



TAEF STATEMENT ON WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY 2024

African Governments Must End Media Restrictions and Censorship

Nairobi, May 3, 2024 - On World Press Freedom Day, The African Editors' Forum (TAEF) reaffirms its unwavering commitment to a free, independent, and diverse media landscape across the continent. Yet, as we celebrate the vital role journalists play in fostering democracy and accountability, we must acknowledge the persistent challenges that threaten this ideal, and we cannot remain silent in the face of egregious violations.

We see a worrying trend of shrinking media freedom in several African countries. Governments continue to impose restrictions and censorship, hindering the free flow of information. Way too many African journalists have been forced into exile. Way too many leaders continue to disparage journalistic work and to troll journalists. Recent operational challenges have unfortunately sparked a dangerous resurgence of self-censorship, silencing critical voices and hindering the public's right to know.

The recent clampdowns on the press in Burkina Faso and Burundi serve as stark reminders of the fragility of press freedom.

TAEF expresses deep concern over the Burkina Faso authorities' targeting of independent journalists. Forcing truth seekers to abandon their critical role and become soldiers on the war front is not only a violation of press freedom but a disservice to the nation. Journalists play a vital role in holding power accountable and informing the public, and their safety must be guaranteed.



The arrest of journalist Sandra Muhoza in Burundi over a comment made in a private journalists' WhatsApp group exemplifies the increasingly intolerant environment for independent media. TAEF calls for the immediate release of Ms. Muhoza and urges the Burundian government to engage in constructive dialogue with journalists, not silence them.

While Africa embraces the possibilities of technology, the digital divide remains a significant barrier. Limited access to reliable Internet and technology creates hurdles for journalists reporting in real-time and for citizens to access diverse media sources. As Artificial Intelligence (AI) transforms the media landscape, this divide threatens to widen, further marginalizing those without access. We must bridge this gap to ensure all Africans benefit from a truly inclusive information ecosystem.

Many African media houses grapple with financial constraints. Limited advertising revenue, coupled with political interference, stifles investigative journalism and the production of quality content. The debate about government advertising in Kenya clearly manifests vested interests. TAEF calls on big tech companies to adopt fair compensation models that ensure news organizations receive a just share of revenue generated from their content. This is essential for the financial sustainability and long-term viability of independent media.

The spread of misinformation and "false news" poses a major threat, eroding public trust and potentially fueling violence. We advocate for stricter fact-checking mechanisms and ethical reporting practices within newsrooms. Sensationalism and bias have no place in responsible journalism.

Women remain significantly underrepresented in media as both journalists and sources. This undermines the richness and inclusivity of the media narrative. TAEF champions initiatives that empower women journalists and ensure their voices are heard in newsrooms and on airwaves.



Journalists in Africa continue to face significant safety risks. Harassment, intimidation, and physical violence are chilling realities. TAEF urges governments and all stakeholders to prioritize the safety of journalists, allowing them to fulfill their crucial role without fear.

On this World Press Freedom Day, let us recommit to building a media landscape in Africa that is truly free, independent, and empowers all voices. It's a collective responsibility - for journalists, media owners, governments, and citizens alike. A strong, vibrant media is the cornerstone of a thriving democracy, and together, we can ensure it flourishes across the continent.

For and on behalf of The African Editors Forum (TAEF)

CHURCHILL OTIENO
PRESIDENT

Note to Editors:

About TAEF: TAEF is the continent's premier editors' guild that represents senior journalists, whose primary responsibility is to defend media freedom, champion journalistic excellence, and be a leading voice for media advocacy. It unites five regional editors' forums and dozens of national associations.