

Reporters Without Borders' Position On Reports That Swedish-Eritrean Journalist May Have Died in Detention.

Unconfirmed reports that Dawit Isaac, a journalist with dual Swedish and Eritrean nationality, has died in detention have been circulating since 27 October, his 47th birthday. On the basis of the information available, Reporters without Borders does not think he has died, but it does not know where the Eritrean authorities are holding him. He has been detained for the past 10 years.

Although the reports continue to be unconfirmed, Reporters without Borders intends to take them seriously and calls on Sweden and the European Union to demand that the Eritrean authorities provide information about this imprisoned journalist.

"Because of his dual citizenship, Dawit Isaac is a European citizen," Reporters without Borders said. "Like many Eritrean journalists, he has been detained for years without a trial, without access to a lawyer and without the right to receive visits. How much longer will Sweden and the European Union continue to tolerate knowing nothing about the fate of one of their citizens? The Eritrean government refuses to tell them anything. This is a scandal.

"At this time of the worst fears about Dawit's fate, the Swedish foreign ministry and the European Union must demand proof from the Eritrean government that he is still alive, as well as information about his location and state of health. If they cannot get a response or if it is confirmed that Dawit died in detention, all relations between Eritrea and Sweden and the EU will have to be reviewed."

The editor and co-founder of the now closed daily Setit, Dawit was arrested on 23 September 2001, during a series of raids in which several government ministers and army generals and around 10 journalists were rounded up. He suffers from diabetes and has been in very poor health for months.

The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) awarded Dawit its 2011 Golden Pen of Freedom Award on 7 October. In September, 5,000 copies of a collection of his writings, entitled "Hope," were distributed at Sweden's Goteborg book fair.

European Union foreign affairs representative Catherine Ashton mentioned Dawit when she called for the release of Eritrea's political prisoners on 15 September.

For more information about Reporters without Borders' campaigning on behalf of Dawit Isaac and the other journalists detained in Eritrea, please see the articles:

Issaias Afeworki - no less dangerous than Muammar Gaddafi or Bashar Al-Assad and Detained journalist's brother and Reporters without Borders tell Sweden and EU they are legally bound to actively seek his release.