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Ethiopia: RSF relieved by the release of three Ethiopian journalists detained for several months

Three journalists detained for their coverage of the conflict in the Amhara region have just been released. They had spent between seven and ten months in detention under a state of emergency law. Relieved by their release, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) is now calling on the authorities to release the five journalists still being held.

This is the first sign of a relaxation of repressive policies in Ethiopia. **Belay Manaye**, co-founder of the YouTube channel *Ethio News*, and **Bekalu Alamirew**, founder and editor-in-chief of the online media *Alpha TV*, who have been respectively held for seven and ten months, most of the time in the Awash Arba military camp, 250 kilometers east of the capital Addis Ababa, have been free since 17 June. **Tewodros Zerfu**, host of the YouTube news channel *Yegna TV* and the online media outlet *Menelik TV*, was detained for ten months and released two days earlier.

Although the circumstances surrounding these releases remain unclear, they took place shortly after the [state of emergency](#) was lifted on 5 June. Launched in August 2023, it authorised the arrest of civilians without a court warrant. However, no charges were ever brought against the journalists. They were detained at the Awash Arba military camp, then from 28 May at the Federal Police Criminal Investigation Office in Addis Ababa.

In a letter dated 11 June consulted by RSF, the Federal Court of First Instance ordered the police to respond to the charges brought by the three journalists, who contested the legality of their imprisonment. Their release followed on 15 and 17 June.

The release of these three journalists, who had been held under the State of Emergency Act for several months, is a positive sign. However, the journalists should never have been locked up for doing their job, which is more necessary than ever in conflict zones. The Ethiopian authorities must now release the five other journalists still detained.

Sadibou Marong

Director of RSF's Sub-Saharan Africa office

The three journalists were arrested because of their [coverage](#) of the conflict in the Amhara region, which has been beset by tensions between the federal army and nationalist militias since April 2023.

Bekalu Alamirew has been in the authorities' sights for several years: the journalist, who used to work for *Awlo Media Center*, has been [arrested](#) four times since November 2020. His last arrest was on 6 August 2023, when he had been [covering](#) the fighting for several days for *Alpha TV*. Tewodros Zerfu was arrested 20 days later in a café in the capital, before being taken to Awash Arba in the following days. Belay Manaye, whose media outlet *Ethio News* has suffered the [crackdown](#) on press freedom, was arrested on 13 November 2023 in Addis Ababa. The journalist with whom he co-founded *Ethio News*, **Belete Kassa Mekonnen**, went into exile at the beginning of the year after receiving numerous threats.

Five journalists still locked up

Five other journalists are still being held by the Ethiopian authorities. Three of them were arrested in April 2023: **Genet Asmamaw**, a journalist with the online media outlet *Yegna Media*; **Meskerem Abera**, founder and editor-in-chief of the independent media outlet *Ethio Nikat Media*; and **Dawit Begashaw**, editor-in-chief of the online media outlet *Arat Kilo*. The director of the *Amhara Media Center* YouTube channel, **Abay Zewdu**, was arrested in August 2023. **Gobeze Sisay**, founder of the YouTube channel *The Voice of Amhara*, was extradited from Djibouti in May 2023.

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