

30 Days for Freedom

4 April - 3 May 2014

#FreethePress

WAN-IFRA www.worldpressfreedomday.org

His Excellency President Isaias Afewerki
President of Eritrea
Asmara, Eritrea

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2 May 2014

Your Excellency,

We are writing as part of the global online campaign '30 Days for Freedom' to call for the release of Dawit Isaak, one of at least 10 journalists and editors jailed as part of your government's September 2001 crackdown on the independent press, and to demand the liberation of all journalists currently imprisoned in Eritrea simply for doing their jobs.

During September 2001, ahead of elections that never took place, Eritrean authorities rounded up and jailed at least ten journalists, allowing the country's burgeoning independent press to vanish in only a matter of days. One of those imprisoned was Dawit Isaak.

Mr. Isaak, who returned to Eritrea from exile in Sweden to help establish the country's independent press, has not been seen alive for four years. Mr. Isaak returned home to co-found *Setit*, the country's first independent newspaper. The paper rose to national prominence for its editorial line that exposed government corruption, but in September 2001, without any formal charges against him and having never been presented before a judge, Dawit Isaak disappeared into the Eritrean prison system.

In 2011, Mr. Isaak was awarded the 50th anniversary Golden Pen of Freedom, the annual press freedom prize of the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA).

Your Excellency, we are appalled that so many of your country's brightest individuals, whose passion to see a successful, democratic and open Eritrea has been twisted by your administration to mean treason and terrorism, have 'disappeared' into the country's notorious prison system. We urge you, in the name of human decency, to provide reliable information on the health and whereabouts of Dawit Isaak and those still imprisoned, so that their long-suffering families may at last receive accurate information.

Your Excellency, your reluctance to embrace a free press is to the disadvantage of all Eritreans. We urge you to reconsider your position and to instead embrace unfettered freedom of expression, and - as a first step - to release Dawit Isaak and all journalists jailed in Eritrea.

Sincerely,

#FreethePress
The 30 Days for Freedom campaign

Organised by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) and the World Editors Forum, the '30 Days for Freedom' campaign aims to highlight the plight of imprisoned journalists worldwide in the 30 days leading up to 3 May, World Press Freedom Day.

www.wan-ifra.org / www.worldpressfreedomday.org

