

Call for Submissions | Rethinking Ethiopia: A Call for Youth Voices

The Rift Valley Institute (RVI), through its Peace Research Facility (PRF), in partnership with Jigjiga University (JJU), invites young Ethiopians to contribute to the next round of *Rethinking Ethiopia*, a youth-centred essay initiative designed to foster rigorous, policy-relevant reflection on Ethiopia's most pressing political and social challenges. *Rethinking Ethiopia* is an ongoing national initiative convened by RVI's Peace Research Facility to create space for critical, independent and inclusive debate on Ethiopia's political trajectories. The initiative places particular emphasis on youth perspectives, recognizing younger generations as both analysts of present realities and key actors in shaping the country's future.

Across successive rounds, *Rethinking Ethiopia* seeks to:

- Encourage grounded, analytically rigorous reflection on major national challenges
- Promote dialogue across regions, identities and lived experiences
- Support emerging thinkers to engage constructively with policy, peacebuilding and public debate
- Expand the range of voices shaping discussions on governance, belonging and coexistence

Each thematic round focuses on a specific issue of national relevance, explored through essays, mentorship and public seminars.

Theme for this round: Youth and patriotism in Ethiopia

Ethiopia is undergoing a period of profound political, social and generational transition. Questions of patriotism, citizenship, national belonging and coexistence have become central to public debate—often in contested and polarized ways. For Ethiopia's youth, these debates shape everyday experiences of identity, opportunity, exclusion and responsibility.

This year's call seeks to provide a national platform for young Ethiopians to critically examine *what patriotism means today*, how it is mobilized and how it might be reimaged in ways that are inclusive, democratic and conducive to peace.

Scope and guiding questions

We invite submissions that critically explore how patriotism is understood, expressed and contested in contemporary Ethiopia. Contributors are encouraged to draw on lived experience, historical legacies and future-oriented visions.

Indicative questions include (but are not limited to):

- How do young Ethiopians define patriotism in a diverse and multinational state?
- What tensions exist between civic, ethnic, cultural and state-centred forms of patriotism?
- How is patriotism mobilized during conflict, protest or political transition?
- How do regional, pastoralist or peripheral perspectives challenge dominant national narratives?

- What role can youth play in reshaping patriotism to promote social cohesion and peaceful coexistence?
- What lessons can Ethiopia draw from its own history or comparative experiences elsewhere?

Submissions should present clear arguments, grounded analysis and constructive, forward-looking reflections.

Objectives of this essay competition

This specific round of *Rethinking Ethiopia* aims to:

- Provide a platform for young Ethiopians to articulate nuanced perspectives on patriotism and belonging
- Encourage critical, non-polarising engagement with sensitive national debates
- Strengthen analytical writing and argumentation skills among emerging researchers and practitioners
- Generate ideas that can inform policy discussions, civic education and peacebuilding efforts

Eligibility

- Open to young Ethiopians aged 18–35, residing in Ethiopia or in the diaspora
- Open to students, early-career professionals, activists and independent thinkers
- Applications from regional universities, particularly from pastoralist areas, as well as from women, are strongly encouraged

Submission guidelines

- **Length:** 1,500–2,000 words
- **Languages:** Amharic, Afan Oromo, Tigrigna, Af-Somali or English
- Submissions do not need to be heavily referenced but should demonstrate analytical clarity
- Contributions from all disciplines are welcome, including political economy, governance, security, identity and nationalism studies and social or cultural analysis

Selection criteria

A joint review panel drawn from Jigjiga University and the Rift Valley Institute will assess submissions based on:

- Originality of ideas
- Analytical strength
- Relevance to the theme
- Constructive and forward-looking recommendations

From the submissions, 15 contributors will be selected to participate in a structured mentorship programme to further refine and develop their papers.

From this group:

- **Five (5)** outstanding contributors will receive a modest honorarium will be invited to present their work at a national seminar hosted at Jigjiga University (hybrid format) in mid-2026
- Selected papers may be translated into additional languages to ensure wider readership.

Submission

Submissions should be sent to:

peaceresearchfacility@riftvalley.net

Cc: musa.mohammed@jju.edu.et

Please include:

- The essay manuscript
- A short biography (maximum 200 words)
- Contact details

Deadline for submissions: 27 February 2026