

The Intersection of Activism and Journalism in Ethiopia's Media Ecology (Post-2018)

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Abstract

The revolution in information and communication technology has significantly expanded media outlets and enhanced the speed of information processing and dissemination. The convergence of mass media, computing, and telecommunications has transformed the media landscape, enabling various actors to participate actively in the production, distribution, and consumption of news and information. Notably, there is a growing convergence between activism and journalism on a global scale, which has also impacted the media environment in countries such as Ethiopia. This convergence, particularly the blurring lines between activism and journalism, raises critical questions for policy, governance, and media standards. This paper investigates the complex interface between journalism and activism in Ethiopia following the 2018 reform era, emphasizing its implications for democratization and peacebuilding. The study employs a reflective and critically analytical methodology to observe and interpret Ethiopia's media ecology. It involves a contextual review of media reports, coverage, and discourse across selected mainstream outlets, including Amhara Media Corporation (AMC), Oromia Broadcasting Network (OBN), Tigray Media House (TMH), and Oromia Media Network (OMN), as well as leading social media platforms such as Ethio-Forum, Ethio-News, and Ethio-360 on YouTube. This approach facilitates a nuanced understanding of how activism influences journalistic practices and the broader media environment. Findings highlight a turbulent Ethiopian media environment where activism significantly impacts journalistic practices, often compromising core principles such as objectivity, independence, and ethics. This overlap hampers the media's capacity to contribute effectively to peacebuilding and democratic reforms, emphasizing the need for robust policy frameworks that protect media independence and uphold professional standards. This study recommends the development of policies that delineate clear boundaries between activism and journalism, fostering an independent media environment capable of supporting sustainable governance and educational standards in media practice. The paper underscores the importance of establishing regulatory and institutional mechanisms that uphold media integrity and promote ethical standards in the digital age.

Keywords

Activism, activist journalist, journalism, convergence, policy and governance, digital media, media standards.