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A group of Ethiopian bloggers and journalists detained for nearly three months have been charged with terrorism for having links to an outlawed group and for planning attacks, a judge stated. The seven members of the blogging collective Zone Nine and three journalists were arrested in April, prompting an outcry from rights groups who said the case was an assault on press freedom. The group is accused of planning attacks in Ethiopia and working in collusion with the US-based opposition group Ginbot 7, labeled by Ethiopian authorities as a terrorist organization. "They took training in how to make explosives and planned to train others," Judge Tareke Alemayehu told the court. - The Zone Nine website, proclaiming "we blog because we care," features mostly social and political commentary, often critical of the government. The judge said their work was a cover for "clandestine" activities and accused them of plotting "to destabilize the nation" (*AFP, July 19*).

PM Hailemariam defended the controversial extradition of Ginbot 7 leader Andargachew Tsige, arrested last month while transiting through Yemen's Sana'a airport. "It's legal and it is legitimate... this guy has been sentenced sometime before he was captured so I think we will continue on according to the sentence that has been given," he said, but did not confirm the death sentence would be carried out. According to Ethiopian law, the president determines whether the death sentence will be carried out, not the prime minister. HRW accuses Ethiopia of using the anti-terrorism laws to silence dissent and jail critics.

An unknown number of people were arrested at the Anwar Mosque on Friday following clashes between Muslim worshippers and the police. The worshippers took the opportunity to demand the release of the detained Muslims and the police fired shots to disperse those who were chanting slogans. There were no casualties but a number of people were injured and taken to hospital. The roads leading to Teklehaimanot Church and Piazza were closed due to the disturbances (*Addis Adams, July 19*).

Over 130 houses have been burned down in Sheka Zone of the SNNPS following clashes between Sheka and Sheko tribal groups. Large numbers of people have been fleeing to Teppi town since then. News sources said the cause of the clashes is the claim by both sides of a piece of land near the border with Gambella where minerals have reportedly been found. The two sides also clashed seriously some years ago but the conflict was stopped for the moment following police interventions. An undisclosed number of people have also died following the recent clashes (*Reporter, July 16*).

The Ministry of Civil Service (MoCS) has announced that it will make an official statement about salary adjustment for civil servants within the coming two weeks. The recently circulated report regarding the extent of the increment is baseless and came from unknown sources, the Ministry said. Civil Service State Minister, Dr. Misrak Mekonnen, affirmed that her office is still working on the details of the adjustment, and that it will be made public within two weeks. Furthermore, the false information that surfaced recently in some private news outlets is completely unsubstantiated and would not be recognized by the government, according to the minister. Payments starting from the current month, July, will be installed as soon as the necessary work is completed, she added. Dr. Misrak noted that the government is currently engaged in initiatives to solve the housing and transportation problems of civil servants (*State media, July 17*).

Egypt has officially requested the resumption of tripartite talks over Ethiopia's multi-billion-dollar Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) project, after the talks were suspended because of the refusal of the former Egyptian administration to attend, says Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesman Dina Mufti. At his weekly media briefing, the Spokesman said Egypt had formally requested for the resumption of the tripartite dialogue which also includes Sudan. The three countries are the main users of the waters of the River Nile. The return of Egypt to the talks is seen as the result of rigorous efforts by the Ethiopian government to continue the talks, Dina said. The exact date for the resumption of the dialogue is being decided (*ENA, July 16*).

In a report on July 14, the UNHCR said US Assistant Secretary of State Anne Richard expressed shock at the number of South Sudanese refugees flowing into Ethiopia and said she had to persuade the U.S. public to increase their assistance. Richard, the Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (BPRM), was visiting camps in western Ethiopia where 167,000 refugees have arrived since South Sudan descended into civil war last December. Richard's visit came a day before UNHCR and its partners launched an appeal on Friday for US\$658m to respond to the regional refugee crisis. Up to 715,000 South Sudan refugees are expected by the end of the year. The appeal was up from \$371m in March, when the refugee population was forecast to reach 340,000 - less than half the new figure. The ongoing conflict and worsening humanitarian situation inside South Sudan is fuelling a refugee exodus into Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda. Ethiopia has witnessed the biggest surge in arrivals.

Sudan is ranked as the second biggest investor in Ethiopia after China with an estimated \$2.4bn in investments, Awad al-Kareem Sa'eed, President of the Sudanese Investors Society in Addis Ababa, announced. Sa'eed said obtaining investment permits and licenses is a very smooth procedure, contrary to the situation in Sudan. According to the chairman, there are 800 Sudanese businessmen registered with the Ethiopian Ministry of Industry, which is in charge of investments in the country. He noted that the Ethiopian Parliament is expected to debate a new bill for investment. If approved, the new bill will raise the minimum investment capital from \$200 to \$3m (*Sudan Vision Daily, July 15*).

Some 70 Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia graduated from Addis Ababa University with first and second degrees in various disciplines. Five of the refugees graduated with second degree. *About 251 Eritrean refugees graduated from various universities in Ethiopia this academic year* (*WIC, July 14*).

The Ministry of Mines and GPB Global Resources Company signed a petroleum exploration and sharing agreement. ceremony, Minister of Mines Tolosa Shagi said the ministry is striving to work in cooperation with capable business partners to explore and discover the petroleum resources of Ethiopia. The Russian company has secured a petroleum exploration license for seven years, he added. The two countries have been working together in the exploration of gas and petroleum in different parts of the country, including the vast Ogaden Basin, the Abay Basin, the South Omo and the Gambella Basin, according to Tolosa. The minister appreciated GPB Global Resources Company for its interest in working in Ethiopia (*WIC, July 16*).

The African Wildlife Capital, a mission-based investment company has signed agreements with a British-Ethiopian venture to build a world-class boutique hotel in Ethiopia's Simien Mountains National Park, one of Ethiopia's heritages registered by UNESCO. Called Lemalimo Lodge, the hotel will offer high-end accommodation, tailor-made activities, and gourmet cuisine in one of the most beautiful places in the world, according to a press release of the lodge . Funded by the African Wildlife Capital with 1bio USD, the lodge is scheduled to open in the fall of 2015 and bring benefits to the wildlife and people in the area (*WIC, July 16*).