



International Federation of Journalists - Africa Office

March 13, 2007

**From: International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)
Africa Regional Office
Dakar, Senegal**

**To: Honourable Parliamentarians
Of the Republic of Sweden
Stockholm**

Dear Honourable Parliamentarians,

The IFJ Calls on the Swedish Parliament to Urge Release of Journalists Imprisoned in Ethiopia and Eritrea

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) is hereby calling on you to facilitate the release of 20 journalists jailed since 2005 in Ethiopia and 15 journalists imprisoned in Eritrea since 2001 for political reasons.

In November 2005, 17 journalists were arrested during the violent suppression of anti-government riots that followed the May 2005 elections in Ethiopia. The journalists were accused of publishing materials favourable to the opposition and were charged with treason. They could face possible death sentences or life imprisonment according to Ethiopian legislation. The detainees include a freelance journalist and two journalists from the public television channel ETV who have been in jail since April 2004.

A number of the journalists and political prisoners have suffered from health problems due to the poor prison conditions. Prison sources stated that the journalists were sick and some of them were hospitalised at the time of the court hearings. Among the detained journalists is Serkalem Fasil, who was pregnant when she was arrested and subsequently gave birth in prison.

We are equally concerned about the Eritrean government's ongoing reign of terror against the independent press. Fifteen journalists including Swedish-Eritrean Dawit Isaac have been held in Eritrea without trial for almost six (6) years. They have been imprisoned in secret detention centres. All the private media houses have been forced to close down.



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In September 2001, opposition leaders advocated for democratic reforms, which were widely carried by the press. Following these reports, ten journalists were arrested along with some opposition leaders. The Eritrean government in an official statement labelled the journalists as "traitors working for the enemy" and a threat to national security.

The journalists are prohibited from communicating with their families and lawyers. Authorities have refused to release information specifying their location or health conditions and, according to recent reports, one of the journalists, Fessehaye "Joshua" Yohannes, is feared dead. There is also the case of five journalists arrested before the wave of repression began in 2001. Eritrea is the only country in the world where there are no independent media or foreign correspondents.

These extreme violations of freedom of expression and media independence in Ethiopia and Eritrea continue unabated. Neither government has shown any sign of making positive changes. The continued lack of information about the situation of the captive journalists is a grave cause of concern.

For these reasons, the International Federation of Journalists is calling on you to do everything in your capacity to appeal for the release of our illegally detained colleagues without any further delay.

We thank you for your support.
Yours sincerely

Gabriel Baglo
Director

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