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<http://www.rsf.org/ethiopia-nine-journalists-and-bloggers-21-08-2014,46830.html>

Africa - Ethiopia

Denied bail

Nine journalists and bloggers still held arbitrarily

21 August 2014

Three journalists and six bloggers who have been [held for the past five months](#) were denied bail by a federal court in Addis Ababa yesterday after the prosecution argued that article 3 of the 2009 anti-terrorism law, under which they are detained, precludes release on bail.

The defence said article 3's bail prohibition does not apply because none of them has been individually charged with a specific crime under the anti-terrorism law. The defence also argued that article 3 violates the constitutional guarantee of the right to release on bail.

The three journalists are **Tesfalem Waldyes**, **Edom Kasaye** and **Asmamaw Hailegiorgis**, and the six bloggers – all members of the *Zone 9* collective – are **Atnaf Berhane**, **Mahlet Fantahun**, **Befekadu Hailu**, **Abel Wabella**, **Natnail Feleke** and **Zelalem Kibret**. One of the collective's co-founders, **Soliyana Shimelis**, is being prosecuted in absentia.

"The Ethiopian government is clearly trying to gag the media," said Reporters Without Borders secretary-general Christophe Deloire. *"These three journalists and nine bloggers have been held for nearly five months without being given the least guarantee of due process. The prosecution still has not said what precisely they are supposed to have done to justify the charges. We call for their immediate release because they have no place being in prison."*

The prosecution accused them on 17 July of "organizing themselves into covert sub-groups to overthrow the government by contacting and receiving finance and training from two designated terrorist groups" – the US-based opposition group Ginbot 7 and the separatist Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). They are facing up to 15 years in prison under the anti-terrorism law.

Restrictions on freedom of information have grown in recent months in Ethiopia, where at least six journalists are currently detained in connection with their work. A state broadcaster [fired 20 employees because of their political views](#) on 25 June, and the justice ministry announced on 5 August that it intended to [bring criminal charges](#) against six news publications for "encouraging terrorism and endangering national security."

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

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