
When asked to take part in the evaluation of Eritrean media again for 2010, a former MSI participant asked back, “What media?”



ERITREA

All media sources within Eritrea have been under state control since September 2001, when the government essentially stamped out all independent outlets, rounding up at least 15 independent journalists and sending them to prison. Some reportedly have died in prison and, over the years, even staff members working in government-owned media establishments have gone to prison, fled the country, or disappeared.

The Ministry of Information, the government arm that controls the media, runs a website with “serving the truth” as its maxim. However, its postings amount to propaganda lauding Eritrea’s performance in all sectors of national development. The absolute absence of independent media also limits the possibilities to challenge the government line or determine whether government media reports have any shred of authenticity.

In addition to the difficulty of merely obtaining information about the Eritrean media, assigning scores to some MSI questions is challenging, as many of the questions are designed to assess the strength of the independent media. Rising restrictions on Internet access, and the fear that seems to have engulfed Eritrean journalists, underscore the ever-worsening state of the media in Eritrea.

When asked to take part in the evaluation of Eritrean media again for 2010, a former MSI participant asked back, “What media?” Many potential respondents had a similar reaction. Such muted forms of participation and response are tacit justification for the extremely low MSI scores.

The MSI questionnaire for 2010 was sent to various media departments within the Ministry of Information and to quite a number of individuals in the Eritrean diaspora. While there was no reply at all from the former, the diaspora Eritreans expressed overwhelmingly that the survey cannot be applied to the Eritrean media sector as long as it has no independent outlets.

The only glimmer of hope stems from the Eritrean websites based outside the country. They are spreading out like shoots across the Internet and are sustaining the Eritrean media presence, providing a variety of news and critical analysis on Eritrean issues. Expatriates perhaps hold the potential for the establishment of a culture of independent media. At this point, however, Eritrean media seem to be in a state of arrested development.

All MSI participants are Eritreans living in exile. The MSI panelists participated remotely by completing the MSI questionnaire and being interviewed by the IREX moderator, also an Eritrean in exile. Given the geographic dispersion of the panelists, a full discussion was not held. While not all panelists asked to remain anonymous, because of the political situation in Eritrea, IREX decided not to publish their names.

ERITREA AT A GLANCE

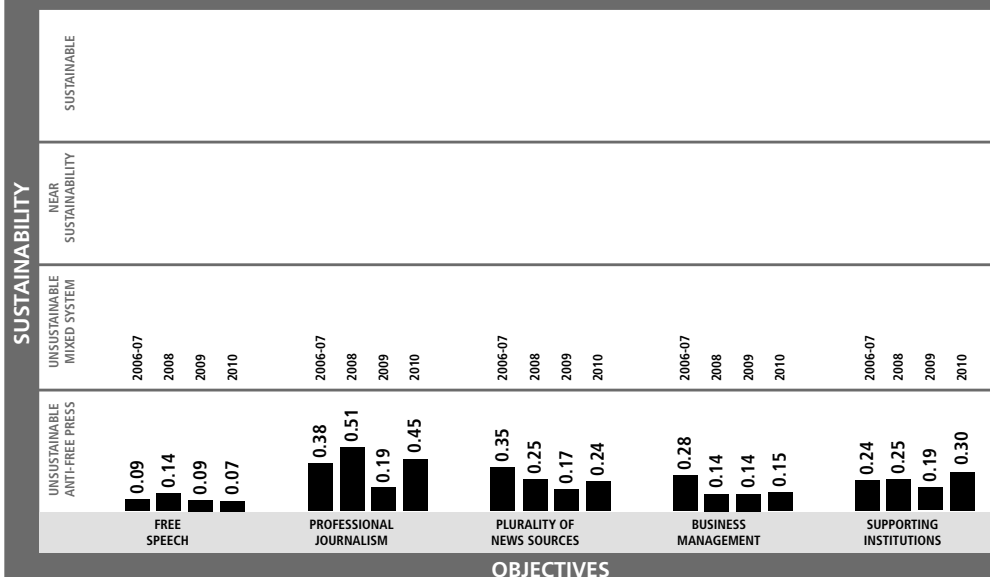
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 5,939,484 (July 2011 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Asmara
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Tigrinya 50%, Tigre and Kunama 40%, Afar 4%, Saho (Red Sea coast dwellers) 3%, other 3% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions:** Muslim, Coptic Christian, Roman Catholic, Protestant (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages:** Afar, Arabic, Tigre and Kunama, Tigrinya, other Cushitic languages (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2010-Atlas):** \$1.79 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2011)
- > **GNI per capita (2010-PPP):** \$540 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2011)
- > **Literacy rate:** 58.6% (male 69.9%, female 47.6%) (2003 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Isaias Afworki (since June 8, 1993)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Newspaper readership is low; there are a handful of radio and television stations. All are state-owned.
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** N/A
- > **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** None
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 200,000 (2008 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: ERITREA



Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0-1):

Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2):

Country minimally meets objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. Evident progress in free-press advocacy, increased professionalism, and new media businesses may be too recent to judge sustainability.

Near Sustainability (2-3):

Country has progressed in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism, and the business environment supportive of independent media. Advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice. However, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable.

Sustainable (3-4):

Country has media that are considered generally professional, free, and sustainable, or to be approaching these objectives. Systems supporting independent media have survived multiple governments, economic fluctuations, and changes in public opinion or social conventions.

OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Eritrea Objective Score: 0.07

Eritrean media are under the absolute control of the state, and all participants confirmed the non-existence of any legal or social norms to protect or promote freedom of speech. Instead, the state apparatus to enforce control and discourage openness in media dominates. The country has no private media of which to speak, and all public information is channeled via government-run media established to promote government propaganda.

The highly anticipated implementation of the Eritrean constitution was shelved back in 1998, and delayed ever since then for reasons of national security. The final blow to press freedom can be traced to September 2001, when the government decided to round up journalists and stamp out any hope of independent media.

By its harsh stance against the press, the Eritrean government confirms its intent to exercise complete control over its citizens and squash any challenges to its authority. In his research paper "Post-colonial silencing, intellectuals, and the state: Views from Eritrea," published in 2010, Professor Peter Schmidt concluded, "... drawing deeply on bitterness toward outside influence, on a disdain for intellectuals, and on a strong valorization of comradeship and loyalty, this culture [of silence] has re-emerged as the dominant

LEGAL AND SOCIAL NORMS PROTECT AND PROMOTE FREE SPEECH AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION.

FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

- > Legal and social protections of free speech exist and are enforced.
- > Licensing of broadcast media is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
- > Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
- > Crimes against journalists or media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
- > State or public media do not receive preferential legal treatment, and law guarantees editorial independence.
- > Libel is a civil law issue; public officials are held to higher standards, and offended parties must prove falsity and malice.
- > Public information is easily accessible; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Media outlets have unrestricted access to information; this is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Entry into the journalism profession is free, and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

According to reliable Eritrean and international organizations, no less than five of the journalists rounded up and imprisoned in September 2001 have died in prison. Verifying the whereabouts or state of health of the remaining prisoners remains a challenge.

way in postcolonial Eritrea and its (re)development into the totalitarian state that it is today."¹

As reported in last year's MSI, the government does not issue broadcast licenses; it is the sole owner of all radio and television signals. Similarly, market entry is closed. In the current setting, opening a non-governmental broadcasting outlet or publication is impossible.

According to reliable Eritrean and international organizations, no less than five of the journalists rounded up and imprisoned in September 2001 have died in prison. Verifying the whereabouts or state of health of the remaining prisoners remains a challenge. But the Eastern African Journalists' Association alleges that "the journalists detained since September 2001 without charges and without trial are facing constant ill treatment and torture. Some of them, about five journalists, have already died in horrendous and callous conditions in the metal and underground prisons, where they are detained incommunicado. Some of the journalists are also being held in secret, harsh, and remote military detention camps and are frequently tortured."²

While it is difficult to obtain confirmation of the prisoners' treatment, some information has leaked about one of the detainees, the Eritrean-Swedish journalist Dawit Isaac. Isaac's brother shared in an interview with the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) that a prison guard who escaped to Ethiopia told him that Isaac is being held in unbearable conditions and that his health is worsening.³

In terms of recent attacks on journalists, international human rights groups continue to record offenses. In its 2010 country

¹ Schmidt, Peter. R. Post-colonial silencing, intellectuals, and the state: Views from Eritrea Afr Aff (Lond) (2010) 109(435): 293-313 first published online March 9, 2010

² Eritrean government is the worst enemy of press freedom in Africa, says EAJA, as it demands the freedom of journalists detained for nearly a decade." Eastern African Journalists Association (EAJA) website, September 14, 2010. Available at: <http://eaja.org/en/contents/eritrean-government-is-the-worst-enemy-of-press-freedom-in-africa-says-eaja-as-it-demands-for-the-freedom-of-journalists-detained-for-nearly-a-decade> (Accessed November 22, 2011).

³ Rhodes, Tom. "Reluctant Activist: A Brother's Struggle to Free Dawit Isaac."

report on Eritrea, Amnesty International stated, "On 22 February [2010], at least 50 employees of Radio Bana were arrested by Eritrean security forces. Although some were released, an unknown number remained in detention. They were not charged with any offence."⁴ According to CPJ's prison census report on Eritrea, a total of 17 journalists were behind bars as of December 2010—and the survey does not include media professionals beyond journalists.⁵ Eritrea regularly tops CPJ's prison census as the African country with the most journalists jailed.

In the introduction to its latest annual report on Eritrea, Human Rights Watch wrote, "By any measure, the unelected government of President Isayas Afewerki is oppressive. It allows no space for individual autonomy in any sphere: political, economic, or religious. Arbitrary arrests, torture, and forced labor are rampant. Rule by fiat is the norm. The Eritrean government refuses to implement a constitution approved in 1997 containing civil and human rights provisions. Many Eritreans conclude that they can avoid oppression only by fleeing the country at risk to their lives."⁶

The 2010 report *Eritrea—The Siege State* by International Crisis Group came to the same conclusions: "[Eritrea] has become, in effect, a siege state, whose government is suspicious of its own population, neighbors, and the wider world. Economically crippled at birth, it is a poor country from which tens of thousands of youths are fleeing, forming large asylum-seeking communities in Europe and North America."⁷

Defiance and denial have characterized the government of Eritrea in all matters of national concern. When pressed by international media attempting to hold him accountable, Afewerki denies allegations routinely. For example, when an Al Jazeera reporter asked Afewerki about imprisoned Eritrean journalists in May of 2008, he replied, "There were never any. There aren't any. You have been misinformed." Similarly, when Donald Bostrom, a Swedish journalist, asked Afewerki about Dawit Isaac, "The president said that he does not know. He goes on and says that he has never been engaged in the issue and emphasizes that it has been used as blackmail against 'us.'"

⁴ Eritrea – Amnesty International Report 2010. Available at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/eritrea/report-2010> (Accessed November 22, 2011).

⁵ 2010 Prison Census. Committee to Protect Journalists website, December 1, 2010. Available at: <http://www.cpj.org/imprisoned/2010.php> (Accessed November 22, 2011).

⁶ Human Rights Watch World Report 2011: Eritrea: Events in 2010." Human Rights Watch website, January 2011. Available at: <http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2011/eritrea> (Accessed November 22, 2011.)

⁷ Eritrea: The Siege State. Africa Report No. 163. International Crisis Group website, September 21, 2010. Available at: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/horn-of-africa/ethiopia-eritrea/163-eritrea-the-siege-state.aspx> (Accessed November 22, 2011.)

Existing Eritrean journalists, all of whom work for government media now, are under strict orders to follow guidelines set by the Ministry of Information. They operate in an atmosphere of full government censorship. These government-employed journalists are subject to imprisonment or persecution—revealing that the persistent crackdown on media elements perceived to be potential threats is not confined to independent media, as assumed initially. Such extremism further separates Eritrea from other countries in the region with reputations as enemies of the press.

The deteriorating state of Eritrea's media reflects the much broader worsening of social, economic, and political conditions. Imprisonment and disappearances are not limited to journalists or media personnel—they cut across the whole of society: parents of men and women that have fled the country, members of religious organizations, potential and real dissidents, so-called national service dodgers, people captured trying to cross into Ethiopia and Sudan, and others who are behind bars for unknown reasons.

Alarming, even Eritrean journalists in exile are not safe from violence. A Houston, Texas- based Eritrean expatriate journalist, Tedros Menghistu, known for his critical reporting on the Eritrean government, was attacked by supporters of President Afewerki at a public event for Eritreans in Texas. A CPJ website article reporting on the incident said that about a dozen assailants "punched and scratched him, breaking his eyeglasses and stealing his notebook and tape recorder," sending Menghistu to the hospital with a neck injury.⁸

In addition to restrictions on public access to information, the ban on private media licenses and the absence of any form of independent information sources inside Eritrea makes accountability virtually non-existent. All participants agreed that freedom of speech is not encouraged and does not play any role in sustaining what should be one of their basic rights.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Eritrea Objective Score: 0.45

Since all media are under state control, it follows that quality and content are judged against government standards. If any professional journalists still work in Eritrea, they operate under full government censorship. Information is of select content and packaged to suit government propaganda. As noted in previous MSI studies, Objective 2's questions

⁸ "Eritrean Journalist Attacked at Public Seminar in Houston." Committee to Protect Journalists website, May 27, 2010. Available at: <http://cpj.org/2010/05/eritrea-journalist-attacked-at-public-seminar-in-ph> (Accessed November 22, 2011).

regarding professional standards and ethics can only be applied to the state-run media establishment—and what qualifications such journalists bring to the job is unclear.

What is clear is that they make no attempt at presenting balanced news; government communications amount to propaganda on the Eritrean government's excellence in all matters of development, while any shortcomings are treated as challenges that will be addressed with the usual Eritrean "steadfastness." All government media sources—television, radio, print media, and website postings—present this front.

Journalists have little choice but to self-censor—not just to keep their jobs, but for personal safety. They have no editorial independence whatsoever. In this climate, upholding professional standards of journalism is out of the question.

Aspiring young journalism graduates can only cover media material that is government-approved. These journalists are like other youths who, once they manage to graduate, will not hesitate to flee the country if the opportunity arises. Quite a significant number of Eritrean journalists have left since September 2001. This a debilitating development—in vast numbers, the young, the able, and the skilled are risking their lives to escape. This scenario progressively reduces any capacity to foster a sustainable media environment in Eritrea. All participants agreed that this also has devastating consequences for the country as a whole and its prospects for a stable future.

As noted in previous MSI studies, many, if not most, journalists work without pay. Some work under the terms and conditions of national service, and most are ready to leave the media—or the country—at the first opportunity.

JOURNALISM MEETS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF QUALITY.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM INDICATORS:

- > Reporting is fair, objective, and well sourced.
- > Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards.
- > Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship.
- > Journalists cover key events and issues.
- > Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are sufficiently high to discourage corruption.
- > Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming.
- > Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient.
- > Quality niche reporting and programming exists (investigative, economics/business, local, political).

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The few journalists who receive salaries are paid far below a living wage.

Some panelists attempted to paint a picture of the professional resources at the disposal of state-owned media outlets. They commented that although there is a government-funded training center with moderate facilities, trainees are not encouraged to equip themselves with the necessary skills to develop their critical abilities to analyze and report on events. One participant said that the modernization of media facilities in Eritrea is of little use, when used only to churn out government propaganda.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Eritrea Objective Score: 0.24

Although print, radio, television, and online news sources exist, all project the state viewpoint, thus plurality without perspective is meaningless. The government does not block international news via satellite, local television, radio, or the Internet, but the absence of domestic independent media

MULTIPLE NEWS SOURCES PROVIDE CITIZENS WITH RELIABLE AND OBJECTIVE NEWS.

PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

- > A plurality of affordable public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet) exists.
- > Citizens' access to domestic or international media is not restricted.
- > State or public media reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
- > Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media.
- > Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs.
- > Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates.
- > A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources.

It is important to note that only tiny percentage of the population has access to television or the Internet. The majority of the population has limited access to even the government media's offerings, whether because of cost or geography.

makes it impossible for Eritrean citizens to hear reliable and objective news about what is going on within their own country. They are fed government-choreographed news with no alternative or independent local sources.

Freedom House alleges that the government of Eritrea controls the Internet infrastructure and likely monitors online communications—an allegation that Eritreans and foreign visitors support. All communication systems, including mobile phone businesses, are under the control of a government corporation. Whenever people call from or to Eritrea, they feel restricted in their conversations for fear of saying something that may put either side in danger, the panelists said.

It is important to note that only tiny percentage of the population has access to television or the Internet. The majority of the population has limited access to even the government media's offerings, whether because of cost or geography. As noted in last year's MSI, the quality and content of news to citizens is divided along language, income, and urban/rural lines.

In terms of new media, a panelist for last year's MSI noted that the country has only three Internet cafés. All are in the capital of Asmara, with no more than 10 computers in service and with very slow Internet connections. Internet service is available beyond the capital and into small towns; however, the expense, slow connection speeds, and ever-present security agents curtail severely the Internet's utility as a news source for Eritreans. Only an extremely small segment of the population accesses the Internet for news. Mobile phones, though available on the market, are registered to a government agency. Moreover, most residents lack the disposable income to use mobile services.

Eritrea has an estimated population of 5 million, with more than 75 percent living in rural areas. A significant number of the younger generation are caught up in an endless cycle of national service, living scattered across the countryside and in military camps far from towns. The few who can access foreign-based news sources are probably outside visitors or privileged townspeople. Government-run radio, television, and online broadcasts are geared carefully to work against

any critical or independent reporting that could potentially put the government in an uncomfortable position.

To that end, the government media focus overwhelmingly on entertainment, development projects, international news with little or no reference to Eritrea, official visits, and festivals and meetings conducted in Eritrea and abroad. In short, Eritrea's national media are a heavy-handed attempt to depict Eritrea as an ideal and "fiercely independent" nation that is permanently on guard to defend itself from external threats.

It is difficult to determine whether websites, Internet radio broadcasts, and other online activities from the Eritrean diaspora can impact countrymen at home or abroad. However limited their influence might be inside Eritrea, they certainly have some bearing on public perception and raising awareness among members of the international community. Global media establishments depict an impartial view of what is likely going on inside Eritrea.

According to Menghistu, the government attempts to obstruct reporting efforts from afar. Following his attack in Houston, Menghistu told CPJ, "Wherever there are Eritreans, there are government spies who report your opinions and activities," Menghistu said, adding that government supporters intimidate critics by threatening reprisals against family members left in Eritrea. "Those that have opinions different than the government, they are just labeled as opposition, as against the country, as traitors," he said.⁹

In a series of extensive interviews with Afewerki televised by international media, including Al-Jazeera and Swedish TV, Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) had the following commentary on Eritrea: "Ruled with an iron hand by a small ultra-nationalist clique centered on [President] Afewerki, this Red Sea country has been transformed in just a few years into a vast open prison—Africa's biggest prison for the media."

In relation to plurality of news, reporters conduct nearly all interviews with the president only. The interviews are stage-managed to assert control and are designed for foreign consumption, in order to deflect intervention in the internal affairs of the country. Local television channels do not broadcast the interviews.

As for the treatment of minority interests and social issues, last year's MSI study reported that the media cannot be said to cover these topics. Tigrinya, Arabic, Tigre, and English are the major languages heard on broadcast media, leaving minority-language speakers at a disadvantage.

⁹ Keita, Mohamed. "For Eritrean expatriate press, intimidation in exile." CPJ Blog: Press Freedom News and Views, June 17, 2010. Available at: <http://cpj.org/blog/2010/06/for-eritrean-expatriate-press-intimidation-in-exil.ph>;

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Eritrea Objective Score: 0.15

As summarized in last year's study, state media are neither efficient nor business-generating enterprises. Fueled by state-funded subsidies, they serve as political tools and promote government propaganda with no planning, transparency, or accountability. As reported last year, it is difficult to gain specific insights about management practices in state media, but poor financial accountability plagues all government ministries.

The government owns all major businesses in Eritrea, and all activities related to media development are tied to government-run corporations. Thus, once again, the MSI objective measuring the business management strength of the media can be applied only to the state. The government's grip on the few small media businesses in operation restricts in their capacity to make any impact.

After Eritrea won political independence in 1993, many diaspora Eritrean entrepreneurs were encouraged to open up private businesses in the country. The trend ended gradually, as the government managed to spread its tentacles and consolidate control across social, economic, and political activities. Independent media were among the earliest casualties.

Some panelists still recall the days when independent papers not only outsold government newspapers, but ran out of copies. Yet even during that time, Eritrean press law permitted private media in print format only, while the government kept full control of radio and television—long

INDEPENDENT MEDIA ARE WELL-MANAGED BUSINESSES, ALLOWING EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:

- > Media outlets and supporting firms operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses.
- > Media receive revenue from a multitude of sources.
- > Advertising agencies and related industries support an advertising market.
- > Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with accepted standards at commercial outlets.
- > Independent media do not receive government subsidies.
- > Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor products to the needs and interests of audiences.
- > Broadcast ratings and circulation figures are reliably and independently produced.

Some panelists still recall the days when independent papers not only outsold government newspapers, but ran out of copies.

before the Internet was available. The combination of an absent independent media and a weak private enterprise infrastructure has broken the positive relationship between sustainable business and media development.

Funding or institutional support might be coming from outside sources, but given the state of absolute government control, the source of any such support is unclear. Any support that does come likely flows into government-managed media establishments.

Advertising agencies do not exist. There is a limited advertising market centered on the local catering and travel industries, but mostly, government legal notices dominate the advertising sections of newspapers. Government businesses and other departments have no option but to use government media to advertise their goods and services. One panelist last year noted that the extreme poverty among Eritreans severely limits the supply and likely impact of advertising—a weakness that would make it very difficult to revive the independent press even if the political climate improved.

The state-run media are making no known efforts to conduct serious market research or measure circulation or broadcast audiences. They have no competition and have an agenda to serve, so they are not concerned with audience tastes.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Eritrea Objective Score: 0.30

As all unions and supporting institutions in Eritrea are government-run, currently they are engaged in developing professional interests only to the extent that they might benefit the government propaganda machine. The only way to measure such institutions using the MSI framework is to consider their potential contributions to the development of independent media in the future.

In terms of support from NGOs, as confirmed by Human Rights Watch, "Nongovernmental public gatherings are prohibited. Asking a critical question at a government-convened forum constitutes grounds for arrest.

Although the country has no independent infrastructure to support the education of journalists, quite a few state-sponsored media students have had the privilege to go abroad for further training—then used the opportunity to escape the country.

No NGOs exist.”¹⁰ International NGOs have all been expelled. And, as Isaac’s brother told CPJ, even many diaspora Eritreans remain fearful of the government, and are reluctant to get involved in press freedom advocacy—with notable and important exceptions, such as Isaac and Menghistu.

With the vacuum of domestic media watchdog organizations, only externally produced reports have documented and reported on Eritrea’s media over the years. Global human rights groups and media establishments (Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, RSF, Freedom House) and various news groups attest and certify repeatedly that conditions in Eritrea are bleak. The violations against journalists and the Eritrean population deserve and demand international attention, but the state’s control mechanisms have kept the crisis from fully seeing the light of day.

In a document circulated by Wikileaks, former U.S. Ambassador to Eritrea Ronald McMullen confirmed that young Eritreans are fleeing their country in droves, the economy appears to be in a death spiral, Eritrea’s prisons are overflowing, and the country’s unhinged dictator remains cruel and defiant. He concluded that the Afewerki regime has succeeded in controlling nearly all aspects of Eritrean society.

Although the country has no independent infrastructure to support the education of journalists, quite a few state-sponsored media students have had the privilege to go abroad for further training—then used the opportunity to escape the country. Again, for fear of speaking out, not many will come forward to expose how the government media institutions are supported. Over the years, the practice of no-return happens in all government departments whenever the opportunity arises for outside travel.

In-country training in journalism and related media skills are limited to very low levels of professional standards—all geared toward producing propaganda, not journalism or critical thinking. The only existing learning institutions are the Ministry of Information, technical colleges, and state-run corporations that generate media content for government propaganda.

The government owns all printing presses and channels of distribution for print and broadcast media, and it exercises some control over the Internet. Freedom House’s *Freedom of the Press 2009* report on Eritrea stated that “the government requires all Internet service providers to use government-controlled Internet infrastructure and owns a large percentage of them.”

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS FUNCTION IN THE PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA.

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

- > Trade associations represent the interests of private media owners and provide member services.
- > Professional associations work to protect journalists’ rights.
- > NGOs support free speech and independent media.
- > Quality journalism degree programs that provide substantial practical experience exist.
- > Short-term training and in-service training programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
- > Sources of newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and unrestricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.

List of Panel Participants

All MSI participants are Eritreans living in exile. The MSI panelists participated remotely by completing the MSI questionnaire and being interviewed by the IREX moderator, also an Eritrean in exile. Given the geographic dispersion of the panelists, a full discussion was not held. While not all panelists asked to remain anonymous, because of the political situation in Eritrea, IREX decided not to publish their names.