eritrea from Ethiopia.



*Image 2: Use of an old picture from Eritrea saying this is a shelled wall of a church found in Tigray.*

**Translation of the post in Image 2:** “The Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Mahibere kidusan did not stop the Tigrayan mothers from persevering in their faith, despite the fact that the Tigrayan clergy looted the Ark for mass shootings of churches in Tigray.”

Reverse image search proves that this post is using an old picture from Eritrea.

- **Rallies ‘to support PM Abiy Ahmed’**

Public rallies which are reported as demonstrating support for Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed have been taking place in various regions and cities since February 2. In a related development, the Prime Minister wrote on his social media page, praising the demonstrators throughout Oromia. **Social media reaction:** Various messages of frustration have been spread by different social media users.

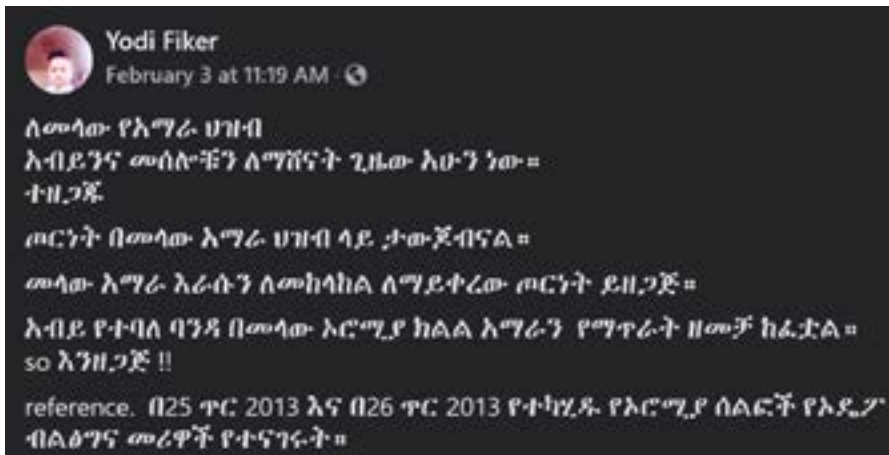


Image 3: Call for violence Post

**Translation of post in Image 3:** “To all the people of Amhara, now is the time to make Abiy and his likes urinate. Get ready, War has been declared on the entire people of Amhara. Let the whole of Amhara prepare for the inevitable war. Banda launches a campaign to clean up Amhara throughout Oromia. So let’s get ready!! Reference: What ODP’s prosperity party leaders said on demonstrations in Oromia on January 25, 2013 and January 26, 2021.”

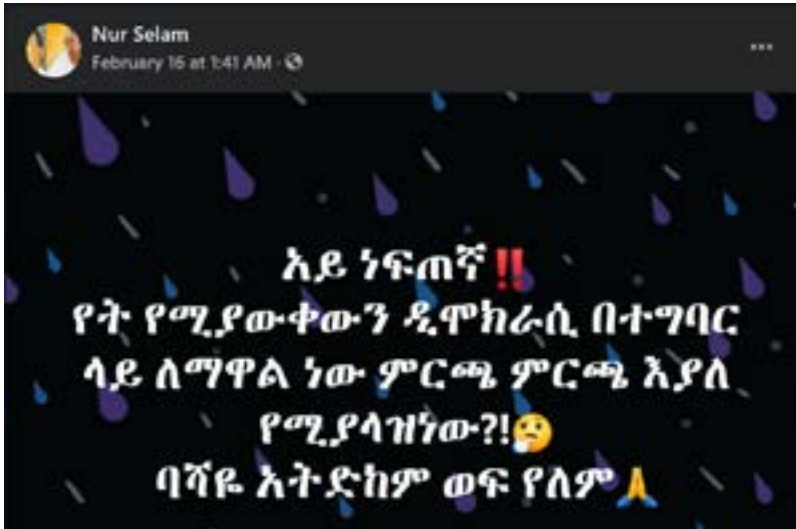


Image 4: Post referring to the people of Amhara as ‘Neftegna’ and as those who have no knowledge of what democracy is, so the election they are aiming for will not happen.

**Translation of the Post in Image 4:** “Oh Neftegna! They are saying election election when they didn’t even know democracy. Don’t try so hard as there will be nothing!”



- **Twitter campaign with the hashtag #OromoYellowMovement and #WeAllArePrisonersHenceTheYellow**

In relation to the Oromo politicians in jail, a Twitter campaign was held, on February 02 using hashtags #OromoYellowMovement and #WeAllArePrisonersHenceTheYellow. The hashtags have a total mention of 98,000 by 5,796 unique authors. According to the organizers, the aim of the campaign was to raise the voice of Oromo political prisoners who are on a hunger strike. Prisoners participating in the hunger strike raised three basic questions. These are related to the safety of Colonel Gemechu Ayana, one of their co-defendant and a senior OLF leader; harassment of families, relatives, and friends who come to visit the prisoners; and the release of those imprisoned for wearing yellow uniforms in court to show solidarity with the political leaders in jail.

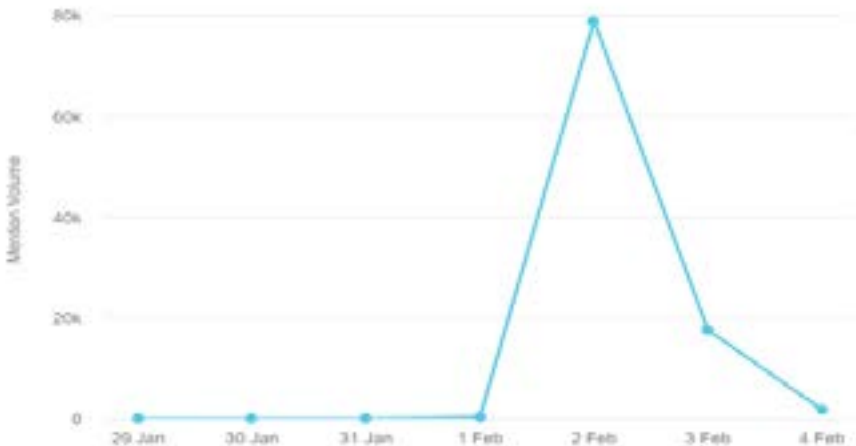
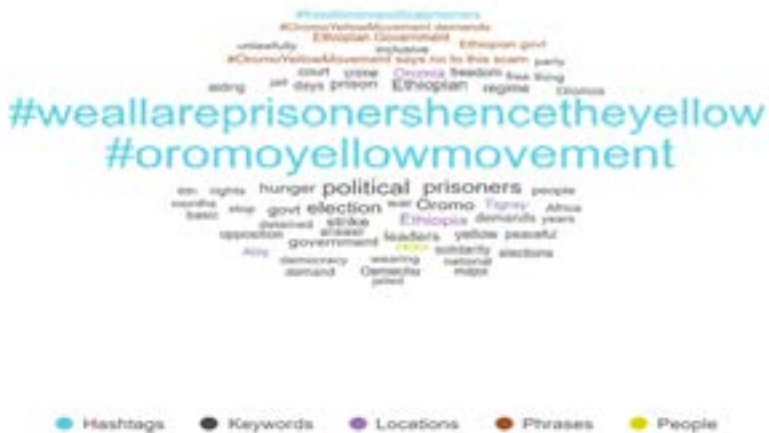


Chart 1: #OromoYellowMovement Mentions volume trend



*Chart 2: Word cloud of hashtags, locations, keywords, phrases and people mentioned in the #OromoYellowMovement.*

### ***Twitter campaign demanding full humanitarian access into Tigray***

There was another Twitter campaign demanding full humanitarian access into Tigray. At the time of compiling this report, the hashtag had 18,000 unique authors and 286,000 mentions volume. This campaign was primarily facilitated by Amnesty International. The United Nations reported that 2.3 million people in Ethiopia’s Tigray region are in immediate need of life-saving assistance and on 2<sup>nd</sup> February Amnesty International stated that humanitarian access has been difficult due to restrictions and slow processes by the Ethiopian authorities. Amnesty International called on PM Abiy Ahmed to take action and allow full access to Tigray for humanitarian workers.

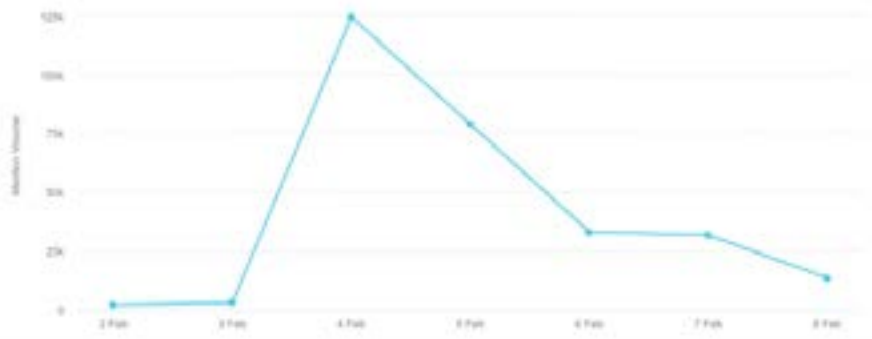


Chart 3: #AllowAccessToTigray Line chart of mentions.

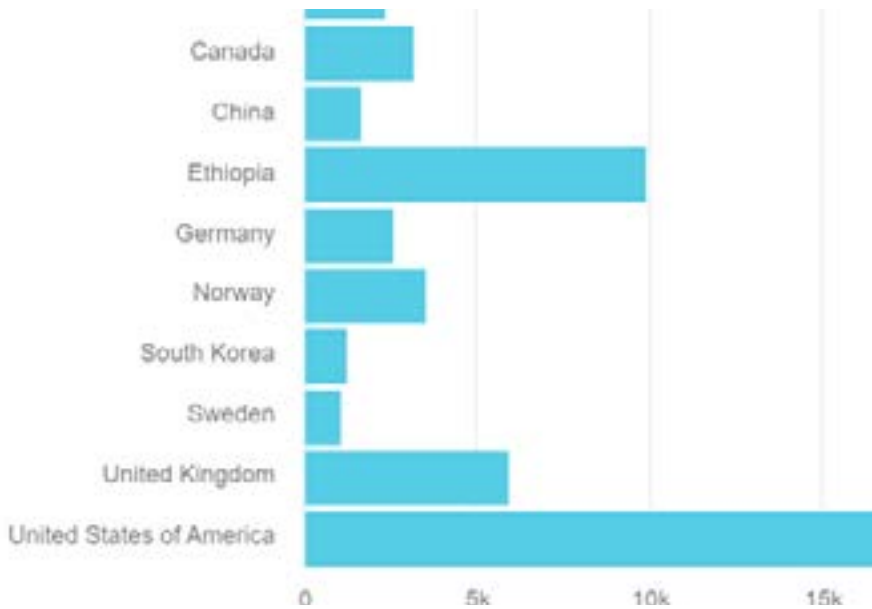


Chart 4: #AllowAccessToTigray campaign participants by location.

- **Twitter campaign with the hashtag #UnityForEthiopia**

There was a Twitter campaign with the hashtag #UnityForEthiopia following Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed’s February 2<sup>nd</sup> statement to Ethiopians around the world. In the statement, the PM called on the Ethiopians to provide accurate information about the current situation in the country to the international community. A Twitter campaign was also launched mostly by Diaspora Ethiopians on February 7 to oppose and expose the false information spread by the digital Woyane in the international media. The campaign has had 11,000 unique authors and 144,000 total mentions.

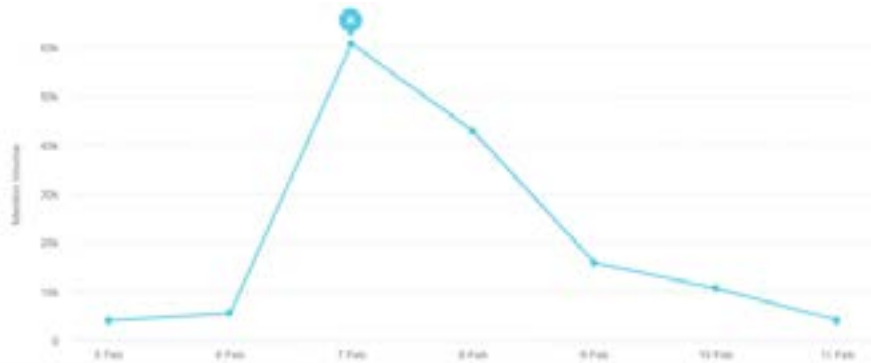


Chart 5: #UnityForEthiopia mentions volume.



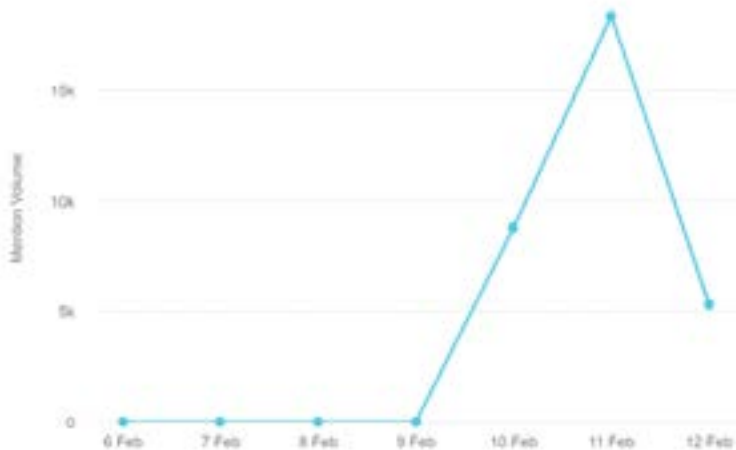


Chart 7: the trend of mentions of the hashtag #TPLFisTheCause

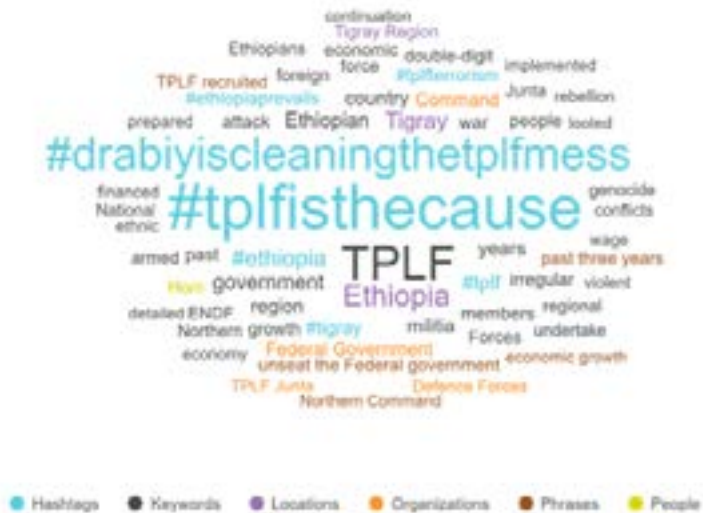


Chart 8: Word cloud of #TPLFisTheCause



*Image 8: Government facilitated Twitter campaign*

By the time the PM called on the Ethiopians to provide accurate information about the current situation in the country to the international community, a Twitter campaign with the hashtag #unityforEthiopia was carried out.



Image 9: Use of old picture

This post in Image 9 has been used in OBN news back in 2019.



## **CONCLUSION**

From our reporting for this month, it is noticeable that the social media controversy has continued. Although there have been various agendas reported throughout the month, the major topics of discussions involved content related to the upcoming election.

This month's monitoring concluded that election threats, intimidation and offensive content on legally registered parties and journalists are becoming a concern. In addition, the low level of transparency of government bodies in giving accurate and timely information is contributing to the spread of unverified information especially in relation to the security concerns in Tigray.

Moreover, the assessment observed is that there is an overlap in what people are talking about and sharing on social media. The usage of different facts might be a contributing reason for the low level of shared attention. There are varying realities shared and therefore people are exposed to different opinions. Therefore, the report concludes that the social media engagement is widely unhealthy filled with misinformation, as well as hateful and incitement content.

