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**AUDIENCE RECEPTION ANALYSIS ON  
“JIHADAWI HARAKAT” DOCUMENTARY FILM  
AMONG ADDIS ABABA COMMUNITIES**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
THE GRADUTE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION  
PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE MASTER OF ARTS IN FACULTY OF JOURNALISM AND  
COMMUNICATION**

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVESITY  
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA  
JUNE, 2013**

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Henok Nigussie, entitled: Audience reception analysis on “Jihadawi Harakat” documentary film among Addis Ababa communities and summated in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Journalism and Communication complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Audience Reception Analysis on “Jihadawi Harakat” Documentary Film among Addis Ababa Communities

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Addis Ababa University, 2013

Ethiopia Television (ETV) aired a ‘documentary’ entitled “Jihadawi Harakat” on February 5, 2013. The documentary film presented Muslims who allegedly tried to establish an Islamic government in Ethiopia. The documentary film also made reference to rising religious fundamentalism in the country. This study was conducted to find out how the audience was received the message of the documentary film.

Data was collected through qualitative content analysis, focus group discussion and individual in-depth interviews.

The finding indicates that majority of the discussants perceived the meaning of the title of the documentary film as the theme of the documentary film (Islamic group movement to establish Islamic government). The audience believes that the documentary film is less credible and subjects in the documentary film do not represent the overall Muslim society. The audience also found the theme irrelevant to the socio-religious context of the country. The finding shows that audiences interpret the representation of subjects in the documentary film as terrorists and fundamentalists who threatens peace and development in the country. The study also reveals that the documentary film affected the social and religious stability in the country in many ways.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First and foremost, I would like to thank the Almighty God for his grace that helped me to endure and succeed in this challenging journey.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my adviser, Dr. Zenebe Beyene, for his constructive comments, suggestions and wholehearted guidance and help he rendered throughout this study. Had it not been for his help, this thesis would not have come in its present form. I am very grateful.

My gratitude also goes to Muluemebet Shifiraw, Zerihun Samson, Gemechu Bekele, H/Meskel Tesema, Asmamaw Addis and Senaiet W/Amanuel who contributed significantly to the betterment of this work.

Finally, I am indebted to my parents, friends and all those individuals who contributed to the betterment of this research one way or the other.

# Table of Content

Content	Page
List of Acronyms	
Operational Definitions	
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b>	
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	1
1.1 Background of the Study .....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	4
1.3 Objectives .....	5
1.3.1 General Objectives.....	6
1.3.2 Specific Objectives .....	6
1.4 Research Questions.....	6
1.5 Significance of the Study.....	6
1.6 Scope of the Study .....	7
1.7 Limitation of the Study.....	7
1.8 Organization of the Study .....	8
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b>	
<b>2. Literature Review</b> .....	9
Introduction.....	9
2.1 Islam in Ethiopia.....	9
2.1.1The Ethiopians (Habashas) and Islam.....	9
2.1.2 Resurgence of Islamic Reform in Post-1991 .....	13
2.1.3 Islamism, Politics and Ethiopia: Seeking religious Political Power? .....	16
2.1.4 Ethiopia: Guarded Religious Tolerance and Monitoring Islam.....	17
2.1.5 Ethiopian Islamic NGOs and Muslim Diaspora Communities.....	19
2.2 Mass Media and Representation of Islam in the Media.....	19
2.3 Documentary Film and Film audience.....	22
2.3.1 Documentary Film .....	22
2.3.2 Ethiopian Television (ETV) documentaries .....	24
2.3.3 Documentary Film audience.....	24
2.4 Concept and Impetus for Audience Research.....	25

2.4.1	Concept of Audience Research .....	25
2.4.2	Impetus for Audience Research .....	28
2.5	Traditions of audience Research .....	28
2.5.1	The Structural Tradition of Audience Measurement .....	28
2.5.2	The Behaviorist Tradition: Media Effects and Media Use .....	29
2.5.3	The Cultural Tradition and Reception Analysis .....	29
2.6	Definition and Implication of Reception Studies.....	30
2.6.1	Audience Reception Theory .....	32
2.6.1.1	Reception Analysis .....	33
2.6.2	Methods of Audience Reception Research .....	33
2.7	Factors in Reception Process .....	34
2.7.1	Situational Factors .....	35
2.7.2	Media Factors.....	35
2.7.3	Audience Factors .....	36
2.7.4	Analytical Factors .....	37
2.8	Mass Media, Meaning Production and Interpretation.....	37
2.8.1	Mass Media and Meaning Production .....	37
2.8.2	Interpretation and Search for Meaning .....	38
2.8.2.1	Interpretation and Social Context .....	39
2.8.2.2	Structure and Interpretive Constraint.....	40
2.9	Contemporary Audience Reception Studies .....	44
2.10	Theoretical Frame work .....	40
2.10.1	Encoding and Decoding Model .....	42
	Conclusion .....	45
 <b>CHAPTER THREE</b>		
<b>3.</b>	<b>Research Methodology .....</b>	<b>47</b>
	Introduction.....	47
3.1	The Research Design .....	47
3.1.1	Philosophy Underlying the Use of Cultural Studies Approach .....	47
3.2	Reception Research.....	49
3.3	Data Collection Procedures.....	50

3.3.1 Qualitative Methods.....	50
3.3.1.1 Qualitative Content Analysis .....	51
3.3.1.2 Individual In-depth Interviews.....	52
3.3.1.3 Focus Group Discussion (FGD) .....	52
3.4 Research Population and Sampling Method.....	53
3.4.1 Sampling Method.....	53
3.4.2 The Population and Sample Size .....	54
3.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation processes .....	54
3.5.1 Thematic Data Analysis.....	55
3.6 Ethical Considerations .....	56

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

<b>4. Data Presentation and Analysis.....</b>	<b>58</b>
Introduction.....	58
4.1 Results of Qualitative Data .....	68
4.1.1 Understanding of documentary title “Jihadawi Harakat” .....	68
4.1.2 Representation of Subjects in the documentary.....	69
4.1.3 Relevant to current socio-religious contexts.....	72
4.1.4 Skepticism about documentary film .....	74
4.1.5 Documentary film and religious consciousness of audiences.....	81
4.1.5.1 Polysemic Interpretations.....	82
4.1.5.2 Increased knowledge and Awareness .....	81
4.1.5.3 Critical Thought and Analysis .....	85

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

<b>5. Conclusion and Recommendations.....</b>	<b>87</b>
5.1 Conclusions.....	87
5.2 Recommendations for Further Research .....	89

Bibliography

Appendices

Appendix-A

Appendix-B

Appendix-C

## Operational definitions

**Audience:** listeners and viewers of media messages (Dominick, 1999, p.6).

**Decoding:** consists of activities that translate or interpret physical messages in to a form that has eventual meaning for receiver, (Dominick, 1999, p.6).

**Encoding:** activities that a source goes through to translate thoughts and ideas in to a form that may be perceived by the senses (Dominick, 1999, p.6).

**Islam:** the religion of the Muslims, a monotheistic faith regarded as revealed through Muhammad as the prophet of Allah (Poole, 2002, p.34).

**Jihadi Islamists:** Islamic group focusing on liberating the *ummah* (the Muslim community) from the onslaught of Western forces and on establishing the Islamic caliphate. They may operate within a defined territorial battleground or feed on local conflicts, they usually perceive themselves as part of a global *jihad* (Gerges 2005; Hegghammer, 2007, p.62).

**Muslim:** a follower of Islam (Poole, 2002, p.34).

**Political Islamism:** denotes groups which limit their activism within a defined local or national scene, and which seek to attain power and influence within this defined area. It contains groups that strive for the improvement of Muslim rights and parity with other religions, those working for a social order permeated by Islamic values as well as those seeking the establishment of an Islamic state (Hegghammer, 2007, p.62).

**Reception:** audiences' response to radio messages (Dominick, 1999, p.6).

**Reformist Islamism:** refers to groups that focus on reforming the religious sphere; combating practices perceived as un-Islamic and infusing a stronger emphasis on individual piety (Hegghammer, 2007, p.62).

**Representation:** to mean the social proceeded of combining signs to produce meanings. While it is evident that the media do reproduce the dominant ideologies of the society of which they are a part, I would argue that they also construct their own 'meaning' (norms and values) through signifying practices (Pool, 2002, p.23).

**Text:** Media product or outlets (Dominick, 1999, p.76).

## **List of Acronyms**

AAUUF: Addis Ababa Ulema Unity Forum

EDA: EDA Eritrean Democratic Alliance

EIASC: Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council

EPRDF: Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front

ERTA: Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency

EMDA: Ethiopian Muslim Development Agency

ETV: Ethiopian Television

FGD: Focus group discussion

OLF: Oromo Liberation Front

ONLF: Ogaden National Liberation Front

PCP: Popular Congress Party

PFDJ: People's Front for Democracy and Justice

TFG: Transitional Federal Government

TNG: Transitional National Government

UIC: United Islamic Courts

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

The media has become obsessed with "Islam," which in their voguish lexicon has acquired only two meanings, according to Said (1998) both of them are unacceptable and impoverishing. On the one hand, "Islam" represents the threat of a resurgent atavism, which suggests not only the menace of a return to the Middle Ages but the destruction of the democratic order in the Western world. On the other hand, "Islam" is made to stand for a defensive counter response to this first image of Islam as threat, especially when, for geopolitical reasons, "good" Moslems like the Saudi Arabians or the Afghan Moslem "freedom fighters" are in question (Said, 1998).

Public perception towards Muslims and Islam varies by country, ethnic group, and whether the discussion is about Muslims as individuals or Islam as a political movement. In the United States and Europe, public perception towards Muslim is a favorable one and people consider Muslims as individuals, as neighbors, friends and work colleagues. But in a politicized context, Muslims and Islam are viewed mostly negatively, especially those of Arab descent (Farid, 2005). Common stereotypes include: Terrorist, Anti-American, Anti-modern, Anti-women rights, Anti-democracy, Shady rich, Oil sheik, Religious zealot, using Islam to justify militant extremism (Progler, 2005). Anything said in defense of Islam is more or less forced into the apologetic form of a plea for Islam's humanism, its contributions to civilization, development and perhaps even to democratic niceness (Said, 1998).

According to Gee, (2005) workers in the media must give serious care to the sensitivities of believers. Branding an entire religious group as being guilty of some evil doings is wrong. In this instance, those delivering the report should 'editorialize' on the inflammatory remark.

The media magnification of extremism is nowhere more challenging than at the intersection of religion and politics. The increasing public awareness of Islam in both negative and positive senses more than ever signifies the importance of the media's impact on the way people construct images of communities that are different from them. The media is a powerful agent of change and many individuals and groups vie for its control. In other words, the media is by no

means insulated from politics. International or regional media coverage of Islam is not innocent of politics (Farid, 2005).

Werner Vom Busch (2005) states three obstacles to writing balanced and objective media reporting and need consideration. These include: First, how can news coverage be objective if journalists lack the historical knowledge, first-hand experience, or the contacts to understand, for instance, the schisms within Islam? Second, How can news coverage be balanced, if terrorist violence by Muslims against non-Muslims is given far more attention than, for instance, Muslim violence against other Muslims, or non-Muslim violence against Muslims? And finally, how can news coverage be neutral if it is embedded in differing Media's capes and serve different masters and audiences (Busch, 2005)?

Clearly, possible answers to these questions are not purely technical but also relate to questions of identity (religious, ethnic, gender, generational) and power. Who is reporting about Islam; who are the opinion-shaping experts cited in the media, and whose views are predominantly represented in the media? Although the challenges in covering Islam evenly, objectively and with insight seem considerable, they are not insurmountable (Busch, 2005).

As far as the Ethiopian situation is concerned, Ethiopia is one of the first places Islam gained ground (Henze, 2000). One case in point is the role of Ethiopia in the history of Islam. Although situated next door to the cradle of Islam, known as "al-Ahbash", the leader of "al-Ahbash" came to Beirut from Ethiopia with a rather flexible interpretation of Islam, which revolved around political coexistence with non-Muslims (Mustafa, K. and Haggai, E., 2006).

The story of the contemporary rivalry between al-Ahbash and the Wahhabiyya has its roots in the Ethiopian town of Harar, the old capital of Islam in the Horn of Africa. The contemporary inner-Islamic, Ahbash-Wahhabiyya conceptual rivalry turned into a verbal war conducted in traditional ways, as well as by means of modern channels of Internet exchanges and polemics in the 1990s. Their debate goes to the heart of Islam's major dilemmas as it attracts attention and draws active participation from all over the world (Mustafa Kabha and Haggai Erlich 2006).

Today the number of Ethiopian Muslims are estimated to be between 23.9 and 27.7 million (approximately 34 per cent of Ethiopians are Muslim, 63 per cent of Ethiopians are Christians)

Ethiopia ranks as the third largest Muslim population in Africa after Nigeria and Egypt<sup>1</sup>. Most scholars believed that the 1991 political transition in Ethiopia created a favorable climate for religious activism and led to the expansion of Islamism, represented by the Salafi movement, the Jamat al- Tabligh and the so-called Intellectualist movement (Oumer, 2006).

The post-1991 political climate proved favorable for Muslim engagement in public life. But, according to Østebø (2008) this initial freedom was severely curtailed from the mid-1990s. Concerned over increased religious activism, which the government interpreted as a radicalization of Islam, several incidents led the authorities on a campaign of closing down Muslim organizations and arresting a number of individuals during 1995/96. This new situation consequently left the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council (EIASC) – closely linked to the regime – as the sole actor claiming to represent Muslim interests, and has moreover contributed to the deinstitutionalize of contemporary Ethiopian Islam (Østebø, 2008).

In 2012, many Ethiopian Muslims demonstrated against the election process of the Islamic Affairs Council. Those involved in the protests felt the government was trying to fix the Islamic council-election outcome and advocate a more liberal Islamic thought, known as Al-Abash<sup>2</sup>. The formation of the Islamic Affairs Council follows months of demonstrations that ended in several clashes with the police and the arrest of more than 100 protesters, including nine prominent Muslim leaders. Twenty-nine Ethiopian Muslims were charged with plotting acts of terrorism, following their involvement in the demonstrations.

After the 29 Muslim protesters were accused of terrorism, Ethiopia Television (ETV), broadcast a ‘documentary’ entitled ‘Jihadawi Harakat.’ This documentary film was produced by the Information Network Security Agency (INSA) and the Federal Police Anti-Terror Joint Task-Force in collaboration with Ethiopian Radio and Television (ERTA).

The documentary film presented Muslims engaged in the protests as members of extremist groups exploiting the situation in order to advance their hidden agenda. Evidences from Federal Police showed that the documentary was believed to tackle concerns over rising religious fundamentalism in the country.

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<sup>1</sup> The Haven of the First Hijra (Migration), Br.Najib Mohammed, selamta, March 09, 2013. Availed at: <http://www.selamta.net/ethiopian%20muslims20history.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Amnesty International report on Ethiopian Muslim: 2 pages. Available on: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR25/016/2012/en>

Regardless of this new development in Ethiopia, no study has tried to investigate how audiences interpret “Jihadawi Harakat” the Ethiopian Television documentary film on Muslim issues. Therefore, this research aimed at studying audience reception of the documentary film aired by Ethiopian Television on February 5, 2013. Staiger (2005) argues that reception studies in the media research establish how audiences interpret media messages rather than measure the impact on audiences. In the 1980s and 1990s, the question about media influence and effects on audiences’ behavior and beliefs was replaced with how audiences interpret, make sense of, interact with and create meanings out of media content and media technologies. In being exposed to media outlets, audiences form different ideologies and social realities (Staiger, 2005).

## **1.2 . Statement of the Problem**

The “mainstream” media in Ethiopia is under the control of the government. It is not an exception in any way from the media of most African countries (Aadland and Fackler, 2009). Much research has evidenced that, throughout history, the Ethiopian media have not been free public arena specifically when it comes to political matters. Media have consistently and primarily promoted government policy and activities. Consequently, Ethiopia has little or no indigenous tradition of thinking about the press as a free commercial enterprise, or as a watchdog or critic of the government (Aadland and Fackler, 2009).

Journalistic reporting on Muslim affairs has been restricted by the government since May, 2012. A Voice of America correspondent was arrested while attempting to report on a rally of the protest movement at Awoliyah School. In late July, 2012, the distribution of the newspaper Feteḥ, one of the very few remaining non-government publications in Ethiopia, was blocked by the government reportedly because its front cover, featuring stories about the Muslim protests and the health of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, posed a threat to national security.<sup>3</sup> Since July 2012, only the Ethiopian Television (ETV) has reported on the protest of Muslim society in Ethiopia.

Ethiopian television aired “Jihadawi Harakat,” a documentary film on February 2013. The documentary film was about an Islam fundamentalist group (now under police arrest) that

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<sup>3</sup>Amnesty International report on Ethiopian Muslim: 2 pages. Available on: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR25/016/2012/en>

attempted to establish an Islamic government in Ethiopia. Winston (1995) considers audience reception a key to defining a documentary as well as essential for evaluating any documentary film's truth claims. Winston observes that the various forms of documentary have no inherent claim to representing authenticity or the truth but that it is up to the audience to evaluate the documentary filmmakers' relationship to the subject and the filmmakers' methodological choices in that representation.

So far, few studies have been conducted on reception. For instance, Beset (2007) had conducted reception research on radio audiences. The study focused on radio messages that discourage early marriage. The findings of the research were in line with social realities in the target audiences and the issue at focus. Another is Dano's (2010) thesis on Audience Reception Analysis of "Dorgaa-Dorgee" Oromia radio entertainment program in the case of Ghimbi district.

However, there is no academic research in the area of documentary film and audiences' reception on Islam issues in Ethiopian context. Therefore, to fill the aforementioned gap, this study investigated how audiences in Addis Ababa interpreted "Jihadawi Harakat" ETV documentary film.

## **1.3 Objectives**

This research had the following objectives.

### **1.3.1. General Objectives**

The general purpose of the research was to investigate how audiences in Addis Ababa interpret the messages of "Jihadawi Harakat" documentary film aired by Ethiopian Television, regarding Muslim issues.

### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives of the study was to

- ✚ examine how the audiences in Addis Ababa interpret “Jihadawi Harakat” documentary film, and
- ✚ study audiences reactions on “Jihadawi Harakat” representation of subjects in the documentary film.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The research aimed at answering the following questions:

- ✚ What interpretation do audiences bring to “Jihadawi Harakat” documentary film related to Muslim issues?
- ✚ How do audiences react on “Jihadawi Harakat” representation of subjects in the documentary film?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Audiences' understanding of a media outlet is a big concern in media research. Paul and Peter (2003, p.72) state “...Whatever a station's news/program value, it is all about competing for audiences' understanding. It is not sufficient merely to broadcast a program. It is also essential to make sure that a program is listened to and understood.”

The findings of the current study would help media professionals to have the know-how of audience reception and would inform practitioners in the media industry to understand gaps.

Furthermore, understanding of audiences' receptions of “Jihadawi Harakat” will serve as a stepping stone for further research.

### **1.6 Scope of the Study**

The study focused on “Jihadawi Harakat” Ethiopian television documentary film related to Muslim issues which aired on February 2013. The target populations of the study were selected Addis Ababa communities. The “Jihadawi Harakat” documentary film was used for qualitative

content analysis to guide the researcher in Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and individual in-depth interviews.

### **1.7 Limitations of the Study**

There are several factors that need to be taken into consideration, such as religion, cultural activities, social class, language and community when one undertakes a research of this nature. This study tried to provide an overview of these aspects through the participation profile form, but did not delve into the demographic profile of participants in great detail in the analysis and interpretation of findings. This is because rather than making distinctions between various segments of the audience, this study simply sought to provide an overview of how Addis Ababa communities engage with “Jihadawi Harakat” documentary film. The participant profile form was used to contextualize participant information.

The focus area of this study is Addis Ababa. The subjects of the study were selected using convenience and purposive sampling techniques. Therefore, the subjects are not representative. For this reason, the conclusions drawn cannot be generalized beyond the respondents’ realities. Organizing groups of respondents was also a daunting challenge for the focus group: participants were reluctant to sacrifice their time for a study. In addition, resource constraints and getting appropriate study subjects as required were great challenges to undertake the study.

### **1.8. Organization of the Study**

This thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter deals with the background, statement of the problem, the research objectives, the research question and limitations of the study. The second chapter reviews the literature related to the study. The third chapter is where the methodology of the study is discussed in detail. The fourth chapter includes the findings and discussions. And finally, the fifth chapter concludes the thesis and suggests recommendations.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2. Literature Review**

#### **Introduction**

This study examines the audience reception of “Jihadawi Harakat” documentary film on Muslim protest in Addis Ababa. In this chapter, the researcher reviews basic concepts to define the area of the problem more manifestly, to show the link of the study with previous studies and to show the missing link in the study of audience reception. The chapter begins with a brief history of Islam and the resurgence of Islamic reform in post-1991 Ethiopia and Islamism and politics are discussed. Issues of Muslims and mass media are also discussed. Documentary film and audiences are given emphasis. Finally, concepts related to audience reception, theoretical frame-work and models used in the study are presented.

### **2.1 Islam in Ethiopia**

#### **2.1.1 The Ethiopians (Habashas) and Islam**

This section discusses the major historical actors and the current events related to Islam/Muslim in Ethiopia.

The people of Ethiopia, al-habasha, or al-ahbash (and also al-hubshdn, al-hubush), were known to ancient Arabians as the neighboring Africans across the Red Sea. Because the state of Ethiopia had embraced Christianity nearly three centuries before Muhammad and was involved in Arabian affairs, its concept as a Christian, monotheistic "other" was well known to the Prophet and his followers (Mustafa and Erlich, 2006).

Interestingly, Ethiopia was also one of the first places Islam gained ground. According to Paul B. Henze, (2000, p.42) the first direct contact between Christian Abyssinia and Islam came during Mohammad’s early preaching career in Mecca. As the prophet developed his mission, he fell into trouble with the ‘Quraysh’ clan who controlled Mecca’s holiest Shrine the Ka`aba. Henze (2000, p.43) add:

When the prophet saw the persecution to which his followers were subjected to in Mecca around 615, he sought for them a safe haven in northern Ethiopia until their hardship subsided. The Muslim Contingent remained in Abyssinia for

several years. Most returned to Mecca, the rest according to Ethiopian tradition, settled at Nejdshi in eastern Tigray, where a substantial Muslim community has survived ever since that time.

Muslim traders soon followed, establishing settlements around the coast of Red Sea and at other locations along the Horn's coastal line, especially the port of Zeila, which today is in the far northwest region of Somalia. From there, the traders gradually penetrated inland to areas east and south of the Abyssinian plateau, and eventually many settled within the Christian kingdom itself (Henze, 2000).

Ethiopia conveniently has been perceived by many Western historians of the Arab Middle East as an African "Christian island," and as largely irrelevant. In practice, however, the Christian-dominated empire has remained meaningful to all Muslims from Islam's inception. It has also been the home of Islamic communities that maintained constant contact with the Middle East. Indeed, one of the side aspects of the resurgence of political Islam since the 1970s is the emergence in Lebanon of the "The Association of Islamic Philanthropic Projects" (Jam'iyyat al-Mashari' al-Khayriyya al-Islamiyya), better known as "The Ethiopians," al-Ahbash. Its leader came to Beirut from Ethiopia with a rather flexible interpretation of Islam, which revolved around political coexistence with Christians (Mustafa and Erlich, 2006).

The term habasha was never restricted only to the Christian core of the Horn of Africa, but to its entire population, including the Muslims. Related to the terms 'habesha and Muslims' Mustafa and Erlich, (2006, p.10) also stated the following;

In Arab and Muslim eyes, al-habasha was distinguished from the blacker Africans, the suddn or zunfij. Here too, with regard to Habashi Muslims, there was some conceptual dichotomy. Habasha were considered the best African slaves. The slave trade persisted in Arabia through WWI, and the habashi enslaved were mostly animists and only rarely Christians. Thus, the term habasha did not actually have a religious meaning but rather suggested a modicum of ethnic, racial inferiority.

Precisely for that reason, and stemming from the supra-ethnic message of Islam, there has been consistently a marked effort by purists to emphasize and praise the religiosity of habashi (MuslimsMustafa and Erlich, 2006).

Also, the story of the contemporary rivalry between al-Ahbash and the Wahhabiyya has its roots in the Ethiopian town of Harar, the old capital of Islam in the Horn of Africa. Harar's long

history itself reflects the dilemmas of Muslims in Ethiopia. In 1887, Harar developed as the model of Islamic integration into all-Ethiopian culture, society, and Christian-dominated politics. In the aftermath of the short Fascist conquest of Ethiopia, 1936-41, Harari society was again split along the lines of these contradictory historical legacies. A group of local leaders, who had been sent by the Italians to make pilgrimage to Mecca and were inspired by Wahhabi influence, attempted throughout 1941-48 to revive Islamic independence from Ethiopia. After a long struggle with the Ethiopian government and its local collaborators, the group was defeated and dispersed' (Erlich, 2007).

The leader of al-Ahbash, Shaykh 'Abdalla ibn Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Harari, was the chief rival in 1941-48 in Harar and Ethiopia. Reportedly born in 1910, he received an Islamic education in Ethiopia and grew to be a firm believer in Ethiopian Islamic- Christian coexistence. As such, he became involved in the struggle over Harar during those years. According to Mustafa and Erlich (2006, p.37) the struggle revolved around two issues:

One was the nature of Islamic education in Harar. In 1941, a group of Harari-Islamic nationalists reestablished the local modern school in the spirit of Wahhabi fundamentalism. A few months later, the Ethiopian authorities closed the school and sent those involved either to prison or into exile. The second was an attempt during 1946-48 to break away from the Christian state. The same Islamic, nationalist circles in Harar organized to collaborate with the then-active Somali nationalist movement to break Harar away from Ethiopia and annex it to Islamic Somalia. They were again exposed by the Ethiopian authorities, and their leaders were punished.

In both cases, the defeated group accused Shaykh 'Abdalla of being instrumental in helping the Ethiopian establishment. Shaykh 'Abdalla and his followers continued to deny any anti-Islamic collaboration and point to the fact that, in 1948, the shaykh himself was suspected by the Ethiopian imperial regime, jailed for a time, and then forced to leave the country. Moreover, Shaykh 'Abdalla and his followers accuse Shaykh Yusuf 'Abd al-Rahman of collaborating with the Ethiopian government. (Shaykh Yusuf was later appointed to supervise the translation of the Qur'an into Amharic.) Their bitter rivalry continues to split Muslims in today's Ethiopia (Yusuf, 1997). In 1995, for example, Shaykh 'Abdalla distributed a leaflet in Ethiopia which said;

Beware of a man called Sheikh Yusuf Abd al-Rahman who left Ethiopia for Medina a long time ago and learned the principles of the Wahhabiyya from his

uncle who lives among the Wahhabis. They gave him money and he returned to Harar to spread their word. He then became close to Haile Selassie and helped him translating the Koran. The emperor gave him land in reward. When Mangistu [Haile Mariam, Ethiopia's communist ruler, 1974-1991] came to power he fled back to the Wahhabis. They again gave him money and he returned to Ethiopia to spread their false belief. Beware of this man and warn everyone of him, warn the people of Harar and all the people of Ethiopia' (Yusuf, 1997).

During Emperor Haileselassie's reign few concessions were given to the Muslims. The establishment of Islamic courts to settle family disputes did little to dispel Muslim feelings of resentment. Of course, Haileselassie's policy on the subject of religion was ostensibly emphasized on the statement: 'Religion is personal, the State is for all' (H. David, 2002). The PDRE Constitution proclaimed by the Derg in 1974, included the separation of religion and State. The Constitution purportedly recognized freedom of conscience and religion however, the Derg's regime was characterized by its worst record ever in abuses of human rights and freedoms (Bahru Zewde, 2002, p.229).

Of wider, all-Islamic importance is the major Ahabash-Wahhabiyya debate that grew out of this peripheral Ethiopian history. Since then, it has been popularly called "The Ahabash." By 1983, Shaykh 'Abdalla had already gained fame as a thinker, an author (he would publish some twenty books) a mufti, and a preacher. Moreover, his becoming head of the Association coincided with the Syrian takeover of Lebanon. By the end of the 1990s, the Ahabash had become one of the best organized transnational Islamic associations in non-Islamic countries, claiming nearly a quarter of a million members (Manar, 2004).

The number of Ethiopian members in al-Ahabash is not known, but there are not many. With the exception of the shaykh from Harar, almost the entire movement is composed of Muslims from various other ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. They consider him one of the greatest scholars of Islam and refer to him with such titles as al-imam al-muhaddith, or muhaddith al-'asr, namely the leader of hadith scholarship and the hadith scholar of our time. He is also referred to as al-hiifiz, the keeper of wisdom and scholarship. His full name, Abdalla ibn Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Harari al-Shaybi al-'Abdari, alludes to Qurayshi origin. They call themselves al-Ahabash in the hope of enhancing flexible Islam, capable of coexisting with the Christian "other" Muslims (Mustafa and Erlich, 2006).

Various scholars and international organizations agreed that the FDRE Constitution of 1995 guaranteed equal status to all citizens and to all religious denominations. Ethiopian Muslims,

Christians and other denominations finally achieved a sense of equality unparalleled in their previous history (International Religious Freedom Report, 2006, 2007, Ethiopia). The new policies of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Party (EPRDF), brought an end to former restrictions on the *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca), suspended the ban on import of religious literature and lifted the constraints on construction of mosques and religious schools (Hussein Ahmed, 1994, p.791).

### **2.1.2 Resurgence of Islamic Reform in Post-1991 Ethiopia**

Islam is a universal religion and culture. Scholars who tend to focus on Islam in specific societies may overlook connections that, over the centuries, were important in shaping various Islamic intercultural dialogs (Mustafa and Erlich, 2012). However, after Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Party (EPRDF) came to power in 1991, the new openness paved the way for marked enthusiasm, produced a new consciousness among the Muslim population, generated new religious affiliations and made Islam in Ethiopia more visible compared with the past (Østebø 1998). The post-Derg era also led to the resurgence of Islamism in Ethiopia, represented by three main movements, the Salafis, the Jamat al-Tabligh and what is here labeled the Intellectualist movement (Østebø 2008). Related to the Salafis groups Østebø (2008, p.43) wrote:

The Salafi movement, or the Wahhabi movement, its initial emergence dates back to the late 1940s, when it first was introduced in Hargere, and then to Arsi and Bale in the 1960s. Re-emerging in 1991, the Salafi movement was able to consolidate its position, expanded to new localities, but experienced, at the same time, internal fragmentation. In the mid-1990s, a fraction led by the younger generation, often referred to as the Ahl al-Sunna emerged. This fraction favored a stricter interpretation of the Salafi tenets, in many instances leading to conflict with the senior Salafis. The most radical wing of the Ahl al-Sunna came to be 13 Leading members of the Islamist groups are represented in the leadership of the EDA.

According to Desplat (2005) and Temam Haji (2002), in 2006 the emergent Madkhaliyya group in Addis Ababa organized around a certain radiologist in Mercato, this group adheres to the teaching of the quietist Saudi Arabian Salafi scholar, Rabi ibn Hadi al-Madkhali, and is seen as advocating a strict puritan lifestyle, as well as being ardently critical to the teaching of the

Muslim Brotherhood. The Madkhaliyya group has later split into two factions; a stauncher faction called the Abrariun (after the main leader, Abrar) and a moderate fraction (Desplat, 2005).

The Tabligh is probably the numerically largest Islamist movement in Ethiopia (Østebø, 2008). In spite of this, very little is known about its history and current activities. The Tabligh is found wherever there are Muslims and is the world's largest *dawa* ("missionary") movement (Østebø, 2008). It seems to have arrived in Ethiopia during the 1970s, introduced by South African and Kenyan Tabligh missionaries. Their activities were facilitated by a Gurage merchant, Sheikh Musa, resulting in the expansion of the movement among the Gurage community in Addis Ababa. Like the Salafi movement, the Tabligh's activities remained limited during the Derg-period, before it resurfaced in 1991. Extensively focused on *dawa*, Tabligh missionaries are sent out from its *markaz* (centre) in Kolfe area in Addis Ababa to various parts of the country, on either three- or forty-day journeys, sometimes in small groups, sometimes in busloads(Østebø, 2008).

The so-called Intellectualist movement is highly informal and devoid of any organizational structure, it evolved around certain individuals advocating a set of ideas rather than initiating a particular movement. About this group, Carney (2005, p.122) wrote:

It first surfaced on the campuses of Addis Ababa University and other institutions of higher learning in the early 1990s, where it soon gained popularity among the Muslim students. Organized in small jama'at, led by individual figures referred to as an amir, and by offering lectures and initiating study-circles, the movement acted unofficially as the Muslim student movement, becoming important in fighting for the rights of Muslim students. Outside the campuses, the movement was able to exert influence through public lectures and through regular contributions in the Bilal magazine. Further, prominent members of the movement have been active in publishing books through the Najashi Publishing House.

The leaders and followers of the Muslim Intellectualist movement in Ethiopian are mainly young university graduates and urban intellectuals (Bonney 2009).

Østebø (2010) in his study of "Islamism in the Horn of Africa; *Assessing ideology, actors*" perceives Islamism according to three main categories: political Islamism, reformist Islamism and Jihadi Islamism.

There are groups and actors that do not easily fit into any of the categories. Ideological developments, together with changing political circumstances may lead to changes over time; a group falling into one category could be categorized as differently at another point in time. Østebø (2010, p.18) states:

The first, Political Islamism denotes groups which limit their activism within a defined local or national scene, and which seek to attain power and influence within this defined area. It contains groups that strive for the improvement of Muslim rights and parity with other religions, those working for a social order permeated by Islamic values as well as those seeking the establishment of an Islamic state. They may advocate the use of violence, or would adhere to a non-violent struggle. The second, Reformist Islamism refers to groups that focus on reforming the religious sphere; combating practices perceived as un-Islamic and infusing a stronger emphasis on individual piety. Thirdly, Jihadi Islamists, focusing on the worldwide struggle of liberating the ummah (the Muslim community), from the onslaught of Western forces and on establishing the Islamic caliphate. It is represented by groups which indirectly or directly are interlinked with each other, and although they may operate within a defined territorial battleground or feed on local conflicts, they usually perceive themselves as part of a global jihad.

Based on the above facts, Political Islamism often draws inspiration from the Muslim Brotherhood, particularly the tradition stemming from Hassan al-Banna, as well as from the Qatar-based Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi. They usually organize themselves as movements (harakat) or as parties (hizb), and are often recognized by the use of the word “reform” (al-Islah) in their names. The most important movements within reformist Islamism category are the Salafis and the Jama’ a al-Tabligh. Moreover, reformist Islamism exclusivist positions pertaining religious purity may have political implications, as it often spurs increased inter- and intra-religious tensions and causes communal unrest (Østebø, 2008). In contrast to the Political Islamism, the Jihadi Islamists have a much wider scope. Even if groups within Jihadi Islamists category at the outset do not have an explicit political agenda, there are several cases in which many of them have moved in such a direction (and the other way around) (Gerges 2005).

The typology has to be related to the relevant social realities. Such a localized approach entails an examination of the ideological currents informing local Islamists, yet puts an emphasis on analyzing how these ideologies are construed, received, appropriated and transformed in the local context. It challenges the oft-used dichotomy between “Islam in Africa” and “African

Islam”; the former representing a foreign, radical and violent version of Islam, and distinctively different from the latter; construed as indigenous and tolerant Islam (Rosander 1997).

### **2.1.3 Islamism, Politics and Ethiopia: Seeking Religious Political Power?**

In relation to seeking religious party or political power in Ethiopia, the Salafis in Ethiopia could best be characterized as Reformist Islamists. Although Haggai Erlich (2007, p. 176) has claimed that the Salafis are working for the “political victory of Islam”, this is not reflected in the Salafi rhetoric in Ethiopia. Recognizing the country’s religious plurality, their position is that freedom and equality for the different groups could only be secured under a secular government. While there are elements among the Salafis which would welcome an expansion of the shari’a courts’ jurisdiction, and include corporal punishment, the mainstream Salafi understanding is that incorporating shari’a into the governing system would be impossible in Ethiopia (Østebø, 2008).

The resurgence of the Takfir wal Hijra in Jimma, where the movement has gained increased influence among the rural young Muslims seems to point in this direction. In spite of efforts made by senior Salafis and by Muslim scholars to ease their zealotry, the Takfiris have remained unbending, and have been fuelling intra- and inter-religious tensions. They played a central role in the Christian-Muslim conflicts in 2006 and have, in accordance with their name, taken a strict exclusivist position towards both Salafi and non-Salafi Muslims. The Takfiris have moreover assumed a radical position toward the Ethiopian state, seen among others by their refusal to hold ID-cards and to pay tax. Compared with the Salafis, the Tabligh movement has sought an even clearer avoidance of political involvement (Østebø, 2008).

The Intellectualist movement is, on the other hand, the one with the most elaborate view on politics. It has been ideologically affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood, where the views of Hassan al-Banna, and in particular that of Yusuf al-Qaradawi were disseminated among its followers. It needs to be noted that the Muslim Brotherhood was never formally established in Ethiopia. Yet the Intellectualists were careful never to mention the names of the Muslim Brotherhood or its ideologues, wanting to avoid becoming too closely linked to a particular movement and fearing that an association with the Muslim Brotherhood would spark interventions from the side of the government (Hussein Ahmed 1998, p.98). An increased

number of mosques and higher representations of Muslims in public life can hardly qualify as evidence for a politicization of Islam in Ethiopia. It has not been uncommon, however, to equate Muslim demands of better representation with a politicization of Islam (Hussein Ahmed 1998, p.98).

### **2.1.4 Ethiopia: Guarded Religious Tolerance & Monitoring Islam**

The EPRDF's policies aimed at securing the rights of the country's many ethnic and religious groups proved favorable for the Muslims' engagement in the public. It spurred the formations of Muslim organizations, newspapers and magazines and brought Muslims to assume governmental and administrative positions. Whereas these developments went relatively unchecked in the first half of the 1990s, the years 1995 and, to some degree, 1996 became a watershed for organized Muslim activities (Tronvoll 2009, p.96).

The government had already showed signs of concern over increased religious activism, which they perceived to be a trend of politicization of Islam. This fear was amplified by the demonstration in November 1994, when Muslims demanded that the Sharia should be included as one of the bases for the national constitution<sup>4</sup>. Three incidents in the years that followed would augment this concern and cause the regime to reassert its policy towards Islam. When worshippers at the al-Anwar mosque in Addis Ababa clashed with the police on 21 February 1995, leaving nine people killed and over one hundred wounded, government used this as an opportunity to crack down on the movements within the Muslim community (Abbink 1998, p.118; Hussein Ahmed 2006, p.17). In the following days, hundreds of Muslims were imprisoned, suspected of involvement, and on the 22nd of February, armed police surrounded the offices of the Ethiopian Muslim Youth Association. All those present were arrested, and the offices were closed.

The government of Ethiopia also perceived concenter the Salafis as particularly representing "foreign" Islam. In its efforts to marginalize the movement, the regime has provided symbolic

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<sup>4</sup>The Ethiopian Muslim Youth Association was important in organizing the demonstration, which also included several other demands forwarded to the Prime Minister (Muslims Stage Huge Demonstration 1995; Muslims Stage Mammoth Rally 1995).

and concrete support for the Sufi-oriented Muslims<sup>5</sup>. The government involvement in creating intra-religious polarization, coupled with the stigmatization of one group over the other, clearly augments the potential for increased radicalization.

Government measures towards Muslim communities have increased since 2009. No information on the background and reasons for this is available. Unconfirmed reports claim that the security apparatus issued a list of nearly 100 Muslims to be arrested,<sup>6</sup> and on 23 February 2009, the government issued a ban on all Muslim religious activities which had not been approved on beforehand by the EIASC<sup>7</sup>. Another case was the January 2010 arrest of Ezedin Muhammed, the editor of the Muslim newspaper al-Quds, for criticizing the prime minister's characterization of Ethiopia as "Orthodox Christian".<sup>8</sup>

Recently, twenty-nine Ethiopian Muslims were charged in February 2012 with plotting acts of "terrorism"; the majority was arrested after protesters accused the government of interference in religious affairs. The government accused the group of "intending to advance a political, religious or ideological cause" by force and the "planning, preparation, conspiracy, incitement and attempt of terrorist acts." The 29 accused - including nine prominent Muslim leaders, were jailed following protests staged by Muslims against the government last July. Demonstrations were led by Muslims who accused the government of trying to impose the moderate Al Ahabash Sufi branch of Islam, a Lebanese import mostly alien to Ethiopia<sup>9</sup>.

Concerning al-Qaida, there are no reports of activities in Ethiopia or any connections to Ethiopian Islamists (Connell 2005, p.77). However, Ethiopia media continued to tackle concern over rising fundamentalism, evident by a federal court already pleaded guilty Kenyan national has being members of al-Qaida. This is the first discovery of an al-Qaida cell in the country<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup>A case in point is the authorities' involvement in the development of the Sheikh Hussein shrine in Bale; building new roads, installing electricity and portable water. Also interesting is the donation of US\$ 25 600 by the US embassy for the preservation of the shrine (Awareness Creation on Cultural Preservation in Dire Sheikh Hussein 2005).

<sup>6</sup>These have been posted on the website <http://blog.ethiopianmuslims.net/negashi/> saying that the regime in February/March 2009 planned to carry out a massive campaign against the Muslims.

<sup>7</sup>Information on the decrees made by the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council", letter from EIASC, 23 February 2009.

<sup>8</sup>Ezedin Muhammed had, together with Maria Kadim (publisher of al-Quds) and Ibrahim Muhammad Ali(editor of Salafiyya), been arrested in February 2008 for criticizing the restrictions on religious practices in public schools (Ethiopia: Third newspaper editor jailed 2010).

<sup>9</sup>Ethiopia charges 29 Muslims under anti-terror law, AFP news,

<sup>10</sup>Ethiopian court has convicted ten people of having links to al-Qaida, January, [Marthe Van Der Wolf](http://www.voanews.com/content/ten-sentenced-in-ethiopian-al-qaida-case/1584121.html), VOA news, 15, 2013. Available on <http://www.voanews.com/content/ten-sentenced-in-ethiopian-al-qaida-case/1584121.html>.

### **2.1.5 Ethiopian Islamic NGOs & Muslim Diaspora Communities**

The Ethiopian Muslim Development Agency (EMDA) is the largest local Islamic nongovernmental organizations in Ethiopia, and receives funds from Action Aid, Pathfinder and USAID (Profile of Ethiopian Muslim Development Agency 2007, p.14).

Ethiopian Muslims also have formed explicit Muslim organizations in the West. The two main Ethiopian Muslim Diaspora organizations are US-based Badr International Ethiopian Muslim Federation, and the Network of Ethiopian Muslims in Europe. During visits to Ethiopia in 2007, both aimed at improving the social and economic situation of Ethiopian Muslims. Both groups have tried to engage with the government and the civil-society in Ethiopia for the realization of inter-religious cooperation, democracy and development in the country (Dereje Feyissa 2010, p.14).

## **2.2 Mass Media and Representation of Islam: Islam the Media Villain**

The media is one of three actors in a triangular relationship with the government and civil society (Alatas, 2005). The media have become the primary focus of attention as they have superseded other institutions in the cultural production of knowledge (Poole 2002). Alatas, (2005, p.41) states:

The media have often been accused of being irresponsible and distorting the truth. To be sure, there are a number of problems connected with media coverage. Knowledge and understanding with regard to Islam and the affairs of Muslims increase. The expanding public awareness of Islam in both negative and positive senses more than ever signifies the importance of the media's impact on the way people construct images of communities that are strange to them. Shortly, media images of Islam even in many Muslim and other third World countries are biased. The role the media is a technical one. It involves the gathering of data, its processing, and presentation in the correct context and in a variety of forms. Beyond this, however, the media is a powerful agent of change and many individuals and groups vie for its control.

The global images are based on observations rather than systematic empirical evidence and tend to be measured in relation to some kind of truth about Islam, be that Islamic belief or Muslims' lived experience. This belies a tendency to see coverage of Islam as 'misrepresentation', implying that there is a reality that could be represented accurately (Poole

2002). In relation to cross-cultural representation, Said (1981) maintains that he is not suggesting that there is a real Islam out there to be represented (as the religion itself will always be subject to interpretation) there are gradations of knowledge; good, bad, accurate and indifferent.

The fact that there are Muslims who perpetrate crimes of terrorism in the name of Islam does not explain Islam. Also there are, of course, Muslims who act in an extremist way, but the problem with the extremist/moderate dichotomy is that it implies that those who are stricter in the practice of Islam are the ones more prone to extremism. According to Alatas (2005) the moderate Islam-extremist Islam dichotomy is a creation in the minds of politicians and journalists, and does not have an empirical referent. But this dichotomy functions to “educate” the public that moderate and, by extension, less strict Muslims are good Muslims while extremist, therefore, stricter Muslims are the ones prone to evil (Alatas, 2005).

Furthermore, the supposed conflictual nature of Islam, further strengthened by images of extremism, fanaticism and irrationality, compounds the discourse of backwardness (Ahmed 1992). This extremism is attributed to all Muslims by linking every conflict to the concept of jihad and Islam (Hassan 1997) and contributes to a cumulative conception of Islam as threatening (Poole 2002).

Media use of unfavorable terminology in relation to Muslims is another aspect of their dehumanization (Haassan 1997). As an example of this, the ‘fundamentalist’ is by far the most prevalent image that is used to constitute a threat (Lueg 1995). According to Sayyid (1997) Islamic fundamentalism has become a metaphor for fundamentalism in general. All Muslim acts interred as extreme are then constituted as fundamentalism, which is then linked to terrorism. Yet, as Bishara (1995) maintains, there is a huge difference between fundamentalism, which Bishara calls ‘political religion’, and the popular religion to which most Muslims, adhere. Bishara goes further to say that the activities of the radical movements under the banner of Islam have actually distanced them from the majority of ordinary Muslims.

In relation to Ethiopia, there is very little evidence to support the claim that Ethiopian Muslims pose a legitimate threat to national and regional security. However, there’s a universal consensus among analysts that Somalia and Sudan are exporters not only of political Islam, but also of Islamic terrorism. Also there is no universal claim about Muslims and violence in Ethiopia. There could be individual Muslim proselytizers bent on using violence. There were a

few incidents of violence, but it would take an independent commission to investigate into the claims<sup>11</sup>.

The media portray of Islam as oppressive (hence, women in hijab); out-moded, anti-intellectualist, restrictive, extremist, and backward, causes conflict and is dangerous. Many of the negative aspects as reported by the media happen both within non-Muslim and the Muslim world. Alatas, (2005, p.41) identifies problems with this kind of reporting:

1. There is little attention to the positive aspects of the Muslim world. The media tends to prefer the strange and the bizarre. Much of what is positive is also often commonplace and boring, and does not tend to find its way into the international media.
2. There is little reporting on how Muslims themselves think about the strange and the bizarre.
3. There is little on how Muslims themselves are affected by the transgressions of their own people. For example, there was little coverage of the Muslim victims of September 11.
4. The media also tends to adopt the prevailing Western terminology when it talks about Islam and the problems of extremism and terrorism. Very often, these are terms that Muslims not only do not use, but also find offensive. For example, the term “salafi” is often used. Some Muslim extremists had arrogated to themselves the right to use this term to describe their own orientation.
5. The media tends to be selective in its reporting on religious fundamentalism. For example, there is little on Jewish, Christian and secular fundamentalism and extremism that would serve to provide a more balanced view of the problem, that is, to show that the problem is not restricted to Muslims(Schwartz, 2005).

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<sup>11</sup>On the Current Muslim Protests in Ethiopia, conversation between Jenny Vaughan of AFP and Alemayehu Fenatw of the LBJ School of Public Affairs, University of Texas, November 1, 2012. Available at: <http://aigaforum.com/articles/the-election-that-broke-extermist-backbone.pdf>

## 2.3 Documentary Film and Film Audience

### 2.3.1 Documentary Film

Documentary films represent the world; making factual claims about the places we inhabit (Eitzen, 1995). Bill Nichols (2001, p.15) discusses documentary film in terms of “discourses of sobriety”:

Documentary film is discourses of economics, politics, science and history (Nichols, 2001:39). Initially, this genre of film privileged an expositional and informative style that was linked with being truthful and objective, rather than using creative and imaginative content. It was based on the premise of conveying truthful information over wanting to please or provide pleasure to its audience.

The positive evaluations by audiences of recent aesthetic advances in fiction film have compelled documentary filmmakers to recognize the importance of producing films with high aesthetic value (Fox, 2010).

The production of documentary film, its content and aesthetics are strongly affected by social, cultural, historical and political forces that are in play during the films conception, production, distribution and consumption. There are strands of documentary associated with an observational form that attempts to present an objective, unmediated truth. Other strands of documentary practice have abandoned attempts to remain neutral and objective, foregrounding aesthetic strategies to acknowledge the subjectivity of filmmaking (Landesman, 2008). In his contribution to the book *Rethinking Documentary: New perspective and practice*, Wayne (2008) makes the point that rather than being a purveyor of facts and knowledge, documentaries challenge the audience with questions and arguments about the construction of reality, testing out uncertainties. In contrast, Bruzzi (2000, p.4) argues that:

Documentary audiences do not need to be constantly alerted to the fact that documentaries are “a negotiation between reality on the one hand and image, interpretation and bias on the other”. This implies that questions of authenticity and trust continue to be of concern to the documentary genre. Documentary films engage with conventions that demonstrate rhetoric of truth which has a certain level of value among audiences. However, not all audiences are able to accurately gauge the arguments and truth claims proposed by films engaging with these conventions. For instance, several fiction films embrace documentary film

aesthetics to get a realistic look, such as grainy film scenes or the use of a shaky hand-held camera.

According to Brian Winston (2008), the truth claims of documentary films are better judged through audience interpretations, rather than the film/filmmaker staking such a claim. Therefore it is important to investigate the various ways in which audiences respond to the truth claims proposed by documentary film.

There is a critique of social documentaries that the people and the issues they represent are victimized and simplified (Davidson, 1983). Yet social and political documentaries serve as a reminder of the exploitation and injustices that occur in communities across the globe (Smaill, 2007). The level of engagement with social and political matters is a marker of value of a documentary film. There are documentaries that stay away from social and political issues; however they receive less critical attention (Corner, 2008). Recently, although documentaries have been flourishing in production and consumption around the world, they continue to receive limited attention (Vladica & Davis, 2008; Lal, 2007). Documentary films have been revitalized due to technological advances such as small digital video cameras and editing software. However, this relative ease of producing films has been met with growing challenges to accessing funding, avoiding censorship, and commercial release (Lal, 2007).

This is an especially timely project; documentary films are becoming more visible. Since the inception of non-fiction film at the turn of the 20th century, documentary film has routinely played a supporting role to its more famous relative, fiction film. However, during the past century documentary film has figured prominently as a powerful means of persuasion utilized by governments, rich patrons, academics and working people alike.

### **2.3.2 Ethiopian Television (ETV) Documentaries**

In last four years, Ethiopian Television broadcast documentaries such as '*Addis Ababan Endebagdad*', '*Amoraw*', '*Akel dama*', '*Ager Chata Hone*', and '*Jihadawi Harakat*'. Related to Ethiopian television documentary films the only academic research is by Skjerdal, Terje. In part of his PhD dissertation, Skjerdal (2013) critically analyzed the content of an ETV documentary on the private press in Ethiopia broadcast during the period of August 2009 to January 2010. As Skjerdal pointed out that the ETV documentary series on the history of the private press should

not be taken as representation of current affairs programming on ETV. Moreover, Skjerdal added that ETV documentaries treat politically sensitive issues, although the content and style could be said to be of propagandistic character.

### **2.3.3 Documentary Film Audience**

By demonstrating close connections with the historical world, documentary films increase their appeal to audiences as credible and authentic representations of the real world (Winston, 2008).

Gaines, (1999, p.34) further the point as:

Documentary film is able to intervene and affect audiences through their use of information and aesthetics which has implications for activating consciousness. Documentary audiences have certain expectations which condition reception of the genre. These expectations mostly relate to their belief, doubt or denial of the truth claims put forward by each documentary. Sometimes audiences are more trusting of documentary film, as they believe this medium closely represents the making of history as it happens, by filming actual events as they take place.

Although documentary films are valuable sources of historical evidence, the effect of filmmaker perspectives and audience interpretations complicates the basis for trust (Stoddard, 2009). That said, writers such as Greg Philo (1993) point out that viewers are aware that the content of documentary films are a reflection of the filmmakers views – it is commonly understood that the filmmaker decides emergent themes and what points are stressed when shaping documentary.

A complicated territory in documentary film studies is the relationship between filmmaker intentions and the meaning derived from it. There is a paucity of research examining filmmaker intent (Lewis, 2007). Audiences begin to question authorial intent and motives when they experience uneasiness or confusion when watching film (Lewis, 2007). This is especially true of the documentary film genre because of its claims to truth, reality and representation of the world. For audiences who are interested in delving deeper into the various layers of the film, it becomes important to explore filmmaker intentions, as documentary films are often shaped through the vision of the director (Lewis, 2007).

Documentary films have a legacy of transforming the world through moving image. There are limited amounts of in-depth research conducted on documentary audience segments, their perceptions and expectations of this genre and their experiences (Vladica & Davis, 2008; Perry, 2009). With continual debate of documentary film being a representation of the ‘real’, as well as its possibilities for social change, it is important to assess the reception of documentary film audiences to provide insight into the functions, benefits and impacts of documentary film.

In her longitudinal study on rural and urban documentary audiences from the United Kingdom, Austria, Netherlands and Spain, Hardie (2007) found that audiences expected the experience of watching documentary film to be boring but informative. Audiences noted that upon hearing the word documentary, their first thought was that the film is serious, political and informative, and Hardie (2007) noted this as an obstacle that prevents documentary from reaching audiences. Most audiences expected the aesthetics and quality of documentary films to be as high as their fiction counterparts. It was rare that the director, rather than the subject, drew in audiences (Hardie, 2007).

## **2.4 Concept & Impetus for Audience Research**

### **2.4.1 Concept of Audience Research**

In media studies, audience is mostly used as a way of talking about individuals or groups of people (Ross and Nightingale, 2003, p.4). It usually refers to large groups of people, like the mass audience for television news, newspaper readership, the general public, or even people attending a major sporting event or a rock concert. In addition, the term is used to refer groups of people who are linked by ties of more enduring socio- cultural significance. These ‘audiences’ may be described as subcultures, taste cultures, fun cultures, ethnic diasporas, indigenous or religious communities, and even domestic households (Ibid).

In his book “Audience Analysis” McQuail (2000), states the word ‘audience’ has long been familiar as the collective term for the ‘receivers’ in the simple sequential model of the mass communication process (source, channel, message, receiver, effect) that was deployed by pioneers in the field of media research. This definition has been utilized in everyday discourse to refer to that which is, in reality, a diverse and complex principal subject, associated with numerous and often conflicting theoretical approaches. Also most audiences of the mass media

are not observable, apart from in fragmentary or indirect ways conceptualizing the audience remains problematic due to its abstract character (Ibid).

Furthermore, McQuail (1997, p.2) argued that audiences are both a product of social context and a response to a particular media provision and these often overlapping spheres which influence media use are further compounded by an individual's 'time use, availability, lifestyle and everyday routines'. Thus, the term 'audience' is ostensibly clear in its definition. Also, McQuail (2000:2) stated, an ambiguous concept defined by variable and intersecting factors such as:

By place (as in the case of local media); by people (as when a medium is characterized by an appeal to a certain age group, gender, political belief, or income category); by the particular type of medium or channel involved (technology and organization combined); by the content of its messages (genres, subject matter, styles); by time (as when one speaks of the 'daytime' or the 'primetime' audience, or an audience that is fleeting and short term compared to one that endures).

Similar to McQuail ideas, Shaun Moores (1993, p.2) asserts that the audience is not a homogeneous group that is easily identifiable for observation and analysis rather, a plurality of audiences consisting of disparate groups categorized according to their reception of various media and/or by their social and cultural positioning. Although this definition poses further conceptual difficulties, Moores highlights this by drawing upon Janice Radway's (1988, p.359) work on the origin of the word 'audience' itself. In her analysis, Radway states that the term's original definition referred to the act of hearing in face-to-face communication, in which individuals shared a direct physical space. In contrast to this, Radway says that in its contemporary usage the term is used to include consumers of electronic mediated messages. In this formulation, she notes that the audience is both distanced and dispersed, and consequently it becomes increasingly difficult to determine who or what constitutes the audience. This point is consolidated by Dahlgren (1998, p.2) statement that 'the conditions and boundaries of audience hood are inherently unstable'.

However, if the notion of audience is 'inherently unstable' then, as Moores (1993, p.2) asserts, how is it that we have come to accept the category of 'the audience' as a self-evident fact? Specifically, John Hartley (1987, p.125) claims that the fabrication of the 'audience' is perpetuated by media industries and media academics for their own purposes: 'in all cases the

product is a fiction which serves the needs of the imagining institution. In no case is the audience 'real', or external to its discursive construction'. In opposition to this, Moores maintains that the audience has a 'reality', albeit emeshed in lived experience and elusive, and in accordance with Ien Ang's (1991, p.13) argument, a differentiation must be made 'between "television audience" as discursive construct and the social world of actual audiences. Also the word spectator, viewer, reader and audience are used interchangeably by some scholars (Staiger, 2005, p.3). Other scholars have debated the implications of each of these terms (Bennett, 1996; Blumer, 1996).

Karen Ross and Virginia Nightingale (2003, p.7) identify five elements of media events that are sources of audience research interest, 'the audience participants as individuals; the audience activities of the participants in the media event; the media time/space of the event; the media power relations that structure the event; and the mediatized information with which people engage. They further suggest that 'In all audience research, certain assumptions are made about what aspects of the media event are acting on audiences and about whether or not such "influence" is likely to benefit them the researchers' (Karen Ross and Virginia Nightingale (2003, p.7). Consequently, Ross and Nightingale claim that any consideration of the media and audiences will be partial rather than comprehensive. Thus, in order to understand how audiences have been conceptualized, it is necessary to consider the various theoretical paradigms employed in audience analysis.

## **2.4.2 Impetus for Audience Research**

In relation to a driving force for audience research Kitzinger (2005:69-70) states four broad spheres:

First, Market Imperatives; a research concerned primarily with measuring audiences, identifying their socio demographic distribution, and tracking issues such as attention flow and channel loyalty (Millard, 1992). Second, Concerns about Morality and Sex 'n' Violence; a research concerned with the potential corrupting influence of the media. Third, responses to technological developments; a research asks questions about the implications of new media and communication devices. Finally, questions about Culture, Politics, and Identity; the impetus for research inspired under this rubric is a concern with the media's role in the public and domestic realm.

According to the above points, Culture, Politics, and Identity impetus examines how the media might frame public understandings and citizenship and how people use media texts.

## **2.5 Traditions of Audience Research**

McQuail (2000, p.366) identified three main variant audience research approaches as discussed in the following sections. Jensen & Rosengren (1990) distinguished five traditions of audience research, which can be summarized as having to do with: effects; use & gratification; literary criticism; cultural studies and reception analysis.

### **2.5.1 The Structural Tradition of Audience Measurement**

Structural tradition of audience research is the approach which deals with media structure and social composition of audiences. By media structure especially the size and reach of radio audiences and the reach of print publications or the number of potential readers as opposed to the circulation or print out. According to McQuail (2000, p.366), size and reach data were essential to management, especially for gaining paid advertising. In addition, media use is largely shaped by certain relatively constant elements of social structure, and it is important to know about the social composition of audiences such as those of education, gender, income, place of residence, position in the life-cycle etc.

### **2.5.2 The Behaviorist Tradition: Media Effects and Media Uses**

The aim of behavioral (functionalist) approach is to explain and predict choices, reaction and effect. McQuail (2000, p.366) stated two main types of behavioral audience research. The typical effects model was a one way process in which the audience was conceived as an unwitting target or a passive recipient of media stimuli. In the early effect research, media audiences were considered as “masses” being made up of isolated and defenseless individuals. This notion of ‘masses’ puts a particular image on media audiences as passive receiver who is easily

manipulated. McQuail (1997) stated that audiences as a mass is passive since it is incapable of collective action.

The other phase of “behavioral” audience research was in many ways a reaction from the model of direct effects. In this regard, the audience was viewed as relatively as active and motivated set of media users/ consumers, who were in charge of their media experience, rather than passive receivers (McQuail, 1997; Williams, 2003).

In the early effect research, media audiences were considered as "masses" being made up of isolated and defenseless individuals. This notion of 'masses' puts a particular image on media audiences as passive receiver who is easily manipulated. McQuail (1997) stated that audience as a mass is passive since it is incapable of collective action. According to Williams (2003), active audience approach reveals the ability of audiences to make their own meanings from what the media let out, to use the media technologies for their own purposes and take their own pleasure from what they see, hear and read.

### **2.5.3 The Cultural Tradition & Reception Analysis**

Since this study would conduct audience reception analysis it necessary to brief about the cultural tradition (reception analysis). According to McQuail (2000) the cultural studies tradition emphasizes media use as a reflection of a particular social-cultural context and as a process of giving meaning to cultural products and experience in everyday life. Media reception research emphasized the study of audiences as ‘interpretive communities (Lindlof, 1988).

McQuail (2000, p38) summarized features of the cultural (reception) tradition of audience research as follows:

The media text has to be read through the perceptions of its audience, which constructs meanings and pleasures from the media texts offered which is never fixed or predictable. The very process of media use and the way in which it unfolds in a particular context are central objects of interest. Media use is typically situation-specific and oriented to social tasks which evolve out of participation in interpretive communities. Audiences are never passive, nor are all their members equal, since some will be more experienced, or more active fans than others.

There are main strands within the cultural approach. First, most media messages are essentially "polysemic." Shroder et al., (2003) citing Corner (1980) explain polysemic as "the

multiplicity of meanings that arise all the time from encounters with medium content, usually without the individuals' conscious awareness." Second or the other strand of cultural approach involves the use of media as a significant aspect of everyday life. Media reception research emphasized the study of audience as "interpretive communities", which refers to shared outlook and modes of understanding, often arising out of shared social experiences (Lindlof, 1988) cited in McQuail (1997).

## **2.6. Definition & Implication of Reception Studies**

This research aims to produce a deep-seated cultural analysis. Audience research origins are found in three traditions; European cultural studies, American cultural studies and qualitative mass communication research (Hermes, 1995). Within the European cultural studies research, the first empirical ethnographic study dealing with audiences was *Nationwide Audience: Structure and Decoding* by David Morley, (1980) Morley used encoding/decoding model as a base for audience interpretation. He rejected the textual determinism, in which text was seen as a source of meaning rather than the interaction between texts and audiences.

The classical American and European mass communication research concentrates on specific cultural phenomena, researching their social contexts from a critical Marxist, feminist or ethnic studies perspective. A key text in this tradition is *Patterns of Involvement in Television Fiction: A comparative analysis*, in which Tamar Liebes and Elihu Katz (1986) take *Dallas* as an example of American television. The research consists of interviews with fifty small groups from five ethnic communities. In their study both researchers "assessed the degree of involvement of the respondents, which is seen as an indicator of influence, if there is no involvement in a text, presumably the text cannot influence viewers"(Hermes, 1995, p.20).

Most research on media reception underlines reception studies is not hermeneutics or truth findings of the meanings of the media products. The enterprise reception study engages is historical and theoretical. According to Staiger, (2005, p.2) reception studies define as follows:

Meanings of a medium text for viewers/listeners may be quite pertinent to their behavior, attitude and beliefs. This is why reception studies ask, what kind of meanings does a text have? For whom? In what circumstances? With what

changes over time? And its effects from the viewpoints of cognitive, emotional, social or political domains.

The above definition is based on the nature of the recipients and social circumstances. Eagleton (1983) also refers to reception studies as “a social and historical theory of meaning.” While Culler (1981) defines as “reception study is an attempt to understand the changing intelligibility of works by identifying the codes and interpretive assumptions that give meaning for different audiences at different periods.” As Iser (1972) puts “stars in a text are fixed, the lines that joined them are variable.”

Reception of a medium text has also its own implications. The value ability of a media outlet (or no valuable) could be analyzed from social or political meanings. Variability in interpretations would open the door to creation of these meanings. As to Janet (2005, p.4), “there is no natural, universally ‘worthwhile’ text exists. All interpretations are subjective, and all texts have political and social meanings and values “positive” or “negative”, reinforcing” or “contrary” to the beliefs of various audiences.” In summary, what the meanings are for readers may be quite pertinent to their behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs.

Reception study is an area whereby audiences are studied in relation to meanings drawn from media products. Media researchers are interested in knowing the influence of the media based on how audiences construct meanings from the media texts. It is how audiences understand media messages in respective to their individuality and social backgrounds. The media affect model also criticized, according to Williams (2003), for considering media audiences as passive recipients of media outlets and ignoring subjective interpretations that the audiences hold. Media message interpretation is central in reception study. As to Williams (2003, p.211), “Interpretation is a process of negotiation between texts and audiences situated within specific social and cultural contexts.”

### **2.6.1 Audience Reception Theory**

Audience reception theory is a humanistic approach of audience study which has come to be widely used as a way of characterizing the wave of audience research, which occurred within communication and cultural studies during the 1980s and 1990s (Singhal et al., 2004). The main

proponents of reception theory Iser, 1980; Holub, Robert C. (1984, p.2) outline the central proposition of reception *theory* in comparing with reader-response criticism as:

Reception theory refers throughout to a general shift in concern from the author and the work to the text and the reader. Similarly, reader-response criticism also refers to a general shift in attention from the author of the work to the text-reader pole. However there are important features that separate the reader-response criticism from reception studies. Reader-response criticism theorists have had very little contact with or influence on one another.

Holub further indicates that reader-response criticism theorists are not participating in any critical movement and are responding with their methods to quite different predecessors and circumstances. In contrast, reception study must be understood as a more cohesive, conscious, and collective undertaking. Reception study emerged as a group effort on both the institutional and critical levels involving a productive exchange of ideas among its advocates (Holub, 1984). Furthermore, reception studies may be separated from reader-response criticism on the basis of lack of mutual influence. Also reception studies are ultimately superficial and too abstract of merging (Holub, 1984).

Davis and Baran (2006, p.199) also define Audience Reception Theory as “Audience centered theory that focuses on how various types of audience make sense of specific forms of content” (Williams, 2003). However, Williams still forwards the point that the concern of reception theory is not limited to answering what people are doing with the media. Rather it also includes how audiences actively engage in the process of generating meaning and the factors out of the media that shape the sense they make out of the media message.

Reception analysis scholars believe that media texts are open to different interpretations depending on the audience’s background and knowledge. The scholars hold an assumption that few messages are self-explanatory and transparent enough to be interpreted in an identical manner. They always have a gap which we need to fill with our knowledge or private or public experience (Davis and Baran 2006).

One significant critique of the field has questioned the extent to which audiences are free to interpret texts in different ways. Where once the audience was thought in danger of disappearing (Fejes, 1984), it is now the text which is in danger. Hence, Blumler et al (1985) are concerned with excessive or ‘vulgar gratificationism’, Fiske (1989) coined the much-attacked phrase of

‘semiotic democracy’, Corner (1995) suggests that in much ‘active audience’ research, the text tends to get lost altogether, and Ang (1994) questions the focus on divergences in interpretation in relation to the exclusion of observed commonalities (Livingstone, 1998, p.8). Reception theory does break with older notions of interpretation.

To conclude, one can simply indicate that reception theory has undoubtedly had a tremendous impact on the way in which media studies are now conducted. It is very important for the mass media to know what kind of audience is targeted because every text assumes to convey meaning to the audience. So, if the text is not designed to accommodate how the audience might respond towards it, the audience can interpret the text’s meaning in a destructive way. Therefore, reception theory can be said to have changed the understanding of production of meaning in a text.

### **2.6.1.1 Reception Analysis Model**

According to McQuail (2000, p.366) “reception analysis is effectively audience research arm of modern cultural studies, rather than an independent tradition.” In examining what people do to the media, reception analysis shares the ambition of uses and gratifications research. The area of emphasis laid by, reception analysis and uses and gratifications is, however, different. As to Jensen (1989), uses and gratifications studies have hardly paid sufficient attention to that which is the origin of audience gratifications; culturally coded content. On the other hand, reception analysis shares an interest in cultural codes as expressed in media outlet.

Media and communication researchers have justified that reception analysis combines qualitative approach to media as texts, producing and circulating meanings in society with the interests in the recipients as co-producer of meaning. Jensen (1989) in other words, expressed the analysis situation as “audience-cum-content analysis.” Cultural research tradition and audience theory mainly aim to understand the meaning of content received and the use of context.

Reception analysis tends to argue that mass communication constitutes a construction rather than representation of reality. Secondly, in reception analysis, audiences substantially contribute to the social construction of reality. Hence, the central locus of analysis, in reception study, is the interface between mass medium and its audience. This interface between medium and audience is social forms rather than the direct consequence of the specific technology. The strategy of

understanding media text is sometimes referred to as interpretive community. This strategy as to Jensen (1989), can characterize audiences in media reception that may come up with a wide variety of decoding possibilities. “In essence, the audience itself may be conceived as set of codes texts to be analyzed and conferred with the texts of the media.

## **2.6.2 Methods of Audience Reception Research**

According to Jensen & Jankowski W. (2002, p.139) “reception methodologies refer to a comparative textual analysis of media discourses and audience discourses, whose results are interpreted with emphatic reference to context, both the historical as well as cultural setting and the “con-text” of other media contents.” Three main elements of this definition may be explicated in terms of the collection, analysis, and interpretation of reception data. Textual analysis is the earliest and still the most prevalent method in audience reception research (Staiger, 2005, p.8).

The collection or generation of data centers on the audience side. The approaches to audience discourses coincide with the general techniques: interviewing (of individuals or groups); observation (with varying degrees of participation by researchers); and textual criticism (of historical sources or other texts). Scholars farther argued that each of these methods, of course, poses classic problems of validity and reliability that have begun to be addressed in the context of reception analysis (Jensen, 1989; Kirk and Miller, 1986).

Textual criticism or discourse analysis is a key constituent of reception methodologies. According to Jensen (1989) “the *analysis* of interviews and other audience discourses draws on techniques and models from linguistics and literary criticism. Discourse analysis not just for the analysis of interviews it is also for other current discourses and for the diachronic study of media-related discourses.” Jensen (1989) stated the following general principles:

Relevance’s of discourse analysis are; it should be emphasized that, beyond documenting a respondent’s line of thought and argument, it offers a powerful tool for evaluating the interaction between interviewer and respondent. Similarly, discourse analysis offers a set of linguistic criteria for assessing the inter-subjectivity of later interpretations, which makes possible reflection and discussion of disagreements, rather than a simple measure of inter-coder agreement.

Reception studies make no absolute distinction between the analysis and interpretation of audience experience of media. In regard to this, Jensen & Jankowski W. (2002, p.140) argue that while moving beyond the vague notion of reading as aesthetic appreciation, reception analysis insists that, for most research purposes, an operationalization of categories that establishes aggregated, decontextualized sets of data which only subsequently are interpreted as findings, does not represent a valid approach to meaning as produced by audiences. Instead, the meaning of the constitutive elements of audience discourses should be interpreted with constant reference to context, both that of the media discourses in question and the broad social context of historical and psychoanalytic circumstances.

## **2.7 Factors in Reception Process**

In studying mass communication as reception, there is a need to consider essential factors in reception analysis. These factors, according to Jensen (1989) cited in Dano (2010, pp.28-31), are situational, media, audience and analytical factors. The following sub-section discusses each factor.

### **2.7.1 Situational Factors**

Media researchers see reception as getting the target audiences with the intended media message. They consider media reception as the meeting between medium and its audiences. As to Lesswell (1948), the context in which reception occurs is an important concern in the media study. The reception situation is embedding in socioeconomic and historical context that stakes out particular social uses of communication. “In studying media reception, the reception situation should be constructed methodologically as a complex of specific social factors. And the situation should not be divorced from its context” (Jensen1989, p.24).

Audience figures of a medium may not provide sufficient information on the significance of the medium text. The figure may over-state the audience's involvement in the process. Jensen (1989, p.24) states “The audience experience of a particular medium and its content cannot be separated from how it is used. To understand the lived reality behind media experience, we need to turn to the context where reception takes place.”

Jensen also argues that listening to a media outlet may work simply as an atmosphere generator. It is the act of listening or not listening that constitutes important and recurring variables of family life, and the specific media program is another important aspect for assessing the meaning of listening to a particular mass medium.

Jensen (1989) explained the active social nature of the interpretation between medium and audience needs to be seen from wider social contexts and related factors. Beyond the meeting between medium and audiences, reception situations should be seen as a complex of social and cultural factors. And the reception of communication cannot be separated from the wider everyday and political contexts where the context acquires relevance for the audiences.

### **2.7.2 Media Factors**

Media researchers argue that audiences engage media products in reception. Therefore, special attention should be paid to these products. The combined analysis of program structures and audience responses can become the bases of a more comprehensive approach to reception. One central aim of uses and gratifications research (Blumberg and Katz, 1974) has been to characterize the experience or gratifications that are associated with the use of a particular medium and types of media products. Audiences need to gratify a variety of social and aesthetic needs from the mass media.

Demographic categorization of respondents may not well explain certain variations in decoding. As to (Lewis, 1983; Morley, 1981), the demographic definition of recipients may be used as preliminary categorization in practical work with audiences, but it is a category that cannot register the ongoing processes.

The social and cultural identities of the audience are established in the social communities and they are the source of those codes of understanding media text that audiences apply in interpreting media codes. It may be essential in reception analysis to think audiences in terms of codes or discourses rather than socio-economic categories. For instance, recipients have their codes of understanding (Jensen, 1989, p.27).

### **2.7.3 Audience Factors**

In the elaboration of the decoding model, Morley (1981) argues that the audiences' ability to decide the various genres of media content should be accounted for as a generalized textual competence. The notion of interpretive community, Jensen (1989, p.28) is useful in studying media audiences. "Interpretive communities and their members are defined both by their social placement and functions and by the cultural traditions, conventions and meanings that unite them." In studying media audiences' interpretations of a particular medium text, it is indispensable to keep in touch with the background scenarios of the recipients.

The role of recipients in mass communication should be explained with reference to their specific social and cultural background: they have been formed or formulated within community of interpretations. The interpretive communities serve to differentiate the audience along lines of interests and usages. Different interpretive communities also seem to rise and fall with changes in society (Jensen, 1989, p.28).

### **2.7.4 Analytical Factors**

The mass media can be taken as sources of meaning. According to media researchers, this is to say we understand media content with constant reference to social realities as it is lived and perceived in everyday affairs.

Jensen (1989) argues that meaning is the stuff that the world of everyday life is made of, and individual instances of communication make no sense before they have been interpreted in the total context of the audience's life world. While the context is not universally ignored, it is assumed for an analytical purpose that communication can be categorized into its constituting elements. In a technical sense, the elements make a difference for the communication, in social sense, have implication in society.

Within the reception analysis, the relationship between medium and audience can be conceived as a linear model of communication, it is a singular instance of meaning transfer. However, meaning attached to media codes need to be looked vis-à-vis interpretation given from different social spheres. Jensen observes the analysis of media reception in qualitative communication model traces the process of establishing the units of meaning. It does so by the

inter play between the media codes and audience codes, and in a wider sense, by interpreting the origins of those codes in different sectors of the social context. In sum, Jensen displayed that “meaning is approached as it is being produced.”

## **2.8 Mass Media, Meaning Production & Interpretation**

### **2.8.1 Mass Media& Meaning Production**

Scholars like Iser, Wolfgang (1972) are interested in the question of how and under what conditions a mass media text has meaning for audience. According to Iser “from the outset audience bring out meaning is contrasts with the traditional interpretation that has sought to elucidate a hidden meaning in the text.” Iser comes to conclude that “meaning as the result of an interaction between text and the reader” (cited in Holub, 1984, p.69). And there is no homogeneity in meaning production even for audiences with similar background, Morley and Brundson, cited in Williams (2003, p.191), further stated meanings attached to media texts and related factors as “meaning is not solely inscribed in the message produced by the media but is the outcome of the interaction between the audience and the text.

Mass media communication is meaning production. Mass communication is processual phenomena that is at once produced by and produces other social practices. Woolcott (1977) discusses that communication is shaped by specific social institutions according to the consensual social uses in a particular culture. Communication also helps to shape that culture by playing a constructive role in everyday life. However, Schramm (1954) discussed that for effective communication to take place, there should be an overlap between encoders’ field of experience and audiences’ field of experience.

Audiences have some scope for redefining media content. According to communication researchers, the general socio-economic and political constraints affect mass text; produced and received. In relation to this, Jensen (1989, p.23) point out that further “the production of meaning through the mass media is variable, but patterned. Meaning is variable because the recipients may intervene and apply alternative forms of interpretations. That interpretation, however, patterned by the political and social uses of the conventional genres suggest.”

## **2.8.2 Interpretation and Search for Meaning**

Reception theory does break with older notions of interpretation and media message interpretation is central in reception study. As to Fourier (2005), “Interpretation is a process of negotiation between texts and audiences situated within specific social and cultural contexts.” Media audiences do not interpret media messages equally. There are differences due to certain factors. Related to this, Williams (2003, p.109) argues that “audience ability to interpret media message is determined by a range of individual, social, cultural factors.” Audience, also do not simply receive media messages even when the media is instrument in shaping attitude opinion, and beliefs (Ibid).

Reception analysis gives emphasis to the ability of audiences to appropriate the meanings they want from the mass media and cultural forms. It is also the concern of reception study to focus on audiences' ability emanating from their critical and creative ability to resist the media. Media audiences are not passive recipients of messages, but a combination of different groups with their own histories, habits, beliefs and social and political interactions (Dano, 2010, p.21).

Much of reception theorists' work can be understood to demonstrate how the reader is the ultimate source of meaning. Therefore, the rehabilitation of the audience must be taken seriously. According to Holub (1984), empirically based studies have insisted on looking at actual people reading texts. This is probably because; empirical studies are actually guided by or based on practical experience of the world people see and feel, not by ideas out of books. Therefore, Islam/Muslim experiences constitute their interpretation of how the mainstream media text represents them.

### **2.8.2.1 Interpretation and Social Context**

The first step of audience activity is interpretive. The meanings of media message are not fixed; these are constructed by audience members. According to Coroteau D. and Hoynes W. (2003), interpretations of media text is Part of the process whereby media messages come to mean something to us; it is how audiences derive pleasure excitement, or a wide range of intellectual or emotional stimulation.

The interceptive activity is crucial because it is in the process of audiences' reception that media texts take on meaning. As to Croteau D. and Hoynes (2003), producers construct complex media texts, often with a very clear idea of what they intend to say, but this intended message is not simply dumped in to the minds of passive audiences. "Audiences intercept the message, assigning meanings to its various components."

Sometimes there will be a very close correspondence between the intended meaning and the ways a particular audience intercepts the media message. This correlation, as to Croteau and Hoynes (2003), may be the result of fine craftsmanship on the part of the producer, the use by producer and audience of a shared interceptive framework. However, there is no guarantee that producers will get their message across in the ways they want. Croteau D. and Hoynes W. (2003, p.269) further argue the point as:

Audience may not know the implicit references, they may draw on a different interpretive framework, or they may focus on different components of the message than the producer had planned. Audiences, then, may not construct the meaning intended by the producer, nor do all audiences' members construct the same meaning from the same media text.

The issue of social context of interpretation implies that interpretation is firmly grounded in audiences' daily life. The essence of active audiences is they intercept media messages socially. That is, audiences do not simply watch, read or listen to a media text; develop independent interpretations of what it means; and stick to them. On the other hand, as to Croteau D. and Hoynes, W. (2003), media is part of our social lives, and audiences engage with media within social settings.

Media outlets contained an 'excess' of meaning within them. Many of the components of a medium program will fit together into one relatively consistent interpretation that is likely to be the dominant interpretation. But lots of bits and pieces around the edge of the program do not quite fit, and the dominant interpretations cannot completely contain them (John Fiske, 1986 cited in Croteau D. and Hoynes W. 2003).

### **2.8.2.2 Structure and Interpretive Constraint**

Audiences are not simply "free" of constraints when they experience media. They experience media as part of daily life, not separate from it and their lives unfold in specific social location. As to Croteau, D. and Hoynes W, (2003), age, occupation, gender parental status, race, neighborhood, educational background and their daily experiences. As to media researchers, texts are not agendum hodgepodge; those that seek mass audiences are built around familiar images and traditional themes that regular mass media users are likely to have experience interpreting. Media message matters, but so doe's audiences` location in various social groups. Social location matters because it shapes whom the audience talk to about different media, what they perceive to be their own best interest and most important concerns, and what kind of interceptive framework they bring to the mass media.

## **2.9 Contemporary Audience Reception Studies**

The history of reception analysis is, indeed, short, but turbulent because of its profound theoretical and political implications (Jensen & Jankowski W. 2002, p.136). But researchers like Stagier insist that "reception studies matter for our individual and our social and political life. It is a practically pragmatic field even if at times reaching specific conclusions is difficult" (Shroder et al. 2003, p.141). Shroder et al. (2003) also support this view that the study of audience reception, with all the shortcomings they exhibit, continue to be an established tradition with formidable theoretical and methodological foundations.

In reception analysis it is commonly acknowledged that the path breaking work of Dave Morley (1980), while emerging from the British cultural studies tradition, summed up a long prehistory that had pitted two conceptions of communication against each other. The first broadly conceived school is associated with the logos tradition of the humanities, and has approached texts as the locus of meaning to be extracted by (more or less) competent readers through a hermeneutic act (Jensen & Jankowski W. 2002, p.136).

Reception studies came to the media research realm with the belief that audiences are active and can reconstruct meaning not exactly intended by the media producers but as the audiences own life styles, experience and social interactions dictate. Therefore contemporary audience

researches focus on inquiring in to “what audiences think and do” in order to understand the influence of the media (Williams 2003, p.190). Reception studies prioritize investigating media messages by active audiences (Shroder et al. 2003; Mustofa, 2011, p.21).

It would be interesting to find out how reception theory, which according to Holub (1984, p.6) was virtually unknown in 1965, could have become so popular over the next decade. Reception theory has proved to be one of the most marketable items that the scholarly community ever produced. Holub (1984, p.7) further argues that:

“No one today can seriously question the enormous impact it has had on the interpretation of literature and art, from Marxists to traditional critics, from classical scholars and medievalists to modern specialists, virtually every methodological perspective and area of literary endeavor has responded to the challenge raised by reception theory.”

On the other hand critiques of the theory, draw attention to the theory’s basing of itself on the subjective interpretation of audience reports, its intent to downplay the absence or presence of effect, the tendency to focus on audience resistance of media message and the lingering subjectivity of researchers themselves (Baran & Davis, 2003,p.278; Williams, 2003, pp.207-08).

Uses and gratifications model focus narrowly on the individual uses of the media, however, encoding-decoding model gives due emphasis on how different social contexts and backgrounds influence individual interpretations (Strelitz 2000, p.38). Morley and Brunson's (1980) study on media reception has also demonstrated that audiences groups from different class backgrounds did to some extent decode a program in ways that could be meaningfully categorized as dominant, negotiated and oppositional.

Today reception research is facing many exciting challenges. What does the growth of the new media mean- are the existing methods of reception research sufficient, or do the more interactive and to a certain extent dialogical media demand that the tool box be expanded with new tools (Mayer, 1998; Roscoe, 1999)? And what about reception research oriented towards cognitive psychology, whose practitioners believe they can add a new dimension to reception research (Höijer, 1998; Höijer & Werner, 1998)? And what about the globalization of the media – what does that mean for reception research? Do we need more transnational, comparative studies to look into differences and similarities in the dissemination and use of media in the age of globalization (Jensen, 1998; Livingstone, 1998)? Thus, all questions give a direction where is

reception research going? When the researcher started planning this research I imagined that I would try to throw a critical glance at all the exciting things that are currently happening in reception research.

## **2.10 Theoretical Frame Work**

### **2.10.1 Encoding and Decoding Model (Stuart Hall)**

The origins of encoding and decoding model are derived from the critical theory, semiology and discourse analysis. It says that media content can have multiple meanings, because of varied interpretative communities, and the primacy of the receiver in determining meanings (McQuail, 2005). The core of the reception model is to establish the relationship between the receiver and the media meaning construction. It describes media messages as open and polysemic, and because messages can have multiple meanings, receivers have different interpretations in accordance to their cultural context. “Semiology emphasizes the power of the encoded text and sees the location of meaning as firmly embedded in it” (McQuail, 2005, pp.73-74). Although this model has been widely accepted, Hall stressed that messages may originate based on ideology and institutional purposes. In other words, “messages can manipulate audiences by giving them a preferred reading or ‘what might now be called spin” (McQuail, 2005, pp.73-74). Hall also challenges that different experiences can cause receivers to resist and apply oppositional readings to what is meant to be an ideological influence. Receivers do not always follow the intended decoding, they “can read between the lines and even reverse the intended direction of the messages” (McQuail, 2005, pp.73-74).

This research aims at understanding audience interpretation of “Jihadawi Harakat” documentary film content in the Ethiopian cultural context. The main methods used are content analysis, focus group discussion and individual in-depth interview. Moreover, the study will show the message decoding and contextualizing positions of audiences.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to review the literature on the production and reception studies on documentary film. How about the theoretical model? Haven't you discussed about that? As noted, documentary films are powerful communication mediums, as they are able to contribute to social change. They are able to influence audiences by stimulating social discussion while increasing awareness and knowledge. This makes it an important medium to assess. However, there is a paucity of research assessing the processes and outcomes of reception among Addis Ababa community.

Therefore, in order to accurately analyze the reception of "Jihadawi Harakat" documentary film from the participant perspectives and the context in which reception occurs will be acknowledged. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge the relationship between text-producer-audience, within the surrounding context. This study recognizes the impact of the producer in affecting audience's reception of text. Filmmaker's intentions are the key to understanding the production of the text, such as the perspectives their messages stem from. Documentary film is a viable medium of choice for education, communication and research (Albertson & Lawrence, 2009). It has a huge impact on being able to communicate with people and motivate social change therefore making it an important communication medium to evaluate to be able to use it in the best possible way (Whiteman, 2009). However, it is important to assess the extent to which this takes place and evaluate the outcomes. The framework informed this research, setting, scope and its direction.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

This study interested in analyzing audience reception of “Jihadawi Harakat” documentary film broadcasted by Ethiopian television. The documentary deal with Muslim issues in Ethiopia. This was done by analyzing the audience’s interpretation of the documentary film.

This research used qualitative tools such as qualitative content analysis, in-depth interview and focus groups discussion (FGD) as main tools of data collection. This chapter also provides a detailed account of the parameters within which qualitative methodological tools were used to collect data, as well as an outline of the frameworks for analysis. The chapter includes three major components: Information on the study design, methodological tools (overview of method, study sample, data collection procedure) content analysis, in depth interviews and Focus Groups Discussion (FGD), description of the analysis and interpretation process.

#### **3.1 The Research Design**

##### **3.1.1 Reception Research**

###### **Philosophy Underlying the Use of Reception Analysis Approach**

Within the reception studies paradigm that this study drawn from, the analysis of experience is paramount to investigating audience reception of a text (Hall, 1980). Reception studies researchers aim to understand experience in terms of how people define and respond to various situations (Hall, 1980). This is appropriate to the goals of this study which seeks to identify and examine the experiences of Islamic activists viewing the documentary film located within the context of a three-way relationship between filmmaker, text and audience (Goldsmith, 1998). A key focus of the active audience paradigm is to recognize and identify the possibility of diverse readings of media texts by audiences (Livingstone, 1998).

Reception study is a field of enquiry that is pluralistic in theoretical foundation, research and methodological approaches. Reception studies perspectives draw from convergence between scholarly disciplines such as the arts, sciences, communications and humanities (Barker, 2006; McQuail, 1997; Livingstone, 1998; Ott & Mack, 2009).

Reception studies approaches to audience research provide an understanding into the ways in which people make sense of the world they live in by placing prominence on the subjectivity and specificity of spoken and observed discussions and activities, while situating them within the socio-cultural context in which they operate (Barker, 2006; Dahlgren, 1997). The acknowledgement of socio-cultural context is important as it is a contributing factor to the differences in experience between individuals. Reception studies also seek to understand the ways in which meanings are etched into cultural products. Documentary films are cultural products or texts as they are heavily influenced by the socio-cultural, political and historical landscape in which they are produced.

To achieve the objectives of the research, qualitative methods were used. According to Littlejohn W. & Foss A. (2009, p.66) “reception research methodologically has, until recently, adhered rather strongly to the doctrinaire view that only qualitative methods”.

Some media reception scholars have expressed concern about a growing degree of fragmentation within the field (Barker 2006). While this fragmentation largely relates to increasing differentiation in research objects and objectives, it is simultaneously expressed and reinforced by a historically prevalent divide between qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Some suggest qualitative could be countered by fostering a greater degree of methodological pluralism among audience researchers (Press 2006; Schroder, Klein & Murray 2003).

In contrast to previous audience reception research which focused on a linear process of media imparting effects on passive audiences, a cultural studies approach proposes a more open relationship whereby audiences are viewed as active, making decisions on how to interpret media content within specific contexts. Active audience paradigm examines the production of documentary texts, how audiences identify and interpret messages and the relationship between documentary film, producer and viewer within the context in which production and consumption occurs (Ang, 1996; McQuail, 1997).

Interpretation is not a simple process of accepting/rejecting media texts. Rather, audiences interpret in accordance with their past experiences, individual characteristics, cultural practices and socio-cultural context (Ang, 1996; McQuail, 1997). The customs, practices, beliefs, languages, values and attitudes of a particular society strongly influence reception research (Hiebert & Gibbons, 2000). Addis Ababa city community was chosen as the location of this research as it is currently the epicenter. The researcher was curious to find out if cultural images

of Islam after the documentary film changes. Additionally, Addis Ababa is the capital city of Ethiopian, most populated and culturally diverse city.

Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding model was particularly pertinent to the area of understanding of active audience research. Hall stated that media texts were polysemic, that is, they were open to a number of possible interpretations (McQuail, 1997). This also causes differences between the messages encoded in, and decoded from texts. Audiences can perform three types of interpretations: dominant (in agreement with the messages or main arguments of the text), negotiated and oppositional (disagreeing with the main arguments or messages of the text) (Barker, 2006).

Hall's theory was significant for the development of an active audience paradigm in the cultural studies tradition as it demystified the premise that media texts had strong effects on passive audiences. Audiences were actively involved in reading texts and producing meaning (Barker, 2006). However, this paradigm was criticized for placing too much emphasis on audience processes and interpretation of texts, while not drawing attention to the meanings that are already inscribed within texts during production. In response, cultural studies progressed to acknowledge that texts, audiences and contexts are interacting elements. Media texts influenced reception and needed to be understood within the context in which they are produced. This includes an understanding of production processes (Johnson et al., 2004); meanings embedded in the texts, as well as the relationship between media texts and audiences (Barker, 2006).

In addition to the broader context, cultural studies reception research also stresses that in order to understand the audience reception, it is important to situate them within the immediate surroundings in which the reading of text occurs (Barker, 2006). The act of watching is inextricably linked with the environment it takes place in. For example when audiences go to the cinema to watch a movie or the theatre to watch a play, the space that they collectively share with other individuals plays an important part on the experience of the event (Sauter, 2010).

### **3.3 Data Collection Procedures**

#### **3.3.1 Qualitative Methods**

The term quantitative research refers to approaches to empirical inquiry that collect, analyze, and display data in numerical rather than narrative form (Given, 2008, p.713). Qualitative methodologies were developed in social science contexts, and are based on the premise that

perceptions of reality are subjective. Consequently, in qualitative studies, participants are encouraged to give their point of view (Iacono et al., 2009). These methodologies explore individual subjectivities to reveal interpretations, experiences, attitudes and opinions that are person-specific. In comparison to quantitative methods, qualitative methodologies are considered much more effective when examining cultural and social phenomena within the social contexts in which they occur (Iacono et al., 2009).

Qualitative methods were chosen for reception research as they allow researchers to examine subjectively created social worlds and focus on how meaning is derived from social interaction (Lindlof, 1991). They allow researchers to identify new phenomena, analyze characteristics and provide descriptions within the social and cultural context the phenomena reside in. Methods such as focus groups allow researchers to observe dynamics between participants, cultural similarity and diversity, and use narratives to analyze individual opinions, experiences and activities (Meyer, 2009). Additionally, using methodological frameworks drawn from qualitative research methods such as ethnography and discourse analysis, cultural studies stresses the importance of lived experience and context. McQuail (1997) qualifies this point with the caveat that because qualitative audience research is often more critical of media institutions it must pay close attention to the context in which reception analysis occurs to ensure that the meanings derived are adequately contextualized.

Audience's understandings, perceptions, feelings, motivations, and desires are investigated with qualitative methods such as textual Analysis, focus group discussion and individual in-depth interview data collection instruments will use for the qualitative research design (Barker 2006; Morley 2006).

### **3.3.1.1 Qualitative Content Analysis**

Content analysis is widely used in communication research and provides a brief description of important aspects of text or data collected (Wilkinson, Joffe & Yardley, 2004). Content analysis is also a technique used for gathering and analyzing the content of a program. Content, according to Deacon et al, (1999) refers to any message that can be communicated in forms of words, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes or meanings. The qualitative content analysis would also help to identify the encoded message elements of the media content.

According to Staiger (2005, p.10) qualitative content analysis consider the units meaning as determined by the context. Robin et al., (2005, p.224) also discuss about a qualitative content analysis as it focuses on media or contents and meanings generated from the content. The study was carried out audiences' interpretations.

In this research the purpose of qualitative content analysis is to identify the encoded message elements of the of “Jihadawi Harakat” documentary film. Therefore, in this context, the documentary film on Muslim issues aired on February 2013 has been considered. The content analysis of the documentary film would help achieve the research objectives and provide the desired input and ideas about the documentary film contents.

### **3.3.1.2 Individual In-depth Interviews**

The researcher conducted 38 individual in-depth interviews with purposively and conveniently selected informants in Addis Ababa. This would help to identify the meanings individual audiences made out of the texts produced by “Jihadawi Harakat” documentary film.

As to Wimmer and Dominic (2003, p.127) “Intensive and well performed in-depth interviews provide detailed background about the reasons why respondents give specific answers. It elaborates data concerning respondents’ opinions, values, motivations, recollections, experiences, and feelings.” Keeping this view in mind, this research employed individual in-depth interviews with the audiences in order to explore more about the documentary accuracy and individual representation in the documentary film from the point of view of the audiences.

As the central familiarity with and knowledge and experience of Muslims, the groups (two in each category) consisted of Muslims and non-Muslims; Muslims who mixed frequently with non-Muslims (contact group), and Muslims who had no frequent contact with non-Muslims (non-contact group), and non-Muslims who are familiar and experience of Muslims are selected.

### **3.3.1.3 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)**

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were used to collect important data on audience reception of the message of the documentary. According to Hansen et al., (1998), Focus Group Discussion (FGD) has gained wide spread popularity as a research method for studying media audiences. With the raise of reception studies in media research in the 1980s, it became an important approaches deployed by communication and media researchers. Focus group discussions are also

resourceful for they could be used as opportunities “for the individual expressions of latent opinions, for the generation of group consensus, for free associations to life and for analytic statements about art” (Katz cited in Hansen et 1998, p.263). Scholars like Lunt and Livingstone (1996, pp.96-97) state that focus group discussion are particularly useful when a research aims at discovering participants’ meanings and understandings.

To study various understanding of audiences on the same media outlet, focus group discussions has far reaching values. Focus group discussions in the media and communication research are used to discover how interpretations were collectively constructed through talk and inter-change between respondents in the group situation (Hansen et al, citing Morley 1980). According to Hansen et al., (1998, pp.62-63) focus group discussions have long been preferred by researchers for the various advantages it bears to a reception study. The first one is that focus groups present the social activity in which “audiences form their interpretations of media content and their opinions about such content through conversations and social interactions, while the second one is related to the relatively vast amount of data such group dynamics produce.

This research relies on Focus Group Discussion (FGD) as a main source of data. The study would have appropriate group representative and group size based on the idea forwarded by media reception researchers. According to Hansen et al, (1998) the number of focus groups will depend on the aims of the research and on available resources. The more homogenous a group in terms of background or social characteristics, the fewer the researcher needs. Hansen et al, (1998) added more focus group studies to obtain group representative of the general population in media research have rarely sought. Media researchers recommended that participants for focus group discussions should be drawn from naturally existing groups or communities-people, who already lived, worked or socialized together.

In this study, the researcher selected the group discussants purposefully. The participants invited to participate in the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were those whom the researcher believed could generate critical ideas for the study and willing to provide the desired information. In identifying appropriate subject for the group discussion, factors such as social location and age were considered. Four focus group discussions were conducted. To conduct the FGD, social location of the subject was important. The researcher also decided the age of the study population should exceed eighteen. This age limit was believed to support the study in collecting critical and reasonable data. Therefore, given the limited time and resource, this study

organized four Focus Group Discussions (FGD) comprising six to eight individuals a total of 27 Individuals.

The documentary film and 16 minutes leaked video was screened before all Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and in-depth interview. It may be hard to find a suitable time when all participants were able to be present for the film screenings and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Consequently, if a participant was not able to make it to the group screening, they were given the opportunity to watch the documentary film at their own convenience prior to the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) session.

### **3.4 Research Population and Sampling Method**

#### **3.4.1 Sampling Method**

To meet the objective, the researcher employed convenience sampling and purposive sampling methods. According to Given (2008), the convenience sampling can be defined as a sample in which research participants are selected based on their ease of availability. Essentially, individuals who are the most ready, willing, and able to participate in the study are the ones who are selected to participate. Henry, G. T. (1990) also says the convenience sample relies on available subjects—those who are close at hand or easily accessible.

In qualitative research, it may be helpful to use a convenience sample to test the appropriateness of interview questions in an inexpensive and quick way by approaching an interested group of people first before embarking on a larger, longer, and more expensive study. Although this type of sampling technique can most assuredly save the researcher time and money at the recruitment stage, it is not without its drawbacks (Given, 2008).

Participants for Focus Group Discussion (FDG) and in-depth interview were selected in line with achieving the purpose of the study. Thus, the participants for the focus group discussion and in-depth interviewee were taken from the target audience group individuals were selected among Muslims and non-Muslims audience.

#### **3.4.2 The Population & Sample Size**

The researcher purposely selected the study area and population. A total of targeted 65 respondents are selected in Addis Ababa, for in-depth interview and focus group discussion

(FGD). For this study the researcher embraced a series of different approaches. Several friends of Muslim and volunteers in socio-cultural organizations (e.g. a walk-in youth house) were helpful starting points to establish a network of respondents across different neighborhoods. The purposive sample included 27 respondents, with Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and 38 respondents, with whom in-depth interviews were held. The sample included 23 men and 17 women a total of 40 individuals from Muslim audiences and 14 men and 11 women from Christians, a total of 25 individuals, all aged above 18 were selected. In order to reach respondents beyond these networks, I visited over 85 Ethiopian Muslim shops, cafés, organizations, mosques and religious school in neighborhoods that are known for their large Ethiopian populations in Addis Ababa. Asking if I could leave or display a bilingual add looking for respondents for the research allowed me to start the conversation about “Jihadawi Harakat” documentary film and my broad research questions.

### **3.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation Processes**

As discussed earlier, the research employed qualitative data gathering techniques. The data was analyzed based on appropriate qualitative research methodologies. Data analysis is the crucial stage where researchers begin to understand their findings in light of their research aims (Basit, 2003).

#### **3.5.1 Thematic Data analysis**

Thematic analysis is commonly used to code and analyze qualitative data collected from interviews and focus group discussion (Vicsek, 2007; Braun & Clarke, 2006). There are many different thematic analysis approaches that have both emerged from key qualitative methodological frameworks such as grounded theory and independently as analytical methods. The coding method is designed to identify themes emerging from the data, while interpretation and analysis organize and describe these themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Attride-Stirling, 2001; Fereday, 2006). Themes are defined as statements or ideas that recur throughout the data, enabling the coherence of a study (Bradley, Curry & Devers, 2007).

In order for thematic analysis to be conducted it is essential that all data is transcribed and a transcript of the discussion is formed (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). The transcript is analyzed in

light of the notes taken by the focus group moderator (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Researchers are also encouraged to bear in mind the social-cultural context in which the research was conducted (Wilkinson, 1998; Lunt, 1996; Attride-Stirling, 2001). With regards to this study, qualitative data was analyzed in reference to the context in which interviews and discussions were conducted, researcher notes, the participant profile form and the participant recorded audio.

The first and most essential step is coding of data (Basit, 2003). A code accurately captures and describes the richness of the data (Fereday, 2006). Researchers ascribe codes to describe paragraphs, sentences, phrases or words of interest in the data (Basit, 2003). These codes are used to find similarities and differences while researchers accumulate examples to highlight each code (Basit, 2003). Coding and the formation of themes can be classified as (Bradley et al., 2007):

1. **Basic themes** (codes) are of the lowest order and a simple descriptive premise of the data. They highlight patterns and are simple concepts and ideas that are illuminated frequently in the data. This process is described as open coding.
2. **Organizing themes** (taxonomies; descriptive themes) are categories into which basic themes are grouped under. Connections are made between the basic themes. They essentially tell a story and provide a picture of the main findings of the data. This process is described as axial coding.
3. **Global themes** (taxonomies; analytical themes) are those which encompass the bigger picture taking into account the data as a whole within the context that the research has been conducted in. These themes are generated through the funneling down of organizing themes. These themes are establishing and conclusive. This process is described as selective coding.

Once these three stages are completed, researchers begin analysis of data by establishing patterns and interpreting findings (Attride-Stirling, 2001). This study combines the results and discussion section allowing readers to see how the themes relate to each other, and their implication in relation to previous literature.

This study legitimizes inductive data analysis in order to generate themes from participants, rather than relying on pre-existing information. The inductive approach to thematic analysis allows themes to emerge from the qualitative data transcripts rather than deductive identification in accordance with a template of codes drawn from the literature review prior to analysis (Fereday, 2006).

### **3.6 Ethical Considerations**

It is important to ensure that research is conducted in an ethical manner, especially when it is social in nature, involving people (Esterberg, 2002). All research was undertaken under the guidelines of the Addis Ababa University, Graduate School of Journalism and Communication.

The confidentiality of participants is an important consideration in social research (Esterberg, 2002). Except interviews with the producer, all other participants were given pseudonyms in order to protect their identity, and therefore their original identity remains undisclosed in this study. This was communicated with the participants during the interview and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) sessions, and verbally before the focus group groups and in-depth interviews took place.

Additionally, it was made clear to the participation that the research is voluntary, and participants could choose to leave the study at any time. No participants objected to this. Participants were once again verbally informed of their rights, research procedures, and given necessary information of the nature of the research with the appropriate contacts, before the commencement of interviews and focus groups. Their consent to be audio-taped (interviews and focus groups) was also sought. No participants had any issues with data handling and storage.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. Data Presentation and Analysis

#### Introduction

This chapter presented and discussed the major findings of the study. The analysis was based on the major objective of the study, which aimed at studying audiences' receptions analysis of "Jihadawi Harakat" documentary film.

The analysis was carried out from the viewpoints of theoretical frameworks and models presented in the literature review. However, the analysis was not confined to specific theory or model. The theoretical frameworks and the models were used as a guide in the data analysis.

The researcher employed content analysis, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and individual in-depth interview as a main data gathering tools. The questions for both methods were designed to identify how audiences reacted to the "Jihadawi Harakat" documentary film, what interpretations they brought, and factors related to audiences' reception.

The researcher used Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to identify audiences' reaction to the message produced by "Jihadawi Harakat" documentary film. The researcher also used individual in-depth interview to identify audiences' reaction to the message produced by "Jihadawi Harakat" documentary film, and to find out audiences reaction on the accuracy of the documentary film towards some basic concepts of the documentary film. The basic content elements of the documentary film were treated separately to identify the audiences' interpretations' of the documentary film contents.

The qualitative content study, using the documentary film materials, was carried out to familiarize the researcher with the program contents. Once the qualitative content study was done, the thematic analysis of audiences' receptions followed.

## 4.1 Analysis of Discussants' and Interviewees'

### 4.1.1 Understanding of the Documentary film Title "Jihadawi Harakat"

It is worthwhile to realize that the title given to media program, besides the message elements, would encourage or discharge audiences' media reception. Chapter four discussed the views of the informants on "Jihadawi Harakat" documentary film representation of individuals in the documentary film and the relevance of the documentary film to the current socio-religious contexts. The first item in both the focus group discussion (FGD) and in-depth interview begins by asking the informants to reflect on how they understood the documentary film's title: "Jihadawi Harakat".

All participants (65) of the four FGDs and interviewees expressed their views differently. For example, Musema Jemal, who is 25, who took part in FGD-A; Abu Santure, who is 24, in FGD-B, Jelan Umur, who is 26, in FGD-C, Yalew Kebede, who is 26, in FGD-D, and interviewee Gashaw Merete, who is 28, shared their understanding of the documentary's title "Jihadawi Harakat" respectively, in the following manner:

**Musema:** I think it is a movement of a military conflict between the Muslims and the Kuffar [non-Muslims]. But, for the first time I heard the word from the documentary. I think it is a specific group that has given this title.

**Abu:** It is good to look at each word one by one. In my understanding, Jihad is the struggle against beliefs which are quite contrary to my religion. You know this struggle should not necessarily be military, and it may have various consequences. Personally, I believe that the existence of jihad in Islam has a duty. The second term 'Harakat', in short, means movement for a war.

**Jelan:** I understood the documentary title as the movement to self-exertion of a Muslim to discipline his own soul, to improve one's faith and to refrain from combat and his own evil inclination.

**Yalew:** I understood the title as movement for any scarification for own religion and against one's own unpleasant feeling.

**Gashaw:** First, I did not understand the title of the documentary. However, I was able to understand it when the narrator explained it in the subsequent episodes, and I understand the title as Islamic movement for a war with non-Muslims.

Based on the discussants and informants' accounts, it could be said that they understood the meaning of the title: "Jihadawi Harakat" as 'jihad or military movement of Muslims with the non-Muslims'. They also pointed out that the terms have been deeply embedded in orthodox Islamic interpretations and traditions. Some of the respondents seem to give conservative meaning: Jihad movement is any struggle against heresy. Few of the discussants gave a different meaning, from linguistic analysis of words, 'Jihad' (jahada—"to strive") and 'Harakat' means "movement" to divest it from its military connotation. However, most of the respondents attributed the meaning of the title to something horrible, evil deeds in the scene. Besides, few of the respondents preferred not to comment on the issue.

In short, the perceived meanings of the two terms used in the title of the documentary film evoked them to attribute it to jihad movement, which is "self-exertion" of a Muslim to discipline his own soul, to improve one's faith and to refrain from combat, his own evil inclination. On the other hand, as documentary film could win the understanding of audiences, the majority seemed to relate the title with the theme of the documentary film.

The interactive approach would produce almost similar meaning for the title given to the documentary film as the theme of the documentary film (Islamic group movement to establish Islamic government). However, few respondents had come up with their own interpretations.

#### **4.1.2. Representation of Subjects in "Jihadawi Harakat" Documentary Film**

Documentary film makers, who have a participatory emphasis, attempt to ensure that their films are created through the discourses of the people participated in the film to empower these people and strengthen their individual and cultural identities (MacKenzie, 2010). Because of the genre's close connection with representations of the world, it can be argued that film makers have an ethical responsibility to ensure a positive representation of the subjects. The documentary film representation of the subjects, who are depicted in the documentary film and whose stories and experiences are shared among the audiences, need to be examined. Concerning

the discussants' opinions on how they reacted to the documentary film representation of the subjects in the documentary film, Musema Jemal, 25, (FGD-A), Furhan Mohamed, 24, (FGD-C) and Jemal Ahmed, 40, (in-depth interviewee) shared their opinions as follow:

**Furhan:** For more than ten minutes, the documentary film focuses on Al-shababa of Somalia and tries to link it with the Ethiopian Islamic groups. I am not sure about Esmael Asefa, but I can speak about Abubeker Ahmed's group; they are not terrorists and should not be portrayed as such. This is intentionally done to harm the Islam in general, not only the individuals in the documentary.

**Musema:** All aspects of the documentary film were trying to represent the individuals in the documentary as terrorists, extremists and threats to peace and security in the country. The documentary film used different techniques like comparing an Islamic group in Ethiopia with Al-shababa, Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda, juxtaposing Muslims at Awoliyah and Egypt protester. Generally, the documentary film did not represent individuals in the documentary and the entire Muslim society in a proper way. It does not reflect the social reality on the ground.

**Jemal:** When you watch the film from the beginning, the documentary film depicted individuals in the documentary film as evil. Look at the title, "Jihadawi Harakat", the title linked Muslims to conflict, war and evil acts. It presents Islam as threat. I am very upfront about Ustuz Abubeker, Kemil Shemsu and Yasin Nuru because they were preaching Islam as peace and advise people to follow legal ways to raise any questions. Now, what I think is the documentary film represented the Muslims as threat... I prefer the agenda not to be portrayed in this way.

As indicated above, most of the informants asserted that the documentary film has portrayed Muslims in general as terrorists, extremists, and threats of peace and development in the country. They also pointed out that those individuals in the documentary film, for example, Kemil's group who are well known to the Muslim community and can represent the general Muslim, while Aman Asefa (Esmael) and Mufti Mohamed (Abu Telha) do not represent the Muslim society. Most of the participants also expressed that describing Kemil's group as terrorists, extremists,

and threats for peace and development of the country is like categorizing all Muslims as terrorists, extremists, threats.

However, some of the participants viewed the issue quite differently. They said that the subjects in the documentary film portray the truth about Muslims. These participants who represented the non-Muslim group underlined the fact that the documentary film revealed the reality although its focus was only on specific individuals not on the general Muslim. Furthermore, non-Muslims participants on the discussion raised the presence of Muslim-Christian conflict in Ethiopia, referring to the case of 'Jimma'. Indeed, some of the respondents strongly argued that individuals with extremist characters in the documentary film should not be considered as they represent the whole Muslim society. Similarly, almost the majority of the participants also argued that there was hardly enough information in the documentary film to conclude if the subjects really represent the whole Muslim society or not.

Non-Muslims are anchored by documentary film information through a lack of knowledge of Muslims. While non-Muslims argued that their experiences inform their beliefs about Muslims, these experiences are filtered through and ultimately shaped by media information. Hence, from the discussion made above the data indicated that a significant number of the respondents clearly showed that the subjects in the documentary film seemed not to be representatives of the Muslim society at all.

### **4.1.3 Relevance to the Current Socio-Religious Contexts**

Audience responses to certain texts will be affected by their initial reaction to the relevance or irrelevance of the text to them (Morley, 1986). Audiences are able to create a relationship with those seen on-screen as they read texts while relating the content back to their everyday lives (de Bruin, 2008). Increased knowledge and a heightened level of awareness about the issues presented in the documentary film probably enabled audiences to use the content in the movie and make it relevant to the current socio-religious contexts. Melat Alemayehu, 25, FGD-A, Abdu Aman, 26, FGD-B, Ibrahim Abdulahi, 30, FGD-C, Hayat Kebir Hussen, 24, FGD-D, Manyazewal Taye, 26 and Rahwa Jemal, 21, in-depth interviewees in reference to "Jihadawi Harakat", documentary film relevance to current religious contexts said that:

**Melat:** I am still obsessed with terrorism, especially Al-shabab. Ethiopian military force has been in Somalia since 2010. So I am still obsessed with this, and such strong interest in the issue will continue. The documentary film shows how strong Ethiopian security is. The documentary film is relevant to all of us.

**Abdu:** When you see the documentary film, you realize that how the producers created faked interviews; the video leaked can be a reference. It is a disappointing situation. I didn't see any relevance to the socio-religious context of the country.

**Ibrahim:** What exactly I want to say is, "Jihadawi Harakat" is full of lies and has no relevance to the socio-religious context of the country.

**Hayat:** The question of Muslims in Ethiopia was about free election of representative, preserving the traditional Muslim religion and about Awoliyah School. The government also accepted these questions but the theme of the documentary film is terrorism. So, I do not think this documentary film is relevant for current religious contexts.

**Rahwa:** Are you joking? What relevance do you expect from this propaganda?

**Manyazewal:** Yeah it can be relevant. It is a warning for those who are terrorist groups in the country and abroad.

The data indicated that most of the participants believed that the documentary film is produced intentionally to frustrate the Muslims under the cover of terrorism and has no relevance to the current socio-religious contexts. However, some of the participants clearly indicated that the documentary film has significance to the current socio-religious context. They furthermore explained that "Jahadawi Harakat" documentary film is useful for the general audience, or for an individual asked in other question items as well. To this end, few of the respondents expressed the seriousness of the alleged terror attempt by relating the attempt with Ethiopia's involvement in Somalia. The documentary film might be relevant in terms of depicting the existence of terrorist group against our security. In line with this, participants were asked how their expectations were met in "Jihadawi Harakat."

In general, analyzing the overall implication of the discussions and interviews on the issue of 'what relevance do the participants find in the documentary film on the socio-religious context of the country', the data implied that most of them found it irrelevant.

The discussants were also asked to reflect their opinions on what the term 'Jihadawi Harakat' evoke in their mind. Among the discussions and interviewees, Yared, 28, and Fikadu Alemu, 27, from FGD-D, Sofia Edris, 24, from FGD-A, Selam Lakew, 29, from FGD-C and Ali Musema, 38 and Manyazewal, 26, in-depth interviews have been selected and their responses are presented below:

**Sofia:** It is terrorism that comes to mind when I think of "Jihadawi Harakat". And I think how horrible terrorism is; the feeling of insecurity and fear, and if the situation continues, we will not have a peaceful country like today's Ethiopia. Therefore, whenever I think of "Jihadawi Harakat" I think about terrorists who are moving to in the cover of Islam. And I see something bright because of the federal police and Information Network Security Agency (INSA) and the Federal Police Anti-Terror Joint Task-Force.

**Selam:** What comes first to my mind when I think of "Jihadawi Harakat" is terrorism. You know? But, I don't think that Ethiopians are patient to live with terrorists. Surprisingly, I watched the documentary film with excitement until the end.

**Fikadu:** I always think about "Jihadawi Harakat". It really fits the documentary film. When I think of Jihad, I feel a military conflict, a war between Muslims and Christians. Nevertheless, I think that different jihadist groups in Ethiopia under control of the police while moving to wage war on Christian their brothers and on the government. This is how I think of "Jihadawi Harakat" documentary film.

**Ali:** When I think of "Jihadawi Harakat" I remember the current problem of Somalia, my mental impression goes to Nigeria and think of Boko Haram act of mass killing and "Jihadawi Harakat" creates the impression that the alleged terror groups wanted to create situation in Ethiopia.

As can be drawn from the discussions above, the terms evoked ideas like terrorism, fear, insecurity and Jihad. These simply seemed to indicate what has been imposed by the documentary film upon the psychology of the respondents. Moreover, most of the participants pointed out that the documentary film forced them to be suspicious towards Muslims and view them as terrorists. On the other hand, some of the participants also argued that the theme of this

documentary film is still relevant to current socio-religious contexts, especially towards exercising their religious freedom. Therefore, almost all of the participants underlined that the documentary film has affected their psychological, social and religious stability in many ways.

#### **4.1.4 Skepticism about the Documentary Film**

This skepticism about documentary film was another theme highlighted in the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The literature suggests that when audiences interact with documentary texts, they undertake a number of evaluations about the genre itself, such as the texts' objectivity, accuracy or the level of truth and aesthetics (Winston, 2008, cited in D'Souza, 2012). Participants from all focus groups have undergone critical evaluation of these areas. Some audiences struggle with the notion that documentary genres represent the real world (Wayne, 2008).

According to Winston (2008), the 'truth' claims of documentary films are better judged through audience interpretations, rather than the film or film maker staking such a claim. However, the ability of the audiences to accurately interpret the documentary film is dependent on their exposure to and familiarity with the genre.

From the discussions and in-depth interviews on the issue, 'how credible the documentary film is', a person with journalism background took part in each session. In this regard, the responses made by, Elias Taye, 31, FGD-A, Abduljelil Yimam, 28, FGD-B, Selam Lakew, 29, FGD-C, Yared Nigussie, 28, FGD-D and Yonas Aregu, 29 from in-depth interviewees have been selected, and their responses have been presented below:

**Elias:** In fact, how do we know whether the subjects in the documentary film have intended to engage in terrorism or are forced to act like terrorists?

**Abduljelil:** The documentary film did not give us any credible sources for the information presented. How do we know whether individuals in the documentary film are terrorists?

**Selam:** I think the documentary is partly credible.

**Yared:** I think the whole picture of the documentary film is based on comparing and linking things. So, some of the facts seem fabricated.

Yonas: I expected to see the army of Islamic groups and more guns on the TV screen, but I saw one or two guns and three to four individuals. But the documentary presented the members of the group as people who were caught before launching terror act in Ethiopia. The suspects are also interviewed while their hands were in chains. The interviewer was also trying to force the suspects to say what he wanted them to say. The interview was like police interrogation and not the usual question and answer manner. So I could not dare to say the documentary is accurate.

The responses from the participants dominantly indicated that the credibility of the documentary film entitled “Jihadawi Harakat” is questionable. Besides, these participants shared their doubt over whether the subjects in the documentary film were real or fictitious, and if the documentary film is concerned with the current issue of the Muslims in Ethiopia. They also described that “Jihadawi Harakat” depicted the threat of terrorism in Ethiopia while the current agenda of the Muslim society was said to about the right to elect their religious representative freely. Most of the participants also expressed their resentment about the fact that the documentary film depicts the Muslim society as terrorist, and aspired to become jihadists who wanted to establish an Islamic state. In addition, some commented that the purpose of the documentary film was to portray Ethiopian Muslims as terrorists and as ‘Boko Haram’ (of Nigeria), ‘Al-shabab’ (of Somalia) and ‘al-Qaeda’ (worldwide terrorist).

In relation to the documentary film credibility, all Muslim and non-Muslim participants made reference to the 16 minutes video leaked, aired after the main documentary film as evidence to their claims. On this leaked video, Abubeker Ahmed is seen with his hand in a chain and in a kind of interrogation with government security officials.

Generally, according to the participants’ views on “Jihadawi Harakat,” the credibility of the documentary is questionable. Participants added that the documentary film criticized all who were involved in public peaceful demonstrations. The participants of all focus group discussions also felt that the ‘Jihadawi Harakat’ was one-sided and biased.

Thus, statements transcribed above clearly indicated that audiences are not merely passive viewers, accepting what they see on screen. They are actively involved in performing operational

and negotiated meanings. Although, most of the ideas go beyond the issue at hand, their responses as the whole implied that they doubted the credibility of the contents in the documentary film.

According to Wayne (2008), documentary film may sometimes aid the function of investigative journalism. The respondents were also asked to reflect upon the motive behind producing the documentary film. On this issue, the responses of Musema Jemal, 27, FGD – A, Qemer Awol, 23, FGD – B, Furhan Mohamed, 24, FGD – C, Hayat Kebir Hussen, 24, FGD – D, Sheh Aman Aliyi, 48 and Tesfahun Shimeles, 32 from in-depth interviewees have been selected and presented below.

**Musema:** I basically say the film was one-sided because it was presented in the context of terrorism, but when I think about what was happening in the Muslim society in the past one year, the documentary film doesn't make sense. The documentary had missed the chance to show a lot about Muslim society issues.

**Qemer:** First, let us know the motive, because obviously the government would not allow the news media to come out and speak about these issues. So the intention of the producer seemed to make the Muslims get this one sided information.

**Furhan:** The Muslim society was not question government policies; what they were asking was the rights to elect their representatives without government interference. But the documentary film represented Muslim as a threat to the country. So I think the producer made this documentary film to cover up the intervention of the government when the Muslims attempted to elect their representatives.

**Hayat:** I think the documentary film seemed to support Al-habesh more liberal Islamic thoughts. The documentary intended to warn Muslims against any anti- Al-habesh Muslim demonstrations.

**Sheh Aman:** Totally the documentary was biased, no need of more explanation. It was a piece government propaganda. When you see, it is a kind of drama which you don't expect from a government.

**Tesfahun:** Yes, it was biased!

When the idea of bias was brought up in the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and in-depth interview, most of the participants explicitly stated that, the “Jihadawi Harakat” presented

inaccurate information which does not represent the reality of the day. Participants noted that what was happening with the Muslim society in the past one year had nothing to do with the contents in the documentary film. A participant also considered the documentary film as if it had been used as vehicle through which the government grabbed attention of viewers.

Pertaining to the views of the audiences on the motive behind producing the documentary film, most of the participants strongly expressed that the government has clear motive to encourage Al- habesh Islamic thoughts by broadcasting the documentary film. Although most of the discussants did not clearly set the motive, they agreed on the fact that the contents of the film are so biased and distorted.

The literature suggests that the perceived integrity of documentary film is influenced by understandings of aesthetics. Smaill (2007) states that a persuasive argument combined with the integrity associated with a low budget documentary positively influences a documentary's opportunity to gather support and advocate for social change. The focus group discussions indicated that most participants exposed to documentary film had a strong perception of what this genre entails. The main theme that emerged from the focus group discussions was that the documentary film is boring. These commonly held beliefs may be shaping the perception of focus group participants. In the participant profile form, out of sixty-five participants, only six revealed an interest in watching documentary film. Abduljelil Yimam, 28, FGD-B, Jalan Umur, 26, FGD-C, Yared Nigussie, 28, FGD-D and Endalew Kelemu, 27, in-depth interviewees, explained the following:

**Abduljelil:** I'm not trying to generalize, but almost all the documentaries are made out of people's misery. This one also almost follows the same trend basically. I've noticed of late; it is the bad things that are always highlighted....

**Jelan:** The documentary film is supposed to be about sad issues.

**Yared:** It was boring; it was informative, and it was everything that I would assume a documentary should be.

**Endalew:** Frankly speaking, I have watched the documentary film because it is a current issue, but such a long documentary can be tedious. It runs for more than one hour....

Once again, participants in the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and in-depth interviews confirmed that the documentary film was boring; it had no entertainment value. In this regard, the literature suggests that aesthetics was kept to a minimum, in the documentary film as critic's evaluations were aligned with realism, objectivity and truth. The obsession with producing and conveying a sense of realism at the expense of creative treatment thus resulting in information-heavy films; that may be one of the reasons why the documentary film is seen as boring (de Jong, 2011).

From the result of focus group discussions and interview on the issue, the documentary film was viewed as boring and pointless by most of the discussants and interviewees. Despite the perceived unattractiveness of this genre, all participants agreed that the documentary film is purposeful. According to the participants, the documentary supported Al-habesh more liberal Islamic thought. This was the most common idea about the documentary film among all Focus Groups Discussants and in-depth interviewees.

In this research, focus group discussions (FGDs) allowed participants to challenge, learn from each other and clarify their own thoughts and beliefs. When they were asked 'to evaluate the value of the focus group discussions, all of the participants highly valued the experience as it allowed them to become more aware of their own views, while benefitting from shared learning. The focus groups of this study are reacting actively on the documentary screening.

In the in-depth interviews, most participants stated that they were not interested in watching a sequel, that is, the documentary film that discusses the issue did not reflect the current Muslims issues in Ethiopia, thus, making it more relevant for those producers. Furthermore, nine participants specifically mentioned how "Jihadawi Harakat" encouraged them to seek out more information about the issue, and raised their awareness and interest in the topic. Such residual interests and activities are indicative of positive reception, as audiences show interest in the issue long after the viewing and reading of film has commenced. In in-depth interview, the following participant valued the ability of this experience in allowing her to self-reflect and critically evaluate important issues, Kasim H/Abdo, 39 and Senait Walelegn, 25 of in-depth interviewee:

**Kasim:** I think the documentary film has given homework for everybody and of us to think the issue of Islamic terror groups especially in Ethiopia. Producers throughout it want to have their point of views in it. That's the reason I think they

went over there, it was their motive to show everybody and it became a platform for the people even if open up government voices and it became biased but, allowing as to evaluate the issues.

**Senait:** It is not expected that the role of a documentary film to be spoon-feeding. It should be for you to question things and to make you more aware and want to know more...leave you to think, leave you to want to find out more about it.

Participants were split as to whether they considered the primary purpose of the documentary film was its function as a medium for people to have their story heard, or if it was a vehicle for the government or producers' point of views. In terms of "Jihadawi Harakat", a few participants advocated for the value of expressing producer's subjectivity. Others considered the film as a biased representation of the issue. Some participants agreed that "Jihadawi Harakat" was a positive representation of the Muslim society situation.

Participants questioned the documentary film as producer motivations in terms of decisions about content, their use of people, and their ability to provide an objective account of the issue. Although most participants realized that producers may be used faked interviews for the purposes of making their documentary film, and sometimes the content is biased due to the socio-political climate at the time the documentary film was made. Some participants still argued for with the idea that the documentary film is a truthful representation of reality.

According to Kahana (2008), the ability of individuals to use the content, they have seen on-screen to understand and interpret their socio-cultural contexts, transforms them from being audiences to agents of change. However, apart from acknowledging the use of documentary film as historical evidence there is a lack of literature that assesses the continued relevance of film over time in relation to changing socio-cultural contexts. This study demonstrates that documentary film continue to remain important over time.

Most participants in the Focus Groups Discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews confirmed that Ethiopian Muslims are expressing their grievances and are on demonstration and show no sign of stopping. This then increases the chances of a reception of this documentary film by Ethiopian audiences, highlighted by the participant discussion noted above. Participants mention that 'Jihadawi Harakat' documentary film is still being used to criticize the government acts on

religion freedom and initiate the Muslims for more movements, and participants note how Ethiopian Muslim are still obsessed with their issues.

Most of the respondents have indicated that the documentary film might contribute to instability in the country by instigating non-Muslims against Muslims. More importantly, its broadcasting would do nothing for the country other than creating chaos.

#### **4.1.5 The Documentary Film and Religious Consciousness of the Audience**

Based on the information gathered from the Focus Groups Discussions (FGD) and in-depth interviews, this section discussed the various processes that highlight audience reception and engagement with “Jihadawi Harakat” documentary film.

##### **4.1.5.1 Polysemic Interpretations**

A polysemic text is one that enables several interpretations, increasing its chance of a broad reach (Ott and Mack, 2009). Thus, the sharing of multiple interpretations allows for audiences to engage with and reflect on thoughts and opinions they might not have necessarily thought of. This fosters better understanding and increases knowledge. As stated previously, this is because “Jihadawi Harakat” explored several issues within the overarching theme of the growing of Muslims extremism and terrorism group. Moreover, using a global perspective, “Jihadawi Harakat” explored the issues within several different contexts. Musema Jemal, 25, FGD-A, Qemer Awol, 23, FGD-B, Mustefa Musema, 21, FGD-D, Ahmedin Abubeker, 36, Worker in Sheria Court and Shiferaw Asfaw, 51, from in-depth interviewee highlights polysemic interpretations of “Jihadawi Harakat”.

**Musema:** I think the message of the documentary is terrorism. Last year the Muslim society were protesting and the producers seemed to convey a message that terrorist groups have made the Muslim society to protest in order to achieve their hidden political agenda. Its basic purpose was to discourage the Muslim society from participating in the protests and to divert the Muslim society questions. I think that is its basic goal because the suspects might have hidden-agenda. However, people may not know about them, and some would follow them.

**Qemer:** I think its message to the Muslim society is clear: follow al-habesh and their doctrine. If you stick to previous religious practices and refuse to follow al-habesh, they will accuse you as a terrorist and throw you into prison, like Abubeker and Kemil. Why does the documentary portray all Muslims as terrorists? In fact, the government is accusing innocent Muslims through the documentary.

**Mustefa:** The message is that some individuals were moving in Ethiopia to establish an Islamic state through jihad. For instance, in the documentary we watched individuals claiming or confessing they were planning to wage war against non-Muslims government. To this end, they took trainings with Al-shaba. All these things make me say the above points.

**Ahmedin:** I think the basic message was to show that under the cover of religion, terrorists are making the Muslims feel that their religious freedom has been targeted and undermined. For me, I think the documentary film had just more than one theme. It concentrated on terrorism, and I think the producers covered the issue in a way they favored; i.e., how Muslim terrorists' are affecting the country peace and development.

**Shiferaw:** I think the basic message was to show how things have gone wrong because of these new developments in the name of religion in Ethiopia.

Most participants said that “Jihadawi Harakat” documentary film had more than one main message. However, the main one focuses on the ill effects of Islamic terrorists resulted in fears and insecurity with no piece of evidence. Participants reported that since Ethiopia is a critical partner of the U.S. war on terror, Ethiopia’s government claims that it is concerned by the rise of radicals and extremists and the an-improbable takeover of power by political Islam. That way, Ethiopia hopes to keep Western aid flowing into the country.

Polysemic texts allow for audiences to derive their own meanings from the text (Condit, 1991). The higher the level of polysemy, the more audiences the text is able to appeal to (Hiebert and Gibbons, 2000). It is important to keep in mind that polysemic texts do not allow for infinite interpretations. Rather these interpretations will be constrained by the socio-cultural contexts the text is read within, allowing audiences to have access to certain frameworks specific to their culture and not others (Ott and Mack, 2009).

Participants also stated that the documentary film attempts to design message unison that there's no uncalled governmental interference in the internal affairs of Ethiopian Muslims. But, the government has sponsored Al-Ahbash Muslim over Wahabi or attempted of privileging one form religious ideology over another.

This view of participants indicated that the meaning they made has something to do with the theme of the documentary. The meaning that the participants found out of the program is based on their understanding and interpretation of the message (content) of the documentary film. Above all, participants hoped to gain facts and more experiences of people.

Those who understood "Jihadawi Harakat" as a documentary film showed that the act of terrorists relate to the meaning they make after watching the documentary film. And the same is true for those who understood the documentary film as a warning against those who were involved in the protest last year. In general, the meaning that the participants made out of "Jihadawi Harakat" reflected that "Jihadawi Harakat" documentary film has got different meanings.

The data discussed above shows that the respondents' responses to the documentary film vary depending on the respondents' religion, age, educational level and other more individuals' related factors. This may indicate that the polysemic nature of the film. A polysemic text is one that enables several interpretations, increasing its chances of a broad reach (Ott and Mack, 2009)

#### **4.1.5.2 Increased knowledge and Awareness of audiences'**

Participants were unanimous in saying that documentary film facilitated and increased knowledge and awareness. When they were asked if they learned anything new from watching "Jihadawi Harakat" documentary film, Fatuma Abubeker, 20, FGD-B, Jalan Umur, 26, FGD-C, Yalew Kebede, 26, FGD-D and Bilal Asen, 31, in-depth interviews, said the following.

**Fatuma:** Yes! I have learned a lot. The documentary imparted new information. What I knew was the Muslim society raised a question of religion in peaceful manner. However, the documentary film showed different angles of Muslim demonstrations.

**Jelan:** I have not learnt anything new about the exact problem of Ethiopian Muslims. But I have definitely learnt more about the Islamic terror groups in Africa as it said much

about terror groups in Africa. Still, I was not even aware of the case of Muslims in Ethiopia.

**Yalew:** I never thought Ethiopian Muslims would try to establish an Islamic state. I was surprised when I saw the documentary film.

**Bilal:** The documentary film clearly showed that those individuals in the documentary film had a strong link with Al-Shabab. Now we are mature enough to understand the ill effects of terrorism.

Participants of all Focus Groups Discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews of this study admitted that before watching the documentary film; they did not know much about jihadist Muslim groups in Ethiopia even if the documentary film is true or not. They felt that they were better informed about the ill effects. Subsequent discussions on the issue helped them gain more understanding about the issue under discussion. However, participants in all FGDs expressed an increased concern about extremisms and jihadist Islam after watching the documentary film. The respondents here pointed out the fact that the documentary film has raised their awareness of terms, plots, and terrorism.

#### **4.1.5.3 Critical Thought and Analysis**

Increased knowledge and awareness of audiences on the issue could be linked with the ability to engage them in critical thought and analysis. Documentary film encourages the audiences to critically think about matters of social significance (Giroux, 2011). The data obtained from focus group discussions and in-depth interviews showed that participants critically analyzed and discussed the content shown in the documentary and reflected on it by raising questions and hypothesizing different outcomes resulting from the issues and events. For example, Sulatan Adam, 29, FGD-A, Abduljelil Yimam, 28, Journalist FGD-B, Efrem Kasa, 24, FGD-C, Serkalem Shita, 25, FGD-D, Ahmedin Abubeker, 36, Worker in Sheria Court, Gashaw Merete, 28 and Simret Sirak, 34, in-depth interviewee, said the following:

**Sulatan:** If they're planning it [war with a non-Muslim government] then they shouldn't speak about it on the screen. They keep their secret and prepare more power, but the

suspects were seen with only two or three guns; do you think war with the government can be won by two or three guns? We would see...

**Abduljelil:** Yes, if they wanted to establish an Islamic state through ousting the existing government, they could have taken enough precaution to make sure no one would know about their agenda. But, they were staging demonstrations. So, the demonstrations were basically religious.

**Efrem:** If the producers' intention was to show about terrorists and jihad, why did they quote Kemil Shemsu while he was preaching about peace?

**Serkalem:** But, what precautions would they take? Ethiopia is so populated. You can't find empty land or empty places.

**Ahmedin:** No they didn't speak that on the screen.

**Gashaw:** Previously the government said terrorists made the people of Muslim to demonstrate so that they could advance their hidden agenda. On the other hand, they said the Muslims' questions are right and lawful. Later on, they came with this documentary film. The documentary film was aired, but they didn't realize that categorizing those individuals as a terrorist would have effects on the mass Muslims society life. Why didn't they research the public opinion before actually airing the documentary?

**Simret:** I think the documentary seemed to condemn all traditional Islamic thoughts and promote Al-habesh liberal Islamic thought.

Critical thoughts and analyses are stimulated by viewers of the documentary film being able to listen to and witness the testimonies of those affected and represented in the documentary film. From the date, one can conclude that discussants critically analyzed and discussed the content shown in the documentary. The majority of the discussants reported that the documentary film condemned the traditional Islamic thoughts and favored the Al-habesh liberal Islamic thoughts. They also reflected by raising questions, for example, as to why the producers failed to research the public opinion before producing the documentary film.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to analyze audiences' receptions of messages produced by "Jihadawi Harakat" documentary film broadcast by Ethiopian television on February 5, 2013.

Qualitative data gathering techniques (content analysis, focused group discussion and in-depth interview) were employed to undertake the study. Using convenience and purposive sampling technique, a total of 65 study subjects were selected for focus group discussions (FGD) and in-depth interviews.

The study began with the content analysis of the documentary film. The content analysis was done to get necessary information about encoding message elements of the documentary film. Focus group discussions (FGD) were also employed to study audiences' meaning construction. Totally, four focus groups were utilized. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted to collect information on how audiences interpret the documentary film contents and how the documentary film is relevant to audiences. The interview also was mainly meant to get rich data that the individual interviewees would reveal information about documentary representation of subjects in the documentary and to consult journalists on the technical production aspects of documentary film.

As a result, the prevalence data from both the Focus Group Discussants and the in-depth interview reveal that the interactive approach would produce almost similar meaning for the title given to the documentary film as the theme of the documentary film (Islamic group movement to establish Islamic government). However, few respondents had come up with their own interpretations upon the documentary title.

With regard to representation of subjects in the documentary, the finding shows that the suspects were described as terrorists, fundamentalists who threaten peace and affect development. A significant number of the discussants report that the suspects do not represent the Muslim society at all. According to the discussants, the documentary film subjects can be classified in to two different groups; Abubeker or Kemil groups' and Aman Asefa (Esmael) or Mufti Mohamed (Abu Telha) groups'. In spite of those differences, portraying of Abubeker or Kemil group as terrorists, extremists that threaten peace and development is the same as representing Muslims as terrorists, extremists that threaten peace and development. From the

above findings, the researcher concludes that the documentary representation of Abubeker or Kemil groups as terrorists and jihadists is not reflecting the reality on the ground.

As the data indicated, there was knowledge gap between the Muslims and non-Muslims. Non-Muslims are anchored by documentary film information through a lack of knowledge of Muslims. Every group that mixes with Muslims lacks the depth of knowledge to understand and develop counter ideologies. While non-Muslims argue that their experiences inform their beliefs about Muslims, these experiences are filtered through and ultimately shaped by media information.

Almost all focus group discussants (FGD) and in-depth individual interviewees stated that most of themes of the documentary were found to be irrelevant.

The study has revealed that audiences are not mere passive viewers, accepting what they see on screen. They are actively involved in negotiating meanings. Although, most of the ideas go beyond the issue at hand, their responses as the whole imply that they clearly doubt the credibility of the contents of the documentary film. Most participants have made reference to the 16 minutes video leaked. The leaked video showed Abubeker Ahmed while his hands were in a chain and being investigated by government security officials.

Therefore, based on the data from the discussion, the leaked video diminishes the overall credibility of the documentary film.

As the findings indicate, the government has clear motive behind broadcasting the documentary film. Although most of the participants did not clearly state the motive, they agreed on the fact that the contents of the film are so biased and distorted to achieve certain hidden agenda of the government.

The findings also indicate that the discussants of the study found the documentary film boring and meaningless or pointless. Most of the discussants also expressed their concerns that the documentary might create instability in the country and instigate non-Muslims against the Muslim society. As a result one can conclude that the documentary has lost its purpose.

As the findings indicate, the documentary film raised viewers' awareness on the issues of terrorism and Islamic groups in the country. The study also indicated that participants have given for the documentary film a polysemic interpretation. In pertain with the informants' views about the ethics and principles of the producers of the film, the majority indicate that the producers should have been more sensitive about the possible consequences of the documentary.

As the findings also shows that no significant differences appeared on most of discussed themes, between the Muslims who mixed frequently with non-Muslims (contact group) and Muslims who had no frequent contact with non-Muslims (non-contact group).

## **5.2 Recommendation for Future Research**

This study assessed the reception of “Jihadawi Harakat” documentary film among Addis Ababa city audience – selected individuals above the ages of 18. As such, it can be used as a pilot study to inform future research examining reception among this segment of the audience.

There needs to be more research investigating the reception of documentary film among audiences because this genre is a very powerful vehicle for action and social change. The persuasive and influential characteristics of documentary coupled with its ability to resonate with Islamic insurgent groups are an important area to be studied.

This study also provided a brief overview of the representation, engagement and reception of “Jihadawi Harakat” documentary film among Addis Ababa city audiences in two different groups – as Muslim audience and as non-Muslim audience groups. There were significant differences between the engagement and reception of “Jihadawi Harakat” documentary film between the groups. As there has been handful of research conducted in this area, future research could focus on the differences between voluntary experiences of viewing documentary film versus as part of academic prescription. Additional research on the impact of Ethiopian television documentary film on different part of Ethiopian people as informative tool would also complement this work.

As most participants stated that the Al-habesh Islamic group would be their main cause of disputes, more research should be conduct in assessing how Al-habesh Islam group followers would interact with “Jihadawi Harakat” documentary film. Participants in this study stated that they were directly affected by the religious issue – topics covered by “Jihadawi Harakat” documentary film. It would be interesting to assess the reception of this film on Muslim populations that were directly being affected by “Jihadawi Harakat” documentary film. Also, the reason behind people’s refusal to engage with documentary film is an important area of study that relates to the overall field of documentary reception studies in Ethiopia.

This kind of study could expand to global research on the reception of documentary film. By comparing the reception of documentary films cross-culturally, research can provide insight about the levels of audience engagement across cultures. Additionally, given its main premise of achieving social change, more research internationally would show if current documentary practices are taking steps in the right direction. Moreover, because of the relative lack of national and international research examining the effects and reception of documentary film, further research must be undertaken to address this gap.

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## Appendix - 1A

### Interview guide for FGD and In-depth Interview with participants

#### DISCUSSION ISSUES FORWARDED FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

##### Biographical Information

- Name/optional \_\_\_\_\_
- Age\_\_\_\_\_
- Gender\_\_\_\_\_

1. Discussion issues forwarded over Audiences' interpretation of the content of the film
  - 1.1. How did you react right after you watched the film?
  - 1.2. Could you explain what you understand by "jihadawiharakat" mean from the film?
  - 1.3. What do you think the central message of the film?
2. Discussion issues forwarded over audiences' opinion on the representation of Muslim
  - 2.1. How do you view the credibility of the contents in the documentary film? Please explain?
  - 2.2. Do you think that the film would have considerable effect on the outlook of the society?  
How?
  - 2.3. How does the film affect your overall outlook than you had before?
  - 2.4. What would be your comment on the importance of viewing such film for the society?
  - 2.5. Have you discussed over the film with other(s)? If so, what conclusion(s) did you come up with?
3. Issues suggested for discussion on the part of the documentary's film content that counts for open interpretation
  - 3.1. What specific part of the contents of the film would lead viewers for open interpretation?  
How, explain it please?
  - 3.2. Which specific part of the contents of the film that you find it new?
  - 3.3. Have you ever discussed over the contents of the film with other(s)? if so, which part did you find hard to come on concences over the discussion(s)?

## Appendix –1B

### IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW ITEMS (for Key Informants)

#### Biographical Information

- Name/optional \_\_\_\_\_
- Age \_\_\_\_\_
- Gender \_\_\_\_\_
- Level of education \_\_\_\_\_

1.1. How did you react right after you watched the film?

1.2. Could you explain what you understand by “jihadawiharakat” mean from the film?

1.3. What do you think the central message of the film?

2.1. How do you explain the credibility of the contents in the documentary film? Please explain?

2.2. Do you think that the film would have considerable effect on the outlook of the society?  
How?

2.3. How does the film affect your overall outlook than you had before?

2.4. What would be your comment on the importance of viewing such film for the society?

2.5. Have you discussed over the film with other(s)? If so, what conclusion(s) did you come up with?

3.1. What specific part of the contents of the film would lead viewers for open interpretation?  
How, explain it please?

3.2. Which specific part of the contents of the film that you find it new?

3.3. Have you ever discussed over the contents of the film with other(s)? if so, which part did you find hard to come on consciousness over the discussion(s)?

## Appendix - 2A

### Focus group participants

<b>FGD – A: age &lt;18</b>				
<b>No</b>	<b>Name (Optional)</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Job</b>
1	Musema Jemal	M	27	Kebele Administrator
2	Sofia Edris	F	24	Postgraduate Student
3	Sulatan Adam	M	29	Merchant
4	Elias Taye	M	31	Journalist
5	Abdurahaman Abdela	M	21	Merchant
6	Melat Alemayehu	F	25	Journalist
<b>FGD – B: age &lt;18</b>				
1	Redwan Kemil	M	21	Merchant
2	Qemer Awol	F	23	University Student
3	Abdu Aman	M	26	Merchant
4	Abu Santure	M	24	University Teacher
5	Kemal H/Tahir	M	33	Merchant
6	Fatuma Abubeker	F	20	Merchant
7	Abduljelil Yimam	M	28	Journalist
<b>FGD – C: age &lt;18</b>				
1	Surur Jemal	M	27	Postgraduate Student
2	Furhan Mohamed	M	24	Merchant
3	Selam Lakew	F	29	Journalist
4	Ibrahim Abdulahi	M	30	Merchant
5	Jelan Umur	M	26	Merchant
6	Efrem Kasa	M	24	Postgraduate Student
<b>FGD – D: age &lt;18</b>				
1	Haji Mohamed Adam	M	42	Worker in Mejlis
2	Yalew Kebede	M	26	Merchant
3	Mustefa Musema	M	37	High School Teacher
4	Serkalem Shita	F	25	High School student
5	Fikadu Alemu	M	27	Merchant
6	Momina Jemal	F	32	Merchant
7	Yared Nigussie	M	28	Documentary film maker
8	Hayat Kebir Hussen	F	24	Merchant

**Appendix - 2B**  
**Participant of the In-depth interview**

No	Name (Optional)	Sex	Age	Job
1	Muniza Beshir	F	25	Industrial Manager
2	Sofia Nur	F	28	Merchant
3	Jemal Ahmed	M	40	Preacher
4	Kedija Aman	F	29	Merchant
5	Ahmedin Abubeker	M	36	Worker in Sheria Court
6	Jemila Feko	F	22	Merchant
7	Usman Mufti	M	36	Head of Mosque
8	Ismail Alo	M	25	Merchant
9	Shikur Temam	M	22	Merchant
10	Tesfahun Shimeles	M	32	Engineer
11	Ali Musema	M	38	Teacher in Awlaia School
12	Yonas Aregu	M	29	Journalist
13	Gashaw Merete	M	28	Psychologist
14	Muzemil Aman	M	38	Merchant
15	Bilan Abdi	F	34	Merchant
16	Manyazewal Taye	M	26	Health officer
17	Endalew Kelemu	M	27	Public relation officer
18	Rahwa Jemal	F	21	University student
19	Zaynebu Hassen	F	29	Merchant
20	Sosna Feleke	F	26	High School Teacher
21	Senait Walelegn	F	25	Nurse
22	Desalegn Takele	M	27	Accountant
23	Mirkat Kebede	F	35	Worker in government org.
24	Hana Wendemeneh	F	32	Worker in government org.
25	Zinu Yusuf	F	35	House wife
26	Sheh Aman Aliyi	M	48	Head of Mosque
27	Alemu Yae	M	34	Worker in government org.
28	Meyrema Said	F	39	Worker in government org.
29	Achamelesh Liyew	F	22	High School Student
30	Simret Sirak	F	34	Worker in government org.
31	Betlhem Abebe	F	31	Worker in government org.
32	Nejat Awel	F	23	College student
33	Shiferaw Asfaw	M	51	Worker in government org.
34	Almaz Feleke	F	26	Merchant
35	Halima H/Abdo	F	23	Worker in Mejlis
36	Rabia Birhan	F	28	Worker in government org.
37	Biniam Ambessie	M	27	Merchant
38	Bilal Asen	M	31	Preacher and worker in Mejlis