

Why Facebook keeps failing in Ethiopia | Rest of World

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In late October, Dejene Assefa, an Addis Ababa-based activist known for his appearances on state television in Ethiopia, posted a message to his more than 120,000 followers on Facebook. The post exhorted his compatriots to rise up across the country and murder members of the Tigrayan ethnic group. “The war is with those you grew up with, your neighbor,” he wrote in Amharic, one of the main languages of Ethiopia. “If you can rid your forest of these thorns ... victory will be yours.” The message was shared nearly 900 times and attracted over 2,000 reactions. Many of the replies echoed the call to violence and promised to heed Dejene’s advice.

Ethiopia’s federal army is currently engaged in a brutal civil war with rebel groups, mostly from the Tigray region. In Addis Ababa, police have reportedly conducted citywide raids — dragging people identified as having Tigrayan ancestry out of homes, businesses, even churches. On Facebook, calls for the murder and mass internment of ethnic Tigrayans have proliferated.

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