

30 Days for Freedom

4 April - 3 May 2014

#FreethePress

WAN-IFRA www.worldpressfreedomday.org

His Excellency President Isaias Afewerki
President of Eritrea
Asmara, Eritrea

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17 April 2014

Your Excellency,

We are writing as part of the global online campaign '30 Days for Freedom' to call for the release of the journalists and editors jailed as part of your government's September 2001 crackdown on the independent press, and to demand the liberation of all journalists currently imprisoned in Eritrea simply for doing their jobs.

During September 2001, ahead of elections that never took place, Eritrean authorities rounded up and jailed at least ten journalists, allowing the country's burgeoning independent press to vanish in only a matter of days.

Those jailed in this, the first of many sweeps designed to stifle the media and prominent opposition figures, included Mehanie Haile, deputy editor of *Keste Debena* (Rainbow); **Dawit Isaak**, owner and co-founder of *Setit*; **Seyoum Tsehay**, freelancer and former director of Eri-TV; **Fessehaye Yohannes** or "Joshua", co-founder of *Setit*; **Said Abdulkader**, founder and editor of *Admas*; **Yusuf Mohamed Ali**, editor of *Tsigenay*; **Amanuel Asrat**, editor of *Zemen* (The Time); **Temesghen Gebreyesus**, sports journalist; **Mattewos Habteab**, editor and co-founder of *Meqaleh*; and **Dawit Habtemichael**, deputy editor and co-founder of *Meqaleh*.

Your Excellency, we are appalled that so many of your country's brightest individuals, whose passion to see a successful, democratic and open Eritrea has been twisted by your administration to mean treason and terrorism, have 'disappeared' into the country's notorious prison system. We urge you, in the name of human decency, to provide reliable information on the health and whereabouts of each of them so that their long-suffering families may at last receive accurate information.

Your Excellency, your reluctance to embrace a free press is to the disadvantage of all Eritreans. We urge you to reconsider your position and to instead embrace unfettered freedom of expression, and - as a first step - to release all journalists jailed in Eritrea.

Sincerely,

#FreethePress
The 30 Days for Freedom campaign

Organised by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) and the World Editors Forum, the '30 Days for Freedom' campaign aims to highlight the plight of imprisoned journalists worldwide in the 30 days leading up to 3 May, World Press Freedom Day.

www.wan-ifra.org / www.worldpressfreedomday.org

