

Mekelle University

School of Law

**THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN
TIGRAY**

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DECLARATION

I, Meron Masresha, declare that the thesis entitled the role of media in promoting human right in Tigray Regional State, Ethiopia. All the data I collected from the informants is genuine and the thesis has never been produced before in any other institution. Moreover, all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signature-----

Date -----

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACHPR: African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights

ACRWC: African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

AU: African Union

CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women

CRC: Convention on the Rights of the Child EU European Union

ICCPR: International Convention on Civil and Political Rights

ICESCR: International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

UDHR: Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UN: United Nations

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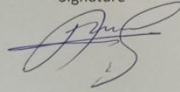
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the role of the media in promoting human rights. Central to the study is an effort to find out why the media decide to include human rights coverage as part of their programs as well as the portrayal of human rights elements in such programs.

The main objective of this paper was to investigate and analyze the role of media in the promotion of human right in Tigray region. Accordingly, two major media organizations- Woyen newspaper and Wurayna Tigrigna magazine- were selected for the study.

Both the interviews and documentary analysis provided data needed to answer the research questions. Findings from the interviews and the documentary reveal that the media do have a role to play in human rights promotion. Media organizations in Tigray are attempting to create awareness on human rights issues. Though they do not have regular columns on human rights agenda, they sometimes go to the extent of investigatory report. Despite these efforts, media organizations are faced with multiple challenges ranging from restrictive laws, lack of capacity in terms of staff and lack of necessary financial resources to do more on human rights.

Accordingly, to achieve better contribution to the human rights situation in Tigray, there must be revisions of some of the laws; the linkage between human rights institutions and the media must be improved; and media should be supported with technical support (capacity building) and financial support.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Background of the Problem

The International Bill of Rights is a body of human rights guarantying human rights through Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequently enacted series of treaties: the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in 1966. These laws mainly state human rights as universal, indivisible, and enforceable. Similarly, the three regional human rights systems have occurred, in Europe, the Americas and Africa. The contents of all the regional laws are not different from the international laws but the regional human rights with particular focus on collective rights.

Media plays an important role in realizing human rights in a state. The contribution of the media has been debated since the 17th Century.¹ In spite of the fact that the media is inclined to sleaze, sensationalism and superficiality, it is deeply understood to oversee and protect the public interest and acts as a bridge between people and a government.²

The issue of human rights reporting is viewed in various ways. The International Council on Human Rights Policy raises questions whether human rights issues are reported well, and judged in terms of traditional reporting standards. Readers, particularly those who are professional journalists and broadcasters, will not be surprised to learn that there is no obvious consensus on the answer to this question. Some said the media do not report human rights issues enough, others that they report in the wrong way or focus on the wrong subjects, and many (especially in Western media centers) felt the record was reasonably good.³

Media is understood to include the preparation and release of all information through various outlets such as the radio, television, print and the Internet. The information transmitted through

¹ Sheila S. Coronel, the Role of the Media in Deepening Democracy, <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan010194.pdf>.

² <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan010194.pdf>.

³ Journalists for Justice, Human rights discourses in Kenya's community media, available at http://www.ichrp.org/files/reports/14/106_report_en.pdf

media by human rights organizations is one of the ways to use media for human rights protection and awareness. The media is then responsible to find out, organize and evaluate the information.

1.2.Statement of the Problem

According to Kumari, the mass media is a way the public opinion is reflected through and is used to protect the people via informing people, strengthening the social cultural-thinking basis and expanding the human rights discourse. They also make public opinion and are components in creating civilization.⁴

The connection between the media and the protection of human rights is very strong. The media plays an indispensable role in the protection of human rights in various ways. However, there are a number of challenges to the media towards the protection of human rights.

Hence, understanding the role of the media in Africa in general, and Ethiopia in particular, requires a deep analysis of the situation. As there are a lot of claims that the media in Ethiopia do not help to improve the situation of human rights, it is necessary to explore if the media really helps improve the situation.

In line with this, it is an important aspect of human rights situation to investigate the roles of the media in Tigray towards the promotion of human rights. Therefore, the thesis intends to find out the roles of the media in general magazines and newspapers in particular with specific focus on the Tigray Regional State.

1.3.Objective of the Thesis

The main objective of the thesis is to investigate the role of the media in Tigray in the promotion of human rights.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- Examine the conceptual and theoretical framework set up for the media for its role in the promotion of international human rights law;
- Identify the federal and Tigray laws and policies in relation to media governance and its task to promote human rights; and

⁴ Umesh Kumari (2016) Role of Mass Media in Promoting Human Rights, International Educational Journal.

- Analyze the contributions of the Tigray media in the promotion of human rights and identify relevant challenges.

1.4. Research Questions

The thesis raises the following questions to be answered.

- What are the contributions of media in the promotion of human rights?
- What are the challenges of the media in the promotion of human rights?
- How far freedom of the press protects the media for uncovering most human right violations in Ethiopia?
- What are the practical contributions of the media so far in advancing the promotion of human rights in Tigray?

1.5. Research Methodology

This thesis has employed the following methodologies to gather data on the role of Tigray Media in line of promoting human rights. First, it reviewed various studies on the role of media and human rights. An attempt is made to organize conceptual, legal and institutional framework, in order to determine the role and contribution of the media in the enforcement, promotion and protection of international human rights law.

Second, there was a document analysis: international human rights instruments, resolutions, different general comments, recommendations, guidelines and action plans related to the protection, promotion and enforcement of international human rights law are assessed. Domestic policies, legislations, directives and guidelines are also used to evaluate the adequacy and effectiveness of the existing environment for the formation and free operation of the media in the protection, promotion and enforcement of international human rights law.

Third, questionnaires were distributed to and interviews were conducted with professionals in the media organizations and others in both governmental and non-governmental to determine their freedom and opportunities to promote human rights law in Tigray.

1.6. Scope of the thesis

Due to lack of resource and time, the research focused only on magazines and newspapers and the professionals around these media.

1.7. Significance of the thesis

The findings demonstrate the role of the media in the promotion, protection and enforcement of human rights in Tigray. The Regional Government will be able to use this opportunity to understand the situation of human rights in the region. It will also help other researchers to deepen the study using this research as a springboard. The findings will assist the government, media organizations and other concerned bodies to take corrective measures in encouraging and strengthening the media to play effective role in the promotion rights in Ethiopia in general and Tigray in particular.

1.8. Limitations of the thesis

The time and financial constraints have forced the author to limit the scope of this thesis to analysis of the print media. So, the author recognizes that though its findings indicate the situation in certain cases, it should be supported by other research works to reach conclusions regarding the whole media and human rights situation in Tigray.

1.9. Organization of the thesis

In its attempt to show the role of media in the protection, promotion and enforcement of human rights in Tigray, the thesis is organized in five chapters. The first chapter introduces the background of the problem, objective of the study, research methodology, and scope of the study, significance of the study and limitation of the study. The second chapter gives a brief explanation on the theoretical, normative framework and institutional set up for the promotion of international human rights law. In addition, this chapter assesses the power, role and responsibilities of the media to engage actively in the promotion of human rights. In view of this, the chapter addresses the main challenges and constraints of the media in the promotion, protection and enforcement of international human rights law.

Chapter three attempts to overview the background history of the media in Ethiopia in relation to human rights. Briefly, the role and contribution of the media in the promotion of human rights in the past was evaluated. In addition, this chapter tries to investigate the legal and policy environment for the media to operate and engage actively in the promotion, protection and enforcement of human rights in Ethiopia.

Chapter four evaluated the practical activities and engagements of the media in the promotion of human rights in Ethiopia. This was assessed in light of the media activity, coverage and the relationship of the media with national human rights organizations. Finally, this chapter tries to identify the legal, policy and institutional gaps and practical challenges for the media in its role in the promotion of human rights.

The last chapter, chapter five, as a way of conclusion, forwards certain measures to be taken in alleviating the problems related to the activities of media and its roles in the promotion of human rights in Ethiopia.

Chapter Two: The Concept of Human Rights and Promotion of Human Rights

2.1. The Notion of human rights

The concept of human rights has arisen from that of natural rights of all humans. The belief that every person by virtue of his humanity is entitled to certain natural rights has been a recurring theme throughout the history of mankind. It can be traced back thousands of years from the Vedas to the Hammurabi Code to the Magna Carta, the French Declaration of Human Rights, and the American Bill of Rights.⁵

When representatives of four major powers met in 1944 at Dumbarton Oaks, in Washington DC, the two world wars, which were fought in less than 30 years, were very much in fresh memory.⁶ Shocked by what had happened during these wars, especially World War II, the leaders felt responsible to make sure there will not be a third world war. The result was a plan to establish the United Nations. The UN was a vision for the leaders to make the world a peaceful and secured place for everyone.⁷ The Charter of United Nations, which came into force in October 1945, begins with the determination of the people of member nations to save the succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to reaffirm their faith in the fundamental human rights and the dignity of human being.

World conference of Human Rights held in 1993 marked a crucial stage in United Nation's policy in the field of human rights. The Vienna Declaration encouraged the United Nations to pursue and strengthen its activities to make respect for human rights a priority objective on the same level as development and democracy and to work for the concurrent achievements of these three objectives.

The preamble reference of human rights under the UN Charter was followed up by six additional references throughout the charter. Further, under Article 68 of the Charter, the Economic and

⁵ Germander Alfredsson & Jonas Grimheden, *International Human Rights Monitoring Mechanisms* (2001 Martinus Nijhoff Publishers) p15.

⁶ James W. Nickel, *Making Sense of Human Rights*, (2nd ed., Blackwell Publishing, 2007) p17.

⁷ Ibid.

Social Council was required to set up a commission in the human rights area. The outcome was the establishment of a Commission on Human Rights.

The Commission developed a document which it named the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The declaration has four pillars: dignity, liberty, equality and brotherhood, according to which its 27 substantive provisions were grouped.⁸ With the objective of establishing mechanisms for enforcing the UDHR, the UN Commission on Human Rights proceeded to draft two treaties: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). These two instruments were open for signature in 1966, waiting for almost 10 years to receive number of ratification or accession required for their entry into force.⁹

Together with the Charter of the UN provisions on human rights and UDHR the two Covenants form the International Bill of Rights.

In addition to the International Bill of Rights- the UDHR and the two covenants- UN promulgated different multilateral human rights instruments dealing with problems such as genocide, racial discrimination, and discrimination against women, religious intolerance, and the rights persons with disabilities, freedom from torture, and the rights of the child.

2.2.The Concept of Human Rights Promotion

The promotion of human rights can be defined as education, training and information aiming at building a universal culture of human rights through the sharing of knowledge, imparting of skills and molding of attitudes directed to.¹⁰ Promotion of human rights makes an essential contribution to the prevention of abuses and conflict and helps create a society in which all persons are valued and respected just because of their humanity.¹¹

The obligation to promote and ensure the enjoyment of human rights is the prime responsibility of States, thereby conferring on states responsibility for the human rights of individuals.¹² Many

⁸ Michelin R. Ishay, *The History of Human Rights* (2008, University of California Press), p3.

⁹ *Id.*, p17.

¹⁰ *Human Rights Promotion & Protection: Definition & Conceptual Issues*, available at [Peace Building Initiative - Human Rights Promotion & Protection](#) (Last visited on July 2, 2010).

¹¹ Paul Gordon Lauren, *The Evolution of Human Rights*, (2003, University of Pennsylvania Press), p255.

¹² *Ibid.*

human rights are owed by States to all people within their territories. Basically, under international human rights law, states have specific obligations to respect, protect, and fulfill the rights contained in the different human rights treaties.¹³ Failure to perform these obligations constitutes a violation of such rights.

Primarily, states are expected to create a legal and policy environment for those who are actively engaged in human rights advocacy and awareness creation. These include the media which should be free from illegitimate interference and supported with enabling environment to promote human rights.¹⁴

Indeed, an essential prerequisite for the realization of human rights is popular awareness and support for the universally accepted human rights norms and standards by each and every individual.¹⁵ Therefore, promoting human rights at a national level is the most effective option to the full realization of international human rights law.

2.3. Normative Framework of the Promotion of Freedom of Expression and Media

2.3.1. UDHR

Article 1 of the Declaration provides the inspirational temperament of the instrument by stating that “All human beings are born free and equal. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in the spirit of brotherhood.” This pioneering article is a grand reflection for what the Declaration stands for.

Generally, UDHR aims to, among others, the promotion of freedom of expression for the common people in the world. However, UDHR fails to provide the right to communication, which is a vital means of informing people about human rights, as a specific and independent right. Nonetheless, in the absence of such a specific right there is still an existing framework where this right can be situated and where it is inherently grounded.¹⁶ It would perfectly settle under freedom of opinion, freedom of expression and more importantly the rights to seek receive and impart information.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ An overview of insider and outsider actors involved in human rights, available at [Peace Building Initiative - Actors & Activities](#) (Last visited on July 13, 2017).

¹⁵ Abdurrahman P Vijapur and Kumar Suresh (ed.), *Perspectives on Human Rights*, (1999, MANAK Publications), p281.

¹⁶ Ishay, *supra* note 8, p96.

Under Article 19 of UDHR, it is provided the right of everyone to freedom of opinion and expression. This right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. Key elements of these rights are the right to diverse, pluralistic media and equitable access to the means of communication as well as the media.¹⁷

2.3.2. ICCPR

The preambles of both Covenants emphasize that the full realization of human rights is possible only if conditions are created whereby everyone will enjoy human rights. In order to create this conditions, the obligations of states under the Charter of the UN to promote universal respect for and observance of human rights and the duties of individuals to other individuals and to the community to strive for the promotion and observance of the rights is recognized.

Article 19 of ICCPR, states that everyone is entitled to hold opinions without interference and to freedom of expression which includes freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, or through any other media of his choice. But there is an exception to this Article on 19 (3) (a and b) when providing by law and are necessary of the rights and reputation of other and for the protection of national security or of public order or of public health or morals.

2.3.3. Regional Human Rights Instruments

The preamble of African Charter on Human and Peoples' Right (Banjul Charter) provides that receiving information is a right. Under Article 9, every individual have the right to receive information. It also adds that every individual shall have freedom of expression and opinions. The Charter, unlike its international counter parts, makes the duty to promote human rights a specific obligation. Under Article 25, it is provided that state parties have the duty to promote and ensure through teaching, education and publication, the respect of the rights and freedoms contained in the Charter and to see to it that these freedoms and rights as well as corresponding obligations and duties are understood.

Freedom of expression is also protected under European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Article 10 of the Convention guarantees the right of

¹⁷ Id, p97.

everyone to freedom of expression. This right includes freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers.

American Convention on Human Rights also protects freedom of expression and freedom of press. It guarantees the rights to receive and impart information. Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression was created by Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in 1997. The mandate of the Special Rapporteur includes the collection of information, the preparation of annual and thematic reports and promotional activities.

2.4.The Power, Role and Responsibility of Media in the Promotion of Human Rights

2.4.1. The Power of Media

Media is an all-encompassing term referring to the presentation and transmission of Information by a multiplicity of outlets (radio, television, print and the internet).¹⁸ In contemporary world, the media is the most important source of information about everything including human rights. This is because, for most people television, radio and newspapers are their only source of information.¹⁹

- *The media are generators and source of information:* under such rubrics reporters gather, process and present most of the information we receive about everything including human rights;
- *Media are the carriers of information generated by human rights organizations (NGOs, national human right commissions, Ombudsman, treaty bodies etc):* they are the most powerful gatekeepers between these organizations and the wider public.

2.4.2. The Role and Responsibility of Media in the Promotion of Human Rights

The media, throughout its history, has paid its close attention to war and internal armed conflict. With the concept of human rights more familiar, the media has found it interesting to investigate and reveal violation of human rights Media playing its role as the agent of information shares

¹⁸ Elizabeth Heger Boyle and Andrea Hoeschen, 'Theorizing the Form of Media Coverage over Time', *The Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No. 4, (2001, Blackwell Publishing), p522.

¹⁹ Melisande Middleton, *Social Responsibility in the Media*, Center for International Media Ethics CIME (2009, Oxford University PCMLP), p 2. 26

and that actually raises the level of awareness on issues which impact individuals and their role in society.

The question that occurs repeatedly is if human rights are news in their own terms or whether they are news only when they are associated with other news. Media professionals always claim they do not have inherent obligation to prioritize or to privilege human rights issues over others. The question for them is always, whether or not human rights issues are newsworthy that will interest their audiences.²⁰

Though, the media is always digging human right violations and covering activities in relation to human rights, this does not lead to the conclusion that media have a legal obligation to cover and report or promote human rights to the public. This is because, international human rights law places all the legal duties on states and creates few or no private duties.

However, human rights practice has shown that media should inform and educate the people about their rights and suggest ways and means by which they can defend violations and thus empowering them to protect their rights.

2.4.3. Constraints on the Media Role in the Promotion of Human Rights

Lack of awareness about human rights by journalists, is one of the major challenges for the effort to promote human rights. Media is considered to be less sensitive on specific human rights and, as a result, missing stories or dimensions of stories.²¹ Especially, economic, social and cultural rights, which are less visible and slow process by nature, are largely underreported because the media still understand human rights synonyms with civil and political rights.²² The importance of economic, social and cultural rights, including the international economy, poverty, inequality and social and economic discrimination is relatively ignored.²³

The most challenging obstacle to the media freedom is the failure of governments to recognize the role played by independent journalism in the creation, nourishment and development of

²⁰ Charles Beitz (2011) *the Idea of Human Rights*, OUP, p20.

²¹ *Id*, pp21-22.

²² *Ibid*.

²³ International Federation of Journalists, *The role of Media in Promotion of Human Rights and Democratic Development in Africa*, (1999, Brussels), p17.

democracy and human rights.²⁴ Many journalists, have been arrested, prosecuted or condemned to heavy fines or prison terms as a result of their effort to contribute to the promotion of human rights.

²⁴ Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa/HRLHA, Report on Press Freedom Violations in Ethiopia to be submitted to the process of Universal Periodic Review of Ethiopia's Human Rights Record, December 2009. Geneva, Switzerland.

Chapter Three: The Legal and Policy Environment of the Media for the Promotion of Human Rights in Tigray region

3.1. The FDRE Constitution

When the EPRDF-led government came to power in 1991, it promised, among other things, to establish a multiparty political system with a free press, to hold free and democratic elections, to honor and protect human rights, and to promote the rule of law based on the equality of all peoples in the country.²⁵ This promise was followed by the constitutional provision which guarantees freedom of expression, freedom of the press and the right of the public to get information. The concept of free press and freedom of expression was also guaranteed the 1992 Press Proclamation which later repealed by Freedom of Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation in 2008.

Article 29 of the 1995 FDRE Constitution protects freedom of expression without interference including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kind regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art or through any media of one's choice.²⁶

It provides the right of the media to institutional independence and legal protection to enable the accommodation of different ideas necessary to a democratic society. Furthermore, the Constitution takes all international agreements ratified by Ethiopia to be integral part of the law of the land.²⁷ This article gives Ethiopian an assurance to exercise their right of international law.

However, despite the guarantees on freedom of expression and access to information as inalienable human rights, the government of Ethiopia has been criticized for Compromising these rights. Subsidiary laws on the mass media and freedom of information have been criticized as restrictive and abusive especially to the private media.

It recognizes the right of media to collect and distribute information including of a critical nature and realizes that an independent mass media that serves as a public forum for uninhabited

²⁵ Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa/HRLHA, Report on Press Freedom Violations in Ethiopia to be submitted to the process of Universal Periodic Review of Ethiopia's Human Rights Record, December 2009. Geneva, Switzerland.

²⁶ FDRE Constitution, Article 29 (2).

²⁷ Id, Article 9(4).

democratic dialogue that thrives on a viable freedom of information and ideas among citizens by enabling them to exercise their right to seek, receive and impart information and opinions freely.²⁸

The Proclamation not only ensures freedom of the mass media but also the right of the people to get access to information. As the right to get information is a widely recognized human right, the Proclamation states that one of its objectives is to:²⁹

- Give effect to the right of citizens to access, impart and receive information held by public bodies,
- To establish mechanisms and procedures to give effect to that right in a manner which enables persons to obtain information as quickly, inexpensively and effortlessly as is reasonable possible, and to encourage and promote public participation public empowerment,
- To foster a culture of transparency, accountability and efficiency in the function of public bodies and to encourage and promote good governance.

Accordingly, the Proclamation affirms the right of all persons to seek, obtain and communicate any information held by public bodies except as expressly provided by the Proclamation.³⁰

The public, unless given the information on the adoption or the making of laws, will not be able to know about human rights let alone to use them in case violations occur. Therefore, the right to access to information held by public officials includes the right to get information about human rights. Regardless of the guarantees provided, the Proclamation has controversial provisions that are considered by some as contrary to its own objective. The argument is that the limitations on the right to information and freedom of expression are the reason for the media disinclination to engage actively in human rights activities which in most cases require communication with government authorities.³¹

²⁸ Preamble of Freedom of Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation No. 590/2008.

²⁹ Id, Article 11(1, 2 and 3).

³⁰ Id, Article 12(1).

³¹ Kebede, Tizita (2008) Ethiopia: Independent Media Professionals Deplore New Press Law, DAILY MONITOR available at [Ethiopia: Independent Media Professionals Deplore New Press Law - allAfrica.com](http://www.allAfrica.com) (Accessed on September 23/2018).

The proclamation is criticized, among other things for discouraging, especially the private media from engaging actively in several topics including human rights. For example, Article 43(7) of the statute provides that defamation and false accusation against constitutionally mandated legislators, executives and judiciaries will be prosecutable “even if the person against whom they were committed chooses not to press charge”. The government claims that this provision would provide more responsible media.

The private media frightened to be accurate about the abuse of human right due to the government and its official of prosecution for any comment the private media they will give.

Without freedom to comment on these organs of government, the media will not be in a position to engage actively in the promotion of human rights and play its watchdog role by offering complete and accurate information to the public.

The Proclamation is also criticized for imposing excessive fines for minor violations of the provisions. For instance, the fine for defamation can reach up to 100,000 Ethiopian Birr. The magnitude of this fine can be understood when compared with the fines for other serious criminal acts and human rights violations like rape and child labor abuse.³²

Registration is also another challenge for the media to engage actively and contribute to the development of press freedom. The press law grants a power of licensing and registration to the Ministry of Information (MoI).³³

The licensing regime established by the Proclamation creates, not just a link between the two but a relationship in which the media cannot operate without the approval of the government. Under such situation, the press cannot afford to question the actions of the government. The likely result of this fear of retribution is that journalists cannot or will not speak out when the government tries to pass additional repressive laws.

3.2.National human right action plans I and II

³² Tracy J. Ross, ‘A Test of Democracy: Ethiopia’s Mass Media and Freedom of Information Proclamation’, *Penn State Law Review*, vol.114 No 3 (2007), p1064.

³³ *Id.*, p1063.

The concept of National Human Rights Action Plan was first developed as part of the second world conference on Human Rights held in Vienna, in 1993 which culminated in the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action. This document was later endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly and recommends in Part 11, Paragraph 71 that each state shall consider the desirability of drawing up a national plan Action Plan identifying steps whereby that State would improve the promotion and protection of rights.³⁴

The preparation of the document assumed the political commitment to draw policies and programs, and effective budgetary allocation to advance the promotion and respect of human rights, to promote human rights education and trainings, to develop independent judiciary system, to ascertain rule of law, and particularly to provide educational, health, housing and social services.³⁵

“When the NHRAP I came into being in 2013 mainly aiming at coordinating the activities of relevant governmental and non-governmental organs so as to improve the implementation of human and democratic rights guaranteed in the Constitution, The plan, specifically, intended to “indicate the strategic guidelines to promote human and democratic rights in the country,” set forth “comprehensive, structured and sustainable” means “to respect and protect” human rights, raise public awareness and designate “strategies on how the government could work in collaboration with NGOs.”

The main reason for the preparation of human rights Action Plan is to ensure the full implementation of fundamental and democratic rights guaranteed under the Constitution the primary beneficiaries being the Ethiopian people.

To design and implement a strategy that reinforce the respect and protection of human rights enables nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia to be a sustainable beneficiary. The preparation and implementation of human rights Action Plan plays an internationally recognized role to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights at a national level in a structured and comprehensive manner.

³⁴ Ethiopia launches 2nd Human Rights Action Plan (2017), available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-launches-2nd-human-rights-action-plan>.

³⁵ Lidetu Yimer, Analysis of UPR recommendation on National Human Rights Institutions: Ethiopia, available at (7) [Analysis of UPR recommendation on National Human Right Institutions: Ethiopia | Lidetu Yimer - Academia.edu](#).

It should be noted that the Action Plan is to be executed by the government organs along with the relevant development partners, civil society associations and other stakeholders, as important part of the five years Growth and Transformation Plan.

The second national human rights action plan of Ethiopia which endeavors to better promote and protect human rights was launched on April 26 in the presence of high government officials. The action plan that runs until 2019 was approved by the House of the Peoples' Representatives in December 2016. It includes detailed directions which will contribute to undertake human rights centered development activities and strengthen human rights institutions.³⁶ The action plan will help the government to prepare new legal frameworks and revise exiting laws to ensure human rights.

Right of Thought, Opinion and Expression

The FDRE Constitution provides under Article 29 that everyone has the right to hold opinion without interference. Everyone also has the right to freedom of expression, and this shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any media of his/her choice. The Constitution guarantees freedom of the press and other mass media and prohibits any form of censorship. It further protects access to information of public interest and assures freedom of artistic creativity. The Constitution states that any propaganda for war as well as the public expression of opinion intended to injure human dignity shall be prohibited. It further States that legal limitations can be laid down in order to protect the well-being of the youth and the honor and reputation of individuals.

There has been institutional measure in order to protect the constitutionally enshrined right of thought, opinion and expression, the government has established Ethiopian broadcast authority and office of government communication affairs.

Government has taken various administrative measures to ensure effective fulfillment of citizens 'Constitutional right of thought, opinion and expression, and freedom of information; to create

³⁶ Ethiopia: A new human rights action plan as country plunges in opposite direction (2016), available at <http://addisstandard.com/ethiopia-new-human-rights-action-plan-country-plunges-opposite-direction>.

multi-faceted mass media capable to contribute to the development process; to internalize government transparency and accountability; and to advance building of democracy.

The Plan further indicates the need to diversify the language of the media and provide the public with current and credible information.³⁷ Concerning the broadcasting services, the licensing service has been widened and facilitated. Diverse domestic and foreign program broadcasters obtain licenses easily as soon as they are proven capable and competent. Further, broadcasting services wishing to broaden their wave range obtain appropriate licenses. In order to expand the citizens' access to mass media, a system has been set in place that provides news, educational programs and entertainment programs by modern means.

Related to the right of thought, opinion and expression, the media have the right, without any form of censorship, to gather, receive and impart news or information, criticize ideas and record public opinion via different means. In order to enable them to make proper use of this right to provide current and correct information to the public, training courses and awareness creation workshops have been provided to enhance the competence and expertise of professionals.³⁸

With respect to ensuring the constitutional right of citizens to freedom of information, anyone who wishes to obtain information from any government institution can do so, without explaining the purpose, in the form he wishes by paying a specified service charge. If the person does not have the means to pay, the information will be provided freely. Should the information be available in the language of the person who requests, it shall be given as it is? However, if the information is available in a language other than that of the request, it will still be provided in its original form. Details of information under limitation are incorporated in the law. If a person is denied access to information not prohibited by law, the person can appeal to the chief executive of the institution, to the ombudsman and, as final recourse to court of law. Such established systems have the dual benefits of ensuring respect to the right to freedom of information; and to ensure transparency, accountability and productivity of government and the prevalence of good governance.

³⁷ National Human Rights Action Plan (2020), available at [National Human Rights Action Plan \(English\) \(abyssinialaw.com\)](http://abyssinialaw.com).

³⁸ Id, p54.

Full respect, effective protection and fulfillment of the right to freedom of thought, opinion and expression can be ascertained if the boundaries of limitations can be clearly defined. Therefore, the right does not include any propaganda for war, and expression of opinion intended to injure human dignity and reputation.

The problem and challenge for the realization of those rights are delay in finalizing the preparation laws and system required for the proper implementation of the proclamation for the freedom of mass media and access to information, the fact that truthfulness of a statement is not a ground to be free from crime of defamation. In addition, the gap in mass media accessibility for people with disabilities and though many have been done, a gap still exists regarding access to information sources, like TV and radio, and quality of internet services.

Plans are supplementary laws and procedures needed for the implementation of Proclamation on Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information would be adopted. not only this but also strengthening and expansion work regarding the area of coverage, quality and quantity of services of mass media will continue. Simultaneously, community radio broadcasting stations will be encouraged to expand and supporting conditions will be created for them by Broadcasting Authority, Office of Government Communication Affairs.

Diverse and wide-range trainings will be arranged and provided to the human resources of all Federal and Regional mass media organizations, at all levels from leadership, down the scale, to enhance their work, competence and to develop their expertise and capability to use and apply modern media applications. Furthermore, experience sharing forums will be arranged by Broadcasting Authority and Office of Government Communication Affairs.³⁹

On monitoring and evaluation the leading institution will be the office of the government communication affairs.⁴⁰ The Office of Government Communication Affairs, Regional States and City Administrations Communication Office are the primary stakeholders to respect and protect the Right of Thought, Opinion and Expression. They are responsible with the following authorities, jointly and severally, to monitor and evaluate implementation of the right Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Education; Federal and Regional State Supreme Courts; Institute of

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Id, p59.

Ombudsman; Ethiopian Human Rights Commission; Council of Ministers; House of Peoples ‘Representatives; Regional States Councils].

3.3. Anti-terrorism Proclamation

The media considers terrorism and terrorist activities newsworthy, terrorist try to take advantage of the media coverage which they couldn’t afford otherwise and governments utilize the media to condemn terrorist activities and promote anti-terrorism attitude.⁴¹

In order to fight terrorism, Ethiopia proclaimed and Anti-Terrorism Proclamation in 2009. The Proclamation was necessary because, as terrorism is comparatively a recent concern, there was lack of adequate legislations.⁴²

However, the Proclamation is criticized for several reasons. First of all, the definition given to terrorism by the proclamation is considered to be broad.⁴³

The punishment for committing terrorist acts, even for minor violation, is rigorous imprisonment from 15 years to life or with death.⁴⁴ The criticism also goes to the extended power given to the police including powers of arrest and detention and to modifying trial procedures and evidentiary rules.

In addition, the Proclamation has its own stringent effect on freedom of speech, opinion and expression. It’s a well-known fact that, in other countries, counterterrorism laws contain provisions criminalizing speech that incites or supports terrorism. However, important international standards on freedom of speech require that such restrictions be limited to speech that directly incites-or is likely to result in-an imminent crime.⁴⁵

⁴¹ *Terrorism and the Media*, Deliverable 6, Work package 4, 2008, available at [Terrorism and the media: a handbook for journalists - UNESCO Digital Library](#) (Last visited on September 21/2018).

⁴² Preamble of Anti-Terrorism Proclamation, No.652/2009.

⁴³ Id, art 3 defines terrorist acts as whosoever or a group intending to advance a political or ideological cause by coercing the government, intimidating the public or section of public, or destabilizing or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional or, economic or social institutions of the country: causes a person death or serious bodily injury, crates serious risks to the safety or health of the public or section of the public, commits kidnapping or hostage taking, causes damage to natural resource environment, historical or cultural heritage, endangers, seizes or puts under control, causes serious interference or disruption of nay public service or threatens to commit any of the acts stipulated above.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch (2009) Analysis of Ethiopia’s Draft Anti-Terrorism Law, available at [Analysis of Ethiopia’s Draft Anti-Terrorism Law | Human Rights Watch \(hrw.org\)](#) (Last visited on September 21, 2018).

The Proclamation does not go in line with this standard. It punishes whosoever publishes or causes the publication of a statement that is likely to be understood by some or all of the public to whom it is published as a direct or indirect encouragement or other inducement to the commission or preparation or instigation of an act of terrorism.⁴⁶

It is difficult for the media to predetermine how their publication or broadcast will be understood or interpreted by their spectators or the government; they are in a great terror of writing or publishing articles that criticizes the country's political, constitutional, economic or social institutions.

Human right related issues can give an impression of coercing the government or intimidating the public to question fundamental political, constitutional institutions of the country. Considering the rigorous imprisonment provided from 10 to 20 years of imprisonment,

The media is not willing to take such risk and as a solution they avoid any controversial matters from their contents.⁴⁷

This proclamation creates tough and scary legal environment for the media. The seriousness of the punishment and the discretion given to the court simply scares off the media from engaging itself actively in critical and somehow risky matters like revealing violations and promoting of human rights. This will affect not only the freedom of the press but also the right of the public to get accurate and timely information about human rights.

⁴⁶ Anti-Terrorism Proclamation No. 652/2009, Article 6.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Chapter Four: the Role of the Media in the Promotion of Human Rights in Tigray

4.1. Contributions of the print and broadcast media in the promotion of human rights in Tigray

This chapter discusses the role and activities of selected media organizations in the promotion of human rights. For this purpose, two print media organizations namely, Woyen Gazette and Wurayna Tigrigna magazine. The chapter endeavors to assess the support provided to the efforts of the regional government in the enforcement, protection and promotion of human rights and the necessary check on it. It also examines the relationship between the media and regional human rights institutions whose objectives comprise advocating human rights. The challenges faced by the media in their effort to the promotion of human rights in the country are also identified.

4.1.1. General background of the selected media institutions

Woyen Gazette is a weekly private newspaper established in 1968 in Mekelle with a mission of creating a culture of free and independent dialogue among the people on issues related to politics, society, culture and democracy.⁴⁸ It is published twice a week. It has a publication of 65,000-70,000 copies per issue on average.⁴⁹ Half of the publication is distributed in Mekelle and the remaining is circulated to other regional cities.

The Wurayna magazine is also one of the broadsheets which have a status of being reliable and readable magazine in the region.⁵⁰ The magazine is printed once a month. It publishes around 35,000 copies on average for each issue. 70% of these copies are sold in Mekelle while the rest are distributed in the other major cities of the region.⁵¹

4.1.2. Incorporation of human rights under editorial policies of the media institutions

Editorial policy is the main component of any media institution. It is a document that states the mission and vision of a given media and provides the journalists with guidance on how and what

⁴⁸ Interview with Lt. General Tsadkan Gebretensae, Editor in Chief of Woyen Gazetta, November 12, 2018.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

to select as a content of their coverage. If one reads an editorial policy of a certain media institution, it does not take much effort to understand its positions and convictions on several matters including human rights.

Both the media institutions covered under this study have editorial policies which, to a certain extent require and guide journalists to work on human rights and related matters. We could also find the indirect inclusion of the concept of human rights under purposes of print media organization underlined in the policy. The purposes are:

- Serving the public: the policy provides that the information broadcasted by the media has to educate the rights and freedoms of the society, build good character and respect among the society and reveal maladministration and corruption. This purpose is recognition of the importance of incorporating national and international human rights in the contents. As a primary purpose, the policy requires the content to be educative of the rights and freedoms of citizens and build good character and respect which can be interpreted as a stand taken by the policy on the importance of promoting human rights through the media.
- Integrity: the policy recognizes the rights of the public to get accurate and timely information. Accordingly, it states, as one of the obligations of journalists working for government owned media organizations, to provide a correct and evidence-based information to the society.
- Respect: information that violate the human dignity, moral, family, personal liberty, group right, women and children rights and freedom on religion, ethnicity, language are excluded from the content of government owned media organizations.

This imposes not only a responsibility of promoting the rights of citizens but also respecting human rights while performing their regular activities.

4.2. Programs in collaboration with regional human rights institutions

The existing human rights system of protection, promotion and enforcement of international human rights law, to the large extent, lies on the hands of the state and its institution and the different regional and international intergovernmental monitoring organs. Especially in a country where space for charities and societies to involve in human rights advocacy is restricted by law,

the state assumes enormous responsibility to promote human rights by all means available. Regional human rights institutions, in this regard, have a significant role in the enforcement, protection and promotion of human rights. The Regional Human Rights Commission has a partnership with the media with the intention of advocating human right to the general public. This partnership assists the activities of the media with regard to human rights.

4.2.1. The regional branch of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission

HPR, per the power given to it by the Constitution established the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission.⁵² The objective of the Commission is to educate the public to be aware of human rights and make sure that human rights are protected, respected and fully enforced as well as to have the necessary measure taken where they are found to have been violated.⁵³

In order to achieve this objective, the Commission has been given several powers including to educate the public using the mass media and other means, with a view to enhancing its tradition of respect for, and demand for enforcement of rights up on acquiring sufficient awareness regarding human rights.⁵⁴ In addition, the Commission has a power and a duty to ensure the enforcement and respect national and international of human rights law in the country.⁵⁵ These powers enhance the Commission to use the media for the purpose of circulating information about human rights to the society and fulfill its responsibility as a national advocate of human rights.

The Commission also directs the government, its officials and citizens, to ensure that laws, regulations and directives as well as government decisions and orders do not contravene the human rights of citizens guaranteed by the constitution, undertakes investigation- up on compliant or its own initiation- in respect of human rights violations, makes recommendations for the revision of existing laws, enactment of new laws and formulation of policies, forwards its

⁵² Ethiopian Human Rights Commission Establishment Proclamation No. 210/2000.

⁵³ Id, Article 5.

⁵⁴ Id, Article 6(3).

⁵⁵ Id, Article 6 (1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7) The commission has a power to ensure that human rights and fundamental freedoms provided under the constitution are respected and enforced by every organ of the government, its officials and citizens, to ensure that laws, regulations and directives as well as government decisions and orders do not contravene the human rights of citizens guaranteed by the constitution, , Undertake investigation, up on compliant or its own initiation, in respect of human rights violations, Make recommendations for the revision of existing laws, enactment of new laws and formulation of policies, , Forward its opinion on human rights reports to be submitted to international.

opinion on human rights reports to be submitted to international organs and translate in to local vernaculars, international human rights instruments adopted by Ethiopia.

The Commission has a conviction that public awareness is a crucial means to the realization of the enforcement, protection and promotion of human rights. The Commission bears in mind that it is only when people are informed and be acquainted with their rights that they can actually defend violations.⁵⁶

As a means of realizing this conviction, the Commission develops close working relationship with media organizations. The Commission gave several trainings to journalists on human rights and their institutional apparatus as well as the means of protection and addressing violations. This is from the estimation that it is through media that the public can be reached at large and awareness creation has to start from the journalists.⁵⁷ The institution uses Radio Woyane and have air time.⁵⁸ These media organizations are used by the Commission to publish or broadcast the investigative findings and to circulate information about the means of protections in case of violations.

In addition, the Institution organizes media forums and workshops which open discussion between media professionals, the public and concerned organs on topics related to good governance.⁵⁹

4.3. Evaluation of media engagement in the promotion of human rights in Tigray

4.3.1. Focus on specific human rights and the rights of vulnerable groups

4.3.1.1. Coverage of specific human rights

Media, at the international level, is often criticized for underreporting certain specific human rights, especially socio-economic and cultural rights. As already discussed in chapter two of this study, by not paying enough attention to these rights, mainly in countries where such rights are not well recognized the media fail to spot stories or dimensions of stories.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Interview with Saba, Regional Human Rights Commissioner, November 14, 2018.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

For this, the nature of economic, social and cultural rights has their own contributions. These rights are, naturally, less visible and slow process which makes them less interesting to the media. However, in Ethiopia, it is possible to challenge the above analysis and maintain a position that socio-economic rights have better coverage than civil and political.

The private media also has comparatively active engagement in the promotion of socio-economic rights in the country. The Reporter, for instance in addition to the news coverage, has regular articles on culture, society, business and economy. These articles, often address the problems and encouraging aspects of societal and cultural setups of the community. It, occasionally, talk about matters related to social and cultural rights, like the right to education, health, religion the right to use one's language and the right to practice once culture.

The regular business and economy articles of Woyen newspaper also evolve on the country's and regional current economic and business situations. They raise economic problems of the society and try to come up with ways forward. The articles question the country's economic development comparing with the current living standard of the people. Woyen newspaper encourages articles written by professionals on matters related to women, economy, and politics.

Woyen newspaper and Wurayna Tigrigna magazine also have articles and frequent news coverage on the women and children with a devotion in discussing matters related to their human rights. The articles comment, criticize and evaluate the pros and cons of the laws, policies and regulations affecting women and children. Often the provisions of regional regulations and the Ethiopian constitution are sighted as a reference for their programs.

In spite of these efforts, the need of the region and the massive extent of human rights violations especially on women and children require additional measures to be taken by the media. For example, Ethiopia is, at present, one the countries where a large number of women and children suffer from different types of abuses and exploitation as a result of human trafficking.

4.3.1.2.Focus on civil and political rights

At the international mass media, civil and political rights are the most addressed and often reported rights. The media is even criticized for using civil and political rights and human rights as interchangeable terms.

In contrast government owned media institutions, under the umbrella of developmental journalism, focus more of their time and energy on socio-economic matters. In addition, cultural rights and group rights are comparatively better addressed than civil and political rights. As a result, it's not common for the public to encounter programs with the aim of creating awareness on civil and political rights. As already mentioned, during election times, for obvious reasons civil and political rights are highlighted as news and the topics of arguments, comment or criticism on the mass media. Setting this exception aside, it is not persuasive to suggest that the media in Ethiopia is doing its job when it comes to addressing civil and political rights. The following reasons can be taken as contributing factors for this lack of commitment.

However, in Ethiopia political parties are engaged in active debate only when at the time of election. As a result, media does not take the matter to be news and coverage worthy. Data from the research show that there are similar limitations with the media institutions subject to this thesis. These limitations are due to, among others:

Safety fears by the journalists: this is another main reason for underreporting of civil and political rights in Ethiopia. This makes the private press very suspicious of the reaction of the government for covering human rights especially when they are related to civil and political rights. The media was notably less involved and less critical of the situations.

The absence of political debate and active political participation culture in Ethiopia: As common practice shows, media is not much interested in human rights, or any other issue for that matter, unless they are associated with other factors like politics, diplomatic relations of states, conflict or massive violations.

Lack of credibility: Studies pointed to the great divide in opinion between the private press and the public media in both civil and political and socio-economic rights. It is almost a tradition for the private media to be opposition friendly and accuser of the government while the government press only supports the ruling party in its reporting and commentaries.⁶¹ This, to a great extent affects the quality and the impact of information on civil and political rights. It also makes both

⁶¹ Terje S. Skjerdal, 'Between journalism 'universals' and cultural particulars: challenges facing the development of a journalism program in an East African context', Journal of African Media Studies, Volume 1 Number 1, (2009, Intellect Ltd), p26.

the government and the private media roll in opposite directions instead of working for what they claim to stand for, building democratic culture and bringing tolerance and national consensus.

Mostly, the private press interprets all the stories in the government media as propaganda while the government looks at the independent press with great skepticism, to the point of calling it an enemy of the people.⁶² This affects the quality of the information the society receives from both media institutions. In the middle of the controversy between the private and government media, the truth is hidden from the general public. This is because both are trying to impress the public rather than presenting accurate and reliable information. This lack of trust made the public less fond of the media when it comes to critical issues like politics and human rights.

Generally, it is plausible to say that the media in Tigray is not using its potential to the fullest to educate and promote human rights in order to support the government to fulfill its obligation under international human rights instruments. The informants interviewed for this research agree with this assertion. So far, the contribution made by the media towards the promotion of human rights is evaluated as poor by the journalists questioned about this specific concern.

4.4. Competence of media professionals in reporting matters

Promotion of human rights through the media is challenged by lack of adequate knowledge and understanding of both national and international human rights laws by the journalists. It is not logical or, for that matter, ethical to expect journalists to cover and promote subjects they do not know or understand. Unfortunately, as discussed in chapter two of this study, even at the international level, journalists are often criticized for their inadequate and sometimes misguided understanding of human rights. In fact, lack of competence of the journalists in human rights is one of the major challenges for the effort of promoting human rights through the mainstream media.

This criticism remains to be true for the journalists of Tigray media institutions. The media professionals often take the blame for lack of competence and awareness about international and national human rights law. This not only affects their coverage of human rights but also the effort of different actors including national human rights institutions to promote and educate the public about human rights. Both the Ethiopian Institution of Ombudsman and Ethiopian Human

⁶² Ibid.

Rights Commission complain saying that journalists do not understand the concept of human rights and this creates a uncertainty on the quality of the broadcast and the publications of the perspective Institutions.

In reality, the majority of journalists who are working at the current media organizations lack the necessary competence to work on and cover human rights issues. From 10 journalists who have filled the questionnaire on whether they have had trainings on human rights, only 1 took proper human rights trainings and another did a training on related matters like democracy and good governance.⁶³

The consequence of this is that major media organizations do not spend enough energy and resource on human rights and related matters and prepare programs devoted to human rights. Journalists agree that lack of awareness about human rights is the major reason for this neglect. As already discussed, human rights are mostly addressed by the media institutions indirectly when they are associated with other matters. While making or editing news, journalists gave affirmative answer whether they consider human rights or not. 8 of the 10 journalists say that they do consider human rights to the extent of their knowledge on the articles or programs they conduct regularly.⁶⁴ 1 journalist said that they do not consider the issue at all.⁶⁵

4.5. Accessibility of information about human rights

The programs circulated by the media about human rights, whatsoever the amount and the quality of the coverage might be, will not have any significant impact if the public do not get access to the information. However, in Ethiopia the right to access to information is hardly recognized as a result of the economic and social status as a least developed country.

Newspaper publishers complain that the majority of the population do not actually buy the newspapers rather they rent it for a few cents. This is the effect of the low income status of the society, who in most cases cannot afford to pay the full price of the papers.

Woyen newspaper and Wurayna Tigrigna magazine publish between the ranges of 65,000-70,000 copies per issue. For a region with a total population of 6.2 million, the number of issues

⁶³ See annex, table five.

⁶⁴ See annex, table five.

⁶⁵ See annex, table six.

is nearly insignificant. Therefore, the media effort to have an impact in the process of building human rights and democratic culture is limited.

Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

Freedom of opinion, expression and the press as well as the right to seek, receive and impart information was guaranteed both in writing and comparatively in practice after the current government assumed power in 1992.

The 1995 FDRE Constitution guarantees these rights and provides the media with legal protection and institutional independence to enable the accommodation of different ideas necessary to a democratic society. The current Freedom of the Press and Access to Information Proclamation also ensures freedom of the mass media as well as the right of the public to get access to information. However, this Proclamation has several gaps that challenge the effort of the media to engage actively in the promotion of human rights. For instance, Article 43(7) which provide that defamation and false accusation against constitutionally mandated government organs is prosecutable even if the person against whom they were committed chooses not to press charge. This created a substantial insecurity among the members of the free press especially with regard to human rights promotion. The reason is that, human rights as a subject matter, are mostly related to government organs and this provision creates a possibility for the government and its organs to abuse and oppress the media.

The Proclamation also imposes excessive fines. Compared to the advantages of freedom of the press in building democracy and promoting human rights, the fines appear to be unreasonable.

The private newspapers covered under this study maintain that the fines are too much and they are not willing to take the risk of printing issues on topics that will offend the government. According to private media institution owners, taking such a risk will not only put their business but also their life in jeopardy.

The other relevant law that made the legal environment for the media challenging is the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation. Ethiopia proclaimed the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation in 2009. Ever since, this Proclamation is criticized for restricting freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

The Proclamation provides that whosoever publishes or causes the publication of a statement that is likely to be understood by some or all of the public to whom it is published as a direct or indirect encouragement or other inducement to the commission or preparation or instigation of an act of terrorism is punishable with rigorous imprisonment. This provision, in addition to opening a wide discretion to the judge in to interpreting any publication in to terrorism act, left the media in a terror of publishing or broadcasting⁷⁸materials that question or criticize the

Regardless of these challenges and constraints, currently, media organizations in the region are making an effort to make contributions in the promotion of human rights in the region. Different media organizations have a number of programs that are relevant to human rights. The media organizations assessed by this thesis, namely Woyen newspaper and Wurayna Tigrigna magazine, have demonstrated a considerable potential and interest to engage and contribute to the promotion of human rights in Tigray. Consequently, human rights are covered by the print media to a certain extent. The institutions approach human rights using, in addition to their news coverage, regular programs, occasional and special coverage on contemporary matters.

The print media, address the matter through several articles and editorials. The institutions do not have a regular article or broadcast that is devoted to human rights promotion or investigating violations. Normally, they raise the matter when it is associated with other relevant events and occurrences. The print and the broadcast highlight human rights as an exclusive topic when there is an event or occurrence which identified by the media as a controversial issue.

The print media also gives a considerable space to matters related to human right, presents several entertaining and educational programs with an aim of creating awareness on human rights. The organizations, through the media, produce and present their investigative findings on violations of human rights and organize workshops, panel discussions, and talk shows on human rights issues, publish articles and, most importantly, give trainings to the journalists about human rights.

The above activities have a distinguished contribution in the process of awareness creation on human rights in Ethiopia. However, several back draws were observed during the examination of the activities of the media institutions with regard to human rights.

The information circulated by the media on human rights, whatever the extent might be, is not reaching the majority members of the society. The print media are not accessible to the majority of the population.

5.2.Recommendations

In light of the study conducted the general observation made so far, the following points are to be considered in measures to be taken as a way forward:

- It is recommended that legislative review is taken into consideration. Especially, the Mass Media and Access to Freedom of Information Proclamation and the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation impose an excessive fines and rigorous punishment on journalists and media institution owners for minor violations of the provisions. Human rights are sensitive issues that possibly might fall in the prohibited areas under the proclamations. The media is not willing to take such risk and chose to avoid issues related to human rights. This is affecting the most important factor in the realization of human rights, which is the creation of popular support and awareness.
- The current activities of regional human rights institutions, compared to the responsibilities they assume, is insignificant. Therefore, they should establish constant relationship with the media through several activities including continuous training to the journalists about human rights, organizing media forums and presenting and sponsoring programs for the purpose of awareness creation to the general public.
- Journalism schools, media institutions, national human rights organizations and non-governmental actors should act towards creating awareness among the journalists about human rights. It will not be appropriate to expect the media to promote and actively participate in a concept they do not understand. Lack of adequate knowledge and understanding on human rights is the main obstacle identified for the media reluctance in engaging on programs related to human rights. Creating awareness among journalists will generate initiation and interest in organizing programs devoted to human rights.

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- Interview with Lt. General Tsadkan Gebretensae, Editor in Chief of Woyen Gazeta.

Annex I

Results of questionnaire for media professionals

General information

Table 1

Number of respondents

Number of respondents	10
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Table 2

Respondents by sex

Sex

Male	2 8
Female	2

Table three

Respondents by age

Ages

18-30	5
31-50	4
51 and above	1

Table four

Years of experience

Years of experience

1-5	6
6-10	4

Knowledge and experience on human rights by the media professionals

Table five

Do you have any training regarding human rights?

Yes	4
No	6

Table six

Do you consider human rights issues with your coverage while reporting or editing?

Yes	2
No	8

Table seven

Do you have programs at your organization devoted to human rights promotion?

Yes	8
No	2

Annex II: Questionnaire for journalists
Mekelle University
College of Law and Governance
School of Law

Dear respondent:

Dear respondents, my name is Meron Masresha I am a postgraduate student in Mekelle University. I have prepared this questionnaire because I want to assess the role of media on creating awareness and promoting human right in Tigray for my study. The information that you provide is indispensable for the success of the research. When I request you to provide your response, I would like to guarantee you that the information you give will be absolutely confidential so that it will not negatively affect you. Thus, I would like to ask you to attempt all questions carefully and respond genuinely.

Thank you indeed,

N.B. . no need to write your name

. Put x on the choice you think appropriate

Part I. Personal profile

Direction I. Put tick mark /X/ for your choice in the boxes provided.

A. Gender: 1= Male 2= Female

B. Age

20-30 30-50 51 and above

C. Name of the institution

D. Position and Responsibilities

E. How long have you worked as a journalist?

F. Do you have any training regarding human right?

Yes

No

G. If your answer is yes for the above question did the training in any way affected your perception about human right?

H. Do you consider human right issues with your coverage while reporting or editing news?

Yes No

I. If your answer is yes to the above question which human rights mostly appear to be related with your news or coverage?

Civil and political rights economic, social and cultural rights

Group rights not know not specified

J. Do you have programs at your organization devoted to human rights promotion?

Yes No

K. If your answer is no to the above question, in your opinion, what is the main barrier in preparing programs devoted to human rights promotion?

Financial problems lake of awareness

Legal barriers

Other

L. What is your view on the role of media in promoting and educating human right to the general public?

M. How do you evaluate the outcomes of human rights promotion by media?

Very good Good Poor