

Ethiopia under fire over journalist's arrest, detention

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) on Friday called on authorities in Ethiopia to release a journalist being held without charge following a spate of similar arrests in recent weeks.



Addis Ababa: The Ethiopian government has been condemned for detaining a journalist. (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

An Ethiopian court on Tuesday extended by 14 days the pre-trial detention of Elias Gebru, Editor-in-Chief of the independent news magazine *Enku* who was detained for questioning in connection with a column published in his paper.

"The detention without charge of Elias Gebru is the latest move by the Ethiopian government to tighten the noose on the country's independent press," said Mohamed Keita of the CPJ.

"We call on authorities to release Elias immediately and to stop arresting journalists as a means to quell information and debate," he alleged.

According to the CPJ, Elias' column covered a controversial monument recently erected outside the capital in honour of ethnic Oromos massacred in the 19th century by Emperor Menelik's forces. It cited local journalists as saying authorities were attempting to link the publication to deadly clashes between Oromo student protesters and security forces last month.

Ethiopian authorities said eight protesters were killed in the violence, although rights groups said the figure was far higher.



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Last month six members of the blogging collective Zone Nine and three journalists were arrested by police, with the government saying they were being investigated for "serious crimes".

UN human rights chief Navi Pillay has condemned the arrests, warning the country is increasingly muzzling freedom of expression under the guise of fighting terrorism.

Source: AFP, via I-Net Bridge