

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/eritrea-eritrea-last-in-the-world-press-11-06-2015,48001.html>

Africa - Eritrea

Damning UN report

Eritrea - last in the World Press Freedom Index for the past eight years

11 June 2015

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) hails this week's [report by the UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea](#).

Released on 8 June, the report says some of the human rights violations by President Issayas Afeworki's government, which include the arbitrary detention of journalists, may constitute crimes against humanity.

Although the commission was not allowed to visit Eritrea, it has produced a very clear picture of the regime's systematic human rights violations by means of interviews with more than 500 Eritreans in exile and 160 written contributions, including RSF's.

Those systematically targeted by the regime include journalists who have been the victims of arbitrary arrest and detention as well as enforced disappearance.

"We welcome the publication of this report, which shines a light on the systematic and widespread nature of Eritrea's human rights violations, and we are happy to have contributed to the commission's investigations," Reporters Without Borders said. *"The international community will no longer be able to ignore the situation in Eritrea. It is crucial that the mandate of the special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea is renewed so that she can continue investigating a country that is an information black hole."*

Eritrea has had no independent media since the closures and arrests carried out in 2001 on the orders of President Afeworki, who is on RSF's list of ["Predators of Press Freedom."](#) *"Freedom of the press is another casualty of the Government's effort to control society,"* the UN commission's report says.

The only media reports published in Eritrea since 2001 are those that have been approved by the government, whose censors systematically vet every article before publication.

The fate reserved for journalists in Eritrea is even more alarming. At least eleven have been the victims of enforced disappearance since 2001. According to the information obtained by Reporters Without Borders, only four of the eleven are thought to be still alive although there has been no confirmation since 2010.

Other journalists are imprisoned arbitrarily and subjected to solitary confinement and other inhuman conditions for years on end, without any prospect of being tried or released, and without even knowing what they are charged with.

According to RSF's tally, at least 16 journalists are currently jailed, making Eritrea the biggest prison for media personnel in Africa. One of the most famous detainees is **Dawit Isaak**, a journalist with Swedish and Eritrean dual nationality, whose case has been [referred by RSF to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in April 2015](#). RSF has also submitted a [written statement on Dawit's case to the Human Rights Council](#) in view of its June session.

Like thousands of other Eritreans, dozens of journalists have had no choice but to try to flee abroad to escape the indiscriminate repression. RSF assists as many of these journalists as possible.

RSF's efforts on behalf of freedom of information in Eritrea include supporting *Radio Erena*, a Paris-

based [independent Eritrean radio station](#) that broadcasts to population in Eritrea and to the Eritrean diaspora.

In its conclusions, the UN commission's report calls on the government to immediately and unconditionally release all arbitrarily detained persons, including journalists, and to set up an effective mechanism to establish the whereabouts of those who have disappeared and provide this information to their families.

The report also calls for immediate measures to allow the operation of independent media, including by bringing relevant legislation into conformity with international standards, and to protect journalists from arbitrary interference and arrest.

Reporters Without Borders will support these recommendations during the next session of the UN Human Rights Council, starting on 15 June, when Eritrea will be one of the countries discussed.

Eritrea has been ranked last in the [Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#) for the past eight years.

For more information about Eritrea, click [here](#).

Photo credit : Sheila B. Keetharuth, ONU

You can download those documents on our website :

- Written Statement of RSF to the Human Rights Council, June 2015, (Word - 49.3 kb)
-