Comprehensive Guide and Election Code of Conduct for Journalists, Media Houses, and Regulatory Bodies

Date: June, 2025

Introduction

In every democratic society, the conduct of free, fair, and credible elections is a foundational pillar of political legitimacy and social stability. Central to the electoral process is the media, which holds the critical responsibility of informing the public, enabling dialogue, and ensuring accountability. The role of journalists and media institutions is not merely to report on events, but to actively shape a well-informed electorate by fostering transparency, diversity of opinion, and trust in the democratic system.

Ethiopia's rapidly evolving political landscape, coupled with its expanding media environment, necessitates a clear and enforceable framework to guide the actions of media professionals and institutions during elections. This **Election Code of Conduct** has been developed to fill that need—grounded in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia's Constitution (especially Article 29 on the right to freedom of expression), supported by national proclamations (Proclamation No. 1238/2021 on Media, Proclamation No. 1185/2020 on Hate Speech and Disinformation, and Proclamation No. 1162/2019 on Electoral Law), and aligned with regional and international best practices.

The Code recognizes that with freedom of the press comes responsibility. It aims to promote journalistic integrity, protect editorial independence, ensure equal access for political contestants, and safeguard the public from disinformation, incitement, and unethical reporting. By outlining clear standards and responsibilities for journalists, media houses, electoral management bodies, regulators, and other election actors, this Code establishes a shared framework for ethical, transparent, and accountable election coverage.

Furthermore, the Code addresses the urgent need to mitigate hate speech, enhance media inclusivity, and strengthen media regulation through cooperative mechanisms involving the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), the Ethiopian Media Council (EMC), and the Ethiopian Media Authority (EMA). It also reflects lessons learned from previous elections, particularly the 2021 general election, and integrates recommendations from civil society, professional associations, and international observers.

This Election Code of Conduct is not a limitation—but a commitment: a commitment to the principles of truth, balance, fairness, and responsibility. It is a tool to guide Ethiopia's media sector in contributing constructively to peaceful and participatory elections, and to strengthen the country's democratic resilience for generations to come.

Background and Rationale

This manual provides a comprehensive election code of conduct and guidance framework for journalists, media institutions, and media regulatory bodies in Ethiopia. It aims to establish consistent, ethical, and democratic reporting practices across the electoral cycle. The document is grounded in Ethiopian national laws and informed by international media standards and democratic principles.

In a democratic society, free, fair, and transparent elections are critical to governance and legitimacy. Central to this process is the media, which serves as both an informer and watchdog. The **media's role during elections** goes beyond routine reporting: it includes fostering public dialogue, scrutinizing political actors, and ensuring voters receive accurate, balanced, and diverse perspectives.

Ethiopia's electoral landscape has undergone important transitions. However, media coverage during past elections—particularly in 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2021—revealed significant challenges: bias in state-owned outlets, marginalization of opposition voices, unequal airtime distribution, dissemination of misinformation, and lack of training among journalists.

This document responds to the critical need for a standardized framework that:

- Promotes **journalistic integrity and professionalism**,
- Enhances **regulatory oversight** without suppressing freedoms,
- Prevents **hate speech and disinformation**, and
- Aligns with national and international legal instruments.

Problem Statement

Without a codified election-specific code of conduct and training, media coverage during elections in Ethiopia remains inconsistent, ethically ambiguous, and vulnerable to politicization. There is a gap in:

- Training on misinformation detection,
- Clear roles for media and regulatory institutions,
- Structured complaint resolution mechanisms.

Objectives of the Code

- Define and standardize ethical media behavior during election cycles.
- Establish accountability structures among journalists, media outlets, regulatory bodies, and political stakeholders.
- Promote responsible and inclusive information flows.
-

1. Legal Foundation

This manual is based on the following laws and instruments:

Under **Article 29 of the FDRE Constitution**, every individual has the right to hold opinions and express them freely through any media. This includes:

- The **freedom to seek, receive, and impart information**,
- **Freedom of the press**, and
- Legal protection from censorship, along with a right to access public information.

This constitutional right imposes a duty on media practitioners to uphold truth, independence, and accountability during elections.

- **Proclamation No. 1238/2021**: Media Proclamation
- **Proclamation No. 1185/2020**: Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention
- **Proclamation No. 1162/2019**: Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Election's Code of Conduct
- **FDRE Constitution, Article 29**: Right to Freedom of Expression
- **UNESCO (2022)**, AU Declaration on Freedom of Expression (2002)

The code of conduct design from global examples highlight the importance of strong regulatory-media partnerships, legal safeguards for journalists, and active public complaint channels.

Comparative International Practices

- **Kenya:** Media Council of Kenya enforces a compulsory Election Coverage Code with penalties.
- **India:** Election Commission regulates paid news and mandates balanced coverage.
- **South Africa:** IEC and SABC enforce party equity on public broadcasters.
- **Ghana:** National Media Commission issues accreditation, reviews complaints, and ensures media independence.

International Reference Models Consulted

- **UNESCO (2022)**: Guidelines for media in elections.
- **AU Declaration on Principles of Freedom of Expression (2002)**.
- **Kenya's Media Council Code of Conduct**.
- **Ghana's Media Performance Tracker (NMC)**.
- **India's Election Commission Broadcast Code**.
-

2. Core Ethical Principles

All journalists and media houses covering elections must adhere to the following principles:

1. **Accuracy and Truthfulness**: All information must be verified before publication or broadcast.
2. **Fairness and Balance**: Equal access and representation must be ensured for all political actors.
3. **Impartiality**: Journalists should not express personal or institutional bias in election coverage.
4. **Public Interest First**: Media should prioritize educating and informing citizens.
5. **Accountability**: Mistakes must be corrected transparently and promptly.
6. **Respect for Diversity**: Coverage must be inclusive of gender, minorities, and marginalized groups.

3. General Guidelines for Journalists

1. Verify all facts, quotes, and claims.
2. Avoid inflammatory language, stereotypes, or assumptions.
3. Label opinions as such; never present opinion as fact.
4. Provide right of reply to candidates and parties.
5. Disclose sources when possible, but protect confidential ones.
6. Avoid accepting gifts, payments, or favors from political actors.
7. Ensure balanced, issue-based reporting.
8. Avoid favoritism or hostile framing.
9. Adhere to national laws and editorial guidelines.

Legal Reference: Proclamation No. 1238/2021, Articles 4, 5, 16, 51

4. Twenty (20) Responsibilities for Journalists during Elections

Roles, and Responsibilities for Journalists during elections, categorized under Ethiopian law, media ethics, and international standards.

A. Based on Ethiopian Law

According to Proclamation No. 1238/2021 (Media Proclamation):

1. Uphold editorial responsibility and ensure that information is factually accurate (Art. 16).
2. Avoid content that incites violence or spreads false information (Art. 4 & 5).
3. Comply with all media professional codes of conduct and directives issued by the Ethiopian Media Authority (Art. 55).
4. Ensure content reflects national diversity and fosters informed public discourse (Art. 51).
1.

According to Proclamation No. 1162/2019 (Electoral Law):

5. Treat all political parties and candidates equitably in media coverage (Art. 85).
6. Refrain from announcing unofficial or partial results before NEBE's declaration (Art. 87).
7. Participate in official accreditation processes for election reporting (Art. 84).

According to Proclamation No. 1185/2020 (Hate Speech and Disinformation Law):

8. Avoid sharing content that promotes hate based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or political belief (Art. 3).
9. Ensure information is verifiable before dissemination to avoid legal repercussions for disinformation (Art. 5).

B. Based on Media Ethics (EMC Code of Conduct)

10. Maintain impartiality and fairness in reporting political dEMAtes and campaigns.
11. Clearly label editorial content and distinguish it from news reporting.
12. Respect the privacy and dignity of interviewees and voters.
13. Avoid plagiarism, defamation, and unverified accusations.
14. Uphold transparency in sourcing and avoid financial inducements or bribes.
15. Disclose any conflict of interest that may influence reporting.

C. Based on International Standards

UNESCO, IFJ, and African Union Declarations:

16. Ensure election coverage is inclusive of women, minorities, and marginalized communities (UNESCO, 2022).
17. Uphold the right to freedom of expression as outlined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
18. Participate in training and professional development on conflict-sensitive and election journalism (IFJ Code of Principles).
19. Promote electoral literacy through informative content that enables voters to make informed decisions.
20. Respect international humanitarian law and peacebuilding frameworks in conflict-prone regions.

Summary Table of Responsibilities of Journalists

Legal/Ethical Area	Key Responsibility
Accuracy & Fairness	Report verified and balanced content
Hate Speech & Misinformation	Avoid inciting or misleading narratives
Equal Access	Provide equal media space to all political actors
Independence	Reject undue influence or gifts
Inclusion	Represent diverse societal voices
Accountability	Correct errors and accept oversight

5. General Guideline for Media Houses

1. Allocate **equal airtime** for all registered political parties and candidates.
2. Maintain **editorial independence** from any political or corporate entity.
3. Avoid disproportionate coverage of the ruling party.
4. Provide civic and voter education programs in local languages.
5. Ensure **editor-in-chief** is responsible for all published material.
6. Provide equitable platform access for all parties.
7. Establish newsroom codes of conduct.
8. Train and accredit political reporters.

7. Twenty one (21) Responsibilities of Media Houses during Elections

This structured list helps media houses fulfill their constitutional and legal duties under **Article 29 of the FDRE Constitution**, while also upholding international standards for election-period journalism.

A. Based on Ethiopian Law

According to Proclamation No. 1238/2021 (Media Proclamation):

1. Ensure editorial independence from state or political influence (Art. 16).
2. Maintain a transparent and accountable chain of editorial responsibility—chief editors are legally responsible for election content (Art. 16).
3. Promote accurate, inclusive programming that reflects the political and cultural diversity of Ethiopia (Art. 51).
4. Comply with the professional code of conduct and directives from the Ethiopian Media Authority (Art. 55).
5. Establish internal complaint handling mechanisms and respond to public concerns (Art. 74).

According to Proclamation No. 1162/2019 (Electoral Law):

6. Provide equitable and fair airtime to all registered political parties and independent candidates (Art. 85).
7. Facilitate voter education programs in collaboration with the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) (Art. 84).
8. Avoid publishing or broadcasting unofficial election results before official announcement by NEBE (Art. 87).

According to Proclamation No. 1185/2020 (Hate Speech and Disinformation):

9. Proactively remove hate speech or disinformation from all platforms, including digital (Art. 3 & 8).
1.

10. Ensure staff are trained to identify and respond to inflammatory content or misinformation (Art. 8).

B. Based on Media Ethics (EMC and Civil Society Standards)

11. Allocate equal resources (e.g., airtime, space, headlines) to all contesting candidates during the campaign period.
12. Disclose any political affiliations or sponsorship of political content.
13. Fact-check all campaign advertisements and reject those containing misinformation or incitement.
14. Implement an in-house code of ethics for election coverage, including editorial review committees.
15. Provide equal access for marginalized voices (e.g., women, ethnic minorities, youth).
16. Support staff safety and independence, protecting journalists from political pressure.

C. Based on International Standards

UNESCO, IFJ, AU Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression:

17. Uphold pluralism by offering multiple political perspectives and opposing viewpoints.
18. Promote civic education by producing content that informs voters about the electoral process.
19. Ensure that media content complies with democratic standards for fairness, transparency, and accountability.
20. Avoid "soft censorship" practices such as editorial alignment with dominant political narratives for fear of regulatory retribution.
21. Cooperate with election observers and media monitors for content transparency and access evaluation.

Summary Table of Media House Duties

Legal & Ethical Domain	Responsibilities
Editorial Oversight	Appoint responsible editors; maintain independence
Equal Political Access	Allocate fair airtime/space to all political actors
Voter Education	Disseminate accurate, non-partisan civic information
Misinformation Management	Remove or correct hate speech/disinformation promptly
Accountability	Create transparent complaints and editorial review mechanisms
Inclusivity & Representation	Feature women, youth, minorities, and underserved regions

Legal Reference: Proclamation No. 1162/2019, Articles 84–87; Proclamation No. 1238/2021, Art. 16

8. General Guideline of Regulatory Bodies (NEBE, EMC, EMA)

The following are a detailed list of **Guidelines, Roles, and Responsibilities of Regulatory Bodies (NEBE, EMC, and EMA)** during elections. These are presented in three distinct parts:

1. Monitor electoral media content for hate speech and disinformation.
2. Develop and enforce national codes of conduct for media.
3. Ensure fair and impartial licensing and accreditation.
4. Collaborate with journalists' unions, CSOs, and international observers.
5. Establish complaint-handling procedures and enforce sanctions.

Legal Reference: Proclamation No. 1185/2020, Arts. 3, 4, 5, 8

- Based on **Ethiopian law**
- Aligned with **media ethics**
- Informed by **international standards**

9. Twenty six (26) Responsibilities of Regulatory Bodies (NEBE, EMC, EMA)

A. Based on Ethiopian Law

1. National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE)

(Proclamation No. 1162/2019, Articles 7, 84–87):

1. Accredit journalists and media outlets to cover the election.
2. Regulate fair access to public media for political parties and candidates.
3. Enforce provisions related to the publication of electoral results and polls.
4. Collaborate with media regulators (EMA and EMC) to monitor election coverage.
5. Develop and distribute voter education content through media.
6. Certify media entities for election coverage.
7. Coordinate with EMC and EMA on media access.
8. Respond to media violations of electoral regulations.

2. Ethiopian Media Council (EMC)

(Proclamation No. 1238/2021, Art. 55, 74):

6. Draft and disseminate codes of conduct for journalists during elections.
7. Receive and address media-related public complaints.
8. Provide ethics training and certification programs for election reporters.
9. Conduct joint monitoring with NEBE and EMA on election coverage.
10. Ensure self-regulation mechanisms are in place for media institutions.
11. Draft and enforce election-period ethical standards.
12. Operate complaint hearing panels.

6.

13. Provide certification and training for journalists.

3. Ethiopian Media Authority (EMA)

(Proclamation No. 1238/2021, Art. 51 & 55):

14. Monitor media content for compliance with licensing and content regulations.
12. Enforce corrective actions on violations, including warnings or license suspensions.
13. Support inclusive access by ensuring multilingual and regionally balanced content.
14. Promote public broadcasting neutrality and prohibit political capture.

B. Based on Media Ethics (EMC and Professional Standards)

15. Ensure the independence of media regulation from political interference.
16. Facilitate open channels of communication between regulators and media actors.
17. Encourage professional dialogue, feedback, and development of shared ethical standards.
18. Protect journalists' rights to work freely and without intimidation during the election cycle.
19. Maintain transparency in enforcement procedures and avoid arbitrary sanctions.
20. Publicly disclose monitoring results and findings through media reports.
21. Regulate broadcasting licenses.
22. Monitors hate speech and misinformation.
23. Enforce penalties for repeated violations.

C. Based on International Standards

(AU, UNESCO, European Commission, IFJ):

21. Uphold freedom of expression as per Article 19 of the ICCPR and AU Declaration on Freedom of Expression.
22. Create independent election media monitoring boards (UNESCO, 2022).
23. Develop real-time monitoring dashboards for media content and political airtime.
24. Set measurable equity indicators (e.g., % of airtime for each party, gender representation).
25. Report transparently to the public and observers about media performance and compliance.
26. Partner with civil society and academia in capacity-building and oversight.

Summary Table of Regulatory Responsibilities

Body	Legal Duties	Ethical Oversight	International Best Practices
NEBE	Journalist accreditation, access, voter education	Fairness in coverage and result handling	Collaboration with observers and monitors
EMC	Codes of conduct, ethics training, complaints	Journalistic standards and inclusivity	Self-regulation and independent monitoring
EMA	Broadcast licensing, hate speech	Impartiality of public	Multilingual, pluralistic

	oversight	broadcasters	content mandates

10. General Prohibited Practices, Restrictions and Enforcement

1. Disseminating **hate speech** (based on ethnicity, religion, gender, etc.)
2. Broadcasting or publishing **false or unverified election information**
3. Favoring or promoting a single party through state media resources
4. Obstructing access of journalists to polling stations or press conferences
5. Using media to **intimidate, harass**, or defame political

actors Prohibited during elections:

6. Anonymous sources making defamatory claims.
7. Publication of misleading pre-election polls.
8. Airing inflammatory language or campaign incitement.

Enforcement measures:

- First offense: written warning.
- Second offense: public reprimand and mandatory correction.
- Third offense: temporary suspension or referral to judicial body.

Legal Reference: Proclamation No. 1185/2020, Arts. 2–5

10. Guidelines, Prohibited Practices, Restrictions, and Enforcement measures for key election stakeholders.

Each section is categorized by stakeholder group and presented under three layers of accountability:

- **A. Ethiopian Law**
- **B. Media Ethics and National Policy Standards**
- **C. International Norms and Best Practices**

1. Journalists

A. Guidelines

- Uphold truth, accuracy, and impartiality (Proclamation No. 1238/2021, Art. 51).
- Provide equal platform access to all political actors (Proclamation No. 1162/2019, Art. 85).
- Protect voter privacy and safety (Art. 87).
-

B. Prohibited Practices

- Disseminating hate speech or false election information (Proclamation No. 1185/2020, Art. 3–5).
- Accepting payments or gifts from political actors (Ethics Code).
- Publishing unofficial election results.

C. Restrictions

- Restricted from entering polling booths without NEBE accreditation.
- May not interview voters at polling stations during voting.

D. Enforcement

- EMC or NEBE may revoke accreditation.
- Subject to prosecution under hate speech or defamation laws.

2. Media Houses

A. Guidelines

- Ensure equitable airtime and fair coverage (Proclamation No. 1162/2019, Art. 84).
- Establish internal editorial review and ethics panels (Proclamation No. 1238/2021, Art. 55).

B. Prohibited Practices

- Favoring ruling or opposition parties using editorial policy.
- Broadcasting unverified or inflammatory political advertisements.

C. Restrictions

- Must clearly label political ads and sponsored content.
- Cannot deny access to accredited journalists.

D. Enforcement

- EMA can issue warnings, suspend licenses (Art. 51, 74).

- EMC can require public apologies or retractions.

3. Voters and the Public

A. Guidelines

A.

- Consume information from verified, credible sources.
- Report suspected misinformation or hate speech.
- Consume news from credible sources.
- Report media violations to EMC or NEBE.
- Avoid spreading unverified information.

B. Prohibited Practices

- Sharing false results or inflammatory content on social media.
- Harassing journalists or candidates.

C. Restrictions

- Cannot photograph or livestream inside polling booths.

D. Enforcement

- Subject to prosecution under criminal and cybercrime laws.

4. Electoral Management Bodies (NEBE)

A. Guidelines

- Coordinate media access and accreditation fairly (Proclamation No. 1162/2019, Art. 7).
- Support civic education through media (Art. 84).

B. Prohibited Practices

- Withholding information selectively from media or public.
- Endorsing political narratives in media partnerships.

C. Restrictions

- May not issue partisan voter education content.

D. Enforcement

- Subject to parliamentary oversight and legal appeal processes.

5. Regulatory Bodies (EMA, EMC)

A. Guidelines

- Monitor media for compliance with election laws.
-

- Provide transparent and timely rulings on complaints.

B. Prohibited Practices

- Arbitrary suspension or censorship of outlets.
- Political favoritism in licensing or enforcement.

C. Restrictions

- Cannot act outside mandate or override NEBE authority.

D. Enforcement

- Legally accountable for abuse of power under administrative law.

6. Political Parties and Candidates

A. Guidelines

- Respect equal media access laws (Proclamation No. 1162/2019, Art. 85).
- Submit content in advance for fact-checking if requested.
- Respect media independence.
- Provide access and transparency to all accredited journalists.
- Avoid coercion or intimidation.

B. Prohibited Practices

- Offering money or incentives to journalists or media.
- Discrediting media institutions or spreading conspiracy content.

C. Restrictions

- Banned from using hate speech or incitement.
- Must follow NEBE rules for broadcast advertising.

D. Enforcement

- Fines, campaign restrictions, or disqualification by NEBE.

7. Security Forces

A. Guidelines

- Protect the press, polling places, and citizens impartially.
-

- Cooperate with accredited journalists and observers.

B. Prohibited Practices

- Obstructing journalist movement without cause.
- Using force to intimidate media or voters.

C. Restrictions

- Cannot censor or restrict information flow unlawfully.

D. Enforcement

- Investigated by human rights bodies or internal oversight.

8. Competitor Bodies (Other Candidates and Coalitions)

A. Guidelines

- Practice peaceful campaigning and fair media engagement.
- Avoid personal attacks in media statements.

B. Prohibited Practices

- Coordinated media misinformation campaigns.
- Sabotaging opponent airtime or defaming journalists.

C. Restrictions

- Restricted from holding parallel press events at polling stations.

D. Enforcement

- Sanctions include loss of media time, fines, or NEBE investigations.

11. Election Reporting Guidelines by Phase

Pre-Election Period:

- Cover all party registration announcements equally.
- Inform the public about the voting process and rules.
- Promote dialogue, not polarization.
- Educate the public about electoral processes.
- Provide equal platform access to all contestants.
-

Election Day:

- Avoid announcing unofficial results.
- Respect rules about polling station coverage.
- Protect voter privacy.
- Report without disrupting polling.
- Uphold NEBE guidelines.
-

Post-Election Period:

- Verify results only through NEBE.
- Report complaints and appeals responsibly.
- Avoid narratives that could incite violence.
- Cover disputes, legal processes, and outcomes fairly.
- Avoid sensationalism that may incite unrest.

12. Monitoring and Complaint Handling

- Media houses must establish internal **ethics review panels**.
- EMC and NEBE shall set up a joint **Media Monitoring Task Force**.
- Public complaints must be reviewed within 5 working days.
- Sanctions may include warnings, suspension, or license revocation.

13. Training Requirements

- Journalists must complete NEBE & EMC-accredited election reporting training.
- Topics should include:
    - Legal framework
    - Conflict-sensitive reporting
    - Digital media ethics
    - Inclusion and representation

14. Annexes

- Annex A: Glossary of Election Media Terms
- Annex B: Sample Political Coverage Monitoring Form
- Annex C: Complaint Submission Template
- Annex D: Airtime Allocation Tracker
- Annex E: Code of Conduct Declaration Form
-

15. Election Rules for Media

Media must:

1. Avoid publishing results before NEBE declares official outcomes.
2. Clearly distinguish between news, opinion, and paid content.
3. Adhere to NEBE accreditation requirements.
4. Fact-check all electoral claims.
5. Provide right-of-reply to any accused political actor.

17. Comprehensive list of standards, guidelines, and safety/ security measures for election-related media actors and institutions

The following section presented a comprehensive list of **standards, guidelines, and safety/ security measures** for **election-related media actors and institutions**, structured under:

1. **Ethiopian Law**
2. **Ethiopian Media and Electoral Environment**
3. **International Standards and Best Practices**

This framework applies to journalists, editors, media houses, electoral institutions, observers, and regulatory agencies during the election cycle.

1. Standards and Guidelines According to Ethiopian Law

A. Legal Instruments Referenced

- **FDRE Constitution, Article 29** – Right to Freedom of Expression and Media Freedom
- **Proclamation No. 1238/2021** – Media Proclamation
- **Proclamation No. 1185/2020** – Hate Speech and Disinformation
- **Proclamation No. 1162/2019** – Electoral Law

B. Core Standards

1. **Freedom of the press** is protected and may only be restricted by law in a democratic society (Const. Art. 29).
2. **Journalists have the right to access public information** for election reporting (Proclamation 1238/2021, Art. 4).
3. **Equity in media access** must be guaranteed to all parties and candidates (Proclamation 1162/2019, Art. 85).
4. **Hate speech and disinformation are prohibited**, punishable by fines or imprisonment (Proclamation 1185/2020, Art. 3–5).
1.

5. **Media institutions must establish editorial responsibility**, with editors held legally accountable (Proclamation 1238/2021, Art. 16).
6. **Accreditation for journalists** during elections must be granted through NEBE and recognized by all security forces (Proclamation 1162/2019, Art. 84).

2. Ethiopian Media Environment: Practical Safety and Ethics Guidelines

A. Practical Safety Measures for Journalists

1. Wear visible press ID issued by NEBE and/or EMC.
2. Establish direct contact with local electoral officers and police commanders for protection.
3. Travel in teams during coverage in conflict-prone areas.
4. Avoid livestreaming from flashpoints or unverified conflict zones.
5. Prepare emergency contact protocols and safety briefings before Election Day.

B. Institutional Guidelines for Media Houses

1. Assign trained editors to manage election coverage and review sensitive content.
2. Implement internal "red flag" alerts for hate speech, incitement, or partisan bias.
3. Provide legal and psychological support to journalists under threat.
4. Vet freelance reporters' qualifications and safety procedures.
5. Build contingency plans in case of state-imposed shutdowns or disruptions.

C. Ethics Protocols

1. Fact-check all political claims.
2. Separate editorial content from news reporting.
3. Provide equal opportunity to marginalized candidates and parties.
4. Offer space/time for public rebuttal and right-of-reply.
5. Avoid inflammatory language that could escalate tension.

3. International Standards and Safety Measures

A. Core References

- **UNESCO (2022)**: Media and Elections in Africa Guide
- **IFJ (International Federation of Journalists) Safety Guidelines**
- **AU Declaration on Freedom of Expression (2002)**
- **OSCE Media and Elections Toolkit**
- **CPJ (Committee to Protect Journalists)** Risk Assessment Model

B. Internationally Recognized Standards

A.

1. Media must **contribute to democratic participation and electoral transparency**.
2. States must ensure **non-interference in editorial content** and provide legal protection to journalists (AU, 2002).
3. Election monitors should **assess media fairness, inclusion, and accuracy** (OSCE, 2014).
4. Emergency response plans must be in place for journalists facing threats or arrest (CPJ, 2021).

4. Summary Table: Safety and Conduct Responsibilities by Actor

Actor	Legal/Ethical Responsibility	Safety Measures
Journalists	Report fairly, factually, and safely (Procl. 1238/2021, 1162/2019)	Wear ID, plan travel, avoid risky areas, maintain contacts with NEBE/ security
Media Houses	Provide equal access, ensure editorial oversight, protect staff	Train teams, review content, establish internal complaint channels
NEBE	Issue accreditation, manage access, protect journalist rights	Share safety briefings with local admin/ security; fast-track safety complaint review
EMC/EMA	Monitor ethics and respond to public/media violations	Log threats and recommend sanctions or referrals
Security Forces	Respect journalist ID and ensure safety near polling stations	Train officers on media protection obligations

Conclusion

A secure and ethical media environment is foundational to credible elections. Adherence to Ethiopian legal frameworks, practical safety measures, and international standards ensures journalists can operate freely and safely while informing the public, monitoring power, and promoting peaceful democratic participation.

Would you like this content added as a new section or annex in your Election Code of Conduct document?

References

Legal and Institutional References – Ethiopia

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. (1995). *Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia*. Federal Negarit Gazette.
→ See Article 29 on the right to freedom of expression and media.

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. (2019). *Proclamation No. 1162/2019: The Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Election's Code of Conduct Proclamation*. Federal Negarit Gazette, 25th Year, No. 97.

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. (2020). *Proclamation No. 1185/2020: Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation*. Federal Negarit Gazette, 26th Year, No. 25.

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. (2021). *Proclamation No. 1238/2021: Media Proclamation*. Federal Negarit Gazette, 27th Year, No. 63.

Ethiopian Broadcast Authority. (2021). *Broadcasting Content Regulation Framework*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Ethiopian Media Council. (2023). *Draft Code of Ethics and Conduct for Media Professionals*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

National Electoral Board of Ethiopia. (2020). *Directive No. 02/2020: Code of Conduct for Media and Journalists during Elections*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

International and Regional Standards

African Union. (2002). *Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa.* Banjul: African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Committee to Protect Journalists. (2021). *Safety Guide for Journalists: Covering Elections and Political Unrest*. Retrieved from https://cpj.org

International Federation of Journalists. (2019). *Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists*. Brussels, Belgium.

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. (2014). *Handbook: Media and Elections*. Vienna: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

United Nations. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. United Nations General Assembly.
→ See Article 19 on the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

UNESCO. (2022). *Elections and the Media in Africa: A Guide for Journalists and Media Practitioners*. Paris: UNESCO.

Reports, Briefs, and Data Sources

Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections. (2021). *Policy Brief: Ethiopian Media Accessibility During Elections*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Freedom House. (2023). *Freedom in the World: Ethiopia Report*. Retrieved from https://freedomhouse.org

IREX. (2022). *Media Sustainability Index – Ethiopia Report*. Retrieved from https://www.irex.org

National Democratic Institute. (2022). *Strengthening Media and Civil Society Engagement in Democratic Elections: Ethiopia Briefing Paper*. Washington, D.C.: NDI.

Comparative Country Codes and Models

Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa. (2020). *Code of Conduct for Broadcasters*. Johannesburg: BCCSA.

Election Commission of India. (2021). *Guidelines on Paid News and Media Monitoring Mechanism*. New Delhi: Election Commission of India.

Ghana National Media Commission. (2016). *Guidelines for Political Broadcasting and Media Conduct during Elections*. Accra: NMC.

Media Council of Kenya. (2017). *Guidelines for Election Coverage*. Nairobi: MCK.

Annex: Comprehensive Guide and Election Code of Conduct for Journalists, Media Houses, and Regulatory Bodies

Prepared for: Ethiopian Media Council (EMC)
Prepared by: ARMA multi Media and Art Production

PLC Ayele Addis Ambelu

Annex A: Glossary of Election Media Terms

- **Accreditation**: Official authorization given to journalists or media outlets by the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) to cover the electoral process.
- **Airtime**: The allocated time on broadcast media for parties, candidates, or voter education programs.
- **Bias**: Inclination or prejudice for or against one person or group, especially in a way considered to be unfair.
- **Disinformation**: False information that is deliberately spread to deceive the public.
- **Equal Access**: The principle that all electoral candidates and parties should have fair and equal opportunities to present their messages via media.
-
- **Fact-Checking**: The process of verifying the factual accuracy of information before publication or broadcast.
- **Hate Speech**: Any kind of communication that belittles or discriminates against people based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or political views.
- **Impartiality**: The journalistic principle of remaining neutral and unbiased.
- **Polling Station**: A place where voters go to cast their votes during an election.

- **Right of Reply**: The opportunity offered to individuals or organizations to respond to public criticisms or accusations.

Annex B: Sample Political Coverage Monitoring Form

Date	Media Outlet	Program Name	Time Slot	Political Actor Featured	Duration (mins)	Tone (Positive/ Neutral/Negative)	Observations
01/04/2025	Radio ABC	Debate Hour	7–8 PM	Party X	30	Neutral	Equal airtime to all parties

Annex C: Complaint Submission Template

To: Ethiopian Media Council (EMC) Election Monitoring Unit
From: [Complainant Name/Organization]
Date: [Insert Date]

Subject of Complaint: [Describe the issue briefly]

Details:

- Media outlet/program: _____
- Date and time of content: _____
- Alleged violation: [Check all that apply]
  -
- Description of incident: _____

Requested Action: _____

Contact Information:

- Name: _____
- Phone: _____
- Email: _____
-

Annex D: Airtime Allocation Tracker

Political Party/ Candidate	Total Air-time Allo-cated (min)	Number of Appearanc-es	Content Type (Interview/Debate/ Ad)	Verified by EMC (Y/N)
Party A	120	4	Debate, Ad	Y
Party B	90	3	Interview	Y

Annex E: Code of Conduct Declaration Form

DECLARATION OF COMPLIANCE

I,_, representing
_____ (media house/journalist), hereby declare that I:

1. Have read and understood the Ethiopian Media Council's Election Code of Conduct.
2. Will adhere to the ethical, legal, and professional standards outlined therein.
3. Understand the implications of non-compliance, including possible penal-ties or revocation of accreditation.

Signed:_____ Date: _____
Position/Title:____ Organization: _____

End of Annexes