

FESSEHAYE 'JOSHUA' YOHANNES: ERITREA

Fessehaye 'Joshua' Yohannes is an Eritrean poet, playwright, short story writer, lyricist, journalist, and co-owner of the independent *Setit* newspaper. He has been held in incommunicado detention without trial for 22 years. Fessehaye was arrested at his home on the morning of 23 September 2001. He is among 16 independent journalists arrested in a massive crackdown between September and October that year for reporting on an open letter by a group of prominent dissident politicians within Eritrea's ruling party popularly known as the Group of 15 or G-15 and conducting related interviews. In their letter, the G-15 had denounced President Isaias Afwerki's abuse of power and called his actions 'illegal and unconstitutional'. In the crackdown, all independent media outlets were banned in Eritrea, and they have remained so to-date. In April 2002, the detained journalists reportedly began a hunger strike in protest of their prolonged incommunicado detention, demanding a fair trial before a court of law. Shortly after the hunger strike, the detainees were separated and moved to different prisons and detention centres across Eritrea. Ever since, Fessehaye has remained in incommunicado detention and the Eritrean authorities refuse to disclose any details on his location, health, and wellbeing. Based on unverified reports attributed to ex-prison guards, Fessehaye is thought to have died in 2006 or 2007 due to poor health and mistreatment in prison.