

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/erythree-radio-arena-independent-voice-for-21-05-2015,47916.html>

Africa - Eritrea

Exile journalism

## Radio Erena – independent voice for Eritrea

21 May 2015

**Reporters Without Borders is today launching a campaign to promote *Radio Erena*, Eritrea's only independent and apolitical radio station. The campaign's launch comes on the eve of the 24th anniversary of Eritrea's independence from Ethiopia on 24 May.**

With the slogan "*Radio Erena, an independent voice for Eritrea*," the campaign is designed to increase awareness of this Paris-based radio station, which can be heard via satellite, on the Internet, and by Call to Listen mobile service.

*Radio Erena* speaks with an independent and critical voice, one that often even disagrees with other Eritrean exile media, most of which are affiliated to political groups.



### Campaign details

The campaign has two elements. A message will be broadcast in Tigrinya and Arabic on *Radio Erena* itself, reminding listeners of its independence. At the same time, a campaign visual will be displayed on the independent Eritrean news website *Shekortet* and on international websites such as the site of the German daily *Bild*, which was one of the first news organizations to give the campaign its support.

*"As Eritrea prepares to celebrate the 24th anniversary of its independence, we thought it was important to spotlight Radio Erena, the only independent and apolitical Eritrean voice making itself heard outside Eritrea,"* Reporters Without Borders secretary-general Christophe Deloire said.

*"President Issayas Afeworki has stolen the independence that the Eritrean people fought so long and hard to obtain. By supporting Radio Erena, we are trying to breathe life into that democratic spirit by means of freely reported news and information."*

### Radio Erena's staff

Radio Erena's journalists – **Biniam Simon**, **Amanuel Ghirmay** and **Fathi Osmane** – are all leading Eritrean dissidents.

Simon was an anchor on *Eri TV*, the national television station, for 14 years. With support from Reporters Without Borders, he found refuge in France, far from his country's dictatorship, in 2007. He then came up with the idea of a Paris-based, Tigrinya-language radio station that would provide

news and information to the Eritrean people, who are completely cut off from the rest of the world. Reporters Without Borders helped him to raise the necessary funding and find premises.

Ghirmay joined him at *Radio Erena* in 2010. He had been assigned to work at *Eri TV* after completing his journalism studies, but he ended up objecting to the propaganda role that the regime imposes on its media and he fled to Ethiopia, where he spent many months in a refugee camp before finally getting to France.

Osmane is the latest addition. He worked for several years in Asmara for *Al Haditha*, the information ministry's only Arabic-language newspaper, and then as a diplomat for the foreign ministry, which sent him to Pakistan and then to Saudi Arabia. After becoming more and more disenchanted with the official line, he finally fled and joined Radio Erena in early 2014, presenting the Arabic-language programmes that are broadcast twice a week.

### **Media freedom in Eritrea**

Africa's biggest prison for journalists, [Eritrea has been ranked last in the Reporters Without Borders press freedom index for the past eight years.](#)

The state-owned newspapers, radio stations and TV stations are the only sources of news throughout the country and no journalists, not even those working for state media, are safe from the dictatorial regime.

An education ministry radio station, *Radio Bana*, was forcibly closed in 2009 and all of its employees were arrested. Thirteen of them spent nearly five years in prison without ever being told of any charge. Such is the fate for anyone trying to do real journalism.

There is a greater need than ever for freely reported, objective and independent news and information to be broadcast to the Eritrean population in Eritrea and to the thousands who risk unimaginable dangers to flee this vast open prison every month.

This situation has endured since September 2001, when [President Afeworki](#) rounded up opponents and journalists working for privately-owned media. Of the 11 journalists arrested at that time, at least seven have died in the detention. The fate of the other four is not known.

In 2010, a WikiLeaks cable drew attention to the appalling conditions in which journalists and government opponents are detained, and the fact that prisoners are often held in underground cells or [shipping containers in the middle of the desert.](#)

[More information about Eritrea](#)

Radio Erena key facts: Frequency: 11678 Mhz with vertical polarization: SR 27500, FEC ¾ Website: <http://erena.org/>

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