



Attacks on the Press 2010: Africa Developments

ATTACKS ON THE PRESS: 2010

- [Main Index](#)

AFRICA

Regional Analysis:

- [Across Continent, Governments Criminalize Investigative Reporting](#)

Country Summaries

- [Angola](#)
- [Cameroon](#)
- [Democratic Republic of Congo](#)
- [Ethiopia](#)
- [Nigeria](#)
- [Rwanda](#)
- [Somalia](#)
- [South Africa](#)
- [Uganda](#)
- [Zimbabwe](#)
- [Other nations](#)

BOTSWANA

In August, a group of 32 media and civil-society members filed a petition with the country's High Court challenging the constitutionality of the 2008 Media Practitioners Act. Among other things, the law required the registration and accreditation of journalists, and established a government-controlled press council to monitor and sanction the press, according to the Media Institute of Southern Africa and news reports. The court challenge was pending in late year.

BURUNDI

Authorities detained Jean-Claude Kavumbagu, editor of the online news outlet *Net Press*, in July on treason charges in connection with commentary critical of the country's security forces, according to his lawyer and local journalists. The charge stemmed from a July 12 story in which Kavumbagu questioned the ability of Burundian security forces to prevent terror bombings similar to those that struck Uganda earlier that month. Defense lawyer Gabriel Sinarinzi told CPJ that the journalist was being held in pretrial detention at Mpimba Prison in Bujumbura. The charge, which was pending in late year, could bring life imprisonment.

CHAD

In August, parliament passed legislation decriminalizing defamation, but introducing prison sentences for journalists and suspensions of media outlets found guilty of "inciting racial or ethnic hatred" or justifying violence, according to news reports. The legislation provided only vague definitions of incitement. Penalties include prison terms up to six months and fines up to 1 million CFA francs (US\$2,000).

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Authorities in Bata ordered the arrest of Pedro Luís Esono Edu Bidang, a reporter for state Radio Bata, in February after he broadcast a news item on the discovery of several bodies in a city landfill, according to local journalists and news reports. The journalist was released without charge after three days in police custody.

CPJ and dozens of organizations and prominent individuals called on UNESCO to reject a US\$3 million

donation from President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo that would have created an international prize in life sciences. CPJ and others, pointing to the nation's long record of press repression and human rights violations, said the prize would be an affront to UNESCO and its principles. In October, UNESCO's executive board indefinitely suspended action on the prize. With the United States and several European countries saying they would never agree to go forward with the prize, the plan appeared to be virtually dead.

GABON

In June, a criminal court sentenced Jonas Moulenda, a reporter for the state-owned daily *L'Union*, to a three-month prison term and a fine of 500,000 CFA francs (US\$1,000) on charges of criminal defamation. The conviction was based on an article raising questions about the unsolved November 2009 murder of a government official, defense lawyer Lubin Ntoutoume told CPJ. Moulenda, who reported receiving numerous death threats, was free in late year pending an appeal.

GAMBIA

In a February submission to the U.N. Human Rights Council, the Gambian government denied having any knowledge about the whereabouts or condition of detained journalist "Chief" Ebrima Manneh. Witnesses have told CPJ and a regional human rights court that security agents arrested Manneh in the newsroom of the *Daily Observer* in 2007 in connection with his plans to run a critical news story. The journalist was seen a handful of times since then in state custody, witnesses said, but the government has refused to disclose his location, legal status, or health. "The government has investigated his whereabouts, but to no avail," Gambian officials said in a report submitted to the Human Rights Council as part of its periodic review. In March, four U.S. senators urged Commonwealth of Nations Secretary-General Kamalesh Sharma to launch an investigation into Manneh's disappearance.

Abdoulie John, a correspondent for the U.K.-based website *Jollof News*, said he received telephone death threats in May after writing a critical story about remarks given by Justice Minister Edward Gomez. In comments made to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Gomez denied that Gambian officials had committed human rights violations and blamed the country's poor reputation on "sensational and fabricated" reporting, according to local journalists and news reports. John's story noted that the remarks were greeted with skepticism.

In September, pro-government media reported that President Yahya Jammeh had received two awards and a letter of congratulations from U.S. President Barack Obama. White House officials told CPJ the claim was untrue. Jammeh had also claimed two other awards, one from a German group whose existence CPJ could not verify. The other, an honorary, tongue-in-cheek "admiralship" bestowed by the U.S. state of Nebraska, was withdrawn by the governor following CPJ's inquiries. The pro-government media's credulous reporting on the purported awards reflected a pervasive climate of repression, CPJ's Washington Representative Frank Smyth wrote on the CPJ Blog.

GHANA

Police charged Ato Kwamena Dadzie, acting editor of the Accra-based station Joy FM, with airing news "with intent to cause fear and alarm." Charges were brought in July after the journalist refused to reveal his sources for a story detailing death threats made against members of the Ghana Real Estate Developers Association who had opposed a government housing deal, defense lawyer Shadrach Arhin told CPJ. Dadzie was free pending a decision by the attorney general on whether to proceed with the case.

GUINEA

In June, the military-led Transitional National Council enacted legislation establishing a new media regulatory agency and requiring all news websites to register with the government. The legislation continued to treat defamation as a criminal offense but replaced prison penalties with fines.

GUINEA-BISSAU

In May, assailants destroyed the Bissau offices of the private weekly *Diário de Bissau* and threatened owner and veteran publisher João de Barros over the paper's investigative coverage of drug trafficking in the country, according to news reports. No injuries or arrests were reported.

IVORY COAST

With presidential election results in dispute in December, the National Council of Audiovisual Communication ordered the satellite transmission company Canal+ Cote d'Ivoire to stop carrying international news channels, according to news reports. The ban, which affected about 10 French-language channels, came shortly after several stations aired a press conference at which the electoral commission declared challenger Alassane Ouattara the winner over incumbent Laurent Gbagbo. The results were immediately invalidated by the Constitutional Court, which said the tally had been announced after a legal deadline had passed. The court instead declared Gbagbo the winner.

In February, government regulators suspended the satellite feeds of broadcaster France24 after the station reported on an antigovernment demonstration in the southwestern city of Gagnoa, according to news reports and local journalists. Several people died after security forces opened fire on protesters, news reports said. The suspension was lifted after 11 days.

In August, a criminal court judge sentenced reporter Traoré Médandjé of the daily *L'Intelligent d'Abidjan* to one year in prison and a fine of 5 million CFA francs (US\$10,000) on charges of defamation and extortion over a story alleging corruption by a former health official. Médandjé was free in late year pending appeal.

KENYA

Joel Eshikumo, a journalist for the private *Weekly Citizen* newspaper, was released after serving eight months in a prison in the western town of Bungoma. He was convicted of criminal defamation in September 2009 over a story accusing Kenya's ambassador to Canada, Simon Nabukwesi, of misappropriating funds in his former position as a school principal, local journalists told CPJ.

NAMIBIA

Four assailants, including three supporters of the ruling SWAPO political party, attacked freelance journalist John Grobler in January, cutting his face with broken glass, according to local journalists. One of the assailants accused the journalist of writing negative pieces about SWAPO, according to a police report. No arrests were reported.

NIGER

In June, the transitional military government enacted legislation decriminalizing libel and other press offenses and setting up a new media regulatory agency, according to local journalists. Passage of the legislation followed the reopening of the national Press House, a press support center funded by the state, after its

closure in 2008 by the administration of deposed leader Mamadou Tandja, according to news reports.

REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The media regulatory agency, the High Council on Freedom of Communication, issued a series of censorship orders in May, according to news reports and local journalists. On May 7, the agency suspended the weekly *Le Choc* for three months in connection with stories critical of France. Five days later, it suspended the weekly *Le Trottoir* for two months over a story implicating an official in a corruption scandal. And in late May, the agency slapped a two-month suspension on the human rights broadcaster, Forum TV and Radio, over a commentary critical of the government.

SENEGAL

In June, plainclothes police raided the printing house of the private daily *Le Populaire*, news reports said. Agents seized printing plates and copies of an edition that carried a petition demanding an investigation into missing licensing fees paid to the government by a private telecommunications company, according to the Media Foundation for West Africa.

SWAZILAND

The brother of King Mswati III threatened journalists in public comments made during a July national policy forum, according to local journalists and news reports. The independent *Times of Swaziland* quoted Prince Mahlaba as saying: "I want to warn the media to bury things that have the potential of undermining the country rather than publish all and everything even when such reports are harmful to the country's international image. Journalists who continue to write bad things about the country will die." The prince was a member of an influential royal council advising the king on public policy, including media issues, according to local journalists. The king did not address the prince's statements.

In January, Attorney General Majahenkhaba Dlamini ordered the independent *Times of Swaziland* to stop publishing a weekly opinion column by Mario Masuku, leader of the banned opposition group, People's United Democratic Movement, according to the Media Institute of Southern Africa. The government has labeled the movement a terrorist group. The paper complied with the order.

In an October address to parliament, Prime Minister Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini accused columnists of tarnishing the country's image and taking payments from unnamed foreign interests, according to the Media Institute of Southern Africa. The prime minister said he would pursue legislation requiring newspaper columnists to seek government permission before they write critically about the country.

TANZANIA

Information Minister George Mkuchika suspended the independent Swahili weekly *Kulikoni* for 90 days under the 1976 Newspaper Act, presidential spokesman Salva Rweyemamu told CPJ. The January ruling stemmed from a November 2009 story that detailed alleged cheating in national exams for the Tanzania Peoples' Defense Force, Managing Editor Evarist Mwitumba told CPJ.

TOGO

Freelance photojournalist Tony Sodji suffered burn marks and lacerations to his arms and hands while covering opposition protests in September and October, according to local journalists and news reports. The injuries were caused by tear gas canisters thrown by plainclothes security agents dispersing demonstrations by

members of the opposition Republican Front for Change.

ZAMBIA

In June, a magistrate sentenced Fred M'membe, editor-in-chief of *The Post*, Zambia's largest newspaper, to a prison term of four months at hard labor on contempt-of-court charges. The charges stemmed from a November 2009 commentary that criticized the government's prosecution of *Post* News Editor Chansa Kabwela, defense lawyer Remmy Mainza said. Kabwela was acquitted in 2009 on baseless charges of obscenity that had drawn international derision. M'membe, a former CPJ International Press Freedom Awardee, was free in late year pending an appeal.

February 15, 2011 12:01 AM ET | [Permalink](#)