Abel W. Sugebo

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Information Integrity & Trust and Safety | OSINT & Influence Operations | AI Safety & Platform Risk

SUMMARY

Information-integrity and OSINT researcher with ten-plus years investigating disinformation, coordinated manipulation, platform abuse, and influence operations. Former principal contact for Inform Africa in Meta's Trusted Partner program, preparing, evidencing, and tracking content, account, and imminent-harm escalations for Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. Founded HaqCheck, Ethiopia's first IFCN Verified Signatory, and led conflict-period verification with extensive exposure to graphic and disturbing material. Certified DISARM analyst and native Amharic speaker. Authorized to work in the United States without sponsorship.

CORE SKILLS

- **Trust & Safety Operations:** evidence assessment and case documentation · content, account, and imminent-harm escalations · urgency and harm-based triage · policy-aligned review and quality control · repeated-abuse pattern recognition · graphic and sensitive content review · coordinated inauthentic behavior (CIB) detection
- **Investigations & OSINT:** open source intelligence collection · cross-platform monitoring · account network mapping · reverse image analysis · geolocation · verification methodology · threat intelligence reporting
- **Influence Operations:** DISARM framework (certified analyst) · FIMI · TTP classification · narrative and network analysis · AI-generated propaganda analysis
- **Tools & Languages:** Microsoft Excel (PivotTables, formulas, data cleaning) · Amharic (native), English (fluent)

EXPERIENCE

Researcher, Information Integrity & OSINT, Independent (self-employed) | Jul 2025 – Present

- Conduct OSINT investigations into influence operations and platform abuse in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa and publish them through Inform Africa; maintain HaqCheck's IFCN Verified Signatory status.
- "When AI Moderation Becomes a Weapon" (March 2026): documented creator reports of cascading enforcement against Ethiopian TikTok accounts with no prior violations and analyzed how coordinated mass reporting can exploit automated moderation in low-resource languages.
- "False in 2021, Asserted in 2026" (October 2026): cross-platform assessment of a purposive sample of 104 posts and videos (41 X, 28 Facebook, 35 YouTube).
- DISARM case study (December 2025): structured analysis of AI-generated propaganda linking GERD pride to "Assab" sea-access narratives.

Ethiopia Country Researcher, State of Internet Freedom in Africa, CIPESA | 2025 – 2026 (contract)

- Authored the Ethiopia country chapter for the 2025 and 2026 editions, covering surveillance, platform regulation, network shutdowns, and restrictions on digital expression.

Lead Researcher & Investigator | Founder, Inform Africa / HaqCheck | Feb 2021 – Jul 2025

- Founded Inform Africa and served as its Executive Director while personally leading investigations, research, and platform escalations.
- Served as principal contact in Meta's Trusted Partner program: prepared, substantiated, submitted, and tracked escalations involving content, accounts, and imminent harm for Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa.
- Triaged claims for verification by urgency and potential harm; applied evidence standards that separate verified facts from incomplete evidence and cases needing specialist review.
- Fact-checked content from the war in Tigray and other armed conflicts in Ethiopia, with extensive exposure to graphic and disturbing material.
- Built DISARM-based workflows to classify influence-operation tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) across investigations into elections, armed conflict, economic policy, and human rights.

- Built HaqCheck into Ethiopia's first IFCN Verified Signatory, developing its verification procedures, sourcing standards, and corrections protocols.
- Built and managed a team of up to 15 researchers, editors, and verification staff through armed conflict and repeated nationwide internet shutdowns. Regular operations concluded in July 2025 following relocation to the United States.

Co-Founder & Managing Director, Addis Zeybe | 2018 – 2024 (concurrent with Inform Africa from 2021)

- Led an independent digital news organization of approximately 30 staff across editorial, operations, and strategy, with full budget and donor-relationship ownership through sustained political instability and regulatory pressure.
- Set verification and sourcing standards across the newsroom and directed conflict-period coverage of disinformation and platform manipulation.

Consultant, Media Resilience and Digital Safety, Free Press Unlimited | 2020 – 2022 (consulting, concurrent with Addis Zeybe)

- Advised on media resilience, information integrity, and digital safety programming for newsrooms and civil society organizations in high-risk environments.

Fact-Checker, PesaCheck (Code for Africa) | 2020 – 2021 (contract, concurrent with Addis Zeybe)

- Investigated and debunked viral misinformation across East African information ecosystems using reverse image analysis, geolocation, and account-network mapping.

Earlier experience: Editor, Addis Fortune (2017 – 2018) · Mechanical Engineer, Ethiopian Airlines (2011 – 2014)

SELECTED RESEARCH

- When AI Moderation Becomes a Weapon: Ethiopia's Mass Reporting Crisis, Inform Africa, March 2026
- False in 2021, Asserted in 2026: Eritrean Troops and the Politics of Verification, Inform Africa, October 2026
- DISARM Case Study: AI-Generated Propaganda Linking GERD Pride to "Assab" Sea-Access Narratives, Inform Africa, December 2025
- State of Internet Freedom in Africa, Ethiopia country chapter, CIPESA, 2025 and 2026
- Annual Report 2022: War and Disinformation, Inform Africa, March 2023

AWARDS

CPJ International Press Freedom Award, Committee to Protect Journalists (2015) · TV5 Monde Prize (2015) · Hellman-Hammett Grant, Human Rights Watch (2015) · Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders, Finalist (2016)

EDUCATION, CERTIFICATION & AFFILIATIONS

B.S., Mechanical Engineering, Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia (2005 – 2008)

Certified DISARM Analyst · Contributor, DISARM Framework documentation (data-knowledge-hub.com)

Co-founder, Zone Nine, Ethiopia's first independent digital rights blogging collective