



## ETHIOPIA: British reporter unwelcome in Addis Ababa

**New York, February 23, 2006**-A British reporter who recently recounted alleged human rights abuses in Ethiopia was denied press accreditation on Tuesday to work in the African country. Inigo Gilmore, whose report appeared in the London weekly *The Observer*, told the Committee to Protect Journalists that he left the country the same day after Ethiopian authorities made it clear he was unwelcome.

Ethiopian authorities had complained to *The Observer* following a December 4 article by Gilmore based on a reporting trip to Ethiopia. The story, headlined "Ethiopian leader accused over human rights," included accounts of alleged human rights abuses in the wake of election protests. Gilmore provided a similar report to the independent British television station Channel Four the same day. His report included an account from one man who said he endured 19 days of beatings while being held in a crowded, unsafe detention camp.

In January, Ethiopian authorities invited Gilmore to return to the country and suggested that he would be given access to top government officials to get their version of events, *Observer* Foreign Editor Tracy McVeigh said. Foreign journalists must get accreditation from Ethiopia's Information Ministry in addition to a visa, which Gilmore had obtained.

"Here was a reporter seeking to cover the crisis in Ethiopia thoroughly and fairly-and the government's response was to thwart his efforts so that the alarming events in Ethiopia can stay hidden from the rest of world," said Ann Cooper, executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists. "This is all the more worrying in the context of the current crackdown on local journalists, at least 17 of whom are in jail for their work."

Gilmore had traveled to Ethiopia ahead of a court hearing today for dozens of opposition leaders and journalists arrested since post-election protests turned violent in November. The detainees, including 14 journalists, have been charged with serious crimes, including genocide and treason, which carries a possible death penalty. Appearing in court today, the detainees refused to enter pleas because they say the charges are political and they do not believe they will get a fair hearing, according to international media reports. Under Ethiopian law, a plea of not-guilty is entered if the accused remains silent.

Last month, Ethiopia expelled Associated Press correspondent Anthony Mitchell, who had been based in the country for five years, accusing him of "tarnishing the image of the nation repeatedly, contravening journalism ethics" and "disseminating information far from the truth about Ethiopia."