

30 Days for Freedom

4 April - 3 May 2014

#FreethePress

WAN-IFRA www.worldpressfreedomday.org

H.E. Hailemariam Desalegn
P.O.Box 1031
Addis Ababa,
Ethiopia

21 April 2014

Your Excellency,

We are writing as part of the global online campaign '30 Days for Freedom' to call for the release of Reeyot Alemu, and all other journalists imprisoned in Ethiopia simply for doing their job.

On 21 June 2011, police seized Ms. Alemu while she was teaching an English class, with no information given to her as to why she was being arrested. Her articles and recordings of a telephone conversation about a peaceful protest were used against her as proof of 'crime', and she was sentenced to 14 years in prison. Her term was later commuted to five years.

Four days before her arrest, Ms. Alemu had written an article critical of Ethiopia's ruling EPRDF party fundraising methods for a national dam project. Her piece drew parallels between Your Excellency's predecessor, Meles Zenawi, and the Libyan dictator, Muammar Gaddafi. Ms. Alemu was one of 11 journalists subsequently arrested and tried under vague anti-terrorism laws.

Ms. Alemu has refused all offers of clemency in exchange for providing information on journalists. Furthermore, she has also refused to apologise for telling the truth - even if displaying contrition could mean her freedom. She has also been subjected to poor treatment including being denied medical care for serious health concerns, including a breast tumour, and prohibited from having visitors.

Your Excellency, we are appalled that journalists are treated in this way in your country. That they should be punished for simply doing their job goes against every international covenant guaranteeing freedom of expression. We urge you to promote a better environment for the freedom of the press in Ethiopia and to begin this process by securing the release of Reeyot Alemu and all journalists currently in jail.

Sincerely,

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The 30 Days for Freedom campaign

Organised by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) and the World Editors Forum, the '30 Days for Freedom' campaign aims to highlight the plight of imprisoned journalists worldwide in the 30 days leading up to 3 May, World Press Freedom Day.

www.wan-ifra.org / www.worldpressfreedomday.org

