

Ethiopia's Eskinder Nega refuses to sign false confession in exchange for prison release

The Committee to Protect Journalists condemns the Ethiopian government's attempts to compel Ethiopian journalist and blogger Eskinder Nega to sign a false confession before releasing him under a presidential pardon.



Ethiopian journalist, Eskinder Nega.

Eskinder, who has spent almost seven years in jail for his work, was one of 746 prisoners due to be pardoned by President Mulatu Teshome on February 8, according to media reports.

"Through this deplorable behaviour the Ethiopian government is undermining any goodwill it might have generated by releasing an innocent man from prison," said CPJ Africa program coordinator Angela Quintal. "Ethiopian authorities should immediately release Eskinder Nega without condition."

At 11am local time, a prison official asked Eskinder to sign a form which falsely stated that he was a member of Ginbot 7, an organisation that the government deems a terrorist group, Eskinder's wife, Serkalem Fasil, told CPJ.

Eskinder refused and asked to see a more senior official. That request was not granted, and the journalist was returned to his cell, his wife said.

Eskinder is serving an 18-year sentence on vague terrorism charges, according to CPJ research. The UN Working Group

on Arbitrary Detention condemned his 2012 trial and conviction and said it was connected to his "peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression". The group found his arrest without warrant and prosecution was flawed, and the trial fell short of international standards of fairness.



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