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SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE FOR ETHIOPIAN
POLITICAL PRISONERS (SOCEPP)



May 3/2008



WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY:
REPRESSION OF FREE PRESS IN ETHIOPIA CONTINUES

"World Press Freedom Day was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1991 as a day "to celebrate the fundamental principles of press freedom; to evaluate press freedom around the world, to defend the media from attacks on their independence and to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the exercise of their profession." Press freedom is considered to be a cornerstone of human rights and a guarantee of other freedoms".

The regime of Meles Zenawi has from the outset violated the right to freedom expression and unleashed brutal repression against the free press. It is responsible for the deaths, imprisonment and flight into exile of dozens of journalists. As a predator of the free press, it has been condemned world wide along with other notorious enemies of free expression. Its existing press law violates all basic premises of a free press and proper press law. The regime controls the mass media, the newspapers, the FM radios are all controlled by the State as is the TV. Numerous journalists are serving long jail sentences, many more have fled. Independent newspapers have been denied licenses, others forced to pay huge fines that have debilitated them. The regime controls the supply of paper, controls many printing presses. Kumsa Beryau, Berhanu Ijigu and other detained journalists have been disappeared for years. The proposed Press law, that is to be made into law shortly, is full of articles that violate the right of free expression and lay the ground for the persecution of the free press. In other words, the regime is determined to continue as a hard line enemy of the free press.

The fundamental principles of press freedom have been violated in Ethiopia for years. At present, after many years of repression the freedom of the media is non existent. If independent journalists are not in prison, they have fled or have been forced into silence. The field has now been left free to the Sate controlled media or to "others" are also covertly under State control. As the world observes Press Freedom Day, it is very clear that press freedom in Ethiopia does

not exist at all. The struggle for the right of free expression is still being waged and still demanding heavy sacrifices.

SOCEPP has time and again called for an end to the repression against the free press and independent journalists, for the immediate release of those jailed illegally and an account on the whereabouts of the disappeared ones.

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