

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	188
Land:	Uganda
Kilde:	Committee to Protect Journalists
Titel:	Attacks on the Press 2010 – Uganda
Udgivet:	15. februar 2011
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	17. maj 2011

Title	Attacks on the Press 2010 - Uganda
Publisher	Committee to Protect Journalists
Country	Uganda
Publication Date	15 February 2011
Cite as	Committee to Protect Journalists, <i>Attacks on the Press 2010 - Uganda</i> , 15 February 2011, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4d5b95c1c.html [accessed 6 April 2011]

Attacks on the Press 2010 - Uganda

Top Developments

- Electronic surveillance measure enacted; may chill news reporting.
- Court strikes down sedition law used against critical journalists.

Key Statistic

- **5:** Journalists assaulted during clashes between security forces and members of the Buganda kingdom.

Authorities harassed and obstructed journalists covering two stories that shook the nation: a fire that destroyed a historic Buganda kingdom site and twin terror bombings in the capital. The press won an important legal victory as the Constitutional Court struck down a criminal sedition statute that had been used to silence critical journalists. But journalists faced new threats as the president signed a sweeping surveillance measure that could chill news reporting, while the administration drafted legislation that could expand regulatory powers over newspapers. Ruling party officials and supporters assaulted journalists covering opposition candidates in local balloting, an ill omen as the country prepared for the 2011 presidential and parliamentary elections.

Tensions between the government and the traditional kingdom of the Baganda, the largest ethnic group in Uganda, flared in March after a fire of unknown origin destroyed the tombs of the traditional kings, an important historical and spiritual site on Kasubi Hill near the capital, Kampala. Riots ensued as Baganda protesters demanded a thorough investigation into the fire, according to local reports. At least three people died in the clashes. Five journalists were reported injured after being assaulted by either protesters or security forces, according to CPJ interviews. Moses Lemisa, who covered the protests for the pro-government vernacular daily *Bukedde*, said he suffered a hand injury and lost his camera after security agents and then protesters assaulted him. President Yoweri Museveni ordered security agencies to monitor news coverage for any speculation on the government having a hand in the fire. "I have instructed the security forces to scan all tapes, radios, and media because this [rumor] is incredible," he said at a press conference at the State House in Entebbe. No harassment was reported as a result.

The clashes were the second in two years between the government and the Baganda. Several journalists were attacked during riots that broke out in 2009 when the traditional king, Ronald Muwenda Mutebi, was blocked from attending a rally in northern Uganda. The government reacted to the 2009 riots by closing four radio stations, including the prominent Central Broadcasting Service (CBS), owned by the Buganda kingdom. The Broadcasting Council, a government regulatory agency, said broadly that

the stations were inciting violence but never identified specific objectionable content. The other stations resumed broadcasting in the ensuing months, but CBS remained closed until October 2010. A court case filed by CBS, pending in late year, claimed the government acted illegally and demanded compensation. A government counterclaim, which blamed CBS for loss of life during the riots, was dismissed by Uganda's High Court. The Museveni administration has allowed traditional kingdoms to exercise some authority on cultural issues, but relations with the Baganda have grown tense in recent years as kingdom leaders have employed a stronger political voice.

Bomb blasts rocked a club and a restaurant in Kampala in July, killing more than 70 people who had gathered to watch the World Cup final. Stephen Tinkamanyire, a part-time presenter for radio station Vision Voice, was among the victims. Al-Shabaab, a hard-line Islamic group based in Somalia, claimed responsibility for the attacks, an apparent reprisal for Uganda's military support of the central government in Mogadishu. Somalis residing in Uganda felt an immediate backlash. At least 20 were arrested in the aftermath, according to the Ugandan daily *New Vision*. Bille Abdullahi, a former reporter for the independent Somali broadcaster, Radio Shabelle, was arrested by anti-terrorism forces in July and held in Luzira Prison in Kampala until mid-September, according to exiled Somali journalists. Abdullahi was not charged.

Authorities sought to restrict reporting on the police investigation into the bombings. An August injunction issued by a Nakawa chief magistrate's court prohibited news media from publishing any information about the investigations. The injunction was largely ignored by the media, said Barbara Kaija, chief editor of *New Vision*. Police accused Timothy Kalyegira, editor of the online *Uganda Record*, of sedition after he published a commentary speculating that the Ugandan government was involved in the bomb attacks. Police detained Kalyegira for several hours, took his laptop, cell phone, and passport, and demanded the passwords to his e-mail accounts, the journalist told CPJ.

Just days after the bombing, parliament adopted the Interception of Communications Act, allowing security agents to tap phone conversations and monitor e-mails whenever they suspect a potential security breach. "The law effectively turns Uganda into one Big Brother House," columnist Isaac Mufumba wrote in *The Independent*, a private bimonthly. "Big Brother will listen in on your conversations with your wife, friend, or colleague and read text messages and e-mails to and from your spouse and friends." The measure, which the president quickly signed, would require cell-phone users to register SIM cards and would create a government center to monitor mobile use.

The press won a major legal victory in August when Uganda's Constitutional Court declared the criminal sedition statute to be unconstitutional. The court ruled on a petition filed by the East African Media Institute and Andrew Mwenda, a 2008 CPJ International Press Freedom Awardee who had been targeted with 17 counts of sedition over the years. The panel of five judges, led by Deputy Chief Justice Leticia Mukasa Kikonyogo, unanimously ruled that the sedition law contravened Article 29 of the Ugandan Constitution, which guarantees the right to free speech, Mwenda's lawyer, James Nangwala, told CPJ. The government planned to appeal the ruling to the Supreme Court, the highest court in Uganda. If upheld, the ruling would lift a legal cloud over more than a dozen other journalists who had been charged with sedition in recent years (including, most recently, the *Uganda Record's* Kalyegira). Prosecution of sedition cases has been stayed while the constitutional challenge is pending.

Mwenda, founder of *The Independent*, did not persuade the Constitutional Court to strike down the charge of "promoting sectarianism" under Uganda's penal code. Facing eight counts of "promoting sectarianism," the journalist planned to appeal. His lawyer, Nangwala, said the statute's language is so vague that it can be used to silence critical reporting. "If a reporter writes about a marginalized ethnic group, for instance, that can be considered promoting sectarianism," he said.

Journalists faced a new legal battle in March, when the government outlined plans to amend the 1995 Ugandan Press and Journalist Act. As initially proposed, the amendment would require newspapers to obtain licenses annually from a regulatory agency known as

the Media Council. Under the plan, the council could deny licenses to media houses based on such vague criteria as the "social, cultural, and economic values of the newspaper" and the "proof of existence of adequate technical facilities." The measure would also impose fines and suspensions against media houses that "publish material prejudicial to national security, stability, and unity" and material "tantamount to economic sabotage." On World Press Freedom Day in May, scores of journalists marched in Kampala to denounce the proposal, according to local reports. Information Minister Kabakumba Masiko told CPJ in September that the government was willing to compromise on the proposed language and said it would consult media representatives before presenting a formal bill to parliament. The measure's vague clause on "economic sabotage" could further impede reporting on recently discovered oil reserves in the western part of the country. Independent journalists reported ongoing difficulty in obtaining documents and information related to oil exploration.

As the 2011 presidential and parliamentary elections crept closer, journalists covering opposition candidates were targeted by operatives for the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM). The Kalangala Action Plan – a militia that journalists said had links to the government – abducted and assaulted editor Moses Kasibante during midterm parliamentary voting in Mukono North in May, the journalist told CPJ. Kasibante, an editor for *Ggwanga*, a Luganda-language weekly, was considered a supporter of the opposition party candidate. Kasibante said militia members abducted him at a polling station and took him to a house in Mukono where they interrogated and beat him for two hours. CPJ documented seven other cases in which NRM officials or supporters assaulted journalists covering opposition party activities.

One journalist was slain in direct connection to his work. In September, motorcycle taxi drivers beat freelance journalist Paul Kiggundu to death, local journalists told CPJ. Kiggundu was attacked while he was filming some drivers demolishing a house in a town outside of Kalisizo in southwest Uganda. The home belonged to another driver who was accused of committing murder and robbery. Five suspects had been arrested in late year.

Copyright notice: © Committee to Protect Journalists. All rights reserved. Articles may be reproduced only with permission from CPJ.
