

CPJ: Ethiopia is introducing high-tech censorship in Africa

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July 2, 2012 (NEW YORK) - An international press rights group on Monday expressed concern that a growing introduction of high tech censorship tools by Ethiopia could encourage other authoritarian regimes in Africa such as in neighboring Sudan use it.

Ethiopia has been under fire by rights groups of suspending a number of private news papers and blocking major news sites and blog hosts following the rigged 2005 elections when post-election violence claimed the lives of over 200 street protesters in the capital, Addis Ababa.

Last month, the country was accused of importing a sophisticated technology, the Deep Packet Inspection (DPI) - an advanced network filtering used to selective blocking websites. It was also accused of banning Skype and other use of Voice-over-Internet-Protocol (VoIP) services that offer audio and video related communications. An allegation Addis Ababa denies.

In the latest statement, CPJ said internet censorship in Africa particularly in the East African region is on the rise citing Ethiopia being in the front run.

"The gap through which undetected, uncensored news gets in and out of Ethiopia is definitely narrowing," CPJ said further argued that other African countries with Authoritarian rule like Sudan will follow the foot steps of Ethiopia.

"Meanwhile, neighboring countries like Sudan, battling with primitive censorship, detentions, and forced exile their own citizens' ability to record and share news, must be looking at Ethiopia's sophisticated controls with some anticipation" CPJ said.

"Whatever tools of Internet suppression Ethiopia imports will surely be rolled out by other authoritarian governments in Africa"

A number of international press right groups have accused Ethiopia of stifling press freedom and endangering safety of journalists by multiple controversial laws being endorsed.

Last week, Ethiopia convicted six journalists, including five in exile, under the country's controversial 2009 terrorism law. The journalists were accused of having ties with a banned opposition movement and conspiring to carry out terrorist attacks and incite "Arab Spring style" violence in the country.

International Rights groups immediately blasted the verdict as "politically motivated" aimed to punish these critical journalists.

According to CPJ research, Ethiopia drove more journalists into exile than any other country, over the past decade. The East African country is also continent's leading jailer of journalists after neighboring Eritrea.

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