

URGENT ACTION

JOURNALIST ARRESTED UNDER STATE OF EMERGENCY

On 13 November 2023, Belay Manaye, co-founder and presenter of Ethio News, a YouTube based news channel, was arrested in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital, by a group of uniformed police officers and other security personnel dressed in civilian clothing. To date, he has not been questioned or informed of the reason for his arrest and detention, although it is believed to be in connection to his reporting on the conflict in Amhara. Under the state of emergency, the Ethiopian government has arbitrarily arrested seven other journalists in response to the conflict in the Amhara region and released few. The Ethiopian authorities must immediately and unconditionally release Belay Manaye and the two other journalists who have been detained in connection to their work under the state of emergency.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

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Dear Prime Minister,

I am concerned by the ongoing arbitrary detention of journalists in Ethiopia since the state of emergency declaration. Amongst them is **Belay Manaye**, co-founder and presenter of Ethio News, a YouTube based news channel, who was arrested on 13 November 2023 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital, by a group of uniformed police officers and other security personnel dressed in civilian clothing. He has since been arbitrarily detained and has not received any information regarding the grounds for his detention. Nor has he been granted access to a lawyer or afforded the opportunity to appear in court for formal proceedings. While no official explanation has been given or charges pressed, it is believed that Belay Manaye has been targeted by the authorities in connection to his work as a journalist who has covered the conflict in the Amhara region.

Furthermore, Belay Manaye's family have also said it has now been three months since they last visited him as the Awash Arba military camp where he was transferred to on 6 December 2023, 240 km away from his home. They are only able to contact him via phone, sometimes weeks apart and with the prison authorities present on the call. His family has also expressed concern for his health, following injuries he sustained when strong winds demolished the detention cells in the military camp where he is held. To date, he has still not received any medical attention for these injuries.

Unfortunately, this is not a standalone case. The Ethiopian authorities have used the state of emergency – in place since August 2023- to silence the press and peaceful dissent. The widespread detention of journalists constitutes a clear infringement upon their entitlement to freedom of expression and press freedom, as safeguarded by both regional and international human rights conventions, of which Ethiopia is a signatory. It is imperative for the Ethiopian authorities to abide by both national and international human rights obligations, respecting the right to freedom of expression, including media freedom.

I call on you to immediately and unconditionally release Belay Manaye and the other arbitrarily detained journalists unless they are formally charged with an internationally recognisable offence. In the meantime, Belay Manaye must be detained in conditions that adhere to international standards, not subjected to torture or ill-treatment, and have immediate and regular access to his family, lawyers and all necessary health care.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Belay Manaye is the co-founder of Ethio News, a YouTube based news channel, serving as both its chief editor and presenter. He was previously arrested in 2020 on allegations of inciting violence. He was released 46 days later without being formally charged.

On 2 February 2024, Ethiopia's House of People's Representatives endorsed an extension of the state of emergency, which came into force in 4 August 2023 amid escalating violence in Amhara region between government forces and Fano militia. Since then, the nationwide state of emergency has given authorities sweeping powers to arrest suspects without a court warrant, impose curfews, restrict the right to freedom of movement, and ban public assemblies or associations. In Ethiopia, consecutive authorities used the state of emergency law to silence peaceful dissent by arbitrarily detaining prominent politicians critical of the government and journalists. The current administration also frequently resorted to this old tactic as at least five high profile politicians and three journalists have been arrested and remain detained without charge under the state of emergency, according to their family members.

Awash Arba military camp where Belay Manaye is currently being held has been used by previous and current Ethiopian governments to detain journalists, opposition politicians, and others en masse. The camp is infamous for its detention conditions, including lack of food, clean water, poor sanitation, and reports of torture.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English, French, Amharic
You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 9 May 2024

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Belay Manaye (he/him)