State of Media and Safety of Journalists in Ethiopia

Analysis Report June-August 2025

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

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About the Report

This report, developed by Editors' Guild of Ethiopia (EGE) in collaboration with the Consortium for Safety of Journalists (CSOJ) and with support from International Media Support (IMS), provides a comprehensive overview of risks faced by journalists in Ethiopia between June and August 2025. Using verified information from sojethiopia.org, local media outlets, and international monitoring organizations (including CPJ, IPI, IFEX, HRW, and RSF) the report documents incidents such as physical assaults, arrests, detentions, and kidnappings. It places these events within the wider Ethiopian media landscape, examining the persistent threats to press freedom, journalists' safety, and operational independence, while underscoring the pressing need for legal, institutional, and practical measures to protect media professionals.

Disclaimer

This report has been prepared by Editors' Guild of Ethiopia (EGE) in collaboration with the Consortium for Safety of Journalists (CSOJ) and support from International Media Support (IMS) to provide an overview of reported incidents affecting the safety of journalists in Ethiopia between March and May 2025. While every effort has been made to verify the information using credible local and international sources, including sojethiopia.org, CPJ, IPI, IFEX, HRW, and RSF, the report may not capture all incidents or reflect the full complexity of the situation. The analysis and findings represent the perspective of the authors at the time of publication and are intended for informational and advocacy purposes, not as legal or official determinations.

Background

Editors' Guild of Ethiopia (EGE) is a professional, membership-based association established on October 29, 2019, and officially registered by the FDRE Agency for Civil Society Organizations under registrar number 4527. Its formation was driven by a comprehensive assessment of Ethiopia's media landscape, which revealed significant structural and institutional gaps; particularly the absence of a dedicated organization representing news editors. As media gatekeepers, editors play a decisive role in shaping content, ensuring ethical standards, and safeguarding professional integrity.

However, they often operate under precarious conditions, facing heightened risks of threats, intimidation, and interference. The Guild was thus conceived as a platform to address these vulnerabilities while strengthening editorial leadership as a cornerstone of media freedom.

Since its inception, EGE has grown steadily, building a diverse membership base that now includes 108 news editors. These members represent a broad spectrum of Ethiopia's media environment, spanning print, broadcast, and digital outlets. Importantly, the Guild brings together editors from across ownership structures (private, government, and community-based) providing a rare platform for dialogue and solidarity that transcends political, commercial, and institutional divides. This inclusive membership ensures that the Guild reflects Ethiopia's complex media ecosystem, giving it both legitimacy and authority to articulate the collective interests of editors nationwide.

EGE's influence extends beyond Ethiopia's borders through its active participation in regional and international networks. It is a recognized member of the International Home of Journalists (IHJ) and a founding member of the Eastern Africa Editors Society (EAES). The latter is a regional coalition uniting editors' associations from Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, with the shared goal of strengthening editorial independence and collaboration across East Africa. These affiliations position EGE as a key actor in regional media solidarity efforts and provide it with access to comparative insights, peer learning, and broader advocacy platforms.

A distinctive feature of the Guild's work is its focus on evidence-based advocacy. Through its monitoring and reporting functions, particularly via sojethiopia.org, a trilingual online portal, EGE documents and analyzes incidents affecting the safety of journalists. This platform serves as a repository of verified data on violations such as harassment, arrests, assaults, and censorship, providing the foundation for well-informed advocacy at both national and international levels. By producing timely and credible information, EGE helps ensure that the challenges facing Ethiopian journalists are not only recorded but also addressed through policy dialogue and practical interventions.

In addition to documenting threats, EGE actively promotes solutions to improve the safety and operational environment of media professionals. It facilitates dialogue between journalists, policymakers, and security actors; advocates for legal and institutional reforms that strengthen press freedom; and collaborates with local and international partners to provide training on safety, digital security, and professional resilience. These interventions are designed to create a more enabling environment for journalism, reduce vulnerabilities for editors and reporters alike, and reinforce media's role as a pillar of democratic society.

Executive Summary

Ethiopia's media landscape between June and August 2025 continued to be highly challenging for journalists. This report examines the safety of journalists in Ethiopia with a focus on incidents from June to August 2025. Compared to the previous reporting period, June to August 2025, the second quarter of 2025 saw a slight increase in reported arrests, detentions, and physical threats against journalists. The number of incidents signals the security situation for media personnel, with continued use of broad charges such as disinformation, defamation, incitement, and terrorism allegations to suppress dissenting voices. The environment remains tense with frequent newsroom raids, surveillance, harassment, and a few cases of forced disappearances, particularly in conflict-affected regions.

Physical Safety Risks: Detentions and Arrests of Journalists (June–August 2025)

Between June and August 2025, Ethiopian journalists continued to face serious safety threats, including arrests, arbitrary detentions, physical attacks, and cases of kidnapping, often directly linked to their professional activities. This quarter of 2025 reflected a continued deterioration in the security environment for media personnel, with incidents reported across major urban centers and conflict-affected regional areas.

Detentions and Arrests

The period saw a sustained increase in reports of journalist arrests. In numerous cases, media professionals were held for extended periods without formal charges or timely access to legal representation, highlighting systemic judicial delays and limited respect for due process. In Addis Ababa, Tesfalem Waldyes, editor-in-chief of Ethiopia Insider, was jailed for five days starting from June 08, 2025, despite bail having been granted, underscoring repeated disregard for court rulings.

In August 2025, two journalists were abducted in Ethiopia under alarming circumstances. Abdulsemed Mohammed, host of a business program on Ahadu Radio and operator of the Salon Tube YouTube channel, was taken by unidentified men in Addis Ababa on August 11 and briefly seen with police before being released on August 23. Similarly, Yonas Amare, editor at The Ethiopian Reporter newspaper, was forcibly abducted from his Sheger City home on August 13 and released on August 23, with police denying knowledge of his detention.

Other journalists, including Hayat Kemal of Nejashi TV, were also arrested during this period, reflecting a broader clampdown on press freedom. Many of these detentions involved surveillance-triggered interventions, signaling the increasing use of state monitoring to intimidate journalists and suppress critical reporting.

Imprisonment and Kidnapping

Beyond formal arrests, journalists faced arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances, raising significant human rights and press freedom concerns.

- Somali Regional TV Journalist Detention (August 5, 2025, Jigjiga, Somali Region): Khadar Mohamed Ismael of Somali Regional Television (SRTV) was detained following a critical post about regional authorities on SRTV's official Facebook page. He appeared in court on August 9 without legal representation, and by the end of August, no formal charges had been filed against him, highlighting the lack of legal transparency and accountability.

- Abduction of Journalist Abdulsemed Mohammed (August 11, 2025, Addis Ababa): Abdulsemed Mohammed, host of a business program on Ahadu Radio 94.3 FM and operator of the Salon Tube YouTube channel, was abducted by unidentified men in Addis Ababa's Haile Garment area. He was briefly seen on August 14 accompanying police during a search of his office in Haya Hulet Mazoria, but his whereabouts remained uncertain for several days, raising concerns of enforced disappearance. He was reportedly released on August 23, 2025.

- Abduction of Reporter Editor Yonas Amare (August 13, 2025, Sheger City near Addis Ababa): On the night of August 13, masked men abducted Yonas Amare, editor at Reporter newspaper, from his residence in Koye Feche, Sheger City. Witnesses reported that the abductors ordered residents inside, confiscated mobile phones, and forcibly took him away. His whereabouts were unknown until August 23, when he was reportedly released and returned home. The police denied any knowledge of his detention, raising further concerns about accountability and extrajudicial practices.

These incidents underscore the precarious environment in which Ethiopian journalists operate, characterized by judicial delays, arbitrary enforcement of laws, surveillance-triggered detentions, and enforced disappearances. The threats are both physical and legal, creating a climate of fear that directly impacts journalistic independence and the ability of media professionals to report freely, particularly on politically sensitive topics. The period from June to August 2025 highlights the urgent need for comprehensive legal safeguards, institutional accountability, and practical safety measures to protect journalists and uphold press freedom across the country.

Date	Location	Journalist(s)	Media Affiliation	Incident Type	Allegation / Context
21 June 2025	Addis Ababa	Andualem Sisay & Wudneh Zenebe	New Business Ethiopia, Green Media	Surveillance-triggered detention for hours	Private conversation alleged to involve political figures
8–13 June 2025	Addis Ababa	Tesfalem Waldyes	Ethiopia Insider	Arbitrary detention	Alleged "false info"; court orders ignored, released 13 June
5 Aug 2025	Jigjiga, Somali Region	Khadar Mohamed Ismael	Somali Regional TV (SRTV)	Arbitrary detention	Critical social media post against regional authorities
11–14 Aug 2025	Addis Ababa	Abdulsemed Mohammed	Ahadu Radio & Salon Tube YouTube channel	Abduction / disappearance	Taken by unknown individuals; seen later with police
13 Aug 2025	Sheger City (Addis outskirts)	Yonas Amare	Reporter newspaper	Abduction / disappearance	Masked abduction at home; police deny knowledge of holding

The following table briefly summarizes major incidents during June - August 2025.

Table 1 shows the number of journalists detained between June and August 2025

Key Challenges

During the reporting period from June to August 2025, Ethiopian journalists faced multiple overlapping risks (legal, physical, and digital) that continue to undermine press freedom and the ability of media professionals to operate independently. Broad and vaguely defined legal provisions remain a primary challenge, with journalists frequently arrested under allegations such as "disseminating false information," "defamation," or "terrorism." These charges are often interpreted arbitrarily, limiting journalists' ability to defend themselves and raising serious due process concerns.

Arbitrary detentions and non-compliance with court orders further exacerbate risks. Journalists were held for extended periods while some despite bail being granted or court-ordered release, highlighting weaknesses in judicial enforcement and the unpredictability of legal protections. Surveillance and harassment (both physical and digital) have intensified, contributing to self-censorship and a climate of fear.

Journalists also face physical attacks, forced disappearances, and abductions, often by unidentified or masked individuals, particularly in urban centers and volatile regions. Regional disparities exacerbate these threats, with journalists in areas such as the Somali Regional State exposed to heightened risks when reporting on local authorities.

A critical concern is the lack of transparency and official communication channels to provide emergency support, updates on detained journalists, or avenues for advocacy. Families, media houses, and civil society often receive little or no information regarding journalists' whereabouts or conditions, while authorities frequently deny involvement. This absence of timely communication undermines accountability, delays protective interventions, and erodes trust in institutions tasked with safeguarding journalists.

Conclusion

The period from June to August 2025 underscores a deeply concerning environment for journalists in Ethiopia, marked by overlapping legal, physical, and digital threats. Documented incidents of detention, abduction, and intimidation reveal the multiple layers of risk that media professionals confront in their daily work. Surveillance, often used as a tool of control, infringes on privacy and fosters an atmosphere of fear, discouraging open dialogue and critical reporting, and reinforcing self-censorship.

Online harassment, including targeted campaigns and the exposure of personal information, further extends these risks into the digital realm, threatening journalists' reputations, safety, and mental well-being. Institutional gaps, including the absence of transparent communication channels for advocacy and emergency support, compound the dangers, leaving journalists and their families with limited recourse.

Overall, the June–August 2025 period and the precedent highlights that press freedom in Ethiopia remains under significant pressure, and that safeguarding journalists requires urgent legal, institutional, and practical measures to protect their safety, uphold accountability, and enable independent reporting.

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