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The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) said a couple of weeks ago, newspaper editor Dawit Kebede, an International Press Freedom award winner, fled Ethiopia. Sadly, Dawit's *Awramba Times* is the latest in a long list of Amharic-language private publications to vanish from the market following the incarceration or flight into exile of their editors. Dawit was imprisoned in 2005 on trumped-up charges of genocide and treason after Ethiopia's disputed 2005 general election. At the time, he was the publisher of *Hadar*, an Amharic weekly, which was banned after his arrest. After his release in August 2007, he launched a more mature paper, *Awramba Times*, with a promising team of writers and commentators. *Awramba Times*'s bold coverage drew an orchestrated smear campaign, waged by ruling party papers and their affiliates. Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority (EBA) accused *Awramba Times* of trying to incite an Arab Spring-style rebellion in the country. With the meager resources that publishers had, it was impossible to hire correspondents and columnists. That led most private newspapers to be a one-man or one-woman show. The incarceration or flight into exile of the editor usually led the title to disappear from the market. For instance, in 1993, *Ethiopia*, one of the first newspapers to emerge after the fall of the Marxist regime, ceased to exist following the detention of its publisher (the indefatigable Eskinder Nega, who at the moment is languishing in prison on terrorism charges). More recently, exactly two years ago, the popular Amharic weekly *Addis Neger* took the same path. When the editors fled the country, the paper folded. Fortunately, they still had the energy to continue the publication online. *Awramba Times* can and may do the same thing (Press release).

Data from the Israel Defense Force (IDF) reveals that one in every four Ethiopian immigrants in the Israeli army ends up deserting, with three times the overall rate among all male recruits. According to the IDF, desertion involves absenteeism from one's army unit for a continuous period of 21 days. According to sources, Ethiopian male recruits join the IDF at a much higher rate than the local public, with 88% Ethiopians enlist compared to 73% Israeli men. However, despite this, the number of Ethiopians deserting the IDF too continues to increase. For many Ethiopian soldiers in the IDF lack of finances remains a pressing issue despite the fact that financial help is sometimes available. According to a source, Ethiopian recruits are caught between two worlds, with their parents culture on one side and the Israeli culture on the other. On the other hand, the trend of absenteeism, desertion has been declining among Ethiopian female recruits, with about half of them enlisting and 5% deserting later. To bring a change to the outlook among Ethiopians, the army declared to pursue a five-year plan in 2008 and spent two years understanding the root cause of the problem (*Ezega, Dec. 9*).

The Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam plan will be reviewed by Independent Technical Experts selected from Ethiopia, Egypt, Sudan and other countries after six months, reports *Capital*. Ethiopian Minister of Water and Energy, Alemayehu Tegenu, said the experts' committee nomination will be held in two months, and the approval will take four months. After the approval, the committee will start its review of the design of the dam. Even though the review work is going to be held, Ethiopia is confident the project will continue unabated. During the ten hour long meeting, the Egyptians asked the Ethiopian government to halt construction and wanted to use it as a criteria for signing the agreement. However, the Ethiopian Water and Energy Minister told the delegates that the construction would not be stopped for a minute as PM Meles Zenawi had said before (*Ezega, Dec. 9*).

A delegation of Somali politicians and military officials led by President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed held talks with Ethiopian and Djiboutian leaders in the Ethiopian capital. The Transitional Federal Government's Minister for Information, Mr Abdulkadir Hussein Jahweyn, told the media the talks would mainly be on security matters concerning Somalia and the eastern Africa region, specifically how to 'synergise' the stabilization of the region and the fight against Al-Shabaab (*African Review, Dec. 6*).

The UN Security Council has toughened sanctions against Eritrea after its East African neighbors accused it of continuing to provide support to Islamist militants. The resolution requires foreign companies involved in Eritrea's mining industry to ensure that funds from the sector are not used to destabilize the region. Thirteen council members voted for the resolution and two abstained. East African nations had called for tougher sanctions after a UN report found that Eritrea continued to support al-Shabaab and other armed groups in Somalia (*BBC, Dec. 6*).

Ethiopia lost \$ 11.7bio to outflows of ill-gotten gains between 2000 and 2009, according to a coming report by Global Financial Integrity (GFI). Corruption, kickbacks and bribery are on the rise in Ethiopia, according to a forthcoming report from Global Financial Integrity, a Washington-based research and advocacy organization. According to the study, illicit financial flows out of the African nation nearly doubled to US\$ 3.26bio in 2009 over the previous year, with corruption, kickbacks and bribery accounting for the vast majority of that increase. In 2008, Ethiopia received US\$ 829m in official development assistance, but this was swamped by the massive illicit outflows. The scope of Ethiopia's capital flight is so severe that the conservative US\$ 3.26bio estimate greatly exceeds the US\$ 2bio value of Ethiopia's total exports in 2009 (*The Wall Street Journal, Dec. 5*).

Prime Minister Meles Zenawi said Chinese banks have been playing a key role in the economic development in Ethiopia. The fund Exim-Bank provided to Ethiopia will be used to accomplish the desired goals and will be returned due schedule. Zhu Hongjie said the bank has provided a loan of 11.4 billion USD for the implementation of various development projects in Ethiopia (*ENA, Dec. 5*).

Derba MIDROC Cement Plc, Ethiopia's biggest cement factory, said it will start production within the „next 10 days,“ helping end a shortage of the building material in Africa's fourth-largest economy. The \$ 351m plant, about 70 km northwest of the capital will produce 8,000 MT of the building material daily by February, said Chief Executive Officer Haile Assegidie. Derba is part of the MIDROC Ethiopia group owned by Mohammed al-Amoudi. the loans took longer than expected, Tadesse said. The factory, which took 3 1/2 years to complete, will require as much as 60 MW of electricity from the national grid, Haile said. The company paid for transmission lines and a sub-station to power the plant, according to Haile (*Bloomberg, Dec. 6*).

The Derba Cement Factory, one of the biggest of Midroc projects, has requested the government to repay it 550m birr which it had expended for building infrastructures such as roads, electric power and water facilities while building the cement factory. The Director-General of Derba Midroc, Ato Haile Asegide, said talks have begun with the government on this issue. Ato Haile said Derba has expended 258m birr for the building of an electric power system alone. This has brought considerable benefits to the people as a whole, he said (*Reporter, Dec. 4*).

The private business weekly reported Mohammed Hussein Ali Al-Amoudi has been ordered to pay 905,158 \$ by the Federal High Court Seventh Civil Bench that he had collected to reclaim debt, which was not only owed to him but also to the government. The ruling on November 29, 2011, came after the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) asked the court for judgment execution. It all started when Shadia Nadin, Tamrat Layne, Hassen Abdela, and Nigussie Hayelom were found guilty of illegally exporting 1,000 t of coffee, a decade ago. Along with their criminal liability for mishandling government property, they had been ordered by the High Court to pay 26.4 million Br, the value of the coffee. Although they had appealed to the Supreme Court, contesting the verdict, the Supreme Court had endorsed the High Court's decision. In the midst of the appeal hearing, Al-Amoudi intervened in the suit. The defendants also owed him money, as they had taken 16m \$ from him, of which the majority (9.5m \$) had been taken by Shadia, while Nigussie and Hassen had taken 556,324 \$ and 6.4 million dollars, respectively, Al-Amoudi had claimed (*Fortune, Dec. 5*).