

RESOLUTION ON ERITREA

PEN International has long had serious concerns about the lack of freedom of opinion and expression and the continuing practice of incommunicado detention without trial of writers and journalists in Eritrea. These concerns were confirmed by the [UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea](#) when it published its report on 8 June 2016 documenting the crimes against humanity committed in the 25 years since independence ‘as part of a campaign to instill fear in, deter opposition from and ultimately to control the Eritrean civilian population’.

Over this period, Eritrean journalists—reporting for both independent and state media—have been subjected to systematic arbitrary arrests, intimidations, enforced disappearances, and in some cases, extra-judicial killings. Since the government crackdown on dissent in September 2001, there has been no independent media in Eritrea, and for the last two years it has come last (180th) in Reporters Without Borders’ [World Press Freedom Index](#), and has also been called the ‘most censored country’ by the Committee to Protect Journalists. PEN International is aware of at least 17 journalists currently held in circumstances amounting to enforced disappearance, some of whom are believed to have died in the appalling conditions of Eritrean prisons (see annex for a list of names). Extensive censorship practices have also severely restricted literary, artistic and cultural production.

The lack of independent media, the systematic harassment and censorship of the creative community have destroyed independent thinking in Eritrea, and left it extremely isolated on the world stage. PEN International wishes to highlight the grave situation in which Eritrean journalists, other writers and artists currently find themselves.

The Assembly of Delegates of PEN International, meeting at its 82nd World Congress in Ourense, Galicia (Spain), 26th September to 2nd October 2016, calls on the government of Eritrea to:

- Clarify the fate and whereabouts of all disappeared journalists and other writers, , and provide all of those still alive with independent medical assessments and any medical treatment they require;
- Grant the immediate and unconditional release of all detained journalists and other writers still alive who have also been imprisoned solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression;
- Return the bodies of any detained writers who have died in custody to their families;
- Abolish the existing pervasive censorship practices, re-establish an independent media and allow international media unfettered access to the country;
- Encourage literary, artistic and cultural production.