

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/ethiopie-editor-illegally-arrested-and-11-10-2013,45323.html>

Africa - Ethiopia

Illegal extradition

Editor illegally arrested and removed from Addis

11 October 2013

Reporters Without Borders is alarmed by newspaper editor **Melaku Desmisse**'s illegal arrest in Addis Ababa by police from the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State (SNNPR) and his subsequent illegal transfer to Awasa, the capital city of the SNNPR.

The editor of [the Amharic-language version](#) of the independent big-circulation weekly [The Reporter](#), Desmisse was arrested for unclear reasons in his office on 9 October, taken to a police station in the Addis Ababa suburb of Bole, and from there was taken more than 250 km south of Addis Ababa to Awasa.

"The Ethiopian government reminds the media of the law so often that it is incomprehensible that it is allowing the police and judicial authorities to flout the law in such a blatant fashion," Reporters Without Borders said. "The SNNPR police have no jurisdiction in Addis Ababa and it is completely illegal for them to seize a journalist working there.

"If Desmisse is accused of breaking any law, he should be brought before a federal court in Addis Ababa, which alone has the authority to try him. In the meantime, we call for the immediate release of this journalist, especially as the reason for his arrest remains puzzling."

Desmisse's arrest may be linked to the publication of an article on 4 September wrongly reporting the dismissal of three SNNPR's vice-presidents. The newspaper retracted the story and officially apologised on 8 September. No one has been able to contact Desmisse since his arrest and he is reportedly being interrogated by the SNNPR police.

Owned by Media Communication Centre, the English and Amharic-language versions of *The Reporter* together constitute Ethiopia's leading independent newspaper, one that is often the target of intimidation.

The newspaper's Amharic-language website, which gets up to 30,000 visitors a day, [was blocked in April 2012](#).

The Reporter editor in chief **Amare Aregawi** was illegally arrested and transferred outside Addis Ababa in August 2008. A few months after his release on bail, [he sustained a serious head injury when attacked by unidentified individuals](#).

Ranked 137th out of 179 countries in [the Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#), Ethiopia remains a very dangerous country for journalists.

Photo : AFP

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