

Social Media as an Alternative Political Forum in Ethiopia: the Case of Facebook

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ABSTRACT

Social Media as an Alternative Political Forum in Ethiopia: the Case of Facebook

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This study aims at examining how the social media, particularly the Facebook has been serving as an alternative forum for discussing politics in Ethiopia. The study was situated within the theoretical framework of Habermas public sphere.

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. For the qualitative method, data gathering tools such as interview, observation, and text of Facebook postings were used. Interviews were conducted with sixteen activists, bloggers, journalists and politicians selected through convenience and snowball sampling methods. The data was collected from mid July to September 2012. For quantitative method, survey was used as a data gathering tool. The survey questionnaire was administered to 103 people selected through random sampling technique. Descriptive statistics was employed to analyze the quantitative data.

The analysis of the data reveals that the social media in general and Facebook in particular is providing an alternative platform for those who have access to freely discuss political issues that would otherwise be off the limit in the conventional public sphere in the Ethiopian context. What is more, Facebook is even serving as a source for the mainstream media for political news and there by challenging the conventional role reserved for mainstream journalism. This being the case, however, Facebook use is facing challenges which could be classified into user-related challenges and government-related challenges. Based on the findings, some recommendations are suggested.

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Lists of Acronyms

FDRE -Federal Democratic Republic Ethiopia

EPRDF - Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front

UDJ- United for Democracy and Justice

OFM- Oromo Federalist Movement

EDP- Ethiopia Democratic Party

CPJ – Committee to Protect Journalists

ETA- Ethiopian Telecommunication Agency

ESAT – Ethiopian Satellite Television

EBA – Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority

ETC –Ethiopian Telecommunication Corporation

INSA-Information Network Security Agency

Chapter One

1. Introduction

1.1. Historical Overview of Ethiopian Media

The duration between 1880 and 90s is considered the start of newspaper publication in Ethiopia. The media history of Ethiopia has aged more than a century. The rise of a 'modernized' empire-state with all its attendant consequences contributed a great deal to the expansion of the printing enterprise in Ethiopia (Shimelis, 2000).

The first medium was the weekly (*La Se-mainie d'Ethiopie*, 1890) later the name changed to *Le Semaine d'Ethiopie* in 1905. It was the first in the history of Ethiopia print media and circulated in Harar. The main language of the publication was French, and occasionally Amharic (Fackler, 2012 ; Shimelis, 2000). The first Amharic newspaper was issued in 1895—a four page weekly newspaper named *Aemero* ('Intelligence') which appeared in the relatively newfound capital Addis Ababa (Fackler, 2012). It was marked by a degree of government control, underlined by the fact that the name was chosen by the Emperor Menelik II himself. Thirdly, there are reports that *Blatta* Gebre Egziabher wrote satirical poems on sheets that were duplicated around 50 times and circulated in the Emperor's courtyard every Sunday, before year 1900; it resembled a newspaper in a format. The year 1921 is the benchmark in Ethiopian print media, i.e., the opening of *Berihanena Selam*. It started *Berhanena Selam*, an Amharic weekly, conceived by Ras (prince) Tafari Mekonnen himself (Haile Silase I). The lasting journalism tradition in Ethiopia has been formed during this period and it was an era when loyalty to the Emperor paid off (Terje S Skjerdal, 2011).

According to MOI (cited in Shimelis 2000) the progress of the Ethiopian press was interrupted for about five years (1935-1941) because of the country's occupation by Mussolini's forces. Printing presses were demolished. There were centers for the production and dissemination of Fascist propaganda at Harar and Jimma. There were also field paper of the liberation forces, Bandirachin (later re-named Sendeq Alamachin - 'Our Flag') issued. There were also the many publications produced in foreign countries to promote the Ethiopian cause.

After the the emancipation of the country from Italian occupation in 1941, a new era had started in the history of the Ethiopian print media. According to the MOI's 1966 release, influential and long-lasting weekly papers as *Addis Zemen* and *The Ethiopian Herald* came on to the scene in 1941 and 1943, respectively. Both became dailies after December 1958. In 1952, *Yezareyitu Etyopia* was added (Shimelis 2000).

The broadcast media started almost more than half a century ago. The Ethiopian Radio was the primary one in the broadcasting sector (Aside, 2011). It was established in 1935 in SW, which the transition nowadays adds the MW and covers all parts of the country (Authority, 2009). Ethiopia was among the first nations in Africa to establish a television service. The only television station, the Ethiopia Television, was established in May 1963 in Africa Hall in Addis Ababa on the important occasion of the first meeting of the Organization of African Unity. It began permanent broadcasting on 2 November 1964, coinciding with the 33rd coronation of Haile Selassie cited in (Terje S Skjerdal, 2011).

The real turn for the newspaper enterprise came in the late 1950s and early 1960s with the establishment of the Economic Commission for Africa (1958) and the Organization of African Unity (1963). There was, in this period, a larger number of both daily and weekly newspapers

and other press products, all, with the exception of a few, being government- owned and catering to a limited circle of an elite readership- mostly top bureaucrats and members of the urban-based intelligentsia (Shimelis 2000).

Following the overthrow of the monarchy by the military junta, in 1974, mass media institutions were recognized as instruments of propaganda under the centralized control of the party and ministry of information. The military government imposed and implemented harsh censorship rule. During the military dictatorship from 1974 to 1991, the government had a total control over the media and the flow of information. Therefore, the years of the Derg regime have unequivocally been portrayed as a dark chapter in the history of the Ethiopian media and journalism (Shimelis, 2000; Terje S. Skjerdal, 2012; XIX, 2004).

1.1.1. Freedom of Expression and the Free Press in Ethiopia

In 1991, the coalition of armed groups, EPRDF, toppled the Military regime and formed the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. A year after, as part of the democratization process, the EPRDF-led government conceded freedom of expression and declared in the press in 1992 the press Bill that granted the free press as well as the freedom of expression, and later in the 1994, Federal democratic Ethiopia Constitution asserted it.

The 1994/95 Federal Constitution in its second part, which states about the democratic right, article 29 explains about Right of Thought, Opinion and Expression, which includes including the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information (Ethiopia, 1994/5; Regassa, 2004; Shimelis, 2000). The beginning of the free press in Ethiopia has been fascinating. Immediately after the 1992 Press Bill, according to Aadland and Fackler (2012), though the figures differ but according to the Government, 385 publications registered between October 1992 and July

1997, of which 265 were newspapers and 120 magazines. At any one time, there were probably about 20 different newspapers for sale in Addis Ababa (Fackler, 2012).

However, in recent days the conditions of freedom of the press and freedom of expression have deteriorated; thus, different critics have called for the improvement of the situation. The US Government, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, Hanrahan has spoken on the event on the National Endowment for Democracy that noted that the government of Ethiopia need to work to improving all the democratic situation in the country, including freedom of expression (Hanrahan, 2012).

In Ethiopia, the print media has a history of more than a century. However, the situation of the freedom of the press and freedom of expression is not satisfactory as it is indicated in the historical review. The media have remained under the control of the government and have used in accordance with the need and interest of the ruling governments. The media policy of the incumbent government, the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), is also commonly portrayed as an exemplar of Ethiopia's alleged authoritarian turn. Repercussions against journalists and tightly controlled state media channels are widely used as evidence of restrictions of public liberties. Evidently, the current political leadership regards the media as an integrated part of its governance strategy, similar to the approach of the preceding regimes (Terje S. Skjerdal, 2012).

1.1.2. The Emergence of Social Media in the Ethiopian Political Context

According to CPJ's (2010) report the situation in the practice of journalism and of the practitioners are deteriorating. In addition, according to Skjerdal (2011), the media scene in Ethiopia is largely dominated by the government. Skjerdal (2011) explained that most

journalists, estimated at 80 percent, work for state media institutions. Private newspapers have been on the market since 1991, but frequent establishments and closings have challenged the industry. Therefore, the media condition has pushed the public and journalists to look for an alternative arena where they exercise better freedom in their activities (CPJ, 2010; Terje S Skjerdal, 2011).

In a country like Ethiopia, where the media has no effective power of serving as a watchdog to the government and where it is illegal and impossible to carry on political discourse openly and freely, the role of Paltalk Chat rooms in breaking this quagmire is of paramount importance. These rooms host various political views including patriotism, democratic system, good governance, election, and opinion regarding public policies (T, 2010). What is more, Faris (2008) noted that the Internet, and particularly, the new social networking sites that have exploded in the past five years, have entirely changed the dynamic. The tools make it easier for like-minded individuals to find each other in spite of their physical separation in far-flung suburbs and their immersion in long workdays and commutes (Faris, 2008).

In Ethiopia, the social media has become a viable option and people started to turn onto it recently. Endalk¹, a blogger, wrote a blog article on the situation. He explained that there is also an ongoing political debate and discussion on the Facebook for political change in Ethiopia. In many of this Facebook groups especially in prominent ones like Yedil Qen with 13, 364 members (currently, this number has increased to 14,872), we see members who tried to show the menacing features of the regime. Similarly, Lefort (2011) wrote an article after he

¹ <http://endalk.wordpress.com/>

observed the activities on Ethiopian social media participants and the movement in North African countries under the name “Will Ethiopia be next?”(Lefort, 2011).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The 2005 election in Ethiopia marked what seemed to be a turning point in both political and social development in Ethiopia. The press, however, could not be as free as it were before the 2005 national election. After accusing members of the private press of working as “mouthpieces” for the opposition and attempting to “violently undermine the constitutional order in the country,” in November 2005, the government began a full-scale crackdown on members of the private media. As a result, at least eight newspapers were closed by government pressure, and members of the media fled the country to avoid prosecution (Ross, 2010).

At various times, different proclamations have been passed by the Ethiopian parliament. One of these is the Mass Media, and Freedom of Information Proclamation, which sustained on controversies for nearly six years, i.e., until in July of 2008. The controversies and the critiques over this media law focused on various articles that intimidate journalists, and repress journalism (FDRE, 2008; House, 2010; Ross, 2010; XIX, 2004).

The Anti-Terrorism Proclamation (FDRE, 2009), which aims to deter the act of terrorism in the country, is the other one which many of the oppositions and journalists talked about its chilling effect on the practice of journalism (CPJ, 2011). Similarly, The US Government, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, (Hanrahan, 2012) has spoken on the National Endowment for Democracy event about the Ethiopian Anti-Terrorism Law not to be used to undermine freedom of expression and independent media.

According to Freedom House 2010 report, the free press activity and freedom of expression in Ethiopia is deteriorating from time to time. The 2010 Freedom House report has stated that the news media are dominated by state owned broadcast and government oriented newspapers. Media practitioners and journalists are also speaking that the media sphere is not suitable to practice journalism. Hence, the media practitioners and others who have strong relationship with the media such as politicians are shifting to the social media, especially the Facebook to get a space for their opinion and forum. Therefore, citizens who have access for the technology are using the Facebook as an alternative source of information as well as for political discussions.

The forum on social media, especially the Facebook, cannot be underestimated because it was common to hear when the people said they saw [read] it on Facebook about the whereabouts of the late PM during his illness. Stassen's (2010) article also asserts that the social media goes beyond chat and personal relationship. He added, "I saw on Facebook..." is a term frequently heard in conversations these days (Stassen, 2010).

Hershey has also noted that these days, the proliferation of technologies has provided lots of media outlets and alternative platforms. People have a number of ways to access information about political, socio-philosophical, or other issues (Hershey, 2010). People began actively expressing their views on certain topics since the start of technology in Ethiopia. Furthermore, Glumor also noted that the current technology changes the feature of reporting, the reporter and the means a lot. He explained that print and broadcast media are doing their best on all circumstances. However, something profound happened. Regular people who have something

to say and show were producing news and not solely by the official news organizations that had traditionally decided how the first draft of history would look (Glumor, 2006).

Even though the report from the freedom house, Freedom on the Net 2012, labeled Ethiopia as internet blocking country and the internet service is totally controlled by the government agency, people have begun to use the social media as an alternative political forum in Ethiopia. However, it is constrained by the number of people who have access to internet and the internet penetration of the country (House, 2012).

Social Mediabacker has notified that the Facebook penetration of online population in Ethiopia is 141.96%. The number of people going on Facebook is much higher than the internet penetration. In other words, this indicates that there are people who use Facebook but not the internet. The same report has given an insight that the social media is becoming a forum for the public who have the access (Socialbakers, 2012).

According to ITU's (2010), report the household with radio in Ethiopia is around 35 % and the household with TV 5%, though radio has lasted for 77 and television for 49 years on transmission. However, the internet penetration in Ethiopia is reaching 1% of the population with the rapid increasing of users in the last fifteen years (Union., 2010). Hence, hoping the improvements on service providing and literacy rate of the Ethiopian. The internet and the Facebook would definitely be potential forums.

All the factors mentioned above have conditioned the mainstream media in order not to report on some issues, especially political issues. Hence, the researcher tried to investigate how Facebook has functioned as an alternative political forum in Ethiopia.

1.3. Objective of the Study

1.3.1. General objective

The study aims at examining how the social media are serving as an alternative political forum in Ethiopia and the strengths and shortcomings of the social media.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are the following:

- examine the extent to which the Facebook has become an alternative political forum in Ethiopia.
- identify the challenges of the Facebook in serving as an alternative political political forum.
- examine the prospects for using the Facebook in strengthening the democratization process in Ethiopia.

1.4. Research Questions

The study aims at answering the following research questions:

- a. To what extent has Facebook become an alternative forum for expressing political views?
- b. What are some of the challenges in using the Facebook as an alternative political forum?
- c. What is the prospect of for using the Facebook in strengthening the democratization process in Ethiopia?

1.5. Significance the Study

This study would have many advantages for different users of the social media, especially for the Facebook users. The study would give the real picture of how different users on various issues had used Facebook. Thus, different potential actors of the social media such as

politicians, political parties, activists, and journalist would plan how to use Facebook for their activities in Ethiopia. In addition, it would indicate a hint to conduct further studies on the issue.

Hence, policy makers, civil societies, governmental and nongovernmental organizations would also base this study to plan how to use the maximum potential of Facebook in their activities to reach their target groups via Facebook. What is more, the mainstream media could use the findings to plan and design a strategy on how to exploit the maximum potential Facebook in order to make it a source for news and different stories.

1.6. The Scope of the Study

The study focuses particularly on examining how the Facebook serves as an alternative political forum in Ethiopia and does not claim to touch other social media. The target groups are Ethiopians who have been playing an active role in the political sphere. The study limits itself to the Facebook post from mid July until September of 2012 because Facebook was the only place where people were discussing about the whereabouts and the subsequent death of the late PM Melse as well as the political situation of the country.

1.7. Limitations

The study is not devoid of limitations. Since it paid attention to examine how Facebook is used as an alternative political forum in Ethiopia. Other aspects of the Facebook discussions were not considered. Newness of the study area and the inexperience of the researcher were other limitations. What is more, as some interviewees were not willing to do the interview, it was impossible to know their opinions which might have strengthened the arguments more.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2. Introduction

In the preceding section, the circumstances of freedom of expression, the state of the free press in Ethiopia and historical overview of Ethiopian media have been presented mainly. Under this section, different scholars' writings and research findings in the field of social media and politics such as internet and world politics, technology for freedom and control, why online, technology and democracy, internet forum and internet and the public sphere are discussed. What is more, research findings on social media and politics are also presented. In addition, historical background of telecom and the emergence of social media in Ethiopian politics are also the major points discussed under this section.

2.1. The Internet

2.1.1. What is the internet?

It is an extensive system of interlinked yet independent computer networks. It has evolved from a highly specialized communications network used mostly for military and academic purpose. It is made up of countless thousands of computers that are connected together by means of telecommunications systems (Mary McGuire, 2002). Internet connectivity is commonly established by using an Internet Service Provider (ISP), which is an organization that has a permanent presence on the Internet and provide a fixed line or dial-up service. Some ISP's make a charge for this service, but many do not (Carey, 2001).

2.1.2. Its Historical Overview

Even though the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) at the US Department of Defense has developed and created the Internet in 1969, Bolt Beranek and Newman Inc, consulting company, also claims the recognition for their 29 October 1969 achievement in installing the first Advanced Research Projects Agency Network) link between two computers. The connection was between the computers one at the University of California Los Angeles site (UCLA), and the other at Stanford Research Institute (Green, 2010). Internet was invented for research centers cooperating within the US Defense Department only. However, scientists started to use it for their own communication purpose (Castells, 1996).

After its innovation, the Internet has revolutionized the way most people in the Western world live. It has become the integral part of our economic, political, and social lives. It alters the way we purchase goods, the way we bank, and the way we communicate with one another. It has altered not only how we deliver the news, but also who delivers the news. It has changed our vocabulary (in these days, the word Google is considered as a verb, which has emerged with the innovation of the search engine Google). It has become the integral part of our life; it has even changed how we check the weather (Ali, 2011). According to Castells (1996), the internet has become one aspect of the new media. It is important for all aspects of social, political and civic life; and there is a human story behind every technological story; it is pivotal to the way people live.

However, these days the internet has offered a wide opportunity on the net for e commerce, health information, education and media all over the world. As Castells (1996) stated in a book entitled *The Rise of Network Society*, it was created in order to build a communication system, which is not vulnerable for nuclear attack. It is a very rich source of information for students

and researchers as well as potential tool for writers and journalist with its wealth of contacts, story ideas, and background information.

There are so many reasons of to why we use the internet. According to McGuire and et. al, (2002), we use the internet for getting latest government information and letting the government know what citizens think of it.

2.2. The Internet and World Politics

It does seem to be the case that for those who have access and the political motivation, and who are living within open, democratic societies, the Internet offers very viable possibilities for civic interaction but clearly cannot promise a quick fix for democracy (Dahlgren, 2005). The internet has come now as a potential means to play a role in the democratization process of the world society besides the mainstream political communication. It has the potential to improve public communications and enrich democracy, a project that requires imaginative policy-making (Blumler, 2009).

In many parts of the world, people apathetic about politics. They are dissatisfied with the politics of their country. According to Blumler (2009), different studies have indicated that citizens turned back from their political system because they are losing hopes. The stories from the mass media are not complete. The public has not paid attentions to hear what officials have expressed. This seriously affects the the communication between the public and the the politicians. Hence, these days, politicians have become nostalgic about the past era of democracy in which people were actively engaged in different political activities. Since the public has become disappointed in the political activities, it has kept away from the political activities and engagement. This has worried the politicians as a result of whom they are

seriously looking for other means that can motivate the public to participate because without peoples' participation, it is impossible to build and sustain democracy. Today, Blumler (2009) asserts that the information technology has revolutionized the political participation of the citizens. It has offered the chance for the public to participate in political activities directly.

Furthermore, Neuman (2010) and her colleagues have mentioned that the Internet certainly makes an impressively broad array of political information and misinformation available, and it dramatically changes who can communicate with whom. For those citizens with the motivation and interest to seek political information or to engage in communication about public affairs, the Internet is likely to have much different effects(W. Russell Neuman, 2010).

In 1999, Rheingold noted that the innovation of the internet has changed the media environment. The change in the media arena is a profound one and a similar change is happening in the political sphere. Structurally, the Internet has inverted the few-to-many architecture of the broadcast age, in which a small number of people were able to influence and shape the perceptions and beliefs of entire nations. In the many-to-many environment of the Net, every desktop is a printing press, a broadcasting station, and place of assembly (cited in Coleman & Blumler 2009).

Morris (1999) has also clearly indicated that the internet makes the the people to have active role in the political decision. Whether direct Internet democracy is good or bad is quite beside the point. It is inevitable. It is coming and we had better make our peace with it. We have to educate ourselves better so that we can make good decisions. Restricting the power of the people is no longer a viable option. The Internet made it obsolete (cited in Coleman & Blumler 2009).

The Internet has a positive effect on Democracy. There is a relationship between Internet penetration and level of democratization. If the internet penetration is good and accessible to every citizen, it is providing the opportunity and the platform for citizens' freedom of expression. The impact of the internet to democratize the public depends on government regime type, degree of Internet diffusion, and social roles of the Internet. Besides, the levels of democracy, a nation's GDP and levels of adult literacy also have great impact on the relationship between internet and democracy (Wade, 2005).

On the contrary, skeptics have explained that the internet has become a problem for the society in many ways. According to Angell (2000), at the most dystopian end of the spectrum, there are critics who contend that the Internet is producing 'market instability, political turmoil and civil unrest, increasing rage and violent actions amongst previously passive people, as well as "immoral" behavior on a gigantic scale' (cited in Coleman & Blumler 2009).

Whatever both the skeptics and the optimists have said, the internet has its own role in and impact on the world politics and democracy. It has the potential to revitalize our weak political communication by injecting some new and different elements into the relationship between representatives and represented and governments and governed (Coleman and Blumler 2009).

2.3. Technologies for Freedom or for Control

It has argued that the new technology has a dual face; it can be used both for activists to organize, struggle and bring change in a society or it can also be used by authoritarians to oppress their citizens.

According to Storck (2011), the Internet has been heralded as an effective weapon of the weak and disenfranchised against their authoritarian leaders, resulting in what New York Times

columnist Nicholas Krist labeled the “Quintessential 21st-century conflict,” in which “on one side are government thugs firing bullets on the other side are young protesters firing ‘tweets’” (Storck, 2011).

For Dahlgren (2005), the Internet is becoming integrated with the established system of political communication, yet it is also being used to challenge established power structures. Even the efforts of some more overtly authoritarian regimes around the world to curtail the democratic uses of the Net have not been fully successful, though inventories of the mechanisms of control are sobering. In the same way, Ali, (2011) also notes the liberating effect of the technology. He argued that perhaps most meaningful is the capacity for social media to foster participation and democratization in developing nations.

However, Ali (2011) has explained how the digital divide influences the use of the internet for citizens. He has described digital divide as the unequal distribution of information and communication across nations as a gap between the haves and have not's. It goes beyond the physical access to ICT. In today's Global Digital Divide economy, computers and internet are so fundamental to production and participation. The adoption of the internet in developing nations is ensuring that content that is a useful to people in those nations exists and is accessible. However, there are four major barriers in the adoption of the internet. Lack of information is one of the barriers. This is related with the information flow, where the information comes from. The other is literacy barrier, which is related with education penetration. Language is also another barrier, which has a relation with English Language; it has become an official language on the internet. The fourth one is lack of cultural diversity,

which is related with the dominance of the haves. In such a way, the haves already have control and dominance over the have-nots.

The cyber world has been serving for freedom struggling as well as controlling mechanisms. Thus, the cyber world has to be managed and harmonized because there are complaints about cyber crime. Deibert and Rohozinski (2010) have indicated how it should be; many of these controlling ways have little to do with technology; they are more related to inculcating norms(Rohozinski, 2010).

According to Deibert and Rohozinski (2010), to minimize cyber crime, a government has to intervene legally when there are slander, libel, and copyright-infringement. However, legal measures also reflect a deliberate tactic of strangulation. Thus, such measures filter contents systematically rather than directly blocking websites. In addition, such laws can create a climate of fear, intimidation, and ultimately self-censorship. In some cases, it might also be necessary to request the internet service providers if there are contents that are against “national security” or “culturally sensitive” issues in order to protect the public safety. The other means to control cyber crime is just blocking in time. “Just-in-time blocking” might be important to prevent cyber crime and attack since it is just disabling critical information at key moments in time—during elections or public demonstrations, for example—may be the most effective tool for influencing political outcomes in cyberspace. Even though hacking is unethical online activity, there might be times in which hacking is important to avoid cyber attack and problem which is called patriotic hacking if activities are threats to the country’s national interest.

However, Deibert and Rohozinski (2010) noted that legal measures, informal request, just in time blocking and patriotic hacking are important to minimize cyber crime harms online. They have also indicated the problems that could be challenging activities online because of these interventions. Hence, Deibert and Rohozinski (2010) have argued that such actions make it difficult to determine the provenance of the attacks: Are they the work of the government or of citizens acting independently? On the other hand, are they perhaps some combination of the two?(Rohozinski, 2010).

On the other hand, in the article *Free Speech: Benefit or Liability?* Kathleen C. and Anuhea R. (2010) also have stated that the technology offers the opportunity for free speech. The coming of the social networking era has brought forth the infinite access to free speech in the social environment through blogging on websites such as Twitter, Wordpress, Myspace and Facebook has manifested free speech (R., 2010).

2.4. Why Online

People prefer the the online forum for many reasons. Willis and Bowman explained why people prefer the online to participate. The reasons are: to gain status or build reputation in a given community, to create connections with others who have similar interests online and offline, sense making and understanding, to inform and be informed, to entertain be entertained (cited in(Suopis, 2010).

Whatever the reasons for people preferring the online forum, there are conditions to be fulfilled to make the online forum successful. According to Dahlberg (2005), there are six fundamental criteria that need to be fulfilled for the internet to be considered a public sphere – autonomy from state and economic power is number one, and which is strengthened by the 2010 ITU

report. In this report, the ITU calls governments for information and communication infrastructure: an essential foundation for the information society highlights that “infrastructure is central in achieving the goal of digital inclusion, enabling universal, sustainable, ubiquitous and affordable access to ICTs by all to provide sustainable connectivity and access to remote and marginalized areas at national and regional levels. This action line also calls on governments to provide ICT connectivity for schools, libraries, post offices, community centers and other institutions accessible to the public (Union., 2010).

2.5. Cyber Democracy

Cyber Democracy involves the use of information and communications technologies to support governance. Cyber Democracy is a collection of new processes and old habits, of aspirations and fears, of specific detailed improvements in government services and enhancements in human evolution, of tremendous promise and terrible risk.

This wide scope of what Cyber Democracy is can be attributed to the fact that Cyber Democracy touches every aspect of what governments do. Furthermore, it comes at a time when the challenges facing governments and societies are significant and are likely to become even more challenging (Scan, 2001).

2.6. The Internet Forum

Forum is a name given to the first internet based networking and online communication tools, and stills a great way to engage people in an interactive ongoing conversation on various subjects. Anyone who has an issue starts a debate, solicits advice, shares an idea, runs a poll or just participates in a conversation (Lan Safko, 2009).

According to Safko and Brake (2009), internet forum has to be regulated. Forum is created, managed and maintained by an individual or groups of individuals who are referred to as administrator. Insult, swear, harness, in appropriate language, advertising, selling, spamming, and personal information, posting sexual content, having more than one account and other copyrighting infringements are prohibited behaviors.

2.7. The Internet Public Sphere

According to Poster (1995), “Contemporary social relations seem to be devoid of a basic level of interactive practice, which in the past was the matrix of democratizing politics. Loci such as the agora, the New England town hall, the village Church, the coffee house, the tavern, the public square, a convenient barn, a union hall, a park, a factory lunchroom, and even a street corner. Many of these places remain but no longer serve as organizing centers for political discussion and action. It appears that the media, especially television but also other forms of electronic communication isolate citizens from one another and substitute themselves for older spaces of politics,” (cited in (Ubayasiri, 2006)p 7).

The emergence of internet has offered free access to the public communication even if it had a threat of being highly commercialized. Some argue that a cursory examination of the thousands of diverse conversations taking place everyday online and open to anyone with Internet access seems to indicate the expansion on a global scale of the loose webs of rational-critical discourse that constitute what is known as the public sphere (Ubayasiri, 2006).

On the other hand, Jürgen Habermas who has spoken on the Bruno Kreisky Prize, for the advancement of human rights, on March 9, 2006 was not sure and speculative that the internet would become a public sphere. He noted that the use of the Internet has both broadened and

fragmented the contexts of communication. This is why the Internet can have a subversive effect on intellectual life in authoritarian regimes. However, at the same time, the less formal, horizontal cross-linking of communication channels weakens the achievements of traditional media. This focuses the attention of an anonymous and dispersed public on select topics and information, allowing citizens to concentrate on the same critically filtered issues and journalistic pieces at any given time. For Habermas, the price we pay for the growth in egalitarianism offered by the Internet is the decentralized access to unedited stories. In this medium, contributions by intellectuals lose their power to create a focus (Habermas, 2006).

Shirky argues (as cited in Safranek, 2012) that the social media has offered the opportunity of public sphere for the public.

Shirky (as cited in Safranek, 2012) believes that the more promising way to think about social media is as long-term tools that can strengthen civil society and the public sphere” and “social media can compensate for the disadvantages of undisciplined groups by reducing the costs of coordination. Larger, looser groups can now take on some kinds of coordinated action, such as protest movements and public media campaigns that were previously reserved for formal organizations. For political movements, one of the main forms of coordination is what the military calls ‘shared awareness,’ the ability of each member of a group to not only understand the situation at hand, but also understand that everyone else does too. Social media increase shared awareness by propagating messages through social networks. Political culture heightens the conservative dilemma by providing cover for more political uses of social

media. Tools specifically designed for dissident use are politically easy for the state to shut down, whereas tools in broad use become much harder to censor without risking politicizing the larger group of otherwise apolitical actors (Safranek, 2012).

As far as Dahlgren (2005) is concerned, a functioning public sphere is understood as a constellation of communication space in society that permit the circulation of idea, information, debate- ideally in an unfettered manner- and also the information of political will (i.e. public opinion). The space in which the mass media and now, more recently, the newer interactive media figure prominently, also serve to facilitate communicative link between citizens and the power holder of the society. The public sphere is most often used in a singular form, but sociologically realism points the plural (2005).

According to Dahlgren(2005), the public sphere as consisting of three constitutive dimensions: *structures, representation, and interaction*

2.7.1. The Structural Dimension

It deals with the formal institutional features; most obviously, it includes media organizations, their political economy, ownership, control and issues of their financing as well as the legal framework defining freedom of and constraints on communication. It is highly related with the freedom of speech, the opportunity as well as inclusions and exclusions of views. Thus, the political situation intervenes in the media practice and the nature of information and forms of expression that circulates. Similarly, the internet's structural dimension of the public sphere is related with the freedom of the online sphere and communication. The legal, social, economic, cultural and technical features have great impact on the representation.

2.7.2. The Representation Dimension

This refers to the target groups, which has the representation on the sphere. In this dimension, media output for political communication, including fairness, accuracy, completeness, pluralism of views, agenda setting, ideological tendencies, mode of addressing the truth and so forth will be affected by the one who owns the power and will have great impact for civic activities.

2.7.3. The Interaction Dimension

The above two dimensions, i.e., the structural and the representation dimension of the public sphere, have direct and great impact on the interaction of the public. Interaction actually consists of two aspects. First, it has to do with the citizens' encounters with the media—the communicative processes of making sense, interpreting, and using the output. The second aspect of interaction is that between citizens themselves, which can include anything from two person conversations to large meetings (Dahlgren, 2005).

However, according to Blumler and Gurevitch (as cited in Dahlgren, 2005), the emergence of internet has contributed to creating a counter force for the above centralized public spheres. The emergence of the internet has destabilized the traditional centralized and stable political communication. It offers the opportunity for everyone to participate in every activity including political communication; as a result, it has brought about heterogeneity on socio cultural and political communication. It has also opened the way for massive growth in media outlets and channels. Along with changes in the formats of media output, it has blurred the traditional boundaries of some tasks and profession. It has given a rise to hybridization of genres, and the erosion of the distinction between journalism and non-journalism. It offers the chance for people not to be limited by geographical location to participate in political communication.

Traditional national borders are weakened. Furthermore, the cacophony emerges with this media abundance where so many political actors and mediators are involved. In some cases, it has also become a cause for the public to develop cynicism and disengagement from political discourse.

2.8. Social Media and Politics

Social media is changing the way we learn about the world. The internet based communication networks are promoting freedom of speech. People are no longer passive readers, but rather engaging in news as a conversation at local, national and international stage. Local and global societies are instantly collaborating, contributing, interpreting and interacting (Suopis, 2010). Social Media is an evolutionary development that has transformed the way that individuals, organizations and political campaigns are able to communicate (Solutions, 2010).

As Rita Safranek (2012) observes, the social media has given the opportunity to any ordinary citizen to participate actively in any affair on the online forum. One is not expected to be a politician or famous person or an activists or someone else to engage in public debate. The only thing that is required from anyone to engage in the social media is basics of computer and idea or content. An average person, with little or no advanced computer skills, can do social media participation and independent blogging. Citizens can create content and can have access to it with as little as a smart phone, and this can easily be integrated (Safranek, 2012).

Social media also lowers traditional socio-economic barriers for commanding the spotlight. You do not have to “be somebody” to “be somebody” on social media. Politicians, regimes, and activists look to purposeful tap into the potential of social media. Since the rise of the Internet in the early 1990s, the world's networked population has grown from the low millions

to the low billions. Over the same period, social media have become a fact for civil society worldwide, involving many actors – regular citizens, activists, nongovernmental organizations, telecommunications firms, software providers and governments (Shirky, 2011).

According to Safranek (2012), these digital technologies influence the formation and activities of civil society groups: mobs, movements, and civil society organizations. While mass popular protests are by no means a new phenomenon, digital tools are facilitating their formation

On January 17, 2001, during the impeachment trial of Philippine President Joseph Estrada, loyalists in the Philippine Congress voted to set aside key evidence against him. Less than two hours after the decision was announced, thousands of Filipinos, angry that their corrupt president might be let off the hook, converged on Epifanio de los Santos Avenue, a major crossroads in Manila. The protest was arranged by a text message reading, "Go 2 EDSA. Wear blk." The public's ability to coordinate such a massive and rapid response -- close to seven million text messages were sent that week -- so alarmed the country's legislators. Estrada's fate was sealed; by January 20, he was gone. The event marked the first time that social media had helped force out a national leader. Estrada himself blamed "the text-messaging generation" for his downfall (Ibid).

The internet seemingly summons societies into virtual town hall meeting, where citizens openly question authority, discuss conspiracies and argue over social trends. A global union is asserted everyday online. Anyone connected to the internet can attempt to understand public opinion, concerning nearly any issue (Suopis, 2010)

For Shirky (2011), the communications landscape gets denser, more complex, and more participatory; the networked population is gaining greater access to information, more

opportunities to engage in public speech, and an enhanced ability to undertake collective action.

Egyptian born columnist, Mona Eltahawy, (as cited in Suopis, 2010), writes about Middle East political affairs for international newspapers. She says social media platforms are giving a voice to the most marginalized groups in the region. On the other hand, Khoury (2011) argues that the Arab blogosphere arose because young people were frustrated with the restrictions imposed by the state-regulated boundaries of the Arab public sphere, which is closed off to most modes of free expression and joint citizen action (Khoury, 2011).

Similarly, Rensburg (2012) explained how the internet and ICT have offered the opportunity for minorities in Africa and its potential to enhance democracy in sub-Saharan Africa. In many cases, ethnic minorities have as a result been largely excluded from political process due to lack of adequate communication channels. In many ways, ICT have redefined what we understand to be effective citizen and effective citizen participation, which are fundamental to a functioning democracy. Almost two billion internet users worldwide with unlimited information at push of button now have alternative access points to the political realm through their computers and mobile phones. Many continue to believe that the solution for African problem lies in the utilization of the internet to stimulate and improve democracy. The internet now provides a platform for communication and networking where traditional media have until now been limited (Rensburg, 2012). Furthermore, Safranek (2012, p 9) stresses that the emergence of social media has offered the opportunity for marginalized group of people. This is particularly applicable to Arab countries where religion and ethnic divides previously prevented networking. “Many Arab regimes banned the creation of political parties and limited

the right to associate or create civil rights groups. This meant that there was little space where religious, ethnic, and cultural groups could meet and interact. ... But social media has helped such groups discover one another and break the psychological barrier of fear between them (Safranek, 2012).

Siriyovasak (2007) has noted that various social media classes should be able to have access to small and big media and participate in self-determination. Differences of opinion and belief must be cornerstone of a political society (Siriyuvasak, 2007). Many researchers suggest that communities are empowered when they become able to have control of their knowledge of environment and conventional paradigm of knowledge. This cannot be done in the traditional media because the traditional media are coming under increasing pressure from the ruling authorities who are showing signs of wanting to limit press freedom. In the face of opposition the internet play a vital role in keeping a country's healthy public discourses (Rensburg, 2012).

According to Rosenberg (cited in Rita Safranek, 2012), "Facebook and Twitter have their place in social change, but real revolutions take place in the street. One of the biggest obstacles in using social media for political change is that people need close personal connections in order to get them to take action – especially if that action is risky and difficult. Social media always comes with a catch: It is designed to do the very thing that isn't particularly helpful in a high-risk situation." The revolution has taken place on the street while the Facebook and Twitter provide the platform to organize the demonstrations. The demonstration has become successful because in Egypt, the role of the unofficial trade unions in the protests has been downplayed - workers who participated in strikes, those bus drivers, factory workers, and Suez canal laborers, nurses and doctors, that finally broke President Hosni Mubarak (Safranek, 2012).

Ali (2011) has indicated that the story of social media in developing nations so far is one of individual empowerment. Social media not only connects deprived nations to the outside world, but also provide the power to shape the Internet in a way that is relevant to peoples' lives, the power to organize in scale, and the power to speak. These features make social media incredible tools that should be embraced by anyone with an eye towards development. Thus, policymakers and development organizations should consider the capacity of social media to attract a wide user base, stimulate content creation, and promote basic ICT skills, and foster participation and democratization in developing nations.

So far, it has been discussed about the emergence of internet and its impact on people's life and interaction. The innovation of internet has influenced the way we discuss issues, the way we read and gather information as well as the political discussions and their nature. Internet has emancipated the public from unidirectional information flow and direct control from the one who owns the media. It has become the cause for the rise of different social networking sites and social media. These social networking sites and media have greatly assisted the public to engage on different activities in the world. In the next section, the introduction of the internet and the rise of social media in Ethiopia will be discussed.

2.9. The History of Telecom Technology in Ethiopia

Telecommunications service was introduced in Ethiopia in 1894 during the rule of Emperor Menelik II (Feyissa, No Date). It was established over a century ago; the Ethiopian Telecommunication Corporation (ETC) is the oldest public telecommunication operator (PTO) in Africa. Although initially private, the company was placed under government control at the beginning of the twentieth century, and was later brought under the control of the Ministry of

Post and Communications (UNION, 2002). The first major telephone line construction spanned a total distance of about 477 kilometers and connected Harrar, a major trade center in the eastern region, with Addis Ababa, the capital city. The line, which took only two years to construct, also interconnected small towns situated along the route. Immediately after the telephone line, a telegraph line was installed following the construction of the first and only railway line in the country--the Ethio-Djibouti railway. Within two years, an 880-kilometer north-south telephone line connecting Asmara the capital of Eritrea, to Addis Ababa was constructed and made operational in 1904. The "verbal repeater" system was used to facilitate long distance calls, making use of the several intermediate stations opened at the small towns and villages along the route (Feyissa, No Date).

The network [the telecommunication] began to expand from then on, extending to other cities in Ethiopia. In addition to this, the country became a member both of the League of Nations and since 1932; the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). Ethiopia consequently took steps to free itself from dependence on the foreign administration of its international traffic. When war inevitably broke out and the fascist powers invaded Ethiopia, facilities were targeted for destruction to deprive the resistance forces of access to information. Most of Ethiopia's telecommunications installations and facilities were destroyed and both local and international communications disrupted. However, realizing the importance and the necessity of the telecommunication, the Italians had started to restore the destroyed lines; yet the resistance forces made them out of order and service (Ibid).

After the end of the war against Italy, Ethiopia established the Imperial Board of Telecommunications. The Imperial Board of Telecommunications of Ethiopia (IBTE) was

established as a chartered organization in October 1952. The organization was to be independent of the Ministry of Posts, Telegraph, and Telephone and had the following main objectives:

- to rehabilitate, extend, and maintain Ethiopia's telecommunications facilities and to engage on a for-profit basis in the civilian telecommunications business;
- to act as an agent for the Ethiopian government in all matters relating to telecommunications services in and outside the country; and
- to establish appropriate training procedures and a training institute for present and future board personnel

In addition to these specific objectives, the IBTE's overall purpose was to provide and efficiently maintain satisfactory telecommunications services for the public. In order to achieve these objectives and meet the ever-growing demand for services, the IBTE has periodically undertaken structural reforms and modifications to its organization (Feyissa, No Date; UNION, 2002).

The Imperial Telecommunication Board, which became the Ethiopian Telecommunication Authority in 1981, was placed in charge of both the operation and regulation of telecommunication services (UNION, 2002).

The Ethiopian Telecommunication Authority had stayed for some years after the regime changed. The reform process in the telecommunication sector began in 1996 with the adoption of a proclamation that provides for the regulation of telecommunications services (49/1996) (as amended). During the same year, by regulation 10/1996, the Council of Ministers set up the

Ethiopian Telecommunications Corporation (ETC) and the government created the regulator i.e. the Ethiopian Telecommunications Agency (ETA) for which all the rights and obligations of the former Ethiopian Telecommunication Authority were transferred. The regulator was legally established in November 1996, but it was not operational until December 1997 until the Minister of Transport and Communications appointed the General Manager (Lishan, 2010; UNION, 2002; Worku, 2005).

As noted earlier, it was private owned; however, the company was placed under government control at the beginning of the twentieth century, and was later brought under the control of the Ministry of Post and Communications, and very recently, it has come under the control of the Ministry of Transport and Communications. ETA operates as a government agency, with financial and political dependence. The country is only beginning now to discuss the liberalization of the sector and the promotion of free flow of information. Thus, all telecommunications infrastructure and value-added services are still owned by the State (Lishan, 2010; UNION, 2002).

ETC would operate as a public enterprise under the authority/supervision of the ETA, with the principal duty of maintaining and expanding telecommunication services in the country and providing domestic and international telephone, telex, telefax and other communication services. In this respect, it is currently deemed by the Regulation to be the only operator of any telecommunication related service, including the provision of the Internet and public phones (UNION, 2002; Worku, 2005).

2.10. Internet in Ethiopia

There is contradicting information about when the internet technology was introduced to Ethiopia. On the one hand, the information from the Ministry of Transport and Communication and Ethiopian Telecommunication Agency 2005/06 Annual Statistics Bulletin indicated that the Internet service has started in Ethiopia since 1997. At the time, the number of internet subscribers was not more than 1000. One year later, the number of subscribers rose by 98.5% and reached 2,068 subscribers (Agency, 2005; Worku, 2005).

Another release by the ITU (2002) stated that the use of the Internet in Ethiopia began in 1993 by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (whose headquarter is in Addis Ababa). Since there was no service during that time, it was connected to GreenNet's Internet gateway in London. The users were mainly international organizations and NGOs as well as some academics, individuals and private companies. Its user were the service about 1'200.

However, Internet coverage has been improving in recent years. In June 2010, the number of mobile plus internet as well as the number of data subscriber was 6, 677,903 and 189,185, respectively. But, this figure has increased dramatically to 22.4 million mobile subscribers and 43.8 million internet and data, including GPRS subscribers by March 2013, which is more than 25% mobile penetration rate and 5.18% internet and data penetration rate.

The diffusion of the Internet is partly hampered by the monopoly on its market. However, in August 2005, the government issued a directive that allows private companies to provide Internet service; in spite of this, there is no private service provider until now. Consequently, Internet services remained a monopoly of the government, often resulting in frustratingly slow

connections and sometimes complete disconnection from the global network altogether(Lishan, 2010).

2.11. The Rise of Social Media in Ethiopia

Since the Internet has revolutionized the way most people in the world live, its reflection and extension has reached to Ethiopia because Ethiopia is part of the world communities. Internet service exists in the country even though it is completely monopolized by the only state owned telecom service provider, i.e., Ethio-Telecom. According to Ali (2012), the internet has become the integral part of our economic, political, and social life. It alters the way we purchase goods, the way we bank, and the way we communicate with one another.

Thus, the emergence of internet not only changes the way we live, it also offers the platform for the rising of different social media and social networking sites. The emergence of social media changes many aspects of relationships and communication. The phenomenon of the social media and social networking has been happening in Ethiopia. From the young to adult, from scholar to ordinary public has engaged in the social media and social networking activity. In addition, the engagement in the social networking sites has changed many aspects of citizens' communication and relationship. According to the social mediabaker, currently, there are 902, 180 Facebook users in the Ethiopia, which makes it 86 in the ranking of all Facebook statistics by Country(Socialbakers, 2012).

2.12. Theoretical Framework: Theory of Public Sphere

This study is situated within the theoretical framework of Habermas notion's of Public sphere. Habermas (1998) explained that we call events and occasions "public" when they are open to all. The public sphere itself appears as a specific domain, which can be classified into two

domains, i.e., the public domain and the private domain. The public appears simply as that sector of public opinion that opposed to the authorities. The state organs and the media that provide the communication were considered as public organs. It was particularly the civil society, which established itself as the realm of exchanging commodities and governed by its laws, that constitutes a public sphere. However, the reduction in the public representation along with the elimination of the estate based authorities by those of territorial ruler created another sphere known as the public sphere in the modern sense of the term: the sphere of public authority.

The sphere of private people comes together as a public and has become the cause for the formation of the bourgeois public sphere. Then, they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities. Thus, they engaged in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor.

Before the public sphere had been formed and engaged in political activities of the state and society affairs, it was developed in the intimate sphere of the conjugal family. It was first formed in the intimate family to speak and discuss on its own public. In addition, before the public sphere had influence over the public authorities, the ideas were contested and settled by the critical reasoning of private persons on such ideas including politics. Thus, the public sphere evolves under the forum. The former literary public spheres provided the training ground for the reflection of critical public discussions, which is the process of self-clarification of private-people focusing on genuine experiences of their novel privateness.

The political economy as well as the psychology arose as a specifically bourgeois science during the eighteenth century. The psychological interests guided the critical discussions that were started by the products of culture. This had become public in the reading room and the theater, in museums and at concerts (Habermas, 1989).

The public sphere was coextensive with public authority. The private realm was the authentic "public sphere," for it was a public sphere constituted by private people. Within the realm that was the preserve of private people, we therefore distinguish again between private and public spheres. The private sphere comprised civil society in the narrower sense, that is to say, the realm of commodity exchange and of social labor; imbedded in it was the family with its interior domain. The public sphere "in the political realm evolved from the public sphere in the world of letters; through the vehicle of public opinion it put the state in touch with the needs of society (Habermas, 1989)

According to Habermas, (cited in Khoury, 2011), public sphere it is a domain where opinion can be formed and can be accessed in principle by all citizens and where they can address all matters without being subject to coercion. Ideally, it is an inclusive space, which is characterized by diversity of opinion and critical debate.

Chapter Three

Research Method

3.1. Research Design

Research design has employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. Under each section below these methods are discussed one by one. A qualitative methodology is a composite of philosophy, concepts, data-gathering procedures, and statistical methods that provides perhaps the most thoroughly elaborated basis for the systematic examination of human subjectivity. Central to this enterprise are the meanings and understandings that individuals bring to their endeavors (Given, 2008). It focuses on the meanings of experiences by exploring how people define, describe, and metaphorically make sense of these experiences. It is more likely to explore processes (for example, how the community makes sense of the accident) than outcomes (the frequency of farm accidents) (JOHNSTON, 2009). Qualitative research is interpretative research with the inquirer typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with the participants (Creswell, 2009).

The study aims at investigating how Facebook has become an alternative platform for the public in discussing political issues in Ethiopia. It particularly focuses on how Facebook is functioning as an alternative forum for discussing political issues, the challenges it faces to that end and its prospects for democratization in the Ethiopian context.

What is more, this study does not intend to map a large community on Facebook. It rather focuses on a few Facebook communities interested in discussing political matters pertaining to Ethiopia. Since qualitative research deals with such subgroups of a culture, it is one of the methods used in this study.

A quantitative method is the second method in the study. According to Miller and Brewer (2003), quantitative research method is numerical measurement of specific aspects of phenomena. It is very structured and explanations are formulated in terms of the relationship between variables. It is also an approach based on intensive study of one or a small number of phenomena to seek to generalization(*The A - Z of Social Research A Dictionary of Key Social Science Research Concepts*, 2003).

According to Campbell and Stanley (cited in Creswell, 2009), quantitative research method includes the true experiments and the less rigorous experiments called quasi-experiments, correlation studies, and specific single-subject experiments. Creswell (2009) adds that more recently, quantitative strategies involved complex experiments with many variables and treatments.

Surveys, interviews, observations as well as questionnaires are the common tools to gather the information (Vanderstoep and Johnston, 2009). In the study, observation and survey questionnaires were tools employed to gather information. Each one of these tools was explained in detail under the section of data collection method.

3.2. Sampling Procedure

A complete enumeration of all items in the population is known as census inquiry. It can be presumed that in such an inquiry where all items are covered, no element of chance is left and highest accuracy is obtained. However, in practice this may not be possible. Many times, it is not possible to examine every item in the population and sometimes it is possible to obtain sufficient and accurate result in studying only part of the population (Kothari, 2004), and this is called sampling. It is selecting participants who are best-suited and with manageable number to

effectively accomplish the research goal (Dawson, 2002; JOHNSTON, 2009). The sampling frame refers to the eligible members of the population that must be bigger than the sample (Dawson, 2002).

In this study, any person who is an Ethiopian and has a Facebook account has an opportunity to be included in the sampling frame and to participate in this study. However, since the study focuses on examining how Facebook is functioning as an alternative political forum in Ethiopia, only people who have Facebook accounts and who actively engage in political debates, discussions on Facebook are the primary participants of this study, i.e., they are the sample of the study.

Actively engaging in political debates and discussions in this context refers to people who try to initiate political discussion on Facebook; people who forward ideas on issues being discussed; people who do online activism and people who organize and post events on Facebook. In addition, prominent bloggers and journalists who are active on Facebook and online activity are also the target of the study. Since it was difficult to identify randomly the target population from the Facebook community, a non-probability sampling method was employed.

In a qualitative study, purposive sampling is more appropriate. Creswell (2009) has well explained the data collection procedures that identify the purposefully selected sites or individuals for the proposed study. According to him (2009), the idea behind qualitative research is purposefully select participants or sites (or documents or visual materials) that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question. This does not call

for random sampling or selection of a large number of participants and sites, as typically is the case in quantitative research.

3.2.1. Non-Probability Sampling

In this type of sampling, the researcher will select items for the sample deliberately; the choices concerning the items remain supreme. In other words, under a non-probability sampling the organizers of the inquiry purposively choose a few out of the many but ensure that they are typically representative of the whole (Kothari, 2004). In non-probability sampling, also known as non-random sampling, participants are selected based on characteristics they possess or their availability to participate. Therefore, each population member is not equally likely to be selected to participate (Vanderstoep and Johnston, 2009). According to Given (2008), to say one will engage in purposive sampling signifies that one sees sampling as a series of strategic choices about with whom, where, and how one does one's research. This statement implies that the way that researchers sample must be tied to their objectives.

In this study, therefore, participants were selected based on their characteristics and their engagement on online activism; and it was based on the political debates and discussions they made on Facebook. The first participants were selected based on the above criteria as well as their proximity to the researcher. In other words, they were identified through convenience-sampling method where these participants suggested other participants, in a manner of snowball sampling method.

3.2.1.1. Convenience Sampling

It involves selecting people who are available (or convenient) for study. Convenience sampling often involve people whom the researcher knows or people who live close to the research site

(Vanderstoep and Johnston, 2009). In this study, the researcher has contacted participants from the Facebook friends who were active in political and social discussions.

3.2.1.2. Snowball Sampling

In snowball sampling, a core group of participants is initially sampled for the research project. These participants are then asked to identify others who might be eligible to participate. The second-generation participants are then contacted. These people, in turn, identify other participants. The sample, like a rolling snowball, begins to build on itself and increase in size (Vanderstoep and Johnston, 2009).

Snowball sampling is a useful technique to pursue the goals of purposive sampling in many situations where there are no lists or other obvious sources for locating members of the population of interest, but it does require that the participants are likely to know others who share the characteristics that make them eligible for inclusion in the study. This method is particularly useful for locating hidden populations, where there is no way to know the total size of the overall population (Given, 2008). In this study, the people who were contacted first have been requested to suggest other people who could be very important for the study.

3.3. Data Collection Procedures

Qualitative approaches to data collection usually involve direct interaction with individuals on a one to one basis or in a group setting (Hancock, 1998). While deciding about the method of data collection to be used for the study, the researcher should keep in mind two types of data: primary and secondary. The primary data are those which are collected afresh and for the first time, and, thus happen to be original in character. The secondary data, on the other hand, are those which have already been collected by someone else and which have already been passed

through the statistical process. The researcher would have to decide which sort of data he/she would be using for his/her study and accordingly, he/she would have to select one or the other method of data collection (Kothari, 2004).

According to Kothari (2004), there are several methods of collecting primary data: observation, interview, questionnaires, and other methods that include warranty cards distributor audits, pantry audits, consumer panels, using mechanical devices, through projective techniques and in-depth interviews. Among these methods of data collection, the following were found to be relevant for this study, i.e., observation, interview, and questionnaire.

3.3.1. Observation

Observation involves collecting impressions of the world using all of one's senses, especially looking and listening, in a systematic and purposeful way to learn about a phenomenon of interest and it is an inherent part of many types of research (Miller and Brewer, 2003; Given, 2008). It is the most commonly used method especially in studies relating to behavioral sciences. This method is employed in the study considering the following advantages it renders. It helps reduce subjective bias if observation is done accurately. The information obtained under this method relates to what is currently happening, i.e., it is not complicated by either the past behavior or future intentions or attitudes. It is independent of respondents' willingness to respond and as such is relatively less demanding of active cooperation on the part of respondents as happens to be the case in the interview or the questionnaire method. It is particularly suitable in studies that deal with subjects (i.e., respondents) who are not capable of giving verbal reports of their feelings for one reason or the other (Kothari, 2004).

In social research, observation can be categorized as a research tool along two parameters. The more familiar typology is based on the degree of participation by the researcher in what is being studied; the other is structured around the level of awareness subjects have of being observed (Miller and Brewer, 2003).

In case the observation is characterized by a careful definition of the units to be observed, the style of recording the observed information, standardized conditions of observation and the selection of pertinent data of observation, then the observation is called as structured observation. However, when observation is to take place without these characteristics to be thought of in advance, the same is termed as unstructured observation (Kothari, 2004). In this study, since units to be observed have not been predefined, the observation was unstructured.

Observation has a distinct feature that helps the researcher to gather a real date from natural occurring area for the study (Louis Cohen, 2007). Therefore, the researcher has had Facebook account since 2007, and he has been using his Facebook account to express his personal views and opinions as well as to participate in discussions. What is more, as a result of the Facebook activities the researcher was able to become a member of almost all the listed Facebook groups, this in turn helped him to follow the activities of the groups and the pages participating in their activities. If the observer observes by making herself/himself, more or less, a member of the group that s/he is observing, s/he can experience what the members of the group experience. Then, the observation is called participant observation (Kothari, 2004).

3.3.2. Interview

It is interchanging ideas and opinions the interviewee and interviewer have on an issue. It helps the interviewee and interviewer to discuss and interpret the situations and experience, which

they live in their own way (Louis Cohen, 2007). It is one of the most popular qualitative research tools (Vanderstoep and Johnston, 2009). They provide a way of generating data by asking people to talk about their everyday lives. Their main function is to provide a framework in which respondents can express their own thoughts in their own words (Miller and Brewer, 2003). The qualitative research interview has become one of the most widespread knowledge producing practices across the social scientific disciplines (Given, 2008).

Regarding how to select participants in a study, Creswell (2009) advises researchers to identify the purposefully selected sites or individuals for the proposed study. The idea behind qualitative research is to select purposefully participants or sites (or documents or visual material) that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question. Thus, interview has been conducted with the first five informants whom the researcher has come to know for their Facebook and online activities. Some of the participants were interviewed through email* since it was difficult to make the interview face-to face because they live abroad. These interviewees were selected for the reason that they were actively engaged in forwarding their opinion and raising discussion points about Ethiopian politics. The researcher planned to interview more willing ones among the twenty-five interviewees who were selected in convenience and snowball sampling. However, because of their unwillingness, it was not possible to conduct the interview with some selected informants. Interviews were conducted with sixteen willing interviewees.

* Electronic interviewing makes use of the more interactive and immediate nature of e-mail, either in the form of one-to-one interviewing or the setting up of electronic focus groups (Miller and John, 2003)

Semi structured interview was used with open questions. Interviewees were allowed sufficient degree of freedom. Questions were generally open-ended in order to gain richer information about attitudes and behavior as it is advised by scholars (Miller and Brewer 2003; Creswell, 2009).

Almost all the interview questions were open ended, except questions like jobs and years of joining Facebook. At the time of interview, there was no hard and fast principle to follow regarding the sequence of the questions and strict adherence to the prepared questions. The interview was flexible and based on what the interviewees said, follow-up and probing questions were also raised. The researcher has attempted to get a holistic understanding of the interviewees regarding the subject. The interviews had two sessions. After the first interview was conducted with the selected participants, additional probing was based on the former interview. Subsequently, additional questions were raised in the interview for the second time; such repetitive design of a study is known as longitudinal design (Dornyei, 2007; JOHNSTON, 2009).

3.3.3. Questionnaire

This method of data collection is quite popular, particularly in the case of big enquiries. A questionnaire consists of a number of questions printed or typed in a definite order on a form or set of forms. The questionnaire was emailed to respondents to write down their responses to the questions.

Employing questionnaire has the following advantages:

- low cost even when the universe is large and is widely spread geographically;
- free from the bias of the interviewer; answers are in respondents' own words;

- respondents have adequate time to give well thought out answers;
- respondents, who are not easily approachable, can also be reached conveniently;
- large samples can be made use of and thus the results can be made more dependable and reliable (C.R. Kothari, 2004); thus, considering the above merits of the tool, it has been used to collect information from the target population of the study.

Some of the questions were of sensitive nature and needed privacy. However, such questions were cutout because respondents were not willing to explain the situation on the record. Thus, for the sake of respondents' privacy, identifying features were left out. Regarding the issue of privacy in using questionnaire, (Louis Cohen, 2007) recommended that since questionnaire is a means of intrusion into the life of the respondent, in terms of time taken to complete the instrument, threat or sensitivity of the questions will become the possible way of invasion of privacy. Thus, care was taken to ensure that the respondents' privacy was not compromised.

Recently, some companies have started to distribute their questionnaire via internet. This indicates the emergence of questionnaires, i.e., interactive questionnaires, which enable the respondents to work with the researcher (Dawson, 2002). The questionnaire consisting of both, closed and open-ended questions was uploaded on the website, at <http://www.surveys-engine.com>, which has been set for such propose. Then, the link was sent to the researcher's Facebook friends and was also put on the researcher's personal Facebook wall. Then, Facebook users who had the opportunity to get the link participated in completing the questionnaire. The researcher's Facebook friends and colleagues have participated in sharing the link with others to widen the population range. Furthermore, the researcher requested some individuals who were known for their Facebook activity to help so that a large number of

people on the Facebook could be reached. Even though one hundred fifty respondents were expected to participate in completing the questionnaire, only 103 respondents were willing to complete the questionnaire.

3.3.4. Textual Analysis

According to Shapiro and Markoff (cited in Mehl, No date) textual analysis is any systematic reduction the of flow of text or symbols to a standard set of statistically manipulable symbols representing the presence, the intensity or the frequency of some characteristics relevant to social science. Given (2008) also explained textual analysis, as anything in written form, constitutes the basic medium through which most qualitative analysis is carried out. Texts for research purposes are generated in many different ways; some are naturally occurring (e.g., newspaper reports, minutes of meetings, or policy documents).

Textual analysis involves the identification and interpretation of a set of verbal or non-verbal signs. Everything that one encounters, from clothing to books to food to architecture, is a sign (Vanderstoep and Johnston, 2009). In this study, texts, quotes and articles were analyzed using textual analytic method. What is more, (RYAN, No Date) have noted that investigators use text analysis for exploratory and confirmatory purposes by examining words, sentences, paragraphs, pages, documents, ideas, meanings, paralinguistic features, and even what is missing from the text, in text analysis.

Furthermore, Mehl has also classified textual analysis into two major categories based on their aim and approach, i.e., representational vs. instrumental (based on their aim) and thematic vs. semantic (based on their approach). Representational textual analysis focuses on developing a representation of the sender original intention of the message. It is the manifestation of the

context of a text. Instrumental analysis focuses on latent contents. Without the researcher's intention, the message is analyzed for the occurrences of a set of theme. Thematic text analysis maps the occurrence of sets of concepts in a text and can technically be solved by counting the frequency of a particular target words or phrases. Semantic text analysis seeks extra information on the conversational meaning of the theme(Mehl, No Date).

3.4. Analytical Procedures

The data collected from the participants were analyzed according to their nature. The quantitative data collected via interview and observation were described. Posts from the selected individuals and groups were articles, pictures and links that were described according to the message they conveyed. According to Matthias R. Mehl, (No Date), the type of textual analysis which deals with meaning, is known as semantic textual analysis. It seeks to extra information on the conversational meaning of the theme. Roberts (1997) added that textual analysis explains how texts can be encoded by fitting themes into a semantic grammar that the researcher uses to capture essential elements of the phenomenon under investigation. Thus, the Facebook posts published from mid July until September 2012 were analyzed to understand how the Facebook political discussions were going on and how Facebook has assisted the discussions.

Chapter Four

4. Data Analysis and Presentation

4.1. Introduction

The data was collected from the sample population of the Ethiopian Facebook communities. Special attention was given for Facebook pages and groups with political inclinations. In this section, the political conversations and discussions that are pertinent to this study were presented. To maintain the privacy of the individuals whose posts and status updates are taken from Facebook pages and groups as extracts and quotes in the discussions and comments, they are addressed with pseudo names.

4.2. Freedom of Expression and Media Practice in Ethiopia

Freedom of expression and the media practice in Ethiopia have historically been subjected to direct political intervention political authorities. There is a claim that the Ethiopian media has never been free of political control. It has been used as an instrument for the the perpetuation of power for political leaders (Shimelis, 2000; Terje S. Skjerdal, 2012).

The media in general and the print media in particular have experienced a notable independence after the regime change in 1991. One of the evidences usually given for this change is the 1992 Press Proclamation. The proclamation has provided a space for the establishment of the private press. According to Ross, (2008) press freedom was also previously afforded under Press Proclamation No. 34/1992. One of the interviewees who spent a portion of his career in Ethiopian journalism reinforced Tracy's claims as follows:

Proclamation 1992/34, the Press Freedom Proclamation of the Transitional government of Ethiopia was very good (Interviewee 06, on 30 March 2013).

The bright momentum for the private press began in 1993, but faces twists and turns. It is reported that the free press has faced diverse problems at different times. But the 2005 post election violence marked as a turning point in the Ethiopian media landscape. The government accused the private press for unbalanced report and for the post election violence that occurred during that time. Subsequently, it began a full-scale crack down on members of the private press (Ross, 2005).

What is more, it is claimed that laws that have been passed of late have affected the media. The 2009 anti-terrorism proclamation is considered as the major one, which the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) believes it is having a chilling effect on the media practice (CPJ, 2011). It is believed that the factors mentioned above have challenged the existence of free, independent and strong media in Ethiopia. One of the following interviewees highlighted the situation in the following excerpt:

In mid of 2011, the Ethiopian private press has totally been nonexistent. In order to run a private press in Ethiopia after 2011, you have to be either very daring or ingratiate the government; otherwise, you cannot be a private press in Ethiopia (Interviewee 06, on 30 March 2013).

Another interviewee has added:

I write for a magazine in Ethiopia. The types of comments, the types of articles I write are not very critical of the government because I want to live in Ethiopia. If I make my articles very critical of the government, I know what they [Government officers] will do to me, I know what they have done against and

prominent journalists.. Therefore, I will not be very critical of the government (Interviewee 10, on 22 March 2013).

Besides stricter regulatory regime and heavy handedness of the government members of the private press claimed that the government has started to push out critical newspapers indirectly from the media market; one of the journalists of the now defunct weekly political newspaper claimed:

I think, they [government officials] threatened the printing houses. After you got a license, you would go to *Berihanena Selam* – government owned printing house. *Berihanena Selam* usually refuses to publish your newspaper. Then, you will try your chance with other private printing houses. Unfortunately, others will ask you if your paper is about politics; if you let them know the contents of your newspaper, they will refuse to print because they are threatened directly or indirectly. For instance, take the newspaper “*Fetih*.” It was just banned by the printing house. Therefore, there are indirect ways of banning private publications (Interviewee 15, on 02 March 2013).

In the same way, Girma Seifu, the only opposition member of the parliament, has reported on how his party’s paper was forced out of publication;

Nobody has ordered us not to publish our newspaper, *Finote Netsnet*. No direct denial or whatsoever of licenses. However, when we go to the printing houses the printers usually refuse to print our paper².

All the factors mentioned above as well as the political and historical background of Ethiopia has an impact on how people express their opinion. In addition, the laws passed have conditioned the media practitioners and the public either to be silent or to look for another alternative to get information and or tell stories of their own. Thus, some nonconforming views and information have started to move to the social media, mainly to Facebook.

4.3. The Rise of Facebook as Forum for Political Expression in Ethiopia

From the survey questionnaire, the online media (blog, Facebook, Twitter) has been found to be more convenient and a preferred place to make political discussion than the print media. Among the respondents, 77 people, i.e., 74.76% have preferred the online medium to discuss politics. Whereas, Twenty-six people, i.e., 25.24% of the respondents have preferred the mainstream media (Newspapers, Radio and TV); even for 25.24% of the respondents, the reason they have given for preferring mainstream media for political discussion is the problem of accessibility, infrastructure and digital literacy. Had these limitations not been there constants, they would have preferred the online media.

In the previous section, a note had been made about the narrowing of the media space for the private press and for freedom of expression and media practice in the country. The shrinking of the media space has pushed journalists and ordinary citizens to use social media to get and

² From speech Ato Girma Seyfu the member of the House of Representatives and Andinet Party at Washington DC , on 14 April 2013

impart information. One of the interviewees, who claimed to have been pushed forcefully out of the media market, said the following about the importance of Facebook:

Ethiopia's public and political sphere is narrowing down. It is under threat, under continuous attack by the government. Therefore, there is no enough space for people to meet in person, to organize, to hold meetings, to debate issues. Facebook has appeared in a very good time (Interviewee 08, on 04 March 2013).

Another journalist supplemented:

Before the 2005 election, Ethiopian has had newspapers. Now almost all of them are defunct; so newspaper readers are moving to the social media, specifically to Facebook (Interviewee 06, on 30 March 2013).

Respondents who have participated in both the survey and individual in-depth interview have emphasized that the social media, especially Facebook, has become better and preferred place to raise political issues. One of the major reasons given for this is the open nature of Facebook. Two of the following excerpts from interviewee 13 & 14 show why Facebook has risen to be an alternative forum for expression:

The more preferred one is the online media, i.e., Facebook, twitter and others because the mainstream media has been gagged and there is extraordinary accountability for the editors (Interviewee 13 on 27 February 2013).

The EPRDF regime continues to clamp down on the already limited space for Journalists and opposition groups. Activists, journalists, politicians and the rest of

the people do not have space to speak out for their right anywhere other than the social media. It seems the social media is the only choice to engage in political discourse, and Facebook in particular, has become the main political sphere (Interviewee 04, on 26 March 2013).

Other respondents observed that people's attention is turning to the social media and they have made a comparative analysis of the current political situation of Facebook with the 1960s' political movement. In the 1960s, the youth moved to the forest. During that time, it was impossible to mobilize the public for the political struggle. Hence, they fled to the forest. Similarly, in the current situation, the youth who have political interest are moving to Facebook because of the shrinking of the media sphere for political debates and discussions. One of the interviewees who himself is an avid user of the social media said:

EPRDF always says during 1960's there was no free media, and there was no freedom of associations. Hence, the only option they had was going to the forest for guerrilla warfare; but now people are opting to run to the Facebook forest, twitter forest, blog forest (Interviewee 13, on 27 February 2013).

Due to the restriction on the media and political sphere, the dissidents and marginalized groups, especially the opposition groups have started to discuss issues on Facebook. The government media do not entertain different views. The focus of government owned media is success stories. Hence, people have moved to Social Media, especially to Facebook for political expression.

4.4. Facebook Groups and Pages in Ethiopia

4.4.1. Facebook Groups

Facebook groups are generally gathering places organized around common interest, such as hobby, favorite topic or a cause. They are the perfect venue for sharing ideas, passions, social and political issues or for just creating a place to connect (Gunter, 2011). Based on such conceptualization the researcher was able to discover one hundred twenty two Facebook groups using a login observation available on the Ethiopian Facebook Community. The Facebook groups were created with various purposes; the researcher was able to classify these groups into eight major categories, i.e., political, media, academic, health related, literature, social, entertainment and religious groups. Among these, sixteen religious oriented, thirty-two political oriented, thirty-six social issue oriented, fourteen entertainment oriented, thirteen literature related, six media, three academic and two health related Facebook groups have been discovered.

Since the aim of this research is to investigate how Facebook has become an alternative political forum in Ethiopia, it is worth looking into the practice of political Facebook groups.

In addition to their orientations and causes, further classification of Facebook groups can be made based on their privacy setting. Accordingly, there are open groups, closed groups and secret groups. In the Ethiopia context, all these three types of groups have existed. Among the one hundred twenty two Facebook groups identified, ninety-seven were identified as open group. Open Facebook groups are open to anyone on Facebook to see and join the group. These groups will appear in search result and all contents that members post is visible to anyone viewing the group (O'Neill, 2010). The the remaining twenty-five groups have been found out as closed groups. The feature allows anyone on Facebook to see the group's name,

its members and the people invited to join the group. However, only members can see posts in the group, but to join closed groups, the admin should add you or you could ask to join (ibid).

However, it has not been possible to discover the secret groups on Facebook since their privacy setting never allow for others to search for and find them(O'Neill, 2010). The researcher has learned from the interview that there are few secret groups organized on various issues. One of the interviewees, for example, has given a tip that a secret homosexual Facebook group is operating underground. Giving the reason why some people want to operate underground on Facebook, interviewee 05 guessed:

There are various reasons privacy and security are the main ones. For instance if one of the homosexuals comes out in public and writes his name on Facebook it would be a very big issue because people can see his real identity so that he will be targeted (Interviewee 05, on 20 March 2013).

Contrary to this, there is an anti-homosexual³ group that has been acting openly on Facebook. Members of this group track the secret activities of of homosexuals' activity on the Facebook. The privacy setting of a secret group helps the members to be anonymous. Such setting of the Facebook grouping has assisted these marginalized communities in having their own forum. Suopil (2010 citing Eltahawy) notes that the social media platforms are giving a voice for to the most marginalized groups.

³ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/165646140245854/?ref=ts&fref=ts> the time line of the anti homosexual Open Group

4.4.2. Facebook Pages in Ethiopia

Gunter (2011) has explained that Facebook pages are an ideal public relations /marketing tools/ for public figures such as politicians and government officials, celebrities, bands and music artists, nonprofit organizations and charities, government agencies, large and small business, entertainment industry, educational entities, such as universities, colleges and schools, brand names and products and companies. Unlike Facebook groups, Facebook pages are all public. However, this study will focus only on the pages with political orientation.

As noted earlier, researcher has identified one hundred ninety two Facebook pages have been identified and they all focus on diverse Ethiopia issues. There are political Facebook pages created by political parties, such as the Ethiopia Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), Semayawi Party, Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDJ). Moreover, there are Facebook pages that are created by political interest groups. The researcher has identified thirteen political Facebook pages with the purpose of opposing or supporting the government or the opposition political parties.

One of the interviewees claimed that people created Facebook pages with different motivations: He said:

There are people who created fan pages to expose political misdeeds of the EPRDF. There are Facebook pages that are always trying to share the political situation of the EPRDF. In a similar fashion, there are government people who are trying to tell ETV propaganda via Facebook. They are trying to carry contents of ETV onto Facebook and twitter (Interviewee 06, on 30 March 2013).

4.5. Ethiopian political Parties and Facebook

The political parties are coming via Facebook as Facebook has come as an alternative political forum for the public. These parties have come on Facebook to get the people who shifted from the mainstream media. As it has been stated above, the mainstream media is seen as having narrow focus because of the different constraints that it has faced. Thus, it seems that the political parties have come to understand that Facebook is an important means to meet fans and members.

The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), Semayawi Party and Unity for Democracy and Justice Party (UDJ), are found using Facebook better than other political parties do. It has also been found that other political parties, such as the Ethiopia Democratic Party (EDP) and Oromo Federalist Movement (OFM) have been using Facebook pages.

4.5.1. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front

In the log in observation, there have been twelve identified fan pages and Facebook groups under the name Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). These are *EPRDF- local business, EPRDF- political party community page, EPRDF- political ideology community page, EPRDF- political organization, EPRDF - community, EPRDF - supporters group, Support EPRDF- Fooramii Derggertotota Dh.D.u.O, EPRDF, Supporters Group, Look at Ours Supporters of EPDRF and EPRDF Supporter Group.*

Among these pages, the EPRDF Supporters Group Fan Page has been selected as a sample for the study as it is actively engagement on Facebook in promoting what the ruling party has been doing in the country. The pages are many because there is no organized way of doing things. The excerpt from interviewee 01 shows how all the pages and groups are formed on Facebook.

We tell to our fans and member to use Facebook and to promote the party. The Youth League is the one, functioning on Facebook. The EPRDF support forum is also the other promoting the party's task on Facebook. The way activities are done on Facebook is not centralized. The support forum has a general recognition from EPRDF, and it does its activity on Facebook (Interviewee 01, on 02 April 2013).

4.5.2. Unity for Democracy and Justices Party (UDJ)

Three Facebook Pages have also been identified under the name Unity for Democracy and Justice Party (UDJ). These are UDJ Political Organization, UDJ Interest Group and UDJ Page, which has been linked to the website <http://andiret.org>.

4.5.3. Semayawi Party

Semaywi Party has joined the Facebook community late in January 2012 with the motto "Come and let us emancipate ourselves and decide our country's destiny!" The party has invited all the public to take part in the country's political discussions. The party has also used the page like the others to announce events and to put links and advertisements about its activities. However, some have mentioned this party as good example in using the Facebook for political objective. Excerpt from the interviewees have asserted the claim.

Sure, I do, Semayawi Party has a Facebook page. UDJ has also I think what I look for most of the time. Actually, Ginbot 7 has its own page but they are terrorists (Interviewee 16, 02 February 2013).

The political parties are not using it properly. Semaywit Party is the most active one. Others you do not see much of them (Interviewee 08, on 04 March 2013).

I know there are parties; for example, *Semayawi Party* and UDJ have their own Facebook pages. There are also pages created to enhance discourses. They may not promote political ideology but discuss politics (Interviewee 15, 04 April 2013).

In the pre-interview and post-interview discussions, most of them believed that Semaywi Party is better in raising political issues on the Facebook. However, the activity of the party is not much impressive. Perhaps this might be because the party has established its page very recently January, 2012.

4.6. Major Political Issues and Manners of their Discussion

This section of the analysis, shades light on what major political themes were raised, what messages were transmitted and in what manners they were discussed. As indicated in the methodology section of the study, the following topics were boiling with blistering tone of discussions during the selected time frame for the study.

4.6.1. The Late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi

For the first time when the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi suddenly disappeared from public appearance, rumor broke out on Facebook. As the time went by, the intensity and the momentum of the rumor on Facebook about his whereabouts has increased though the mainstream media failed to pick up the story from the Facebook. The usual developmental and success stories were the focus for the mainstream media, especially for the state media. However, according to the logged in data collected from Facebook accounts from mid of July to the last week of August, there was no any other Ethiopian personality who was discussed like the late PM Meles Zenawi among the Ethiopian Facebook community. Some of the

following status updates and discussions that are taken from individual Facebook pages and groups can clearly show the pervasiveness about the discussion about the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's condition. A Political Facebook page named [Nitro Ethiopians](#) shared a link with following the following speculations:

Nothing is known about the health condition of the late PM Meles. It was not clear who would be in charge of the military in his absence. There was a speculation that General Samora Yunus will fill the gap created by the absence of the late Meles Zenawi. However, because of his sudden illness, he himself has stopped his responsibility, and left abroad for medication.

The wild speculation about Army Chief General Samora Yunus remained on Facebook until the General came out in public to pay tribute to the late Prime Minister after the official confirmation of the death of Meles Zenawi. The debates, the rumors and speculations on the health of the late PM Meles Zenawi on Facebook culminated in the breaking news of the death of the prime minister. However, the rest of the mainstream media never reported about it and they engaged in reporting the London Olympic. Similarly, the EPRDF Facebook Support Group page had engaged in telling the success stories about Ethiopia's athletes in London. The following post, which was taken from one of the most visible opposition pages on Facebook, cited a Diaspora based media and insisted that the late Meles Zenawi had passed away:

Breaking News

ESAT had reported today, based on its diplomatic sources, PM Meles Zenawi died at the age of 57. After the release of this news, the website of ESAT was taken down temporarily because of the technical attack it received.



At this point, the Facebook community even went on to give analysis on the next political situation of the country.

“... The succession will be smoother than some people might expect. But the incentive to cooperate, fear of vulnerability to outside attack, protecting economic interest, presenting a narrative that TPLF is not a one man show, etc, would get eroded or be replaced by new incentives once the crisis gives away to quiet politics and polite signs of succession has decreased. This is when real power struggle starts⁴.

The rumor got intensified after the AU summit held in Addis, earlier, there were NEPAD’s summit and the late PM Meles Zenawi was expected to at the meeting as he was the chairperson, but he could not make it. Thus, the deputy of NEPAD in his opening speech gave the first official statement about the ailment of the late PM Meles Zenawi. The following status update was taken from the page that had been updating the status of the late PM Meles continuously.

⁴ Abiy Teklemariyam’s status update on July 19, 2012



“The chairperson, PM Meles Zeawi could not appear at the meeting today because of health problem. We hope he will get well soon and join us.” *The Senegalese President and Deputy Chairperson of NEPAD, Maki Sali*

“PM Mele Zenawi is not ill. It is news from ESAT” *Ato Shimeles Kemal’s statement*, at the bottom of the page⁵

At the peak of the rumors, the speculations reached a point of no return, forced the Government Communication Affairs Minister, Ato Berket Simon, to come out, and give a statement regarding the health condition of the PM. In the statement, the Minister stated that Meles Zenaw was not in a critical state, but was in a good condition. The minister added that the PM was still in charge of the country and was expected to return to office shortly⁶.

Following the statement, the two sides, the opposition and supporters of the EPRDF, had conversation on individuals’ Facebook pages; they raised issues, set agenda, and led discussions. The discussions were more of emotive, undisciplined and illogical even though some had tried to make the discussion more of logical and disciplined. During the interview, respondents have expressed that Facebook discussions are not disciplined and focused.

⁵ [Bitaniayahum](#) July 15

⁶ EPRDF Support Forum on July 18 and 19, 2012

4.6.2. Facebook vis-à-vis Print Media on the Late PM Meles Zenawi

None of the private or state media had dared to raise the issue of the health of the late PM Meles Zenawi; rather, news was broken in the form of rumors and hot discussions were made on the social media.

In two of the weekly newspapers, the issue of the health of the PM was covered in a completely contradicting manner. The Reporter had news on the front page that declared that the PM was on sick leave abroad⁷. On the contrary, Addis Fortune wrote that the PM has come back home⁸. The way the newspapers covered the news of the late PM Meles Zenawi also became the center of attention on Facebook. The Facebook community had criticized these newspapers. One of the major criticisms forwarded by the Facebook community against these weekly newspapers was related to misinforming the public.



The only private newspaper that dared to report on the rumors of the late Prime Minister was Fetih. Fetih published a story of the ailment of the late Prime Minister; it was translated from the website of BBC. As a result, the High Court had banned the newspaper. When the newspaper was banned, the editor-in-chief of the newspaper announced that the court had banned the newspaper on his personal Facebook page.

⁷ <http://www.ethiopianreporter.com/news/293-news/7199-2012-07-25-06-43-37.html>

⁸ <http://www.addisfortune.net/MELES%20BACK%20IN%20TOWN.htm>

I do not agree with the decision the court had taken to interdict this week’s edition of our newspaper. Yesterday the prosecutor had asked the court to impound all the copies of *Fetih* Newspaper and the court approved it. I don’t agree with the decision. It is illegal. I would like to assure to the family of *Fetih* that we are not terrified and we will not change our stance. I will update you as soon as I got the real reason for the impoundment of the newspaper⁹.



Thus, Facebook became the only place where citizens were able to ask, debate, make speculations and forward views about the whereabouts of the late PM Meles Zenawi and the potential political rivalry and power transition.

Subsequent to the official announcement of the death of the prime minister on 21st August 2012; one of the defunct newspaper’s Facebook page reported the death in the following manner:

A brilliant and promising medical student turned a rebel, and the turned into one of the most brutal dictators of Africa, Meles Zenawi's dramatic life that started 57 years ago in the historic town of Adwa has come to an end. Ethiopian State television just confirmed the long circulating rumors that Ethiopia's Prime

⁹ Temesgen Dessalegn status update on July 25

Minster Meles Zenawi is dead. The post Meles Zenawi era has now officially begun for Ethiopia with all its challenges and questions.¹⁰

Meanwhile, other newspapers and magazines in the country came up with different images of the late Prime Minister Melese Zenawi. *Finot Netsnet* a party newspaper has run a series of critical articles about the government of Meles Zenawi. It was reported that it was one of the reasons why *Finot Netsnet* was later forced out of circulation.

Whereas, on Facebook, the discussion and the way people expressed their views was different from the mainstream media individuals and groups had expressed their real feeling on their Facebook pages as well as on the status update of prominent accounts in initiating, guiding and leading discussions. The comments reflected how the community had felt about the death of the PM. One of the prominent accounts on Facebook described how the debates and speculations on the health of the late PM turned into sadness or otherwise while his death was officially announced.

Until the death was released on the mainstream media, Facebook and other social media forum participants were actively discussing presenting their evidences on the health condition of the late PM. Even, some of them were sharing their speculations and analysis on post Meles situation. However, putting these things aside, when the death of the PM was officially released unexpectedly, the pattern of discussion turned into feeling sad or otherwise.¹¹

¹⁰ Addis Neger Online August 22,2012

¹¹ By Zone 9 on Aug 26, 2012

The public had different views on the death of the PM Meles. Some were sad; some were not. While, the mainstream media, especially the state television was creating consents on the national mourning days showing media footages where people were crying from different parts of the country, the excerpt taken from one of the prominent accounts below shows the way the opposition was expressing its views on the death of the late PM on Facebook.

. . . We want to weep for those who were indiscriminately killed in Ogaden and Gambella. We want to mourn the deaths of Wondossen Gutu and others who were killed during the quiet days of 2006 and 07. We have never had the chance to do what people who are saddened by Meles Zenawi's death are able to do. Let this national mourning week be ours as well¹².



A picture of a mother whose two children were killed in the 2005 election disturbance and the writing beside explained it.

I have no drop of tear to shed for Meles. I have finished all my tears crying for an old mother whose two children were killed in 1997 [2005]; he was responsible their death.

¹² Abyssinia status update on 21 august 2012

People expressed different views and the oppositions was extreme on Facebook with respect to making sense of the death of the the late PM Meles Zenawi; on the other hand, the state television kept on broadcasting positive stories of the PM. It was impossible to express views not in line with the mainstream media. In the first place, the mainstream media was broadcasting the life stories of the PM during the national mourning days. The other reason is that some of the language was inappropriate for the mainstream media. However, since Facebook is open for all, everyone was able to do it on Facebook. Some of the selected comments made during the official statement about the PM below illustrate the nature of the discussions as well as how Facebook became a battleground for the two camps, i.e., the opposition and supporters of the regime.

This is it. You actually posted as I started to search for pictures of those massacred in 2005 and before, and change my profile picture. *Davidson*

I am not celebrating the death of a human being but let us also remember the death of so many innocent Ethiopians during the 2005 election because of their personal views. RIP all who were taken their life brutally and who died naturally as PM. *Dendir*

You are not Ethiopian shut yr mouth!!!*Adriano*

@Adriano, r u ze member of one of 'tikake ena anestegna'????? Sorry for ur dad!!!! *Yeamui*

He was exceptionally intelligent leader. And it is very hard to make all groups happy as a leader. The target of a good leadership is measured by making the majority happy; and it is what he had accomplished. It is absolutely impossible to get a leader who can ideally fulfill all our interest. But, PM Melse was nearly that ideal figure except for some minor lapses including those you mentioned here. Let us mourn the tragic loss of Meles and all those who we lost in the process. *Balderas*

Txs bro. We were prohibited 2 cry 4 Engineer Kitaw & Professor Asrat who was [were] jegna (brave) not only 4 Ethiopia but also 4 world. *Al hem*

Anyway, Meles went out one of the two ways tin pot dictators such as himself would leave office: Either they get overthrown or nature takes its course.

Theodor

4.6.3. The Talk of the transition and the Appointment of the New Prime Minister

After the state funeral, Facebook remained an important forum for political discussions about the post Melse political situation of Ethiopia. On the other hand, the mainstream media remained reporting success stories of the country. After his election as the new PM, Hailemariam Dessalgn became the center of discussion on Facebook for both supporters and opposition groups. The post below can give the tone of the discussion on the side of the supporters on Facebook community about the post Meles political situation and the new PM Hailemariam Desalegn.

*Hailemariam was elected by unanimous vote among three candidates.

*Hailemariam will continue

*The party has decided the leadership replacement plan to be fully implemented

(thus only the new generation was considered in the election)

*EPRDF has already set a two-term limit and age 65 on its leaders.

*Parliament will meet on the beginning of October as usual¹³

On the other hand, there was a story by one of the politically engaged Facebook group about how PM Hailmariyam Dessalgen looks like some other ethnic groups¹⁴. As usual, Facebook also assisted discussions on the post Meles political situation of Ethiopia and about newly elected PM. People have criticized the elected PM for his resemblance of the late PM Meles in his use of gestures and in his responses for the questions from the members of the parliament calling the new PM Hailemariyam as “Hailemeles”. This was openly expressed on Facebook.

What is more, the excerpt from one of the Facebook group pages below displays how Facebook functioned as a discussion forum different from the mainstream one:

The analysis on the post Melse Ethiopian politics started with a detail analysis from the historical background of the country as well as the nature of the ruling party and its politics. Dr. Dangnachew gave the analysis. In the analysis, he emphasized on the experiences that we had passed through and the complicated and contentious current political situations of the country. Thus, he explained that it would be difficult to speculate on the post Meles Ethiopia whether the

¹³ Danibarbery post on September 16, 2012

¹⁴ September 24, Zone 9 blog post “Untold and Unheard stories of Prime Minister Haile Mariam Dessalegn.”

change would be capital letter 'P', referring fundamental change or the small letter 'p', referring that no remarkable change in the country's political situation. However, he explained that significant changes would not be expected in the post Meles Ethiopia.¹⁵

It would be impossible to make such discussions on the mainstream media during this time of crisis where it was preoccupied with the celebration of peaceful and democratic power transition experienced for the first time in the history of Ethiopia. However, Facebook offered the option for the public to express views that were dissented from the mainstream narratives, functioning as a real public sphere. As Habermas (cited in Khoury, 2011) noted public sphere is a domain where public opinion can be formed and where it can be in principle accessible to all citizen and where they can address all matters without being subject to coercion. Ideally, it is an inclusive space, which is characterized by diversity of opinion and critical debates.

In the preceding discussion, arguments are made as to how Facebook has become an important political discussion in Ethiopia, offering the chance for individuals to express their views freely. The next section focuses on the challenges and prospects of Facebook in terms of serving as an alternative forum.

4.7. Challenges of Facebook and Freedom of Expressions Online in Ethiopia

Free expression online is relatively encouraging in Ethiopian context. There are challenges citizens face in using the new media for free expression. These challenges can be broadly classified into two: users related and government related.

¹⁵ Zone 9 on August 29, 2012

From the challenges identified, anonymity, Facebook forum participant behavior, language and fear were the major challenges associated with forum participants. On the other hand, surveillance, intimidation, laws and regulation, blocking of websites and Facebook pages, internet penetration and cost of internet and Ethio-telecom were challenges associated with the government. What is more, poverty was also the other challenge.

4.7.1. Forum Participants Related Challenges

Facebook has brought a new dimension and the opportunity for the public to discuss a broad range of issues. However, there are various factors that challenge it from different angles. One of these is associated users discussed below.

4.7.1.1. Anonymity

Anonymity is one of the major challenges for the political discussions on Facebook. People have different views regarding anonymity. Some people have considered it as a major challenge with respect to the unreliability of the information provided, and, hence for the failure of political discussions on Facebook. Whereas, others have supported anonymity as a means of keeping individuals safe in the political discussions. The interviewees have the following to say in this regard.

There are numerous people on Facebook with fake accounts, fake names, and fake identity that you cannot be sure of what they say (Interviewee 08, on March 2013).

If you are really scared of your safety, it is not wise to expose your real identity; so, you can talk in anonymity (Interviewee 05, on 29 March 2013).

I think ERM [Ethiopian Revolutionary Mind] page advocates for regime change; they are working for revolution so exposing their real names is truly dangerous. Anonymity, of course, gives the right for individuals to do anything. It is sometimes necessary, especially in a dictatorial system Interviewee (15, on 02 February 2013).

However, anonymity has offered freedom for individuals to convey any kind of messages. Most of the groups have many members and yet the discussions on the issues they raise are not that much strong and people are not actively participating. The activities in these groups, especially in organizing events and updating status have become the responsibility of few members. From the observation, it was witnessed that different groups often used similar posts and similar links. Moreover, the contents appeared to more of extreme and they tend to focus on the shortcomings of the government.

4.7.1.2. The Behavior of The Forum Participants

Safko and Brake (2009) have stated that an online forum has to be regulated otherwise behavior of forum participants seriously affects the forum. They have noted that insult, swear, in appropriate language, advertising, selling spamming and personal information, posting sexual content, having more than one account and copyrighting infringements are prohibited behaviors on a forum. However, such behaviors have become a challenge for the political forum among the Ethiopian Facebook community. Interviewee 11 and 03 state as follow:

The other problem is our culture of intolerance. It is reflected in the Facebook discussions. We cannot make civilized discussions. As a result of that, so many people keep away from Facebook. There are extreme points. They cannot be

educative and there is a little people can get from the discussions. We are very far from civil discussions. We are at the beginning stage (Interviewee 11, 03 April 2013).

If you come back to the ongoing discussions, the first challenge is some comments and articles make people frustrated because they lack substance. They are insults; they are opposition of the opposition with no respect for others' opinions. These are from both sides, i.e., opposition and supporter (Interviewee 03, on 17 February 2013).

4.7.1.3. Language

In developing nations, the adoption of the internet is enabling to make available useful contents people can understand and access. However, Ali (2011) identifies four major barriers to the internet adoption. Among these, language barrier is one. The interview participants have confirmed this in the following words:

One problem may be people mainly use English on Facebook to discuss issues, which I think is more difficult for the people to understand (Interviewee 10, on 22 March 2013).

There might be many reasons; competence is one, i.e., knowledge of politics and language. Most of the time, I use English to write. I think these are the reasons why people are not participating much (Interviewee 08, on March 04 2013).

How many of the people can read and understand English as well as express their opinion in English. I think this is also one of the challenges (Interviewee 07 on February 2013).

One of the Facebook forum participants also stressed this claim. This person even suggested that individuals who set the agenda and lead discussions to write in Amharic as can be seen from the following statement.

It will be good if you write in Amharic for us who are reading your writings on *Addis Neger*. It is also good if we do not forget we are Ethiopians (19 July 2012).

Hence, it would be better if individuals, who raise issues, shape the agenda and initiate discussions on Facebook, could use Amharic or other local language to allow more people in the discussion. While in the pre interview discussion, one of the interviewees emphasized the same. The interviewee argued that most people on Facebook use English to show their language competence.

4.7.1.4. Fear

Fear has also been found out as one of the challenges that hinder political discussions among the Facebook community as interviewee 14 and 15 have indicated.

Prevailing fear is one of the challenges I think (Interviewee 14, on 22 March 2013).

The other thing is fear. The fear of expressing oneself with respect to political matters has crippled citizens. Therefore, people do not actually express their

genuine opinion on Facebook and that limits the expansion of discourse (Interviewee 15, on 02 March 2013).

People fear the wrath of government and intimidations by either side of the political camp, i.e., supporters and oppositions.

4.7.2. Challenges Related With Government

There are also challenges from the government side. Interviewees have explained that surveillance, and intimidations, provisions and proclamations are the major challenges for the Facebook political discussions. What is more, the poor Ethio- Telecom service provided by the government as well as poverty are pose serious challenges for political discussions on Facebook.

4.7.2.1. Surveillance

Most of the interviewees have mentioned government surveillance as a challenge for the political discussions on Facebook.

There is an extra ordinary surveillance on the online community. I think it has become a major setback (Interviewee 04, on 26 March 2013).

There is surveillance. The government follows activities of people with lots of followers and with strong view on Facebook. Beyond that, I believe there is a practice of hacking probably by INSA. I cannot prove it. But I believe INSA would definitely hack some of the prominent people blog, Facebook pages and emails (Interviewee 08, on 04 March 2013).

The claim by forum participants regarding surveillance has become a fact. It is related with the issue of the national security as interviewee 01 explains it.

I do not know the details. However, it is the government's responsibility to assure the national security since we are living in a complex world. There are fundamentalist groups in any direction and stream; in religion or in politics or in other spheres. They communicate and for that reason, the government controls such activities. It is not surprising. It is a practice in any other countries (Interviewee 01, on 02 April 2013).

Similarly, citizen lab report has also explained the existence of online surveillance in Ethiopia in its 2013 release.

This post describes the results of a comprehensive global internet scan for command and control servers of FinFisher's surveillance software. It also details discovery of campaign using FinFisher in Ethiopia used to target individuals to an opposition group. A FinSpy campaign in Ethiopia uses picture of Ginbot 7 an Ethiopian opposition group. FinSpy captures information from an infected computer such as passwords and Skype calls and sends the information to FinSpy command and control (C2) server (Marquise Boire and etal, 2013).

4.7.2.2. Intimidation

On top of surveillance, Facebook political discussions have been challenged by intimidation. There is intimidation of the people who are active on Facebook political discussions and who

shape agenda as well as lead political discussions on Facebook as interviewee 08 and 15 expressed it.

I personally got a threat from government officials. They accused me being of a traitor. I am a traitor for them; therefore, they warned me to stop what I was doing on Facebook because of that I deactivated my Facebook account for two months. I have faced a serious threat from government officials. As a result, I have restricted my friends and minimized my activities. It was too dangerous. They warned me not to tell anyone (Interviewee 09, on 19 March 2013).

I have never faced such serious threat so far. Insults are common. However, my two close friends received a threat at gunpoint during the death of Meles (Interviewee 08, on 04 March 2013).

4.7.2.3. Provisions and Regulations

In addition to surveillance and intimidation, some proclamations have challenged the political discussion on Facebook as interviewee 06 has explained.

Last year in 2011, in June or July, there was a proclamation, which is called the Ethiopian Telecom Fraud Proclamation. I have read from government policy papers that explain there is another law coming after that. It is on the pipeline, it is called cyber crime law, which is going to be very very sensitive for the online activities (Interviewee 06, on 30 March 2013).

According to some of the interviewees, there are court cases where Facebook activities have been presented as evidences for defendants' involvement in illegal activities.

There was a case about politicians and bloggers. The prosecutor has presented Facebook conversations on one of the politician who was accused of terrorism. He has a relative who lives in Asmara with a certain labeled terrorist organization. Their conversation was about family issue yet it is presented as an evidence for his relationship with that labeled terrorist organization (Interviewee 09, on 19 Mach 2013).

I have friends who are imprisoned; for example, for Senait the prosecutor had presented her Facebook posts. When her Facebook account was accessed, posts like (Enough!) had been found and that was presented as an evidence for one of the charges (Interviewee 12, on 01 March 2013).

According to (Rohozinski, 2010), legal measures reflect a deliberate tactic of strangulation.

4.7.2.4. Blocking of Blogs, Websites and Facebook Pages

In addition to the mentioned challenges, blocking of blog pages and websites has become one of the challenges for the Facebook political discussions because people use their personal Facebook account to put links of different websites to share with their friends what they read from a website.

There are blocked websites which cannot be accessed in Ethiopia with the pretext that their writings instigate conflicts between ethnic groups or they divert people's attention from the developmental activity. Our situation is different from others in its harshness. It has a universal feature; for instance, you cannot access terrorists' website in the US. However, in the US or other countries, there might be few

websites blocked, but here you can find two hundred or three hundred blocked websites (Interviewee 03, on 17 March 2013).

In log in observation, the researcher has confirmed the blocking of one hundred twenty three tubes, websites and blogs. These websites, blogs and tubes (for audio and video) have released news and articles about Ethiopia. Moreover, it has been found from the questionnaire that 82 people (43.85% respondents) reported that Facebook pages that are politically oriented and that convey political messages are blocked. Furthermore, 51 People (27.27%) respondents indicated that opposition pages are blocked in Ethiopia. According to Deibert and Rohozinski (2010), blocking is one system to influence discussions. They explained that disabling or attacking critical information assets at key moments in time is the most effective tool for influencing political outcomes in cyberspace.

4.7.2.5. Cost and Penetration of Internet and Poverty

The internet penetration has become as one of the major challenges for Facebook political discussions because the existence of Facebook and other social media depends on the existence, reach and quality service of the internet as interviewee 05 explained.

The first challenge is social media existence on the internet. If here is no internet, there is no social media. The need for the social media in Ethiopia is very interesting. If you see the data, it is very interesting. There are more Facebook users than internet users in Ethiopia. There are people who never use internet but only Facebook. Normally the penetration of internet is much slower than the need of the people to be on the internet. There is a high demand to be on the internet

and social media, but the challenge is there is a little access (Interviewee 05, on 29 March 2013).

In addition to a dismal the internet penetration, the cost is also another challenge. Though cost for internet service in Ethiopia has been mentioned as the least in East Africa, it is not affordable for the public because the society's income is very low. However, users complain about the internet penetration. Ethio-Telecom, the sole service provider, claims that the penetration has grown very rapidly and the service has been made accessible for citizens. The following excerpt from the Ethio-Telecom report reinforces the claim:

In July 2010, the number of mobile plus internet as well as number of data subscribers were 6,677,903 and 189,185, respectively. But this figure has increased dramatically to 22.4 million mobile subscribers and 4.38 million internet and data (including GPRS) subscribers as of March 31, 2013, which is more than 25% mobile penetration rate and 5.18% data penetration rate (Berihanu, 2013).

Even though, the penetration has shown progress, there are still serious problems in relation to the quality of service and the monopolistic nature of the ownership.

4.7.2.6. Ethio-Telecom: The Sole Telecom Service Provider

There is a monopoly in telecom service provision in Ethiopia and citizens often complain about it. The monopoly has different interpretations on both the government and users side. Users have complained that the service charge is is exorbitant and yet the quality of service is very poor; they blame the monopoly for this. On the other hand, the government claims creating

access for all citizens as a reason for its control over the service as noted by the interviewees below.

The sole telecom service provider, Ethio-Telecom, is the other problem. Because there is no competition in the field, the service has become very poor. Look at the Ethiopian Airlines international service. Even though it is state owned, because of its international competition, it provides good service. However, if you see the domestic flight the service is poor because there is no competition. Similarly, on the telecom service because there is no competition, the service is very bad. That is the biggest bottleneck for the social media (Interviewee 05, on 29 March 2013).

The government does not consider the telecom service as a luxury; rather, it is a necessity. It considers it as the commanding sector. Therefore, it is the government's responsibility to expand and to maintain the quality of the service. It is not profit-oriented. It works to make the service accessible to the entire public. If it is privatized, it will be profit-oriented. That will not benefit the public. We also use the income from telecom for cross investments. If it is privatized, we cannot do this. However, later on, considering the country's situation, it will be privatized (Interviewee 01, on 02 April 2013).

Even though the government has stated public benefit as the reason for the state ownership of the telecom service, those who complain say it is not. Some users argued that the government owns the telecom not to benefit citizens but to control easily online activities as the excerpts from interviewees, 02 and 05, revealed.

It is easy for the government to inspect the online activity if it controls the telecom service (Interviewee 02, on 19 February 2013).

I guess there are so many reasons why the government owns it. The first reason is the understanding of the use of internet. Whenever there is internet, there is people's communication via the medium. Normally, internet is beyond that. Even though it is my assumption, if there is high internet penetration, it is impossible to control compared with other traditional media (Interviewee 05, on 29 March 2013).

In addition to all these, there are also other challenges for the social media and the Facebook political forums. Among the problems are knowledge of computer, i.e., basic computer skill, level of education, the living style of the society and availability of resources. These factors pose major challenges for the political discussions on Facebook.

Such challenges of the internet have international dimension. It is explained as known as digital divide. According to Ali Ali (2011), digital divide is the gap between the information haves and have-nots. For Ali (2011) there are four major, barriers to internet adoption, i.e., lack of local information, literacy, language and lack of cultural diversity. The barrier of lack of local information is related with the information flow; literacy barrier is related with educational level of the society; language barrier is related with the language used in the technology. English language has become the world technology language by default. Lack of cultural diversity is the other one which is related with the dominance the haves exert over the have-nots.

In the proceeding section, it has been discussed about the major challenges of Facebook. The challenges have been categorized into two major groups, i.e., users related problems as well as problems related with government. In the next section, the prospect of Facebook is discussed.

4.8. Facebook and New Experiences in Ethiopia

The emergence of the social media in Ethiopia has brought new things to the online community as well as to the offline community. It has assisted the formation of new communities. “The Good Ethiopian” and “Ethiopian Human and Secular Association” can be good examples of such communities. “Dimtschin Yisema” (Let our voice be heard) movement is also the other. This page has organized and led the Muslims protest for the last one year. Zone 9 can also be another example. These days, this group has become one of the prominent groups on Facebook. It shapes agenda for discussion and promotes public discourse on political and social issues. In addition, Facebook has become a cause for the establishment of new relationship between the mainstream media and the social media. It has become a source for news and information and has offered the chance for the media to have another platform in which the audience can participate, i.e., Facebook page.

4.8.1. New Relationship between Facebook and the Mainstream Media

The social media, especially, Facebook and mainstream media have established a relationship. Rumors from the Facebook discussions have become a source for the mainstream media stories. As interviewee 03 has explained:

There are posts and articles that are published on social media, which are against the government. In such cases, the mainstream media (ETV), pays attention. You can take Statue of Abun Petros at Piazza and the railway construction. It was said

that they were [government] going to demolish history. It was a hot issue on the social media. The mainstream media took that and produced a program. Usually, information leaks first on social media, then ETV analyzes and takes them (Interviewee 03, on 17 March 2013).

4.8.2. The Rise of New Community

Beyond the discussion forum, Facebook has offered the opportunity for citizens who have similar interest and opinion to create their own community. An individual with such interest meets on the Facebook. After series and thorough discussions some of the have been able to come true. Interviewee 09 has shred the experience.

We are trying to establish Ethiopian Humane Secular Association. It is born out of our online Ethiopian Atheist Page. For the last two years, we have been discussing issues on the existence of and non-existence of God or Allah. These days, we come to discuss the issue offline to establish on NGO, which, we named, “Ethiopia Humane and Secular Association”; its aim is promoting science (Interviewee 09, on 19 March 2013).

Like that of the Ethiopian Humane and Secular Association, the groups called Zone 9 and the Good Ethiopian have a similar story on their formation. Individuals who used to blog on the political and social situation of Ethiopia have formed it. Interviewees 08 and 09 have explained the process of the formation of the groups.

A group of ten or eleven people has formed the group called Zone 9. They met on Facebook first. Then, they met and formed the group; they are doing lots of activism (Interviewee 08, on 04 March 2013).

Sixteen individuals online formed the group, “The Good Ethiopian”. There was a woman called Alem Dechasa, who died at Beirut, Lebanon. She was the reason for the formation of the group. The aim of the group was to help her family. It was an online establishment for fund raising from offline community (Interviewee 09, on 19 March 2013).

Facebook has become a place where individuals who have similar attitude, interest, and motives can meet and form their own community.

4.8.3. The Middle Ground in Ethiopia Politics

The conventional political discourse in Ethiopia has long been dominated by extremes dispositions inherited from the 1960s politics. It does not leave a room for independent views. However, Facebook has made the public to experience a new trend in this respect. Individuals have come to discuss and listen to various opinions on the political discussions even though they may not subscribe to it.

There are very few people on Facebook. You see now, in a political sphere, the middle ground now is [being] created on Facebook. It is very painful, but it is coming and growing (Interviewee 11, 03 April 2013).

It is on its way and I think it is going to be the best way of discussion for political issues in the future. If it continues in this manner, it is on its ways to develop in the way [in the way, which will be all inclusive, and a place to discuss political issues] (Interviewee 16, on 26 February 2013).

Extant literature also supports this idea. According to Ali (2011), the power of social media to organize in scale has become incredible tools that embraced anyone. Thus, Ali (2011) added

that policy makers and development organizations should consider the capacity of the social media to broaden users' base can stimulate content creation. Basic ICT skills foster participations and democratization in the developing nations. This has implications for Ethiopia; a country has embarked on the path of development and building democracy. Thus, the policy makers have to consider the role of ICT for the country's development and the process of democratization.

Chapter Five

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

This study set out to examine how Facebook is functioning as an alternative political Forum in Ethiopia.

It was found that Facebook has become an alternative platform for the public to discuss a wide range of issues. In some cases, Facebook has also become the only place where people discuss political issues as well as subjects formerly considered as a taboo.

It has offered citizens the opportunity to exercise freedom of expression they could not do otherwise. The political and cultural history of the society coupled with provisions like the antiterrorism proclamation has constrained political discussions on the mainstream media. Thus, Facebook has become a viable option for those who have the resource to raise political issues, as witnessed during the sudden disappearance of the late PM Meles from public view in July of 2012. From mid July until September 2012, Facebook became a forum for the public to discuss the issue well while the mainstream media kept silent. It can, thus, be said the coming of Facebook has provided a window of opportunity for citizens to freely express their views

In a society where intolerance of different ideas largely taken as a norm, Facebook has provided the platform where citizens could learn to accommodate ideas different from their with restoring the physical fight. Such an engagement will have a positive pay off in the future with respect to cultivating the culture of civil discourse, which in turn will contribute in developing the culture of democratic engagement.

On the other hand, the political parties have also been using Facebook in their own ways. They use the Facebook to discuss issues, and to communicate with their fans and members. However, it is not well structured in terms of content, agenda setting, shaping discussions and engaging citizens to participate in a wide range of political issues. Various political parties have websites that cater for their online activity. The parties tend to use their websites better than their Facebook pages for their online political activities. This is attributable to the attitude of political leaders towards Facebook. They are skeptical about the potential of Facebook. They do not think that activities on Facebook would bring change. It should, however, be noted that the youth (the urban youth) is migrating to the social media, and political parties cannot effectively engage this group of citizens unless they pay attention to Facebook.

Furthermore, Facebook has offered the chance for citizens to be citizen journalists, as a result of which it has created a new form of relationship with the mainstream media. The mainstream media is looking for scoops from social media sites, such as Facebook. Hence, the Facebook is serving as a source for the mainstream media.

This being the cause, however, political discussions on Facebook have become the reflection of the Ethiopian politics on the ground. Practices such as hate speeches, labeling, extremism and radicalism are seriously affecting the political discussions on Facebook. At the same time, the middle ground is also being created because of the political discussions on Facebook. This could eventually help the development of democratic engagement and civil discussions in the country. Another challenge is that groups that are trying to set agenda, to shape discussion and to direct the political discourse are fragmented, affecting the political discourses. What is more

even though there were many pages and groups that are politically oriented, only a few them able to have visibility to their activities on Facebook.

With all the shortcomings identified above, Facebook seems to be playing an important role in providing a platform for those with resources to redefine the conventional public sphere for political engagement.

5.2. Recommendations

Even though employing Facebook for political discussions is at its infancy in the Ethiopian context, it can be an important tool if properly handled. To this end, the following recommendations are suggested:

- Political parties do not seem to be well aware of the potential of Facebook for nurturing civil democratic culture and engagement with citizens. They should develop strategies as to how they can harness the power of social media for democratic transformation.
- The government should also acknowledge the potential positive effect of the use of social media in democratization and commit itself to expand the penetration of internet as well as its accessibility to citizens.
- Conventional journalism should also revisit its practice in this age of social media and design a strategy as to how it can best utilize social media as information source.
- In order to minimize the abusive use of Facebook that could potential poison discourse among the Facebook community, higher learning institutions and other relevant institutions should design mechanism whereby social media users could have basic literacy in proper utilization of the social media.

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Appendix A

Survey Questionnaire

I am a second year postgraduate student at Addis Abba University at School of Journalism and Communication. I am doing my thesis on the *Social Media as an Alternative Political Forum in Ethiopia: in the Case of Facebook*. This survey questionnaire aims to get your opinion and say, which makes my study alive and complete. Hence, I kindly request you to fill this questionnaire. Personal details are not needed.

I thank you very much for you time and consideration in advance.

Tesfaye Alemayehu

You can reach me via tesfaye.alemayehu2013@gmail.com

Please put click in the box

1. Age

15-20

51-60

21-30

61-70

31-40

71- 80

41-50

2. Sex: Male Female

3. Your educational status

Junior Secondary

BA /BSc.

High School

MA/M.Sc

College Diploma

Ph D

4. How often do you update your status on Facebook?

Never

Most of the days in a week

Few times in a week

Everyday

5. For what purpose do you use Facebook?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Turn your passion into a business | <input type="checkbox"/> Gain energy (Motivation) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take control of your life | <input type="checkbox"/> Learn more about yourself through self-expression |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take control of your publishing | <input type="checkbox"/> Overcome the fear of public speaking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take control of your marketing | <input type="checkbox"/> Leave your day job behind |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Become a thought leader | <input type="checkbox"/> Connect to global markets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make a difference | <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss Political Issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Build trust | <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss on Literary works |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Earn respect | <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss on Social issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Build a business online | <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss Professional issue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Create independence | <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss Religion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meet cool and influential people both virtual and face to face | <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss Sport |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grow your own network of influence | <input type="checkbox"/> For Entertainment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Become well known or even famous | <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss Philosophy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Turn your life form ordinary to extraordinary | <input type="checkbox"/> For Dating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Become an author | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Change people's lives | If any other please mention |

6. Which one of the following do you think preferred for political debate or discussion in Ethiopia these days

- The mainstream media (Newspapers, Radio and TV)
- The online media (Blog, Facebook, Twitter and others)

7. What do you think the reason is?

8. How many Facebook accounts do you have?

- One
 Two
 Three
 More than three

9. Have you ever created a Facebook group?

- Yes No

10. If your answer for the above question is “yes”, please explain the reason why.

11. Have you become a member of any Facebook group, which is politically motivated?

- Yes No

12. If your answer is “yes” for question number “8”, please write the reason why you have become a member.

13. Do you participate on Facebook debates or discussion?

- Yes No

14. If your answer for question number 9 is “yes”, please explain in what kind of discussions you usually interested in to participate.

15. How often do you give comment on Facebook discussions?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Most of the time | <input type="checkbox"/> Never |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> When an issue that concerns me |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely | <input type="checkbox"/> I observe the discussion passively |

16. Do you know any individual politician or a political party that has a Facebook page?

- Yes No

17. If you know any politician or a political party that uses Facebook, please list them below.

18. Do you believe that these Facebook political forums and debate contribute for the development of Ethiopia's civil political culture or democracy?

- Yes No

19. Do you face a blocked Facebook page?

- Yes No

20. If your answer for the above question is "yes", please, explain how often you have faced closed Facebook pages.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Always | <input type="checkbox"/> When there is an incident |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Rare |

21. What kinds of Facebook pages do you think most of the time blocked?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Political Pages | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Issue Pages |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Opposition Pages | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious Pages |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pornography Pages | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Pages |

If any, other

Appendix B

First Round Interview Questions

Part I- For Individuals (Activists, Journalists, Bloggers and Facebook Users)

1. When did you join the Facebook?
2. How many friends and followers do you have on Facebook?
3. How often do you post, comment and update your status on Facebook?
4. What is Facebook for you?
5. What is the state of Facebook in Ethiopia?
6. For what do you use the Facebook?
7. What do you think the purpose for which other people use the Facebook?
8. Do you think the social networks /media/ sites, especially Facebook, are suitable to make discussions on different issues like, social life political or any other?
9. Which one of the following do you think preferred for political debate or discussion, from the online medium (Facebook, twitter, or else) and the mainstream media?
 - 9.1. What do you think is the reason?
10. Do believe that facebook has become a new political sphere in Ethiopia?
 - 10.1. Why do you say so?
11. Do you know any politically oriented or affiliated Facebook groups or pages?
 - 11.1. If there exist, what do they do on their facebook?
12. Can you tell me (a) Facebook group (s) that you have become a member?
 - 12.1. Why you become a member?
13. What is the state of these Facebook groups?
14. What do you think are the need to be organized online when it is allowed and possible to make it on the ground?
15. What are the goals and activities of these politically oriented Facebook groups?
16. What is the state of freedom of expression online in Ethiopia?
17. What are the main challenges of facebook in Ethiopia?
18. Is there any political discussion on the Facebook?

19. Have you ever participated in the discussion, argument or debate that is prepared by these groups?
 - 19.1. How is the tone?
20. Do you think the political activities on the Facebook are successful, so far?
 - 20.1. Why do you say so??
21. What do you recommend/ suggest/ to make Facebook an alternative source of information or trusted political forum in Ethiopia?
22. What do you suggest to make the Facebook forum fruitful?
23. What are the major challenges in using Facebook as a forum for political or any other issues of import?
24. Please add any point that you would like to say about the political activities on Facebook.

About Political Parties Activity on Facebook

25. Do you think that these discussions contribute for the development of country's civil political culture or democracy?
26. Do you know any political party among the major ones that use Facebook for their political activity?
27. Do the known politicians (individual) use Facebook?
28. What is their purpose in using the Facebook, both political parties and politicians?
29. What do you think is the problem for political parties for not using Facebook to reach their supporters or to enhance their political campaign?
30. What should they do to benefit from the social media activity for their political activities?

Appendix C

Second Round Interview Questions

Part I- For Individuals (Activists, Journalists, Bloggers and Facebook Users)

1. There are groups with the same name. What do you think is the reason?
2. People have explained that there are groups and individuals who have become influential for their Facebook activity; do you know anyone and can you mention some?
 - 2.1. Can you explain their activities on the Facebook that make them known /influential/?
3. What have you faced so far because of your online activities? Who do you think does that?
4. The public /majority of the Facebook community/ have been tied by “idea Phobia” to mean that they do not want comment, take part in discussions, raise issues? What do you think is the reason?
5. Some say that Facebook has become one source of information. How far do you agree with this idea?
 - 5.1. Do you remember any story on the mainstream media, which basis the Facebook?
6. Some say the freedom of expression on Facebook is too excessive; they recommend that there should be a law, which restricts this excessive freedom.
 - 6.1. Do you agree? Why?
7. According to some people, most Facebook groups are administered anonymously; thus, they say that it hurts and limits Facebook discussion and forums. What do you say on this idea?
8. Some people explained that Facebook forums in Ethiopia are not successful compared with Egyptians and Arab Countries’ movement. However, some do not agree with this. They say that it is fruitful because it helps the public to be aware of what is happening around. What do you say on this point?
9. The sole telecom service provider, Ethio Telecom, is repeatedly being criticized for its low quality service and expensive tariff. Even some people explained that the telecom

service goes beyond the monopoly; it is a means to control people's activity. What is your opinion?

10. These days, some people say that the government has been trying to infiltrate the online community and has contending online in various ways sponsoring some bloggers and activists. Do you have any information on this?
11. Some people say that Facebook is the only place where they freely express their feelings and emotions; yet, some say still Facebook is not as free as it has to be. There is a spying on Facebook. Have you ever encountered any action of spying on your Facebook activities so far?
12. What are the opportunities that Facebooka has offered to you?
13. There are pages that promote the idea of the ruling party these days on Facebook. Is this a sign that it is coming to Facebook to use its maximum potential?
14. Are people using Facebook to escape or hide themselves from the mainstream media accountability for the writing and the opinion forwarded?
15. Do you know if there is any regulation or directive on how to use Facebook and the online medium so far?

For political parties

16. How is your media department organized?
 - 16.1. What is your media policy?
 - 16.2. How do you plan to use Facebook as a medium to reach your target audience, members and fans?
17. It is heard and obvious that most of the leaders and members age aged people. Thus, they are not technology friendly. Most people mentioned that this is the major problem for political parties for not using the Facebook effectively. What have you planned on this?

Questions For EPRDF

1. As a party and a government, are there directives on how to use the online medium and Facebook?
2. Ethio Telecom service has been criticized for its low quality and it inefficiency in its service provision; service what has the government planned?
3. What is EPRDF's strategy and plan to use the Facebook as a medium?

- 3.1. Is there a section in the the media or PR department of the party?
4. What has been planned to regulate the online medium including Facebook?
5. Some people say that the ruling party is not much interested in using Facebook because the ruling party uses the mainstream media. However, there are pages that promote the idea of the ruling party these days on Facebook. Is this a sign that it is coming to Facebook to use the maximum potential?
6. Some people believe that there are sponsored online activists that are working for the ruling party; how far is this true?

Appendix D

Observation Checklists

No Points of Observation

1. Activists use of Facebook
2. Facebook Groups
3. Facebook Pages
4. Different NGO and Other organizations on Facebook
5. Media House on Facebook
6. Political Parties on Facebook

Appendix E

Interest Groups on Facebook

A. **political activists or/ and politically affiliated on the Facebook**

1. Melese Dictatorship enough beka gaye
Open Group
Members 9463
2. Ethiopian Revolutionary Mind
CLOSED GROUP
Members 16,625
3. The Independent
Closed Group
Members 1,268
4. ድል ለኢትዮጵያ ሕዝብ
Open Group
5. ኢትዮጵያ [ETViopia]
Closed Group
All members 516
6. G7 fan club
CLOSED GROUP
All Mmembers 2501
7. ይገደባል አባይ
Closed Group
All Members 293
8. Boycott Woyane Businesses!!!
CLOSED GROUP
ALL GROUP MEMBERS 9513
9. Ethiopian youth for democracy and human rights anti we
OPEN GROUP
Members 6243
10. ETHIO WETAT LIJOCH CLUB
Open Group
Memebers 5262
11. iCare
Open Group
All Members 302
12. I am eskinder Nega
13. Wake Up For Your Freedom and Right!!!
Open Group
Member 932
14. የነጻነት ቀን Ye netsanet ken
Open Group
15. Free Woubshet Taye,Reiot Alemu and other free press journalists in Ethiopia
Open Group
Members 2365
16. Fair View Discussing ideas, issues, literature, economy, politics
Members 224
Closed Group
17. <http://minilik-salsawi.blogspot.com>
(ምንጩ ሳልሳዩ)
Closed Group
Members 1298
18. Lela hager Yelegnim yetim alhedim
Open Group
Members 4600
19. Solidarity Movement for New Ethiopia
Open Group
Members 1771
20. EPRPYL (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party Youth League)
Open Group
Members 2846
21. Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement Supporters
Open Group
1183 members
22. Boycott Weyane's Business
Closed Group
Members 9591
23. Kibre Negest Party
Open Group
Members 3286
24. Ethiopian youth for democracy and human rights anti weyane group
Open group
Members 6261
25. Human Rights Violation in Ethiopia!

- Open Group
Member 573
- 26. Open Mind Ethiopia Politics and Current Affairs Discussion
Open Group
Members 211
- 27. Greater Ethiopia Movement
Open Group
Members 208
- 28. ENOUGH IS ENOUGH !
Open Group
Members 1110
- 29. Ato Meles Zenawi'S Personal Diary :(
Open group
3412 members
- 30. እኔ ነሰው ገብሬ ነኝ በሞቱ ፍረሃትን አሸንፌያለሁ እርስዎስ?
Closed Group
Members 1209
- 31. የወያኔ ባርነት በቃኝ እርስዎስ?
Closed Group
Members 818
- 32. UNITY TO PROTECT AMHARA(UPA)
Open Group
Members 3,173

B. Facebook Groups on Entertainment

- 1. ETViopia
Closed Group
Members 533
- 2. Crucial
Open Group
All Members 437
- 3. Ethiopian Music and other music groups
CLOSED GROUP
ALL MEMBERS 908
- 4. ኢትዮ አዝናኝ ቀልዶች እና አባሎች
Open Group
All Members 4962
- 5. Ye Abe tokichaw Shemutoch
Closed Group
Members 3042
- 6. Kefet. com
Open Group

- All Members 9918
- 7. የኛ የማር ጠጅ ቤት
Open Group
Members 66
- 8. ሙዚቃ ሂወቴ MUSIQA HIWOTE
Open Group
3445 Members
- 9. Addis Chewata
Open Group
Members 7253
- 10. LOMI SHITA- A film By Abraham Gezahagne
Open Group
Members 345
- 11. * Sebseb Belu *
Open Group
Members 1980
- 12. The London habesha traditional and modern fashion show 2011
Open Group
All members are 120
- 13. "Facebook but NOT Face ur Books :D"
Members 231
Open Group
- 14. Nuna glsun enchawet
Open Group
Members 3063

C. Facebook Groups on Social Issues

- 1. When we stand together
Open Group
Members 5261
- 2. እንተዋወቅ የኔ ቆንጆ/Habesha intimate/
Open Group
ALL MEMBER 5, 561
- 3. Ethiopia the African Tibet Show - Ethiopiawinet Ethiopianism United
Open Group
All Members 9, 525
- 4. etc sucks
Open Group
ALL MEMBERS 1487
- 5. Feed The needy

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>All Members 740
Open Group</p> <p>6. The Good Ethiopian(ደገ- ኢትዮጵያዊ)
Open Group
All Members 4664</p> <p>7. Ant Homo Sexuality
MEMBERS 687</p> <p>8. Ethio Enimamar ኢትዮጵያ እንማማር አምድ
Closed Group
5369 members</p> <p>9. Justice for Alema Dechasa
Closed group
Members 2467</p> <p>10. HAGER MALET
Open Group
Memebrs 1151</p> <p>11. Ethiopia The Beautiful!!!
Closed Group
Members 1776</p> <p>12. FEMALE eye=Bank
Members 238</p> <p>13. <u>ONE ETHIOPIA UNDER GOD... Our Diversity is Our Strength!!!</u>
<u>Open Group</u>
Member 6831</p> <p>14. <u>North Shoa Information Group</u>
<u>Closed Group</u>
Members 481</p> <p>15. Stop trafficking Ethiopian children
Open Group
1729 members</p> <p>16. Teddy Afro Group
Open Group
Members 10, 111</p> <p>17. Women Empowerment in Ethiopia
Open Group
Member 1294</p> <p>18. Rotaract
Open Group
Member 119</p> <p>19. <u>Clickhabesh</u>
Closed Group
Members 2452</p> <p>20. <u>Anti Bribery Fighters</u></p> | <p>Open Group
Members 542</p> <p>21. Awra Amba
Open Group
Members 123</p> <p>22. The Union of Amhara people
Open Group
Members 507</p> <p>23. <u>No One Is Illegal</u>
Open Group
Members 333</p> <p>24. Bahir Dar,The Most Beautiful City In The World
Open Group
Members 3491</p> <p>25. Ras Teferian
Members 8340</p> <p>26. <u>እርስዎ ቢሆኑ ምንድኑርጋሱ</u>
Members 661</p> <p>27. Young Diplomats
Open Group
All Members 440</p> <p>28. <u>ETHIOPIA and ITS FEATURES</u>
CLOSED GROUP</p> <p>29. Habesha Penpal
Open Group
Members 167</p> <p>30. <u>ድድ ማስጫ</u>
Open Group
Memebers 2893</p> <p>31. Facebookers
Members 3698</p> <p>32. Adwa: An African victory አደዋ አፍሪካ የግነት ቀን
Open Group
Members 92</p> <p>33. <u>በታላቁ መሪያችን ጠቅላይ ሚኒስቴር መለስ ዜናዊ ሞት አጅግ አዝነናል!</u>
Members 1298</p> <p>34. Save The Statue of Martyred bishop, Abune Petros
Open Group
Members 2716</p> |
|---|---|

35. እርስዎ ቢሆኑ ምን ያደርጋሉ የውይይት መድረክ

Open Group
All members 116

36. The Ancient Ethiopian Association
Open Group
Members 333

D. Groups on Literature and Readership

1. Amharic poems
Closed Group
All members 487
2. Book for all
Open Group
All members 1723
3. Addis Neger readers
MEMBERS 382
4. Ethiopian Blog Sphere
OPEN GROUP
MEMBERS 327
5. የበዓሉ ግርማ መድረክ
Closed Group
MEMEBRS 2915
6. ኔትነት እንደው
Open Group
All Members 1005
7. ነብይ መከንን
8. የግጥም እፍታ (EFTA POETRY)
Closed Group
Memebrs 605
9. Adam Reta
Open Group
1140 members
10. የማያልፍ ቀን ሽሙቦች
Open Group
All members are 450
11. TOTO ADEFRIS'S COMMUNITY
(የቶቶ አደፍርስ ማሕበረሰብ)
Open Group
Members 1867
12. ኢትዮጵያዊ ጥበብ
Open Group
Members 977
13. National Museum of Ethiopia
Exhibitions and Forums

Open Group
Members 208

E. Medicine /health related/ Groups

1. Medical world
Closed Group
All Members 359
2. Let's restore sight to needlessly blinds in Ethiopia
Open Group
Member 1991

F. Academic Groups

1. Ethiopian scientific and academic Network
Closed Group
Memebers 4485
2. Ethiopian Society of Mechanical Engineers (ESME)
Open Group
Members 205
3. ADDIS KETEMA HIGH SCHOOL REUNION አዲስ ከተማ ሁለተኛ ደረጃ ትምህርት ቤት ፤ አዲስ አበባ ኢትዮጵያ
Open Group
Members 936

G. Media Groups

1. Ethiopian news
Members 3090
2. Free Media for Ethiopia
Open Group
Member 959
3. Endalkna Mahder Besheger
Members 126
4. Ethio Paltalk ኢትዮ ፓልቶክ
5. Ethio asyl in telemark
Members 193
6. ለጎልጎል የድረ ገጽ ጋዜጣ ባለሁለት ሪፖርተር ነኝ ያገባኛል!!

H. Religious Groups

1. Ethiopian Atheists ነፃ ህዝቦች
Open Group
Members 591
2. ቶ ጳ Orthodox Youth ቶ
Members 3151

- Open Group
- 3. Akotet Ze Tewahedo
Open Group
Members 5691
- 4. The believers Voice
Open Group
Member 9387
- 5. Oriental orthodox Christians
Open Group
Members 1,361
- 6. PRAYER FRIENDS
Open Group
1889 Members
- 7. Bole Holy Savior Church + ቦሌ ደብ
ረሳሌም መድኃኔ ዓለም
Open Group
3810 members
- 8. Ethiopian Muslims
- 9. ድምፃችን ይሰማ (Demtsachen yesema)
- 10. Dimtsachin Yisema(ድምፃችን ይሰማ)
ke Jimma
- 11. Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Global
Network
Open Group
- 12. Orthodox for the Unification of Africa
Open Group
All Members 3467
- 13. Freedom of Religion for all Ethiopian
**መንግስት በሀይማኖት ጣልቃ
መግባቱን ያቁም**
Open Group
Members 21,983
- 14. ቃለ ሕይወትና ሰማያዊ ምስጋና (kale
Hiwot & Semayawi Misgana)
Open Group
569 members
- 15. Why I am not Muslim/ Lemin
alselmkum
Open Group
Members 927
- 16. Testimony Page - የምሥክርነት ገጽ
Members 3036
Open Group

Facebook Pages for Different Political Parties, Organizations Celebrities

A. Political Parties Pages

- 1. Ethiopian People's Revolutionary
Democratic Front
369 people like this. 7 people are talking
about this
- 2. Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary
Democratic Front
19 likes · 2 talking about this
- 3. Ethiopian People Revolutionary
Democratic Front Supporter Group
297 likes · 235 talking about this
- 4. Semayawi Party- Ethiopia
135 likes · 13 talking about this
- 5. Free Temesgen Desalegn
1,138 likes · 17 talking about this

- 2. ጭቆና ይብቃ
3,680 likes · 3,851 talking about this
- 3. ሕገ-መንግሥቱ ይከበር
3,340 likes · 2,048 talking about this
- 4. VOTE EPRDF ** ድምጻችንን ለሕ.
ሕ አይግ
585 likes · 4 talking about this
- 5. Ethiopian Revolution
46 people like this. 1 person is talking about
this
- 6. Tinsae Ethiopia
164 likes

B. Politics Fan Pages

- 1. Ethiopian Teachers Revolutionary
Front

7. *የመለስ ዜናዊ አሰተዳደር መወገድ አለብት!! ፊርማ ማሰባሰቢያ*
63 likes · 1 talking about this
8. *Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia*
2,234 likes · 40 talking about this · 84 were here
9. *Meles Zenawi dictator of Ethiopia*
2,517 likes · 12 talking about this
10. *Ethiopian's Peaceful Revolution - Take What's Yours*
34 likes
11. *The Ethiopian's Peaceful Youth Student Revolution freedom NOW*
101 likes
12. *Ethio talk*
70 likes

C. **Media Fan Pages**

1. VOA Amharic
42,690 likes · 1,506 talking about this
2. DW Amharic
6775 likes talks about this 231
3. Zone9
2,633 likes · 429 talking about this
4. SHEGER FM 102.1 RADIO
59,319 likes · 1,885 talking about this
5. Ze Habesha
10,545 likes · 946 ta. lking about this
6. FBC (Fana Broadcasting Corporate S.C.)
3,694 likes · 653 talking about this
7. AbbayMedia
13,856 likes · 2,613 talking about this
8. Yehabesha Tube
13,261 likes 1469 people talk about this
9. Admas Radio
291 likes · 13 talking about this
10. www.DireTube.com
50,775 likes · 9,170 talking about this

11. EthioTube
39,123 likes · 11,215 talking about this
12. nazret.com
11,615 likes · 1,410 talking about this
13. Ezega.com
25,804 likes · 506 talking about this
14. Ecadf Ethiopian
9,337 likes · 1,287 talking about this
15. Global Voices
33,611 likes · 625 talking about this
16. VOA Afaan Oromoo
12,707 likes · 521 talking about this
17. DStv Ethiopia
5,279 likes · 274 talking about this
18. **DINQ Ethiopian Magazine**
10,681 likes · 939 talking about this
19. **Bilal Communication**
3,104 likes · 230 talking about this
20. **Africa tv**
33,491 likes · 7,271 talking about this
21. **Ze Habesha**
10,712 likes · 1,558 talking about this
22. **Yehabeshatube /media that focuses on entertainment/**
3,197 likes · 40 talking about this
23. **DezeTube.com**
6,307 likes · 1,611 talking about this
24. **AmharicTube - All Amharic TV Channels and Shows**
6,932 likes · 2,078 talking about this
25. **Tadias**
1,565 likes · 64 talking about this · 114 were here
26. **Ethiopian Think Tank**
353 likes · 1 talking about this
27. **EthiopianReview**
2,640 likes · 16 talking about this
28. *CyberEthiopia*
592 likes · 4 talking about this
29. *Ethioonutube*
4,294 likes · 232 talking about this
30. Ethiopian Reporter
11449 likes · 249 talking about this.

31. *Ethiopiana- media*
414 likes · 10 talking about this
32. *Addis Fortune*
1,628 likes · 11 talking about this
33. *total433.com*
1,449 likes · 127 talking about this
34. *Ethiopian Breaking News*
4,532 likes · 23 talking about this
35. **YETAEM LEKET (SHEGER FM 102.1 RADIO)**
1,622 likes · 18 talking about this
36. *Addis Admas news paper*
184 likes this. 1 talking about this
37. **ESAT**
30,549 likes · 1,451 talking about this
38. *Sodere.Com Ethiopian Social Network News Comedy Music Drama and Sport*
4,363 likes · 998 talking about this
39. *Addis Neger*
18,688 likes · 76 talking about this
40. *Awramba Times*
1,041 likes · 17 talking about this
41. *balager.com*
459 likes · 3 talking about this
42. *The kassa show*
48,642 likes · 522 talking about this

D. Celebrities and Famous People Fan pages

1. **Kenenisa Bekele**
21,108 people like this 233 people are talking about this
2. **Tilahun Gessesse**
10,961 likes · 123 talking about this
3. **PM Meles Zenawi**
33,571 likes · 630 talking about this
4. **Teddy Afro**
16,341 likes · 2,117 talking about this
5. **Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia**
89,215 likes · 1,472 talking about this
6. **Liya-Kebede**
39,559 likes · 620 talking about this

7. **Mahmoud Ahmed**
4,354 likes · 26 talking about this
8. **Sayat Demissie**
68,137 likes · 2,497 talking about this
9. **Mulatu Astatke**
11,411 likes. 30 talk about this
10. **Kuku Sebsebe**
18,500 likes · 264 talking about this
11. **Kuku-Sebesebie Adika**
2,630 likes · 199 talking about this
12. **Gelila Bekele**
6,272 likes · 223 talking about this
13. **Haile Gebrselassie**
57,468 people like this 562 people are talking about this
14. **Amleset Muchie wife of Teddy Afro**
39,432 likes · 16,145 talking about this
15. **Mahder Assefa (Medi)**
15,678 likes · 4,821 talking about this
16. **Maya Haile**
7,622 likes · 330 talking about this
17. **MICAH BEHAILU**
1,188 likes · 9 talking about this
18. **Zeritu Kebede**
27,739 likes · 206 talking about this
43. **Michael Belayneh Adika**
2,232 likes · 240 talking about this
44. **Abraham Wolde**
4,984 likes · 25 talking about this
45. **Netsanet Melesse Adika**
409 likes · 15 talking about this
46. **Scientist Kitaw Ejigu**
16,059 likes · 470 talking about this
47. **Abegasu K/work**
1,781 likes · 15 talking about this
48. **Alemayehu Eshet**
258 people like this . 3 people are talking about this
49. **Jah lude**
1,079 likes · 54 talking about this
50. **Abe Tokichaw**
12,815 likes · 505 talking about this
51. **Hanisha Solomon**
1,278 likes · 98 talking about this
52. **Zewdy**

36,516 likes · 1,794 talking about this
 53. **Aster Aweke**
 2,980 likes · 193 talking about this
 54. **Atse Yohannes IV**
 132 likes · 2 talking about this
 55. **Kalkidan Tilahun (Lily)**
 19,935 likes · 269 talking about this
 56. **Dr. Belay Abegaz**
 11,438 likes · 315 talking about this
 57. **Judith Franklin**
 1,557 likes · 22 talking about this
 58. **Redet solomon**
 453 likes · 98 talking about this
 59. **Deacon Danielkibret**
 9,221 likes · 165 talking about this
 60. **Minyeshu**
 3,722 likes · 10 talking about this
 61. **Abebe Bikila**
 17,821 likes · 275 talking about this
 62. **Hayat Ahmed**
 517 likes · 10 talking about this
 63. **Dr. Birhanu Nega**
 6,583 likes · 45 talking about this
 64. **Hailé Gerima**
 4,575 likes · 12 talking about this
 65. **Kibebew Geda**
 4,131 likes · 26 talking about this
 66. **Dr. Gebisa Ejeta**
 5,254 likes · 86 talking about this
 67. **Abune Mekarios**
 68 likes · 1 talking about this
 68. **Lidetu Ayalew**
 396 likes · 10 talking about this
 69. **Eyob Mekonen**
 606 likes
 70. **Saba**
 1,322 likes · 5 talking about this
 71. **DJ YEMI**
 3,760 likes · 72 talking about this
 72. **Yoni Yoye [ጎንደርኛ]**
 408 likes · 9 talking about this
 73. **Helen Berhe**
 1,595 likes · 18 talking about this

74. **Emahoy Tsegue-Mariam Gebrou**
 625 likes · 3 talking about this
 75. **Hade Haile**
 4,434 likes · 23 talking about this
 76. **Temesgen**
 637 likes · 32 talking about this
 77. **Yehunie Belay**
 1,731 likes · 47 people talking about this
 78. **Samuel Tesfamichael**
 3,787 likes · 194 people talking about this
 79. **Haile Roots (Hailemichael Getnet)**
 301 likes · 2 people talking about this
 80. **Abby Lakew**
 1,199 likes · 23 people talking about this
 81. **DANIEL AMDEMICHAEL**
 7,906 likes · 1,500 people talking about this
 82. **Abraham Afeweriki**
 1,633 likes · 9 people talking about this
 83. **GIGI (Ejigayehu Shibabaw)**
 467 likes · 1 person talking about this
 84. **Hanna Tekle**
 807 likes · 49 people talking about this
 85. **teddy yo**
 1,709 likes · 14 people talking about this
 86. **Yehunie Belay**
 1,731 likes · 47 talking about this
 87. **Mekrez - Ayewalehu Meskelun CD**
 1,305 likes · 4 talking about this
 88. **Minilik Wesinachew**
 142 likes · 1 talking about this
 89. **PM HaileMariam Desalegn**
 4,374 likes · 41 talking about this
 90. **Mahder Assefa (Medi)**
 15,802 likes · 2,276 talking about this
 91. **Tamagne Beyene**
 9,499 likes · 110 talking about this
 92. **Beza aman**
 1,546 likes · 52 talking about this
 93. **Dr Dagnachew Assefa**
 (ዶ/ር ዳ ኛ ቸው አሰፋ)
 1,252 likes · 18 talking about this
 94. **Eebbisaa Addunyaa**

- 727 likes · 5 talking about this
- 95. Derartu Tulu
- 4,762 likes · 8 talking about this
- 96. Dureti Tusse
- 5,289 likes · 130 talking about this
- 97. *Dr. Negasso Gidada*
- 197 likes · 10 talking about this
- 98. Ali Birra
- 718 likes · 82 talking about this
- 99. Yeha Band
- 523 likes · 8 talking about this
- 100. *Shewit bitew, (shewa)*
- 3440 likes · Community Page about Music
- 101. *Boonaa Mohammed*
- 39,057 likes · 5,257 talking about this
- 102. Jawar Mohammed
- 6,059 likes · 40 talking about this
- 103. Tirunesh Dibaba
- 40,601 likes · 381 talking about this

E. Academic Institutions Fan pages

- 1. Addis Ababa University
- 18,667 people like this 523 people are talking about this
- 2. Jimma University
- 8,614 people like this 252 people are talking about this
- 3. *Mekelle University*
- 189 likes

F. Religious Fan Pages

- 1. Saint Gebriel Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Seattle
- 1,212 likes · 89 talking about this · 240 were here
- 2. Tewahdo orthodox
- 9,699 likes · 426 talking about this · 82 were here
- 3. Ethio Bilal Tube
- 25,800 likes · 5,255 talking about this
- 4. Adama Muslim Youth Movement/
የአዳማ ሙስሊም ወጣቶች ንቅናቄ
- 735 likes
- 5. *ድምፃችን ይሰማ በጂማ*

- 14 likes
- 6. *ድምፃችን ይሰማ ጎንደር ና ባህር ዳር*
- 288 likes · 192 talking about this
- 7. If You Are Ethiopian Muslim Join The Page Please
- 6,039 likes · 336 talking about this
- 8. *ድምፃችን ይሰማ !Ethiopian Muslim University students*
- 1,943 likes · 620 talking about this
- 9. *ድም ፃች ን ይሰማ Community Page about ድም ፃች ን ይሰማ - Let Our Voice be Heard*
- Like 21, 800
- 10. *ድም ፃች ን ይሰማ - ليسمع صوتنا*
- 1,196 likes · 37 talking about this
- 11. *YeMuslimoch Dimts የሙስሊም ስለም ች ድም ጽ*
- 6,113 likes · 432 talking about this
- 12. *ድም ጻች ን ይሰማ :-በደሴ*
- 3,621 likes · 1,146 talking about this
- 13. *Ethiopian Orthodox*
- 16,851 people like this .639 people are talking about this
- 14. *Deje Selam*
- 14,675 likes · 532 talking about this
- 15. *የቤተ ክርስቲያኔ ጉዳይ ያገባኛል I do Care about EOTC*
- Likes . talks about this
- 16. *Sexy Atheists*
- 115,982 likes · 83,892 talking about this
- 17. *Al-hudaa*
- 8,421 likes · 3,012 talking about this
- 18. Ethiopian Muslims for Justice and Freedom
- 6,147 likes · 37 talking about this
- 19. What is new About Ethio Muslims
- 1,877 likes · 132 talking about this
- 20. Furaat Org
- 314 likes · 28 talking about this

G. Social and Entertainment Fan Pages

- 1. *Ethiopian Cute Guys and Girls*

- 35,856 likes · 2,527 talking about this
2. *habeshaintimate.com*
34,861 likes · 39,609 talking about this
 3. *We Are All Eskinder Nega*
563 likes · 2 talking about this
 4. *ፋገራ ቤና* | Fugera News
1,950 likes · 385 talking about this
 5. Habesha.net
751 likes · 4 talking about this
 6. Sew Le Sew Ethiopian Drama
52,092 likes · 2,099 talking about this
 7. Ethiopia national football team
4,682 people like this 195 people are talking about this
 8. Female sex workers
254,480 people like this 32,240 people are talking about this
 9. Sexy Habesha Girls
5,775 likes · 1,509 talking about this
 10. ECADF Ethiopian News
2,201 likes · 46 talking about this
 11. Ethio Eritrean Beautiful People With Their Culture
12,198 likes Community Page about Culture
 12. Ethiopia sexy college
7,468 likes · 474 talking about this
 13. Ethiopia Is Beautiful
8,748 likes · 7,031 talking about this
 14. I LOVE TIGRAY
10,973 likes · 7,685 talking about this
 15. *RohaClips.com*
2,424 likes · 2,458 talking about this
 16. *I love being Habesha*
3,684 likes · 599 talking about this
 17. I Am Jobless
38 people like this
 18. The Yellow Movement AAU
243 likes · 13 talking about this
 19. Oromo Diaspora Association - New York (ODA-NY)
37 likes · 5 were here
 20. International-Oromo Youth-Association
7,282 likes · 49 talking about this
 21. *1p1c.blogspot.com*
236 likes · 2 talking about this
 22. Ethiopian Arts
436 likes · 5 talking about this
 23. Talk about love in Ethiopia
82 likes
 24. Ethiopian Idol
4,957 likes · 40 talking about this
 25. *Ethiopian sexy girls*
2,434 likes · 244 talking about this
 26. *Ethiopian sexy girls*
322 likes · 25 talking about this
 27. *Ethiopian Diaspora Intelligence Agency*
231 likes · 1 talking about this
 28. *Gemena - ገመና*
13,407 likes · 74 talking about this
 29. *Ethiopian readers and writers book club*
359 likes · 3 talking about this
 30. *www.azmaribet.com*
1,642 likes
 31. Habeshans funny album by me
435 likes · 29 talking about this

- 32. *Hope for Children in Ethiopia & Win Souls for God*
160 likes · 9 talking about this
- 33. *"Ban the circulation of Khat in Ethiopia!!"*
7 likes
- 34. *አፈላላጊ ወ ጠፉ ሁ ነኛ የፌ ስቡ ክ ፌስ ቡ ክሮች*
174 likes · 3 talking about this
- 35. *የቆንጆ ዎች ት ሰይንት*
10,186 likes · 13,899 talking about this
- 36. *የፍቅር ቅኔ*
13,973 likes · 6,525 talking about this
- 37. *Ethio beautiful habesha guys and girls click like if u are*
2,084 likes · 161 talking about this
- 38. *ምርጥ ወንዶች vs ቀሽት ሴቶች*
2,413 likes · 237 talking about this
- 39. *Hope for Children in Ethiopia & Win Souls for God*
160 likes · 9 talking about this
- 40. *Ethiopian maids abused in Middle East*
400 likes · 1 talking about this

H. Places Fan Pages

- 1. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
86,893 people like this
313,919 people have been here
8,565 people are talking about this
- 2. Ethiopia
12,533 likes ·
500 talking about this
- 3. Nazret, Ethiopia
2,680 people like this
5,657 people have been here
105 people are talking about this
- 4. Ethiopia
19,760 people like this
114,383 people have been here
1,168 people are talking about this
- 5. Ethiopia
62,546 likes

19,902 talking about this
Official Facebook Page™ ®

- 6. *መስቀል አደባባይ*
42 likes
- 7. Dire Dawa
7,020 people like this
9,924 people have been here
433 people are talking about this

I. Business Pages

- 1. Ethiopian Coffee
2,347 people like this
7 people are talking about this
- 2. *Ethiopian Calendar for Mobiles*
3,792 likes · 83 talking about this
- 3. *Kotett Ethiopian classifieds*
283 likes · 5 talking about this
- 4. *Allthings Ethiopia*
4,495 likes · 39 talking about this

J. Music Pages

- 1. ARAT KILO
1,817 likes · 20 talking about this
Musician/Band
- 2. *Ethiopian DJ የኢትዮጵያ ሙዚቃ*
Community Page about Music of Ethiopia
- 3. *Yemusica Qana*
685 likes · 2 talking about this
- 4. Bunna
Album
850 likes · 17 people talking about this
- 5. R.I.P ~~~~ TILAHUN
GESSESSE~~~~
Musician/Band
1,840 likes · 2 people talking about this
- 6. *Ethiopian Orthodox Mezmur*
996 likes · 30 talking about this
- 7. *የመሪዎች ሕብረት መዘምራን*
651 likes · 7 talking about this
- 8. ""Konjo Ethiopian's""
Musician/Band
824 likes · 60 people talking about this
- 9. Krar Collective

Musician/Band

807 likes · 49 people talking about this

10. Mehari Brothers

761 likes · 13 talking about this

11. Jano Band

6,489 likes · 2,069 talking about this

12. *ROHA BAND*

279 likes · 7 talking about this

13. *Ethiocolor traditional band*

229 likes · 14 talking about this

14. *Habesha zefen*

10,093 likes · 1,076 talking about this

K. Sport

1. Ethiopian taekwondo

355 likes

2. Ethiopia Buna FC (ኢትዮ ቡና)

475 likes · 55 talking about this

3. *ST.GEORGE FC**

1,068 likes · 41 talking about this

Appendix F

Amharic Interview Excerpts

ፍኖተ ነፃነትን እንዳታትሙ አልተባልንም። ማተሚያ ቤት ስንሄድ ግን ማተሚያ ቤቶች አናትምም ብለዋል። አንድ ቦታ እኔ በአካል የሄድኩበት ቦታ ስንጠይቃቸው “ንግድ ፈቃድ አምጡ አሉን” ”እኛ ነጋዴ አይደለን ንግድ ፈቃድ ከየት እናመጣለን” ስንል ከዛም እሺ ጋዜጣው እንዲታተመልችሁ ከብሮድካስት ኤጀንሲ ይታተምላቸው የሚል ደብዳቤ አምጡ አሉን።¹⁶

አንዱ ማህበራዊ ሚዲያውን ህዝቡ የመረጠው ይህን ጥብቅ ህግ ለመሸሽ ነው። ጥብቅ ህግ ባወጣህ ቁጥር ግን ነገሩን አይደለም የምትቆጣጠረው፣ ሰውን ሌላ አማራጭ እንዲፈልግ ነው የምታደርገው። ኢህአዴግ ራሱ የሚለው ነገር አለ በወቅቱ ነፃ ሚዲያ፣ ነፃ የመደራጀት መብት ስለሌለን ያለን አማራጭ ጫካ መግባት ነው። ምክንያቱም ህጉ ጥብቅ ነው። ድሮ ተፈጥሮ ጫካ ውስጥ የሚገቡ ሰዎች ነበሩ አሁን ደግሞ ፌስቡክ ጫካ፣ ትዊትር ጫካ ውስጥ፣ የብሎክ ጫካ ውስጥ የሚገቡ ሰዎች ነው የምትፈጥረው። interviewee 13

ያኔ 1966 (1974 እ.ኤ.አ) ትግል አደረጉ። ትግል ሲደረግ ደርግ መጣና የማይገዳደሩትነት ሃይል ሲሆንባቸው። ምን አደረጉ ጫካ ገብ አሁን ባለው ሁኔታ ደግሞ ወጣቱ የዚያን አይነት ሜንታሊቲ ስለሌለው ወደ ፌስ ቡክ ነው እየገባ ያለው። Interviewee 12

¹⁶ Taken from the speech of Ato Girma Seyfu, the only opposition parliamentarian and Andinet Party at Washington DC , on 14 April 2013

“ሁሉም አቅም በፈቀደ እንዲንቀሳቀስ ይመከራል። የወጣቶች ሊግም በፌስ ቡክ ላይ ይሰራል የኢህአዴግ ሰፖርት ፎሞችም የየራሳቸውን ይሰራሉ። ሴንትራላይዘድ አይደለም። [ሁሉም] በራሱ መንገድ ነው የሚሄደው ፖርት ፎረም ኢህአዴግ ጠቅላላ እውቅና አለው። በዛ ላይ በመመስረት የራሱን ስራ ይሰራል አጠቃላይ ቅርፁ ከኢህአዴግ ጋር ይመሳሰላል።” interviewee 01

“እንደ መታገያ ሜዳ. . .፣ በዋናነት ፌስቡክን እንደመታገያ ሜዳ መጠቀም አይቻልም ይህ ማለት የማይጠቅም ነገር አለው ማለት አይደለም። የምትጠቀምበት መንገድ አለ። የተለያዩ ሃሳቦች ሊንሸራሸሩ ይችላሉ ማንም የሚፈልገውን አመለካከት ሊያራምድበት ይችላል ስለዚህ በሃሳብን በነፃነት የመግለፅ የመለማመጃ ትንሽ ሜዳ ከማለት ውጭ ሌላ ትርጉም ልትሰጠው አትችልም።” interviewee 02

“እኔ ለፌስቡክ ያላቸው ግምት (አመለካከት) ይመስለኛል። በእኛ ፓርቲዎች ውስጥ ገዢውን ፓርቲ ኢህአዴግን ጨምሮ መሪ ተዋንያኑ ሽማግሌዎች ናቸው። በእነሱ ዘመን ፌስ ቡክ አልነበረም ስለዚህ እነሱ ፌስ ቡክን የወጣት አድርገው ነው የሚመለከቱት።” interviewee 13

በፍርድ ቤቱ ውሳኔ አንስማማም!!!
በትላንትናው ዕለት የፍትህ ጋዜጣን እግድ እንዲያፀድቅ በዓቃቢ ህግ የቀረበለት ፍርድ ቤት ዕግዱን ተቀብሎ አፅድቆታል። ይህን ውሳኔ መቼም ቢሆን ተስማምቶ መቀበሉ በሀሊናችን ያለውን እውነተኛነት መካድ ስለሚሆንበት ተስማምተን አንቀበለውም። በዚህ አይነቱ የአፍና እርምጃ በመደናገጥ የፍትህ ወጥ አቋም እንደማይቀየርም ለፍትህ ቤተሰቦች አረጋግጥላችኋለሁ። (ፍርድ ቤቱ

ጋዜጣዎ የታገደችብትን ምክንያት በደብዳቤ ነገ እንደሚገልፅልን ስለነገረን፣ ደብዳቤው እንደደረሰን እዚሁ እልጥፍላችኋለሁ)

July 21 ሰበር ዜና-

ፍትህ ጋዜጣ እንዳይሰራጭ ታገደች!

በትላ ንትናው ዕለት ለስርጭት መብቃት የነበረባት ፍትህ የጠቅላይ ሚኒስትሩን መታተም ተከትሎ በተፈጠረው የስልጣን ትግል እያሸነፈ በመጣው አክራሪ ሀይል ተስተንጉላ የነበረ ቢሆንም በማግስቱ እንድትታተም ተፈቅዷል ተብሎ ታተመች። ትላንት ከምሽቱ 2 ሰዓት ላይም ሙሉ በሙሉ ታትማም አለቀች። ነገር ግን አንባቢያን እጅ ልትደርስ አልቻለችም። ምክንያቱ ደግሞ (በዛው ኃይል ትዕዛዛ ይመስለኛል) በአቃቤ ህግ ብርሃኑ ወንድም አገኝ «ለሀገር ደህንነት የሚያስጋ ዘገባ በጋዜጣው ላይ መታተሙ መረጃ ስለደረሰን እንዲታገድ ወስነናል» በሚል የተፈረመ የዕግድ ደብዳቤ ማተሚያ ቤቱ እንደደረሰው ገለፀልን። በዚህም ምክንያት በአሁኑ ሰዓት 30 ሺህ የፍትህ ጋዜጣ እትም በብርሃና ሰላም ማተሚያ ቤት ተቆልፎበት ይገኛል፡ ... እንዴት ነው ነገሩ? «ትሻልን ፈትቼ ትብስን አገባሁ» እየሆነ ነው? ይህ ሁኔታ ወደስልጣን እየመጣ ያለው ሀይል የባሰ እንደሆነ ምልክት እያሳየስ ይሆን?

ለማንኛውም መጨረሻውን አይተን የራሳችንን እርምጃ እንወስዳለን።

(ማተሚያ ቤቱ ለጋዜጣው ዝግጅት ክፍል የላከውን ደብዳቤ ከስር ይመልከቱ)



Nitro Ethiopians

Samora the TPLF general is sick. Let us wait for the outcome!

ጄነራል ሳሞራ የኑስ በጠና ታመው ትላንት ምሽት ኢትዮጵያን ለቀቁ

የቀድሞው ጠቅላይ ሚኒስትር መለስ ዜናዊ በምን ሁኔታ ላይ እንደሚገኙ አይታወቅም። ጠቅላይ ሚኒስትሩ ይዘውት የነበረውን የጠቅላይ ጦር አዝዥነትን ሚና በማን ኃላፊነት ላይ ሊወድቅ እንደሚችል ግልጽ አልነበረም። ይህንን ክፍተት ለመሙላት ከጠቅላይ ሚኒስትሩ ቀጥሎ የጦር አዝዥነቱን ሚና ጄነራል ሳሞራ የኑስ ተክቶ ይሰራል፤ ተብሎ ግምት ሲሰጥ ቢቆይም...አሁን ግን ሳሞራ የኑስም በድንገተኛ ህመም ስራቸውን ያቆሙ መሆኑን ለማወቅ ችለናል።



“በደንብ። ሁሉም በራሱ ስም ብቻ አይደለም እየጻፈያለው የተለያዩ አኖረመስ፤ እንደ ብዕር ስም፤ የተለያዩ አካውንቶችና ፈጥሮ በደንብ ሃሳቡን እየገለጸበት ነው። ጋዜጣ ላይ ለመጻፍ የማትችላቸውን ነገሮች እዚህ ላይ ትጽፋለህ።” interviewee 12

“ሞቱ በአገራችን ሚዲያ እስከ ተነገረበት እለት ድረስ በፌስ ቡክ እና የተለያዩ የሶሻል ሚዲያዎች ባሉ ተሳታፊዎች “አልሞትም” “ሞቷል” እና በጠና ተሟል ብለው ማሳመኛ የሚሉትን ሃሳብ እያነሱ በንቃት ሲወያዩ እንደነበር የቅርብ ትዝታ ነው። አንድ አንድትም እንዲየው ድህረ መለስ ትንታኔዎችን ሲሰጡ ግምቶቻቸውን ሲያካፍሉም ነበር። ይህ በእንዲህ እንዳለ የመለስ ሞት በሃገራችን ሚዲያ በአብዛኛው ሰው ባልጠበቀበት ሰዓት ቢገልፅ ውይይት በመለስ ሞት ማዘንን እና አለ ማዘንን መግለጽ ተቀየረ”

“ዋና የዜና አንግሎ የነበረው ጠቅላይ ሚኒስትሩ ከማለፋቸው የተነሳ አንድ ሃዘኑ ነው። መጀመሪያ ህዝቡ የተሰማውን ሃዘን፤ ሁሉም ሰው የተሰማውን ሃዘን ሚመለከት ነው። ሁሉም ሰው ሃ ዘኑን እንዲገልፅ ዕድል እንዲያገኝ ነው። ሁለተኛው በኢትዮጵያ ውስጥ ከቆየው ሲስተም አንፃር የመሪ ሞት ምንድነው ሚያመጣው ተፅእኖ የሚሉ መላ ምቶች ነበሩ ከዛ አንፃር ተረጋጋ የሽግግር ዘመን መሆን እንደሚችል የሚያሳይ ነው። ሶስተኛው ዋናው ፍሬም ተደረገበት በጠቅላይ ሚኒስትሩ የተጀመሩ ነጥቦች አሉ እሳቸው ቢሞቱም ማስቀጠል እንችላለን የሚል ነው።”

“ምን ያህሉ በእንግሊዝኛ አንብቦ ሃሳቡን መግለፅ ይችላል መረዳት ይችላል የሚለው አንድ ነገር ነው።” interviewee 07

“በቋንቋ መጠቀም ቢቻል መልካም ነው” interviewee 02

“... ያንተን ፅሁፍ አዲስ ነገር ላይ በጉጉት ስናነሳ ለነበርን ኢትዮጵያኖች በአማርኛ ብትፀፍልን አይከፋም። ኢትዮጵያዊነታችንንም ባንረሳው መልካም ነው።”

“ዝርዝር ጉዳዮችን ላውቅ አልችልም። ነገር ግን መንግስት ናሽናል ሴኩሮቲውን ማረጋገጥ ሃላፊነት አለበት። የምንኖርበት አለም ውስብስብ ነው። ከሴኩራቲ አኳያ እንደሚታወቀው ፈንዳሜንታል የሆኑ አስተሳሰቦች የሚያራምዱ የተለያዩ አስተሳሰቦች በየትኛውም አቅጣጫ እንደዚሁ አይነት አክራሪ አስተሳሰብ ያላቸው ኮሚኒኬት የሚያደርጉበት ዘመን ነው። ስለዚህ መንግስት እንደዚህ አይነት ቁጥጥር ማድረግ ብዙን አያስደንቅም እኛም ሃገር ብቻ ሳይሆን በሌላውም አለም ይደረጋል።”

interviewee 01

“የታሰሩ ጓደኞች አሉኝ ለምሳሌ . . . አንዱ የቀረበባት ክስ የፌስ ቡክ አካውንቷ ተከፈተ ሲታይ መለስ በቃ ሚል እና ተለያዩ ፖስቶች አሉ እነሱን ፕሪንት አድርገው እንደ ማስረጃ ያቀረቡባት።”

interviewee 12

"በመጀመሪያ ደረጃ ቴሌ በመንግስት መያዝ ክፋቱ ነው። ዋነኛ ክፋቱ በመንግስት መያዙ ሳይሆን መንግስት የማይፈልገውን ነገር መቆለፉ ነው። በመንግስት የተያዘን ነገር ደግሞ ህዝቡ እንዴት እንደሚመለከተው ታውቃለህ። ሲሪየስ ያልሆነ ነገርንም በህዝቡ እንደ አስጠያቂ ነገር ይታያል።”

interviewee 02

«አሉ የሁላችንም ችግር ነው። በኢትዮጵያ ውስጥ የቴሌኮም አገልግሎት አለመኖሩ ነው እንጂ በበቂ ሁኔታ የፌስቡክ ተጠቃሚ ሰዎች ቁጥር የቀነሰው። የቴሌኮም አገልግሎት እንደ ልብ ቢሆን እርግጠኛ ነኝ ወደፊት ማንም የቤት ሰራተኛም ሁሉ በፌስ ቡክ የምቀጠርበት ደረጃ ላይ ትደርሳለህ። interviewee

እኛ ቴሌኮም አገልግሎትን የጥቂቶች ሌግዠር አድርገን አንመለከተውም። ነሰሲቲ ነው። የቴሌኮም እና የሃይል አቅርቦትን እኛ ኮማንዲንግ ሴክተር ብለን ነው ምንጠራቸው። ማስፋፋፊቱን እና ጥራት ማስጠበቁን መንግስት ሃላፊነት ወስዶ ይሰራል። መንግስት ሃላፊነቱን ሲወስድ በትርፍ አይመራም። ለፕብሊክ ሁሉ ለማድረስ ይሰራል። ፕራይቪታይዥድ ቢደረግ በትርፍ ይመራና ያዋጣኛል የሚለው ቦታ ላይ ብቻ ነው ሚሰራው። ይህ ህዝቡን ተጠቃሚ አያደርግም። ከቴሌኮም የሚገኘውንም ትርፍ ለሌላ ልንጠቀመው እንችላለን። ፕራይቪታይዥድ ቢደረግ ይህን ማድረግ አንችልም። በኋላ ከሃገሪቱ ተጨባች ሁኔታ ጋር ታይቶ ሙሉ በሙሉ ፕራይቪታይዥድ ቢደረግ ችግር የለውም። ለህዝቡ ይጠቅማል ያልነውን በሙሉ ፕራይቪታይዥድ እያደረግን ነው። interviewee 01

«ኢንተርኔት አክሲዮን እንደልብ የለም ከዋጋው ውድነት ጀምሮ ኢንተርኔት ፍጥነቱም በጣም ዝግ ያለ ነው ስለሆነ እሱ ላይ የመጠቀም እድሉ የለም። ብዙ ሰው ከተማ አካባቢ ያለው ነው ፊስብ ቡክ እየተጠቀመ ያለው።» interviewee 12

“መሰረታዊ ችግሮች አንድ ገንዘብ፣ ኮምፒውተር ወይም ኢንተርኔት ካፌ እንደ ቅንጦት ነው የሚታየው የኢኮኖሚው ጥያቄ ከፍተኛ ነው። ከእኛ የገቢ ሁኔታ ጋር አብሮ አይሔድም ትልቁ የኢኮኖሚ ችግርም ከገቢያችን አለማደግ ጋር ይያያዛል።” interviewee 02