

Ethiopia Drops Treason, Genocide Charges Against VOA Journalists, 13 Others

By VOA News

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An Ethiopian court has dropped charges of treason and genocide against 18 people, including five journalists for the Voice of America.

Judge Adil Ahmed of Ethiopia's Federal High Court ordered the charges dropped Wednesday, at a hearing in the capital, Addis Ababa.

The Ethiopian government continues to prosecute 111 opposition members and others charged following two outbreaks of deadly violence last year.

More than 80 people died when security forces clashed with demonstrators protesting election results the opposition says were rigged.

The five VOA journalists: Negussie Mengesha, Addisu Abebe, Tizita Belachew, Adanech Fessehaye and Solomon Kifle, work in Washington and were never in Ethiopian custody.

VOA Director David Jackson had denounced the charges as false, saying they were designed to intimidate VOA broadcasters

Several others whose charges were dropped were also being tried in absentia.

The next hearing against the opposition members is scheduled for May 2.

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