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Freedom on the Net 2025 - Ethiopia



Key Developments, June 1, 2024 – May 31, 2025

Internet freedom remained restricted in Ethiopia, as the government continued its crackdown on independent online media and civil society organizations. Dozens of journalists have fled the country in recent years due to the risk of abduction or arbitrary detention in retaliation for their online expression.

- High prices continued to limit internet access, particularly after the government devalued the currency in July 2024 and the state-owned Ethio Telecom imposed price increases for mobile internet service in October 2024 (A2).¹
- The authorities restricted internet service in response to conflicts between the federal government and regional militias, increasing the difficulty of delivering humanitarian aid and reporting freely on human rights violations. In July 2024, officials lifted an internet shutdown that had been imposed in most cities in Amhara Region for about one year,² while localized shutdowns were reported in Oromia Region throughout the coverage period (A3).³
- Ethio Telecom sold 10.7 percent of the available shares in its initial public offering to local investors in April 2025; the government had previously sought to sell a partial stake directly to a corporate partner (A4).⁴
- The Authority for Civil Society Organisations suspended several groups during the coverage period, effectively limiting access to online information about human rights issues. The suspensions were lifted only in March 2025, after intervention from the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (B6).⁵
- A court sentenced journalist Ahmed Awga to two years' imprisonment in May 2025, finding him guilty of "propagation of disinformation and public incitement." The case reportedly stemmed from a Facebook post in which Ahmed had been tagged, but which he did not write.⁶ At least 10 other online journalists were arrested or held in pretrial detention during the coverage period, with some enduring inhumane conditions (C3 and C7).⁷

Political Overview

The 2018 election of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed initially set off a transitional period. Abiy pledged to reform Ethiopia's authoritarian state, undertook legislative reforms, held elections, and implemented some liberalization policies. However, Ethiopia remains beset by internal conflicts and intercommunal violence. Abuses by security forces and violations of due process are common, many reformed laws have yet to be implemented meaningfully, and many restrictive laws are still in force. Armed conflicts in the Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray Regions in recent years have caused widespread displacement, and credible allegations of atrocity crimes have emerged.

This report has been abridged for Freedom on the Net 2025 due to [ongoing budget constraints](#). Please consider making a [donation](#) to support future editions of this vital resource.

For additional background information, see last year's [full report](#).

A Obstacles to Access

A1 0-6 pts

Do infrastructural limitations restrict access to the internet or the speed and quality of internet connections?	1 / 6
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A2 0-3 pts

Is access to the internet prohibitively expensive or beyond the reach of certain segments of the population for geographical, social, or other reasons?	1 / 3
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A3 0-6 pts

Does the government exercise technical or legal control over internet infrastructure for the purposes of restricting connectivity?	2 / 6
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Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 because internet shutdowns, while still severe, were less extensive than in the previous coverage period.

A4 0-6 pts

Are there legal, regulatory, or economic obstacles that restrict the diversity of service providers?	2 / 6
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Score Change: The score improved from 1 to 2 because of the diversification of the telecommunications market, as state-owned Ethio Telecom sold a partial stake and Safaricom, the second provider licensed in the country, established a subscriber base.⁸

A5 0-4 pts

Do national regulatory bodies that oversee service providers and digital technology fail to operate in a free, fair, and independent manner?	1 / 4
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B Limits on Content

B1 0-6 pts

Does the state block or filter, or compel service providers to block or filter, internet content, particularly material that is protected by international human rights standards?	4 / 6
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Score Change: The score improved from 3 to 4 because the social media blocks recorded during the previous coverage period were not repeated, though authorities reportedly blocked YouTube in several cities after the current coverage period.[9](#)

B2 0-4 pts

Do state or nonstate actors employ legal, administrative, or other means to force publishers, content hosts, or digital platforms to delete content, particularly material that is protected by international human rights standards?	2 / 4
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B3 0-4 pts

Do restrictions on the internet and digital content lack transparency, proportionality to the stated aims, or an independent appeals process?	0 / 4
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B4 0-4 pts

Do online journalists, commentators, and ordinary users practice self-censorship?	1 / 4
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B5 0-4 pts

Are online sources of information controlled or manipulated by the government or other powerful actors to advance a particular political interest?	1 / 4
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B6 0-3 pts

Are there economic or regulatory constraints that negatively affect users' ability to publish content online?	1 / 3
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B7 0-4 pts

Does the online information landscape lack diversity and reliability?	2 / 4
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B8 0-6 pts

Do conditions impede users' ability to mobilize, form communities, and campaign, particularly on political and social issues?	2 / 6
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C Violations of User Rights

C1 0-6 pts

Do the constitution or other laws fail to protect rights such as freedom of expression, access to information, and press freedom, including on the internet, and are they enforced by a judiciary that lacks independence?	1 / 6
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C2 0-4 pts

Are there laws that assign criminal penalties or civil liability for online activities, particularly those that are protected under international human rights standards?	0 / 4
C3 0-6 pts	
Are individuals penalized for online activities, particularly those that are protected under international human rights standards?	2 / 6
C4 0-4 pts	
Does the government place restrictions on anonymous communication or encryption?	2 / 4
C5 0-6 pts	
Does state surveillance of internet activities infringe on users' right to privacy?	1 / 6
C6 0-6 pts	
Does monitoring and collection of user data by service providers and other technology companies infringe on users' right to privacy?	1 / 6
C7 0-5 pts	
Are individuals subject to extralegal intimidation or physical violence by state authorities or any other actor in relation to their online activities?	1 / 5
C8 0-3 pts	
Are websites, governmental and private entities, service providers, or individual users subject to widespread hacking and other forms of cyberattack?	2 / 3

Footnotes

- 1Munir Shemsu, "Here Are the New Ethio Telecom Prices: What You Need to Know," Shega, October 3, 2024, <https://shega.co/news/here-are-the-new-ethio-telecom-prices-what-you-ne...>; Dawit Endeshaw, "Ethiopia's birr drops 30% as central bank floats currency," Reuters, July 29, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/markets/currencies/ethiopia-shifts-market-based...>
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- 8Paula Gilbert, “Ethiopia's telecoms liberalization makes progress – Omdia,” Connecting Africa, October 21, 2024, <https://www.connectingafrica.com/connectivity/ethiopia-s-telecoms-liber...>; “Historic Milestone Sees Ethio Telecom Unveil 100 Million Shares,” Shega, October 15, 2024, <https://shega.co/news/historic-milestone-sees-ethio-telecom-unveil-100-...>; Dawit Endeshaw, “Ethio Telecoms sells just 10.7% of shares in IPO,” Reuters, April 25, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/ethio-telecoms-sells-just-107-shar...>
- 9Muluken Tekleyohanes, “Ethiopian Government Slows Internet, Restricts YouTube During Historic Online Broadcast,” Ambassador Media, June 7, 2025, <https://ambassadorsmedia.com/local-news/stop-war-peace-ethiopia/>.