

**Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale**

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## Freedom of the Press 2010 - Eritrea

**Status:** Not Free

**Legal Environment:** 30

**Political Environment:** 40

**Economic Environment:** 24

**Total Score:** 94

- The media environment in Eritrea continued to be among the worst in the world in 2009, as it remains one of the few that lack any form of privately owned press. The once-vibrant private media ceased to operate in 2001, after a ban imposed by the government of President Isaias Afwerki and the imprisonment of key editors and journalists. Since then, the crackdown has extended to state-employed journalists, many of whom have fled the country due to intimidation and arbitrary imprisonment. At the beginning of 2009, six journalists working for Radio Bana, an outlet sponsored by the Ministry of Education, were arrested for having provided information to opposition organizations and websites operating abroad.
- The constitution guarantees freedom of speech and of the press. Afwerki continues to claim that in his country "no one is prevented from freedom of speech." In an interview with the Swedish broadcaster TV4 in June 2009, the president dismissed private outlets as being driven by personal interests and indicated that real freedom for the Eritrean people could only be provided by the state-owned media. Despite the absence of any private media, the 1996 Press Proclamation Law continues to apply in principle, mandating that all newspapers and journalists be licensed. It also stipulates that publications must be submitted for government approval prior to release, and prohibits reprinting articles from banned publications.
- The country continued to have the worst record in Africa for the detention of journalists, and ranked fourth in the world. The arrest of the six Radio Bana journalists caused the overall number of journalists in jail to rise to 19 as of December 1, 2009, from 13 the year before, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists. There is little information on the condition of those imprisoned, though unconfirmed reports indicate that several have died in detention. Dawit Isaac, a Swedish-Eritrean journalist arrested in September 2001, was reported to be seriously ill and to have been taken to a military hospital early in 2009. The government has since failed to disclose his health status.
- Foreign journalists are not able to freely enter the country and are generally not welcome unless they agree to report favorably about the regime. There have been occasional reports from journalists operating undercover, and Afwerki has conducted interviews with foreign broadcasters such as Swedish TV4 and the

Qatar-based Al-Jazeera. However, it remained almost impossible to report from within the country in 2009.

- The three newspapers, two television stations, and three radio stations that operate in the country remain under state control. Individuals are allowed to purchase satellite dishes and subscribe to international media, though the importation of foreign publications without prior approval is not permitted.
- The government requires all internet-service providers to use government-controlled internet infrastructure. Many websites managed by Eritreans overseas are blocked, as is the video-sharing site YouTube. Authorities are believed to monitor e-mail communications, although internet use is extremely limited, with just under 5 percent of the population able to access the medium in 2009.

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