



State of Media and Safety of Journalists in Ethiopia

Analysis Report September – November 2025



Prepared by: Editors' Guild of Ethiopia (EGE) in collaboration
with Consortium for Safety of Journalists (CSOJ) and support
from International Media Support (IMS)



I. About the Report

This report, prepared by Editors' Guild of Ethiopia (EGE) in collaboration with the Consortium for the Safety of Journalists in Ethiopia (CSoJ) and with support from International Media Support (IMS), documents threats to journalists in Ethiopia from September to November 2025. Drawing on verified data from EGE's monitoring portal, sojethiopia.org, and credible sources including CPJ, IPI, IFEX, HRW, RSF, and local media, it analyzes incidents of physical attacks, arrests, detention, and intimidation. The report also examines the regulatory environment to provide a comprehensive overview of the challenges to press freedom during this period.



II. Disclaimer

This report provides an overview of reported incidents affecting the safety of journalists in Ethiopia between September and November 2025. It is prepared by Editors' Guild of Ethiopia (EGE) in collaboration with the Consortium for Safety of Journalists (CSOJ) and with support from International Media Support (IMS).

While every effort has been made to verify the information using credible local and international sources including sojethiopia.org, Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), International Press Institute (IPI), IFEX, Human Rights Watch (HRW), and Reporters Without Borders (RSF), the report may not capture all incidents or reflect the full complexity of the situation. The analysis and findings represent the authors' perspective at the time of publication and are intended for informational and advocacy purposes, not as legal or official determinations.

III. Background

Editors' Guild of Ethiopia (EGE) is a professional association founded on October 29, 2019, and officially registered by the FDRE Agency for Civil Society Organizations. EGE was established to address a critical gap in Ethiopia's media landscape: the lack of a dedicated body representing news editors. As essential gatekeepers, editors face unique professional risks, including threats and interference. EGE provides a platform to address these vulnerabilities and strengthen editorial leadership as a foundation for media freedom.

EGE has grown to 108 members from print, broadcast, and digital outlets across private, government, and community-based media. This inclusive membership fosters dialogue and solidarity across geographic and institutional divides, giving the Guild legitimacy to advocate for editors nationwide.

The Guild actively participates in regional and international networks. It is a member of the International Home of Journalists (IHJ) and a founding member of the Eastern Africa Editors Society (EAES), a coalition with editors from Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania focused on editorial independence.

A core part of EGE's work is evidence-based advocacy. Through its monitoring portal, sojethiopia.org, it documents incidents affecting journalists' safety, such as harassment, arrests, and digital attacks, creating a verified data foundation for national and international advocacy.

Beyond monitoring, EGE promotes practical solutions. It facilitates dialogue between journalists, policymakers, and security actors; advocates for legal reforms; and provides training on safety and professional resilience. These efforts aim to build a more enabling environment for journalism and reinforce media's role in democracy.

IV. Executive Summary

From September to November 2025, Ethiopia's media landscape remained difficult and hazardous for journalists. This quarter saw a continuation of arrests and detentions at levels similar to the previous reporting period (June - August 2025). Threats and restrictions linked to coverage of sensitive topics were frequent.

A noticeable increase was observed in actions against media outlets and individual journalists related to digital content, licensing issues, and reporting from regions with ongoing tensions, particularly Tigray.

Authorities continued to employ laws concerning disinformation, defamation, and national security to question or detain journalists. The overall environment for the press stayed tense in many parts of the country. Journalists in the capital and regional states reported harassment, brief detentions, and direct threats while performing their duties. These incidents affected local reporters as well as those working for private, state-affiliated, and international outlets. Safety concerns for media professionals persist across different regions and media types.

1. Physical Safety Risks: Arrests and Detentions (September – November)

Arrests of journalists continued this quarter. In many cases, journalists were held for short periods without formal charges or prompt court hearings, limiting their access to legal assistance. Most incidents occurred in major cities and tense regional areas.

- Addis Ababa (September 3, 2025): Police detained Eshete Assefa, Editor-in-Chief of Sheger FM 102.1, along with two colleagues - Editor Tigist Zerihun and Reporter Mintamir Tsegaw. They were questioned after the station's coverage of a planned protest by the Ethiopian Health Professionals Association was challenged by the Ethiopian Media Authority (EMA) for allegedly lacking balance and government voices. The EMA, which holds the power to sanction outlets and revoke licenses, ordered the report removed, accusing it of "bias and inciting violence." While Eshete Assefa was released the same evening, Tigist Zerihun and Mintamir Tsegaw remained in police custody for over 20 days before being released on 50,000 Birr bail each on September 24, 2025.
- Tigray (October 21, 2025): Tensions rose with reports of journalists being targeted. Merhawi Birhane and Meaza Sirak of Tigray Broadcasting Services (TBS), and Eyerusalem Birhanu of Tigray Public Media (TPM), were detained by a local militia group for one day while covering a protest in Adi Gudem.

- Addis Ababa (October 22, 2025): Yitbarek Getachew, a reporter for the weekly independent business newspaper Addis Fortune, was arrested at the Woreda 23 Police Station (Chid Tera) while covering a controversy surrounding the relocation of market shops. He was released on October 24, 2025.

2. License Suspension and Closure

- Deutsche Welle Correspondents (October 23, 2025, Addis Ababa): On October 23, EMA issued a statement temporarily suspending the licenses of nine local correspondents for the German broadcaster Deutsche Welle (DW). As of the end of this reporting period (November 30, 2025), the suspension had not been lifted.
- Asham TV (On October 22, 2025): The privately-owned Asham TV ceased broadcasting. The independent station, which had been reportedly struggling with financial difficulties, ultimately closed. This move places Asham TV among dozens of Ethiopian media outlets that have shut down in the past five years due to economic unviability.

Table 1: Summary of Reported Arrests, Detentions, and License Suspensions (September - November 2025)

Date	Name of Journalist(s)	Role/ Outlet	Case/Incident Details
September 3, 2025	Eshete Assefa	Editor-in-Chief, Sheger 102.1 FM	Detained and released the same day
	Tigist Zerihun	Editor, Sheger 102.1 FM	Detained in Addis Ababa; held for over 20 days before release on bail
	Mintamir Tsegaw	Reporter, Sheger 102.1 FM	Detained in Addis Ababa; held for over 20 days before release on bail
October 21, 2025	Merhawi Birhane	Tigray Broadcasting Services (TBS)	Detained by a local militia group for one day while covering a protest
	Meaza, Sirak	Tigray Broadcasting Services (TBS)	Detained by a local militia group for one day while covering a protest
	Eyerusalem Birhanu	Tigray Public Media (TPM)	Detained by a local militia group for one day while covering a protest
October 22, 2025	Yitbarek Getachew	Reporter at Addis Fortune	Arrested while on duty in Addis Ababa; released on October 24, 2025
October 22, 2025	Asham TV	Closure	Asham TV ceased broadcasting due to financial difficulties
October 23, 2025	Nine DW local correspondents	Deutsche Welle	Licenses suspended by EMA; suspension remained in effect through November 2025

Table shows seven journalists subjected to arrest/detention, nine journalists affected by license suspension, and closure of one broadcaster

V. Key Challenges Identified

The reporting period highlighted multiple, overlapping layers of risk (legal, physical, and administrative) that continue to threaten press freedom and the independent operation of journalists in Ethiopia.

- **Broad and Vague Legal Provisions:** Journalists continued to be arrested under allegations such as “disseminating false information,” “inciting violence,” or “terrorism,” using laws that are broadly defined and open to subjective interpretation.
- **Arbitrary Detentions and Non-Compliance with Legal Norms:** Cases of short-term detention without clear charges undermine legal protections and create unpredictability for media work.
- **Surveillance and Harassment:** Increased reports of physical and digital surveillance threaten journalists’ safety and free movement. This practice, particularly following administrative actions like license suspensions, fosters an environment of intimidation and self-censorship.
- **Physical Attacks and Threats:** Journalists, especially those operating in volatile regions like Tigray, faced threats and detentions. The involvement of both formal security forces and informal militia groups creates an atmosphere of fear with limited accountability.
- **Lack of Transparency and Accountability:** Details surrounding many incidents remain unclear, with authorities often slow to provide information. The absence of transparent and timely investigations erodes trust in state institutions and leaves victims without recourse.

VI. Conclusion

Between September and November 2025, the situation for journalists in Ethiopia remained challenging. Journalists continued to face legal pressure, physical risks, and administrative harassment. The combined use of license suspensions, arbitrary detentions, and intimidation creates a climate of uncertainty that undermines journalists' ability to perform their duties safely and freely.

These conditions not only impact individual journalists but also constrict the overall flow of information to the public. Moving forward, strengthening institutional accountability, ensuring transparent dialogue between authorities and media organizations, and safeguarding digital rights are crucial steps toward reducing these risks. Fostering a more supportive environment is essential for enabling open, accurate, and responsible reporting, which benefits both the media and Ethiopian society at large.

VII. References

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