

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/ethiopia-reporters-without-borders-hails-10-09-2012,43357.html>

Africa - Ethiopia

Free at last !

Reporters Without Borders hails Swedish journalists' release

10 September 2012

The Ethiopian government has released reporter **Martin Schibbye** and photographer **Johan Persson**, who spent 14 months in prison on convictions for their professional activities.

After granting the journalists a pardon on the Ethiopian new year (11 September), the government immediately freed them. The two had been convicted of "illegal entry into the country" and alleged "support for terrorism".

"Let us not forget that the journalists were imprisoned for 14 months without genuine cause," Christophe Deloire, director general of Reporters Without Borders, said in a statement. "They simply doing their duty of reporting the news."

The press freedom organization had for weeks been closely following direct negotiations between the Swedish government and Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. His sudden death on 21 August had aroused grave concern for Swedish officials and the journalists' families that the talks would slow down.

On assignment for the *Kontinent* news service, Schibbye and Persson had been arrested on 1 July 2011 along with members of the Ogaden National Liberation Front. The journalists had illegally entered the Ogaden region of southeast Ethiopia to report on the human rights situation there. Before they were arrested, they had been wounded during a battle between the rebel group and Ethiopian forces, in which 15 liberation front members were killed.

Deloire noted that journalists' safety remains a grave concern, with three Ethiopian and two Eritrean journalists still in custody. "While we express our relief for our Swedish colleagues, we maintain our demand to free all imprisoned journalists in Ethiopia," he said.

Photo : The two swedish journalists, from Kontinent news service, Martin Schibbye and Johan Persson

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