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Africa - Ethiopia

Jail terms

Long jail sentences for three magazine owners

8 October 2014

They fled the country before the trial and were convicted in absentia

Ethiopia's federal supreme court yesterday sentenced three magazine owners in absentia to more than three years in prison on charges of "inciting violent revolts, printing and distributing unfounded rumours and conspiring to unlawfully abolish the constitutional system of the country."

The three, who fled the country when the prosecution was mooted, are *Addis Guday* publisher **Endalkachew Tesfaye**, *Lomi* publisher **Gizaw Taye** and *Fact* publisher **Fatuma Nuriya**. Their jail terms range from three years and three months to three years and eleven months.

[Ethiopia's justice ministry announced](#) in August that it was bringing criminal charges against these three magazines and three other weeklies – *Enqu*, *Jano* and *Afro-Times*.

"The sentences imposed on these three magazine owners are shocking," said Cléa Kahn-Sriber, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Africa desk. "The clearly outrageous grounds for their conviction are indicative of how a very authoritarian regime is manipulating the justice system. This type of persecution amounts to banning independent media in Ethiopia altogether."

The authorities have been stepping up their persecution of news and information providers for the past several months. [Six bloggers and three journalists](#) (including an *Addis Guday* reporter) have been held since April. After repeated postponements, their trial is now scheduled for 15 October.

In June, [18 journalists were fired](#) from *Oromia Radio and Television Organization (ORTO)*, the main state-owned broadcaster in Oromia, Ethiopia's largest region, for supposedly having "narrow political views." The dismissal order came from the government.

Ethiopia is ranked 143rd out of 180 countries in the [2014 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).

(photo : Ethiopia's Justice minister, Getachew Ambaye)
