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IFJ Accuses Ethiopia over Ban on European Journalists' Leader
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The International Federation of Journalists today demanded an explanation from the Ethiopian authorities over the decision to bar a European journalists' leader from entering the country as part of an international mission.

The IFJ says that the decision to refuse an entry visa to Arne König, Chair of the European Federation of Journalists, Europe's largest journalists' group was inexplicable and "smacks of political spite."

König, a Swedish citizen, was due to join an IFJ mission that visited Ethiopia two weeks ago, but his application for a visa was stalled at the Ethiopian embassy in Stockholm where questions were asked over his role in the mission, which was due to meet with senior government figures in Addis Ababa, including the Prime Minister.

The IFJ has written to the Ethiopian government asking for a full explanation as to why he was denied a visa when other members of the mission were able to enter the country.

"It is completely unacceptable to exercise what appears to be arbitrary discrimination in this case," said Aidan White, IFJ General Secretary. "There were suggestions that König, who is a distinguished leader of Europe's journalistic community, had no place in meeting with senior government officials. This is unacceptable interference in the IFJ's work."

The IFJ mission completed its visit without König and is now preparing a report on the difficult media situation in Ethiopia where the oppression of journalists has led to many journalists' leaders going into exile.

The mission comes after a far-reaching crackdown on the independent press in November last year when the authorities detained more than a dozen journalists, issued a wanted list of editors and publishers, and threatened to charge journalists with treason, which is an offence punishable by death. Dozens of journalists went into hiding during the crackdown. The government published a list of those it planned to prosecute including 17 editors and publishers from eight private newspapers, as well as Kifle Mulat, president of the IFJ-affiliated Ethiopian Free Press Journalists' Association (EFJA), who is now in exile.

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