

AFP CALLS FOR THE RELEASE OF A TRANSLATOR WORKING FOR ITS JOURNALISTS IN ETHIOPIA

AFP calls on the Ethiopian authorities to release a man who was arrested while he was serving as a translator for a team of its journalists reporting in the Tigray region, the scene of a military operation launched in early November by Addis Ababa against the then regional authorities.

Fitsum Berhane was arrested at his home on Friday night by uniformed men in the regional capital Mekele and has since been detained without being able to see his relatives. Another man, Alula Akalu, who was working as a translator with a journalist from the Financial Times daily, was arrested a few hours later on Saturday in Mekele, and he too remains detained.

Fitsum Berhane was arrested after working for three days as a translator for a team of AFP journalists duly accredited by the Ethiopian authorities for a series of reports in the northern region of Tigray. It has been difficult to access Tigray, and communication in the region has been difficult, since a military intervention by federal forces took place last November to oust the dominant party, the TPLF (Tigray People's Liberation Front), from power in the region.

Tigray's interim authorities have indicated that the two translators are under investigation, without further details.

«We have not been informed of any specific charges against Fitsum Berhane. His collaboration with a media outlet should not be a motive for his arrest, and we call for his immediate release,» said Phil Chetwynd, AFP's global news director.

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