

Ethiopia threatens journalist with solitary confinement

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has expressed concern about the safety of Reeyot Alemu, a jailed Ethiopian journalist and teacher.

In a protest letter to Birhan Hailu, Ethiopia's justice minister, Joel Simon, CPJ's executive director asked that Alemu, whose health has reportedly deteriorated since being held on terrorism charges, to withdraw the threat of placing her in solitary confinement.

Human rights and press freedom groups have long accused Addis Ababa of using its controversial terrorism legislation to curb opposition and stifle the media in the East African nation.

"Prison authorities have threatened Reeyot with solitary confinement for two months as punishment for alleged bad behavior toward them and threatening to publicise human rights violations by prison guards" said CPJ's letter, which was published on its website.

Despite pledges to the contrary Ethiopia's Ministry of Justice has failed to ensure that Reeyot's full human rights have not been violated during her detention, which began in June 2011.

"We urge you to fulfill Ethiopia's promise to build a humane and democratic state by withdrawing the threat of solitary confinement against Reeyot and ensuring her access to adequate medical care" CPJ said.

"No journalists should face detention or imprisonment in the exercise of their duty"

Reeyot, a columnist for the now-defunct independent weekly *Feteh*, is being held on the basis of accusation that she was involved in a vague terrorism plot.

In January 2012 she was sentenced to 14 years in prison under the country's anti-terrorism law however an appeals court later in August, reduced the initial sentence to five years after the court dropped most of the terrorism charges pressed against the journalist, who is known for writing columns critical of the government.

CPJ has also expressed grave concern over the deteriorating health conditions of Reeyot saying she has been denied of access to adequate medical treatment after she was diagnosed with a tumor in her breast.

Reeyot is a 2012 winner of the International Women's Media Foundation Courage Award.

International human right groups accuse Ethiopia of using the country's broadly defined anti-terrorism law to punish critical

journalists and opposition members, an allegation Addis Ababa denies.

In 2011 the United Nations special rapporteur on torture, Juan E. Méndez, urged the prohibition of "the imposition of solitary confinement as punishment - either as part of a judicially imposed sentence or a disciplinary measure."

In the report the special rapporteur urged Ethiopia to fulfill its obligation as signatory to the United Nations Convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Source: [allAfrica](#)

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