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## The Meles Regime Criminalises Skype

A full report by Craig Wilson has presented the following:

"Ethiopia's state-owned Internet service provider, the Ethiopian Telecommunication Corporation (Ethio-Telcom), has begun performing deep-packet inspection of all Internet traffic in the country. The country's government recently ushered in new legislation that criminalizes the use of services such as Skype, Google Talk and other forms of Internet phone calling.

The new law, which came into effect on 24 May, makes use of Internet voice services punishable by hefty fines and up to 15 years in prison.

The official line from the government is that the move is intended to protect national security and protect the national, state-owned telecoms carrier from losing revenue to Skype and similar services; this, despite the fact that Ethiopia's fixed-line penetration rate is the second worst in Africa (after Sierra Leone) at an estimated 1% of its 85m strong population.

Ethiopia has instituted numerous restrictions on its digital community in recent years. The government has previously closed down Internet cafes offering voice-over-Internet protocol services and, in December 2006, made it obligatory for Internet cafes to keep records of the names and addresses of their customers in an effort to clamp down on bloggers and other users critical of the regime.

The new law prohibits all VoIP traffic along with audio and video data traffic via social media..... The law also gives the government the right to inspect any imports of voice communication equipment and accessories.

The OpenNet Initiative, which tracks Internet filtering and surveillance, says in a report on Ethiopia that the country already blocks all blogs hosted at blogspot.com ...The new legislation is no doubt also motivated by the events of the Arab Spring that saw mass protests organized via social media. With many bloggers critical of Ethiopia's current government, censorship by the state looks likely to increase."

It is to be noted also that the Meles regime has jammed radio and satellite TV broadcasts, blocked web sites and imposed a rigid censorship making publishing houses responsible for any printed item. A repressive anti terror law makes any dissidence a possible and punishable crime. Several journalists have been condemned to long years of imprisonment by a regime that has proved to be the determined and obdurate enemy of the freedom of press and of free speech.

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