

Expelled British reporter leaves Ethiopia

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ADDIS ABABA (Reuters) - A British journalist ordered to leave Ethiopia within 24 hours after the government accused him of portraying the Horn of Africa country in a bad light left for Kenya on Sunday, officials said.

Immigration sources in the capital Addis Ababa said Anthony Mitchell had flown to Nairobi. The Associated Press (AP) news agency, which employs him, confirmed Mitchell had left Ethiopia.

"Mitchell complied with a government order to leave the country today," AP Managing Editor Mike Silverman said in a statement. "We hope he will be allowed to return to Addis Ababa soon so that he can be with his family and return to his duties.

"The AP stands behind Mitchell, who is an aggressive and fair journalist, and has worked in Ethiopia for AP for more than five years," Silverman added.

Ethiopia's Foreign Ministry summoned Mitchell on Saturday and expelled him, accusing him of "disseminating information tarnishing the image of the country despite repeated advice not to do so". No further details were given.

Once hailed by former U.S. President Bill Clinton as "part of a new generation of leaders" for Africa, and a key member of Prime Minister Tony Blair's Africa Commission in 2005, the democratic credentials of Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi have suffered in the last year.

A disputed May election sparked bloody protests and a security crackdown in which more than 80 people were killed. Top opposition leaders and journalists have been arrested on treason charges.

Britain said on Wednesday it would stop budget support worth at least 50 million pounds to Ethiopia because of concerns over governance and human rights.