



**International
Federation
of Journalists**

JIM BOUMELHA
President

BETH COSTA
General Secretary

Honorable John Kerry
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

30 April 2014

Dear Mr Secretary,

I write on behalf of the International Federation of Journalists to urge you to raise with the authorities in Ethiopia during your visit the ordeal of the journalists in jail.

For many years, we have been protesting regularly the crackdown on press freedom in Ethiopia which has worsened in recent months, making this country Africa's second worst jailor of journalists after Eritrea. Only last week, three prominent independent journalists, editor Asmamaw Hailegeorgis and freelancers Tesfalem Waldyes and Edom Kassaye, have been detained without formally been charged with any crime. This took place on the same day that six bloggers, members of an independent collective called Zone 9, which publishes news and commentary, were also arrested.

Your visit to Addis Ababa comes at a time when the Ethiopian government continues to ignore calls made by a range of organisations demanding that it releases journalists in jail. The IFJ and its member unions in 180 countries representing 600,000 journalists worldwide have been trying to engage the Ethiopian government on the deteriorating state of press freedom but to no avail.

We called in particular for the release of the seven journalists behind bar, among them award winning columnists Eskinder Nega and Reeyot Alemu, both of whom jailed under the country's sweeping anti-terrorism law. More recently Somali journalist Mohamed Aweys Mudey was also sentenced to 27 years in prison.

Crackdown on the media in Ethiopia began in 2009 when the government expanded its legal authority over journalists and civil society groups. The 2009 Anti-Terrorism Proclamation gave new powers to the government to arrest those deemed seditious, including journalists. The IFJ has always called on the Ethiopian authorities to immediately free all journalists convicted under the provisions of the country's 2009 anti-terrorism law.

We are sure, Mr Secretary, that you will agree with us that a free and vibrant media is the best guarantee of stability and development and the interest of your country will best be served by allies whose stability is based on democratic rule.

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The IFJ would be grateful if you would raise the issue of journalists currently in jail with the Ethiopian governments and join us in requesting they are released, and for their colleagues to be able to work freely and openly without fear of reprisal.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jim Boumelha", written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above a long, thin horizontal line that extends to the right.

Jim Boumelha
President
International Federation of Journalists

Cc

Donald Yamamoto, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of African Affairs

Patricia M. Haslach, U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia