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DEMOCRATIC SOCIAL MOVEMENT FRAMING DYNAMICS: FRAMING OF THE OROMO PROTEST MOVEMENT BY THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS MEDIA, OROMO ACTIVISTS, INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS, AND THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

by

SEIFU ADEM

Under the Direction of Carrie Freeman, PhD

ABSTRACT

Although there is a plethora of literature on social movements in the fields of sociology and political science, fewer studies exist on the subject in the field of media studies, especially in Africa. While scholarship on the role of social media is emerging in recent years, the literature on the news media coverage of social movements vis-à-vis international human rights organizations that also have a role in shaping the discourse is absent. The aim of this project was, therefore, to understand the framing dynamics in the discourse around social movements by the international news media, local activists, international human rights organizations, and

government officials. It analyzed the 2015-2016 Oromo protest movement against injustices by the Ethiopian government to examine: (1) the major themes highlighted by these actors, and 2) the framing dynamics between the actors' frames. Qualitative framing analysis was used to examine texts of international news media outlets, Facebook messages of prominent Oromo activists, reports and statements of Human Right Watch and Amnesty International, and the Ethiopian government officials' response to the protests. The findings reveal that three major themes—*cause of the protest, government response to the protest*, and *call for action*—dominated the texts of the news media, activists, and human rights groups. These themes were framed as various political and economic *grievances, violence*, and third-party intervention for *justice*, respectively. The themes and frames of the news media and human rights organizations largely supported the themes and frames highlighted by protest activists. Similar themes were highlighted in the texts of the government officials but were used to counter-frame the frames of other actors (ex: portraying the protesters as violent). The findings have significant implications. They may guide democratic social movement activists in the social media age who want to design similar protests against authoritarian governments in an international arena. The findings bolster existing studies on the use of collective action framing and the relationship between news media and activists. Additionally, the results suggest that international human rights organization are also "signifying agents" engaged in creating meanings and shaping discourse about social movements.

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INDEX WORDS: Oromo protest, Social movement framing, Ethiopia, international journalism, human rights organizations

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Georgia State University

2019

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Seifu Adem
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May 2019

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my father, Aman Adem, whose death hurts me deep inside!

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This project would not have been completed without continuous guidance and invaluable help from my advisory committee: I thank them so much! Credit also goes to my dearest wife, Sara Hassen, for her continuous support and patience even as she struggled with her cancer, which thankfully is cured now. I owe to my uncle, Abdulaziz Hussein Mamie (PhD) and my sister-in-law Aziza (Afro) Seido for their support. And my sons, Rayyan Adem and Khalid Adem have always been a cure to my stress.

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1 INTRODUCTION

"Ethiopia's Feyisa Lilesa gets a silver for running – and a gold for bravery" was the title of a news article by the *Daily Maverick* published on 22 August 2016. The news story was about an Oromo athlete who crossed his arms above his head as he finished the marathon race at the 2016 Rio Olympics to show solidarity with Oromo people who were protesting against the Ethiopian government since 12 November 2015. Allison (2016), the writer of the news article, described the significance of Lilesa's action by comparing it with similar actions of only a few athletes in history who used sports events as a venue to bring injustices in their countries to global attention. He wrote:

> Whatever happens next, Lilesa himself has joined that small pantheon of athletes who realize that sport is about more than running and jumping and kicking a ball. It is an elite group that includes the likes of Tommie Smith and John Carlos, who raised their fists in that iconic black power salute in 1968; the Zimbabwean cricketers Andy Flower and Henry Olonga who wore black armbands in a match against Namibia in 2003, to symbolize the death of democracy in Zimbabwe; boxer Muhammad Ali, whose outspoken opposition to the Vietnam War cost him his titles and his fighting license. (para. 12).

Ethiopia experienced a history of several consequential protests and uprisings. For example, the 1960 student movement played a crucial role in ending the regime of Haile Selassie in 1974. The civil war in northern Ethiopia that lasted decades led to the overthrow of the Communist regime of Mengistu Hailemariam in 1991 and cessation of Eritrea in 1993. The Oromo protests that started in November 2015 forced Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn to resign on February 15, 2018. It is this latter protest in Oromia that I am studying here.

The recent Oromo protest is different from the previous two uprisings in Ethiopia for various reasons. First, unlike the first two uprisings which were bloody, Oromo protests were mainly peaceful. Second, the first two uprisings ended in regime change, but Oromo protests led to what many political commentators refer to a "soft coup d'état"—a change of leadership, not regime. Third, social media, which did not exist during the first two uprisings, were widely used by Oromo activists. Fourth, although the main protests took place in Ethiopia, the Ethiopian diaspora community in North America, Europe, Australia, and South Africa played a vital role in bringing the issue to the attention of the international community. Fifth, it got sympathy of international news media and human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. These differences led me to want to investigate the communicative role that the international media and human rights organizations played in the dynamic between the protesters and the government that may help explain the outcome.

The Oromo protests succeeded in many ways. The new government led by Prime Minster Abiy Ahmed introduced many political reforms. It released all political prisoners including politicians and journalists. It lifted a state of emergency which was in place during the protests. It changed the anti-terrorism law. It lifted a ban on media. For the first time in Ethiopian history, there is no single journalist in jail.

This introductory chapter aims at introducing the whole project. First, it gives an overview of the Oromo protest movement by highlighting how it started and summarizing the main demands and strategies of the protesters. Then, by describing the purpose of the study, the chapter also states the main research questions. The chapter also explains the significance and scope of the study, as well as how it is organized.

1.1 The Oromo Protest Movement

Since November 2015, Ethiopia experienced public uproar to the magnitude it had never seen before (Allo, 2016). Local activists protested across many areas of the Oromia region, the most populous federal state in Ethiopia. Protests started on November 12, 2015 against the government plan, known as the Addis Ababa Master Plan – a plan that would have expanded the territory of Addis Ababa, the capital city, into surrounding areas of the region (Amnesty International, 2015). Oromo activists, who led the protests, viewed the Master Plan as a scheme by government officials to displace farmers from their lands (Allo, 2016).

Due to its magnitude and violent response from government security forces, the protests received significant international media attention. For example, on January 8, 2016; August 19, 2016; and October 11, 2016, *The Washington Pos*t published editorials with titles: "Ethiopia silences its critics with a deadly crackdown on dissent;" "Ethiopia's regime has killed hundreds. Why is the West still giving it aid?" and "Ethiopia meets protests with bullets," respectively. On August 26, 2016, *Thomson Reuters Foundation* published an 11-minute documentary that narrates factors that triggered the protests. On August 12, 2016, Jeffrey Gettleman of *the New York Times* published a story titled: "'A Generation is Protesting' in Ethiopia, a Long U.S. Ally." The protests received wide coverage on social media as well.

The Oromo protest movement also captured the attention of different human rights organizations. For example, Amnesty International put out a statement that said, “prolonged protests over political, economic, social and cultural grievances were met with excessive force and lethal force by police” (Amnesty International, n.d, para. 1). It portrayed the government’s action as “crackdown on defenders of human rights, independent media, journalists, bloggers, peaceful protesters, as well as members and leaders of the political opposition” (para, 9).

Likewise, Human Rights Watch published several reports on how the government handled the protesters of the Oromo protest movement. On January 21, 2016, the United Nations human rights experts called on Ethiopia to stop its violent measures against protesters. The European Parliament condemned the disproportionate use of force against protesters by Ethiopian security forces. On March 9, 2017, the U.S. Foreign Affairs Committee held a hearing on human rights violations in Ethiopia (Tadias, 2017). Furthermore, many U.S. lawmakers including Al Franken, Amy Klobuchar, Keith Ellison, Betty McCollum, Tom Emmer, and Mike Goffman wrote letters to the State Department urging it to pay attention to how the government of Ethiopia was handling Oromo protests.

1.2 Demands of the Protesters

The Oromo protest movement activists voiced a broad range of political and economic demands. As the trigger of the protest movement was the plan to expand the jurisdiction of Addis Ababa city into the territory of the Oromia region, the activists' demand was a halt to the plan. They used different slogans such as "No to the Master Plan," "The master plan is a master killer," No to landgrab," "Lafti teenya lafee keenya" ["Our land is our bone"], "Oromiyaan kan keenya" ["Oromia is ours"], "Didne" ["We say, no"]. Although the Ethiopian government claimed the plan was to provide better services and create economic opportunities, for the Oromos it amounted to a landgrab that could displace them from their lands (Allo, 2016; Gaffey, 2016)

There were also other demands including the demand for the release of opposition political party leaders such as Merera Gudina, Bekele Gerba, and Olbana Lellissa. As the government security forces also killed some protesters during the protests, they also demanded a halt to the killing of "innocent people". The protesters also demanded the implementation of a

Constitutional provision which recognizes the "special interest" (the legal rights) of the State of Oromia on Addis Ababa City. Article 49/5 of the Ethiopian Constitution says:

> The special interest of the State of Oromia in Addis Ababa, regarding the provision of social services or the utilization of natural resources and other similar matters, as well as joint administrative matters arising from the location of Addis Ababa within the State of Oromia shall be respected. Particulars shall be determined by law. (pp: 104-105).

The protesters used slogans such as "Finfinneen handhurra keenya" ["Addis Ababa is our navel"], "Finfinneen kan keenya} ["Addis Ababa is ours"]. However, when the death of many protesters was reported, protesters changed their demand to the end to the regime. They used slogans such as "down down *woyanne*." Woyaane refers to Tigray People's Liberation Force (TPLF), a member party of the four-party coalition that rules the country. The protests mainly aimed against TPLF as they believe it dominates all other parties in the ruling coalition.

1.3 Protesters' Strategies

Oromo activists expressed their demands in different ways. Some took to social media, especially Facebook to post news, views, and analysis on the protests. Others gave interviews to international news media outlets such as *Aljazeera*, *BBC*, the *Voice of America* (*VOA*), *Deutsch Welle* (*DW*), *PBS*, *NPR*, and diaspora-based Ethiopian media such as *Oromia Media Network* (*OMN*) and the *Ethiopian Satellite Television* (*ESAT*).

Activists both at home and in the Diaspora also engaged in different forms of activism. Singers released new songs; poets composed poems; artists drew pictures; religious leaders condemned the government and prayed for the souls of those who died; and women challenged men for not doing enough to fight the government. Oromo activists also organized rallies and demonstrations in different places. Those in Ethiopia used streets, schools, religious gathering

places, and funerals to protest against the government. Those in the diaspora protested in front of the State Department and White House in the U.S. while those in the United Kingdom and Australia protested in front of the office of the prime minister and parliament respectively. To get media attention, they also demonstrated in front of *CNN*'s head office in Atlanta and the *BBC* office in London.

August 21, 2016 marked a turning point in the history of Oromo protests when Feyissa Lilesa, an athlete, crossed his arms above his head—a symbol of resistance—at the 2016 Rio Olympics as he finished second in a marathon race. Many international media, curious about the meaning of his symbol, went even further to cover about Ethiopia in general, and Oromo protests in particular. Lilessa told *BBC* on August 21, 2016 that he used the international stage to tell the international community that, "'The Ethiopian government is killing my people, so I stand with all protests anywhere as Oromo is my tribe . . . I raised my hands to support with the Oromo protest.'" (para. 5).

As the intensity of the protests increased and received the attention of the international media and international human rights organizations, the government heeded some of the demands. For example, on January 13, 2016, it announced the cancellation of the Addis Ababa Master Plan, which had triggered the initial protests on November 12, 2015 (*BBC Africa*, 2016). In his speech to the parliament on October 10, 2016, Mulatu Teshome, the president of Ethiopia, told lawmakers of his government's plan to solve the issue of the State of Oromia's special interest in Addis Ababa city, another key demand of the protesters. The government also put out official statements promising a broad range of both political and economic reforms to answer the grievances of the protesters. However, the protesters did not trust the government's promises, so they called for regime change.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The story of Oromo protest movement summarized in the preceding paragraphs may raise many fundamental questions that go beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, given the intensity of the protest and the attention it received from the international community—both the international news media and international activist organizations—two questions warrant close attention. First, how did the news media and other actors (human rights groups and government officials) frame the Oromo protest movement, in response to the package of grievances outlined by Oromo activists that were designed to motivate collective action? Furthermore, what were the framing dynamics among these actors in terms of posing similar and competing themes regarding the protest?

The goal of this project was to discover the frames highlighted by the news media and non-media actors (Oromo protesters, international human rights organizations, and Ethiopian government officials). To this end, it sought to answer the following research questions about the Oromo protest:

RQ1. What were the major themes of the international news media on the Oromo protest movement? How did they frame those themes?

RQ2. What were the major themes of the messages of the key Oromo activists? How did they frame those themes?

RQ3. What were the major themes highlighted by international human rights organizations (Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International)? How did they frame those themes?

RQ4. What were the major themes of the Ethiopian government officials' response to the protest? How did they frame those themes?

RQ5. How did the international news media frames compare with the frames of other actors (activists, human rights groups, and the Ethiopian government officials), especially in terms of reflecting the Oromo activists' frames on the protests?

1.5 Justification and Significance of the Study

Scholars have studied the link between the news media and social movements. One of the areas that attracted the attention of scholars has been the role of the news media on social movements. The news media has the power to shape social events including social movements (Tim, 1996). They cover the existence of social movements; create the conditions for collective action; and provide definitions and interpretations on issues (Klandermans, 2014). They frame issues to promote some aspects of the reality (Entman, 1993).

Another area that attracted attention is the interdependency between the news media and social movements. For example, Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) have long argued that social movements and the news media depend on each other, although they also stressed that the former depends on the latter more so than the reverse. Social movement activists need the media to pass their message across to their constituent members (mobilization), to create the impression that the world is watching them (validation) and enlarge to the size of their protests (scope enlargement) (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993). According to Gamson and Wolfsfeld, the media-social movement relationship is also characterized by a "struggle over framing" (p. 18).

This project is significant for different reasons. First, it focuses on the protests in Ethiopia which makes it unique in many ways. Although there were many movements in Ethiopia such as the student movements of the 1960s and the peasant uprisings of the 1950s, no study has yet looked at the international news media coverage of social movements in Ethiopia. The movements in Ethiopia and most African countries are different from the movements in most

western countries in that they take place under authoritarian regimes where violent response to suppress the protests has been the norm. Even from African countries, Ethiopia's case is different in that most social movements in Africa focused on the anti-colonization movement (Larmer, 2010), which Ethiopia did not experience, as it is the only African country that did not fall under colonization. According to Larmer (2010), even those social movements studied in Africa used the political science approach to understand the change in politics, rather than the discourse surrounding them.

Second, unlike many studies that looked into one or two actors (for example, the news media or protests), this project analyzes the frames of more actors (the news media, the anti-government movement itself, government officials, and human rights organizations) to further our understanding of social movements in general and the Oromo protest movement in particular. It helps us to understand the dynamics of the frames of these actors all discussing and constructing meanings on the same topic from different perspectives. Including the frames of international human rights organizations—the actors involved in the discourse of the movement but who do not receive enough scholarly attention—make this project more comprehensive and unique from other studies.

The findings of this project can make several contributions. By explaining how movements change their grievances into collective action through the framing process, it will further our understanding of social movements in general and the Oromo protest movement in particular. By comparing frames of more actors, some of which did not tend to receive scholars' attention (e.g., frames of human rights organizations), the findings may also shed light on the dynamics among the frames of different actors related to a democratization protest. The findings might also serve as a stepping stone, or become an additional resource, for scholars who want to

conduct further studies on the framing of social protest movements from a variety of primary actors/stakeholders' standpoints. Practically, the findings may help government officials and social entrepreneurs to have a better understanding of how activists use media to air their grievances, especially in the context of anti-government protests in authoritarian regimes.

1.6 The Scope of the Study

Different aspects of social movements and media could be studied, but the focus of this project was on the framing of the major themes only. It did not focus, for example, on the type of media the protesters used, how they used them, and why, or their motivations for selecting different media. It instead focused on messages and how those messages were framed. Also, as this project aims mainly at understanding collective action frames and frames of different actors, not their impact, it did not do audience analysis, nor did it fully assess achievement of goals by movement actors.

Although the protests in Ethiopia were not limited to only the Oromia region—it also covered the Amhara region—the focus of this project was on the protests in Oromia only. The protests in these states have different causes and questions. While the immediate cause of the protests in Oromia was the expansion of a capital city into the lands owned by Oromos, those in the Amhara region were caused by the detention of the Wolkayit Committee. Because of cultural, linguistic, and historical differences between people in these regions, their questions were also different. Also, due to its long duration and intensity of the protests, the Oromo protests received more media attention than those in the Amhara region.

This project analyzed documents/texts only. It analyzed texts of Facebook posts of the key Oromo activists, news media, human rights groups, and the Ethiopian government officials. The detailed description of the data and selection process are in chapter three.

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the Oromo protest movement has achieved its major goals such as cancellation of the Masterplan, change of the government (leadership, not regime), the release of the political prisoners, lifting of the ban on the media, cancellation of the Anti-Terrorism Law, etc. The goals they achieved include the change of government, the cancellation of the master plan that triggered the protests, release of political prisoners, and promise on political reforms. So, this project analyzed materials produced around big events such as the August 6, 2016 "Grand Oromia Rally," and the Irreecha event of October 2016, and August 21-Rio Olympics, where athlete Feyisa Lilesa raised his hands above his head to protest. So, the result of this project may not explain the frames developed throughout the entire protest movement and their evolution over the years, but it captures the most significant and newsworthy events of the protest movement.

Lastly, the project used a qualitative approach aimed at understanding a particular issue, how the Oromo protest movement was framed. So, the result cannot be generalized to all movements in the world, different movements in Ethiopia, or even to Oromo protests that happened many years back.

1.7 Author's Perspective

My interest in conducting this project comes in part out of my familiarity with the politics of Ethiopia in general and of the Oromo people in particular. I am a member of the Oromo society who was born and grew up in Oromia, Ethiopia. Hence, I not only know the Oromo language and culture, I also closely follow issues related to Oromo politics. I am also a long-time friend of some of the activists who were the leaders of the Oromo protest movement. I take my familiarity with the Oromo people—language, culture, and politics—as an asset to successfully carry out this project. My knowledge of the language and culture helps me to understand the

nuances of the Oromo protest movement's demands, frames, and discourse. However, even though I am supportive of the protesters' struggles for democracy and human rights in this authoritarian regime, I had no agenda for this project other than to gain a better understanding of the protest framing dynamics to contribute to media studies and social movement studies. As such, I strived to accurately and fairly describe all players involved.

1.8 Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into eight chapters including the introductory and conclusion chapters. Chapters two through eight are organized as follows:

Chapter two provides a discussion of the relevant literature. It starts by giving a historical context to the Oromo protest movement, especially the political dynamics in Ethiopia that might also have a bearing on the current Oromo protest movement. Then it presents the summary of the literature on social movements and scholarly perspectives on how to study them, especially on theories of collective behaviors, resource mobilization, political processes, and framing. It then discusses available literature on the link between media (both traditional and social media) and social movements. The chapter presents scholarly perspectives on issue framing dynamics between social movements and government officials.

Chapter three discusses the methods. It has two main sections: the data and procedures. The first section describes all the data used for this project. It explains justifications of why they are essential to carry out this project. The second section discusses the procedures—description of the steps used to collect and analyze the data.

Chapters four through seven constitute the vital part of the dissertation: analysis of the data. Chapter four analyzes the data from the news media. It discusses all the major themes, and

the frames that emerged from the data. Chapters five, six, and seven present the results of data analysis from Oromo activists, human rights groups, and government officials respectively.

The last chapter (chapter 8) is the conclusion of the study which provides the summary and interpretation of the findings. This chapter also discusses the results and their implication by connecting findings to existing literature. After explaining the limitations of the study, the chapter concludes by suggesting future areas of research.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature that focuses on areas relevant to this project. The chapter has five major sections. The first part gives background information and historical context that gave rise to the Oromo people's protest. The second section deals with the literature on social movements and framing. It reviews the literature on the link between social movements and the media. The third section of this chapter gives a summary of scholarly work on foreign media and democratization. Mainly, it pays attention to the role of international media within the democratization in undemocratic countries. The fourth section looks at the major theories of international relations and the role of media and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like human rights groups. After discussing the literature on framing and counter-framing by government officials in the fifth section, the chapter previews the research questions and gives a summary to segue to the methods section.

2.2 Overview of Ethiopia and the Oromo People

Ethiopia is a multi-cultural country in East Africa. It has more than 80 different ethnic and linguistic groups. Out of this, the Oromo, Amhara, Somali, and Tigray constitute 34.4%, 27%, 6.2%, and 6.1% of the population respectively (The World Factbook, 2018). The major languages are Afaan Oromo, Amharic, Somali, and Tigrigna spoken by 33.8%, 29.3%, 6.2%, and 5.9% of the population respectively (The World Factbook, 5 September 2018).

Although a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-linguistic country, Ethiopia was created as an "empire state" (Keller, 1995, p. 622). The creation of the modern Ethiopian state began in the second half of the nineteenth century by emperors Tewodros (1855-1868) and Yohannes (1872-89) and consolidated by Menelik (1889-1913). These emperors tried to

construct a nation-state with a single Ethiopian national identity dominated by the Amharic language and the Amhara culture. The Communist military government of Mengistu Hailemariam which ruled from 1974-1991 also attempted to keep the Ethiopian nationalism intact (Keller, 1995).

However, after the end of the long imperial rule of Emperor Haile Selassie from 1930-1974, a question for self-determination by different ethnic groups emerged and led to the rise of ethnic nationalism (Keller, 1995). The question of nations and nationalities is associated with "controversies regarding the legitimacy of those in power and their policies" (Joireman, 1997, p. 388). According to Joireman (1997), Ethiopian regimes before 1991 tried to downplay the issue of ethnicity" in order to "foster pan-Ethiopianist feeling and breakdown the opposition posed by organized ethnic groups" (p. 388).

However, the attempt to create a single national identity was unsuccessful as the question of self-determination was also highlighted during the Ethiopian student movement of the 1960s. Two of the major issues raised by the Ethiopian student movement were, among other things, the self-determination of nations and nationalities and land rights with a slogan, "land to the tiller" (Joireman, 1997, p. 389). While the question of the right to self-determination of nations and nationalities was addressed in the current Constitution of the country, i.e., Article 39, the demand for land rights was also tackled by the Communist regime of Mengistu Hailemariam that came to power in 1974.

The Oromo people are known for their traditional institution called the *Gadaa* system. According to Legesse (2000), *Gadaa* is a "system of generation [sic] classes that succeed each other every eight years in assuming political, military, judicial, legislative and ritual responsibilities" (p. 104). The Oromos consider the *Gadaa* system as "a classic example of a

traditional African form of democracy" (Keller, 1995, p. 624). Like the modern democracy, it has the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the government (Keller, 1995). However, the Oromo *Gadaa* system declined especially after the mid-nineteenth century due to the expansion of religion (Islam and Christianity) and a ban on it by the Amhara dominated Ethiopia (Keller, 1995).

The Oromo people consider the imperial rule between 1855-1974 as a colonial rule (Keller, 1995). This conception is due to "its coincidence with the European scramble for Africa and the creation of nation-states based on external models" (Keller, 1995, p. 625). During this time, they experienced different forms of political and economic suppression: they were forced to share their produce with the ruling class, mainly the Amharas; and were forced to change their traditional religions to Christianity (Keller, 1995). They also faced economic subjugations under imperial Ethiopia. As Keller wrote:

> In the distribution of scarce resources, their needs were considered secondary to those of the dominant Amhara groups as a matter of course, despite their great contribution as regards Ethiopia's chief export crops: coffee, oil seeds, hides, and skins. All Oromo areas had become crown lands as a result of conquest and were used by the Emperor to reward or remunerate those in his service in the periphery. Moreover, peasants and pastoralists alike were saddled with a heavy cash tax burden in an economy that had yet become market-oriented. After 1855, they found themselves subjects of Amhara overlordship in a world that was now organizing itself along the lines of nation-states with permanent and inviolable geographic boundaries. (p. 626).

The subjugation of the Oromo people under the Amhara elites led to the development of sense of the Oromo ethnic identity (Keller, 1995), which also led to the rise of Oromo social

movements (Jalata, 1995). According to Jalata, the growing sense of Oromo nationalism is linked to the realization of the political, economic, and cultural exploitation by the Ethiopian ruling class. Jalata (1995) described this exploitation as:

> The Ethiopian colonial state created a leadership vacuum in Oromo society by destroying a cultural and political leadership during its colonial expansion. It also delayed the development of an Oromo national leadership by denying the Oromo opportunities essential for developing an educated and Organized leadership. The division of power have been ethnized and almost all Oromos and other colonized peoples were limited to agricultural activities. Educational opportunities have been mainly provided for children of the Ethiopian rulers in order to perpetuate Amhara-Tigrayan dominance. (p. 169).

The perception of political, economic, and cultural marginalization prompted educated Oromos to create an organized movement in the 1960s such as the Mecha-Tulema self-help organization in 1965. The Mecha-Tulema organization was founded by Oromos who demanded fair share for their nation (Keller, 1995). Keller also noted that "by the mid-1960s, Oromo intellectuals were demanding first-class citizenship" (p. 627).

The establishment of the Mecha-Tulema was regarded as significant. According to Keller (1995), it sent three major signals to the Ethiopian government: 1) assimilation of the Oromo was not successful; 2) Oromo elites preferred self-determination to multi-ethnic Ethiopian nation-state, and 3) it was impossible to suppress the sentiments of the Oromo nation by banning political parties. On the other hand, it strengthened the sense of Oromo nationalism. As Keller (1995) pointed out, "the movement sensitized the Oromo to the importance of their own national culture as well as to the contradictions in the emerging politico-economic system" (p. 628).

The Oromo people's political movement is also shaped by their narrations of experience (Levine, 2007). Levine classified the Oromo people's narratives of their experience into three types: The Traditionalist, The Colonialist, and The Ethiopianist narratives. The *Traditionalist narrative*, according to Levine, is rooted in Oromo people's key institutions, the *Gadaa* system. Levine summarized the core of this narrative by saying:

> It identifies Oromo culture-bearers as carrying a distinctive legacy of important sacred values. It enjoins a course of action directed at sustaining and strengthening whatever can be preserved of the traditional institutions of the Oromo Gadaa system. Toward that end they should maintain a certain distance from the political center of the Ethiopian nation. They should do whatever can be done to resist the alienation of their land, and to promote the survival and rebirth of the herds so important to their traditional lifestyle. (p. 59).

The *Colonialist narrative* highlights the subdual of the Oromo people's glorious experience and the people who promote it. It "identifies the Oromo experience as essentially one of victims of a century-and-a-half of unrelieved subjugation" (Levine, 2007, p. 59). It challenges the "Ethiopian national center" and encourages "a struggle to ensure adequate representation in the Ethiopian Parliament and in the federal bureaucracy, and to maximize full and genuine autonomy for the Oromia region (p. 59).

The *Ethiopianist Narrative*, however, "identifies the Oromo as participants in a five-century [since 15th C] process in which diverse[sic] interacted to form a multiethnic national society" (Levine, 2007, p. 60). It sees the Oromo expansions during the 16th century as promoting "the process of building a modern multiethnic national state" (p. 55). According to Levine, Oromo values such as "adoption, assimilation, and intermarriage" helped in the process where "Oromo settlers blended readily with the peoples living in the areas that they penetrated"

(p. 55). This emphasizes that Oromos participated in the nation building after the late 6th century (Levine, 2007).

As discussed in this section, the Oromo people have struggled for their political, economic, and cultural rights for decades. The previous regime of Mengistu Hailemariam addressed their question for land rights. The current government has answered their question of culture such as language use. But still, the Oromo people's struggle against the Ethiopian government has not stopped. However, the latest protest that started in 2015 has attracted global media attention, as outlined in the introduction chapter. The next section provides a review of literature on social movements and the link between social movements and media.

2.3 Overview of Social Movement Literature

According to Grossley (2002), several definitions of the term social movements have been offered, however, "all of them are problematic" (p. 2). Grossley stated that one problem relates to either defining it too broadly "such that they include phenomena which we would not wish to call social movements" or defining it too narrowly (p. 2). Another problem, according to Grossley, has to do with the ambiguity of words used to describe social movements which need definition themselves.

According to Eyerman (2005), social movements refer to a "form of acting in public" and politically motivated performances (p. 43). Eyerman also pointed out that emotions play a vital role in communicating movement messages. Snow, Soule, and Kriesi (2004), on the other hand, provided the following broad definition:

> Social movements can be thought of as collectivities acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional or organizational channels for the purpose of challenging or defending extant authority, whether it is institutionally or

> culturally based, in the group, organization, society, culture, or world order of which they are a part. (p. 11).

Common to these definitions is collectivity and goal-orientedness (to support or to oppose a change) and action. So, my definition of Oromo protest movement refers to the actions taken, and campaigns held by Oromo activists both online and offline to oppose the Ethiopian government policies.

The literature on social movements provides different explanations on why social movements occur. For example, theories of collective behavior link social movements with "significant social and cultural breakdowns" (Morris, 2000, p. 445). Morris said that social movements, according to this view, are phenomena characterized by spontaneity, lack of organization and structure, and lack of any connection with institutions and organization. Social movements historically were characterized by "emotions and irrational ideologies" which play a key role as movements "occurred in highly charged contexts characterized by mass enthusiasm, collective excitement, rumor, social contagion, and mass hysteria" (p.445). However, this approach was criticized for focusing on individual psychology rather than political and organizational factors (Oliver & Johnson, 2005). It was also criticized for ignoring agency and agency-producing mechanisms such as "social organizations, strategizing, reasoning, analysis, and rationality" (Morris, 2000, p.445).

Another approach to the study of social movement is the resource mobilization approach. Contrary to theories of collective behavior, the resource mobilization approach regarded social movements as "normal, rational, political challenges by aggrieved groups" (Buechler, 2011, p. 111). Resource mobilization theory links origins of social movements to resources (Sen & Avci, 2016). According to McCarthy and Zald (2001), four core assumptions characterize this theory:

its emphasis on resources; its view of social movements as normal behavior; its assumption about sources of resources; and its emphasis on the role of media. Resources include money, energy, and time (McCarthy & Zald, 2001). This theory also views social movements as "normal behavior emerging out of biographical circumstances, social supports, and immediate life situations" (p. 535). Proponents of resource mobilization theory also argue that the sources of resources are larger society, governmental and non-governmental institutions, and groups" (p. 535). For proponents of this theory, media play a major role in "mediating between the movement and bystander publics" (p.535). In other words, resource mobilization theory argues that individuals mobilize resources to alleviate their grievances (Sen & Avci, 2016). However, this theory was challenged for too much focus on resources as a key factor, as social movements may occur even in the absence of enough resources, especially money (Sen & Avci, 2016). It was also challenged by social psychologists for ignoring the issue of social construction of reality (Oliver & Johnson, 2005).

Another theory of social movements is political process theory. This theory emphasizes the interaction between activists and mainstream institutional politics (Meyer & Minkoff, 2004; Sen & Avci, 2016). Its core assumption is that a social movement is determined by “exogenous factors” which “enhance or inhibit prospects for mobilization, for particulars sorts of claims to be advanced rather than others, for particular strategies of influence to be exercised, and for movements to affect mainstream institutional politics and policy” (Meyer & Minkoff, 2004, pp: 1457- 1458). It also views a social movement "as a type of political movement" the origins of which is based on "the availability of political opportunities" (Sen & Avci, 2016, p.127). In other words, "the relationship between challengers and political systems is placed at the center of analysis because the political system determines whether movements are able to develop in the

first place" (Morris, 2000, p. 446). As opposed to the resource mobilization approach which pays attention to the "formal organization, elite sponsorship, external resources, rational actors, interest group constituencies, and manufactured grievances," the political process approach emphasizes "diverse organizational forms, informal mobilizing structures, solidarity and group consciousness within the mass base, indigenous resources …" (Buechler, 2011, p. 140). The political process model faced criticism due to its view that "external political opportunities must become available before challenging groups can generate collective action" (Morris, 2000, p. 447). Morris argued about the existence of a "reciprocal relationship" between social movements' ability to mobilize and political opportunities saying, "thus, in some instances, collective action can generate political opportunities where none existed previously and in other instances, political opportunities can clear the way for collective action" (p. 447).

Framing is also another major approach to the study of social movements, and one most relevant to this dissertation project. Dove (2010) indicated that the framing perspective became one of the major developments in the study of social movements in the 1980s. It "provided a way to link ideas and social construction of ideas with organizational and political process factors" (Olvier & Johnson, 2005, p. 185). Based on the concept of a frame by Goffman (1974), the framing perspective "focuses on the various collective action frames that are used by social movements to increase and maintain support for their goals and activities" (Dove, 2010, p.203). Collective action refers to "the processes of consensus mobilization needed for people to decide to participate in collective action" (Klandermans, 2014, p.41).

The framing perspective differs from other approaches such as resource mobilization and political process theory in the way its proponents viewed social movements. Snow and Benford (1988) argued that social movements should not be conceived as just "carriers or transmitters of

programs for actions that arise from new structural dislocations" or as merely "resource acquisition and deployment activities of movement organization" (p.198). Snow and Benford (1992) further argued that there were two problems with the literature on social movements before the mid-1980s: treating meanings and ideas as a given and ignoring "the extent to which movements are engaged in ‘meaning work’—that is, in the struggle between the production of ideas of meanings" (p. 136). Snow and Benford (1988) argued that social movements are "engaged in the production of meaning for participants, antagonists, and observers" as well (p. 198). Social movements are conceptualized as "signifying agents" (p. 198). To elaborate on this, they borrowed the verb ‘framing' from Gamson et al. 1982; Snow et al., 1986) which indicates "an active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction" (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 614). They explained this saying:

> It is active in a sense that something is being done, processual in the sense of a dynamic evolving process. It entails agency in the sense that what is evolving is the work of social movement organization or movement activists. And it is contentious in the sense that it involves the generation of interpretative frames that not only differ from existing ones but that may also challenge them. The resultant product of this framing activity is referred to as collective action frames. (p. 614).

Snow and Benford (1988) contended that social movements assign meanings to events and interpret them in such a way that they can mobilize their followers, get the support of bystanders, and demonize their antagonists. Movements construct collective action frames as they negotiate a common understanding of a problem that needs change, making attributions on what or who to blame, “articulate an alternative set of arrangements, and urge others to act in concert to affect change" (Benford & Benford, 2000, p. 615). That is, constructing collective

action frames requires casting existing circumstances as shared grievances which also need to be "transformed into demands" (p.52).

Snow and Benford (1988) explained that movements are engaged in three types of collective action framing tasks: diagnosis, prognosis, and mobilizing participation. Accordingly, while diagnosis refers to framing an event or some aspect of social life as a problem that needs to change, the prognosis task of framing aims at proposing a solution to the problem. The third task—the framing task of mobilization—is aimed at calling for "arms or rationale for engaging in ameliorative or coercive action" (p. 199). Klandermans (2014) pointed out that the role of collective action frames in mobilizing adherents depends on how well they attend these three framing tasks. Snow and Benford (1988) also maintained that the success of framing is affected by four factors: (1) the robustness, completeness, and thoroughness of the framing effort, (2) "internal structure of the larger belief system with which the movement seeks to affect some kind of cognitive/ ideational alignment," (3) "relevance of the frame to the life world of the participants or phenomenological relevance, and (4) cycles of protest (p.198).

Another important task of social movements identified in the literature is frame alignment (Buecheler, 2011; Johnston, 2002; Klandermans, 2014; Snow, Rochford, Worden & Benford, 1986). Snow, Worden, Rochford, and Benford (1986) referred to as the "linkage of individual and SMO [social movement organizations] interpretative orientations, such that some set of individual interests, values, beliefs and SMO activities, goals, and ideology are congruent and complementary" (p. 464). They pointed out that frame alignment is a crucial requirement for movement participation.

According to Snow et al. (1986), there are four types of frame alignment processes: frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame transformations. Frame bridging refers

to “the linking of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 624). For example, in her study of the “Million Hoodies Movement,” Hon (2016) found that the movement used frame bridging to portray the case of Trayvon Martin as part of race issue experienced by not just an individual (Trayvon Martin), but also by African-Americans. As Buechler (2011) put it: “frame bridging essentially says ‘we are already on the same page; why not join us?’” (p.146). It “activates unmobilized [sic] sentiment pools or public opinion clusters; it recruits people by demonstrating that there already is a movement representing their views” (Buechler, 2011, p.146).

Frame amplification, according to Benford and Snow (2000) involves “idealization, embellishment, clarification, or invigoration of existing values or beliefs” (p. 624). “the clarification and invigoration of an interpretative frame that bears on a particular, issue, problem, or sets of events (p. 469). In “Million Hoodies” movement study, Hon (2016) indicated how the movement used frame amplification by continuously updating members with encouraging clarification by saying “‘Zimmerman is getting charged (April 11, 2012)’ and ‘Motion for acquittal denied. Zimmerman will face the jury.’ July 5, 2013)’” (p. 16). Frame amplification is of two types: value amplification and belief amplification (Snow et al. p. 469).

Frame extension involves portraying a movement's “interests and frame(s) as extending beyond its primary interests to include issues and concerns that are presumed to be of importance to potential adherents” (Benford & Snow, 2000 p.625). For example, Hon (2016) indicated how “Million Hoodies” movement used frame extension by announcing, “‘National Hoodie Day and International Day of Internet Action for Justice! Spread the Word! (April 9, 2012)’” (p. 16). The fourth type of frame alignment process is frame transformation, which involves “changing old

understandings and meanings and/or generating new ones" (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 625). According to Snow et al. (1986), frame transformation occurs when the frames promoted by social movements do not resonate with the frames of their recruits.

2.3.1 Media and social movements

"The power of the media to shape social events is a fact beyond dispute" claimed Tim Baylor in his article on "Media framing of movement protest" published in 1996. Klandermans (2014) argued that the media cover the existence of movements; set the stage for collective action; provide definitions and interpretations of the situations; and take part in the creation of a common understanding of the situations. As Fahlenbrach, Sivertsen, and Werenskjold (2014) argued, "although both sides [media and social movements] might follow up different or even divergent motives and frames, there is structural bind between them that is first of all based on the common need for public attention" (p. 2).

Both media and activists need each other. Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) pointed out that social movements need media for three main purposes: "mobilization, validation, and scope enlargement" (p.116). According to these authors, in addition to wanting the media to convey messages to their constituents (mobilization), they also need it to create the impression that 'the whole world is watching us' (validation). Movements view media as a key to broadening the scope of the conflict as well. Vliegenthart and Walgrave (2012) also echoed similar idea saying, "it is difficult to imagine that social movements could exist without the mass media" (p. 395). According to Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993), making a conflict more public offers the movement an opportunity to "improve its relative power, compared to that of its antagonist, and mass media coverage is a vehicle for this" (p. 115). However, this is not always the case as the media

sometimes do not pay attention to what movements would prefer. I will discuss this in detail in the following section.

The media-social movement interaction is not limited to the covering of issues only; it involves how those issues are covered as well. The interaction between media and social movements is characterized by negotiation over meaning or what Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) referred to as a "struggle over framing" (p. 18). Getting “preferably favorable media coverage is one of the critical preconditions for collective action” (Boykoff, 2006, p. 193) because it affects a movements' ability to mobilize their constituents (Cooper, 2002; Barker, 2008). Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) also argued that people who are engaged in "symbolic contests read their success or failure by how well their preferred meanings and interpretations are doing in various media arenas" (p. 119).

Research evidence suggested that media framing has an impact on social movements’ mobilization. For instance, Cooper (2002) observed the existence of a direct relationship between media and social movement framing congruence and movement mobilization. Thus, high congruence between media framing and social movement framing correlates with high level of mobilization while low level of congruence correlates with low level of mobilization. Likewise, in their study on “Mobilizing the White March,” Walgrave and Manssens (2005) found that the Belgian press did not only define the theme of the movement, it also facilitated people’s participation. Accordingly, the press “not only engaged in diagnostic or prognostic framing—more ‘normal’ functions of the media—but unmistakably undertook—large scale and unconcealed motivational framing efforts” (p.132). The authors described the support of the Belgian press saying, they “presented themselves as actors and players in White March events

with as it seems, their own agenda and objectives. Indeed, turning the White March into a success seemed to be an implicit goal of several newspapers" (p.132).

Media framing and a social movement's framing of an issue do not always match, however. According to Ryan (2001), factors such as resources, journalists' beliefs, and media-related conventions are important factors that facilitate or hinder a movement's access to the media. Furthermore, the match between movements' frames and the cultural frame is also an important factor. For instance, Baylor (1996) in his study on the television framing of American Indian protests concluded that "even to stage confrontational events to get media attention to promote a frame that does not already conform to some widespread and beneficial cultural frame" may not succeed (para. 45). For example, the study revealed that while the Indian protesters used the *Civil Rights* and the *Treaty rights* frames to focus on social and economic issues, the media mainly used the "militant," "stereotype," and "factionalism" to negatively portray the protests. Undrakhbuyan's (2001) findings on the media coverage of World Trade Organization and protests in Seattle in 1999 also indicated how media frames and protesters' frames of an issue do not always much. In his content analysis of whose interests the media advanced in their coverage of the World Trade Organization and protests, he found that developed countries and corporations received more favorable media coverage than developing countries and protesters. In fact, most of the newspapers (39.0%) portrayed the protesters as violent compared to (7.8%) which supported their agenda. This corroborated Ryan's (2001) findings that resources play a major role in facilitating or hindering movements' frame resonance with media. Furthermore, the study suggested that ideology played a role in influencing how media covered the WTO and protests in Seattle saying, "the agenda of major metropolitan newspapers tend to reflect the agenda of a strong ideological force" (p. 21).

Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) also identified three components of movement-related factors that affect media attention: standing (the level of attention given to the movement by the media); preferred framing (the salience of movement's frame in the media discourse); and sympathy (the extent to which the content covered by the media receives sympathy from concerned people). Gamson and Wolfsfeld added that movement standing by itself depends on resources, organization, professionalism, coordination, and strategic planning of the movement, which also influences the degree to which the preferred frame is salient in media discourse.

2.3.2 Social media and social movements

The literature on social movement-media interaction I reviewed in the preceding section focused on traditional media. In recent years, however, the link between social media and social movements also received significant attention, especially since the 2008 financial crises, Arab Spring, popular movements in Britain and Spain, and Occupy movement, etc. (Allsop, 2016). One major question surrounding this relationship relates to whether social media has an impact on social movements (Kidd & McIntosh, 2016).

Scholars' views on the impact of social media on social movements are divided into three main categories: those who have optimism about the impact of social media, those who are the pessimist about it, and those who are ambivalent (Kidd & McIntosh, 2016). For optimists, social media has a "revolutionary power" (Kidd & McIntosh, 2016, p.785). These group of scholars view the role of social media as a "paradigm shift" as "empowering individuals and communities challenging existing power structures in new ways" (Allsop, 2016, p.35). They present different reasons for their claim. For example, Gangopadhyay (2015) listed advantage of social media such as the speed at which participants of social movements can organize themselves, availability of chat rooms to discuss and share information, and easy and quick ways of signing

online petitions. Maghrabi and Salam (2011) also pointed out that internet-based communications not only help movements to organize themselves, but they also enable them to make a real impact on politics. These authors emphasized the vital role social media play in both "fostering the development of social movements and promoting the growth in a new political form" (p. 9). Pointing to recent years' politics in North African and Middle East countries, Balci and Golcu (2013) argued about the role social media plays in overthrowing authoritarian regimes. However, they also emphasized that social media cannot cause social movements by themselves, but when used effectively can help movements to achieve their political goals.

Pessimists view social media not only as incapable of having an impact on social movements but also as a hindrance to a positive contribution towards a social change (Kidd & McIntosh, 2016). These group of scholars sees social media activists, also known as "slacktivists," as "encouraging relatively ineffectual actions, rather than supplement more traditional forms of activism" (Allstop, 2016, p.35). Louw (2013) pointed out a problem with manipulation in social media use, "as with all media platforms, interactive digital media forms are also susceptible to being used as weapons by large political actors who mobilize surrogate warfare as tools of their foreign policy" (para. 3). Louw used the examples of how states and non-state actors use social media to insert their agenda into social movements' discourse.

The third group of scholars, ambivalent, view social media-led revolution as difficult, but also possible in some cases (Kidd & McIntosh, 2016). According to Kidd and McIntosh (2016), social media is not a platform used by social movements only, they are also communication channels effectively used by governments to disrupt them. Likewise, Tufekci (2014) contended that movements might use social media to get public’s attention quickly, find a way around censorship, and easily coordinate, but this may not translate into their success, as success

depends on other factors such as the structure and organization of the movement as well. Tufekci also explained that governments have tried to disrupt protests using legal means and other strategies such as negatively portraying social media, restricting content, and inundating the cyberspace with supporters and paid people.

Scholars also identified other factors that moderate the impact of social media on social movements. For instance, Olorunnisola and Martin (2012) pointed out that social media can empower movements, but their impacts are tempered by factors related to contexts such as digital divide. Similarly, Garcia-Murillo, Wohlers, and Zaber (2017) argued that information communication technologies provide movements with valuable benefits such as the decreased cost of information, but the impacts are constrained by factors such education, income level, legal matters.

2.3.3 Social media and collective action frames

Surzhko-Harned and Zahuranec (2017) argued that social media serve as an important framing tool. Ince, Rojas, and Davis (2017) contended that social media are platforms not only where movement activists "promote their messages, articulate their core beliefs," they are also a place where they frame issues (p.1818). Surzhko-Harned & Zahuranec (2017) argued that "when traditional sources of issues framing such as elites and media lose their credibility, social media can provide a powerful platform for framing events and issues" (p. 775). Moscato (2015) also pointed out that social media frames of an issue also serve the purpose of traditional media which include reporting, mediating, debating, entertaining, and taking positions on political and economic issues. Surzhko-Harned and Zahuranec (2017) even went further claiming that internet-based social media have "unmatched capabilities" as sources of news and framing tool (p. 775).

Social media enable people to construct their frames on contentious issues (Goh & Pang, 2016, p. 531). They allow citizens to "alter and manipulate the movement's construction of meaning" (Ince, Rojas, & Davis, 2017, p. 1827). They enable users to create a "distributed framing" which is using hashtags to develop an "understanding of problems and solutions that do not exclusively rely on leaders within the movement or other highly visible individuals" (p. 1818). In their study on how Twitter users interacted with "Black Lives Matter" movement using hashtag, Ince, Rojas, and Davis found that users 1) added more framings to the original frames of the movements, and 2) made moves to transition from "a movement that is small and focused on a specific grievance to a mass movement that has more developed tactics" (p. 1825).

Studies have also indicated that social media frame issues using collective action framing strategies. For example, in her study that looked at how the "Million Hoodies Movement for Justice" framed issues on social media, Hon (2016) found all framing tasks of collective action frames identified by Snow and Benford (1988): diagnostic framing, prognostic framing, motivation framing, frame bridging, and frame alignment. Accordingly, the movement used two diagnostic frames: the injustice frame to oppose George Zimmerman's release from jail, and the racism frame to explain his motivation behind the shooting of Trayvon Martin. The finding also indicated that the movement used solidarity and gun control frame as prognostic frames, while it used participation frames such as holding rallies, marches, and vigil as motivational frames. Moreover, the result of the study revealed that the movement used different types of frame alignment processes. For example, they used the case of Trayvon Martin as part of a racism issue faced by African-Americans (frame bridging). They continuously updated members with clarification of the next move (frame-amplification). They reached out to more supporters

(frame-extension) and went beyond Trayvon Martin's case to include other social issues facing African Americans (frame-transformations).

Likewise, Goh and Pang (2016), who studied the protests in 2013 and 2014 in Singapore against the government's immigration policy, also found that protesters used the three collective action framing strategies: diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing strategies. Their study indicated that the protesters used the injustice frame to raise awareness about the cause of the problem, the victim of the problem, and the injustice. They also used two prognostic frames—a call for government change and call on the government to listen to their concerns. They also used three types of motivation framing: collective agency (to unite to assert their identity), individual agency (get your voice heard), and the reason for participation (legitimate cause, likely success). However, the same study indicated the existence of difference on the level of emphasis on different framing strategies—motivational framing most frequently used, followed by diagnostic, prognostic frame respectively. Furthermore, it revealed a difference between organizers and individual protesters on the level of emphasis on sub-frames under each frame; for example, while the protest organizers emphasized government for as a causal agent, the individual protesters emphasized foreigners.

Scholars have also looked at the impact of social media frames of movements on traditional media frames of the same. In the study that analyzed the frames of Canada's "Idlenomore Movement," Moscato (2015) found evidence that frames of hashtag activism were not only embraced by traditional media, they also helped audiences of the mainstream media to identify grievances, challenges, and opportunities of the movement.

However, there is not always a congruence between social media framing of a movement and the traditional media framing of the same. For instance, in their study on how social media

and traditional media, especially the foreign media, framed the Ukraine's Euromaidan Movement, Surzhko-Harned and Zahuranec (2017) found disparities between the frames of the mainstream media and social media. That is, while traditional media framed the movement as a "geopolitical struggle," social media portrayed it as an "anti-regime revolution" (p. 758). Likewise, a study on framing of the 2011 Egyptian uprising by Hamdy and Goma (2016) showed discrepancies between the frames of social media and the mainstream media. Accordingly, while government-affiliated newspapers framed the movement as a conspiracy against the state of Egypt, social media portrayed it as "'a revolution for freedom and social justice'" (p. 195). The same study also revealed that independent media adopted the combinations of both frames.

As discussed in this section, there are different perspectives on the study of social movements such as theories of collective behavior, resource mobilization approach, the political process theory, and the framing. This section also discussed the link between social movements and the media (both traditional and social media). The next part looks at the role of foreign media in the democratization process by paying attention to the Western media coverage of Africa.

2.4 Foreign Media and Democratization

The role of foreign media on democratization has been the subject of scholarly discussions for decades. Studies revealed that international media play a significant role both in the process and the outcome of the democratization effort such as encouraging and promoting protests and weakening authoritarian governments through propaganda. This section provides a summary of the literature on the role of foreign media in the process of democratization and some overview of Western media coverage of Africa.

Foreign media played a significant role in conflicts in other states. For example, the Western media played a vital role in weakening the Communist regimes. They provided audiences in those regimes with alternative information that was not available on domestic media (Kern & Hainmuller, 2009). By so doing, they allowed the audiences "to compare communist propaganda with credible information from abroad" (Kern & Hainmuller, 2009, p. 379). According to Kern and Hainmuller (2009), foreign media also exposed to the world the presence of protest movements, human rights abuses, and those countries' involvement in foreign wars. Furthermore, they enabled the audience in the Communist countries to make a comparison between their life standards with those of people in the capitalist countries and familiarized them with democracies and freedom in other countries (Kern & Hainmuller, p. 379).

Foreign media also foster opposition to the authoritarian regimes. For example, during WWII, BBC worked hard to promote protests against the Nazi-Germany's occupation in Europe. (Gagliarducci, Onorato, Sobbrio & Tabellini, 2017). For example, in their study on BBC Italian Service's radio program's coverage of the Nazi's occupation of Italy during World War II, Gagliarducci et al. (2017) identified two strategies the radio program used to foster protests. First, it targeted groups or individuals who wanted to engage in resistance, and second, it provided information and counter-propaganda messages to the broader section of the society. As Gagliarducci et al. (2017) put it:

> The Italian program was giving counter-propaganda messages against the fascist regime along with information on the war events both within and outside Italy, as well as encoded messages for the resistance. These "special messages" [sic] aimed at delivering logistic and military information to resistance fighters (upcoming military operations, shipments of supplies, weapons, movements of troops, etc.). (p. 6).

The Western media generally pay less attention to issues in Africa (Kalyango & Onyebadi, 2012; & McNulty, 1999). When they cover the continent, they focus on areas where the Western countries have interests (Kalyango & Onyebadi, 2012). It is "almost always in direct proportion to the scale of direct Western involvement (NGO or military intervention), or to the degree of clamour for such interventions (the 'something must be done response)" (McNulty,1999, p. 269). For example, in their study of the 30 years of coverage of Africa by three U.S. television networks (ABC, NBC & CBS), Kalyango and Onyebadi (2012) found that Africa received less coverage (19%) than the networks' coverage of Europe (54%) and South America (27%).

Another area that attracted the attention of media scholars has been how the Western media represent conflicts in Africa. The media representation of Africa is generally negative (Gruley & Duvall, 2012) focusing mainly on conflicts and crises (Kalyango & Onyebadi, 2012) and stereotypical tribalism (Gruley & Duvall, 2012; & McGulty, 1999).

Different factors affect the Western media coverage and frames of issues in Africa. These include the interest of the Western countries (Kalyango & Onyebadi, 2012; McNulty, 1999; colonial stereotypes (Gruley & Duvall, 2012; Vladisavljevic, 2015), political context (Baum & Zhukov, 2015), and journalistic professionalism (Nwosu, 1987).

For example, Kalyango and Onyebadi (2012) found that three U.S. based networks' (ABC, NBC, & CBS) news events focused on topics that included the involvement of the U.S. government and its militaries. According to these authors, this explains why only a few geographic locations, e.g., southern and northern parts of Africa, received media coverage. They concluded that the "coverage of Africa focused on the northern and southern part of the

continent, possibly because several countries in both regions such as South Africa and Egypt are geographically linked to the interests of the United States" (p. 681).

Some scholars have also found that colonial stereotypes influence the Western media coverage of conflicts in Africa. For example, in their study of how *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* covered the conflicts in Darfur, Sudan, from 2003-2009, Gruley and Duvall (2012) found that the newspapers represented the disputes stereotypically and linked it with tribalism, using terms associated with it, such as ethnic and tribe. Gruely and Duvall also found that the newspapers' coverage of conflicts in Darfur lacked detail. Vladsavljevic (2015) also made similar assertion saying: "…media representation of political conflicts in African states have long involved negative stereotypes and relied on the themes of 'ancient hatreds' and 'tribalism'" (p. 12).

The nature of the regimes, whether democratic or undemocratic, can also affect how the international media cover conflicts. That is, the media underreport conflicts in undemocratic states compared to their coverage of conflicts in democratic countries. For example, in their studies of international newspapers reporting of the crisis in Libya in 2015, Baum and Zhukov (2015) found media bias against opponents of the Libyan regime which included underreporting protests and collective action by protesters, ignoring violence committed by the government, and highlighting on violence committed by the opponents.

The way the news media cover Africa's democratization process varies from media to media. For example, Alalawi (2015) who studied how Fox News and Al Jazeera covered the Arab Spring found a great discrepancy between the two media. That is, for example, Fox News gave negative coverage to protests in Egypt against the incumbent President Hosni Mubarak. Fox News associated the Muslim Brotherhood, the most organized political party that led the protest,

with terrorism and extremism. However, Alalawi found that Aljazeera portrayed the Muslim Brotherhood as a peaceful political movement. Alalawi concluded that Fox News informed the American audience that the movement was radical and extremist and described the group as anti-democratic.

As reviewed in this section, foreign media play a significant role in the process of democratization. But the Western press generally gives less attention to issues in Africa. Even when they give attention, their coverage and framing of issues depend on different factors such as the economic and interests of the Western countries and colonial stereotypes. The following section discusses the literature on counter-movement framing by opponents and government officials.

2.5 Theories of International Relations, News Media, and NGOs

International relations and media studies are two separate fields of studies. However, scholars have attempted to establish a link between the two recently. Non-Governmental Organizations such as human rights groups, which received less attention in the literature of international relations, have also received some attention in recent years. This section will give a summary of the major theories of international relations, and will then review literature that links international relations theories, news media, and NGOs.

2.5.1 Major approaches to the study of international relations

Scholars of international relations have long tried to provide a theoretical explanation of why and how states form a relationship—be it political, diplomatic, economic or otherwise—with other states. Although there are many theories of international relations, four major theoretical models dominate the literature on international relations. They are realism, institutionalism, liberalism, and constructivism.

The realist approach to study international relations stems from its assumptions about states (Mearsheimer, 1992). According to realists, states are always in the state of anarchy; they have some "offensive military capacity;" they always live in uncertainty; their motive is survival, and they are rational" (Mearsheimer, 10). The realists hold the view that cooperation among states is possible but that it is unsustainable (p.12). The main reason cooperation among states cannot last long in the eyes of realists is due to two main reasons: cheating and relative-gains considerations. Mearsheimer pointed out that "the bottom-line, however, is that cooperation takes place in a world that is competitive at its core—one where states have powerful incentives to take advantages of other states" (p.13).

The institutionalist model shares many of realist's assumption about the world. That is, the world is characterized by anarchy, offensive capacity, uncertainty, survival, and rationality. According to liberal institutionalists, institutions lead to international stability and strengthen the connection between institutions and economic cooperation. However, they part company with realists on how to deal with a security dilemma that has roots in anarchy. Unlike realists, they believe that it is not alliance formation or balance of power that allays states' fear for security, but it is institutional cooperation among nations (Mearsheimer, (p.16). According to Keohane and Martin (1995), cheating and lack of trust among states can be dealt with through established institutional rules. Liberal institutionalists give four reasons why institutions bring cooperation that results in world stability: they increase transactions among states; result in issue-linkages and reluctance to cheat; increase information flow; and reduce transaction costs.

The liberalist theoretical model holds the view that it is essential to pursue "policies that can be termed to be in the common good, rather than what is good for the individual state" (Kaufman, 2014, p. 53). This theoretical model accepts cooperation and interdependence among

states. Many scholars in international relations believe that "because of its broad worldview and its acceptance of interdependence, there are many in international relations who think that the liberal model is more appropriate than realist theory in describing and explaining international relations in a globalized post– Cold War world" (53). Like institutionalists, liberals accept the idea that cooperation among countries is possible. However, unlike realists and institutionalists, liberalists argue that a state is not unitary, i.e., there many actors and interest groups who can affect international cooperation. According to liberalism, domestic interest affects international relations. In her book: "Interests, Institutions, and Information" Helen V. Milner (1997) described how domestic politics impact international relations. She argued that domestic politics and international relations are inseparable: "A country's international position exerts an important impact on its internal politics and economics" and "conversely, its domestic situation shapes its behaviors in foreign relations" (Milner, 1997, p.1). Milner also claimed that three variables—interests, institutions, and information— in domestic politics have impact on international relations (p.11).

The fourth approach to study international relations is constructivism. This approach looks at relations within "a larger set of social and political interactions and the ways in which those relationships help a state frame the answers" (Kaufman, 2013, p. 57). Constructivists argue that ideas are socially constructed. Elaborating on constructivist claims Wendt (1994) said:

> 1) states are the principal units of analysis for international political theory; 2) the key structures in the state system are intersubjective, rather than material; and 3) state identities and interests are an important part constructed by their social structures, rather than given exogenously to the system by human nature or domestic politics. (p. 385).

Scholars have indicated that the constructivist approach to international relations explains the role of media in foreign affairs. According to Dell'orto (2013), "…while power, interests and institutions matter, they need to be understood as constituted by ideas that exist within their specific cultural and historical times" (p. 238). In the process of construction ideas, communication is important because it is "a necessary locus for the negotiation of those meanings within widely accepted, historically and culturally specific understandings" Dell'orto, 2013, 2018). That is, if ideas are socially constructed, as the constructivists argue, then communication plays a fundamental role, as it is "a site for the formation of meaning around foreign realities" (Dell'orto, 2013).

2.5.2 Media and international relations

In today's world, people of one country have exposure to the media of a foreign country. As O'Hefferman (1991), pointed out:

> every country is penetrated by the media of other countries, from international magazines and newspapers brought in by tourists and business travelers to news and entertainment directly broadcast from satellite to homes, offices, and cable systems in dozens of countries simultaneously. (p. 85).

Exposure to foreign media has significant bearings on international relations. According to Moulana (2015), the international pollical affairs which were once characterized by "geographical and physical level" are being replaced by "cultural and communication" where the news media plays a role (p. 92). Mass communication is important in international relations because "it remains an essential locus for the creation, definition and transformation of the power relationships that lie at the heart of international affairs" (Dell'orto, 2013, p. 1). Dell'orto further pointed out that media "…has been a crucial factor—an irreplaceable mediator—in international

affairs historically and currently, by functioning as the public arena where meanings for things literally foreign become understandable realities that, in turn, serve as the basis for policy and action" (p. 1). The media helps create a country's image in foreign countries. As Dell'orto (2013) argued, they play a key role as the "images of national identities it helps create and negotiate influence expectations and consequently policies" (p.2).

News media are also essential in international relations. as controlling the global agenda is a "source of power" (Moulana, 2015, p. 93). Scholars have emphasized the role of media in agenda setting. For example, in their study on the role of international news on setting agendas, Wanta, Golan, and Lee (2004) found the link between international news coverage of international issues and people's perception. In their study on the link between the U.S. news media coverage of international news and audience perception, they found that the more the U.S. news media cover a foreign country, the more audience members perceive that country as important to the United States. Additionally, their study also found that negative coverage of a foreign country led to negative audience perceptions of that country.

2.5.3 Non-Governmental Organizations and international relations

Scholars give marginal status to the role of Non-Governmental Organizations in international relations (van Boven, 1989). Van Boven then argued that although many international organizations such as the United Nations rely on NGOs for information, the latter's contribution to promoting human rights did not get the attention they deserve. Accordingly, it is less well known that a good number of NGOs are performing many other functions for the sake of human rights and fundamental freedoms. That fact that NGOs also make contributions—and often very significant ones—to the development of human rights norms is an aspect of NGO activities that is generally overlooked. (p. 207). Other scholars, however, acknowledged the role

of NGOs such as human rights organizations. For example, Sikkink (1998) found that NGOs such as human rights organizations can influence the other countries' domestic policies by "norms and ideas" (p. 517).

2.5.4 Non-governmental organizations and news media

Scholars of media studies mainly focused on the role of the news media in shaping the discourse about social movements. This is so perhaps because the news media dominated coverage of international issues. However, studies also indicate that the news media are facing competition from Non-Governmental Organizations (Powers, 2018). This section reviews literature on the relationship between NGOs and news media.

2.5.4.1 The role of NGOs in news production

In recent years, there is scholarly work that indicates the role of the non-governmental organization in shaping discourses about social movements around the world. Non-governmental organizations not only play a key role in shaping discourse about human rights situations, but they also produce news, an area traditionally considered an exclusive domain of the news media. According to Powers (2018), they "play an increasingly crucial role in shaping and in some cases directly producing news coverage about some of the most pressing humanitarian and human rights issues of our time" (p. 4).

Powers (2018) explained why NGOs are involved in news production. NGOs see "communication as both a way to garner credibility as actors in international politics and a means to raise funds—either directly (through public donations) or indirectly via (via branding)—that are necessary for their survival and growth" (Powers, 2018, p.5).

The involvement of Non-Governmental Organizations in news production led them to work with the news media as well. That is, NGOs hire journalists who prefer "a news-making

sensibility to advocacy organizations" (Powers, 2018, p. 5). NGO's working together with journalists also affects the type of information they gather. As Powers pointed out:

> Although the development of such sensibilities boosts these organizations' overall chances of garnering news coverage, it also ensures that advocacy groups produce information that largely accords with rather than challenges media preferences. Donors, government officials, and news organizations—each in different ways and for distinct reasons—further reinforce these tendencies by incentivizing NGOs to focus their efforts primarily on appearing in the mainstream news media. (p. 5).

2.5.4.2 News media's dependence on NGOs

As NGOs need journalists, the news media also rely on NGOs. That is, news media use NGOs as a source of information, because of what Wright (2018) described a shift in their "political economy" (p.5). Wright explained the cause of the shift in the political economy, saying: "the decline in revenues of the news organization caused by the decline in circulation and shift of advertising to online media have led the news organization to cut back on the number of foreign bureaus and journalists" (p. 5). Wright also pointed out the rise in "'costs of news production' to compete with other news organizations is also a factor in change of the political economy" (p.5).

2.6 Counter-Movement Framing by Governments and Non-Governments

Social movements cannot always impose their interpretations of events on others as their construction of reality is challenged by others who do not support them. That is, the process of framing in social movements is a contested arena (Benford & Snow, 2000; Mc Adam, McCarthy& Zald, 1996; Noakes, 2005; Zald, 1996). It is "the subject of intense contestation between collective actors representing the movement, the state and any existing

countermovement" (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 1996, p. 16). According to Benford and Snow (2000), activists who are engaged in the construction of collective action frames cannot "construct and impose on their intended targets any version of reality they would like," because they face different challenges from movement opponents (p. 625).

Boscarino (2016) defined frame contestation as "an explicit and confrontational engagement with opposing frames and framers" (p. 285). There are framing contests between movements and counter-movements; between movements and the media; and between movements and authorities. The framing contests between movement and countermovement are mainly to "demonstrate who has the most support and resources at their command" and "to persuade authorities and bystanders of the rightness of their cause" (Zald, 1996, p. 269). According to Benford and Snow (2000), counter-framing is any "attempts to 'rebut, undermine, or neutralize a person's or group's myths, version of reality, or interpretative framework' (Benford, 1987, p. 75)" (p. 626).

Opponents of social movements challenge different aspects of movements' frames. For example, Benford and Snow (2000) pointed out that they mainly challenge the diagnostic and prognostic collective action frames. But Zald (1996) argued they challenge the mobilization frames as well. As discussed in the preceding section, media and movements are also engaged in "the struggle over framing" (Gamson & Wolfsefeld, 1993, p. 18). Frame contestants use different framing tactics.

Opponents of movement frames used different techniques to counter-frame collective action frames. For example, in her study on the frame contestation between two interest groups of energy policy—the Sierra Club and Environmental Defense Fund (EDF)— Boscarino (2016) identified four framing techniques: discrediting frames, utility frames, perversity frames, and

character frames. For example, the study indicated that the EDF used the discrediting frame technique against the Sierra Club's utility claims by accusing it of "presenting misleading information on energy usage" (p. 297). Also, while the Sierra Club used the "futility frame" to "assert that the competing proposal was inadequate and would not solve the problem at hand," the EDF used the "perversity frame" by claiming "their opponents plan would actually exacerbate energy issues" (p. 298). Both groups used character frames to "delegitimize" their opponents (Boscarino, 2016, p. 299).

In their study on frame competition between supporters and opponents of abortion in the United States, McCaffrey and Keys (2000) identified three strategies: "polarization-vilification," "frame saving," and "frame debunking" (p.56). McCaffrey and Keys' study indicated that the New York State National Organization for Women (NYSNOW) used the dichotomy of 'us vs. them' to polarize conservatives who opposed abortion. In their analysis of the polarization-vilification strategy used by NYSNOW in National NOW Times newsletter McCaffrey and Keys (2000) said:

> This newsletter [National NOW Times] suggested that there was 'a nationwide criminal conspiracy' and that 'these fanatics have instituted a reign of terror against women nationwide.' Antiabortion activists 'have use illegal violent tactics to close clinics, including smashing medical equipment, invading clinics and intimidating patients and medical staff. (p.51).

McCaffrey and Keys' study also revealed how NYSNOW debunked their opponents' use of the term, 'pro-life' saying "'the pro-life is a term used to make anti-abortion, and anti-choice seem positive and good' (Mid Suffolk NOW June 1987'" (p. 53). In addition, the study showed

NYSNOW used a frame saving strategy, for example by arguing they were ‘pro-choice, not pro-abortion.

Scholars also argued that state officials are also engaged in the activity of counter-framing the collective action frames of social movements. That is, as social movements are “signifying agents” engaged in the construction of meanings (Snow and Benford, 1988), states are also “active signifying agents engaged in the construction and maintenance of official frames” (Noakes, 2005, p. 105). McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1996) argued states engage in counter-framing activities, especially when they realize “the movement is able to establish itself as a serious force for social change” (p.17).

Scholars established some similarities between social movements’ collective action frames and government officials’ frames. The first being both social movements and states (state agencies) are “signifying agents” engaged in meaning construction. The second, both movements’ collective action frames and official (state) frames of an issue value frame resonance (Noakes, 2005). Benford and Snow (2000) referred to frame resonance as “the credibility of the preferred frame and its relative salience” with target audiences (p. 619). Another similarity, according to Noakes (2005), is like social movements, state officials also “draw on familiar repertoires of interpretations to construct official frames” (p. 101). Accordingly, states not only ensure their frames have cultural resonance but also aim to preserve “political legitimacy” and maintain “sentiments attaching citizens to the state’s activities” (p. 104).

Scholars also compared the impact of a movement’s collective action frames with official frames. For example, Noakes (2005) argued that official frames of issues have a greater chance

of winning than the collective action frames of movements because of the differences in the amount of resources each has at its disposal. According to Noakes:

> In terms of both materials and cultural resources, state managers enjoy significant advantages over social movement entrepreneurs and that the official frames they construct have a greater chance of triumphing in the struggle for cultural supremacy than do collective action frames mobilized by social movement entrepreneurs. (p. 105).

2.7 Summary

As discussed in this chapter, the social movement by the Oromo people is decades old. The question of self-determination and land rights raised during the Ethiopian student movement in 1960 was also the question of the Oromo people. Although those questions were addressed and enshrined in the Constitution, the Oromo people continue to protest against the government policy on land and self-governance. However, this time, the Oromo people's protests utilized social media and received global attention more than at any time in history.

The literature on media and social movements gives important insights into how social movements engage in the process of meaning construction to create collective action frames that will gain positive media attention. It sheds lights on the core collective action framing tasks of movements: diagnosis, prognosis, and motivation. In addition, the literature on government officials' framing of issues also indicates that as movements engage in constructing collective action frames, government officials also engage in constructing official frames, which often results in counter-framing contests.

From the literature on the media-social movement interaction, there are three major takeaways. First, social movements need media coverage for validation, mobilization, and scope enlargement. Second, the media and social movements engage in negotiation over meaning, or

what Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) termed “struggle over framing.” Third, media frames and the social movement’s frames of an issue do not always match, but it is preferable for a social movement for the media’s framing to be congruent with their own.

On the link between social media and social movements, while the question of whether social media has an impact on movements remains controversial, there is an agreement among scholars on social media being used as a forum to organize collective action. They enable movements and the audience both to share information and to frame issues. Movements use social media to frame issues using all framing strategies identified in the literature: diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing strategies.

On the Western media coverage of the democratization process in Africa, there is enough scholarly work that suggests the continent receives less media attention compared with other continents. As discussed in the preceding section, the Western media give coverage to issues in Africa where the Western countries have economic or military interests. This may suggest that the Western media coverage of the democratization process in Africa is helpful to social movements in areas where the Western countries have interests and when those interests are best served by supporting the democratization process.

This project is aimed at examining how the Oromo protest movement was covered by different actors, i.e., Oromo protest movement activists, news media, government officials, and international organizations. It analyzes how international news media, Oromo protest movement activists, and human rights organizations (Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International) covered the Oromo protest movement. The next chapter will discuss the methods used to inquire into these questions.

3 METHODS: MAIN STUDY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine, via a textual analysis, the major themes of the Oromo protest movement as covered by different actors who play key roles in shaping discourse about protest movements, namely, the news media, activist messages, human rights organizations, and the Ethiopian government officials. It also aimed at looking at whether or not the themes and frames highlighted by the news media were congruent with the themes and frames emphasized by other actors. This chapter provides a detailed description of how the study was conducted. It begins with listing and explaining each of the major research questions, and then it describes the research design, i.e., the data sample and procedures (data collection and data analysis).

3.2 Research Question

This dissertation examined texts produced by the news media, key Oromo activists, human rights groups, and government officials in order to uncover the themes highlighted during three key events in the Oromo protest movement and how each actor framed those themes. To this end, it attempted to answer the following five research questions, discussed in these subsections below.

3.2.1 Major themes of the international news media

As discussed in chapter two, the mass media play an important role in shaping the discourse about social movements. They cover the existence of movements, "define and interpret the situations," and create a "shared definition of the situation" Klandermans (2014, p.42). They also frame issues by defining a problem, interpreting the causes, evaluating the morals, and

suggesting solutions (Entman, 1993). As regards social movements, studying news media is key to understanding how they "coalesce, build, and maintain themselves, as well as how they decide to frame their dissident messages." (Boykoff, 2016, p. 193). So, this project sought to look at the major themes of the news media on the Oromo protest movement and how those themes were framed. By answering the following research question:

RQ1: What were the major themes of the international news media on the Oromo protest movement? How did they frame those themes?

3.2.2 Major themes of the messages of the Oromo activists

As discussed in chapter 2, social movements are "signifying agents actively involved in the framing of events and conditions, and thus in the production of meanings and ideas" (Snow & Benford, 1988, p. 213). By engaging in the construction of collective action frames, activists create a common understanding on the definition of a problem that needs change, attribution on who is responsible, or what to blame, solutions to the problem, and actions needed to change it (Benford & Snow, 2000). According to these authors, these core collective action framing tasks can be defined as diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing. In addition to studying the news media texts, understanding the social movements also requires studying the movements themselves. So, this dissertation sought to understand the themes highlighted by the social media activists of the Oromo protest movement and how those themes were portrayed, by answering the following research question:

RQ2. What were the major themes of the messages of the key Oromo activists? How did they frame those themes?

3.2.3 Major themes of human rights organizations

One area that receives little scholarly attention in social movement studies is the discourse of international organizations such as rights-oriented NGOs. As discussed in the preceding two chapters, international human rights organizations also play a key role in reporting on issues that involve human rights violations around the world. The news media also use them as a source of information, especially with the rights violations in the case of Ethiopia. Therefore, this project also sought to assess the themes of the Oromo protest movement as highlighted by two influential internatonal human rights groups, namely, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, by answering the following question:

RQ3. What were the major themes highlighted by international human rights organizations (Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International)? How did they frame those themes?

3.2.4 Major themes of the Ethiopian government officials

The dissertation also looked at the major themes of the response by the Ethiopian government officials to the Oromo protest movement. Governments are not only the targets of the protest movement, but they are also sources of information for the news media. Furthermore, government officials are not passive onlookers; they are involved in shaping the discourse about the protests against them as well. As Noakes (2015) argued, governments are "engaged in the construction and maintenance of official frames" (p. 105). So, the project also answered the following research question:

RQ4. What were the major themes of the Ethiopian government officials' response to the protest? How did they frame those themes?

3.2.5 Comparison of news media frames with the frame of other actors.

As discussed in chapter two, social movements operate in a contested arena where "intense contestation" takes place between "collective actors representing the movement, the state, and any existing countermovements" (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, 1996, p. 16). Hence, this project sought to understand the framing dynamics between the news media frames and frames other actors (Oromo activists, international human rights groups, and the Ethiopian government officials) by looking at the following question:

RQ5. How did the international news media frames compare with the frames of other actors (activists, human rights groups, and the Ethiopian government officials), especially in terms of reflecting the Oromo activists' frames on the protests?

3.3 Data

In order to answer the research questions, texts produced during the Oromo protest movement provide an ideal source of data. They are important to study messages in general and how those messages are presented in particular. According to Lindolf and Taylor (2011), texts give insights into how behaviors and interpretations are coordinated. They also argued that texts are sites where power, legitimacy, and reality are claimed. Texts are important sources of data for researchers who study frames and framing as well. According to Johnston (2002), "frames are based on text" (p. 66). Johnston provided three main reasons as to why texts are important sources of data for researchers who study frames and framing activities: 1) movement participants always accomplish framing activities though texts; 2) researchers get access to frames and framing activities mostly through texts; and 3) "verification of framing and framing activities or of frame's content is based on evidence embodied in what people say and do" (p. 66). For the purpose of this study, I adopted Johnston's (2002) definition of texts, which are

"symbolic behaviors and their structures" that include "written documents; verbal behaviors such as conversations, speeches, slogans, songs; and sometimes visual representations such as pictures, cartoons; and combinations of all three" (p. 66).

So, for a sample, this project analyzed news stories on the Oromo protests published by international media; Facebook posts of the eight key Oromo activists; statements of the Ethiopian government officials (press releases and interview transcripts); and reports, news, and dispatches of the human rights groups (Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International). Explanation of why these materials were important and fitting to analyze is discussed here (3.3), followed by more specifics on the sample in the next section (3.4).

3.3.1 News stories of international news media

The stories international news media outlets covered about Oromo protests are important materials to analyze. According to Wanta, Golan, & Lee (2004), international news media play a vital role in informing foreign audiences. These authors also pointed out that the media shape the policy of foreign governments on issues. Moreover, it is a tool of diplomacy (Price, 2003). The association between news coverage of an issue and public perception of importance of those issues has been well established by studies on agenda setting. For social movements, getting access to media coverage also helps protest movements to achieve the three major goals identified by Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993): mobilization, validation, and scope enlargement. In many cases, reports of international media are also used as sources for different human rights organizations.

3.3.2 Facebook posts of the Oromo protest activists

In recent years, Facebook has become an important area of study. According to Wilson, Gosling, and Graham (2012), social media like Facebook provide scholars with the opportunity

to examine human behavior that was not easy to assess previously. These authors also pointed out that activities of Facebook users such as connecting to others, expressing their preferences, and updating their status provides scholars with important data. According to these authors, Facebook's popularity also deserves scholarly attention. Mark Zuckerberg on his Facebook post on June 27, 2017, stated that the number of Facebook users has reached 2 billion people per month. Facebook's positive and negative impact on users demands scholarly attention as well (Wilson, Gosling, & Graham, 2012). In addition, social media may play a role in changing regimes through protests (Balci & Golcu, 2013).

Facebook posts of the key Oromo activists were used to conduct this project for several reasons. First, Oromo activists used this platform extensively during the protests. They published and shared different posts about the protests including textual messages, pictures, and videos. Second, Facebook posts provide a primary document, i.e., messages produced or shared by the activists themselves. Unlike studying only media reports on movements, analyzing materials produced by protesters themselves help to get direct insights into their thinking. Third, in a country like Ethiopia where media and information were under strict control of the government, social media, especially Facebook, were an ideal platform to freely discuss political issues. Fourth, prominent Oromo activists used Facebook more than any other media platform to communicate about the protests. For example, activist Jawar Mohammed, whose Facebook posts were analyzed, used this platform to share information about the protests with his more than 1.2 (now it reached 1.5) million followers.

3.3.3 Statements and reports of human rights groups

The Oromo protest movement also captured the attention of the international human rights organizations. International organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty

International not only document injustices and violations against human rights by governments around the world, they can be an additional voice for the activists. Their documents are often used as news sources by news media.

3.3.4 Statements and press releases of the Ethiopian government officials

Analyzing responses from government officials to the Oromo protest movement was also important. First, Oromo protesters' major demands such as canceling the Addis Ababa Master Plan, releasing political leaders, and stopping the jailing and killing of protesters were directed at the government officials. Second, protesters' call for collective actions (such as demonstrations, stay-at-home campaign, and market boycotts) were aimed at pressuring the government officials to answer their demands. Third, government officials also engaged in countermovement activities.

The Ethiopian government officials issued numerous statements. First, they denied the claim the protesters made that the Master Plan aimed at displacing farmers from their ancestral lands, and instead, said it aimed at building infrastructures such as roads and social services centers such as hospitals. Then they said the protesters' demand to cancel the Master Plan was the question of the few that did not represent the majority of people. As the intensity of the protest increased, however, they accused organizers of the movement of hidden political agendas. For example, at a press conference he gave on February 25, 2016, Getachew Rada, Government Communications Affairs Office Minster, said the demands of the Oromo protest movement "has no relation either with the integrated master plan or the lack of good governance" and rather, "subversive elements have taken advantages of the grievances of the people and diverted it into their own hidden political agenda" (*The Ethiopian News Agency*, 2016, para. 9).

So, analyzing government officials' responses to the demands of the protesters was important to get insights into the dynamics of collective action frames and government official frames.

3.4 Data Collection

This section discusses procedures and techniques of data collection from each actor's sample texts. It also discusses the number of data (in terms of the unit of analysis) analyzed to answer each research question discussed in the preceding sections.

3.4.1 Data from the news media

In order to answer RQ1, the texts of eight international news media were collected. The news media outlets are: *The Associated Press*, *The Agence France Presse*, *Reuters, The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *CNN*, *BBC,* and *The Guardian*. These media outlets were selected based on: (1) the amount of coverage they gave to the Oromo protest movement, (2) the fact that most of them are Western-based media (as activists want their stories heard by audiences of influential countries), and (3) their popularity (audience size). The unit of analysis for the data on international media was news stories (N=73), editorials (N=3), and op-eds (N=2). News stories were selected as they are the primary information source that tells the public what happened, citing many sources. Editorials are also chosen not only because they also tell what happened, but they also reflect the opinions of the news organizations. Op-eds were selected because, although they might not reflect the opinion of the news organization, they are at least a primary platform for expert opinion.

Lexis/Nexis Academic was used to search for stories produced between November 12, 2015 (the day the Oromo protests started) and November 1, 2016 (a month after the Irreecha incident) using keywords: "Oromo," "Oromo Protests," "Ethiopia," and "Ethiopia Protests,"

"Feyissa Lilessa," and "Irreecha 2016," and “Oromia grand rally.” The names of key Oromo activists whose Facebook pages I analyzed as they were cited by many media outlets. These activists are: Jawar Mohammed, Etana Habte, Girma Gutema, Tsegaye Ararsa, Najat Hamza, Henoke Gabisa, and Ezekiel Gebissa, and Geressu Tufa.

The search resulted in 132 articles in total. However, 54 articles that mentioned the Oromo protests marginally were rejected, and the remaining 78 were analyzed. The number of articles analyzed based on the source are: *BBC* (N=14), *The Agence France Presse* (N=13), *Reuters* (N=12), *The Associated Press* (N=10), *The Washington Post* (N=9), *The New York Times* (N=8), *CNN* (N=7), and *The Guardian* (N=5). Out of these articles, 73 were news stories while three and two were editorials and op-eds respectively. In addition, 12 were also analyzed.

3.4.2 Data from the Facebook posts of the key Oromo activists

To answer RQ2, Facebook posts of eight Oromo activists were collected: Jawar Mohammed, Etana Habte, Girma Gutema, Tsegaye Ararsa, Najat Hamza, Henoke Gabisa, Ezekiel Gebissa, and Geressu Tufa. These activists were selected based on their prominence: their participation, number of their posts, their appearance in different media, and the number of followers they have. They were seen working together in different ways. Most of them appeared together on *Oromia Media Network* (*OMN*)—a U.S.-based satellite television station they control – to give their opinions and analysis on Oromo protest movement. Most of them also appeared on international media such as *BBC*. They not only appeared together in media, they also shared and “liked” each other’s Facebook posts.

The unit of analysis of the Facebook data was activists’ posts (written texts, photo captions, videos and audio) and shares (written texts, photo captions, videos and audio). The

posts and “Shares” of the activists reflect not only their thinking, but also what they want their follower to pay attention to.

The search term “#OromoProtests,” Irreecha 2016, “Feyisa Lilesa,” and “#GrandOromia Rally” were used to collect posts produced and posted during three significant events during Oromo protests: the August 6, 2016 Grand Oromia Rally, the October 2, 2016 "Irreecha Massacre," and Feyissa Lilessa' s August 21, 2016 Rio Olympic Marathon. The August 6, 2016 Oromia Grand Rally was a major event. Activists called an Oromia-wide rally to protest against the government for its marginalization of Oromo people and human rights abuses. As a result, hundreds of thousands of people participated in the demonstration in more than 200 cities and towns, which led to the death of more than 50 people (Opride, 2016)

The August 21, 2016 Rio Olympic Marathon is a significant event in the history of the Oromo protest movement. Athlete Feyisa Lilessa, an Oromo, who crossed his arms above his head—as a symbol of resistance—at the 2016 Rio Olympics brought the Oromo cause to the attention of global media. As a result, Oromos called him a “hero” who took a risk to himself and his family who were in Ethiopia at the time. His action created curiosity among international media, which as a result, gave significant coverage to the Oromo protests. The European Union invited him on November 10, 2016, to explain the human rights situation in Ethiopia.

The October 2, 2016 Irreecha (the annual Thanksgiving festival of the Oromo people) also marks an important event in this history of Oromo protest movement. At the event where more than 2 million people gathered (*Al-Jazeera* 2016), a clash broke out between the people and government security forces, and resulted in the death of 55 people, according to the government, but 678 deaths according to the Opposition political party (Allo, 2017). Following this, activists

called for “five days of rage” and angry protesters attacked many private and foreign-owned investments. Like the Rio Olympic event, this event also received significant media attention.

For the Grand Oromia Rally and “Irreecha Masacre,” I analyzed materials posted five days before and after the event. The purpose of including the pre-event, during, and post-event materials is to examine how activists framed issues up to, during, and after these events and to see whether frames changed. For Rio Olympic event however, however, there was not a plan for it, and hence, there were no materials produced for it.

The search resulted in N=1,539 posts in total. In order to reduce the number for a qualitative in-depth analysis, however, the data were arranged according to the date they were published and every 5th number was picked, which resulted in N=308. 52 more posts which were counted more than once because they were shared by more than one activist, and the remaining 256 posts (texts: N=235; pictures: N= 11; & videos: N=8) were analyzed.

3.4.3 Data from International human rights organizations

As the data produced by human rights groups were limited in number, all available materials that were published between November 12, 2015 to October 2016) were analyzed. In total, N=18 reports, ten from Human Rights Watch, and eight from Amnesty International were examined. The unit of analysis for the data from human rights groups was reports and dispatches, and letters.

3.4.4 Data from the Ethiopian government officials

The data to analyze the major themes of the Ethiopian government officials’ response to the Oromo protest movement were press statements and interview texts of the officials. Since the responses of the government officials were limited in number, all publicly available materials that were produced from November 2, 2015 (the day protests started) until October 22, 2016

were analyzed. In total, eight texts: four interview transcripts from government officials were analyzed: one by Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn; three by Getachew Reda, Director of the Ethiopian Government Communications Affairs; and four newspaper interview transcripts by Addis Ababa and Oromia government officials.

3.5 Data Analysis

To answer the research questions discussed in the preceding section, the qualitative research approach, specifically, qualitative framing analysis was used. Framing has been defined in different ways by different scholars. For example, Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss, and Ghanem (1991) cited by Weaver (2007) defined media frames as "the central organizing ideas for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration" (p.143). This definition emphasizes providing context as an important aspect of news content. It also highlights different techniques used by news media to frame issues: "selection," "emphasis," "exclusion," and elaboration." According to Entman (1993), "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (p. 52). While Tankard et al. (1991) provided a description of what frames are—"the central organizing ideas,"— Entman's definition offers description of what framers want to achieve—"to promote a particular problem," and how it should be defined, understood, evaluated, and recommended.

From the above definition, it is important to note that all issues are not equally important for the news media and, therefore, the ones that are deemed more important are picked and

highlighted while the ones that are considered to be less important are given less emphasis or rejected altogether.

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter and chapter 2, framing has also been a prominent approach to studying social movements (Johnston, 2002, p. 62). Borrowing the concept of a frame from Goffman (1974), Snow et al. (1986) defined frames as "interpretative schemata" which "enable individuals to locate perceive, identify, and label…occurrences within their life space and the world at large" (p. 464). Johnston (2002) described the function of frames as interpretative schemata which "indicate what to look at and what is important, and thereby indicate what is going on" (p. 64). He further said: "A frame may also indicate, by directing attention away from other things, what is not important" (p. 64).

This project used the qualitative frame analysis to answer the research questions. Reese (2010) described qualitative frame analysis as an interpretative research approach that emphasizes "the cultural and political content of news frames and how they draw upon a shared store of social meanings" (p. 18). Johnston (2002) described qualitative frame analysis as a description of "collective action frames and their roles in movement development" (p. 72). Qualitative frame analysis is "based on relatively small samples that should mirror discourse" (Matthes, 2009, p. 351). With regards to social movements, it relies on "convenience samples of movement documents and/or transcribed ethnographic interviews with movements activists as the database" (Johnston 2002, p. 72). Frames describe texts "with detailed quotes" in depth, "but without quantifications" (Matthes, 2009, p. 351). Qualitative frame analysis involves "data reduction" which "orders a wide variety of written or spoken textual materials by categories that represent more general factors" (Johnston, 2002, p. 69).

Qualitative frame analysis has its limitations. The results are not generalizable. It does not also provide the cause and effect relationship between variables, such as "exposure to media frames and issue opinions" (Brewer & Gross, 2010, p. 173). In spite of its limitation, however, a qualitative approach to frame analysis helps scholars understand how people "use their reasoning skills, their experiences, their knowledge, and their conversations with fellow citizens to engage—and sometimes reconstruct—the frames that they encounter" (Brewer & Gross, 2010, p. 173-174).

This project used the four procedures qualitative research methods suggested by Glaser and Strauss (2006/1967): 1) code data to identify categories that emerge from data; 2) integrate categories and their properties: place categories according to their properties and rules that define them; 3) delimit theory: look at any overlapping categories and the changes to be made; and 4) write the theory- findings.

The raw data were categorized into four broad categories based on their sources—international news media, Oromo activists, human rights organizations, and the Ethiopian government officials. Texts were printed, and video and interviews were transcribed. Further categories were also made based on the names of the news media organizations, activists, human rights organizations, government officials, and the date of publications of each data (news stories, editorials, reports, etc.).

In order to identify the themes, concepts, and meanings, the data were coded using the three coding stages—*open coding*, *axial coding*, and *selective coding* used in grounded theory (Corbin & Srauss, 1990) which were also used by scholars who study the frame analysis of news content (e.g., Gorp, 2010). *Open coding* was used to identify the initial concepts, ideas, and meanings of the data in sentences. Then *axial coding* was used to see the relationship between

the codes identified during the open coding stage. *Selective coding* was used to determine the relationship between the major codes identified during the open coding stage. Then each category identified at the *selective coding* stage was integrated based on their common feature, properties, conditions, and contexts. As discussed in the next chapters, for example, killing, torture, beatings, arrests, and disappearances were categorized under the major theme of "government response to the protests" while different categories such as economic, political, and cultural complaints are categorized under the theme of "the cause of the protests." Once the themes emerged, their frames were also identified based on the text.

The next four chapters are the analysis of the data from each actor—international news media, Oromo activists, and human rights organizations, and the Ethiopian government officials. They are organized based on the research questions outlined in this chapter. Hence, chapter 4 presents the result of the analysis of the international news media. Chapter 5 analyzes Oromo activists' Facebook messages. Chapters 6 and 7 give the analysis of data from human rights organizations and Ethiopian government officials respectively.

Each chapter starts by introducing the major themes uncovered from the study followed by a detailed analysis of the themes and how they were framed with examples and evidence from the texts analyzed. Each chapter wraps up with a summary of the findings to segue to the next chapter.

4 ANALYSIS: NEWS MEDIA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter answers RQ1: what were the major themes of the international news media on the Oromo protest movement? It discusses the major themes highlighted by the international news media and how they were framed.

The results of the analysis of the texts news media indicate that the Oromo protests received significant media attention. The news media focused on various themes, but the major ones are the root causes of the Oromo protest (the problem), how the government handled it, and suggested solutions. However, there were variations among the different media outlets and among sections of the same media outlet (such as news story, editorial, and opinion piece) on the degree of attention given to each theme.

All news media gave significant attention to both the root causes of the protests and how the government handled the protesters and framed them alike as *grievance* and *violence* respectively. However, they gave similar solutions but varied on how they framed those solutions. For example, while the *Washington Post* both in its news stories and editorials was more direct in calling for a solution such as third-party intervention (to stop the violence), the news media outlets such as *Reuters*, *The Associated Press*, *Agence France* Press, *The New York Times*, *BBC*, *Al-Jazeera English*, *CNN*, and *The Guardian* made indirect calls reflecting the views of activists, opposition political party leaders, and human rights groups.

However, solutions suggested by the news media were aimed at ending the violence against protesters rather than addressing the root causes that prompted the protests in the first place. To be clear, they focused more on justice for victims of the violence than a halt to the Masterplan or other administrative issues that were also important to the protesters. In this

regard, the news media departed from the protesters' demands. This section highlights the following news media themes in detail: causes of the protests, government response, and calls for action.

4.2 Causes of the Protests

The news media gave significant coverage to the causes of the Oromo protests. In covering the cause of the protests, they focused on 1) the immediate trigger of the protests, and 2) on long-standing issues. While they described the Addis Ababa-Oromia Special Zones Integrated Masterplan, also known as the Masterplan, as the immediate trigger of the protests, they also highlighted long-standing economic, political, and cultural issues. The news media framed the causes of the Oromo protests as grievances. The four main grievance frames will be discussed next: economic, historical, political, and a chain of causes.

4.2.1 Economic grievance

At the heart of the economic grievance was the Masterplan, the government project that would expand the territory of Addis Ababa into the surrounding areas of the Oromia region. The news media portrayed the Masterplan as an attempt by the government to take away lands from Oromo farmers against their wishes. To this end, they used different descriptive and vivid words and phrases such as "landgrab" (e.g. *BBC*), "confiscation" (e.g. *The Washington Post*), and "annexation" (e.g., *CNN*).

The news media used the landgrab frame to describe how the Oromo people viewed the Masterplan. For example, CNN published an opinion piece on its website on August 9, 2016 authored by Awol Allo, an Oromo activist himself, who claimed that the Oromo people viewed the Masterplan as a "blueprint for annexation" (Allo, 2016, para. 6). On January 12, 2016, the BBC ran a short video clip taking the views of Mohammed Ademo, another Oromo activist, who

portrayed the Masterplan as "…. the landgrab disguised as a development plan" (BBC, 12, 0:45). Similarly, on 2 October 2016, *The Washington Post's* Paul Schemm wrote an article in which he described the Oromo protests as a protest against land confiscation. He alluded to the contradiction between the numerical majority of the Oromo with marginalization and loss of land, saying: "The Oromo, Ethiopia's largest ethnic group, making up a third of the population, have for the past year been protesting their marginalization and the confiscation of their land for factories" (Schemm, 2016, para. 4).

The news media also described the intent of the "landgrab" as a wealth transfer from Oromo farmers to investors. For instance, on September 13, 2016, Rick Maese of *The Washington Post* ran a short video on its website in which Athlete Feyisa Lilesa, an Oromo activist, said: "The Ethiopian government forced Oromo farmers off their land to sell it to foreign investors" (Maese, 2016, 0:39). In its article published on January 14, 2016, Schemm, the writer of the article, repeated the views of the Oromo people, saying: "protesters from the Oromo ethnic group say the government is trying to take away their lands and use them for everything from industrial development to luxury housing projects" (Schemm, 2016, para. 4).

The news media associated the "landgrab" with its likely impact on the Oromo people. Particularly, they highlighted people's fear of displacement/eviction without alternative means of livelihood. For example, on January 14, 2016, the *BBC* aired the views of Mohammed Ademo who said that the Masterplan would "evict farmers with little compensation" (*BBC*, 2016, 0:49). According to the *BBC*, the protests were triggered by the fears that the Masterplan would evict the Oromo farmers. Likewise, the *Associated Press* published a news story on December 23, 2015 where Elias Meseret, the writer of the news story, quoted Merera Gudina, the leader of the

Oromo Federalist (OFC) party who said the Masterplan would '"rob famers of their land and rights…"' (Meseret, 2015, para. 10).

The fear of the impact of the landgrab was further explained by linking the loss of land to the loss of everything else. For example, the *Agence France Press* (AFP) described land as "everything" for the Oromo people. Boulo Justin, the writer of the news article, used a direct quote form Felix Horne, a researcher at Human Rights Watch who said: "for famers of Oromia and elsewhere in the country, their land is everything" (Justin, 2015, 2015, para. 22). AFP further cited explanation from Horne who said the land is '"critical for their food supply, for their identity, for their culture"' (para 23). Similarly, *The Washington Post* portrayed land as a 'means of livelihood" for the Oromo people. Paul Schemm, the author of the article, wrote the worries of Tarecha Guttama, an Oromo farmer, saying: "surrounded by three generations of family he supports on his farm, he said can't imagine what he would do if the order ever came to confiscate his land for an investment project" (Schemm, 2016, para. 22).

Some news media also used past experience as evidence to give legitimacy to people's fear of the impact of the Masterplan. To this end, they used quotations from Oromo politicians and activists and explained how the lives of the Oromo people who lost their land in the past were affected. For instance, on August 11, 2016 Sally Hayden of *Reuters* quoted Merera Gudina, the leader of the Oromo Federalist Congress, an opposition party, as saying "many farmers who have been moved from land already are now living in poverty, with some women forced to turn to prostitution" (Hayden, 2016, p. 22). In her *Reuters*' news article published on August 25, 2016, Hayden also highlighted how the people describe their past experience due to the landgrab. She quoted athlete Feyisa Lilesa who described people's experience such as being hired as a guard to someone on their own land as:

> When the city expands the [authorities] would take away their land and build hotels or buildings, the owners of the land would them become guards [for] someone else's property…that's what the Oromo people have had to deal with again and again. (Hayden, 2016, para. 15).

In its news story published on October 7, 2016, *Reuters* also highlighted the story of Mulugeta, another Oromo protester, whose life was affected by the landgrab. Maasho (2016), the author of the article quoted Mulugeta as saying: "I went to apply for a job at a steel factory that was built on my family's land, but I was turned away when they discovered I was the son of the previous land owner" (para. 13).

4.2.2 Historical grievance

In addition to the immediate trigger, the Masterplan, the news media also portrayed the cause of the Oromo protests as having deep roots in history. They used the historical grievance frame to highlight complaints about marginalization and discrimination in the political and economic arena. For example, the *BBC* on January 13, 2016 described the Oromo protests as something that evolved over time. It referred to unnamed "observers" who said: "Oromo protests build on long-standing complaints that the community has been excluded from political and economic power" (*The BBC*, 2016. para. 13). The *Washington Post*'s Schemm (2016) also provided a broad historical context by linking the establishment of Addis Ababa city and Oromo people's past grievances to how they view the Masterplan now saying:

> Addis [Ababa] was established 150 years ago by Ethiopia's dominant Amhara people in the heart of Oromo territory, and its expansion has come at the expense of the local Oromo farmers. The announcement of a "Masterplan" to manage the city's expansion was seen as the latest attempt to take more land (para. 14).

Likewise, *Reuters* quoted Feyisa Lilesa as saying, the "conflict over Oromo land began more than 100 years ago and the marginalization of his people is equally longstanding" (*Reuters*, 25 August 2016, para. 4).

4.2.3 Political grievance

The news media also framed the cause of the Oromo protests as a political grievance. They emphasized the control of the political and economic sectors by one group, especially the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), a member party of the coalition of the ruling party of Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Force (EPRDF). TPLF represents the people of Tigray who constitute only 6 percent of Ethiopia's population. The news media used the political grievance frame to highlight inequality, majority rule over minority, and lack of democracy.

The political grievance frame was also used by the news media to pinpoint the Oromo people's complaints over inequities. *The Washington Post*, for example, drew attention to the blame on the ethnic group Tigrayans for the inequality of good work opportunities, and marginalization. Schemm (2016) of the *Washington Post* described this complaint saying the protesters have "increasingly singled out Tigrayans for their woes, accusing them of getting the best jobs and dominating the economy" (para 10). Likewise, the *New York Times'* Kushkush on September 13, 2016 used human rights groups as a source and wrote: "Human rights groups have said an authoritarian government, dominated by the Tigray ethnic group, has marginalized regions outside the capital, including Oromia and has engineered economic projects on lands without local input" (para. 6). The *Washington Post*'s Paul Schemm on January 14, 2016 described how the Oromo people feel about inequality, saying they "feel they are treated like second-class citizens…" (para. 15).

The news media used the minority rule over the majority frame to underline the dominance of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in the political and economic spheres. *Agence France Presse'*s Karim Lebhour on August 10, 2016), for example, stated that political dominance by the minority group from Tigray is a cause of the protest by stating: "the protesters have different grievances but are united by their disaffection with the country's leaders, who largely hail from the northern Tigray region and represent less than 10 percent of the population" (Lebhour, 2016, para 11). Lebhour cited opinion leaders such as Getachew Metaferia, an Ethiopian professor who lives in the U.S. who said: "the state [Ethiopia is] 'controlled by an ethnic minority imposing its will on the majority,' is a crucial factor in understanding the protests" (para.14). Victor and Gettleman (2016) of the *New York Times* also used the minority rule over the majority rule frame using population size of the Oromo and Tigray people and the control they have on the political, economic, and security sectors. They wrote: "Protests in the Oromo ethnic group, Ethiopia's largest, say they feel marginalized. The Tigrayan ethnic group makes up about 6 percent of the population but dominated in politics, the military, and commerce" (2016, para.11).

The *Washington Post*'s Maese (2016) used the minority rule over majority rule frame to show the Oromo people's marginalized voice in the political arena despite their numerical majority. Maese pointed to the contradiction between the numerical majority and their role in politics by stating: "By most estimates, Oromos make up about 40 percent of the population, but few hold positions of power" (para. 6). Similarly, *Agence France Presse* in its October 5, 2016 edition used the minority rule over the majority frame, saying: "the protesters accuse the country's leaders, who largely hail from the northern Tigray region, of monopolizing power" (para. 17). Furthermore, it used the minority rule over majority to emphasize the feeling of

discrimination and marginalization as historical. It took a direct quote from Human Rights Watch's statement that said "'many Oromos have felt marginalized and discriminated against by successive Ethiopian governments and have often felt unable to voice their concerns over government policies'" (para 10).

The news media also framed the cause of the Oromo protest as lack of democracy in the country. Particularly they focused on issues such as elections, the authoritarian nature of the government, and people's frustration about it. They magnified protesters' claims about "rigged' elections. For example, on December 25, 2016, Paul Schemm of *the Washington Post* used a direct quote by an Oromo farmer who complained that government officials were not the ones the people voted for, saying: '"During the past elections [in 2015], those that came to power were not the ones chosen by the people…. we don't know where the ballots of the people go'" (para. 27). Schemm on *The Washington Post*'s edition of January 15, 2016 also tried to draw attention to the 2015 national election in which the ruling party won all parliamentary seats whereas opposition political parties did not win even a single seat. Schemm linked the accusation of vote fraud to the May 2015 election "in legislative elections in May [2015], not a single opposition candidate won a seat, prompting accusations of widespread vote fraud by the ruling party" (para. 27). Likewise, on October 3, 2016, Schemm also wrote that "government-allied parties won every seat in parliament in the 2015 elections" (para. 21). Schemm on January 15, 2016 also associated the cause of the Oromo protest with authoritarianism. For example, it cited activist Seyoum Teshome as saying the country was under the authoritarian system. In a similar manner, Jocey Fortin of *The New York Times* on December 16, 2015 used the lack of democracy frame to indicate the government's nature of authoritarianism. She criticized the government by alluding to the 2015 national elections, saying: "In a telling sign of its dominance, the governing

Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front and its allies won all 547 seats in national elections in May" (para. 9). Furthermore, Fortin (2015) used a quote by Merera Gudina, the leader of Oromo Federalist Party, who said: '"people are frustrated to live under this government, frustrated with the election, frustrated with their local governments, frustrated with their whole lives"' (para. 13). She described the contradiction of the government system itself saying:

> The central government presides over a federalist system that, on paper, ensures equal rights for more than 80 ethnic groups in Ethiopia. But many Oromo activists complain of political and socioeconomic marginalization that stretches back generations. The masterplan has become a rallying point. (para.14).

Some news media also highlighted protesters' claims that government officials violated their constitutional rights. For example, the Masterplan was also portrayed as a violation of federalism. Fortin (2015) of *The New York Times* emphasized this by quoting Hallelujah Lulie, an activist, who said:

> However, beyond the issue of the proposed master plan, the protests are caused by broader issues, including the proper implementation of federalism and the capital's relationship with the Oromo Community that surrounds it. The movement, which is informed by historic injustices, also targets bad governance and calls for respect for human and political rights. (para15).

Generally, the news media gave significant coverage to the cause of the Oromo protest movement by focusing both on the immediate trigger and long-lasting issues. The following quote from Merera Gudina, the leader of the Oromo Federalist Congress, by Hayden (2016) of the *Reuters* summarizes most of the findings discussed in this section: '"people are demanding

their rights…. people are fed up with what the regime has been doing for a quarter of a century. They protest against landgrab, reparations, stolen elections, the rising cost of living, many things"' (para. 3).

4.2.4 Chain of causes

The news media also highlighted a chain of causes; the protests were sustained by new demands. That is, although the news media portrayed political, economic, and historical issues as contributing factors to the Oromo protests, they also highlighted that government responses to the protests were escalating factors. For example, the protests were originally prompted by the Masterplan, but as the government started arresting and killing some protesters, new demands such as the release of political prisoners and demand for justice for those who were killed by security forces were added to the list of demands. Hence, the protests did not stop even after the government announced the cancellation of the Masterplan, the initial demand.

Agence France Presse in its article published on October 3, 2016 summarized how the Oromo protesters expanded their questions to include other questions saying: "the project was binned; however, a brutal crackdown on the protests kindled simmering anger against iron-fisted leaders who largely hail from the northern Tigray region and represent less than 10 percent of the population" (para19). Similarly, Elias Meseret of *The Associated Press* on October 11, 2016, described how the protests continued due to a chain of causes despite the cancellation of the Masterplan. To quote it directly, he wrote: "while the government later gave up the idea [of the master plan], the protests broadened into a demand for more rights and for the release of detained activists, opposition figures and journalists" (Meseret, 2016, para. 2). Reuters' Maasho (2016) on August 8, 2016 also covered how the protesters' demands shifted from a specific demand, the cancellation of the Masterplan, to the government itself saying:

> Unrest flared in Oromiya for several months until early this year over plans to allocate farmland surrounding the regional capital for development. Authorities scrapped the scheme in January. But protests flared again over the continued detention of opposition demonstrators. (para. 2).

4.3 Government Response

> Two lifeless bodies lay on the ground as the terrified crowd, armed only with sticks against gun-toting Ethiopian security forces, fled the fierce crackdown on protesters. Blood seeped a sheet covering one of the bodies on the road outside Wolenkomi, a town just 60 kilometers (37 miles) from the capital Addis Ababa. (Boulo, 2015, para, 1).

The above quote from *Agence France Presse*'s Justine Boulo on December 22, 2015 is just an example of another theme—government officials' response to the Oromo protests—that received significant attention from the news media. Under this theme, the news media highlighted the use of force by security forces that resulted in the arrest, torture, and death of protesters. The news media used the violence frame to describe the government response against the Oromo protesters.

In order to highlight the level of violence, the news media used different descriptive words and phrases such as "crackdown"/ "bloody crackdown" (e.g., *Al-Jazeera*); "brutal crackdown" (e.g., *BBC*); "politics of death" (e.g., *Reuters*); "shot dead" (e.g., *The Associated Press*); and deadly protests" (e.g., *Agence France Presse*). They published news stories with titles that directly show the type (e.g., arrests and killings) and level of violence against the Oromo protesters. The following Table 1 shows some examples of the news media that used titles that show the violence.

Table 1 Examples of the News Media that that Show Violence Against Oromo Protesters

News Media	Title
Al-Jazeera - English	• "Ethiopia's crackdown on dissent takes rising toll: Rights groups say 140 people killed in recent as government moves forward with controversial development plan (10 January 2016) • "'Ethiopia accused of bloody crackdown on protesters…." (22 February 2016)
BBC	• "Amnesty warns against "brutal crackdown' on protesters" (17 December 2015) • "Ethiopian government 'kills 140 Oromo Protests'" (8 January 2016) • "Ethiopian forces 'killed 400 Oromo protesters'" (16 June 2016)
Reuters	• "Ethiopian opposition figures arrested over land protests" (25 December 2015) • "Ethiopian students demand end to police crackdowns in rare protest" (8 March 2016) • "Politics of death: The map maker who finds the bodies in Ethiopia's land battle" (28 June 2017) • "At least 90 protesters killed in Ethiopia: residents, opposition" (8 August 2016)
The Associated Presse	• "Several dozen shot dead in weekend protests across Ethiopia" (8 August 2016)
Agence France Presse	• "Rights groups criticize Ethiopia suppression of deadly protests" (17 December 2015)
The Washington Post	• "Ethiopia silences its critics with deadly crackdown on dissent" (8 January 2016 • "Ethiopia meets protests with bullets" (11 October 2016)

4.3.1 Different types and levels of violence

The news media used vivid and descriptive language to highlight the nature of the government violence against the protesters. In the excerpt quoted earlier, Boulo (2015) of *Agence France Presse*, for example, described the death of protesters as "two lifeless bodies lay on the ground…." In the same excerpt, she also described the ensued emotion using the phrase ("…terrified crowd…"). She further highlighted imbalance of force between participants

("…armed only with sticks against gun-toting Ethiopian security forces"). To the level of violence, it used the phrase "fierce crackdown on protestors." Boulo also tried to create further images of the violence in the readers' minds by saying "Blood seeped a sheet covering one of the bodies on the road…." (para, 2).

Like Agence France Presse, *The Washington Post* also used similar descriptive language to highlight the violence against Oromo protesters. For example, Paul Schemm, the author of the news article, published on August 9, 2016, used a picture of many pairs of shoes with the caption that read: *"protesters' shoes lie scattered on the sidewalk in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on Aug. 6 after demonstrators were arrested and taken away by police."* In this news story, Schemm gave salience to how the government treated the protesters, for example, by forcing them to walk barefoot and beating them: "the detained protesters walked barefoot through the rain, escorted by grim-faced police officers who casually beat them with batons to keep them moving" (para.2). By referring to what was going on in different parts of the country as a "bloody story" and citing the Human Rights Watch's estimation of 400 deaths over months, he portrayed the action of the government against protesters as "harsh" (para. 13).

In its editorial published on October 11, 2016, The *Washington Post* was even more direct in describing government officials' violent response to the protesters. For example, in its choice of the title: "*Ethiopia meets protests with bullets,*" it clearly indicated the means of the violence, i.e., bullets. By referring to the death of protesters at Irreecha festival in Bishoftu on October 2, 2016, the editorial framed the government response as "tragic and emblematic of the government's wrongheaded use of force" (*The Washington Post* Editorial, 2016, para. 2). The stampede at the Irreecha festival resulted in the death of more than 52 people after security forces used teargas and live ammunition to disperse protesters.

In another editorial published on January 8, 2016 with the title: "*Ethiopia silences its critics with a deadly crackdown on dissent*," *The Washington Post* also highlighted the government response as "devastating violence" (para. 1). It used the "devastating violence" frame as a choice the government officials made over "dialogue" to address the protesters' demands. *CNN* also used the violence frame to describe the security forces' response to the protesters. For example, Awol Allo, in an opinion piece published on August 9, 2016, described the level of force against the protesters as "overwhelming." He wrote that "the government used overwhelming force to crush the protests, killing hundreds of protestors and arresting thousands" (para. 8).

Likewise, *The New York Time*s highlighted a violence theme. For example, in its news story titled: "*A Generation is Protesting in Ethiopia, Long a U.S. Ally*" (16, September 2016), Gettleman used a 32-second video by posted Upadhye (2012) captioned: "Demonstrators demanding political change in Ethiopia have been met with violent resistance by the government." The video shows security forces beating protesters with sticks. At one point it also shows a police officer kicking a protester in the face with a military combat boot. In order to highlight the violence theme, the *New York Times* article also hyperlinked to another video of the Human Rights Watch posted on June 15, 2016. The video shows, among other things, police officers whipping protesters with sticks and forcing others to do handstands.

Gettleman *(2016)* of *The New York Times* also drew attention to different types of violence against protesters. For example, he quoted human rights groups saying: "opposition within the country has been limited, with dissents effectively silenced. Many have been exiled, jailed, killed or driven to the far reaches of the desert" (para. 5). In its other article published on September 13, 2016, Kushkush, the author of the article, used the violence frame to emphasize

how even children and pregnant women were victims. For example, it quoted Athlete and activist Feyisa Lilesa who said:

> I had been witnessing the suffering of my people….This is not new to me, but we have not seen what we are seeing now when young children and pregnant women and elderly are being killed; things got worse by the day in the last nine months (para. 11).

In the *New York Times'* edition of August 21, 2016, Victor Daniel and Jeffrey Gettleman also referenced human rights groups saying: "…they [protesters] have been met by brutal crackdowns by the government including the shooting death of unarmed protesters" (para. 10).

Reuters also used the violence frame to describe the government response to the protests. For example, in its news story published on October 2, 2016, titled: "*Dozens killed in stampede in Ethiopia after police fired warning shots at protests,*" Maasho (2016) posted a video. The video clip shows many men and women in cultural attire converging on Hora Harsadee, a lakeside where the annual Irreecha festival is celebrated, singing the Irreecha songs. After a few seconds, the video shows many young people shouting "we need justice" by crossing their arms above their head—a symbol of resistance used by Oromo protesters. Then, the video shows police firing teargas to disperse the protesters which led to a stampede, which in turn resulted in the death of more than 50 people. Then, it showed people being plunged into ditches and many of them trying to come out of the ditches, some falling down. In the same text, Reuters used pictures of some injured protesters lying on the ground with a caption: "Injured protesters wait for help after several people died during the Irreecha, the thanksgiving festival of the Oromo people in Bishoftu town of Oromia region, Ethiopia, October 2, 2016. REUTERS/Tiksa Negeri." Maasho (2016) also used description of a witness who "saw people dragging out a dozen or more victims, showing no obvious sign of life" (para.9). It also quoted another witness who said,

"Half a dozen people, also motionless, were seen being taken by pick-up truck to a hospital..." (para. 9).

4.3.2 Violence frame to blame the government

The news media used the violence frame to portray government security forces as perpetrators of the violence. As shown in the preceding paragraph, *Reuters'* Maasho (2016) used a video showing security forces firing tear gas on peaceful protesters. Likewise, the *Associated* Press' Meseret (2016) on October 2, 2016 accused the government security of committing violence against peaceful protesters at annual Irreecha event of 2016. He quoted Mulatu Gemechu, an opposition leader, who said the protesters were "peaceful and did not carry anything to harm police" (para. 11). Meseret also cited its own reporter at the scene as a witness saying: "Before the stampede, an AP saw a small group of people walking in the crowd and holding up their crossed wrists in a popular gesture of protest. The reporter also saw police firing tear gas and, later, several injured people" (para 12 – 13).

In its March 9, 2016, the *BBC* also characterized government security forces as the perpetrators of the violence. It describes how the attempt by police to force peaceful people to turn off a nationalistic song turned into a violence that resulted in death and injury as follows:

> A bus filled with a wedding party taking the bride to the groom's home was stopped at a routine checkpoint on 12 February near the southern Ethiopian town of Shashamane. Local police told revellers [] to turn off the nationalistic Oromo music playing. They refused and the bus drove off. The situation then rapidly escalated and reports indicate at least one person died and three others were injured after police fired shots (para. 2-4)

The *Associated Press'* Elias Meseret on August 22, 2016 also mentioned a video clip he said the *Associated Press* obtained (but it didn't post) claiming it showed security forces

committing acts of violence including "beating, kicking and dragging several protesters" (para. 11). On June 16, 2016 Emanuel Igunza of the *BBC* cited the Human Rights Watch as a source to allege the government was "using excessive force" against protesters (para. 19). Referring to the same source, he said "some of those interviewed [by Human Rights Watch] allege they were hung by their ankles and beaten while others described having electric shocks applied to their feet while in detention. Several women also claim to have been raped and sexually assaulted" (para. 20 – 21).

4.3.3 Violence frame to describe the impact

The news media also used the violence frame to describe the impact of the government officials' response on the daily lives of the people. For example, on December 22, 2015, Boulo (2015) of *Agence France Presse* included in the news a story of a woman whose only son was killed by the government security forces as an example. The woman equated the death of her only son to her own death saying: "'That was my only son,'" [she was referring to one of the two dead bodies described by *AFP* as "two lifeless bodies mentioned at the beginning of this section] a woman sobbed. They have killed me'" (para. 3). In its article published on February 25, 2016, *Agence France Presse* also indicated how the presence of security forces affected the daily lives of the people saying: "Oromia ….is dotted with machine-gun mounted vehicles and Ethiopian soldiers who locals say have disrupted daily life with incessant checks, harassment, and intimidation" (para. 2). It also used a direct quote from an unnamed "mother of two aged in her forties" who said: '"I am very scared for our children, for our youths. Our life has become hell and it has no meaning'" (para. 4).

Other media outlets such as Al-Jazeera English, *CNN*, and *The Guardian* also highlighted the violence theme. Unlike other news media, these media outlets depended more on information

from human rights groups such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, and activists such as athlete Feyisa Lilesa.

4.4 Call for Action

> Ethiopia's human rights abuses and political repression must be addressed frontally by the United States and Europe, no longer shunted to the back burner because of cooperation fighting terrorism. With the state of emergency, Ethiopia's leaders are borrowing a brutal and counterproductive tactic from dictators the world over who have tried to put a cork in genuine popular dissent. It won't work! (*The Washington Post*, Editorial Bord, 2016, para.5)
>
> *"Oromo Protests: Why US must stop enabling Ethiopia?" (CNN, 9 August 2016)*

The above two excerpts are from the *Washington Post's* editorial published on October 11, 2016, and an opinion piece published on the *CNN* website on August 9, 2016 respectively. In addition to the causes of the Oromo protests, and government response, the news media also gave significant coverage to the solution to the problem. The suggested solutions include a call for independent investigation, framed as *justice*, and a call for a pressure by a third party, framed as third-party intervention.

In its editorial page published on October 11, 2016, the *Washington Pos*t Editorial Board blamed the Ethiopian government officials for rights abuses, the state of emergency (announced on October 9, 2016), the death of protesters at the 2016 Irreecha event, and the death of more than 500 people during the protests. The editorial characterized the violence by the government as a threat to a foreign investment, which it described as "the pillar of the Ethiopia's development agenda" (para. 4).

4.4.1 Blame third Party

The *Washington Post*'s Editorial Board published on January 8, 2016 played the activist role; it blamed the United States government, especially the Obama administration for not doing enough to stop the violence against protesters in Oromia. For example, by referring to the statement by the United States that stated it was "very concerned over the situation in Ethiopia," the *Washington Post* Editorial Board blamed the USA for stopping "short of explicitly urging the Ethiopian government to refrain from violently cracking down on protesters" (para. 4). It also criticized the Obama administration for characterizing Ethiopia as '"a model and voice for development in Africa"' (para. 5). It further suggested that the United States' unconditional praise for the ruling party in Ethiopia would undermine its own commitment to democracy saying:

> But as long as Ethiopia's authoritarian master plan for development included the suffocation of political opposition, a blatant disregard for human rights and cracking down on media, U.S. praise of the EPRDF [Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front] regime will continue to undermine its claim to support democracy on the continent. (para. 5).

CNN in its opinion piece published on August 9, 2016 also blamed the United States' support for the Ethiopian government. Awol Allo, the author of the piece, criticized the United States' view of Ethiopia as a "critical partner on the Global War on Terror" (para. 18). He claimed that this made "administration officials go out of their way to create fantasy stories which cast Ethiopia as democratic and its leaders as progressive" (para. 19). Allo was referring to statements of three officials of the United States: Susan Rice, the then U.S. ambassador to the United Nations; Wendy Sherman, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, and President

Barak Obama. In 2012, in her speech at the funeral of Meles Zenawi, the former prime minster of Ethiopia, Rice described the late prime minister as "uncommonly wise – able to see the big picture and the long game, even when others would allow immediate pressures to overwhelm sound judgment" (Rice, 2012, 02:16). In 2015, in her press conference with Tedros Adhanom, the minster of the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Wendy Sherman described Ethiopia as "a democracy that is moving forward in an election that we expect to be free, fair, credible, open and inclusive" (Sherman, 2015, para.2). In 2015, when he visited Ethiopia, President Obama described the government as "democratically elected government" (Obama, 2015, 0:22:49).

4.4.2 Third-party intervention

One of the solutions suggested by the news media was intervention by a third party. That is, instead of directly calling on the parties in conflict—Ethiopian government and the Oromo protest movement activists—to address the issues, it called on other actors such as the United States, the United Kingdom, the European Union, and the United Nations. The *Washington Pos*t Editorial Board on October 11, 2016 called specifically on the United States and Europe to address the violence. It argued that cooperation of these countries with Ethiopia on the fight against terrorism should not hold them back from addressing the human rights issue. It tried to draw attention to the implication of the state of emergency saying: "Ethiopia's leaders are borrowing a brutal and counterproductive tactic from dictators the world over who have tried to put a cork in genuine popular dissent" (para. 5).

4.4.3 Intervention—use your money

The news media called on the West to use its aid money to help Ethiopia to stop the violence against the Oromo protesters. For example, in its editorial published on August 9, 2016,

the *Washington Post* Editorial Board carried a title with a question mark, also suggestive of a solution: *"Ethiopia's regime has killed hundreds. Why is the West still giving it aid?* By juxtaposing the loss of life (the killing of hundreds by security forces) with the aid money that goes to the same government that kills protesters, it put a moral challenge to the West. By referring to the killing of at least 90 people by security forces in the weekend of August 6-7 (it hyperlinked to *Reuters*' news story published on August 8, 2016), the *Washington Post* Editorial Board suggested the West use its aid money to influence Ethiopia saying: "the weekend's bloodshed should prompt the West to reconsider its aid to the regime [of Ethiopia] (para. 2). The Editorial Board also suggested cooperation with Ethiopia to fight terrorism should not be at the expense of the human rights situation in Ethiopia. Hence, it criticized the United States for focusing on cooperation on terrorism while ignoring the human rights situations saying:

> The United States has long relied on Ethiopia as a partner in the fight against al-Shabab's terrorism in Somalia and sends the country tens of millions of dollars in development assistance, tiptoeing around Ethiopia's human rights abuses and resistance to democratic reforms…. The Obama administration should encourage a credible investigation into the killings and publicly make clear that Ethiopia's continued crackdowns are unacceptable. (para. 4).

BBC in its post published on March 9, 2016 also suggested the role of the third-party intervention to stop violence against protesters. For example, in its discussion of the government's arrest of the leaders of the Oromo Federalist Congress, it took a direct quote from Jawar Mohammed, a prominent Oromo activist, who challenged the governments of the United States and the United Kingdom saying: "Also what is the UK and US doing? As major donors to

Ethiopia they should be taking the lead to get the government to work out an agreement [with opposition political party leaders]" (para. 28).

Some news media also highlighted the need for third-party intervention to ensure justice. For example, the *Washington Post* Editorial on August 9, 2016 called on the United States to "encourage a credible investigation into the killings and publicly make clear that Ethiopia's continued crackdowns are unacceptable" (para. 4). It also called on the European Union to look into its '"cash for cooperation"' relation with Ethiopia. By "cash for cooperation" it meant EU's support for Ethiopia with aid and trade benefits in exchange for the latter's help in solving the migration and refugee issue in Europe. It characterized the violence in Ethiopia as a challenge to the EU saying: "Now Ethiopia is providing a litmus test of the stated E.U. commitment to human rights" (para. 4). It demanded the EU to make the "cash for cooperation" with Ethiopia conditional on addressing human rights violations and maintaining justice. Hence, it wrote:

> If Ethiopia continues its pattern of abusing its citizens and stifling dissent, and if it fails to credibly investigate the recent killings, the European Union should make clear to the regime that it risks being dropped from the migrant agreements. (para. 5).

The news media in their news section also highlighted the need for third-party intervention. However, unlike the editorials and opinion piece seen in the preceding paragraphs which made a direct call for third-party intervention, the news media in their news sections highlighted a call made by activists and human rights groups for third-party intervention. For example, *Agence France Presse* in its news story published on September 13, 2016 cited athlete and activist Feyisa Lilesa who said the United States can influence Ethiopia. Blanc (2016) of the *Agence France Presse* quoted Lilesa as saying: '"I want to tell the world what is happening"' (para. 12). Likewise, Aaron Maasho of *Reuters* in the news story published on October 9, 2016,

highlighted the call by U.N. experts for international investigation into the government response to Oromo protests. In its news story on October 5, 2016, *Agence France Presse also* cited an official of Amnesty International who called for investigation into the violence by government security forces against protesters. It quoted Michelle Kagari, Amnesty International' regional office as saying: "given the contradictory accounts [different numbers on casualties at Irreecha event], it is critical that an investigation be held to unearth the truth and identify law enforcement officers criminally responsible" (para.8).

4.5 Summary

As indicated at the outset, this chapter answered RQ1: What were the major themes of the international news media on Oromo protests? How were they framed? In sum, three major themes were identified: the cause of the protest, the government's response, and the solution (end to violence).

The news media portrayed the trigger of the protest as mainly political, economic, and historical grievances (although, acknowledging a chain of causes), while they used the violence frame to describe the government's response by highlighting killings, jailing, arbitrary arrests, and tortures of the those who participated in the protests. In the call for action (solution) theme, the news media called for an investigation into the violence and called for third-party intervention to end the violence. They framed the solution theme as getting justice for the victims. However, as indicated earlier, the call for action by the news media was mainly aimed at ending the violence, not addressing the political and economic causes that prompted the protest.

5 ANALYSIS: OROMO ACTIVISTS' SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

5.1 Introduction

This project also sought to uncover the major themes of the Oromo social media activists and their frames in answer to Research Question 2. Hence, this chapter presents the findings of the analysis of the texts of the Oromo social media activists on three events: "the Oromia Grand Rally," the Rio 2016 Olympics, and the Irreecha Festival of 2016. Oromo activists highlighted different themes during these events. The major themes highlighted by Oromo activits are *cause of the protest*, *government action*, and *call for action*.

Analysis of the texts produced before and after the #GrandOromiaRally indicate that activists focused on different themes related to political and economic rights; violence against the protesters by the government security forces; justice; environmental issues; and state terrorism. On the Rio 2016 Olympic event, they focused more on the implication of Lilesa's action on the Oromo protests by highlighting the global attention the Oromo protests was receiving; praising Feyisa Lilesa and discussing the impact of his action on the Oromo protests. Following October 2, 2016, however, the major themes that dominated the activists' messages were an expression of different feelings that include anger at the news media for not covering the incident enough or misrepresenting it, grievance, hope, and determination.

5.2 #GrandOromiaRally

The Oromo protest movement held what they branded a "Grand Oromia Rally" on 6 August 2016. The rally was significant in the history of the Oromo protest movement for three main reasons. First, the protests covered a large area of the Oromia region. It took place in around 200 cities and towns (Opride, 2016). Second, the government security forces responded with with force that resulted in the death of many protesters. Third, it received significant

coverage of the international media. This section presents the major themes of social media discussion both before and after the rally.

In the pre-rally social media discussion, activists focused on six major themes: political rights, economic rights, an end to violence, justice, environmental protection, and state terrorism. However, analysis of the post-rally activity indicates a shift of the themes of discussion to what occurred on the day of the rally: violence against the protesters; expression of solidarity, determination, and hope; warning to the government; and defending and praising the protesters.

Figure 1 Slogans of Oromo Protesters Before the #GrandOromiaRally

5.2.1 The pre-rally discussion

On 5 August 2016, one day before the rally, they posted a statement titled: "The grand Oromia rally for freedom, justice, voice, and peace," for "immediate release." In the statement, the activists portrayed the aim of the rally as an expression of "deep-seated mass grievances, country-wide anguish []and suffering, widespread violations of rights" (Ararssa, 2016a, para. 1).

In the statement activists also provided the plan to hold rallies in more than 200 cities, advising protesters to stay connected and share information. They also made a call to others to join them: “We march in the company of all people who, like the Oromos were wronged by the regime’s ruthless dictatorial, at times, even terroristic practices” (Ararssa, 2016 para.5)

They justified the rally by pointing out that it “comes at a time when the regime lost all kinds of reason by placing elite political benefit over public service, self-interest over justice, and oppression over inequality, and most importantly, privileging members of one ethnic group over those of others” (Ararssa, 2016, para, 5).

Before the rally, the Oromo social media activists also shared some demands in the form of slogans to be carried by protesters on the rally (see figure 1 above). The analysis of these slogans showed that activists highlighted six major themes which were: demands for political rights, economic rights, an end to violence, justice, environmental protection, and an end to state terrorism. The following table (Table 2) summarizes the major themes, specific demands, and the pre-rally slogans shared by Mohammed (2016a).

Table 2 Summary of the Major Themes, Specific Demands, and Slogans

Themes	Specific demands	Slogans
Political rights	Self-rule	“Agaaziin Oromiyaa keessaa haa ba’u” [“Agazi out of Oromia”]
		“Self-rule now”
		“No to military rule”
		“Genuine federal self-rule now”
		“Oromiyaa raayyaa waraanaatin bulchuun haa hafu” [“stop military rule in Oromia”]
		“Bulchiinsa raayyaa waraanaa didneerra” [“No to military rule”]
		“End Agazi rule in Oromia”
		“Finfineenn haandhuura Oromiyaati” [“Finfinnee is the core of Oromia”]
		“Finfinnee bulchuu barbaanna” [We need to rule Finfinnee”]
	Freedom of the press	“Unchain press media and information”
		“Gaazexxeessummaan yakka miti” [“journalism is not a crime”]
		“Blogging is not a crime”

	Religious rights	“Bilisummaan amantii haa kabajamu”[“respect religious freedom”]
	Human rights	“Migi namoota maraaf haa kabajamu” [“respect the of all”]
		“All human right for all now”
		“Mirgi mursi jiraachuu haa kabajamu” [“respect right to life”]
	Language and Identity	“Our language, Afaan Oromo; Our land, Oromia; Our identity, Oromummaa are non-negotiable”
		“Afaan Oromo for Ethiopia, Ethiopia for Afaan Oromo [“Afaan Oromo for Ethiopia, Ethiopia for Afaan Oromo”
		“Afaan Oromoo Afaan hojii federaalaa haata’u” [“we want Afaan Oromo to be the federal language”]
Economic rights	Lands	“Oromia is not for sale”
		“Qonnaan bulaa lafa isaarraa buqqaasuun haa dhaabbatu” [“Stop evicting farmers from their lands”]
		“Buqqatootaaf beenyaa gahaan haa kaffalmu” [“fair compensation for people evicted from their lands”]
Violence	End to violence (killing)	“Oromo ajjeessuun haadhaabbatu” [“stop killing the Oromo”]
		“Ajjeessuun haa dhaabbatu” [“stop killing”]
		“Ajjeechaa fi hidhaan nurraa haadhaabbatu” [“stop killing and imprisoning”]
		“Stop killing Oromos: Oromo lives matter”
		“Stop the massacre of our children”
		“Ajjeechaan daa’imman keenyaa haadhabbatu” [“stop killing our children”]
		“Stop the killing”
		“Bloodshed breeds bloodshed”
	End to violence (arrest)	“Hidhamtoonni siyaasaa haa hiikkaman” [“release political prisoners”]
		“Baqqalaan Garbaa haa hiikamu” [“release Bekele Gerba”]
		“Release political prisoners”
		“Baqqalaa garbaafi Iskandir Naggaa haa hiikaman” [“release Bekele Gerba and Eskinder Nega”]
		“Yoonaattan Tasfaayee fi Olbaanaa Leellisaa haa hiikaman” [“Releae Yonatan Tesfaye and Olbana Lelisa”]
		“Hidhamtoonni siyaasaa marti haa hiikaman” [“release all political prisoners”]
		“Yoonaattan Tasfaayee fi Olbaanaa Leellisaa haa hiikaman” [“Release Yonatan Tesfaye and Olbana Lelisa”]
		“Hidhamtoonni siyaasaa hunduu haa hiikaman” [“release political prisoners”]
	End to torture	“Stop the torture”
		“Maa’ikelaawiin haa diigamu” [“demolish Ma’ikelawi”]
		“Stop the abuse in Gambella”
Justice	Justice	“Lubbuun Obbolaa keenyaa yakka 1 malee ajjeefamanii haqa haa argatu” [“Justice for our brothers who were killed without any crime”]
		“Yakkamtoonni lubbuu balleessan seeraaf haa dhiyaatan” [“Criminals who killed lives should be brought to court”].
		“No dumping waste in Oromia”

Environmental protection		"Iddoowaan daraaraa lafa qonnaan bulaa keenyarraa martinuu haa diigaman ["shut down all flowers farmings on our farmers' land"]
State-terrorism		"Nuti Oromoota, miti shorokeessitoota" ["we are Oromos, not terrorists"]
		"We are Oromos, not terrorists"
		"Stop terrorizing people"
		"Ummata shororkeessuun didneerra" ["stop terrorizing people"]

5.2.1.1 Political demands

Oromo social media activists focused on rights in general, and some specific rights they want respected. They highlighted four major rights: political, economic, and freedom of speech. Activist focused on rights generally. For example, from the slogans posted on social media one reads, "All human rights for all." Another one reads: "Bilisummaa, walqixxummaa fi dimokrasii barbaanna" [we need freedom, equality, and democracy].

Activists demanded political rights such as administrative rights, particularly self-rule respected. They demanded the Agazi force, the special military force perceived to ensure the interests of TPLF, to leave Oromia, their state: "Agaziin Oromiyaa keessaa haa ba'u" ["Agazi out of Oromia"]. They demanded an end to interference in the administrative affairs of their region saying, "self-rule now" and "genuine federal self-rule now." The self-rule rights also included the right to rule Finfinnee (Addis Ababa), the capital city, which is geographically in Oromia but has a semi-autonomous administration. On the issue of Finfinnee (Addis Ababa), most activists point to the Constitution, which recognizes the Oromia region's special interests (legal jurisdiction) on Addis Ababa, but which has never been materialized.

Oromo social media activists also highlighted that freedom of the press was one the reasons to take part in the Grand Oromia Rally. They used the slogan, "Unchain press media and information." "Unchain" implies both the status of the press freedom and activists demand to

free it. One slogan reads: “Blogging is not a crime.” They also demanded the release of journalist and blogger, Eskinder Nega.

Among the demands of the Oromo social media protests was the respect of religious freedom. Ethiopian Muslims were protesting against what they believe government’s interference in their religious affairs (IRIN, 2012). So, the activists demanded respect for religious rights: “Bilisummaan amantii haa kabajamu” [“respect religious freedom”].

The Oromo people have long complained about cultural grievances. These grievances were also reflected in their slogans for the Grand Oromia Rally. For example, in one slogan they highlighted the importance of their language and identity. Our language, Afaan Oromo; our land, Oromia; and our identity, Oromummaa [“Oromo-ness”] are non-negotiable. Among their slogans are also their demands to make Afaan Oromo the federal language of Ethiopia: Afaan Oromoo Afaan hojii federaalaa haa’ta’u [“We want Afaan Oromo to be the federal working language of Ethiopia”]. Note: Afaan Oromo is the official language of the Oromia region, but it is not the federal language. So, many Oromos complain that their children cannot find a job in the federal government offices, as they require Amharic, the federal working language. They also highlighted that both Afaan Oromo and Ethiopia need each other: “Afaan Oromo for Ethiopia, Ethiopia for Afaan Oromo.”

Oromo social media activists also used slogans that demanded respect for human rights in general. These demands were reflected in their slogans such as Mirgi namoota maraaf haa kabajamu” [“respect for the rights of all”], “all human rights for all.” Oromo social media activists also demanded the rights of non-Oromos such as Mursi.

5.2.1.2 Economic demands

As discussed in the news media analysis part, the immediate trigger of the Oromo protest movement relates to the land, the Addis Ababa Masterplan. So, the Oromo social media activists highlighted it at the Grand Oromia Rally. They highlighted that their life is inseparable from their lands: “Lafti Keenya lafee keenya” [our land is our bone”]. They framed the Masterplan as a government plan to sell their lands to investors. They portrayed it as a scheme to sell the entire Oromia region: “Oromia is not for sale.” They emphasized that Oromia belongs to Oromo farmers: “Our land for our farmers.” In addition, they demanded compensation for those evicted: “Buqqaatootaaf beenyaa gahaan haa kaffalmu” [“fair compensation for people evicted from their lands”].

5.2.1.3 End to the violence

Most slogans by the Oromo activists focused on an end to state violence against the Oromo people. They listed different types of violence including killings, arrests, torture. They demanded the killings to stop in general: “stop killing.” They emphasized the target of the killings. One slogan reads: “Oromoo ajjeessuun haa dhaabbatu” [“Stop killing the Oromo people”] while another reads: “Stop killing Oromo: Oromo lives matters.” Another slogan further specified it saying, “Stop the massacre of children.” Another slogan warned the government that killing does not solve the problem, it would rather intensify it: “Bloodshed breeds bloodshed.”

Activists also shared slogans that demand the government end arresting people. They used a general call on the government. Some of the slogans referred to the prisoners as “political prisoners” suggesting they were arrested not because they committed any crime but for their political views. They mentioned some politicians such as Bekele Gerba, the opposition leaders of

the Oromo Federalist Congress party, Eskinder Nega, a journalist and blogger, and Yonatan Tesfaye, a blogger.

Oromo social media activists also demanded an end to torture saying, “Stop Torture.” Along with the demand to end torture, they also demanded the closure of Ma’ikelawi, saying, “Demolish Ma’ikelawi.” Ma’ikelawi is a crime investigation center in Addis Ababa where police forces “use coercive methods on detainees amounting to torture or other ill-treatment to extract confessions, statements, and other information from detainees.” (Human Rights Watch, 17 October 2013, para. 3). According to the Human Rights Watch, “detainees are punished or rewarded with denial or access to water, food, light, and other basic needs” if they do not comply with investigators’ demands (para.3).

5.2.1.4 Demand for justice

Another theme highlighted by the Oromo social media activists was Justice. They called for those who killed the people to face justice. One slogan referred to the victims as “obbolaa keenya” [our brothers”]: “Lubbuun Obbolaa yakka 1 malee ajjeefamanii haqaa haa argatu” [“Justice for our brothers who were killed without any crime”]. While they described the victims as “our brothers,” they portrayed those who killed them as “criminals” as in “Yakkamtoonni lubbuu balleessan seeraaf haa dhiyaatan” [“Criminals who killed lives should be brought to court”].

5.2.1.5 Environmental protection

Farmers in Oromia have long complained about the dumping of solid waste from Addis Ababa into Oromia saying it poisoned water and killed their livestock. In 2016 they forced the government to shut down the landfill in Sandafa, Oromia (Davidson, 2017). Likewise, they complained about flower farming in Ethiopia, accusing the growers of using chemicals that cause

health issues and environmental damage (Hanshaw, 2006). Hence, the Oromo social media activists used the environmental issue as a rallying point during the Grand Oromia Rally. They reflected it in their slogans. For example, one slogan reads, "No dumping waste in Oromia." Another slogan says "Iddoowwan daraaraa lafa qonnaan bulaa keenyarraa martinuu haa diigaman" [shut down all flower farming on our farmers' land"].

5.2.1.6 State terrorism

Oromo social media activists opposed the government's framing of the protesters as terrorists. They held slogans that not only deny they are terrorists, but also that portray the government itself as a terrorist. So, "a terrorist is not me, it is you." In one of their slogans they contrast what the government calls them, the terrorists, with who they are, the Oromo: "Nuti Oromoota, miti shororkeessitoota" ["We are Oromos, not terrorists"]. In another slogan, they asked the government to "Stop terrorizing people."

5.2.2 The post-rally discussion

Analysis of the post-discussion among the Oromo social media activists indicated that four major themes were highlighted. They are violence against the protesters; expression of solidarity, determination, and hope; warning the government; and defending and praising the protesters.

5.2.2.1 Violent response to the "peaceful protesters"

One of the major themes highlighted by the Oromo social media activists was the government's response to the protests that took place on the day of the Grand Oromia Rally. Oromo activists mainly focused on the response of the government security forces that resulted in the deaths, injuries, and arrests of protesters in different parts of Oromia. They portrayed the response as violence against peaceful protesters.

Activists highlighted the violence in different ways. They posted reports of the violence from their own "sources," and from the news media. They also shared others' posts that talked about the violence.

5.2.2.2 Report on the violence

Oromo social media activists reported "news" on the violence from their sources. [Here I used "news" in quotation because they cited anonymous sources, their friends, or other informants that contacted them through their inbox]. Activists highlighted different types of the violence they claimed security forces committed against the protesters. Table 3 shows examples of the report and types of violent response to the protesters.

Table 3 Examples and Types of Violent Response Against Oromo Protesters

Activists	Dates of report	Types of violence
Girma Gutema	6 August 2016a	Detention
	8 August 2016c	Arrests, beatings, killings,
	10 August 2016d	Injuries
	11 August 2016e	Dispersing, beatings, imprisoning
Jawar Mohammed	6 August 2016c	Killings, injury
	9 August 2016d	Killings, beatings,
	12 August 2016e	Arrests (of children)
Etana Habte	8 August 2016d	Killings, injury, and disappearance of protesters
	10 August 2016e	Disappearance, arrests,
	12 August 2016f	Beatings
Henok Gabisa	11 August 2016a	Death, injury
Najat Hamza	8 August 2016k	Killings
Tsegaye Ararsa	6 August 2016b	Arrests, beatings,

In addition to reporting news of the violence against the protesters from their own sources, activists also shared reports from the news media, especially international news media. For example, Gabisa (2016b) shared a link to a video by *The Reuters (*published on 6 August 2016). The link to *The Reuters* video shows police officers dispersing the protesters by beating them with clubs and kicking those who fell on the ground. Gabisa (2016c) also shared a link to

CNN website which published an opinion piece contributed by Awol Allo published on 9 August 2016. In the opinion piece, Allo detailed the killings, arrests, and tortures committed against protesters by security forces of the Ethiopian government.

Likewise, Hamza (2016a) shared *BBC*'s news report video published on 6 August 2016. The video reported the killings of hundreds and arrest of thousands of protesters. It also showed security forces trying to disperse the protesters by beating them. In the video, Emmanuel Igunza, the reporter of the *BBC* also mentioned questions raised by protesters such as demand for the release of protesters, an end to the killings, and respect for human rights. Hamza (2016j) also posted a link to the *Guardian*'s news story titled: "*Dozens shot dead in anti-government protests across Ethiopia says opposition*." *The Guardi*an reported the death of 33 people citing an opposition leader. In addition, Hama (2016l) shared a link to *NPR* interview transcript held between Audie Cornish, the host, and Gregory Warner, *NPR* correspondent from Nairobi, Kenya aired on 9 August 2016. Cornish reported the killing of more than 100 people by the Ethiopian government's security forces. Likewise, Mohammed (2016b) also posted a link to a video by *Al-Jazeera* aired on 6 August 2016. Catherine Soi, a reporter from Addis Ababa, reported that there was tight security in Addis Ababa and other parts of the country due to the protesters. She also mentioned the arrest of many protesters.

On 12 August 2016 Habte (2016f) shared a link to a short video by *The New York Times*. The video posted by Upadhye (2016) shows police officers beating protesters. The video screen has a caption that reads: "police forces have shot and killed scores of unarmed protesters in Ethiopia." The description, "unarmed protesters" seems to resonate well with the news media, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International, as discussed in the next subsection. Along with the link, Habte tried to introduce his Facebook followers to what the video was all about:

"*The New York Times* published a short video showing violent crackdown on Oromo youth last Saturday (06/08/16) at Mesqel Square." Habte (2016b) also shared a link to a news story by *Reuters* with a title: "*At least 30 protesters killed in Ethiopia's Oromiya region: opposition*" (published on 8 August 2016). By citing an opposition political party official, Aaron Maasho, the author of the news article, reported the death of at least 33 people in Oromia. He wrote that those were "shot by security forces" (Maasho, 2016, para.1). Similarly, Ararssa (2016k) posted a link to *Al-Jazeera* with a title: "*UN Calls for a Probe into Ethiopia Protesters Killings*" published on 10 August 2016. Among other things, *Al-Jazeera*'s Charles Stratford, a reporter from Addis Ababa, reported the death of 90 people and arrest of hundreds (without giving the exact number).

The Oromo social media activists not only shared news media that reported the violence but also disputed the news media they thought did not cover the violence appropriately. For example, they disputed the characterization of the cause of the rally. For example, Habte (2016a) blamed the international media for limiting the cause of the rally to "unfair distribution of wealth" saying:

> #GrandOromiaRally That increasing number of international media reporting on today's Oromia wide movement as having been solely caused by "unfair distribution of wealth" is a clear mark of clouds of ignorance refusing to fade away even after nine months of #OromoProtests, but it is at the same an undertone of how effective we have been in the presentation of key issues of our nation's narratives of struggle.

Habte (2016c) shared a link to *Agence France Presse* website which published a news story on 8 August 2016 with a title: "*7 dead Ethiopian police and protesters clash*." He disputed the number of people killed without giving his own number. "Confusion on the side of international media continues, especially on the number of deaths." The following picture is a

screenshot from Hamza (2016b)'s post in which she disputed a report by *Reuters,* describing it as "Irresponsible Reporting! Deplorable narrative! @Reuters." She demanded *Reuters* to "#ReportFactsNotFiction." Hamza did not specify which reporting she disputed or the narrative she did not like. However, the violence reported by the news media was covered in the news story. Aaron Maasho, the writer of the story, reported that security forces "used tear gas and blocked roads…try to quell protests against alleged rights abuses" (6 August 2016. para.1).

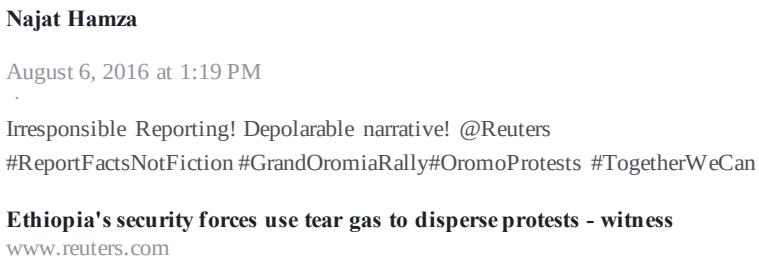

Figure 2 Examples of Activists' Protests Against News Media

5.2.2.3 Violence against peaceful protesters

Oromo activists not only highlighted state violence against the protesters, but they also portrayed it as violence against peaceful protesters. For example, in his post on 11 August 2016, Gabisa (2016a) shared a picture of Pastor Daniel with a Bible in his hand, leading a march of people including many young children in opposition to the government. Gabisa described how even a pastor, the symbol of peace, can be a target of the government violence. He wrote: "No matter how eternally peaceful one could be in Ethiopia, TPLF military will shoot you!" (Gabisa, 2016a). Also, Gabisa pointed out that Pastor Daniel was targeted because of his identity and being the voice of the people.

> His only crime is being Oromo and leading the voice of his people and his congregation in opposition to the authoritarian regime of TPLF that killed over 700 Oromo people since November of 2015, of which over 100 were massacred just over this past weekend. (Gabisa, 2016a).

Mohammed (2016c) in his post on 6 August 2016 claimed that most protesters were killed not even during the protests but afterward. He also portrayed the security forces' response as an act of revenge to "teach lesson" to the protesters. He wrote the following:

> A very strange testimony almost from all provinces has emerged. Most of the victims were shot NOT during the rally but AFTER they were dispersed while they were returning home. Either they were shot by snipers or ambushed in narrow alleyways. Why? The regime wanted to 'teach [] lesson. (Mohammed, 2016c, para. 2).

Oromo social media activists highlighted not only the government's violence against peaceful protests but also its refusal to help victims of the violence. For example, in his discussion about Pastor Daniel, Gabisa (2016a) said Pastor Daniel was not only shot but also denied medical assistance in hospital. Likewise, Gutema (2016b) reported the government's attempt to deny protesters access to medical help. For example, he wrote the following:

> TPLF forces blocking wounded protesters on #GrandOromiaRally not to get hospital treatments in different parts of Oromia" By citing a "personal witness" he said, in West Arsi, "people are left helpless with their wounded family members because the military closed the only public hospital available in the town.

5.2.2.4 Expression of solidarity, determination, and hope

Oromo social media activists also expressed their solidarity with the victims of state violence, determination to continue the struggle, and hope for the future.

Figure 3 Expression of Determination by Oromo Protesters

Some activists expressed their solidarity with the victims of state violence. For example, sharing the above picture, originally posted by Merertu Geleta Kitila, a Facebook user, on her Facebook page on 6 August 2016, Hamza (2016c) expressed her solidarity: "We stand with you Oromia"! By metaphorically describing the experience Oromia was going through as the "darkest," but also as a "channel," she talked about the "brighter" future: "This darkest hour channel to get to a brighter free Oromia!" She further used hashtags that connect Oromia (described as a mother of the struggle) with the size of the struggle (Grand Oromia Rally) and hope (Together we can): "#MotherofTheStruggle #GrandOromiaRally #TogetherWeCan."

Hamza (2016k) also expressed a mixed feeling of sorrow for the death of a young and anger at the world for doing nothing. She shared a picture of a body of a young son and expressed her emotion as follows:

> Asasa, Oromia...young life slips away without notice and without a name...tossed aside all alone with a shot right through his young heart! Nothing to see here...just another

> young Oromo kid killed while the world looks away!!! #GrandOromiaRally #OromoProtests #TogetherWeCan.

Activists' show of solidarity with the victims of the Oromo protests also involved sharing of pictures of other people who showed solidarity. For instance, on 6 August 2016, Hamza (2016d) a picture posted by Nuredin Sule, a Facebook user. A picture shows a group of people in Atlanta, United States, gathered together to show solidarity with the Oromo protesters. The people in the picture crossed their hands above of their head, a gesture used by protesters. Hamza (2016d) described the picture saying "Atlanta, standing in solidarity with #GrandOromiaRally #OromoProtests #TogetherWeCan right now!" (Hamza, 2016d).

Ararssa (2016b) also described the resolve with which the people were fighting and his hope for victory. For example, on 6 October 2016, he argued: "the people are fighting back with resolve. Confrontation is raging. [] Situation is tense…we shall overcome" (para.2). In his other Facebook post, Ararssa (2016c) described the situation as a turning point saying, "we are on the cusp…" Ararssa (2016d) also expressed determination to continue the struggle: "yet, we say: "KILLING WON'T KILL OUR STRUGGLE."

Hamza (2016e) also warned about the inevitable defeat of those who committed violence against peaceful protesters because it will not last by saying:

> [sic] Ethiopian regime needs to understand violence cannot be sustained indefinately [sic] against the entire population of the country! Sooner or later the demand of the people must be respected and answered! Those who have inflicted and continue to inflict harm on peaceful civilian protesters will face justice.

Oromo social media activists also expressed their hope on the continuity of their struggle. For example, on her Post on 6, 2016 Hamza (2016f) posted a video of small children singing

"Oromia, Oromia, Oromia…" Hamza described the children as: "Little Oromian angels also have something to say, after all [] we are fighting to give them [] freedom to live" by…#GrandOromiaRally #OromoProtests#TogetherWeCan." In her other post, Hamza wrote about the solution to what she described as "hunger for freedom.": "The hunger for freedom can only be quenched with the sweet taste of liberation #GrandOromiaRally #OromoProtests #TogetherWeCan" (Hamz, 2016g)

Like Hamza, Ararssa (2016g) also expressed both determination and hope in the face of the violent response. For example, he posted a picture of very young protesters to indicate hope of the future saying, "The future is calling…" (Ararssa, 2016g). On 8 August 2016i, he posted a picture of young protesters holding up what many Oromos believe is a "resistance flag" and a slogan that reads "'WE WILL NEVER BE RULED BY TPLF.'" (Ararssa, 2016i) Ararssa emphasized the slogan by writing on his Facebook page along with the picture: "We will never be ruled by the TPLF' say the children of hope. Moreover, what does TPLF say? I would rather leave it unsaid."

5.2.2.5 Warning to the government

Another theme of the message of the Oromo activists in their social media discussion was warning to the Ethiopian government. For example, on 6 August 2016, Tsegaye Ararssa posted a picture of a big crowd crossing their hands above their heads, a sign of protest used by the Oromo protesters. He described those hands as "hands of peace," and "hands of protests" (Ararssa, 2016f). However, he also warned the government suggesting those hands would not be peaceful forever saying, "Woe unto the regime the day these hands start to reach out for guns, which the regime is inviting every passing minute" (Ararssa, 2016f). He also said of the same picture in his other post, "Who knows? This may as well be the last appeal to the roughs in

power to resolve problems peacefully…it might as well be time to shift gears further…" (Ararssa, 2016g).

Similarly, Najat Hamza in her post on 6 August 2016 shared another Facebook post of Ifaa (2016) which warned the government suggesting its violent response does not solve the problem: ''violence breeds violence. Bloodshed breeds more bloodshed." (Ifaa 2016 quoted by Hamza, 2016h). The post also warned the government of taking the country to a dangerous course: "The EPRDF [Ethiopian People's Democratic Revolutionary Force] government is driving the country off the cliff!" Furthermore, the post highlighted the choice the government made as a root for the crisis: "Wanton killings of peaceful protest expressing the deep-seated grievances…instead of addressing the underlying systemic political, economic and social causes." On her other post on 6 August 2016 she also shared a post by Getu Olana, another Facebook user, who wrote, "'LET IT BE CLEAR TO ALL, PEACE CANNOT BE MAINTAINED BY FORCE OR BY THE GOOD WILL OF ONE SIDE'" (Olana, 2016 quoted in Hamza, 2016i). The post further said:

> 'Today, protesters are shouting bilisummaa [freedom] and the brutal forces of the TPLF/EPRDF regime are firing at people and trying to contain the protest by force, in effect turning the protests into violence. Let it be clear to all, peace cannot be maintained by force or by the good will of one side. What happened and happens today is likely to leave a permanent mark in the history of Ethiopia.' (Olana, 2016, shared by Hamza, 2016i).

Hamza (2016i) reinforced Olana's comment saying: "You can only maintain chaos with violence not peace and order #GrandOromiaRally #Oromo protests."

5.2.2.6 Defending and praising protesters

Some social media activists defended the actions of the protesters. For example, Ararssa (2016h) in his post on 6 August 2016, tried to defended protesters' road blocking portraying it as an act of self-defense. He posted a picture of roads blocked by stones and logs by protesters to limit the movement of security forces. He defended the protesters as engaging in self-defense who did not have an option but to resist the government violence: "When you meet a civil protest with a military means, you turn everyone into a soldier. You turn a peaceful protest into a militant resistance" (Ararssa, 2016h). He implied the shift from "peaceful protest" to a "militant resistance" because of how the security forces responded to peaceful protesters.

Activists also praised the protesters by framing their cause as peace and dignity. For instance, Tsegaye Ararssa portrayed the march in the face of violence and the sacrifice as a price paid for peace and dignity: "They marched for peace even in the face of guns. They marched for life even in the face of death produced in mass by a State killing machine. They marched for dignity. And those who died, died with dignity, for the dignity of many more" (Ararssa, 2016j).

5.3 Reaction to Lilesa's Gesture at Rio 2016 Olympics

BBC (2016, August 21) carried a news article titled: *Ethiopian runner makes protest sign as he crosses line in Rio*" along with a picture of Athlete Feyisa Lilesa who raised his arms above his head in a display of solidarity with the Oromo protest movement in Ethiopia. Lilesa's gesture at one of the biggest events in the world received significant attention. International news media covered it for weeks. Users of social media shared and discussed it. Lilesa's gesture also marked a turning point for activists of the Oromo protest movement who, until then, needed global attention so badly. This section presents the major themes highlighted by the Oromo

social media activists and how they used them to fit into their narrative about the Oromo protest movement.

The results of the analysis show that the Oromo social media activists highlighted three major themes. First, they highlighted that the Oromo protest movement was receiving international attention—"the whole world is watching us"—framing it as a "victory." Second, they devoted much of their attention to praising Lilesa for his gesture. They praised Lilesa as a "hero." Third, they emphasized the impact of Lilesa's gesture on the protest movement, portraying it as "inspirational."

5.3.1 "We are getting global attention"

The "we are getting global attention" was a major theme the Oromo social media activists highlighted in their discussion about Feyisa Lilesa's gesture at the 2016 Rio Olympics. Activists highlighted this theme both directly by discussing it and indirectly by sharing stories covered by the news media.

All social media activists whose Facebook posts were studied for this project shared links to international news media that covered Feyisa Lilesa's gesture. Some activists shared their own articles or interviews published or aired on other media outlets. The following table shows examples of the news media stories, along with their titles, the Oromo activists shared on their Facebook pages.

Table 4 Examples of the News Media Shared by Oromo Protest Activists

Activists	News Media and Titles of Their Stories
Mohammed Ademo	"*Ethiopia on the Precipice: The Regime's Armor Has Been Pierced*" (*OkayAfrica*, 23 August 2016). "*Uncommon courage* at Rio Olympics: Ethiopia's Feyisa Lilesa risks it all for his people" (*Oprid*e, 22 August 2016)
Henok G. Gebisa	"*Silver medalist Feyisa Lilesa: 'If I go back to Ethiopia, the government will kill me*'" (*Olympics*, 21 August 2016)
Tsegaye Ararssa	"*Lelisa's Message*" (*Jacobin*, 13 August 2016)

	"*Rio 2016 - Feyisa Lilesa shows solidarity with protests back in "Ethiopia as he wins Silver in Men's Marath*on" (*Ethiotube*, 21 August 2016)
Geresu Tufa	"*Dr. Awol Allo on the significance of Feyisa Lelisa's Olympic gest*ure" (*Arise News*, 21 August 2016)
Etana Habte	"*With Fists Raised, Ethiopian Stirs Ghosts of '68 Olympics*" (*NBCNEWS*, 23 August 2016) "*Runner Fears for Life After Showing Solidarity with Ethiopian Protesters*" (*VO*A, 21 August 2016) "*Rio 2016: Ethiopia's Feyisa Lilesa gets a silver for running – and a gold for bravery*" (*Daily Maverick*, 22 August 2016) *"Running for more than medals" (Stephenville Empire-Tribune 22 August 2016).*
Jawar Mohammed	*Ethiopian marathoner makes protest gesture at Rio finish line.* (*CNN*, 22 August 2016) *"Ethiopian runner fears Olympic protest could get him killed*" (*Fox News*, 22 August 2016) "*Ethiopian marathoner makes political protest at finish line*" (*Yahoo Sports*, 21 August 2016).
Girma Gutema	"*The Question: Can the Olympics ever be apolitical?*" (*The Irish Times*, 27 August 2016).

Some activists both shared and commented on the news media that covered Feyisa Lilesa's gesture. For example, Hamza (2016m) shared Yisihak (2016), who posted a list of 13 media outlets which covered Lilesa. The media outlets on the list were *The Daily Mail, CNN, BBC, The Washington Post, The New York Times, The Independent, Mirror, The Daily Post, News.com, Sports News, LetsRum.com, and Reuters*. Yisihak described the news coverage as evidence that Oromo protest movement was receiving global attention: "International media are reporting about Ethiopian Athlete, Feyisa Lelisa, and his brave act Rio Olympic. He exposed the dictatorial regime the brutal leaders in Ethiopia" (Yisihak, 2016 Shared by Hamza, 2016m).

Likewise, Mohammed (2016n) in Facebook post on 25 August 2016 stated that Feyisa Lilesa received significant attention by mentioning the google search results saying, "When you search Feyisa Lilesa's name on google, you will find some 2 million results making it the most widely reported personality from Ethiopia ever. (Mohammed, 2016n). Mohammed (2016i) also thanked *Fox News* and shared its link to a short video clip that talked about Lilesa's gesture at

Rio Olympics: “Thank you Fox News for this in depth [] reporting on the cause of Feyisa Lilesa’s heroic act of resistance (Mohammed, 2016i). Jim Gray, the contributor of the show, cited unnamed activists who claimed that the protests in Ethiopia were in opposition to the killings of protesters and the Masterplan. Gray portrayed the Masterplan as “a major [cause] because many Ethiopians survive by farming” (Gray, 2016: 1:02 shared by Mohammed, 2016i). In the show, Gray also described the cause of protesters as a demand for freedom for the Oromo people. So, according to Gray, Lilesa was “drawing even more attention to the deadly protests that are happening in Ethiopia” (0:44).

Similarly, Gutema (2016k) also shared a link to *Reuters* which ran a story titled: “*Olympics marathon medalist’s protest shines spotlight on unrest in Ethiopia* (25 August 2016). On 25 August 2016, Gutema (2016f) also posted a video of Feyisa Lilesa at the finish line of the marathon race triumphantly raising his arms above his head. He pointed out that Lilesa made the people’s voice, which was suppressed at home, heard around the globe: “TPLF [the dominant party in the ruling coalition of Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front] suppressed people’s voices inside the country only to make it heard in the whole world” (Gutema, 2016f).

Oromo activists also discussed how the news media reacted to Feyisa Lilesa’s gesture at the Rio Olympics. For example, Mohammed Ademo on *21 August 2016* shared a link to his own article titled: “*Uncommon courage at Rio Olympics: Ethiopia’s Feyisa Lilesa risks it all for his people*” (22 August 2016). In the article, Ademo (2016a) expressed his satisfaction with how Chris Chavez of the *Sports Illustrated,* Kevin Seiff of *the Washington Post,* and Piers Edwards of *BBC*, described Lilesa’s action as follows:

> Chavez was one of the first western journalists to recognize the significance of Lilesa’s gesture and live-tweet the athlete’s post-race comments … the *Washington Post*’s Africa

> Bureau chief, Kevin Sieff, called it 'the bravest act at the 2016 Olympics' … *BBC* Journalist Piers Edwards dubbed Lilesa's display of courage an 'extraordinary moment.' They were right" (Ademo, 2016, para. 5 shared by Ademo, 2016a).

Ademo (2016b) also shared a link to www.okayafrica.com an article with the title: *Ethiopia on the Precipice: The Regime's Armor Has been Pierced*" (23 August 2016). Hassen Hussen, the author of the article, underscored that Lilesa's gesture at the Rio Olympics challenged the Ethiopian government's attempt to externalize the cause of protesters to some members of the Ethiopian diaspora community:

> After Lelisa's display of solidarity for the protests at the Rio Olympics, after winning a silver for his country in a marathon, it [Ethiopia] could not [] longer dismiss the troubles as the handiwork of what it likes to call a handful extremist saboteurs in the diaspora. (Hussen 2016, para. 14 shared by Ademo, 2016b).

5.3.2 Impact of Lilesa's gesture

> I think this is such a momentous, dramatic day not only for the Oromo people, but also for the entire oppressed people within Ethiopia and beyond. The Oromo people have been protesting since November of 2015. They were crying to be heard. And they were being killed in hundreds just to be heard. And they were crying to be heard. (Allo, 2016, 1:17 interviewed by *Arise News*, 2016 and shared by Tufa, 2016a).

The above quote is an interview transcript Awol Allo, an Oromo activist, gave to *Arise News* on 24 August 2016. It exemplifies how social media activists viewed the impact of Feyisa Lilesa's gesture at the Rio Olympics. Oromo social media activists highlighted the impact regarding the global attention it received; the pressure on the Ethiopian government; and implications on the Oromo protest movement itself.

Some activists highlighted the impact of Lilesa's action regarding grabbing the attention of the international community. For instance, on 23 August 2016, Habte (2016g) shared a link to *People's World*, which ran a news story titled: "*Ethiopian marathon runner uses win to protest killings, oppression in his country*" (23 August 2018). Robinson (2016), who wrote the article, discussed among other things, the impact of Lilesa's action. She described it as grabbing global attention and pointed out that the news of Lilesa's gesture quickly spread on social media. Robinson also highlighted the diplomatic impact on the Ethiopian government by mentioning Lilessa's suggestion that the western governments had a role in the violence by supporting the Ethiopian government: '"Now America, England, and France support this government. [] When they give this support it buys machine guns, then they kill the people'" (Lilesa, 2016 quoted in Chauncey, 2016, Lilesa's impact section, para. 2 shared by Habte, 2016g). Neither Robinson nor Lilesa explained the association between the western governments' support to Ethiopia and the latter's violence against protesters. However, activists and human rights groups accused the Ethiopian government of using the aid money to buy machine guns or to use it to silence dissents.

Likewise, Tufa (2016a) shared *Arise News'* video clip, which broadcast an interview with Awol Allo. Allo discussed the significance of Lilesa's gesture in telling the world the story of the Oromo people by saying, "This is such a critical moment that sort of propelled the story of the Oromo people into the global stage…the Oromo people had the opportunity to be heard for the first time by the global audience" (*Arise news*, 2016, 3:43 shared by Tufa, 2016a). Allo in his interview also discussed how the U.S. was also contributing to the oppression in Ethiopia, for example, by mentioning that its top officials such as President Obama and Susan Rice portrayed

Ethiopia as a democratic country. So, according to Allo, Lilesa exposed the reality on the world stage:

> …the most important message here is that … he [Lilesa] is saying, contrary to public knowledge, contrary to these make-believe stories created by the Ethiopian government and … aided by powerful figures such as President Obama…Ethiopian people, particularly the Oromos, live under a very oppressive situation. (*Arise News*, 2016, 5:24 shared by Tufa, 2016a).

Similarly, Mohammed (2016j) shared an article by *Daily Maverick* (22 August 2016) contributed by Simon Allison. Allison highlighted Lilisa's impact on the Ethiopian government in two ways: damage on its image, and the impact on the aid it receives from donors such as the United States. Allison highlighted the likelihood that the Ethiopian government might moderate its violence against protesters because of the aid money it receives: "With the world watching, and precious aid money on the line, Ethiopia may be forced to moderate its response to further protests" (Allison, 2016 para. 10).

Girma Gutema on his 24 August 2016 shared a tweet by Khaled Beydoun who described the impact of Feyisa Lilesa's gesture by comparing his silver medal with gold medals others received at the Olympics: "'Feyisa Lilesa's Silver medal is more impactful than any & and all of the Gold medal [] at the #Rio2016 #OromoProtests.'" (Beydoun, 2016 shared by Gutema, 2016i)

Social media activists also highlighted the contribution of Lilesa's gesture to the Oromo protest movement itself. For example, in his post on 21 August 2016, Jawar Mohammed expressed his amazement by its impact in raising the spirit of the Oromo people: "#OromoProtests What a day, Feyisa Lilesa raised his hand in solidarity and uplifted the spirit of the nation mourning hundreds of its martyrs!!" (Mohammed, 2016g). Ademo (2016a) also

described the possible impact of Lilesa's gesture as empowering and inspiring for other athletes: "To witness one of their own using the biggest stage of his life to make a bold and unmistakable statement, it is to be inspired and empowered" (Ademo, 2016a, para. 6). He portrayed Lilesa's gesture as a source of hope and inspiration for Ethiopians in general and Oromo people in particular:

> Lilesa's defiant protest may not generate similar attention only because the international media pays little to no attention to Africans and African stories. But for millions of Ethiopians, particularly the Oromo, the symbolic gesture offers hope for a better future. It will serve as yet another inspiration to the 9-month old Oromo protests, which has already shaken the foundations of the Ethiopian state. (para. 11).

5.3.3 Praise for Feyisa Lilesa

Praise for Lilesa was another major theme the Oromo social media activists highlighted in their discussion Feyisa Lilesa's gesture. Activists portrayed Lilesa as selfless, hero, courageous, risk taker and brave. The table below shows examples of how Oromo activists praised Lilesa for his gesture at the Rio 2016 Olympics.

Oromo social media activists highlighted how Lilesa's action at the Rio Marathon was a selfless act. For instance, Gutema (2016j) in his post on 24 August 2016 described Lilesa as someone who took a risk to expose the grievance of the Oromo people to the world. Gutema described Lilesa's selflessness by juxtaposing what he risked, "his life" and "his career," with what his goal was, exposing "collective grievances" and "institutional discrimination:" "At [sic] risk to his life, and at the sacrifice to his career, Lilesa was determined to express at the Olympics the collective grievances and institutional discrimination his people suffer in the Oromia region" (Gutema, 2016j).

Mohammed (2016h) shared a link to *VOA Amharic* radio which aired Lilesa's interview on 22 August 2016. He showed how Lilesa's act was selfless by directly quoting what he told the VOA saying he did not have any material or personal problem: '"I drive a good car. I live in a nice house. I have no personal problem. But others are being thrown out of their homes and losing their lives. That's why I had to speak up" #Feyisa Lilesa tells VOA Amharic"' (Mohammed, 2016h). Lilesa compared himself with his people who were the victims of government policy but chose to be on their side.

Table 5 Some Words of Praise Oromo Activists Shared on their Facebook Pages

"The hero, Feyisa Lelisa standing in grace and defiant showing the resistance gesture on the stage at the press conference" (Gutema, 2016g)
"In Ethiopia, long distance runners are heroes. But Feyisa Lilesa must be the most heroic of the lot. The marathon runner won a silver in Rio on Sunday, but it is what he did after he crossed the line that will be remembered" (Allison, 2016 shared by Mohammed, 2016j.
"uncommon courage made common at Rio Olympics" (Ademo, 2016a)
'"#FeyisaLelisa's career with the Ethiopian Athletics Federation ended tonight. But his courageous act of protests is one for the history books" (Ademo, 2016 cited by Robinson, 23 August 2016, para. 7).
"Kana kunooti nama jechuun kana" ["this is what it means to be a man"] (Suleeyman, 2016)—shared by Mohammed, 2016k)
"yaa abaaboo fakkeenya hundaa, goota koo baga dhalatte, badhaasa harmee Oromiyaa, seenaa gaarii raawwatte" ["you, the flower, the icon of everything, my hero, good that you were born. You, the gift of the motherland, Oromia, you made history"]. (Bekele & Tadele, 2016)—shared by Mohammed 2016L)

"When Ethiopian marathon runner Feyisa Lilesa crossed the line at Rio he made a bold political statement" (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2016—shared by Mohammed
"Feyisa Lelisa, the symbol of the moral courage we all needed to see in these very dark days..." (Tsegaye Ararssa, 2016L).
"Feyisa Lelisa, the face of courage, determination, and of living for a cause that is larger than himself, larger than even Olympic glory!!!" (Ararssa, 2016m).

On August 23, 2016, Gutema (2016h) shared by link to www.okayafrica.com which published an article titled: "*Ethiopia on the Precipice: The Regime's Armor Has Been Pierced*" (2016, August 23). Hussein (2016), the author of the article, praised Lelisa for exposing the Ethiopian government to the world. Gutema (2016h) suggested his followers needed to read the article by saying: "A MUST READ." (Mohammed (2016j) also shared a post by *The Daily Maverick* that published a story about Lilesa with a title suggestive of the worth of his bravery: "*Ethiopia's Feyisa Lilesa gets a silver for running—and a gold for bravery*" (22 August 2016). Simon Allison, the author of the article, compared Lilesa's reward for running—silver medal—with his reward for "bravery"—the gold medal. Allison also compared Lilesa's heroism with the heroism of other Ethiopian athletes but highlighted that Lilesa's heroism was better due to his gesture at the Rio Olympics.

> In Ethiopia, long distance runners are heroes. But Feyisa Lilesa must be the most heroic of the lot. The marathon runner won a silver in Rio on Sunday, but it is what he did after he crossed the line that will be remembered (Allison, 2016, para. 1 shared by Mohammed, 2016j).

Furthermore, Allison compared Lilesa with other athletes "who realise that sport is about more than running and jumping and kicking a ball" (para. 11). These athletes were Tommie

Smith and John Carlos (Americans), Andy Flower and Henry Oonga (Zimbabweans), Mohammed Ali (American). She compared them as follows:

> Lilesa himself has joined that small pantheon of athletes who realise that sport is about more than running and jumping and kicking a ball. It is an elite group that includes the likes of Tommie Smith and John Carlos, who raised their fists in that iconic black power salute in 1968; the Zimbabwean cricketers Andy Flower and Henry Olonga who wore black armbands in a match against Namibia in 2003, to symbolise the death of democracy in Zimbabwe; boxer Muhammad Ali, whose outspoken opposition to the Vietnam War cost him his titles and his fighting licence []. (para. 11).

Allison used the simile, "Like" to compare Lilesa with the athletes saying, "Like them, and at a great personal risk, Lilesa has used his 15 minutes of fame to bring the world's attention to an issue far greater, and more urgent than himself" (Allison, 2016, para. 12).

"I halready[sic] ear[sic] the sound of a new song in his name, a tune of longing for freedom. A longing throbbing for expression in the hearts of millions and millions of Oromos across the globe" (Ararssa, 2016l). On the day Feyisa Lilesa displayed his gesture in solidarity with the Oromo protest movement, 21 August 2016, Ararssa (2016L) suggested a new song to praise him. He suggested a song be sung in Lilesa's name. He suggested what the song should be about as follows:

> A song of freedom much needed after a long, dark day…
>
> To the masterful performance you displayed as an athlete;
>
> To the courageous gesture of solidarity [] you expressed as an Oromo person;
>
> To the incredible valor you showed in order to do what you did as a person;
>
> and to you as a person, as a genuine hero

...we pray tribute tonight.

We salute you ilma goototaa [the son of heroes]

You wrote a new chapter in history today

And as you belong to the more glorious archives of history, history will own you—to remember you, to honor you, and to celebrate you for the ages to come (Ararssa, 2016).

Oromo social media activists also shared poems and songs that praised Lilesa for his display of solidarity with the Oromo protest movement in Rio Olympics. Mohammed (2016k) Umar Suleeyman, an Oromo singer. Umar Suleeyman's video starts off by showing Lilesa raising his hands above his head as he finishes the marathon race and showing the clenched fist of his right hand, a body language that symbolizes victory. In the background is heard a round of applause—a sign of praise. His action followed by a sound of a gunshot, symbolizing a struggle for freedom. Then appeared Umar Suleeyman saying, "Kana kunooti nama jechuun kana" ["this is what it means to be a man"], praising Lilesa as "the man." He also praises his act saying, "hujii jechuun tana. Hojjatan akkana" ["this is the right action; this is how you do the right thing"]. Suleeyman goes on to say, "Isinitti jabaa oduu gammachiisaa" ["I herald to you, the good news"]. The "good news" he was referring to was what Lilesa did at the Rio Olympic: "Gootichi Oromoo, Fayyisaa Lalisaa ["the hero of the Oromo, Feyisa Lilesa"], "Rio Olympic Biraazil keessatti" ["at the Rio Olympics in Brazil"], addunyaatti ibse rakkoo saba isaa" ["told the world about the grievance of his people"]. Suleeyman mentioned some of those problems such as beatings, killings, arrest, and forced migration. He compared Lilesa's gesture as (raising his arms above his head) with a "shimala," a traditional stick used by the Oromo men to defend themselves from being hit.

Mohammed (2016L) also shared a video by Mulu Bekele and Jagama Tadele, both Oromo signers. On August 24, 2016, Mohammed (2016l). The video starts off by showing Lilesa raising his arms above his head at the finish line of the marathon race. It showed untired and determined Lilesa, after he ran the full-distance marathon of 26.2 miles. In the song, Jagama Tadele says, "Ariitee baga dhaqabde. Addunyaa dha qaxxaamurte. Baga gammanne, baga gammadde" ["Good that you chased and captured. You crossed the world. Congratulations to us, and congratulations to you"]!

Then, Mulu Bekele praised him saying, "yaa abaaboo fakkeenya hundaa, goota koo baga dhalatte, badhaasa harmee Oromiyaa, seenaa gaarii raawwatte" ["you, the flower, the icon of everything, my hero, good that you were born. You, the gift of the motherland, Oromia, you made history"].

Tadele also described Lilesa's selfless act saying, "Qorraa fi aduudha hinjenne; beelaafi dheebu osoo hinjenne; dadhabee boqonnaa hinjenne; kaayyoo keetti xiyyeeffattee; biyaa keetif, lammii keetif, wabii dhaabbatte" [you did not care for the cold and sun; you did not care about hunger and thirst; you did not say, 'I am tired;' you just focused on your goals. You stood for your country, for your people." Bekle also said, Lilesa, not the coward, deserve to be praised: "…yartuu farsuun, lugna faarsuun anaaf naa hinta'tu." ["I cannot praise the weak and the coward"].

5.4 The Irreecha Event

The Irreecha Festival of October 2, 2016 was a significant event in the history of the Oromo protest movement. The protests at the festival led to the death of more than 52 people, according to the Ethiopian government, or more than 700 people according to the human rights groups. The incident captured global attention. It received extensive coverage by the

international media. Pictures of dead bodies and injured people widely circulated among Oromo social media users. The incident added more momentum to the Oromo protest movements that started nine months before the incident. This section sought to answer how the Oromo social media activists responded to the Irreecha Festival protests by analyzing the major themes of their discussion on Facebook. It uncovered five major themes: Complaining about news media coverage, expression of grievance, expression of hope, information sharing, and call for a new strategy

5.4.1 Complaints about the news media coverage

> "It hurts to have lived through the pain when it happens. It hurts more when the story of your pain is either ignored, distorted, un-understood, or misinterpreted" (Ararssa, 2026n).

The above quote is from one of the Facebook posts of Tsegaye Ararssa, an Oromo social media activist of the Oromo protest movement. It is just one example of how many Oromo social media activists reacted to the way the news media covered the Irreecha event of 2016. Tsegaye Ararssa and other social media activists whose Facebook posts were studied reacted differently to the news media coverage of the Irrecha incident. Some of them shared the news stories about the incident on their pages without commenting, some shared but also invited others to read or listen to those news stories, while others disputed how the news media framed the death of protesters, mainly highlighting the cause of the deaths. Still some of expressed their anger at how the news media framed the cause of the deaths at the Irreecha incident.

Some activists reacted to the news media by disputing the framing, particularly of the causes of death, of protesters at the event. For example, the following is how Mohammed (2016O), disputed the *Washington Post*'s frame of the cause of the death of protesters as a "stampede."

> *[sic] Washington Post* correct your stupid report. Stampede was not the main cause. The stampede was a result of people running from machine gun bullets and teargas [] thrown from helicopters. You want proof, ask those bunch of diplomats and foreign journalists who were sitting there at the VIP lounge. They saw the whole thing and filmed it but unwilling to speak the truth. (Mohammed, 2016o).

In the above quote, Mohammed, challenged *The Washington Post*'s Paul Schemm who wrote the news article on October 2, 2016) on the cause of the death using assertive language: "The stampede was not the cause." Moreover, he provided an alternative frame without denying the contribution of the stampede to the death by pointing to what caused the stampede itself: "The stampede was the result of people running from machine gun bullets and teargas." He also suggested *The Washington Post* ask people (diplomats and foreign journalists) who were at the scene.

However, the researcher noted that: *The Washington Post*'s article Mohammed (2016O) alluded to was updated twice saying, "This article has been updated with new details throughout" and "This article has been updated with more details and comment from the government" respectively (2 October 2016). The researcher also noted that the article changed its title from "*Dozens of deaths during stampede at Ethiopia religious event*" (2 October 2016) to "*Dozens killed during stampede at religious celebration in Ethiopia*" (2 October 2012). The title of the updated article shows a change in the frame of the cause of the death with the word "killed," which is more suggestive of how the protesters died: "dozens killed.…"

Like Jawar Mohammed, Etana Habte, another Oromo activist, disputed media representation of the cause of the death at the Irreecha festival. In his Facebook post published on 2 October 2016, Habte (2016h) expressed his disagreement with the way news media framed

the death of protesters. He claimed that massacre, not the stampede, was the cause of the deaths at Irreecha. He said the news media framing of the death otherwise hurts more than the death of protesters for which he blamed journalists as being lazy, ignorant, and irresponsible: "What is hurting even more than the death of hundreds of our beloved ones today at Irreecha is lazy, ignorant and irresponsible journalism reporting the massacre simply as a stampede" (Habte, 2016h, para. 1).

Similarly, Tufa (2016b) disputed the news media's frame of the cause as a stampede. He even went further by equating portrayal of the cause of Oromo protesters' death at Irreecha as a stampede to supporting the "massacre." As he put it, "Framing today's #Massmassacare [] as simply caused by #Stampede on the side of international media is [sic] amount [sic] to condoning the massacre" (Tufa, 2016b)).

Likewise, Najat Hamza on 5 October 2016 shared a post by Asafa Jalata (which was published on 2 October 2016), an Oromo and a professor at the University of Tennessee, who accused among other things, the Western media of misrepresenting the cause of the death at Irreecha. Jalata claimed that the Ethiopian security forces fired teargas and live ammunition into the crowd. He blamed the Western media for "spreading inaccurate information about the tragic events of this day" (Jalata, 2016, para.1 shared by Hamza, 2016n).

In addition to disputing the news media frame of the cause of the death at Irreecha, some activists also expressed their feelings in different ways. Some of it involves the use of profanity. For example, Habte(2016i) in his post published on 2 October 2016 called the *BB*C "idiot." "[*sic*] BBC is idiot." Although Habte did not specify why he described it that way, The *BBC* he was citing framed the cause of the death as "stampede" as opposed to what the activists prefer to portray it as, a "massacre." Likewise, Mohammed (2016p) questioned the quality of the BBC

report without specifying the reason or saying which edition of the *BBC* he was referring to. He just wrote: “Shame on *BBC*. What a shitty report. Who is their reporter who compiled this crap?” (Mohammed, 2016p). Mohammed (2016O) also referred to *The Washington Post*’s news article published on October 2, 2016 as a “stupid report.”

Tsegaye Ararssa also expressed his annoyance at the way the news media covered the Irreecha incident. In his post on 2 October 2016, Ararssa (2016n) Ararssa used an emoji that says, “Tsegaye Ararssa is feeling annoyed.” Without naming a specific media outlet that annoyed him, he wrote about the foreign news media’s reluctance to cover what was going on in Ethiopia. Ararssa listed the following as possible reasons for media hesitation to let the world know about the incidents in Oromia:

> Part of it is the result of the fear and self-censorship among their 'informants' close to the event for fear of being arrested, tortured, or even killed by the regime. Part of it is their deranged sense of history. But part of it is from their liberal fantasy of achieving journalistic 'objectivity' and 'balance' in an environment that is so unfair and asymmetrical in every imaginable respect. (Ararssa, 2016n, para.1).

He described the results of this as “annoying level of inaccuracy, distortion, undervaluation or ignoring of weighty events/facts/incidents, decontextualization, and/or misinterpretation” (p. 1).

5.4.2 Expression of grievance

Expression of grievance about the death of protesters at the Irreecha festival is another theme that was highlighted by Oromo social movement activists. Oromo activists expressed their grievances by posting pictures and videos with written messages of condolences.

On his Facebook post on 2 October 2016, Ararssa (2016o) posted two pictures. The first is a picture of a young man with a caption, “black Irreecha.” The picture reflects a young male in isolation and despair. His posture suggests he is in deep sorrow and looking down while putting his hands on his head. The image symbolizes the expression of grief in Oromo and many Ethiopian cultures. The second picture shows a black background on which is written two captions: #IrreechaMassacre and #ThanksgivingMassacre suggesting what happened was a sad story that took place on an important religious event which was supposed to end peacefully. Ararssa (2016s) also posted the following picture along with his feelings that suggested he was speechless:

> In the face of excess, the first one to fail is language itself. I guess it’s true, after all, that extreme pain nullifies words (a la E. Scarry). Horror, material or discursive, is truly unspeakable. So, … I am silent even while my mouth is open… wanting to say something…Hence, the quiet noise… (Ararssa, 2016s).

Figure 4 Expression of Grievance at the Death of Oromo Protesters

On his post on 3 October 2016, Tufa (2016e) shared a link to a short video clip that he said shows the funeral service of Aberash Hailu who died at Irreecha. The video shows a big crowd of people crying. Geresu wished her to rest in peace.

On 3 October 2016, Mohammed (2016q) also posted a photo of a young lady and a short video clip. Mohammed in his comment section said the people of Najjoo received the body of Lalisee Haftaamuu who was martyred in Bishooftuu. The photo was a picture of Lalisee Haftamuu. The image shows a happy young lady posed for a camera. The video clip shows a big crowd of people, many of them crying, as they receive the body of Lalisee Haftaamuu.

On October 3, 2016, Gebissa (2016) used metaphor and comparisons to highlight the graveness of the violence at Irreecha. For example, he used the metaphor "Bloody Sunday" in his article titled: "*The Irreecha Massacre: Another Bloody Sunday for History*." He compared the Irreecha incident of Sunday, October 2, 2016, to three other massacres that took place in history on Sundays but different years: the Hamidian Massacre of October 1, 1985 (Armenia); Russia's Bloody Sunday of January 22, 1905; and the Bogside Massacre of January 30, 1972 (Ireland).

Gebissa (2016) attempted to show similarities between these incidents. For example, he noted that all of them took place on Sundays saying, "Sundays seem to have been the chosen day for perpetrating massacres" (para, 2). He also mentioned that all these massacres were committed against civilians. Gebissa portrayed massacres as a sign of weakness on the part of governments: "Governments perpetrate massacres as an act of desperations by officials who have completely other avenues of maintaining legitimacy and stable rule" (Gebissa, 2016, para. 6).

Tufa (2016f) also invoked another metaphor, "Black Swan" implying what happened at Irreecha was unfathomable and unexplainable to him when he asked, "What is the possible #Black_Swan in Ethiopian politics?" (Tufa, 2016f).

5.4.3 Expressions of hope

In addition to expression of grievances, Oromo activists also expressed hope of success in their movement by highlighting that massacres do not achieve their goals. For example, Gebissa (2016), mentioned that both massacres in Russia and Ireland did not succeed in that they did not save the Tsarist aristocracy" (para. 8) or help "the British rule Ireland" (para. 9). He expressed his hope one day that:

> Oromo nation will rise from today's pain and will sit in judgement of those who tear-gassed innocent people and annihilated hundreds. History has shown that clearly that massacring people didn't save the Ottoman Sultans, the Romanovs and British forces in Ireland. (para. 13)

Similarly, Habte (2016L), shared a post by ገቢረአቢ (Gadaa) (2016) titled "ቢልሱማ በነፃ አይገኝም" ["No freedom without sacrifice"]. The post sends a message of condolences saying, a human being is born; and like a tree, he will get old and die; the same is true for a regime. ገቢረአቢ (Gadaa) also glorified and congratulated them for making history. Furthermore, ገቢረአቢ (Gadaa) portrayed the death at the Irreecha event as special death saying the Oromo have been dying, and so the death in Bishoftu was a bless. ገቢረአቢ (Gadaa) argued that one's death for agenda and land is an honor, not a sorrow.

5.4.4 Information sharing

Social media Oromo protest activists shared information in the form of "news" on what was going on in the country. For instance, activists Geresu Tufa, Etana Habte, Henok Gebisa, and Tsegaye Araarssa shared different "news." Here the quotation mark is used to differentiate the information activists shared, which they received from friends or other activists through their

inbox, from information on the news media. The activists put the “news” in quotation marks, suggesting their friends in-boxed (received from their friends back home) them.

On 5 October 2016, Habte (2016k) shared a post from an unknown source by putting it in quotation marks. The “news” stated the continuation of the “struggle” by mentioning an attack on two government agents, six police officers, and a driver of a car that belongs to the government. It also mentioned that two Kalashnikovs were confiscated from unnamed people. Furthermore, the post stated that the targeted people had ignored repeated warnings given to them. On 3 October 2016, Habte (2016j) also posted another message that says: "I received credible information that a Bull dozer [sic] was set on fire at a construction site of Dambi Doolloo University. The contractor who owns it is from Tigray. He was severely beaten by Qeerroo and is now on the run or hiding." Qeerroo is the name of the Oromo youth who spearheaded the protests against the Ethiopian government.

Likewise, Ararssa (2016q) on 2 October 2016 published “news” from a source he did not mention about the death at Irreecha saying, ‘“hello [sic] dear: ayyaana ilalchisee hammi bishaanitti gadi nam’ee hammaa du’e caala jedhamaa jira.” [It is being reported that those who drowned are more than those died”]. Ararssa (2016p) also published his own information. For example, he posted the following information on 2 October 2016:

> DEVELOPING NEWS: The regime has opened live bullets on irreechaa celebrants in Bishooftu killing several people on the spot. The attack is reported to come from the Agazi on the ground and and [sic]from a helicopter hovering over the gathering in Horaa Arsadii.

Similarly, Hamza (2016o), on 5 October 2016, posted “news” on the arrest of Tilahum Gemeda Wariyo, an opposition leader. She posted Wariyo’s picture and informed her followers he was arrested while he was drinking coffee along with three other people.

5.4.5 A call for a change of strategy

Another theme highlighted by Oromo social media activists was a change of tactics and strategies. The tactics and strategies were aimed at minimizing the risk of being identified by the government security forces on the one hand and strengthening the protests on the other hand.

5.4.5.1.1 Minimizing the risk

Tufa (2016h) his post on 5 October 2016 suggested a specific action such as road blocking to limit the movements of security forces. He told his followers to block roads in order to limit the movement of the killer-soldiers and their killings. He advised on possible locations of road blockade suggesting road blockade should not be in cities as doing so would lead to the security forcing the people to remove the boulders. Tufa (2016h) also encouraged the protesters to block roads at some selected and strategic locations far from cities.

Tufa (2016g) also provided further information. He warned protesters not to disclose the locations of the roadblock and not to post a picture of it on social media as doing so would help security forces to know about it in advance. He suggested that the protesters leave the area once they blocked the roads. In another post on 2 October 2016 Tufa (2016c) called for the need to defeat what he called the war the government waged on the Oromo people. He insisted that the war, the kind of which has not been declared on human being, has been declared on his people and has to be defeated. Oromo activists also challenged his followers saying if they deserve to live while genocide was being waged on the people. For instance, Tufa (2016d) asked his

followers if they deserve to live as usual while a genocide was taking place on the Oromo people.

5.4.5.1.2 Change of #Hashtag

Another strategy suggested by some Oromo activists of social media was a change of hashtag from #OromoProtests to #OromoRevolution. For example, Tufa (2016i) shared an article by Bonsa (2016) article on his website. Tufa directly quoted Bonsa's definition of the "'#OromoProtests was a short [sic]hand for a longer Oromo Peaceful Protests'" (Bonsa 2016 quoted in Tufa (2016i). The activists explained that the change of hashtag was needed because the efforts to bring about change through a peaceful means "'fell on deaf ears'" (Bonsa quoted in Tufa (2016i).

5.4.5.1.3 Call for a military means

Some activists also suggested a change of strategy that involves a shift from peaceful protests (political means) to military means. For example, Ararssa (2016r) in his post on 2 October 2016 suggested the use of military force to stop the death of people was the only option. Ararssa (2016r) also expressed his doubt of peaceful (political solution). The following is a direct quote of his message on Facebook posted on 2 October 2016:

> Unfortunately, it has become increasingly more and more obvious that there is little likelihood for political end to this carnage. Regrettably, only military solutions are availing themselves. It has become abundantly clear that the matter now is going to be settled on the streets and jungles of Oromia, not on the corridors of the political class in Addis or on the diplomatic corridors of the regime's foreign patrons. This must be the limit of politics, national and international. (Ararssa, 2016r, para.1).

5.4.5.2 Call for unity

Strengthening unity among different tribes was also another theme that was highlighted by some Oromo activists. For example, Gebissa (2016) stressed that "the Irreecha Massacre" needed to be "seen as a new chapter in the epic of Oromo resistance against a kleptocratic cabal parading as an Ethiopian government" (para. 15). He warned his followers if they did not follow the advice of Martin Niemöller saying, "We were going to be doomed if we don't heed the counsel of Martin Niemöller applied to our situation" (para. 1). Gebissa borrowed from Niemöller's "First they came…" version to Ethiopia's situation by taking the examples of Sidama and Anuak tribes whose people were killed by the Ethiopian security forces in 2002 and 2004-2006 respectively. He described it as follows:

> First [sic] they came for the Sidama, and we did not didn't do much—because we're not all Sidama. Then they came for the Anuak, and we did not do much—Because we're not all Anuaks. Then they came for the Oromo, again and again, and we didn't do much—Because I was not an Oromo. Then they came for us—and there was no one left to speak for all of us. They have no struck at the heart of what it means to be Oromo. (para. 15).

5.5 Summary

The aim of this chapter was to examine the themes highlighted by Oromo activists on three major events during the Oromo protests: #OromiaGrandRally, the 2016 Rio Olympics, and the Irreecha event of October 2016. Analysis of texts on #OromiaGrandRally event show that Oromo protests highlighted difference themes. In their pre-rally social media posts, they highlighted different demands they wanted the Ethiopian government to answer. These include different political and economic demands; a call for an end to violence, which they framed as state-terrorism; justice; and environmental protection. However, as violence erupted on the day

of the rally, there was a change in the post-rally themes. That is, the post-rally themes highlighted security force's violence against the protesters, expression of solidarity with the victims of the violence; and determination to continue the protests.

On the Rio Olympic 2016 event, where Feyisa Lilesa showed a defiant gesture at the finish-line of the marathon race, Oromo highlighted three major themes: the "the world is watching us" by mainly focusing on the news media's coverage it received; expression of praise for Lilessa, and discussion on its impact on the Oromo protests.

Analysis of the Oromo activists' posts of the Irreecha event indicate they focused on five major themes: complain about how the news media covered the incident; expression of grievance; expression of hope; sharing information with the public; and a call for a new protest strategy.

6 ANALYSIS: INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter analyzes the major themes and their framing by two international human rights groups: Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International respectively, answering research question 3. Like the news media and the Oromo activist social media texts analyzed in the preceding chapters, human rights groups also highlighted three major themes: causes of the protest, government action, and call for action. Both Human Rights Watch and Anesty International framed the *cause of the protests*, *government response*, and *call for action* themes as *grievances*, *violence*, and *justice* respectively.

6.2 Human Rights Watch

Analysis of the Human Rights watch indicated that three major themes—causes that triggered the protest, the response of the government to the protests, and solutions. This section analyzes each of the themes and how they were framed. Frames include *grievances*, *violence*, and *justice*.

6.2.1 Causes of the protest

Human Rights Watch gave significant attention to the cause of the protests. It framed the cause of the protest as a grievance. Its documents portrayed the Addis Ababa Masterplan as the immediate trigger of the protest in Oromia. It highlighted the people's concern as fear of displacement from their ancestral lands.

Like the news media, Human Rights Watch documents framed the cause of the Oromo protest movement as a grievance. Human Rights Watch documents mainly three grievances: historical grievance, lack of democracy, and chain causes—grievances caused by the government's action against the protesters every time they demand something.

6.2.1.1 Grievance rooted in history

Human Rights Watch put the cause of the Oromo protest movements into a broader historical context emphasizing discrimination, marginalization, and different types of violence against them. For example, in its article published on December 18, 2015, the Human Rights Watch described the Oromo people faced history as follows:

> Many Oromos have historically felt marginalized and discriminated against by successive Ethiopian governments, and Oromos are often arbitrarily arrested and accused of belonging to the Oromo Liberation Force (OLF), which waged armed struggle in the past and which the government designates a terrorist organization. (Human Rights Watch, 2015, para. 16).

The Human Rights Watch also highlighted the impact of the historical grievance on people's feeling in exercising their rights. For example, in its dispatches authored by Horne (2015a), it described how the feeling of marginalization and discrimination prevented the Oromo people from opposing government policies saying: "many Oromos have felt marginalized and discriminated against by successive Ethiopian governments and have often felt unable to voice their concerns over government policies" (Horne, 2015a, para. 2).

6.2.1.2 Lack of democracy

The Human Rights Watch also associated the cause of the Oromo protest movement to lack of democracy in the country. It mentioned government restrictions on people's rights, problems with elections, and questions on the independence of the judiciary system of the country. For example, in its article published on October 6, 2016, Horne (2016b) suggested the protests, which he described as "crises," should not come as a surprise given the lack of democracy in the country. Horne (2016b) maintained that:

> Ethiopia's current crisis came as a surprise to many European policymakers, but it follows years of systematic government attacks on fundamental rights and freedoms, cutting off dissent. Despite widespread frustrations with the government, the ruling party is able to hold every one of the seats in the federal and regional parliaments. The courts have shown little independence on politically sensitive cases, misusing anti-terrorism law to punish peaceful dissent. There is little scrutiny of abusive security forces in part because of restrictions on independent media and NGOs. All of this has contributed to the complete closure of political space, creating the perfect storm. (6 para. 7)

Human Rights Watch also portrayed the government's suppression of rights as a root cause of the Oromo protest movement. For example, in its statement to the European Parliament on October 13, 2016, Human Rights Watch (2016c) framed the cause of the protest as "the outcome of the government's systematic and calculated suppression of fundamental rights and freedoms that have closed political space and left few opportunities for the peaceful expressions of dissent" (para. 6).

6.2.1.3 Chain of causes

In addition to portraying the Addis Ababa Masterplan and political grievances such as lack of democracy as causes of the Oromo protest movement, Human Rights Watch documents also indicate that the intensity of the protests was associated with the response of the government to the protests. For example, the anger at government action at Irreecha on October 2, 2016 exacerbated the protest, which again prompted the government to announce the state of emergency. So, by the time the government announced the cancellation of the Masterplan, the initial demand of the protesters, more questions were added to the list of their demands. Human Rights Watch (2016c) stated:

> By the time the government announced the cancelation of the master plan in January, protester grievances had expanded to include condemnation of the brutality of the security forces' responses to the largely peaceful protests as well as decades of marginalization and human rights violations of the Oromo people. (para 2).

Human Rights Watch also suggested that more violence against protesters would lead to more protests. For example, in its letter to Angela Merkel, the Chancellor of Germany who was visiting Ethiopia at the time, Human Rights Watch (2016b) stated that the protests may lead to "wider crisis" unless the Ethiopian government stopped violations against protesters saying:

> Tensions and public frustrations over security force killings and other abuses against protesters in Oromia, Ethiopia's largest region, have spread to other parts of the country in recent months and risk spiraling into wider crisis if the Ethiopian government doesn't change course. (Human Rights Watch, 2016b, para. 8).

6.2.2 Government response to the protests

Analysis of the Human Rights Watch documents also shows that the government response to the Oromo protest movement was a major theme. Like the news media, Human Rights Watch also framed the response against the protesters as violent.

Human Rights Watch used the violence frame to highlight the government's treatment of protesters, which include detention of protesters in unknown places without charge and torture. For example, in its article titled: "*Yet Again, a Bloody Crackdown on Protesters in Ethiopia,*" (5 December 2015), Horne (2015), a senior Ethiopia and Eritrea researcher for Human Rights Watch, described the experiences of Oromo students as follows:

> Those I spoke with told me about the torture they endured as part of interrogations. But countless others remained in detention. Some have been charged under Ethiopia's

> draconian counterterrorism law for their role in the protests; others languish without charge in unknown detention centers and military camps throughout Oromia. (para. 3).

The Human Rights Watch also used the violence frame to expose different types of rights abuses against the Oromo protesters. For example, in its report titled "'*Such a brutal crackdown': killings and arrests in response to Ethiopia's Oromo Protests*" (15 June 2016), Human Rights Watch (2016a) described the violations and denial of rights against Oromo Protesters saying: "security forces have tortured and otherwise ill-treated detainees, and several female detainees described being raped by security force personnel. Very few detainees have access to legal counsel, adequate food, or to their family members" (Human Rights Watch, 2016a, para. 6).

6.2.2.1 Impact of violence against the protesters

The Human Rights Watch also used the violence frame to emphasize the impact of the violence on the people. For example, in its dispatches published on 22 December 2016 it detailed the impact on protesters. For example, Horne (2016d) narrated about "Iftu," a 16 years old student who took part in the protest in Oromia. Horne details the killing of her father by security forces, the arrest of two of her brothers by the military, days after the funeral of her father, and the disappearance of her mother and her other two brothers, her uncle who cannot walk due to torture he sustained in prison, and her suspension from school because the military forces found a protest song in her phone. Horne described how the government action ruined her family saying: "Her family and her future have been torn apart because she, her fellow students, and her father took to the streets to protest government policies" (Horne, 2016d, para. 3)

In dispatches published on 9 November 2016, Horne (2016c) also detailed the experience of another case. Horne narrates the story of Meti, who participated in the protest against the

Masterplan, ran when security forces started firing a gun, later saw her brother dead, found her father and two brothers detained, and was finally told by school officials that she was suspended from school due to her participation in the protest. Taking the story of Meti as an example, Horne describes the impact of government officials' violence against protesters saying: "Security forces have killed hundreds, detained tens of thousands, and shattered the lives of countless families over the last year" (Horne, 2016c, para. 4).

6.2.2.2 Violation of international law

Human Rights Watch also portrayed violence against the Oromo protesters as the violation of international law. It did so by citing relevant principles of the international law. For example, in its article published on 18 December 2015, Human Rights Watch (2015) stated the following:

> The United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials provide that security forces shall as far as possible apply nonviolent means before resorting to the use of force. Whenever the lawful use of force is unavoidable, the authorities should use restraint and act in proportion to the seriousness of the offense. (para. 10)

In its report on Ethiopia, Human Rights Watch (2016c) provided a broader context on human rights violations in Ethiopia. For instance, in its statement to the European Parliament on October 13, 2016, it described the overall human rights violations as follows:

> Ethiopia is among Africa's leading jailors of journalists, and there is little space for independent journalists to operate. Ethiopian journalists and bloggers must choose between self-censorship, arrest, or living in exile. Websites critical of the government are blocked, radio stations are regularly jammed during sensitive times, and those providing

> information to journalists are targeted for arrest. At various times in the last three months, the government has blocked the internet completely in some locations, restricted access to social media, and jammed radio transmissions including German broadcaster Deustche Welle (Human Rights Watch, 2016c, para. 7).

6.2.2.3 Restriction on the right to protest

In addition to the type of violence against protesters, Human Rights Watch (2016c) also highlighted how the government prevented people from protests in the first place and how it treats those who defy the restrictions. The following is another excerpt from Human Rights Watch's statement to the European Parliament that detailed the problem protesters face in Ethiopia:

> The authorities restrict public protests with routine denial of permits and arrests of real or perceived protest organizers. Fear of opposing the government has historically kept people from protesting, but that fear is rapidly dissipating. For those who do take to the streets, as thousands have done in hundreds of locations over the last year, brutal force from security forces is often the response. What avenues does this leave to express dissent, to question government policies or to voice concern over abusive practices? (Human Rights Watch, para. 9).

6.2.3 Call for action

The third major theme of the Human Rights Watch was the call for action. The call for action theme includes two subthemes: an end to the violence, and investigation into the violence.

6.2.3.1 End to the violence

Human Rights Watch called on the government to stop the violence against protesters. For example, Horne (2015) called on the government to "ensure the use of excessive force by its

security forces stops immediately" (para. 6). Likewise, the Human Rights Watch (2016a) in its report published on June 15, 2016 demanded the government officials release all those who were detained without legal process saying: "the Ethiopian government should drop charges and release all those who have been arbitrarily detained" (para. 11).

6.2.3.2 Call for investigation

The Human Rights Watch also demanded government officials to investigate the violence against the protesters. The demands include suggesting the steps the government officials have to take. For example, Human Rights Watch (2016a) demanded that the Ethiopian government "should support a credible, independent, and transparent investigation into the use of excessive force by tis security forces, it should discipline or persecute as appropriate those responsible and provide victims of abuses with adequate compensation" (para. 11). Likewise, Horne (2015a) called for similar action in the report on December 5, 2015, saying it should help with the investigation of "an independent and impartial inquiry" on how security forces handled the protests (para. 6).

6.2.3.2.1 Accountability

In its call for investigation, Human Rights Watch emphasized accountability. It demanded holding those responsible for the violence to account. For instance, Horne (2015a) stated that "those responsible for serious abuses should be fairly prosecuted" (para. 6). The Human Rights Watch also framed holding those responsible to account as a way for the government to show it cares about the violence, that it doesn't support the violence, and that it makes sure those who broke the law are punished. Accordingly:

> This would the best way for the Ethiopian government to show its concern about the deaths and injuries inflicted on the students, that it does not condone the use of live

ammunition against peaceful protests, and that those who break the law are appropriately punished. (Horne, 2015a, para. 6).

6.2.3.2.2 Justice

Human Rights Watch framed investigation into the violence to bring justice to the victims of the violence. For instance, Felix (2016c) on November 9, 2016, called on the Ethiopian government and international community. He wrote, "the Ethiopian government and its international allies should refocus on the need for justice, accountability, and meaningful reform" (para. 8).

6.2.3.2.3 Call for intervention of the international community

Human Rights Watch also called for intervention of the international community in the process of justice seeking. *In its report titled: "Lethal Force Against Protesters: Military Deployment, Terrorism Rhetoric Risk Escalating Violence*" (18 December 2015), Human Rights Watch (2015) called on Ethiopia to involve human rights experts from the African Union and United Nations. Likewise, in its letter to Germany's Chancellor, Angela Merkel, on October 8, 2016, Human Rights Watch (2016b) asked Germany to pay attention to the human rights violations in Ethiopia. The letter asked the chancellor to end the use of "excessive force by security forces," release the protesters, "express support for a credible, international investigation into the deaths…," and called for the "lifting of government restrictions on media reporting and access to the internet and social media" (para. 7).

Human Rights Watch also called on the European Union (EU) to intervene in the human rights situation in Ethiopia. For example, in its article titled: "*EU Needs a New Approach to Ethiopia,*" (6 October 2016), Horne (2016b), the author of the article, criticized Frederica Mogherini, EU's High Representative, for working on a joint declaration called '"Towards an

EU-Ethiopia Strategic Engagement'" with Hailemariam Desalegn, Ethiopia's prime minister. It characterized the declaration as "business as usual" (para 4). He blamed the EU for being silent as demonstrators were being shot, journalists and opposition members locked up, and peaceful activists punished…" (Horne, 2016b, para. 4). It portrayed the EU's long-term relations with Ethiopia as negligent on human rights issues. The Human Rights Watch characterized the EU relations with Ethiopia a "quiet diplomacy approach" for being "among many donors that have historically been silent about Ethiopia's human rights abuses, afraid to risk strategic partnerships on development, migration, peacekeeping, and security" (Horne, 2016b, para. 8).

6.2.3.2.4 Abuse of aid money

Human Rights Watch accused the Ethiopian government of abusing the aid money it gets from foreigners, including the European Union, to buy silence from the people. Horne (2016b) described the abuse of aid money as a common practice in Ethiopia. He said, "Offering government benefits in exchange for silence is something many Ethiopians, particularly in rural area, have known for years" (para.9). Horne further said the government "carefully controls access to the benefits of development including seeds, fertilizers, food aid, and jobs, much of it funded by the EU and its members" (para. 9). Human Rights Watch (2016c) framed the abuse of aid money as '"a political capture of aid"' which involves government officials' "misuse of development assistance…. by ensuring that only those who are ruling party members or supporters receive the benefits of aid, including access to seeds, to jobs, and to training opportunities" (para. 11). It also warned of the negative consequence of the "political capture of aid" saying:

> While EU development assistance makes an invaluable contribution to much-needed poverty reduction efforts in Ethiopia, it also has the unintended side effect of increasing

> the government's repressive capacity, by contributing to the reliance that Ethiopians have on the government for their livelihoods and ultimately for their survival. (Human Rights Watch, 2016c, para. 11).

6.2.3.2.5 Solution

As a solution, the Human Rights Watch calls for a new EU approach to Ethiopia. It warned of the danger of not do so saying its "strategic relationships will become obsolete if Ethiopia plunges further into crisis" (Horne, 2016b, para. 12). He demanded the EU to "push Ethiopia to respect divergent views, and rein in forces that rapidly turn to bullets, beatings, and mass arrests" (para. 12). Horne called on the EU to push for international investigation into the violence in Ethiopia:

> The EU and its member states should continue to push for an international investigation into the killings, press the government to grant the UN access to investigate, and urge the government to hold to account security forces members responsible for abuses. By taking these steps, The EU and its member states can improve the potential to be stable long-term partners. (Horne, 2016b, para. 13)

6.2.3.2.6 Lack of trust in the Ethiopian government.

Human Rights Watch's call for international investigation into the violence against the protesters was due to a lack of trust in the government. For example, in dispatches published on July 28, 2016, Horne (2016a) criticized the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission for claiming the force used by the government against the protesters was proportionate. He characterized the claim as "sending an ominous message to Ethiopian that security force members can shoot unarmed protesters with impunity" (para. 4). For example, he portrayed the killing of more than 400 people by security forces that did not prompt the government to conduct "meaningful

investigation" as indication of the absence of "effort to hold security forces accountable" (para. 3). Human Rights Watch (2016a) called on the international community. It said: "given that a national process is unlikely to be viewed as sufficiently independent of the government, the inquiry should have an international component" (Human Rights Watch, 2016a, para. 12).

6.3 Analysis of Amnesty International Documents

Like the news media, social media users, and Human Rights Watch, analysis of the texts of Amnesty International reports focused on three major themes: *causes of the Oromo protests*, *government response to the protests*, and *call for action*. The frames are the same as the frames of Human Rights Watch which are *grievances*, *violence*, and *justice*.

6.3.1 Causes of the protest

The causes that triggered the Oromo protests is one of the major themes of Amnesty International's documents. But unlike texts of other actors such as Human Rights Watch and the news media, which went further to include historical grievances (marginalization and discrimination), the Amnesty International reports focused mainly on the immediate trigger of the protests—the Masterplan. For example, Amnesty International (2015), Amnesty International (2016c); Amnesty International (2016f), and Amnesty International (2016g) portrayed the Masterplan as a factor that triggered the Oromo protests.

In their articles published and October 5, 2016 and November 9, 2016, Amnesty International (2016f) and Amnesty International (2016g) respectively portrayed the cause of the protests as "opposition to the Addis Ababa Masterplan." The Amnesty International focused on the underlying reason for the opposition to the master plan as a fear of the consequence i.e., the fear of what might happen to the people if the Masterplan was implemented. For instance, Amnesty International (2016f) described the underlying reason to oppose the Masterplan as fear

of "*mass displacement of people* from their homes" (para. 9). Amnesty International (2016c) also described the cause as "dispossession of land without adequate compensation in the Oromia region" (para. 3).

Amnesty International also described the intention of the Masterplan in terms of an administrative government frame. For instance, Amnesty International (2016f) and Amnesty International (2016g) wrote that the aim of the Masterplan was to "extend boundaries of the capital Addis Ababa into parts of Oromia (para. 9) and "to extend the capital Addis Ababa's administrative control into parts of Oromia" (para 2) respectively.

6.3.2 Government response to the protests

The government action theme received significant attention from Amnesty International. Like Human Rights Watch and the news media, Amnesty International also used the violence frame to describe the government response against the Oromo protest movement. It detailed different forms of violence against protesters such as detention, torture, and killings. The violence frame also highlighted the way the government officials carried out the violence.

6.3.2.1 Levels of violence

The violence frame used many descriptive phrases to indicate the level of violence by government officials against protesters. These phrases include "use of excessive lethal force," "heavy-handed response," "the most severe crackdown," "brutal crackdown," and "lethal force." For example, in its article published on January 14, 2016, Amnesty International (2016a) described the violence against "peaceful protests" saying the government officials "responded with excessive force…. including by use of live ammunition against protesters, among them children as young as 12" (para. 12). Likewise, Amnesty International (2016d) described the violence against political opposition leaders who it said were "beaten and forced to appear before

court inadequately dressed" (para. 1). For example, referring to a complaint by Bekele Gerba, an opposition leader and one of the detainees, to the court, the article said: "…. some defendants were beaten while in detention, and prison officials confiscated all the defendant's black suits, which they intended to wear to court. The rest of their clothes were taken by other prisoners" (para. 2).

Amnesty International (2016d) framed the violence against the detainees as immoral or "a new low." For example, citing Micelle Kagari, Amnesty International's Deputy Regional Director for East Africa, the Horn and Great Lakes, it wrote: '"aside from the beatings they [the detainees] suffered in detention, degrading the defendants by making them attend court in their underpants is a new low in the behavior of the prison authorities and a total outrage"' (para. 3).

Amnesty International ((2016a) used the violence frame to describe the continued use of violence against protesters as worrisome escalation. For example, it cited Mandeep Tiwana, Head of Police Research at CIVICUS, who said the '"use of excessive and lethal force against protesters, coupled with mass arrests of peaceful demonstrators and human rights defenders represent a worrying escalation of the government's ongoing campaign to silence any form of dissent in the country'" (2016, para. 4).

6.3.2.2 Manner of violence

The violence frame was also used by Amnesty International to describe the manner of the violence against Oromo protesters. Amnesty International used different descriptive adjectives, for example, to describe detention of protesters as "arbitrary", and the killings as "unlawful." For instance, in its June 3, 2016 report, Amnesty International (2016d) criticized the government. It stated that the government security forces "arbitrarily arrested thousands of people, and several hundreds of people participating in the protests have been unlawfully killed by the security

services" (para. 8). In an article published on June 2, 2016, Amnesty International (2016c) also accused the government of arbitrarily detaining peaceful protesters even by ignoring a call by different groups. It accused as follows:

> Despite repeated calls from CSOs, independent UN experts, the European Parliament, and numerous governments, including the United States, the Ethiopian authorities continue to arbitrarily detain and prosecute scores of peaceful protestors for exercising their rights, using the broad provisions of the ATP [Anti-Terrorism Proclamations] to criminalize peaceful expressions of dissent (para.7).

6.3.2.3 Made-up allegations

Amnesty International used the violence frame to indicate security force's use of illegal means against protesters. For example, in its article published on February 17, 2016, with a title: "*Detained Oromo Protesters Must Be Release*," Amnesty International (2016b) narrated the story of Dejene Tafa, a member of the Oromo Federalist Congress, an opposition party that supported Oromo protests. It mentioned that police searched Dejene Tafa's house illegally (without warrant), planted a banned opposition party's flag and other items in his house only to accuse him of having them, detained him but denied him access to his lawyers, restricted visits by his family, and prevented him from discussing the pain in his eyes.

6.3.3 Call for action

The Call for Action theme is one of the dominant themes of the Amnesty International reports/texts. For instance, the following six articles by Amnesty International have a theme that calls for action in their titles (see Table 6):

Table 6 Reports of Amnesty International that Called for Action

▪ *"Ethiopia: After a year of protests, time to address grave human rights concerns"* (Amnesty International, 2016g)
▪ *"Ethiopia: Renewed protests underline need to investigate after dozens killed in stampede"* (Amnesty International, 2016f).
▪ *"Ethiopia: Civil society groups urge international investigation into ongoing human rights violations"* (Amnesty International, 2016e)
▪ *"End use of counter-terrorism law to persecute dissenters and opposition members"* (Amnesty International, 2016c)
▪ *"Further information: Detained Oromo protesters must be released"* (Amnesty International, 2016b)
▪ *"Civil society groups urge the international community to address killing of Oromo protesters"* (Amnesty International, 2016a).

6.3.3.1 A call for an end to violence

Amnesty International also called for an end to all forms of violence such as detention, mistreatment (torture), and killings. As the above table shows, its documents asked for an end to violence with a sense of urgency (e.g., "time to address grave human rights concerns…, (Amnesty International, 2016g) and necessity, as in "…underline the need to investigate …." (Amnesty International, 2016f). In its article published on June 3, 2016, Amnesty International (2016d) called on government officials to "immediately stop the ill-treatment of political members and human rights defenders who were beaten in detention and then forced to appear before the court inadequately dressed" (para.1).

6.3.3.2 Repeal the law and procedures responsible that justify the violence

Along with the call for an end to the violence, Amnesty International called for the repeal of the underlying laws and procedures that justified the government's use of violence against protesters, e.g., the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation 652/2009(ATP). Amnesty International justified its call for repealing the law by 1) questioning its quality, and 2) arguing that the

government officials used it as a tool of oppression. For example, in its article published on June 2, 2016, Amnesty International (2016c) characterized the law as not meeting international standards. It accused the government of "using laws and judicial processes that fail to meet international human rights standards to harass and stifle dissent, targeting activists, human rights defenders, opposition party leaders, and activists" (para. 2).

Amnesty International also portrayed the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation law as giving the government officials too much power to suppress dissidents. For instance, in its article published on December 12, 2015 Amnesty International (2015) criticized the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation 652/2009 (ATP) for granting the govern officials "unrestrained force" to silence opponents. In its call for repealing the law, Amnesty International juxtaposed the provisions of the law with the impact it had on the people as follows:

> Ethiopia's Anti-Terrorism Proclamation 652/2009, permits the government to use unrestrained force against suspected terrorists, including pre-trial detention of up to four months. People that have been subject to pre-trial detention under the anti-terrorism law have reported widespread use of torture and ill treatment. (Amnesty International, 15 December 2015, para.7-8).

Furthermore, Amnesty International portrayed the use of the law as a cover up to target people who hold a view different from the government. For instance, Amnesty International (2016c) it cited Hassan Shire, the Executive Defend Defenders who said "'The Ethiopian government's use of counter-terrorism as a smokescreen to target the peaceful work of human rights defenders is an affront to its regional and international obligations"' (para. 8).

Amnesty International also called for the repeal of the law suggesting it both justified the violence against the protesters and contributed to the protest itself. For example, Amnesty

International (2016g) cited Micelle Kagari, Amnesty International's Deputy Regional Director for East Africa, the Horn and the Great Lakes, demanding that government officials change. She said: '"They should also repeal the repressive laws that imprisoned them in the first place, including the draconian Anti-Terrorism Proclamation that has also contributed to the unrest"' (para. 4).

6.3.3.3 Investigation of the violence

Amnesty International also called for investigation into the violence against the protesters. It called for truth and accountability and independent and impartial investigation. A third aspect of the call for action is also a call for investigation into the violence against the protesters. It framed the call for investigation as doing justice for victims of the violence. It also framed the purpose of the investigation as finding the truth. For example, in its article published on October 5, 2016, Amnesty International (2016f) quoted Michelle Kagari, Amnesty International's Deputy Regional Director for East Africa, the Horn and the Great Lakes who said: it is "'critical that an investigation be held to unearth the truth and to identify law enforcement officers criminally responsible and hold to account in open and fair trials"' (para. 5). Amnesty International also suggested that truth and accountability aimed at helping the victims of the violence as well. For instance, in its article on 14 January 2016, Amnesty International (2016a) demanded that government officials help victims. It wrote: "the Ethiopian authorities must ensure that victims of human rights violations by law enforcement officials have access to an effective remedy and obtain adequate reparation, including compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction, and guarantees of non-repetition" (para. 11).

In its call for truth and accountability, Amnesty International documents also highlighted the need to conduct independent and impartial investigation into the violence against the

protesters. The emphasis on the independent and impartial investigation emanated from lack of trust of the government of Ethiopia. For example, in its article on 30 August 2016, Amnesty International (2016e) cited Sarah Jackso, Deputy Regional Director for East Africa, the Horn and the Great Lakes who "lack of independent and transparent investigation of human rights violations in Ethiopia strongly implies that the Ethiopian government's investigation of the ongoing human rights crises will be independent, impartial, and transparent" (para. 4). For the lack of trust of the government of Ethiopia, it also referred to Ethiopia's National Human Rights Commission's statement on the violence saying:

> Ethiopia's National Human Rights Commission, which has the mandate to investigate rights violations in Ethiopia, has failed to make its own June report on the Oromo protests, while concluding in its oral report to Parliament that the lethal force used by security forces in Oromia was proportionate to the risk they faced from protesters. (para. 10).

In its call for independent and impartial investigation into the violence, Amnesty International also specified the type of violations that needed to be investigated. It suggested investigation into human rights violations in general, and the killings and arrests of the protesters in particular. For instance, it reflected on a civil society group's call for: "an independent and impartial international investigation into human rights violations in Ethiopia, including the unlawful killing of peaceful protesters and a recent spate of arrests of civil society members documenting this crackdown" (Amnesty International, 2016e, para.1).

6.4 Summary

This chapter answered RQ3, that is, the main themes and frames highlighted by international human rights organizations (Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International).

Like the news media, both Human Right Watch and Amnesty International focused on three major themes: the cause of the protest, government response to the protest, and a call to action (solutions). Human rights organizations framed the cause of the protest as a grievance. But while the Human Rights Watch focused on the political and historical grievances, Amnesty International emphasized the economic grievance, especially the Masterplan. Both Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International framed the government response to protests as violence. Like the news media, they highlighted on the different types of violence such as killings, mass arrests, and torture of the protesters by security forces of the Ethiopian government. The call for a solution also focused mainly on justice to the victims.

7 ANALYSIS: THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

7.1 Introduction

This chapter analyzed texts (statements and interview transcripts) of the Ethiopian government officials on the Oromo protest movement to answer research question 4. As with other actors (the news media, social media activists, and international organizations), three major themes—causes of the protest, violence, and solutions—were highlighted. However, the government officials framed all themes differently than other actors. It attributed the cause of protests to internal forces, a frustrated youth in Ethiopia, and external forces or diaspora Ethiopians and foreign countries who want to overthrow the government. It framed the violence theme as violence caused by the protesters against security forces, civilians, and public infrastructures. The government framed the solution theme as "deep reform within the government" in order to grow the economy and serve the interests of the people.

7.2 Cause of the Problems

The Ethiopian government officials highlighted the causes of the Oromo protest movement. They attributed the causes of the problem to two factors: internal factors they framed as "frustration" by the people, especially the youth, due to "unmet expectations," and external factors they characterized as forces that sought to use the protests to destabilize the country and seize government power.

7.2.1 Internal factors

The government described the Oromo protest movement as an "expression of frustration." It portrayed the sources of the "frustration" as a disappointment by the youth about "unmet expectations" on economic and political issues. For example, in his interview with the *Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation* (*EBC*) on 7 October 2016 Getachew Reda, the minister of

Government Communications Affairs, mentioned the economic factors as inequality in wealth distribution and unemployment. However, Reda also used vague language at times. For example, in similar interviews, he described the "inequality" as "real and perceived inequality" indicating that protesters' claims were inaccurate or exaggerated.

Although the government admitted that economic issues such as wealth distribution and unemployment explain "frustration" among the youth, it also sought to put a positive spin on it. For example, it claimed that the big expectation on the part of the youth was in part the result of the country's success in economic growth. For example, while it cited sending millions of students to school as a source of pride, it also admitted that it did not meet the raised expectation about job opportunities for the graduates.

The government officials also depicted youth frustration as a frustration created by economic development, saying the economic growth in the country did not trickle down to some parts of the society, especially the youth. So, the frustration was the "result of a very success that which the EPRDF has unleashed as a result of progressive policies" (*EBC,* 11 September 2016, 1:52). Reda mentioned the "result of progressive stories" such as sending millions of students to schools and graduating every year but not getting a job. Reda described this as "unmet expectations." "We have been victims of our own successes" (*EBC,* 11 September 2016, 3:35).

The government also attributed the "frustration" to political factors, such as issues of good governance and corruption. Like social media activists and international news media, the government officials then blamed bad official practices. However, unlike the Oromo protest activists or the international news media, which portrayed the problem as the problem of the government system itself, the officials portrayed it as a problem with "some officials" who "abandoned their responsibility." For example, Reda said, "With some government officials'

practices ur departing slightly er and even in some cases significantly from the kind of developmental er focus that EPRDF has been er known for." (*EBC*, 7 October 2016, 2:42). These officials, according to Reda, do not represent the government which "was basically a service-oriented government, a government which was, which puts the interest of the public front and center" (*EBC*, 7 October 2016).

The Addis Ababa and Oromia Special Zone Masterplan that triggered the Oromo protest movement was also highlighted in the officials' discussion about the protest, especially in the context of responding to the protests. However, unlike the Oromo protest activists, who framed the masterplan as a "landgrab" intended to displace farmers from their lands, the government officials portrayed it as the "development plan" aimed at improving the lives of the people. They represented the Masterplan as mutually beneficial to both Addis Ababa and surrounding towns of the Oromia region. For example, in his interview with *The Ethiopian Reporter* on 30 August 2015, Hayelom Tawuye, the Deputy General Manager of the Addis Ababa City Development and Management Office said the following:

> እነዚህ አካባቢዎች በተቀናጀ መንገድ ቢያድጉ ሁሉም ተጠቃሚ ይሆናል። ማንም ይኼን ያምንበታል። ይህንን ድንቅ ሐሳብ አዕምሮውን ክፍት አድርጎ የመተለከተ ሁሉ የሚያደንቀው ነው። ["If these areas [Addis Ababa and Oromia towns] growth together all will benefit. Everyone believes this. Anyone who sees this with an open mind will appreciate this novel idea"]. (*The Ethiopian Reporter*, 30 August 2015).

Tawuye counteracted opposition to the Masterplan saying it was caused due to misunderstanding. He said that integrating a cities' masterplan with surrounding areas is a common practice in other countries, without mentioning those countries by name.

Tawuye explained what the integration plan means and how it can benefit Addis Ababa and Oromia towns as follows:

ግለሰቦች ከግንዛቤ ጉድለት ወይም ሆን ብለው ችግር ሊፈጥሩ ይችላሉ፡፡ ነገር ግን ማቀናጀት ምን ማለት ነው? የተወሳሰበ ጉዳይ አይደለም፡፡ አንተ እንዳልከው ቁምነገሩ ማኅበራዊ፣ ኢኮኖሚያዊና አካባቢያዊ ጉዳዮችን እንዴት እናሳድግ የሚለው ነው፡፡ የአንድ አካባቢ ዕድገት ከተጎራባቹ ጋር አብሮ መሄድ ይኖርበታል፡፡ የአዲስ አበባ ዕድገት በዙሪያው ያለውን ይዞ መሄድ አለበት፡፡ አዲስ አበባ ውኃ ከልዩ ዞኑ ትጠቀማለች፡፡ ሌሎች ሰፋፊ ጥቅሞች ይኖራሉ፡፡ በተመሳሳይ ልዩ ዞኑም ከአዲስ አበባ የሚጠቀመው ይኖራል፡፡ መንገድ ስትሠራና ባቡር ስትዘረጋ አንድ ላይ የተሳሰረ ነው፡፡ መዋቅራዊ ፕላኑ ለሁሉም የሚበጅ ግዙፍ ዕቅድ ነው፡፡ የሁለትዮሽ ጥቅምን በሚመለከት መንግሥት የጠራ ግንዛቤ አለው፡፡ የጋራ ማስተር ፕላኑ ይህንን ከግንዛቤ ከቶ የተዘጋጀ ነው፡፡ [Individuals may create a problem either because of lack of understanding or intentionally. However, what does integration mean? It is not a complicated issue. As you said, the important thing is how we can address the social, economic, and environmental issues. Development in one area should be integrated with the development of the neighboring areas. The development of Addis Ababa should go along with the areas that surround it. Addis Ababa will get water supply from the special zone [Oromia]. There are other benefits. In the same way, there are benefits the special zone gets from Addis Ababa. When you construct roads and railways, you link the two. The Masterplan is a big plan that benefits all. The government has a clear understanding regarding the mutual benefit. The Masterplan was prepared to take this into consideration]. (*The Ethiopian Reporter*, 30 August 2015).

In his interview with *The Ethiopian Reporter* published on 27 December 2015, Fekadu Tesemma, the head of the Oromia Regional Government Communications Affairs, also highlighted the benefits of the master plan. He described the masterplan as “infrastructural plan” aimed at promoting trade and investment, protecting the environment by ensuring mutual benefits of Addis Ababa and surrounding towns of the Oromia regions. He further stressed the benefit the masterplan gives to Oromia towns saying Addis Ababa was a big market.

Government officials also sought to dispel the fears by the Oromo people concerning the quality to the masterplan by highlighting the master plan was prepared based on the experience of other countries and with the participation of international experts. For example, in his interview with *The Ethiopian Reporter* on 13 September 2015, Diriba Kuma, the Mayor of Addis Ababa, explained that the Masterplan was prepared by professionals from France. He indicated that it took the experience of the city of Lyons (France) and the experience of how cities in Europe integrated and developed together. He also described the master plan as a sign of modernity, not a source of the problem.

In addition to highlighting the benefits of the master plan in terms of development, government officials also highlighted the master plan as unproblematic. For example, in his exclusive interview with *The Ethiopian Reporter TV* on 30 November 2015, Prime Minster Hailemariam Desalegn said the master plan would not cause any problem. He said the protest against the masterplan was unnecessary as it was not ratified by the Parliament, and hence open for discussion with the public. Like other officials, he portrayed the master plan as a "development plan" aimed at building infrastructures that connect Addis Ababa with surrounding towns of the Oromia region. He mentioned railway, electricity, and water supply as an example.

Hailemariam Desalegn also counter-framed protesters accusation that the master plan was aimed at expanding the territory of Addis Ababa Oromia lands. For example, he said the following:

> "የአዲስ አበበ ማስተር ፕላን ሲሰራ አሮሚያ ዙሪያ ያሉ የኦሮሚያ ከተሞች ማስተር ፕላኑ አካል ሆነው ቢሠሩ ከአዲስ አበበ ጥቅም ያገኛሉ። ይህ ማለት አዲስ አበበ በአዲስ አበበ የኦሮሚያ ከተሞች በኦሮሚያ እየተዳደሩ ማለት ነው" ["If the design of the Addis Ababa Masterplan includes Oromia towns, the Oromia towns will get benefit from Addis Ababa. This means Addis Ababa will be administered

by Addis Ababa, and Oromia will be administered by Oromia"] (*The Ethiopian Reporter TV*, 30 November 2015, 1:22:42).

Hailemariam went further saying: "አዲስ አበበ የራሷ ድንበር አላት። ከድንበሩ አንድ ኢንች ወደ ኦሮሚያ አትገባም አዲስ አበበ" ["Addis Ababa has its own territory. It will not expand an inch into Oromia"] (*The Ethiopian Reporter TV*, 30 November 2015, 1:23:55). Diriba Kuma, the mayor of Addis Ababa also tod The Ethiopian Reporter the same thing saying the following:

> ሁለት የአስተዳደር አካላት የተቀናጀ ዕቅድ ይዘው መሥራታቸው በምንም ዓይነት አንዱ የሌላውን አስተዳደራዊ ሥልጣን የሚነካ አይደለም፡፡ ቁም ነገሩ በጋራ እንልማ ነው፡፡ አንዱን መሬት ወደ ሌላ የመውሰድ ዓላማም የለውም፡፡ በቅንጅት የማልማት ጉዳይ ነው፡፡ ["For two administrations (Addis Ababa and Oromia) working on integrated plan does not interfere into the jurisdiction of another administration. It has no plan to take other's lands. It is about growing together].

7.2.2 External factors

The Ethiopian government officials also attributed the cause of the protests to external forces. It divided the external forces into state and non-state actors. For example, in his interview with *EBC* on 7 October 2016, Getachew Reda mentioned three types of actors: nation states, the diaspora-based Ethiopian activists, and opposition political parties. By state actors, the Ethiopian officials allude to Egypt and Eritrea. Egypt has always been considered a country that does not want peace in Ethiopia because of the long-standing issue over the water politics, the Nile River. Egypt depends on 85% of its water needs from the Nile, which gets 85 percent of its water from Ethiopian highlands. Ethiopia's ongoing construction of a huge dam on the river created fear in Egypt that it may lose some water from the river. Likewise, Eritrea was considered an enemy country that supported oppositions against the Ethiopian government. Ethiopia and Eritrea fought

a bitter border war in 1998-2000 that resulted in the death of more than 80,000 people from both sides (Gebrekidan, 2018). They portrayed these forces as forces that want to destroy the state:

> But there are also other explanations here, especially with the government being very serious about addressing the kinds of challenges…the people are facing, meeting the demands of the people, there are some elements which are in the business of, in fact, allowing the government to, to itself because, they are ready to take …every opportunity at their disposal to make sure this government and the state apparatus is dismantled. (*EBC*, 7 October 2016, 9:06)

Reda suggested that these forces do not want the government to reform itself because if it does, they would not have an excuse to protest. He said: "Of course, they are trying to take advantage of the situation because if the government manages to reform itself, which it will, and then, they will have lost their rallying cry" (*EBC*, 7 October 2016, 9:35).

The Ethiopian officials portrayed the diaspora-based Ethiopians as the "rejectionist elements" who want to overthrow the government. Here is how Getachew Reda explained who these elements are saying, "the rejectionist elements in the Ethiopian diaspora who have always been trying every means, every means at their disposal to short-circuit the process to power" (*EBC*, 11 September 2016, 9:54). Reda described the Ethiopian diaspora group as wanting to dismantle the constitutional order to overthrow the government.

7.3 Violence

As with the international news media, Oromo social media activists, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International, violence was a major theme of government officials' discussion about the Oromo protest movement. However, unlike these actors, who framed it as a

state-violence against peaceful protesters, the government officials highlighted the violence by the protesters.

7.3.1 The cause of the protests is also the cause of the violence

For protesters and other actors, the cause of the protesters—the government officials who caused the economic, social, and political grievances—also responded violently to peaceful protesters for demanded their rights. For the government, the source of the protests, especially the external forces—foreign states (Egypt and Eritrea) and the "rejectionist diaspora-based" Ethiopians caused violence in order to "dismantle the constitutional order."

7.3.2 "Protesters cause is not the real cause"

Government officials rejected the claim that the Masterplan was the cause of the protesters. They rejected the Masterplan as a "cover-up." For example, in his press conference on 17 December 2015, Getachew Reda, Minister of Government Communications Affairs, rejected this as a "cover-up" saying, "የማስተር ፕላን ጥያቄ ሽፋን ነበር እንጂ የመጨረሻ ጥያቄ አልነበረም ["The question of the master plan was a cover-up; it was not their ultimate question"] (*Awramba Time*s, 17 December 2015, 3:51). According to government officials, although there was a misunderstanding on the Masterplan by some people, it was hijacked by "some elements" inside and outside the country who want to overthrow the government through violence. For example, the following was how he described opposition political parties who operate in the country legally:

> እዚህ ሀገር ላይ በህግ የሚንቀሳቀሱ ሀይሎች አሉ። በህጋዊ ስባል ያው ለምዝገባ ሲባል ህጋዊ የሆኑ በተቻለ መጠን ግን በግርግርና በሁከት አመካኝቶም ቢሆን ራሳቸውን ቤተመንግሥት እናገኘዋለን የሚል ቅዠት ያለቸው ወገኖች አሉ። ["in this country, there are folks who operate legally. But 'legally means just for the

sake of registration [by electoral commission] but as much as possible use the violence to find themselves in the Palace"]. (*Awramba Time*s, 17 December 2015, 4:49).

The "terrorists" the officials were alluding to are Ethiopian opposition parties who engaged in armed struggle to overthrow the government. Three political parties: the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), and Ginbot 7 were deemed terrorist groups by the Ethiopian Parliament.

7.3.3 Self-defense

The Ethiopian government portrayed the violence against protesters as an act of self-defense and maintaining law and orders by security forces. By denying the accusation of the violence against the protesters, they justified the use of force as an action that was done to protect security forces. For example, in his interview to *Al Jazeera*'s Inside the Story, Getachew Reda, the minster of the Ethiopian Government's Communications Affairs, said, "Look, security forces are taking measures when there are violent protests, and when people are particularly using deadly forces against security forces and civilians in the name of protests" (*Al Jazeera*, 14 August 2016, 08:13). Reda framed the violence by security forces against protesters as a response to the violence by the protesters. For example, in his answer to *Al Jazeeera*'s Fuli Batibo's question to explain the justification for the killing of 30 protesters in the City of Bahir Dar, he answered the following, "… there was a violent incident involving people among the protesters throwing grenades at institutions and at people, and of course, security forces … would normally respond when there is a violent reaction" (*Al Jazeera*, 14 August 2016, 9:03).

7.3.4 Exaggerated number of casualties

The Ethiopian government officials also contested the numbers of casualties that were reported by the activists and the news media. For example, he described the information on

casualties by activists as "being plucked out of thin air" (*Al Jazeera*, August 14, 2016, 8: 28). He described exaggeration of the casualties as aimed at "creating a cloud of suspicion and fear throughout the country" when he said, "…simply because we are trying to inflate figures of casualties and fatalities simply to because we are trying to create a cloud of suspicion and fear throughout the country" (*Al Jazeera*, 14 August 2016, 12:12).

7.3.5 Demonizing the protests

The Ethiopian government official not only externalized the problem to outside forces, political parties, and diaspora-based terrorists, he also demonized them as such. Getachew Reda framed the organizers of the protests as "*ganne*n"[demon]. በነገራችን ላይ ሁከት የጠራው ወገን፣ ጋኔን የጠራው ወገን ጋኔኑም ራሱ መቆጣጠሩ እርግጠኛ አይደለም። ["by the way, the folks who called for the violence, the folks who were called by the demon, even the demon himself is not sure if he can control it"]. (*Awramba Times*, 17 December 2015: 6:07).

7.4 Solution

Solution to the problems was also a major theme that was highlighted by the government officials in their discussion about the Oromo protests movement. The solutions, according to government officials, were "deep reform" or "deep renewal." "Deep reform" or "deep renewal," according to Getachew Reda in his interview with the *Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation* on 7 October 2016) was "to bring EPRDF [The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front] back to its fundamental …to its original promises to its people … to revitalize the state in such a way that it will once again become at the service of …of the people" (*EB*C, 7 October 2016, 6:43). The government officials maintained that the EPRDF government is the government of the people that always prioritizes the interests of the people. So, the purpose of the "deep reform,"

according to Getachew Reda, was to create a "servant state" in which officials do not use the state power for personal gains, saying:

> It will once again become the kind of servant state and government that it is …expected to be with the renewal line. Also make sure state power is not source of private gain and private wealth, but a platform to serve the interest of the public (*EBC*, 7 October 2016, 7:10).

7.4.1 The source of the problem is the source of the solution too

By framing the source of the economic problem as economic growth, the government officials also suggested the same as solutions to the problem: "So, the government clearly realizes that the best way to address this youth bulge, to address this frustration, through more not less growth, through more, not less change, and of course, this is what the government is doing" (*EBC*, 7 October 2016, 15: 09).

7.4.2 Defending government policy

In contrast to the Oromo social media activists, the news media, and international organizations, the Ethiopian government officials sought to defend its policy. That is, they admitted problems with 'some officials" and they portrayed the policy as having no problem. For example, in his interview with *EB*C, Getachew Reda defended his government policy as a policy with no problem although some government officials did not deliver to the people. The following is how he defended the government policy:

> Of course, our policies are proven they are mettle, proven they are caliber…throughout the last 15 years but…frustrations here and there are manifestation of the kind of departure, some practices are taken from...what I said the renewal line is clearly spelt out 15 years back. (*EBC*, 7 October 2016, 7: 14).

The officials also sought to defend government's policies by comparing its government with other governments of African states. For example, in his two interviews on *EBC* on 7 October 2016 and 11 September 2016, Getachew Reda compared the Ethiopian government with the governments of other African countries which he described as "predatory states." The following is how he differentiated the Ethiopian state from African states:

> EPRDF is not a quintessential predatory er African governments. What EPRDF er succeeded [in] in the last 20 years is to er create a state apparatus that is absolutely different. A clear departure from the traditional predatory Africans states, which uses [] the state power to in a manner that benefits the people at large. Not as a source patronage mechanism used to line the pockets of officials and their their their cronies. (*EBC*, 11 September 2016, 4:06).

In contrast to African states he characterized as "predatory states," the Ethiopian state "has been very successful in creating state apparatus that is primarily driven by the need to protect the interests of the people" (*EBC*, 11 September 2016, 4:42).

7.5 Summary

As discussed in this chapter, government officials also highlighted the major themes emphasized by other actors but framed them differently. They stressed the cause of the problem as both internal and external factors. As internal factors, they emphasized economic and political grievances. On the economic grievance, the government officials attempted to frame the problem as caused by the fast-growing economy which led to unfulfilled expectations by the youth. On the political grievance, they framed it as an issue caused by a "few" governments officials. This contradicts other actors' frames that accused the government as a system, not as a "few" officials.

Like other actors, government officials also highlighted the government response. But unlike other actors who framed it as violence against peaceful protesters, they highlighted the violence created by protesters. They magnified the attack of public properties by protesters. They framed their actions as a government duty to maintain peace and order.

On the solution, the government officials focused mainly on addressing the economic grievance by growing the economy so that the people benefit from economic development. On the political grievance, they highlighted “deep reform” as the solution. “Deep reform” according to government officials refers to sticking to the ruling party’s “revolutionary democracy.”

8 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

This project aimed to discover the frames highlighted by media and non-media actors on the Oromo protest movement in Ethiopia. To be clear, it aimed at uncovering the major themes and their framing by the news media, activists, human rights organizations, and the Ethiopian government officials. The qualitative framing analysis was used to discover the meanings, concepts, themes, and frames of each actor to answer the following research questions: (1) What were the major themes of the international news media? (2) What were the major themes highlighted in social media posts by key Oromo activists? (3) What were the major themes of the human rights groups Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International? (4) What were the major themes of the Ethiopian government officials? (5) How did the international news media frames compare with the frames of other actors (activists, human rights groups, and the Ethiopian government officials)?

The data of the study were the texts of the news media (news reports, blogs, editorials, videos); social media messages of the Oromo protest activists; press statements and interview transcripts of the Ethiopian government officials; and reports and press releases of the human rights groups (Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International).

This chapter has four sections. The first section provides summaries of the findings of the analysis of the texts of each actor that was studied (answering research questions 1 – 4). The second section of the chapter presents the results of the study. It outlines the patterns of each theme and discusses the similarities and differences between and among the themes and their framing. It also discusses theoretical implications of these patterns (this answers research

question 5). The third section describes the limitations that may have a bearing on the study. The last section concludes the chapter by suggesting areas of future studies.

8.2 Major Findings

Analysis of the texts of each actor indicates that three themes dominated discourses about the Oromo protest movement. The themes each actor addressed are 1) causes of the protest (such as political, economic, and cultural grievances); 2) government response to the protests (typically framed as violence); and 3) and a call for action (for example, an end to the violence). The study revealed the similarities in how the actors framed those themes, especially on the grievance and violence frames. However, it also showed some disparities in how they framed themes, especially the government and the call for action theme.

8.2.1 Major themes of the news media

As indicated in Figure 12 below, the three major themes that dominated the international media's discourse about Oromo protests—*cause of the protests*, *government response to the protest*, and a *call for action*—have several subthemes framed differently.

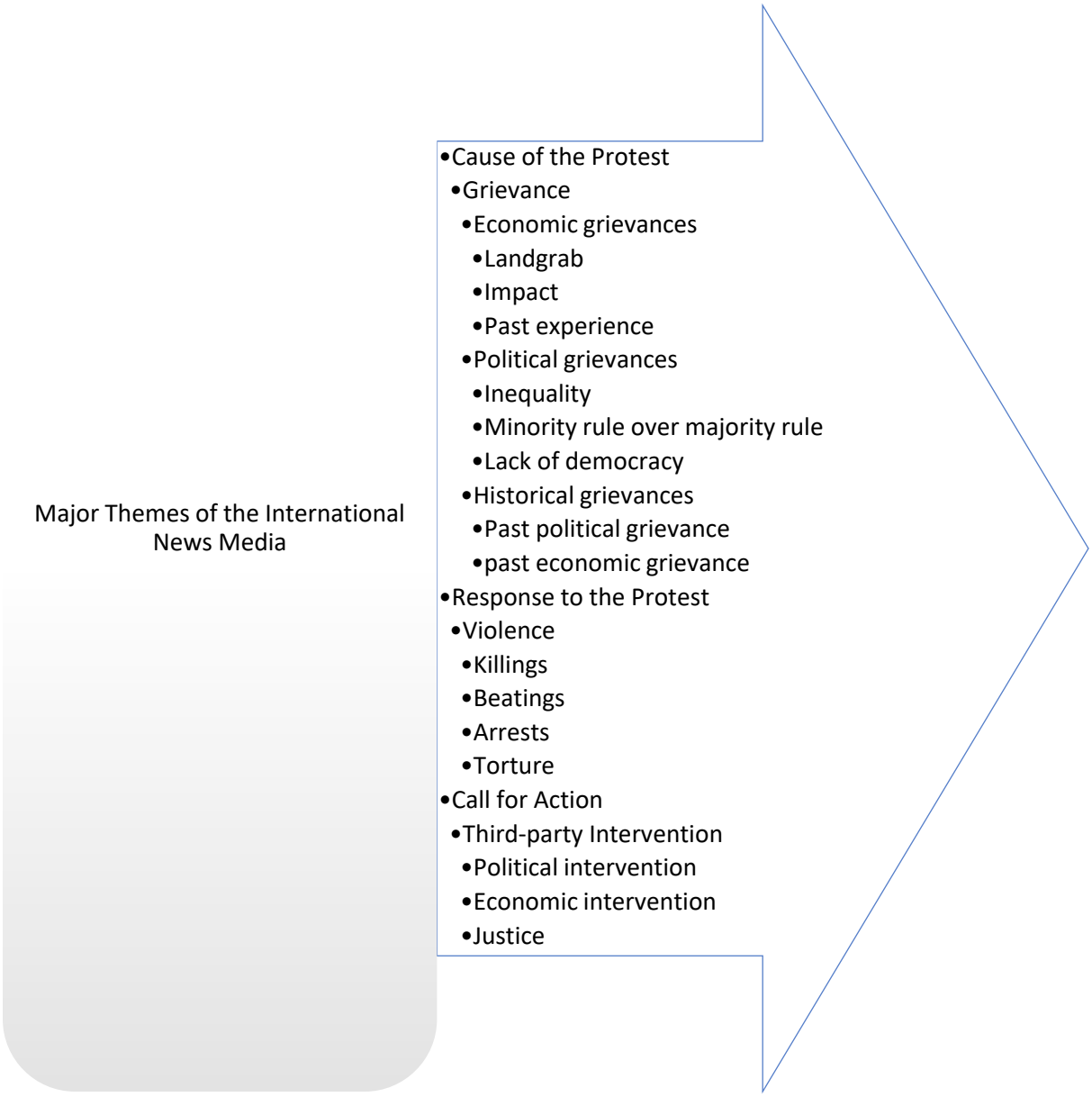

Figure 5 Themes of the International News Media Coverage of the Oromo Protests

The news media framed the causes of the Oromo protest movement as a grievance. Three types of grievances were identified: economic, political, and historical. In their discussion about the *economic* grievances, the news media focused mainly on the immediate trigger of the protest, the Addis Ababa and Oromia Special Zone Masterplan, also known as the Masterplan. The Masterplan was framed as a "land grab," a frame that also resonated well with the frame of the

Oromo protest movement activists. The news media also highlighted how the Masterplan would have affected the lives of the Oromo people by underscoring past experiences of the people who were displaced from their lands. Some media outlets also magnified how important the land is for the Oromo people. Furthermore, the news media highlighted grievances by putting Oromo grievances in *historical* contexts. The *political* grievances highlighted by the news media were inequality, minority rule over the majority, and lack of democracy.

The news media also highlighted the theme of the government response to the protesters. They framed the government response as state violence against peaceful protesters. The news media used the violence frame to highlight different types of violence such as killings, beatings, arrests, and torture of protesters by government security forces.

In the theme of call to action, the news media highlighted the need to end government violence against peaceful protesters. They called for an investigation into the violence, which they framed as justice. In addition to the investigation, some news media also called for third-party intervention, which involves calling on others to pressure the Ethiopian government to end the violence. For example, *The Washington Post* in its three editorials called for the United States and the European Union to use the economic and diplomatic clout they have on Ethiopia to end the violence.

8.2.2 Major themes of the Oromo activists' social media messages

Analysis of social media (Facebook) posts of the Oromo social media activists indicated that three major themes—causes of the protest movement, government response to the protest, and call for action—were highlighted. Oromo activists framed the causes of the protest as a grievance. As *Table 7* below shows, Oromo activists highlighted three main grievances: political, economic, and violent. They used *political* grievances to highlight administrative issues (e.g.,

self-rule); democracy (e.g., freedom of the press and freedom of religion); and rights (e.g., human rights and language and identity). They used the *economic* grievance frame to emphasize the masterplan and its possible consequences such as displacement of Oromo farmers from their ancestral lands, and environmental issues. And they used the *violent* grievance frame to portray the government as unjustly violent against innocent Oromo people, causing the need to rise up in protest.

In the government response theme highlighted by the Oromo activists, they highlighted different types of government violence against Oromos, such as killings, arrests, torture, and disappearance of protesters. Activists used the news media, human rights groups (Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch), and sometimes their "anonymous" sources as a source of information about these types of violence.

The call for action was also a major theme highlighted by the Oromo social media activists. The activists called on both the government officials, third-party intervention, and the protesters themselves. They called on the *government* to address their demands, i.e., address their political and economic demands. They also demanded an end to violence they highlighted such as killings, arrests, torture, and disappearing of activists. The Oromo activists also called on their *fellow protesters* to continue the protest. The protest was used not just as an expression of disapproval of the government policy but also as a means to an end, i.e., to put pressure on the government to address their demands. For example, in their discussion about Feyisa Lilesa's gesture at the Rio Olympics, they highlighted its significance in telling the world about the protest and its impact on the government. Activists also encouraged more protests; praised those who protested as "heroes"; and paid homage to those who lost their lives as "martyrs." So, the

call for action theme was not only aimed at ending the violence against the protesters but also answering the major economic and political demands (grievances that caused the protests).

Table 7 Summary of the Themes of Oromo Activists

Causes (Grievances)	Government Response (Violence)	Call for Action

• Political Grievances
  • Administrative (e.g. self-rule),
  • Democracy (e.g., freedom of the press, freedom of religion),
  • Rights-oriented (e.g., human rights, language and identity)
• Economic grievances (landgrab,
• Environmental issues)
• Grievances related to state violence
	• Killings;
	• Beatings,
	• Arrests,
	• Torture,
	• Disappearances
		• Call for more protests
		• Call on others (third party for justice)
		• Call on the government to address their demands

8.2.3 Major themes of the human rights groups

Human rights groups (Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International) emphasized three major themes: the causes of the protest, government response to the protest, and calls for action. As *Table 8* below shows, each major theme has several subthemes framed differently. Both Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International portrayed the cause of the protest as a grievance. As the following figure shows, Human Rights Watch used the grievance frame to highlight both political and historical issues as major causes, while Amnesty International emphasized the economic aspect, especially the masterplan.

Table 8 Summary of the Themes of International Human Rights Groups

Human Rights Watch	Amnesty International

• Causes of the Protests (Grievances)
  ○ Historical Grievances
  ○ Political Grievances
  ○ Chain of Causes
• Government Response (Violence)
  ○ Impact of the violence
  ○ Violation of international law
  ○ Violations of rights
• Solution
  ○ End the violence
  ○ Investigate
  - Justice
  - Accountability
• Third-Party Intervention
  - Use of diplomacy
  - Use of aid money
	• Cause of the Protest (grievances)
	  ○ Economic grievance
	• Government Response to the Protests (violence grievances)
	  ○ Level of violence
	  ○ Manner of violence
	  ○ Made-up allegations
	• Solution
	  ○ End the violence
	  ○ Change laws
	  ○ Investigate
	  - Truth and accountability
	  - Independent and impartial investigation

Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International highlighted the 'government response' theme and framed it as violence against peaceful protestors. However, while the Human Rights Watch used the violence frame to highlight the impact of violence and describe the violation of international law and human rights, Amnesty International used the violence frame to talk about

different types of violence such as killings, arrests, torture, and disappearance. Amnesty International also blamed the government officials for "made-up allegations" against the protesters.

The 'call for action' theme was highlighted by human rights organizations. They framed the needed action as the government serving justice to the victims of the government violence. They called for an end to violence and an investigation into the violence.

8.2.4 Major themes of government officials

Like all other actors, analysis of the government officials' reports and interview transcripts also yielded three major themes—causes of the protest, government response, and call for action. The government officials linked the *cause of the protests* to internal and external factors. They portrayed the internal factor as a grievance due to "unmet frustration" on the part of the youth on political and economic spheres. The government officials framed the political and economic grievances differently from other actors. That is, unlike other actors who framed political grievance as caused by the government system, the government officials framed it as a problem of "good governance," such as corruption by "a few" government officials, not the whole system of the government. Likewise, they framed the economic grievance, not in connection with the land grab, but portrayed it regarding the fruits of the development not trickling down to the youth. In other words, the government boasts of its economic achievement but regrets its inability to enable the youth to receive the benefit of it.

The external factors the government officials wanted to associate with the cause of the protest were the diaspora-based Ethiopians, opposition parties, and foreign governments, who want to change the government by force. According to the government officials, the diaspora-based Ethiopians and opposition parties wanted to overthrow the government through violence to

take the state power. However, it also accused foreign governments of inciting a takeover, specifically Eritrea with which it fought a border war, and Egypt, which for geopolitical reasons wants to maintain its share of water from the Nile River, where it gets 85% of its water from tributaries in Ethiopia.

The theme that received significant attention was the *government officials' response* to the Oromo protests. The government officials highlighted violence by *the protesters* and characterized the response by the government security forces as a measure taken to defend citizens and government institutions against violent protesters. A *solution* was also highlighted in the government reports and interview transcripts. The solution suggested by the government officials was "deep reform," which means adhering to the revolutionary democracy.

8.2.5 How did the frames of all actors compare?

As the discussion in the preceding paragraphs indicate, all actors—the news media, Oromo activists, the human rights organizations, and the government officials highlighted the basic themes of 1) causes of the protest (problem), 2) the government response, and 3) a call for action (solution). In answering the last research question (number five), this section (8.2.5) describes similarities and differences of the major themes and their frames. The following section (8.3) will then discuss theoretical explanations for the similarities and differences in framing of the themes, according to scholarly literature. It particularly focuses on why the news media's framing of the themes was congruent with activists and human rights groups while it was not generally congruent with the government's framing.

8.2.5.1 Similarities and differences of themes and their frames.

As *Table 9* below shows, the findings indicate that some themes, especially those highlighted by the news media, were congruent with the themes highlighted by the Oromo social

media activists and human rights groups. The government was the outlier in terms of not having its frames supported and reflected by other actors in most cases. Regarding the *cause of the protest*, all actors except Amnesty International (AI) highlighted political grievances while the news media and Human Rights Watch (HRW) emphasized historical grievances and the chain of causes as well. Chain of causes refers to the grievances caused by security forces' response to past protests such as killings and detention. For example, the killings and arrests of protesters who went out to the streets to protest the masterplan will become another cause for the next protests.

In discussing the *government's response to the protests*, all actors (besides the government officials) portrayed it as government violence against protesters by highlighting the killings, mass arrests, beatings, and tortures by the security forces. The government officials, by contrast, justified their response as a duty to maintain peace and security, the government also emphasized its duty to protect citizens from the violence by the protesters and different forces who wanted to overthrow the government and others who wish to disturb the peace and security of the country (for geopolitical reasons).

Table 9 Similarities and Differences of the Major Themes by Actors

	Major Themes		
	Cause of the protest	Government response	Calls for action
News media	Grievances - Political - Economic - Historical	Violence - Killings - Arrests - Torture - Disappearances	End to violence - Investigation into the violence - Third-party intervention
Oromo activists	Grievance - Political - Economic - Ongoing state violence	Violence - Killings - Arrests - Torture	End to violence - Address the political & economic demands

		- Disappearances	- Third-party intervention - More protests
Human Rights Watch	Grievance - Political - Historical	Violence - Killings - Arrests - Torture - Disappearances	End to violence - Investigation into the violence - Third-party intervention
Amnesty International	Grievance - Economic	Violence - Killings - Arrests - Torture - Disappearances	End to violence - Investigation into the violence - Third-party intervention
Government officials	Grievance - Economic (inequality) - Political (corruption by some gov't officials)	Protesters are violent. Gov't duty to maintain peace and safety of the citizens and gov't institutions	"Deep reform" and grow economy

The *calls for action* by the news media, human rights groups, and activists all aimed at ending the violence against the protesters. They called for an investigation for justice and third-party intervention to pressure the Ethiopian government to stop the violence. Activists also called upon the government to answer their economic and political demands, not just to stop the violence against protesters. While the news media and human rights groups called on the Ethiopian government and international countries such as the United Nations, European Union, the United States, and the United Kingdom to get involved, Oromo activists additionally called on the Oromo people to keep protesting.

The protest dynamic of framing and counter-framing between Oromo activists and the government is interesting, as Oromo activists and the government officials framed their issues in different ways, not surprisingly. The first has to with the emphasis each gave to grievances. While Oromo activists highlighted many aspects of the grievance frame (political, economic,

rights violations, environmental issues, language and identity), the government emphasized mainly just the political and economic grievances issues, admitting to some problems but making them less severe and comprehensive.

The second framing dynamic between Oromo activists and government officials concerns how each framed the government—the target of the protest. The activists framed the whole government structure as a culprit. But the government officials counter-framed this using two framing strategies: defensive and externalizing. They defended the government structure by portraying the culprit as a "few" officials who did not conform to the government policy and ideology of the developmental state revolutionary democracy. They used the externalizing frame strategy on the whole protest by portraying the protests as being manipulated by external forces who have a hidden agenda. As discussed in chapter 7, the foreign countries are mainly Egypt and Eritrea, whom they accused of wanting to destabilize Ethiopia for geopolitical reasons, and the Ethiopian opposition political parties, whom they blamed for wanting a short-cut to the government power. It contradicts the activists' frame that portrayed the protests as a protest by the Oromo people, for example, by using the hashtags #OromoProtests and #OromoRevolution.

The third dynamic relates to using the same issue to put the blame on each other. For example, Oromo activists and government officials did not deny the existence of violence, but they blamed each other for it. While activists used the violence frame to highlight government actions such as killing, beatings, mass arrests, and tortures of the protesters and Oromo people more broadly, the government used the same frame to blame the protesters by highlighting road blockades and attacks on government facilities. Even for the violence to which they admitted, the government officials tried to justify it as a duty to maintain peace and security.

Both the international news media and human rights groups seem to reflect and support many collective actions frames of Oromo activists, which the government officials did not. The media and human rights groups reinforced the grievance frame of the cause of the protest and counteracted the government claims in some cases. For example, in countering the government officials' frame of externalizing the *cause of the protest*, the *Washington Post* in its Editorial Board wrote:

> Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn blamed 'anti-peace forces,' and 'foreign enemies' whom he claimed are trying to destabilize Ethiopia. But attempts to point to foes abroad masks the truth that unrest is being fueled by a deep sense of anger at home. (2016, October 11, para. 4).

The *Washington Post* framed the "anger" as economic (land), political, and violence against the protesters by the government officials saying, "anger over plans for reallocating their land, political disenfranchisement and detention of opposition activists" (para. 2). This contradicts the government officials' frame of the masterplan as a "coverup," political, and as a "hidden agenda of external forces." Human rights organizations also counter-framed the government officials' use of the externalizing frame to accuse the protesters of being manipulated by others who have a hidden agenda. In its article on 18 December 2015 Human Rights Watch quoted Lefkow (2015), deputy Africa director at Human Rights Watch as saying: "the government's labeling of largely peaceful protesters as terrorists and deploying military forces is a very dangerous escalation of this volatile situation" (para. 3)

The news media and human rights groups also reinforced activists' violence frame of the *government action*. For example, as the analysis in chapter 4 shows, the *Washington Post* in the title: "Ethiopia meets protests with bullets" (2016, October 11) highlighted the government

officials' violence by suggesting the perpetrator (the government), the victims (protests), and the means of violence (bullets). Similarly, Human Rights Watch carried the title "Yet Again, a Bloody Crackdown on Protests in Ethiopia" (2015, December 5). Amnesty International also counter-framed government claims of use of the law to maintain peace and security. For example, in the article published on 2 June 2016, it carried a title, "End use of counter-terrorism law to persecute dissenters and opposition political members" by highlighting the need for a *call for action*.

There are also visible supportive frame dynamics between Oromo activists and the international news media and international human rights groups, especially on how they framed the call for action theme. Both the international news media and human rights groups emphasized an end to the state violence as the main goal. But Oromo activists went beyond just an end to the violence call and demanded the government address grievances that caused that triggered the protests in the first place. The international news media (especially op-eds and opinions piece) called for a third-party intervention aimed at ending the state violence and bringing justice to the victims of the violence through economic (e.g., cutting aid) and diplomatic means. Unlike Oromo activists who also demanded economic justice as a solution, the international news media and human rights groups focused primarily on the human rights aspects of the grievance.

8.2.5.2 Political explanation of similarities and differences of media and activist frames

As discussed in chapter two, the Western media give little coverage to issues in Africa, and when they do, they focus on areas where the Western countries have interests. So, it is no wonder that the protests in Ethiopia have received wide coverage from the Western media. The Western countries, especially the United States and Europe have geopolitical interests in

Ethiopia. Ethiopia is the ally of the United States in the fight against terrorism and peacekeeping missions in Africa (Shinn, 2013). These countries have cooperation on intelligence, and Ethiopia allowed the United States to use its territories to launch drone attacks against terrorist bases in Somalia (Shinn, 2013; Gettleman, 2016). In return, the United States provides Ethiopia's military with funds for training and equipment (Shinn, 2013). Likewise, Ethiopia has a strong relationship with the EU countries. In addition to the war on terrorism in Somalia, the EU countries need Ethiopia to help with African refugees that cross into Europe, most of them from the Horn of Africa including Ethiopia. As a result, The EU supports Ethiopia with financial aid (Toga, 2014).

Hence, what explains the Western news media's framing that was supportive of Oromo activists and human rights organizations' frames might be a shift in the Western countries' policies towards Ethiopia that favors the protestors. For example, on June 28, 2016, 19 U.S. lawmakers issued a Resolution titled: "Supporting respect for human rights and encouraging inclusive governance in Ethiopia." The Resolution highlighted different human rights abuses by the Ethiopian government, which they suggested contradicted with one of the United States core policy towards sub-Saharan Africa: "… to advance peace and security, including supporting sector reform." (p. 2). Different high-level United States government and EU officials also publicly expressed their concern about the human abuses in Ethiopia. For example, Samantha Power, the United States Representative to the United Nations on October 18, 2016 put up a tweet that says: "#Ethiopia must end crckdwn on peaceful oppo. Mass arrests, incl rearresting Blen Mesfin, show cont'd backslide on rts & are self-defeating." The news media and social media users of Oromo activists widely quoted this tweet and other statements by officials of the United States and the European Union.

The reason the news media's coverage of the Oromo protests was congruent with the preferred frames of the Oromo protests might also explain the media's frame congruence with the human rights organizations (who were supportive of the local activists in Oromo). However, since the literature on the link among the news media, human rights organizations, and grassroots activists is sparse, future studies might be needed to expound on this dynamic.

8.3 Discussion

To round out an explanation of research question five, this section discusses the implication of the findings in the context of media studies and social movement framing scholarship. It also makes some theoretical propositions for future studies.

8.3.1 News media and Oromo activists

The findings of the study support existing scholarly arguments for example, by Klandermans (2014) and Gamson and Wolfsfeld (2001), that the news media covers the existence of social movements, sets a stage for collective action, provides definitions and interpretations, and takes part in the creation of the situations. That is, the news media covered the existence of the Oromo protests by making them the headlines of their news stories. They also set stages for collective action by framing the issue (causes of the problem and solutions). Furthermore, some news media provided broad historical contexts to the Oromo people's struggle for freedom in general and the 2015-2016 protests in particular.

The findings on the news media and Oromo activists support previous studies on the relationship between social movements and the media. For example, Gamson and Wolfsfeld (2001) pointed out that protest activists use the media for validation, mobilization, and scope enlargement. The Oromo social media activists not only shared the media that covered the Oromo protest movement, they also took it as evidence that the world was paying attention to

their protests. Some activists listed the media outlets that gave coverage to the protests. Others added their commentaries by highlighting the idea in the news media that resonated with their views.

The findings on the news media and Oromo social media activists also concur with previous research evidence that suggests media and protest movements are engaged in a "struggle over framing" (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 2001), as media framing and protesters' issues framing do not always match, as argued by Ryan (2001) and Undrakhbuyan (2001). For example, as discussed in chapter 6, there were times when Oromo social media activists complained about the misrepresentations of issues related to the Oromo protest movement. Some activists contested the new media's framing of the causes of the deaths of protesters; others disputed the choice of words used to describe the death of Oromo protesters (e.g., stampede vs. massacre regarding the death at Irrecha), and even the number of deaths. For example, in his Facebook post on October 2, 2016, Ararssa (2016n), one of the Oromo activists, wrote the following:

> So frustrating to listen to the hesitation and the all-too-odd non-committal posture of foreign journalists in covering Oromo/Ethiopian affairs. Part of it could be explained by the barrier (political, linguistic, and physical) between them and the sites where the events take place. Part of it is the result of the fear and self-censorship among their 'informants' close to the event for fear of being arrested, tortured, or even killed by the regime. Part of it is their deranged sense of history. But part of it is from their liberal fantasy of achieving journalistic 'objectivity' and 'balance' in an environment that is so unfair and asymmetrical in every imaginable respect. The result is this annoying level of

inaccuracy, distortion, undervaluation or ignoring of weighty events/facts/incidents, decontextualization, and/or misinterpretation.

The literature on media framing of social movements suggests association between the news media and social movements' framing congruence and mobilization efforts (Cooper, 2002). But this dissertation did not look at whether the framing contest between the news media and Oromo activists on some issues did affect the Oromo protesters' mobilization. As discussed in the preceding section, the major frames of the news media were congruent with the frames of the Oromo activists.

The findings on Oromo social media activists also concur with existing literature on social movements' "collective action" framing of issues. The three types of collective action frames identified by Snow & Benford, (1988)—diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames—were highlighted by the Oromo social media activists and often by the news media. According to Snow and Benford (1988) the *diagnostic* frame of social movements "involves identification of a problem and the attribution of blame or causality" (p. 200). The cause of the protest theme highlighted by the news media fits this type of framing. As discussed in the analysis part (chapter 4) and summary of the findings in the preceding section, the news media identified the triggers (causes of the Oromo protests), which they framed as grievances. These grievances include political, economic, and historical grievances. The news media attributed the political grievance of the Oromo protest movement to inequality, minority rule over the majority rule, and lack of democracy. Some news media highlighted the 2015 parliamentary election in which the ruling party won 100%. They make the government officials mainly responsible for the politically motivated arrest of journalists and opposition political leaders. Likewise, the news media also attributed the economic grievances of the Oromo people to policies such as land use.

The news media was also involved in *prognostic* framing. Prognostic framing involves "the articulation of proposed solutions to the problem, or at least a plan of attack, or and the strategies for carrying out the plan" (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 616). The news media suggested solutions to the problems. Under the "call for action theme" in this study, the news media called for an end to violence. As a strategy, instead of calling on the Ethiopian government, the main culprit of the violence, the news media called for a third-party intervention. For example, *CNN*, on its opinion piece called on the United States to stop its diplomatic and economic support to Ethiopia, suggesting it would help solve the problems. Similarly, *The Washington Post* in its editorials called on the United States and the United Kingdom to stop supporting the Ethiopian government through financial aid.

The news media also engaged in *motivational* framing which, according to Benford and Snow (2000), aimed at providing "'call to arms' or rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action, including the construction of appropriate vocabularies of motive" (p. 617). The motives were reflected in justice and equality frames which might emanate from news media's tendency to focus on human rights issues and promote democratic values. The news media used the violence frame under the "government response." As indicated in chapter 4, they used different terms to describe the types of violence such as killings, tortures, forced disappearance, and arbitrary arrests to describe the violence as the violation of human rights.

As discussed in Section 8.2.5.1, the international news media collective action frames were supportive of the collective action frames of Oromo activists. In the *cause of the protest* theme, they engaged in collective diagnostic (problem) framing by focusing on the political, economic, and historical grievances. This was reflected not just in how they framed the collective action frames of the Oromo protests but also on how they counter-framed the

government officials' frames when they were not congruent with activists' frames. In prognostic (solution) framing, the news media highlighted an end to violence by demanding justice. In the motivational framing of human rights violations, they portrayed the government as unjust toward innocent people.

However, it is important to note that there were differences in emphasis on some frames. For example, in the *call for action* theme, the news media did not include one of the solutions demanded by the protesters. That is, the solution of the news media focused on a halt to the state-violence, while the protesters' solutions also included the demand to solve political and economic issues that caused the protests in the first place. In other words, while the media focused more on immediate human rights abuses *during* the protests, the protesters stuck to their original demands as well that preceded the protests. This focus on public violence during protests might be explained by the news media's tendency to focus more on episodic coverage of news than the thematic coverage (Iyengar 1991; Amenta, Gharrity, Gardner, Tierney, Yerena, & Elliot, 2012, p. 89).

The findings also do not support that results of previous studies on the Western media coverage of Africa. For example, previous studies suggested that the Western media coverage of Africa were influenced by stereotypical tribalism (Gruley & Duvall, 2012; McGulty 1999) or by colonial stereotypes (Gruley & Duvall, 2012; Vladisavljevic, 2015).). Ethiopia is a multinational and multilinguistic country with more than 80 different groups. It is not only a country where Muslims and Christians live together, but it shares borders with many countries in East Africa such as Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan. Ethnicity, tribalism, and religion are causes of conflict. Furthermore, it is in the region where the terrorist groups like Al-Shabab operate.

However, the Western media analyzed in this study of the Oromo protests did not use ethnicity, tribalism, and religion frames which characterize most of their coverage of Africa. Ethiopia's uniqueness as the only African country that did not fall under the Western colonization may explain why the Western news media did not use the stereotypical tribalism or colonial stereotypes.

8.3.2 Human rights groups

Like the news media, similar patterns also emerged in the texts of human rights groups—Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. That is, causes of the protest, violent response by the government, and call for action dominated the texts produced by these actors. However, there was a slight difference in how these actors framed the themes. For example, all of them framed the causes of the protests as a grievance. That is, while the news media frames highlighted three types of grievances (economic, political, and historical grievances), Human Rights Watch focused on the economic and political, and Amnesty International focused on the economic grievance only. The disparities in emphasis on framing grievances among actors may have to be studied in the future.

Human rights groups also framed the Oromo protest movement in a way that fits the Snow and Benford (1988) elements of collective action framing —diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing. They focused on the causes of the problem being various grievances (diagnostic framing) and solutions or a call for an end to the violence and investigation into rights abuses and third-party intervention (prognostic framing), and emphasis on violence, highlighting it as a violation of human rights (motivational framing).

The findings also reveal a symbiotic relationship between human rights groups and grassroot activists and the media. For example, the news media and Oromo activists used human

rights groups as sources of information and vice versa. Whether actors' use of each other as a source of information explains the similarity of themes was beyond the scope of this dissertation. But the sharing of information between the news media and activists may be explained by Gamson and Wolfsfeld's (1993) assertion that the media-movement relationship is characterized by interdependence in which both need each other. That is, the news media help social movements for "mobilization, validation, and scope enlargement" while social movements provide news media with "drama, conflict, and action; colorful copy; and photo opportunities" (p. 116 - 117).

As discussed in Chapter 2, scholars have indicated the growing interdependence between the news media and NGOs such as human rights groups. The changing political economy of the news media and the desire of the human rights groups to get their stories out in the news media makes this relationship a necessity. As indicated in this study, the fact that both international news media and human rights organizations engaged in collective actions frames that somehow reflect that of activists may also show the existence of the interdependent relationship among the three actors. The news media and human rights organizations can be allies for grassroots democratic activist groups.

8.3.3 Government Officials

As indicated in Section 8.2.4, the Ethiopian government officials constructed their version of reality which fits scholarly arguments that both social movements and government officials are "signifying" agents engaged in meaning construction (Noakes, 2005). The findings also prove the suggestion by Benford and Snow (2000), McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1996), Noakes, (2005), and Zald (1996) that collective action frames are a contested arena of framing and counter-framing an issue. For example, the government officials counter-framed the

masterplan, which activists framed as a "landgrab," and as a "development project" plan aimed at connecting Addis Ababa with surrounding cities and towns Oromia through infrastructures.

Government officials and Oromo activists used different counter-framing techniques identified by scholars in previous studies. They used the "discrediting frame" technique identified by Boscarino (2016). Oromo activists used this technique to portray the government officials' "development project" frame as a "landgrab" aimed at selling their lands to foreign investors. The government also used the "discrediting frame" to counter-frame activists' "inequality" frame of the economic grievance. For instance, Getachew Reda, the minister of the Government Communications Affairs Office counter-framed saying "real and perceived inequality," questioning the accuracy of the claims and at the same time suggesting that it was exaggerated.

Both the government officials and Oromo activists used three framing techniques ("polarization-vilification," "framing saving," and "frame debunking") identified by McCaffrey and Keys (2000). Activists used the "polarization-vilification" frame to describe the protest as the opposition to the government project (the masterplan), as the war between the Oromo people on the one side, and the TPLF-led Ethiopian government on the other side. But the government officials counter-framed this by portraying the opposition to the master plan between the government (not the TPLF) and external forces who have a hidden agenda.

Oromo activists also used the "frame-debunking" strategy to make the government official's frame of the masterplan look negative. They debunked the government "development project" frame of the masterplan with "the master plan is master killer" slogan. While the government officials framed opposition to the "development project" as a few misinformed people who did not understand its purpose, the protesters framed it as opposition by millions of

people. This was reflected in their use of different hashtags such as "#GrandOromiaRally," #OromoProtests, and #OromoRevolution.

The government officials' framing of issues related to the Oromo protest movement conforms to Benford and Snow's (2000) assertion that actors cannot "construct and impose on their intended targets any version of reality they would like" because they may face counter-framing by those targets (p.625). It is worth noting that the findings suggest that the counter-framing of issues by government officials mainly focused on the diagnostic and prognostic frames of collective action and not the motivational frames. It conforms to the arguments made by Benford and Snow (2000) that opponents of social movements (the government officials in this case) challenge mainly the diagnostic and prognostic collective action frames.

8.4 Conclusions

This project shed some lights on the discourses by media and non-media actors surrounding the Oromo protest movement. It used the qualitative framing analysis to identify the themes highlighted by these actors and the resulting broad categories (cause of the protest, government response to the protest, and call for action). Hence, from the findings, the following summary can be made:

1. The news media described the Oromo protest movement as an expression of grievances (economic, political, and historical) that was met with state violence (killings, beatings, arrests, and torture) that needs some intervention (third-party intervention) to stop the violence against the protesters or to also address their ongoing issues with government oppression of Oromo people.
2. The Oromo activists described the Oromo protest movement as an expression of grievances (economic, political, and historical) that was met with state violence

(killings, beatings, arrests, and torture) that needs some intervention (third-party intervention + further protests by the movement against the government) to address them.

3. The human rights groups (Human rights Watch and Amnesty International) described the Oromo protest movement as an expression of grievances (political and economic) that was met with state violence (killings, beatings, arrests, and torture) that needs some intervention (third-party intervention) to stop the violence against the protesters.
4. The government officials described the Oromo protest movement as an expression of grievances (economic and political) that led to violence by the protesters (killing of members of security forces and damaging of properties) that needed some intervention by the government 1) to maintain peace and stability, and 2) to address protesters' grievance through "deep reform" and the acceleration of economic growth.

In conclusion, the findings fit with social movement framing literature that actors in social movements are "signifying" agents engaged in collective actions frames—diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames. Like the news media, human rights organizations are also involved in constructing collective action frames. Both the news media and human rights organizations engaged in collective action frames that reflected the collection frames of social movement activists, although at times there were frame contestations, especially between the news media and activists. However, government officials engaged in counter-framing the frames of the three actors—activists, news media, and human rights groups.

The results of the study also concur with literature that social movement activists need news media for validation, mobilization, and scope enlargement. It also conforms to previous

studies on social media (e.g., Surzhko-Harned & Zahuranec, 2017; Royas & Davis, 2017; & Moscato, 2015) who characterized social media as a forum where activists organize social movements for mobilization, motivation, and scope enlargement, a role previously dominated by traditional media, but also as a vital framing tool.

This study also indicates the different ways activists use social media by posting links to content (news articles, videos, and pictures) of online news media and human rights organizations' documents by sharing them on their Facebook pages. The activists whose Facebook posts I studied do this for different reasons such as to give the impression that "the whole world is watching us," when the news media and human rights organizations give favorable coverages to their causes, or to challenge them when they frame their causes in unfavorable ways.

This study which focused on protests in Ethiopia did not find evidence that supports previous findings that suggested stereotypical tribalism and colonial stereotype influenced the Western media's characterization of conflict in Africa. This is perhaps because of Ethiopia's uniqueness for being one of the two African countries that was not colonized.

8.5 Limitations of the Study

The project shed some lights on the themes highlighted by each actor and the interaction among the actors. It uncovered similarities and differences of themes and the frames underscored by each actor. However, it is also worth mentioning the limitations of the study.

First, this project analyzed the messages of each actor. Although different aspects of social movements and the link between social movements and the media could be studied, this study focused only on themes and how those themes were framed. It did not examine, for

example, the type of media the protesters used, how they used them, and why, or their motivations for selecting different media. It rather studied messages, their themes and how those themes were framed. Also, as this project aims only at understanding the themes and their frames, not their impacts; it did not conduct audience analysis, nor did it assess achievement of goals by movement actors.

Second, the study was limited in scope. Although there were protests across Ethiopia, mainly in Oromia and Amhara regions, the project focused on protests in Oromia only. So, the results of the study should not be generalized to protests, news media, social media activists, human rights groups and government officials in the world, or even in Ethiopia.

Third, this project looked at texts only. That is, it analyzed publicly available Facebook posts, news stories, reports, press releases, and government officials' public statements. It did not conduct interviews with any actor, nor did it do an ethnographic study.

Fourth, now the Oromo protests movement ended in victory. Some of the Oromo activists' questions were addressed. The government leaders including the prime minister of the country were replaced by those who have wide acceptance among the people. Some government officials, including the director of the government communications affairs, whose statements were analyzed in this study, were fired. Most Oromo social media activists, whose social media posts were studied for this project, are back home now. Tens of thousands of prisoners were released. Political dissidents who live in foreign countries have been allowed to return to their home countries. The ban on media outlets was lifted. The new leaders also promised more political reforms that address all the protests grievances. So, this project focused on materials produced before the changes. Thus, the results do not reflect the whole process of the protest movement, although one could surmise that the Oromo protests were effective, perhaps in part to

the strategic messages and the support they received from international media and human rights groups.

Fifth, the project used a qualitative approach aimed at understanding a particular issue, the major themes highlighted by different actors. So, the result of the study should not be generalized to all movements in the world, various movements in Ethiopia, or even to Oromo protests that happened many years back.

8.6 Areas of Future Study

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions could be made on areas that need further study. First, future studies could benefit from adding in interviews for more in-depth analysis of the motivations involved and rationales for highlighting some themes by different actors. Second, future studies may also benefit from conducting an audience analysis, especially to understand the impact of both the themes covered by different actors and how those themes are represented. Studies so far focused on the interaction between media and social movements. Although other actors, particularly human rights groups such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International were included, this project did not look at the cause-effect relationship between these actors and how the theme of one actor might have influenced the theme of another actor or variables involved. Therefore, focusing on these areas may also shed some lights on the role of human rights groups in not only covering social movements but in framing them.

Third, as discussed in the foregoing section, the Oromo protest is now over with some degree of success. However, this project focused only on the protest itself rather than how it succeeded. So, further study on the evolution of the protest movement from start to the end, with success or failure, and of different actors' (news media, social media activists, government

officials, and human rights groups) would further contribute to the literature on strategies for democratic social movements.

In conclusion, this study uncovered that more actors are involved in shaping the discourse about social movements. That is, although scholars on social movements have so far typically limited their scope of study on the discourse of the social movements, the media, and the government officials, this study indicates that international human rights organizations play a key role as well. Gamson's and Wolfsfeld's (1993) concept of media-social movement independence should lead scholars to look into the existence and nature of interdependence among different actors, especially non-media actors such as Non-Governmental Organizations.

For social movements activists, the findings of this study have significance. Understanding the supportive role of international human rights organizations may provide them with an additional instrument to devise communication.

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