

# Ethiopia Legal Responses to Cyber Bullying: Comprehensive Analysis

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## Abstract

In today's interconnected world, the internet has become a powerful force, transcending borders and bringing people together like never before. However, with this unprecedented connectivity comes a dark side, the alarming rise of cyber bullying. This insidious form of online harassment has permeated the digital realm, affecting individuals worldwide, including those in Ethiopia. The repercussions of cyber bullying are grave, with victims often enduring severe psychological trauma and, tragically, even contemplating taking their own lives. This article delves into the legal framework governing cyber bullying, examining both international human rights law and the specific laws within Ethiopia. Through a comprehensive analysis, it becomes evident that international human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) play a crucial role in preventing and prohibiting cyber bullying. In Ethiopia, key legislations such as the civil code, criminal code, hate speech proclamation, and computer crime proclamation contain provisions aimed at curbing this harmful behavior. The article calls for a collective effort to combat cyber bullying, emphasizing the need for proactive strategies and increased awareness about the legal ramifications of engaging in such activities. By upholding the principles enshrined in international human rights law and reinforcing domestic legislation, Ethiopia can strive towards creating a safer digital landscape that respects the rights and well-being of all individuals. This article serves as a compelling call to action for stakeholders to work collaboratively towards eradicating cyber bullying and fostering a more inclusive and respectful online environment.

**Keywords:** cyber bullying, International human instruments, Ethiopia law

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## 1. Introduction

In the days of old, when communication technology was distinct dream, society thrived in blissful ignorance of malevolence that cyber bullying could inflict, for those society safety was only a matter of protection from dangers of the tangible world could cause.

<sup>1</sup> However as gears progress turned, this insidious force found it voice, casting a dark cloud over the safety of users and society at large. This malicious act does not have universal agreed definition,<sup>2</sup> it defined differently by different author and experts. For instance cyber experts define cyber bullying as “a hostile, deliberate act or an omission that is performed out by a particular person or group utilizing electronic forms of contact against a sufferer who is unable to safeguard him or herself, repetitively and overtime.”<sup>3</sup> Also cyber bullying is defined by others as “an aggressive and an intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms as intermediate to harm other”.<sup>4</sup> Still other experts in the field define cyber bullying as “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices”.<sup>5</sup>

Further, other defines cyber bullying as “the act of using the internet to denigrate, demean or harass a person”. One more cyber bullying is defined as “the use of digital technologies to scaring, angering or shaming those who are targeted”.<sup>6</sup> Even though those definition are defined by using different words all those definition tell us about the cyber bullying as it is modern and recent types of crime that is committed using technological instruments, to scare, to harass and to disturb other user.

As the physically committed old type of crime the cyber bullying have equal psychological and physical effect over victim. Among other cyber bullying lead the victim to feel guilty like their fault, hopeless and unable to get out of the situation alone, like there is no-one who can help them, sad, anxious, unsafe, afraid, stressed, ashamed, humiliated and embarrassed.<sup>7</sup> In worst stage even the effect push the victim to commit the suicide<sup>8</sup>, same by observing this effect of the cyber bullying they stated that Cyber bullying can be more hurtful and

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<sup>1</sup> Msc Community Safety , *Cyber bullying: an explanatory analysis* , March 2009, pp. 6

<sup>2</sup> Info sheet, *Cyber bullying*, 2015, pp.1

<sup>3</sup> Supra note 1 pp.7

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/adults/cyber-bullying.aspx>, last accessed on January 11

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Supra note 2

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Dr Marilyn Campbell, *Cyber bullying and young people: Treatment principles not simplistic advice*, 2019, pp. 4

dangerous than offline (actual) world bullying.<sup>1</sup>

In Ethiopia according to January 2023 report there are around 6.40 million social media users, this equating to 5.1 percent of the total population.<sup>2</sup> Among those users it is expected that cyber bullying will occur and as some studies have disclosed, there is cyber bullying in Ethiopia and even studies have revealed that females are bullied online more than males and youths are more bullied than elders.<sup>3</sup> If it is verified that there is cyber bullying in Ethiopia and cyber bullying acts have the capacity to put both physical and psychological suffering over the victim just like offline committed bullying, it is very important to assess whether Ethiopia has laws by which to prevent and penalize cyber bullying acts. Therefore, the object of this article is, since Ethiopia has no separate law that deals with cyber bullying, to identify possible national and international law to which Ethiopia is a party that can be applied to penalize the act. To achieve the target, the article is organized in four sections.

## 2. Type of cyber bullying

Through wide study of the literature, a variety of forms of cyber bullying are differentiated. Discussing about those forms of cyber bullying is very important because it helps victims to identify whether cyber bullying is undertaken over them or not. There are eleven main forms of cyber bullying: flaming, harassment, denigration, impersonation, outing, trickery, exclusion, cyber stalking, rating, defamation and cyber treat.<sup>4</sup> Flaming is posting an online message that is insulting and may use angry and vulgar language.<sup>5</sup> Harassment occurs when threatening messages are repeatedly sent day and night toward the victim.<sup>6</sup> Denigration is discrediting someone online which can include sending or posting gossip or rumors about a person that could damage their reputation or friendships.<sup>7</sup>

Impersonation is another type of cyber bullying in which the cyber bully pretends to be the person whose account has been hacked in order to post abusive comments and bad language by the name of the victim.<sup>8</sup> Outing is cyber bullying involving the sharing of someone's secrets, embarrassing information, or photos online without their permission to the public.<sup>9</sup> Trickery is a kind of cyber bullying where the bully gains the trust of the victim by promising false security and then the bully takes advantage of that trust and leaks private information to a third party.<sup>10</sup> Exclusion is deliberately leaving certain individuals out of online social exchanges (e.g., instant messaging or email conversations and telegram groups).<sup>11</sup>

Cyber stalking includes monitoring, making false accusations, and threats along with online stalking. It is regarded as a serious form of cyber bullying. It might extend to physical threats to the targeted victim.<sup>12</sup> Rating, in this type of cyber bullying, the perpetrator engages in rating aspects of a victim (e.g., appearance, character) on a rating site in a way that creates shame and embarrassment for the victim.<sup>13</sup> Defamatory cyber bullying is about posting upsetting or defamatory remarks about an individual online, or name-calling, general insults, and prejudice-based bullying, for example sexist, homophobic, and racist messages.<sup>14</sup> Cyber treat can include violence, including sexual violence, or threats to disclose information about someone that may harm them, or that they are not ready to share.<sup>15</sup> Committing one of these cyber bullying acts among those who bully over the victim leads the victim to suffer from psychological and physical pain and leads to a violation of different human rights of the victim, even including the right to life of the victim.

## 3. Critical examination of international human right instruments and Ethiopia national law used to fight against cyber bullying

The law serves as a formidable weapon against the encroaching darkness that could cast a shadow over our lives. The purpose extends beyond mere enforcement and order to nurture a harmonious environment where individual

<sup>1</sup> Ibid

<sup>2</sup> Shafaat Hussain, Cyber-bullying among Youths on Social Networks: A Case of Western Ethiopia, Volume-3, Issue-10, Oct-2014 • ISSN No 2277 – 8160.

<sup>3</sup> Supra note 2 pp. 42

<sup>4</sup> Nicole M. Aune, *Cyber bullying*, (A Research Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master of Science Degree With a Major in School Psychology) pp. 10

<sup>5</sup> Guidance, *Respecting others: Cyber bullying*, September 2011, pp. 29

<sup>6</sup> Kazi Nazrul Islam, Abdus Sobur, Md Humayun, *The right to life of children and cyberbullying dominates human rights: society impacts*, 2023 IJCRT | Volume 11, Issue 8 August 2023 | ISSN: 2320-2882, PP.8

<sup>7</sup> Supra note 12

<sup>8</sup> Supra note 13

<sup>9</sup> Supra note 12

<sup>10</sup> Supra note 14

<sup>11</sup> Munawar S. Mirza1, Sameen Azmat2 & Sania Zahra Malik, *A Comparative Study of Cyber bullying among Online and Conventional Students of Higher Education Institutions in Pakistan*, Journal of Educational Sciences & Research Fall 2020, Volume 7, No.2, pp 87-100

<sup>12</sup> Supra note 14

<sup>13</sup> Supra note 19

<sup>14</sup> Michelle Pearl Black, *Cyber bullying, Bullying, and Victimization among Adolescents: Rates of Occurrence, Internet Use and Relationship to Parenting Styles*, 2014, pp. 6

Michelle Pearl Black

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

can flourish without being haunted by trepidation, in this regard the role of international human rights laws and Ethiopia national law is very important to protect safety of users while using social media from evil act such as cyber bullying in following discussion the laws are dentally examined to reveal what the laws are state about the cyber bullying.

### 3.1. International human rights standards applicable to protect social media user from Cyber bullying

Internet is good medium that provides us a platform to exercise the right to freedom of expression and information meanwhile the internet has given birth to a new category of crime such as cyber bullying.<sup>1</sup> This internet raised social evil lead for physical and psychological suffer over victim for instance as many Studies are disclosing that cyber bullying increases the risk of suicide among adolescents.<sup>2</sup> For this among other UDHR which is pioneering and first document in narration of human right stated that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”<sup>3</sup> and further in document it stated that everyone has a right to life,<sup>4</sup> and the law must uphold that, nobody's life should be taken until they've been found guilty of a crime and given a just punishment.<sup>5</sup> This human life is foundational to the realization of all other freedoms and right paves the way for future liberties.<sup>6</sup> Also under article 6 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights this individual right of life is clearly stated.

Among other cyber bullying such as flaming and harassment as previous mentioned involve on insulting and threatening victim through means social media for this under UDHR it is stated that “No one shall be subjected inhuman or degrading treatment”<sup>7</sup> also under article 7 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights the individual right to human treatment, dignified treatment is clearly stated. On other hand cyber bullying such as Denigration and outing engage on disclosing individual secret to public without acquiring the victim permission. Individual right to protected from such misery are enshrined under UDHR and ICCPR , under those instruments it is stated that everyone has right to privacy and right to get protection from arbitrary interference to his own affairs . By Denigration cyber bullying when bullies reveal individual secret to public through social media they are about involving in to breach of two right of victim first, they breach victim right to privacy second, they involve on disclosing secret of victim to public.

On other those human right enlisted different provision for protection of person from impersonation cyber bullying, first under UDHR it stated that every person are free to conducted his business under his cover , it not allowed for anyone to interfere in personal affair of other also under ICCPR obligation is putted over the government to safeguard the personal privacy of individual. Under this type of cyber bullying also the bullies communicate other by pretending the victim for and prevent the victim from communicating other for this under UDHR it is stated that everyone has right to receive and import information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers in same manner under ICCPR it is stated that everyone without frontier either orally , in writing or in print , in form of art or other media of his choice have the right to send and receive the information.

As previously stated by exclusion cyber bullying, bullies participate on exclusion of victim from certain social media group for this under UDHR it is stated that everyone has right to get information and have the right to share this accessed information to public without affecting other right . For other cyber bullying such as cyber stalking, rating, cyber treat and defamation it stated under UDHR, ICCPR, and ICESCR that everyone has right to human treatment also under those instruments it is stated that individual have the right to health, this right to health of individual include physical and psychological cure ness so individual to be cure and health he/she should protected from treat, rating that may affect moral of individual. In summary speaking international human right instruments under their number provision they include right of social media users to protected from cyber bullying.

### 3.2. Ethiopia laws used to protect social media users from cyber bullying

As previously discussed Cyber bullying has emerged as a pervasive issue in the digital age, with individuals using electronic and telecommunications correspondence to harass, intimidate, and harm others. The impact of cyber bullying on victims can be devastating, leading to mental health issues, anxiety, and in extreme cases, even death. In response to this growing problem, legal systems around the world have begun to address cyber bullying through criminal laws and provisions, Ethiopia is one among all those countries thus in following discussion we will embark on each laws in Ethiopia that are important in prohibition of the cyber bullying.

#### A. Criminal code

In Ethiopia, the criminal code includes several articles that address cyber bullying and its consequences. First article that directly deals with it is article 606 of the criminal code which prohibits unauthorized access to electronic,

<sup>1</sup> Mehrak Rahimi , *Cyberbullying and Cyber Human Rights: The Case of Iran* , 2018 , pp. 10

<sup>2</sup> S. Samundeeswari, & Dr.K.Vijaya, *Cyberbullying: Harmful Impact of Technology* , 2022 IJCRT | Volume 10, Issue 2 February 2022 , pp. 5

<sup>3</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights , December 10 , article 1

<sup>4</sup> Ibid article 3

<sup>5</sup> Supra note 23

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Supra note 26 , Article 5

telegram, telephone, or telecommunications correspondence. This provision aims to protect individuals' privacy and prevent unauthorized interception or destruction of their communications. Anyone found guilty of unlawfully accessing or intercepting such correspondence can face fines or imprisonment, depending on the circumstances of the case.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, sub-article 2 of Article 606 specifically addresses intentional and unlawful interceptions, destruction, retention, or diversion of electronic communications. This provision is crucial in prohibiting cyber bullying activities such as impersonation and unauthorized access to personal information on social media platforms like Telegram, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Messenger.<sup>2</sup> Individuals who engage in these activities can be held accountable under this provision and may face imprisonment for their actions.

Additionally, it is important to note that while Article 538 sub article 1 of criminal code does not explicitly mention cyber bullying as a means of causing death, its broad language encompasses any means through which death is caused. The article literally stated that “*Whoever causes the death of a human being intentionally or by negligence, no matter what the weapon or means used, commits homicide*” This could certainly include instances where cyber bullying leads to tragic outcomes. Therefore, when interpreted broadly, Article 538 can be seen as encompassing cyber bullying as a means through which death may occur.

Similarly, Article 615 does not explicitly mention cyber bullying but rather focuses on insults and harassment through any means. The article word by word it says that “*anyone directly addressing the victim, or referring to him, offends him in his honour by insult or injury, or outrages him by gesture or in any other manner*” , When widely construed, "any means" can certainly include cyber bullying activities such as online insults and derogatory gestures. Therefore, when considered broadly, Article 615 can be interpreted as prohibiting cyber bullying activities that offend someone's honor through insults or derogatory gestures via electronic means. By considering these broader interpretations of Articles 538 and 615 within the Ethiopian criminal code, it becomes evident that these provisions have the potential to encompass cyber bullying activities. This broader interpretation ensures that the legal framework is equipped to address the evolving challenges presented by cyber bullying and other technological evil in the digital age.

The implications of these broader interpretations are significant in the context of combating cyber bullying. By recognizing that existing legal provisions can apply to cyber bullying activities when widely construed, it becomes clear that the Ethiopian criminal code has the capacity to address this form of harm effectively.

Furthermore, this broader interpretation serves as a proactive approach to combatting cyber bullying. It sends a powerful message that the legal system is equipped to address harmful behaviors in digital spaces and holds perpetrators accountable for their actions. By acknowledging that cyber bullying can fall within the scope of existing legal provisions, individuals engaging in such behavior are made aware that they are not exempt from legal consequences.

While Articles 538 and 615 of the Ethiopian criminal code do not explicitly mention cyber bullying, their broad language allows for a wider interpretation that encompasses cyber bullying activities. This broader interpretation ensures that existing legal provisions have the capacity to address cyber bullying effectively and hold perpetrators accountable for their actions. As technology continues to advance and new forms of harm emerge in digital spaces, it is essential for legal systems to adapt and respond to these challenges comprehensively. By recognizing the potential applicability of existing legal provisions to combat cyber bullying, Ethiopia's legal framework demonstrates a proactive approach to addressing harm in both physical and digital realms.

In summary, Ethiopia's criminal code provides a robust framework for addressing cyber bullying and its consequences. The provisions within the code explicitly prohibit unauthorized access to electronic communications. Furthermore certain provisions of the code have the potential to encompass cyber bullying activities effectively when they constructed widely. This comprehensive approach underscores Ethiopia's commitment to protecting individuals from harm in both physical and digital spaces and sends a clear message that harmful behaviors will not be tolerated. As technology continues to evolve, it is imperative for legal systems to remain adaptable and responsive to emerging challenges such as cyber bullying, ensuring that individuals are safeguarded from harm across all facets of modern life.

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<sup>1</sup> See The Criminal Code of Ethiopia, Proclamation No. 414/2004, Federal Negarit Gazetta 2005-05-09 *The provision is clearly state that , Whoever, without lawful authority:*

a) *deliberately learns about the contents of or opens a business or private closed or open letter, envelope or correspondence, or accesses electronic, telegram, telephone or telecommunication correspondence, commercial or closed letter or envelope, or a packet, a sealed parcel or any consignment, which is not his; or*  
b) *having learned of certain facts by opening, even by mistake or negligence, such a closed envelope or parcel not addressed to him, divulges such facts or derives a gain therefrom, is punishable, upon complaint, with a fine not exceeding one thousand Birr, or according to the circumstances of the case, with simple imprisonment not exceeding three months*  
c) *Whoever intentionally and unlawfully intercepts, destroys, retains or diverts from their true destination such correspondence or packages, is punishable upon accusation with simple imprisonment not exceeding six months, where his act does not constitute a specific crime punishable more severely.*

## B. Civil code

As mentioned a number of times under the above discussion in the modern world of technology and social media, the issue of cyber bullying has become increasingly prevalent. The Ethiopian Civil Code, in Article 2044, addresses this concern. This article serves as a crucial tool in the fight against cyber bullying, as it holds individuals accountable for their words and actions, even in the virtual realm.

Article 2044 of the Ethiopian Civil Code unequivocally states that a person commits an offense when their words, writings, or any other means of expression are used to make another living person appear despicable, contemptible, or ridiculous. This provision also encompasses actions that jeopardize an individual's credit, reputation, or future. What sets this article apart is that it does not require intent to cause harm; even if the offender did not intend to cause injury, they can still be held liable for civil damages of up to 1000 birr.<sup>1</sup> The broad language of the article is particularly significant in the context of combating cyber bullying. By encompassing actions "by any means" that defame others, the article effectively includes the posting of defamatory material online.<sup>2</sup> This demonstrates the foresight of the Ethiopian Civil Code in recognizing the evolving nature of communication and ensuring that individuals are held accountable for their actions regardless of the medium they choose to employ.

Cyber bullying, including defamation through online platforms, has the potential to inflict serious harm on individuals. The anonymity and reach of the internet can amplify the impact of defamatory content, causing lasting damage to a person's reputation and well-being. Article 2044 serves as a shield against such harmful behavior by establishing legal consequences for those who engage in cyber bullying. In today's digital age, where online interactions have become an integral part of daily life, it is essential to have legal safeguards in place to protect individuals from the pernicious effects of cyber bullying. The Ethiopian Civil Code's proactive approach in addressing this issue demonstrates a commitment to upholding the rights and dignity of all individuals, both offline and in the virtual sphere. Furthermore, the application of Article 2044 extends beyond mere punitive measures. By holding individuals accountable for their online conduct, this provision sends a clear message about the importance of responsible and respectful communication in the digital realm. It encourages individuals to exercise caution and empathy in their online interactions, fostering a culture of civility and mutual respect. The significance of Article 2044 cannot be overstated in its role in combatting cyber bullying. By recognizing the impact of defamatory actions carried out through online means and imposing civil liability for such behavior, this provision stands as a beacon of protection for individuals navigating the complexities of the digital world. It not only holds wrongdoers accountable but also serves as a deterrent, sending a powerful message that cyber bullying will not be tolerated within the legal framework of Ethiopia.

In conclusion, Article 2044 of the Ethiopian Civil Code stands as a vital instrument in the fight against cyber bullying. Its comprehensive language and proactive approach reflect a deep understanding of the challenges posed by online defamation and serve as a testament to Ethiopia's commitment to safeguarding the well-being and dignity of its citizens. As technology continues to evolve, this provision remains a crucial pillar in upholding justice and accountability in the digital age.

## C. Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation

Article 2(2) of the proclamation defines hate speech as any speech that deliberately promotes hatred, discrimination, or attacks against a person or discernible group identity based on specific characteristics. This includes acts of flaming, harassment, denigration, and rating in the context of cyber bullying, especially when it targets individuals based on their ethnic group, sex, race, gender, or religion. Such behavior is explicitly prohibited under Article 4 of the proclamation, with severe consequences for those who engage in disseminating hate speech through social media using text, images, audio, or video content.<sup>3</sup> The legal framework outlined in the proclamation sets a clear standard for accountability and responsibility in the digital sphere. It emphasizes the gravity of cyber bullying and hate speech by imposing penalties of imprisonment not exceeding two years or fines not exceeding 100,000 birr for those found guilty of such offenses.<sup>4</sup> This sends a powerful message that individuals who engage in harmful online behavior will face legal repercussions for their actions.

Furthermore, the proclamation also places obligations on enterprises that provide social media services. Article 8 mandates these enterprises to suppress and prevent the dissemination of disinformation and hate speech through their platforms. Additionally, under Article 2, they are required to remove or take out of circulation any content constituting hate speech within 24 hours of receiving a report about such material. This proactive approach underscores the importance of cooperation between social media platforms and regulatory authorities to combat

<sup>1</sup> Abdulmalik Abubeker & Desta G/Michael, *Extra-Contractual Liability Teaching Material*, 2009, pp. 130-137

<sup>2</sup> The Civil Code of the Empire of Ethiopia, Proclamation No 165/1960 Art. 2044. - **Defamation. - Principle.**

*A person commits an offence where by his words, his writings or by any other means he acts in such a way as to make another living person detestable, Contemptible or ridiculous and to jeopardize his credit his reputation or his future.*

<sup>3</sup> Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation No.1185 /2020

<sup>4</sup> Article 7 sub 1

the spread of harmful content online.<sup>1</sup>

The significance of these legal provisions cannot be overstated in the context of combating cyber bullying and hate speech. They serve as a robust framework for promoting responsible online conduct and protecting individuals from the damaging effects of online harassment and discrimination. By explicitly addressing the dissemination of cyber bullying through digital means and holding both individuals and social media enterprises accountable, the Ethiopian government demonstrates its commitment to creating a safe and inclusive online environment for all citizens. In light of these legal measures, it is essential for individuals to recognize the impact of their online behavior and exercise empathy and respect in their interactions. The ability to communicate freely online comes with a responsibility to uphold ethical standards and refrain from engaging in harmful conduct that can inflict lasting harm on others. By fostering a culture of civility and understanding in digital spaces, we can work towards creating a more positive and inclusive online community. Moreover, the proactive stance taken by the Ethiopian government in addressing cyber bullying and hate speech reflects a broader commitment to upholding human rights and promoting social cohesion. By explicitly prohibiting hate speech based on specific characteristics such as ethnicity, religion, race, gender, and disability, the legal framework aligns with international standards for combating discrimination and promoting equality.

It is crucial to recognize that the impact of cyber bullying and hate speech extends beyond individual harm; it can also contribute to societal divisions and undermine the fabric of communities. By addressing these issues through legislative means, Ethiopia not only seeks to protect individuals from online harm but also aims to foster a more harmonious and respectful society where diversity is celebrated rather than targeted.

In conclusion, the legal provisions outlined in the proclamation serve as a powerful tool in addressing the complex challenges posed by cyber bullying and hate speech in the digital age. By explicitly defining hate speech, imposing penalties for its dissemination, and placing obligations on social media enterprises to combat harmful content, Ethiopia demonstrates its commitment to creating a safer and more inclusive online environment. These measures not only hold wrongdoers accountable but also send a clear message about the importance of responsible online conduct and the promotion of mutual respect. As technology continues to evolve, this legal framework remains a crucial pillar in upholding justice and accountability in the digital realm.

#### **D. Computer Crime Proclamation**

The Computer Crime Proclamation No. 958/2016 in Ethiopia is a significant legal framework that addresses various forms of cyber bullying and online harassment. The proclamation includes specific provisions aimed at protecting individuals from intimidation, threats, defamation, and the unauthorized dissemination of explicit or private content through computer systems. These provisions play a crucial role in preventing and addressing cyber bullying behaviors such as cyber stalking, cyber threats, denigration, and outing. One of the key provisions of the proclamation addresses the intentional intimidation or threatening of individuals or their families through the dissemination of harmful content via computer systems. This provision is vital in combatting cyber bullying scenarios where perpetrators repeatedly send threatening messages to their victims, causing fear and psychological strain.<sup>2</sup> The proclamation stipulates that individuals who engage in such behavior are subject to punishment, including imprisonment. By criminalizing these actions, the proclamation aims to deter and prevent cyber bullying and its detrimental effects on victims. Furthermore, the proclamation specifically addresses the dissemination of defamatory content that tarnishes the honor or reputation of an individual. This provision is essential in combating forms of cyber bullying such as denigration, where harmful messages are spread online to damage a person's reputation. By recognizing the impact of such behavior and establishing legal consequences for those who engage in it, the proclamation serves as a powerful tool in safeguarding individuals from the adverse effects of cyber bullying.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to addressing intimidation and defamation, the proclamation also includes provisions related to the unauthorized sharing of sexually explicit content involving minors. This provision is particularly important in combating a type of cyber bullying known as outing, where private images or videos are shared online without consent, often targeting minors. By criminalizing the production, transmission, sale, distribution, and possession of such content without authorization, the proclamation provides crucial protection for minors and seeks to prevent the exploitation and victimization of young individuals in the digital realm.<sup>4</sup>

The proclamation also recognizes the impact of cyber threats on individuals and their families. It stipulates that individuals who cause fear, threat, or psychological strain on others by repeatedly transmitting information about them through computer systems or by keeping their computer communications under surveillance are subject to punishment, including imprisonment. This provision is significant in addressing cyber bullying scenarios where perpetrators engage in threatening behavior without necessarily disclosing private information about the victim. By recognizing the harmful effects of such conduct and establishing legal consequences for it, the proclamation

<sup>1</sup> Article 8 sub 2

<sup>2</sup> Computer Crime Proclamation No. 958/2016, article 13 sub article 1 and 2

<sup>3</sup> Ibid article 13 sub article 3

<sup>4</sup> Ibid article 12 sub article 1 and 2

aims to prevent and address cyber threats and their detrimental impact on victims.

Moreover, the proclamation provides a comprehensive legal framework to prevent and address various forms of cyber bullying. It not only recognizes the impact of online harassment on individuals but also establishes clear consequences for those who engage in such harmful behaviors. By incorporating specific provisions related to cyber stalking, cyber threats, defamation, and the unauthorized dissemination of explicit or private content, the proclamation serves as a robust legal instrument to safeguard individuals from the adverse effects of cyber bullying and uphold their rights in the digital realm.

In summary, the Computer Crime Proclamation No. 958/2016 in Ethiopia plays a vital role in addressing cyber bullying and online harassment. Its provisions are designed to protect individuals from various forms of intimidation, threats, defamation, and the unauthorized dissemination of explicit or private content through computer systems. By recognizing the detrimental impact of cyber bullying and establishing legal consequences for those who engage in such behavior, the proclamation serves as a crucial tool in preventing and addressing online harassment and upholding the rights and well-being of individuals in the digital age.

#### 4. Conclusion

The primary focus of this article was to delve into the legal framework governing cyber bullying in Ethiopia. To achieve this goal, the article was structured into four comprehensive sections. The first section explored the definition and various types of cyber bullying, highlighting the multifaceted nature of this pervasive issue. It was revealed that cyber bullying encompasses the use of the internet to denigrate, demean, or harass an individual, with different scholars offering nuanced perspectives on its interpretation. Through an extensive review of literature, 11 distinct forms of cyber bullying were identified, including flaming, harassment, denigration, impersonation, outing, trickery, exclusion, cyber stalking, rating, defamation, and cyber threats. It was emphasized that perpetrating any form of cyber bullying can inflict significant psychological and physical distress upon the victim, thereby infringing upon their fundamental human rights, including the right to life.

The second section delved into the application of international human rights law in preventing cyber bullying. This involved a detailed examination of key international human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). These instruments were found to contain a myriad of principles aimed at curbing cyber bullying. For instance, cyber bullying activities such as denigration and outing, which involve the unauthorized disclosure of an individual's private information to the public, contravene the rights enshrined in the UDHR and ICCPR. These rights emphasize an individual's entitlement to privacy and protection from unwarranted interference in their personal affairs. Therefore, it is evident that international human rights law provides a robust foundation for combating cyber bullying at a global level.

The third section provided an in-depth analysis of the specific laws within Ethiopia that are designed to prevent cyber bullying. Four key legislations were identified as applicable to cyber bullying: the criminal code, civil code, hate speech prevention proclamation, and computer crime proclamation. Each of these laws contains provisions outlining mechanisms to prevent cyber bullying and address its detrimental impacts. By exploring these legal frameworks, it became apparent that Ethiopia has taken significant steps to address cyber bullying within its jurisdiction. The criminal code was found to encompass provisions that can be invoked to address various forms of cyber bullying, thereby ensuring legal recourse for victims. Similarly, the civil code offers avenues for individuals to seek redress for harm caused by cyber bullying through civil litigation. The hate speech prevention proclamation serves as a crucial tool in combating online hate speech and discriminatory rhetoric, which are often intertwined with cyber bullying. Furthermore, the computer crime proclamation plays a pivotal role in addressing cyber bullying by penalizing illicit online activities that cause harm to individuals or society at large.

In conclusion, this article has shed light on the intricate legal landscape surrounding cyber bullying in Ethiopia. By delineating the definition and types of cyber bullying and examining the pertinent international human rights instruments and domestic laws, a comprehensive understanding of the legal framework has been achieved. It is evident that cyber bullying is a complex issue with far-reaching implications for individuals' well-being and their fundamental human rights. However, through a concerted effort to enforce existing laws and develop targeted interventions, Ethiopia has the potential to mitigate the prevalence of cyber bullying and safeguard the rights of its citizens in the digital sphere. Moving forward, it is imperative for stakeholders across various sectors including government entities, legal professionals, educators, and civil society organizations to collaborate in devising proactive strategies to prevent and address cyber bullying effectively. Additionally, raising awareness about the legal ramifications of engaging in cyber bullying and promoting digital literacy can play a pivotal role in fostering a safer online environment for all Ethiopians. Ultimately, by upholding the principles enshrined in international human rights law and reinforcing domestic legislation, Ethiopia can strive towards creating a digital landscape that is conducive to respect, dignity, and equality for all individuals. In essence, this article serves as a call to action for all relevant stakeholders to work collectively towards combatting cyber bullying and upholding the rights and

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well-being of individuals in Ethiopia's digital realm.