

# ETHIOPIA

	2009	2011
<b>INTERNET FREEDOM STATUS</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>Not Free</b>
<b>Obstacles to Access</b>	n/a	21
<b>Limits on Content</b>	n/a	26
<b>Violations of User Rights</b>	n/a	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>69</b>

**POPULATION:** 85 million  
**INTERNET PENETRATION:** 0.5 percent  
**WEB 2.0 APPLICATIONS BLOCKED:** Yes  
**SUBSTANTIAL POLITICAL CENSORSHIP:** Yes  
**BLOGGERS/ONLINE USERS ARRESTED:** No  
**PRESS FREEDOM STATUS:** Not Free

## INTRODUCTION

Although Ethiopia is one of Africa's most populous countries, poor infrastructure and a government monopoly on telecommunications have significantly hindered the expansion of digital media. As a result, Ethiopia has one of the lowest rates of internet and mobile-telephone penetration on the continent. Nevertheless, dissidents both inside the country and in the diaspora have increasingly used the internet as a platform for political discussion and criticism of the regime.

The government has responded by instituting one of the few nationwide filtering systems in Africa, passing laws to restrict free expression, and attempting to manipulate online media. These efforts have coincided with a broader increase in repression against independent print and broadcast media since the 2005 parliamentary elections, in which opposition parties mustered a relatively strong showing.<sup>1</sup> The crackdown gained new momentum ahead of the next elections in May 2010, though these were significantly less competitive. The ruling party and its partners obtained 544 of the 547 parliamentary seats and all but four of the 1,904 seats in regional councils, amid allegations of fraud and intimidation of opposition supporters.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Julia Crawford, "Ethiopia: Poison, Politics and the Press," Committee to Protect Journalists, April 28, 2006, <http://cpi.org/reports/2006/04/ethiopia-da-spring-06.php>.

<sup>2</sup> European Union Election Observation Mission to Ethiopia, *Ethiopia: Final Report, House of People's Representatives and State Council Elections, May 2010* (Brussels: European Union, 2010), [http://www.eucom.eu/files/pressreleases/english/final-report-eucom-ethiopia-08112010\\_en.pdf](http://www.eucom.eu/files/pressreleases/english/final-report-eucom-ethiopia-08112010_en.pdf).

Internet and mobile-phone services were introduced in Ethiopia in 1997 and 1999, respectively.<sup>3</sup> In recent years, the government has attempted to increase access through the establishment of fiber-optic cables, satellite links, and mobile broadband services. It has refused to end exclusive control over the market by the state-owned telecommunications firm, the Ethiopian Telecommunication Corporation (ETC). However, in December 2010 France Telecom took over management of ETC for a two-year period, renaming it Ethio Telecom in the process.<sup>4</sup> China has also emerged as a key investor and contractor in Ethiopia's telecommunications sector.<sup>5</sup> Given allegations that the Chinese authorities have provided the Ethiopian government with technologies that can be used for political repression, such as surveillance cameras and satellite jamming equipment,<sup>6</sup> some observers fear that the Chinese may assist the authorities in developing more robust internet and mobile-phone censorship and surveillance capacities in the coming years.

## OBSTACLES TO ACCESS

Ethiopia's telecommunications infrastructure is among the least developed in Africa and is almost entirely absent from rural areas, which are home to about 85 percent of the population. In 2009, an estimated 915,000 fixed telephone lines were in operation, serving a population of 83 million, for a penetration rate of approximately 1 percent.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, as of 2009, there were only 447,000 internet users, for a penetration rate of 0.5 percent.<sup>8</sup> However, the number of actual subscriptions is lower, with a reported 74,600 fixed-line

<sup>3</sup> The first use of internet-like electronic communication was in 1993, when the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) launched the Pan African Documentation and Information Service Network (PADISNET) project, establishing electronic communication nodes in several countries, including Ethiopia. PADISNET provided the first store-and-forward e-mail and electronic-bulletin board services in Ethiopia. It was used by a few hundred people, primarily academics and staff of international agencies or nongovernmental organizations.

<sup>4</sup> William Davison, "France Telecom Takes Over Management of Ethiopia's Monopoly," Bloomberg, December 3, 2010, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-12-03/france-telecom-starts-two-year-management-contract-at-ethiopia-utility.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Isaac Idun-Arkhurst and James Laing, *The Impact of the Chinese Presence in Africa* (London: africapractice, 2007), [http://www.davidandassociates.co.uk/davidandblog/newwork/China\\_in\\_Africa\\_5.pdf](http://www.davidandassociates.co.uk/davidandblog/newwork/China_in_Africa_5.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Hilina Alemu, "INSA Installing Street Surveillance Cameras," *Addis Fortune*, March 21, 2010, <http://www.addisfortune.com/Vol%2010%20No%20516%20Archive/INSA%20Installing%20Street%20Surveillance%20Cameras.htm>; "China Involved in ESAT Jamming," *Addis Neger*, June 22, 2010, <http://addisnegeronline.com/2010/06/china-involved-in-esat-jamming/>.

<sup>7</sup> International Telecommunications Union (ITU), "ICT Statistics 2009—Fixed Telephone Lines," [http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/icteye/Reporting/ShowReportFrame.aspx?ReportName=/WTI/MainTelephoneLinesPublic&ReportFormat=HTML4.0&RP\\_intYear=2009&RP\\_intLanguageID=1&RP\\_bitLiveData=False](http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/icteye/Reporting/ShowReportFrame.aspx?ReportName=/WTI/MainTelephoneLinesPublic&ReportFormat=HTML4.0&RP_intYear=2009&RP_intLanguageID=1&RP_bitLiveData=False).

<sup>8</sup> International Telecommunication Union (ITU), "ICT Statistics 2009—Internet," <http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/icteye/Indicators/Indicators.aspx#>, accessed February 14, 2011.

internet connections in 2009, and only 3,500 of them broadband.<sup>9</sup> Mobile-phone penetration was roughly 5 percent, or about 4.1 million subscriptions, as of 2009.<sup>10</sup>

The combined cost of purchasing a computer, initiating an internet connection, and paying usage charges places internet access beyond the reach of most Ethiopians. The cost of mobile-phone broadband service ranges from a subscription charge of US\$80 plus a monthly fee of US\$255 for a 2.4 Mbps connection, to a subscription charge of US\$10 plus a usage-based monthly fee for a 153.6 Kbps connection. For the second option, the actual speed is 70 to 80 Kbps, and an average subscriber using the connection mainly for e-mail and limited web functions would pay about US\$20 per month.<sup>11</sup> By comparison, the gross domestic product per capita was US\$318.70 in 2008.<sup>12</sup> A 2010 study by the International Telecommunication Union found that Ethiopia's broadband internet connections were among the most expensive in the world when compared with monthly income, second only to those in the Central African Republic.<sup>13</sup> Prices are set by ETC and kept artificially high; the Ethiopian government has been reluctant to liberalize the telecommunications sector, which would likely drive prices down. An adult literacy rate of 36 percent means that the majority of Ethiopians would be unable to take full advantage of online resources even if they had access to the technology.<sup>14</sup> Radio remains the principal mass medium through which most Ethiopians obtain information.

The majority of internet users rely on cybercafes to access the web, though connections there are often slow and unreliable. A 2010 study commissioned by Manchester University's School of Education found that accessing an online e-mail account and opening one message took six minutes in a typical Addis Ababa cybercafe with a broadband connection.<sup>15</sup> The number of cybercafes has grown in recent years, after a brief period in 2001–02 in which the government declared them illegal and forced some to shut down. Since July 2002, the Ethiopian Telecommunications Agency (ETA) has been authorized to issue licenses for new cybercafes.

The authorities have placed some restrictions on advanced internet applications. In particular, the use or provision of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services or internet-

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid..

<sup>10</sup> ITU, "ICT Statistics 2009—Mobile Cellular Subscriptions," <http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/icteye/Indicators/Indicators.aspx#>, accessed February 14, 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Ethio Telecom, "Detail Tariff for Leased Line Internet Through BBMN," <http://www.ethionet.et/services/leasedlineinternetbbmntariff.html>, accessed February 15, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> United Nations, "Country Profile: Ethiopia," *World Statistics Pocketbook*, <http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=Ethiopia>, accessed August 26, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Fildes, "UN Reveals Global Disparity in Broadband Access," British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), September 2, 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-11162656>.

<sup>14</sup> UNICEF, "Ethiopia: Statistics," [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/ethiopia\\_statistics.html#67](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/ethiopia_statistics.html#67), accessed August 6, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> Andinet Teshome, *Internet Access in the Capital of Africa* (School of Education, University of Manchester, 2009), EthioTube video, 8:56, posted by "Kebena," <http://www.ethiotube.net/video/9655/Internet-Access-in-the-Capital-of-Africa-Addis-Ababa>, accessed August 06, 2010.

based fax services—including at cybercafes—is prohibited,<sup>16</sup> with potential punishments including a fine and up to five years in prison.<sup>17</sup> The government instituted the ban on VoIP in 2002 after it gained popularity as a less expensive means of communicating and began to drain revenue from the ETC's traditional telephone business.<sup>18</sup> Social-networking sites such as Facebook, the video-sharing site YouTube, and the Twitter microblogging service are available, though very slow internet speeds make it impossible to access video content. International blog-hosting websites such as Blogger have been frequently blocked since the disputed parliamentary elections of 2005, during which the opposition used online communication to organize and disseminate information that was critical of the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF).<sup>19</sup> In addition, for two years following the 2005 elections, ETC blocked text-messaging via mobile phones after the ruling party accused the opposition of using the technology to organize antigovernment protests. Text-messaging services did not resume until September 2007.<sup>20</sup>

Ethiopia is connected to the international internet via satellite, a fiber-optic cable that passes through Sudan and connects to its international gateway, and another cable that connects through Djibouti to an international undersea cable.<sup>21</sup> In an effort to expand connectivity, the government has reportedly installed several thousand kilometers of fiber-optic cable throughout the country in recent years.<sup>22</sup> There are also plans in place to connect Ethiopia to a global undersea cable network through the East African Submarine Cable System (EASSy) project. The EASSy project itself was completed and launched in July 2010, but its effects on Ethiopia have yet to be seen.<sup>23</sup> The authorities have sought to increase access via satellite links for government offices and schools in rural areas. WoredaNet, for instance, connects over 500 woredas, or local districts, to regional and central government offices, providing services such as video conferencing and internet access. Similarly, SchoolNet connects over 500 high schools across the country to a gateway that provides video- and audio-streamed educational programming.<sup>24</sup> The impact of such projects has

<sup>16</sup> Ethiopian Telecommunication Agency (ETA), "Telecommunication Proclamation No. 281/2002, Article 2(11) and 2(12)," [http://www.eta.gov.et/Scan/Telecom%20Proc%20281\\_2002%20\(amendment\)%20NG.pdf](http://www.eta.gov.et/Scan/Telecom%20Proc%20281_2002%20(amendment)%20NG.pdf), accessed August 24, 2010.

<sup>17</sup> ETA, "Telecommunication Proclamation No. 49/1996, Articles 24 and 25," [http://www.eta.gov.et/Scan/Telecom%20Proc%2049\\_1996%20NG1.pdf](http://www.eta.gov.et/Scan/Telecom%20Proc%2049_1996%20NG1.pdf), accessed August 24, 2010.

<sup>18</sup> Groum Abate, "Internet Cafes Start Registering Users," *Capital*, December 25, 2006, [http://www.capitalethiopia.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=259:internet-cafes-start-registering-users-&catid=12:local-news&Itemid=4](http://www.capitalethiopia.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=259:internet-cafes-start-registering-users-&catid=12:local-news&Itemid=4).

<sup>19</sup> Bogdan Popa, "Google Blocked in Ethiopia," Softpedia, May 3, 2007, <http://news.softpedia.com/news/Google-Blocked-In-Ethiopia-53799.shtml>.

<sup>20</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Ethiopia: Repression Rising Ahead of May Elections," news release, March 24, 2010, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/03/24/ethiopia-repression-rising-ahead-may-elections>.

<sup>21</sup> Hailu Teklehaimanot, "Unraveling ZTE's Network," *Addis Fortune*, August 22, 2010, <http://www.addisfortune.com/Interview-Unraveling%20ZTEs%20Network.htm>.

<sup>22</sup> Samuel Kinde, "Internet in Ethiopia: Is Ethiopia Off-Line or Wired to the Rim?" MediaETHIOPIA, November 2007, [http://www.mediaethiopia.com/Engineering/Internet\\_in\\_Ethiopia\\_November2007.htm](http://www.mediaethiopia.com/Engineering/Internet_in_Ethiopia_November2007.htm).

<sup>23</sup> Brian Adero, "WIOCC-EASSy Cable Ready for Business," *IT News Africa*, July 23, 2010, <http://www.itnewsafrika.com/?p=8419>.

<sup>24</sup> Kinde, "Internet in Ethiopia."

been limited, however, as internet speeds across these networks remain almost prohibitively slow, and outages are common. In addition, as all of the networks are government owned and managed, the space for independent initiatives, entrepreneurial or otherwise, is extremely limited.<sup>25</sup> While a very small number of governmental and international organizations have their own VSAT satellite links to the internet with special government approval, such connections are not allowed for private organizations.<sup>26</sup>

The state-owned ETC, or Ethio Telecom, retains a monopoly on all telecommunications services, including internet access and both mobile and fixed-line telephony. Connection to the international internet is centralized via Ethio Telecom, from which cybercafes must purchase their bandwidth. The ETA is the primary regulatory body overseeing the telecommunications sector.<sup>27</sup> Although it was established as an autonomous federal agency, in practice it is tightly controlled by the government.

Liberalization of the telecommunications sector is expected to greatly increase internet and mobile-phone penetration, but the prospects for such liberalization remain uncertain. While some observers consider the December 2010 entry of France Telecom as manager of Ethio Telecom to be a potential move toward liberalization, others are skeptical of the government's commitment to allowing greater public access to information and communication technologies (ICTs). The foreign partnership may simply be an effort to improve service delivery while maintaining the state monopoly. The government has declared that it will not hasten the liberalization process or succumb to pressure from the international community.<sup>28</sup>

## LIMITS ON CONTENT

Although the Ethiopian authorities deny engaging in online censorship,<sup>29</sup> studies conducted by the OpenNet Initiative (ONI) in 2009 indicate that Ethiopia is the only country in sub-Saharan Africa to impose nationwide, politically motivated internet filtering.<sup>30</sup> The blocking of websites is somewhat sporadic, tending to tighten ahead of sensitive political events. Following a period in early 2009 during which several previously blocked websites became

<sup>25</sup> Al Shiferaw, "Connecting Telecentres: An Ethiopian Perspective," *Telecentre Magazine*, September 2008, <http://www.telecentremagazine.net/articles/article-details.asp?Title=Connecting-Telecentres:-An-Ethiopian-Perspective&articleid=163&typ=Features>.

<sup>26</sup> Agencies including UNECA, the World Bank, and the Ethiopian Civil Service College have been given special authorization for a VSAT link.

<sup>27</sup> ETA, "Telecommunication Proclamation No. 49/1996, Part Two," [http://www.eta.gov.et/Scan/Telecom%20Proc%2049\\_1996%20NG1.pdf](http://www.eta.gov.et/Scan/Telecom%20Proc%2049_1996%20NG1.pdf), accessed August 24, 2010.

<sup>28</sup> Technology Strategies International, "ICT Investment Opportunities in Ethiopia—2010."

<sup>29</sup> "Ethiopia: Authorities Urged to Unblock Websites," Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), May 25, 2006, <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=59115>.

<sup>30</sup> OpenNet Initiative, "Regional Overview: Sub-Saharan Africa," <http://opennet.net/research/regions/ssafrika>, accessed May 28, 2010.

available, filtering intensified again ahead of the May 2010 elections as part of a general crackdown on independent and opposition media.<sup>31</sup>

The government's approach to internet filtering appears to entail hindering access to a list of specific internet-protocol (IP) addresses or domain names at the level of the international gateway. Testing by ONI found that the filtering focuses primarily on independent online news media, political blogs, and Ethiopian human rights groups' websites.<sup>32</sup> International news outlets such as the U.S.-based Cable News Network (CNN) and nongovernmental organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and Reporters Without Borders—all of which have criticized the Ethiopian government's human rights record—were available as of early 2009. However, tests conducted by Freedom House found that in mid-2010 the websites of Freedom House, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International were inaccessible. In March 2010, Voice of America (VOA) reported that its website was blocked in Ethiopia.<sup>33</sup> This came shortly after Prime Minister Meles Zenawi admitted that the government was jamming VOA's Amharic radio service.<sup>34</sup> In addition, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reported in June 2010 that e-mail messages sent from Ethiopia to the U.S.-based Committee to Protect Journalists were being blocked.<sup>35</sup>

Ethiopian websites and blogs that are typically blocked but suddenly became available in early 2009 included CyberEthiopia, *Ethiopian Review*, Ethiopian Media Forum, Quatero, and Ethiomedia. Several observers suggested that the loosening came in response to the 2008 U.S. State Department human rights report on Ethiopia,<sup>36</sup> released in February 2009, which accused the government of restricting internet access by blocking politically oriented websites.<sup>37</sup> CyberEthiopia, a prodemocracy website, commented in March 2009 that the erratic nature of internet filtering may be a deliberate tactic by the authorities aimed at creating confusion and buttressing government claims that there is no systematic and pervasive filtering regime in the country. The article also raised concerns about a planned filtering system that would be capable of blocking access if blacklisted keywords are found at a given URL, but the existence of such a system has yet to be confirmed by additional

<sup>31</sup> Ben Rawlence, "100 Flowers of Repression Bloom as Ethiopia Moves to Gag Press Ahead of Elections," *East African*, April 12, 2010, available at <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/04/12/100-flowers-repression-bloom-ethiopia-moves-gag-press-ahead-elections>.

<sup>32</sup> OpenNet Initiative, "Regional Overview: Sub-Saharan Africa."

<sup>33</sup> Barry Malone, "VOA Says Ethiopia Blocks Website as US Row Escalates," Reuters, March 29, 2010, <http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFJJOE62S0KX20100329?rpc=401&feedType=RSS&feedName=topNews&rpc=401&sp=true>.

<sup>34</sup> "Ethiopia Admits Jamming VOA Radio Broadcasts in Amharic," BBC, March 19, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/8575749.stm>.

<sup>35</sup> Will Ross, "Donor Darling: What Ethiopian Poll Can Teach Africa," BBC, June 1, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/10205887.stm>.

<sup>36</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, "Ethiopia," in *2008 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, February 2009), <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/af/119001.htm>.

<sup>37</sup> Mohamed Keita, "Ethiopia Lifts Filtering of Critical Web Sites—At Least for Now," *Committee to Protect Journalists Blog*, March 4, 2009, <http://cpj.org/blog/2009/03/ethiopia-lifts-filtering-of-critical-web-sites--at.php>.

sources.<sup>38</sup> By mid-2010, all of the newly available websites and several others—including the online version of *Addis Neger*, a leading independent newspaper that was forced to close in December 2009<sup>39</sup>—were temporarily inaccessible again, apparently as part of the government’s broader election-related restrictions on the free flow of information.<sup>40</sup>

The increased repression against journalists working in traditional media has generated a chilling effect in the online sphere. Few Ethiopian journalists work for both domestic print media and as correspondents for overseas online outlets, as this could draw negative repercussions. Many bloggers publish anonymously to avoid reprisals.

In addition to censorship, the authorities use regime apologists, paid commentators, and progovernment websites to proactively manipulate the online news and information landscape. Acrimonious exchanges between a small number of apologist websites and a wide array of diaspora critics and opposition forces have become common in the online Ethiopian political debate. In an example of alternative techniques for controlling online discussion, in April 2010 the *Addis Neger* prodemocracy Facebook group, which had attracted thousands of members, was shut down by Facebook administrators based on complaints that were apparently orchestrated by the regime; following international pressure, Facebook promptly reinstated the group.<sup>41</sup> Lack of adequate funding represents another challenge for independent online media, as fear of government pressure dissuades Ethiopian businesses from advertising with politically critical websites.

Regime critics and opposition forces in the diaspora increasingly use the internet as a platform for political debate and an indirect avenue for providing information to local newspapers. But given the low internet penetration rate, the domestic Ethiopian blogosphere is still in its infancy. Blogging initially blossomed during the period surrounding the 2005 parliamentary elections and the subsequent clampdown on independent newspapers. This growth has slowed somewhat since 2007, when the government instituted a blanket block on the domain names of two popular blog-hosting websites, Blogger and Nazret.com. Nevertheless, several bloggers, such as “Ethio-Zagol Seminawork” and “Urael,” continued to use blogs to relay information abroad that exposed human rights violations, and to advocate for the release of political prisoners. Over the past two years, the use of social-networking sites, most notably Facebook, as platforms for political deliberation and information sharing has gained momentum, though many civil society groups based in the country are wary of mobilizing against the government. Some political commentators use

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<sup>38</sup> “Ethiopia—Only Country in Sub-Saharan Africa to Actively Engage in Political Internet Filtering,” CyberEthiopia, August 21, 2009, <http://cyberethiopia.com/home/content/view/full/140/2/>.

<sup>39</sup> Reporters Without Borders, “Weekly Forced to Stop Publishing, Its Journalists Flee Abroad,” news release, December 4, 2009, [http://en.rsf.org/ethiopia-weekly-forced-to-stop-publishing-04-12-2009\\_35258.html](http://en.rsf.org/ethiopia-weekly-forced-to-stop-publishing-04-12-2009_35258.html).

<sup>40</sup> Oromsis Adula, “Election 2010, Blogging, Medrek, and the Future of Ethiopia,” Opride.com, <http://www.opride.com/oromsis/ethiopia/647-election-2010-blogging-medrek-and-the-future-of-ethiopia.html>, accessed May 25, 2010.

<sup>41</sup> “Facebook Urged to Reinstates Pro-Democracy Page,” Ethiomedia, May 1, 2010, <http://www.ethiomedia.com/absolute/3137.html>.

proxy servers and anonymizing tools to hide their identity when publishing online and to circumvent filtering. Among general internet users, however, circumvention tools are rarely employed, and most people simply forego accessing websites that are blocked.<sup>42</sup>

## VIOLATIONS OF USER RIGHTS

Constitutional provisions guarantee freedom of expression and media freedom.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, in recent years the government has adopted laws—namely the Mass Media and Freedom of Information Proclamation and the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation—that restrict free expression.<sup>44</sup> According to Human Rights Watch, the 2008 Mass Media and Freedom of Information Proclamation has some positive aspects, such as a ban on pretrial detention of journalists. However, it also introduced crippling fines, licensing restrictions for establishing a media outlet, a clause permitting only Ethiopian nationals to establish mass media outlets, and powers allowing the government to impound periodical publications.<sup>45</sup> The 2009 Anti-Terrorism Proclamation includes an overly broad definition of terrorism, leaving the authorities with wide discretion to invoke it when suppressing nonviolent dissent. Under the legislation, publication of a statement that is likely to be understood as a direct or indirect encouragement of terrorism is punishable by up to 20 years in prison.<sup>46</sup>

A criminal code that entered into force in May 2005 provides for “special criminal liability of the author, originator or publisher” when writings are deemed to be linked to offenses such as treason, espionage, or incitement; in such instances, the penalty may be life imprisonment or death.<sup>47</sup> Also under the criminal code, publication of a “false rumor” is punishable by up to three years in prison.<sup>48</sup> As of mid-2010, none of these laws had been used to prosecute an individual specifically for online expression, but the harsh legal regime has created a chilling effect on both traditional and online media.

Government surveillance of online and mobile-phone communications is a concern in Ethiopia, though there is a lack of concrete evidence as to the scale and scope of such

<sup>42</sup> Interview with an Ethiopian blogger and political commentator, August 8, 2010.

<sup>43</sup> “Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Article 29,” Parliament of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, <http://www.ethiopar.net/>, accessed August 24, 2010.

<sup>44</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Analysis of Ethiopia’s Draft Anti-Terrorism Law* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2009), <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/06/30/analysis-ethiopia-s-draft-anti-terrorism-law>.

<sup>45</sup> “Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation No. 590/2008,” *Federal Negarit Gazeta* No. 64, December 4, 2008.

<sup>46</sup> “Anti-Terrorism Proclamation No. 652/2009,” *Federal Negarit Gazeta* No. 57, August 28, 2009.

<sup>47</sup> International Labour Organization, “The Criminal Code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Proclamation No. 414/2004, Article 44,” <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/70993/75092/F1429731028/ETH70993.pdf>, accessed August 24, 2010.

<sup>48</sup> International Labour Organization, “The Criminal Code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Proclamation No. 414/2004, Articles 485 and 486,” <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/70993/75092/F1429731028/ETH70993.pdf>, accessed August 24, 2010.

practices. Upon purchasing a mobile phone, individuals are asked to register their SIM card with their full name, address, and government-issued identification number. Internet account holders also are required to register their personal details, including their home addresses, with the government. For a period following the 2005 elections, cybercafe owners were required to keep a register of their clients, but as of mid-2010 this was no longer being implemented in practice. The key government agency allegedly involved in surveillance is the Information Network Security Agency (INSA).<sup>49</sup> It is suspected of engaging in internet filtering and monitoring of e-mail.<sup>50</sup> There have also been reports of the government using technology obtained from the Chinese authorities to monitor phone lines and various types of online communication.<sup>51</sup>

Although traditional media journalists in Ethiopia face considerable harassment and intimidation, leading several to flee the country in recent years, there have been no reported cases of prosecution or attacks specifically in response to online expression or blogging.

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<sup>49</sup> Information Network Security Agency of Ethiopia, "Mission Statement,"

<http://www.insa.gov.et/INSA/faces/welcomeJSE.jsp>, accessed June 2, 2010.

<sup>50</sup> Chris Forrester, "...While Ethiopia Starts Jamming," Rapid TV News, June 23, 2010,

<http://www.rapidtvnews.com/index.php/201006236926/while-ethiopia-starts-jamming.html>.

<sup>51</sup> Helen Epstein, "Cruel Ethiopia," *New York Review of Books*, May 13, 2010,

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2010/may/13/cruel-ethiopia/>.