



## **Annex to the Declaration of Table Mountain**

### **Abolishing “Insult Laws” in Africa and Setting Free Press Higher on the Agenda**

**2010**

#### ***June***

According to reports from **Rwanda**, Jean Leonard Rugambage, the acting editor of the Umuvugizi newspaper, was shot outside his home on June 24. Mr Rugambage recently published an article on the Umuvugizi website alleging that Rwandan officials were involved in the attempted murder of a former Rwandan general, Faustin Kayumba Nyamwasa, in South Africa on June 19, 2010.

Observers are concerned that his death may be related to publication of this article and that the environment for journalists and news publishers in Rwanda is worsening ahead of the presidential elections due to take place in August 2010. The trend can be illustrated by the closure of two independent newspapers, Umuseso and Umuvugizi, journalists being reportedly put under surveillance and a journalist being attacked after carrying out an interview with an opposition party member. According to reports, Mr Rugambage complained to a friend of being under constant surveillance before his death.

In **Zambia** on 4 June Fred M'membe, editor of The Post newspaper, was sentenced to four months of hard labour for contempt of court. He was detained for three days before being released on bail on 7 June pending an appeal.

The charge arose from the publication of an opinion piece by a US-based Zambian legal professor during the trial of The Post news editor, Chansa Kabwela, in August 2009. The article described the case against Ms Kabwela as a "comedy of errors".

Ms Kabwela was arrested last July on charges of "circulating obscene materials" after sending two photographs of a woman giving birth in the street outside a hospital to the vice-president, the minister of health and other officials to highlight a health workers' strike. The photographs were not published in the newspaper. In October, a court ruled that Ms Kabwela had no case to answer.

## **May**

Pre-election violence in **Burundi** continues and the threats to freedom of expression were exacerbated by the expulsion of Human Rights Watch observer Neela Ghoshal in May, sending a clear message to journalists and other observers that criticism of the government in the lead up to elections will not be tolerated.

**Egyptian** Foreign Affairs Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit filed a criminal defamation lawsuit against independent journalist Hamdi Kandil. He faces up to six months in jail and a discretionary fine if convicted.

Expatriate journalist Tedros Menghistu Wondefrash, publisher and editor of *Selam* was attacked in Houston, Texas, by supporters of **Eritrean** President Isaias Afwerki. Wondefrash is well known for his critical reporting on the Eritrean government.

During May a new Anti-Terrorism law was proclaimed in **Ethiopia**, citing definitions of terrorism so vague they could apply to many legitimate forms of expression, including criminalising public debate that “encourages terrorism” or allowing journalists to be put under surveillance in order to identify their sources.

In **Sudan**, the opposition newspaper, *Rai al-Shaab*, was closed and four of its journalists arrested on grounds of false news.

## **April**

The media situation remains critical in **Cameroon**. On 22 April, Ngota Ngota Germain, editor of the weekly *Cameroun Express* died in jail after six weeks’ detention, due to a lack of essential medical treatment. Journalists Simon Herve Nko'o, from the weekly *Bebela*, and Serge Sabouang of the bi-monthly *La Nation*, were detained in February for allegedly possessing a document that could expose disturbing information about the head of the state-run oil company.

## **March**

Lucien Pungu, a journalist from the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, was sentenced in absentia to one year in prison and fined more than US\$12,000 on the charge of libel, following a publication on the website, *Congo Blog*, which he was erroneously attributed.

In **Ghana**, a media company was threatened by a group of young Ashanti men, which demanded that a journalist Ato Kwamena be sacked for allegedly insulting their king.

A month after a military coup in **Niger**, a three-day national conference was held to discuss the goal of putting an end to the criminalisation of press offences. Since the junta took over, the draft law has been approved; the Niamey Press Club reopened and prison

sentences for journalists repealed.

In **Somalia**, Al-Shabaab militants arrested three journalists – the manager of *Markabley* radio Ahmed Omar Salihi and two of the station’s reporters, for broadcasting reports critical of the militia.

## **February**

Two journalists from **Uganda**’s *Sunday Monitor* were charged with libel by President Museveni on the grounds that they “defamed him” after comparing him to former Philippine leader Ferdinand Marcos. The climate in Uganda for journalists remains difficult, with increasing reports from human rights groups suggesting there is a concerted campaign by the ruling party threatening, harassing and intimidating journalists who are critical of their government.

## **January**

There are growing concerns about restrictions on the media in **Ethiopia**. In January *Al-Quds* editor Ezedin Mohamed was sentenced to one year in prison for his column criticising Prime Minister Meles Zenawi’s statements about religious affairs in Ethiopia.

One of **Morocco**'s sole independent publications, *Le Journal Hebdomadaire*, was closed in late January for bankruptcy. Since it was founded in 1997, the weekly had been a fierce critic of the government and ruling monarch and it effectively pushed the ‘red lines’. Officially the closing of the Journal was due to a towering debt in unpaid taxes and social contributions, and a 270,000 euros fine for libel, yet it is believed that the Moroccan government orchestrated both an advertising boycott and unusually speedy bankruptcy trial in a bid to silence the magazine.

# **2009**

## **December**

In **Ghana**, journalists have been subjected to regular threats and harassment, particularly from political militants. In late December, ruling party supporters attacked five journalists, accusing them of biased reporting.

In **Morocco**, several journalists were fined and sentenced to jail during the last months, while leading independent newspapers were seized after reporting on King Mohamed

VI's rule and health, and printing a cartoon that was considered "disrespectful of a member of the royal family."

In **Uganda**, the government continues to use sedition, defamation and incitement laws to repress voices of dissent, and to curtail press freedom. At least 16 journalists were facing a variety of criminal charges at the end of the year.

## **November**

In **Algeria**, a court decision banned a supplement of Al Monaqsa newspaper on the grounds that it was unlicensed. According to the newspaper's staff however, the decision is the result of the newspaper's recent reporting on corruption and the embezzlement of public funds.

The **Egyptian** government's hardline view is underscored by its refusal to release imprisoned blogger Kareem Amer, denying his right to be released after having completed three quarters of his prison term, per legal stipulations for all prisoners. Amer was expected to be released on 5 November 2009, after spending three years in the Borg Al Arab prison on charge on insulting president and Islam, however officials at the Egyptian prisons department, which is affiliated with the Interior Ministry, announced that his release request would not be approved by the State Security Service, and that instead the release order would have to come from "high above," referencing the office of the president.

**Sierra Leone's** Supreme Court declined to repeal provisions of the 1965 Public Order Act stipulating prison terms for journalists found guilty of libel or defamation, ruling that the Law is in line with the country's constitution and that "journalists are under no imminent threat." The decision was rendered despite claims by Sierra Leone Association of Journalists' (SLAJ) that the 1965 text contradicted the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression.

## **October**

In **Tunisia**, journalist Taoufik Ben Brik was accused of assault on a woman and arrested following the publication of a series of critical articles on the recent re-election of President Ben Ali.

The **Ivory Coast's** media regulatory body, the 'Conseil National de la Presse,' levied heavy fines against the daily Le Nouveau Reveil for libel against the Prime Minister, Guillaume Soro. The daily was ordered to pay 5 million FCFA (approximately 7,500 Euros) after publishing an article entitled "Soro talking nonsense after jaunt to China." The daily is closely linked to the Parti Démocratique, which currently supports an opposition leader for the next presidential elections.

The Parliament of **Togo** adopted a draft law that extended the powers of the regulatory body in charge of broadcasting and communications, and leaving independent media exposed to a wide scope of restrictions and regulations that could limit freedom of expression. The law can potentially be abused for political purposes and the High Council for Broadcasting and Communication (HAAC) has already banned several publications, while suspending interactive radio and TV programmes. The new law allows the Council to not only impose sanctions on media companies in Togo, but also the right to seize equipment, increase the durations of media bans, and withdraw journalists' accreditations.

In **Niger**, Abdoulaye Tiémogo, editor of the independent weekly *Le Canard Déchaîné*, who had been arrested in the past on several occasions, was finally released in October 2009 after spending two months in prison on charges of discrediting a judicial decision. The poor conditions in which he had been detained had caused his health to deteriorate, and he had suffered from several illnesses including malaria.

## ***September***

Ibrahim Soumana Gaoh, the director of weekly **Niger** news magazine *Le Témoin*, was arrested in September 2009 on charges of defaming the communications minister, Mohamed Ben Omar, in an article on his involvement in a financial scandal.

In **Nigeria**, both government and criminal gangs intimidate and sanction journalists who report on corruption and criminal activities. Bayo Ohu, assistant news editor of the Nigerian daily *The Guardian*, was shot dead on 20 September by a group of up to five gunmen as he was preparing to attend a church service.

## ***August***

Authorities in **Senegal** continue to turn a blind eye to violence against journalists and independent media. On 17 August, 10 men armed with knives and teargas grenades raided the premises of the privately owned daily newspapers *L'As* and *24 heures*, destroying their equipment and printing supplies. The attack was an escalation of the conflict between Senegal's handicraft and air transport minister, Farba Senghor and a number of newspapers, after the latter published information concerning his personal life. In a separate incident, followers of religious leader Serigne Modou Kara Mbacke raided the premises of the media group *Wal Fadjri* on 25 September, damaging its offices and capturing *Wal Fadjri*'s CEO. The attack followed the publication of an article alleging that a religious leader was supporting the Senegalese President in return for donations.

## ***June***

The **Sudanese** parliament passed a new press law allowing the National Press and Publication Council to shut down any media outlet at its own discretion, for a period of up to three days.

Six journalists were arrested in **Gambia** on charges of sedition and defamation of President Yahya Jammeh after they supported a press union statement criticizing the president over public comments he made about Deyda Hydara, a journalist who was brutally murdered in 2004 by still unknown attackers. On 6 August, the Banjul High Court handed down a two-year sentence for each journalist and a total fine of 500,000 dalasis (approx. \$18,000). All journalists were later released on 3 September after being granted a presidential pardon.

## ***May***

In Nigeria, the government continues to intimidate and sanction journalists who report on alleged cases of government corruption.

In Sudan, the government is intensifying its campaign to intimidate journalists and others who criticise the authorities

## **2008**

### ***November***

In the course of October and November, the **Egyptian** security service has conducted an aggressive campaign against bloggers and Internet activists who are critical of the country's authoritarian regime, raiding the houses of several prominent bloggers, seizing their computers, arresting and prosecuting them.

### ***October***

In Tunisia, the public prosecutor issued in October a court summons to Neziha Rejiba, editor of the online magazine Kalima and one of the country's most critical journalists. In an article for the weekly Mouatinoun, Rejiba accused the government of being behind the recent destruction of Kalima. Authorities also seized all copies of Mouatinoun.

### ***September***

In **Lesotho**, a defunct weekly, The Mirror, its editor and the printing company were handed a M50 000 (5,700 EUR) fine on 29 September for defaming Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili, for an article published in April 2001 which according to the court made "political insinuations that were highly defamatory." The court stated "there was no justification whatsoever for those allegations and the defendants negligently published them without bothering to establish their truthfulness."

In **Tunisia**, security agents detained Slim Boukhdhir, an online writer, for two hours, demanding that he stops his work. Boukhdhir had just written an article urging Ben Ali to follow the advice of U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and loosen the state's grip on the civil society. Authorities had harassed Boukhdhir in the past, jailing him for several months earlier in the year.

In **Senegal**, which was once a beacon for freedom of expression in West Africa, El Malick Seck, editor of the daily 24 Heures Chrono, was sentenced on 12 September to three years in jail by a Dakar court for "activity liable to disrupt public order and cause serious political unrest", "disseminating false news", "public insult" and "illegal possession of government documents". 24 Heures Chrono was suspended for three months. The charges related to an article published on 28 August that claimed that President Abdoulaye Wade and his son Karim were involved in money laundering.

## ***August***

In Gambia, Fatou Jaw Manneh, a contributor to the AllGambian.net website, was sentenced to four years in prison on charges of "sedition" and publication of "false news intended to create public fear and alarm" for criticising President Yahya Jammeh. A former reporter for the privately-owned Daily Observer, she was tried for an article published in October 2005 in which she accused President Jammeh of "tearing our beloved country to shreds" and described him as "a bundle of terror."

## ***June***

The National Communications Council of **Guinea** banned the publications La Vérité, L'Observateur and La Nouvelle for extended periods earlier this year in retaliation for separate articles critical of the presidential administration, the government and the army.

## ***May***

In **Zimbabwe**, the Standard editor, Davison Maruziva, was charged with "publishing false statements prejudicial to the state and contempt of court" for publishing an editorial by opposition leader Arthur Mutambara that was critical of President Robert Mugabe's regime.

## ***April***

In **Uganda**, the bimonthly independent publication The Independent has been in the government's spotlight since April following investigations the paper led into illegal detention centers in the suburbs of Kampala. Police raided the paper's premises, seized equipment and arrested staff, on charges of "possessing seditious materials" and "publishing inflammatory materials."

## **March**

An article published by the Arabic-language Al Massae daily in **Morocco** led to a strong division of the country's press in early 2008. The article reported on a supposed homosexual marriage ceremony, which resulted in attacks on the people that allegedly participated in the ceremony. In the end, jail sentences were handed to the people present at the supposed marriage on charges of « sexual perversion » but also to Rachid Ninni, director of the Al Massae press group, for libel. He received a record-high fine of six million dirhams (524,000 euros), which jeopardizes the entire operations of the newspaper group.

In **Niger**, the managing editor of an independent bi-weekly publication, L'Eveil Plus, was sentenced in February to one month in prison following a complaint filed by the State Prosecutor of the Niamey Court. The charge stemmed from an opinion piece critical of the judiciary's contrasted handling of two high-profile corruption cases.

In **Gabon**, the National Communications Council is instrumental in the government's arsenal to silence critical reporting. Among the latest sanctions was a three-month ban imposed in March on the private publication Tendance Gabon after it republished Le Monde's article on French investigations into the private luxury Parisian residences acquired by five leaders of oil-rich African nations, including President Omar Bongo.

## **2007**

In **DRC**, Jean Pierre Phambu Lutete, publisher of the Kinshasa-based bi-weekly newspaper "La Tolerance", was arrested by the Kinshasa Provincial Police Inspection (IPK) unit when he arrived for an interview with Pauline Ipelueka, a senior official with Kinshasa's property tax office, to discuss a criminal case against her. He was charged with "threatening and attempted extortion" of Ipelueka. Lutete told JED from his cell that he had been preparing an article in which he criticised Ipelueka's recent appointment to a high-level post in view of the fact she was facing charges of "breach of trust" brought by the Kinshasa/Kalamu High Court's prosecutor.

Michel Mutabesha Bakuza, a reporter with state funded public broadcaster Radiotelevision Nationale Congolaise (RTNC), was indefinitely suspended by officials for allegedly "breaching the station's editorial policy" after he aired an interview with dissident Congolese General Laurent Nkunda "without prior consent from the station's management". In the interview Nkunda criticised the government over the pace of the integration of his troops into the Congolese armed forces.

Authorities in the central diamond mining town of Mbuji-Mayi closed down a private broadcaster on Sunday in connection with comments critical of the provincial governor that aired on two programmes the previous week.



In **Mauritania**, Abdel Fettah Ould Ebeidna, managing editor of the daily newspaper "Al-Aqsa", was illegally jailed in Nouakchott after he had been ordered to report to a police station by Judge Mohamed Talhata because of a libel complaint against him by businessman Mohamed Ould Bouammatou, who the paper had said was involved in a large-scale cocaine racket in the northern town of Nouadhibou, along with the son of a former president, a politician and the sons of several prominent figures. Under the country's new 2005-2006 press law, libel and printing "inaccurate news" are no longer punishable by imprisonment and a press and broadcasting regulatory body, HAPPA, has been set up.

In **Liberia**, the management of the "Liberian Express" bi-weekly newspaper has been threatened with a US \$20,000 libel action by a ruling Unity Party member of the House of Representatives of Liberia, Dusty Wolokollie, who accused the newspaper of publishing "a falsehood against him". The newspaper had linked him to a meeting allegedly held in London to make an oil deal with the management of the Broadway Consolidated company, a UK-based mineral company which entered into an off-shore concession agreement with the Government of Liberia. Wolokollie says he will not request a retraction or complain to the Press Union of Liberia; instead he intends "to teach the Liberian media a lesson".

## ***April***

In **Algeria**, Yasser Abdelhai a journalist with the Echourouk El Youmi daily was sentenced to pay four million dinars (40,000 euros) in damages for four defamation cases. Abdelhai has had 26 cases brought against him since 2002.

Algiers Appeals Court imposed suspended sentences of six months' imprisonment and a fine of Dinars 50,000 (Euros 530) on Arabic-language daily "Ech-Chourouk" editor Ali Fodil and one of his journalists Nanla Berrahal for defamation of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi in reports which, it was alleged, "attacked his person, the Libyan state and the security of the Algerian and Libyan states".

Arezki Ant-Larbi, correspondent of the French dailies "Le Figaro" and "Ouest France", was detained at Algiers airport as he was about to board a flight to France on the basis of a 1997 warrant when he was found guilty of libel as a result of a complaint by a former justice ministry official who complained of an article in the weekly "L'Evenement" in 1994 about his department's slowness to respond to allegations of mistreatment of detainees in Lambose prison.

In **Central African Republic**, a Bangui criminal court sentenced Ngady to two months' imprisonment following his jailing on March 13 and imposed a fine of CFA fr300,000 (\$636) in connection with his statements critical of the governmental High Communication Council.

In **DRC**, After 132 days spent in the cells of Kinshasa's Secret Service Police and the city's main prison reporter/cameraman Papy Ntembe Moroni of the privately-owned Canal Congo Television (CCTV), was 'provisionally' released without trial but accused

of "inciting hatred and violence, spreading false rumours and public insults". He claims he suffered severe brutality. Papy Ntembe, is a native of Equateur province. He is being held under special confinement and has been refused visitors, even his lawyer.

In **Djibouti**, Houssein Ahmed Farah, a contributor to the opposition weekly "Le Renouveau" and member of the Movement for Democratic Renewal (MRD), was detained following accusations that he had written an article in the newspaper on 26 April that linked President Ismael Omar Guelleh to an alleged sex scandal involving a businessman from Dubai. Farah was freed on 13 May after a judge ruled there was not enough evidence to establish that he wrote the article. Within hours of his release, police from the department of criminal and special cases carried out another raid on Le Renouveau's premises in the capital's Hayableh neighbourhood, where newly acquired printing material was being stored, and have prevented it from publishing.

**Egyptian** authorities arrested blogger Abdel Moneim Mahmoud, 27, and detained him for 30 days pending an investigation into charges that he belongs to the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood and that he defamed the government with his reporting. Mahmoud used his blog to expose torture of civilians by Egyptian authorities and the country's practice of trying civilians in military courts. Mahmoud's lawyer Islam Lutfi said "Egyptian authorities use temporary detention as a form of punishment", and could extend Mahmoud's detention by 15-day increments to enable him to be kept in custody for months.

**Ethiopia's** High Court acquitted Kifle Mulat, the exiled president of the banned Ethiopian Free Press Journalists Association, of the single charge of "outrage to the constitution and the constitutional order" over his organisation's criticism of the government crackdown on journalists and politicians in November 2006, according to local media reports.

In **Ghana**, reporter Kojo Hayford and cameraman Lord Asante Fordjour of Accra-based independent TV station, TV3, were attacked when they went to the office of Raymond Gbegoah, Coordinating Director of Akuapem South District Assembly in the Eastern Region of Ghana to seek his comments on insanitary conditions at a market in Nsawam, the district capital. Gbegoah, who was outraged by the filming of the filth without his consent, impugned ill motives to the journalists and chased them from the Assembly building and slapped the cameraman. Gbegoah said the filming of the refuse was intended to ridicule his administration and bring the image of the district into disrepute. A few minutes after the incident Gbegoah dispatched a team to clear the refuse.

In **Rwanda**, A court in the capital, Kigali, sentenced Agnès Nkusi-Uwimana, director of the bi-monthly journal Umurabyo, to a year in prison on charges arising from the publication of an unsigned reader's letter on January 1 that compared ethnic killings during President Paul Kagame's Tutsi-dominated administration to those of the previous Hutu regime. Nkusi-Uwimana who had been in jail since January 12 was convicted of divisionism, sectarianism, and libel and also ordered to pay damages of Rwandan fr 400,000 (\$760).

In **Tunisia**, Managing Editor Omar Mestiri of the banned online newspaper Kalima is facing a prison sentence of between one and three years because he has refused to provide the identity of his sources for a story about an attorney whom he accused of fraud and forgery and because he is alleged to have defamed the attorney. He was summoned by the public prosecutor to answer questions about the alleged defamation offence.

'The Namibian' newspaper's editor Gwen Lister and The Free Press of **Namibia**, the company that owns and publishes the newspaper, received a demand for N\$7-million (US \$1-m) damages from the Palazzolo family, or face five defamation suits.

## **March**

In **Algeria**, newspapers find themselves before the courts on a weekly basis on charges of defamation and libel. In March, Omar Belhouchet, publisher of the French-language El Watan daily, and Chawki Amari, a columnist with the same paper, were sentenced to two months in prison and ordered to pay one million dinars (10,000 euros) in damages for comments made in a column published in El Watan in June 2006.

In **Central African Republic**, editor Michel Alkhaly Ngady of the private weekly Les Temps Nouveaux and the president of local publishers' organisation GEPPIC, was summoned and jailed in a police station near Bangui's harbour York over statements critical of the governmental High Communication Council (HCC).

In **Chad**, a court in the capital N'Djamena imposed a six-month suspended prison term, a fine of CFA fr 25,000 (US \$50) and CFA fr 500,000 (\$1,000) damages on Director Adji Moussa of the satirical bi-monthly Le Mirror on criminal defamation charges.

In **DRC**, armed police acting on the orders of local police chief Oscar Malongi, Kasa district commissioner, occupied the premises of the community radio station ODL, in Luebo, 500-km east of Kinshasa, ``brutally" stopped all broadcasts, looted and vandalised the equipment and chased staff members off the premises. They forbade all subsequent access. Malongi reportedly accused the radio station of broadcasting ``insulting" remarks, ``incitement to hatred", ``spreading hate messages" and ``inciting civil disobedience".

In **Egypt**, the State Security Investigations (SSI) bureau of the Interior Ministry issued a report to public prosecutors that named pro-democracy activist and blogger Muhammad al-Sharqawi and 16 other bloggers, journalists and activists as being responsible for organising demonstrations and ``spreading false news" that could harm Egypt's image abroad. The authorities subsequently charged al-Sharqawi with ``chanting slogans against the regime liable to disturb public order and social peace", ``insulting the president", ``insulting and assaulting officials in the course of performing their duties", ``calling for an unlicensed assembly", and ``disrupting traffic", and held him at Tora prison.

In **Gabon**, the official National Communications Council (CNC) suspended the private bi-monthly satirical newspaper Edzombolo for three months for allegedly publishing "defamatory and insulting news directed at prominent state personalities", according to local journalists and the news website Gabonews.

Damages of **Kenya** shillings 500,000 (Euros 5,500) or one-year prison sentence imposed in a Nairobi court on Mburu Muchoki, editor of the tabloid weekly "The Independent", for "libelling" Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister Martha Karua in a 2004 story headlined "Karua's father in abortion scandal".

In **Mali**, director Diaby Makoro Camara and editor Oumar Bouare of the private monthly Kabako were sentenced in Bamako to four-month suspended prison terms, fined CFA fr 50,000 (US \$100) and ordered to publish the court decision after convictions on charges stemming from a defamation suit brought by Planning and Land Development Minister Marimantia Diarra.

The private Radio Jamakan in the central town of Markala, north of Bamako, housed in the government-owned Office du Niger (ON) complex, an agency managing irrigation projects, was given notice to "surrender the ON premises by March 31", after airing broadcasts critical of President Amadou Toumani Toure ahead of next month's elections.

In **Senegal**, Director Jean Menssa Diop and reporter Faydy Drame of Walf Grand-Place, a daily publication of the leading independent Wal Fadjri media group, were each sentenced by a court in the capital of Dakar to six-month suspended prison terms and damages of CFA fr10-million (US \$21,000) on criminal defamation charges related to a June 2006 story about a consumer complaint against a car dealership.

In **Somalia**, Publisher Yusuf Abdi Gabobe of the privately-owned daily "Haatuf" was sentenced during a trial inside a police training centre in Mandera (60-km northeast of Hargeisa) to two years' imprisonment for "reporting false information about the government, insulting the president by discrediting him and his family and creating inter-communal tension".

Veteran radio commentator and media activist Daniel Lawson-Drackey has been banned indefinitely by the **Togo** government from broadcasting because he gave a commentary on private radio Nana FM critical of a government minister.

In **Zimbabwe**, the government has issued in the capital Harare a press release threatening foreign correspondents with unspecified government reprisals over alleged biased reporting.

## ***February***

In **DRC**, The Kalamu Peace Court in the city of Boma, in Bas-Congo province, sentenced Popol Ntula Vita, a reporter with the Kinshasa-based weekly "La Cite Africaine", to three months imprisonment without parole and imposed damages of

US\$6,450 for "defamation and damaging allegations" against Thomas Ndombasi, the local head of the public tax office and three of his colleagues.

Congolese university professor Idesbald Byabuze Katabaruka, who is also director of the "Mashariki News", published in Bukavu, South-Kivu province's in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, detained in the Rwandan capital of Kigali in connection with a 2005 report critical of President Paul Kagame, which he says he did not write

In **Egypt**, Secular blogger Abdel Kareem Nabil Suleiman (popularly known as Kareem Amer) was sentenced to four years' imprisonment on charges of disparaging religion (three years) and defaming the Egyptian president (one year).

Prominent independent newspaper editor Ibrahim Eissa of the weekly Al-Destour newspaper had a one-year jail sentence for "insulting" the president quashed by a judge but was fined Egypt pounds 22,000 (US \$4,000). He was sentenced to the one-year jail term for carrying a story about a court case against President Hosni Mubarak.

In **Ivory Coast**, stories critical of President Laurent Gbagbo led authorities to charge Director Denis Kah Zion and reporter Andre Silver Konan of the private daily Le Nouveau Reveil and director Jean-Marie Ahoussou and reporter Hyppolite Oulan of the private daily L'Inter in the commercial capital, Abidjan, with offending the head of state.

In **Rwanda**, Jean-Bosco Gasasira, managing editor of the independent fortnightly "Umuvugizi", was beaten unconscious by unidentified assailants in Kigali following, according to local journalists, a series of articles in his paper critical of officials in the government of President Paul Kagame.

The **Tunisian** authorities banned issues of two French publications, the daily "Le Monde" and the weekly "Le Nouvel Observateur", and blocked the website of a third, the daily "Liberation", because they contained articles by Tunisian journalist Taoufik Ben Brik critical of President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali.

## ***January***

In **Burkina Faso**, two month suspended prison terms were handed down on two journalists, Germain Nama and Newton Ahmed Barry, by an Ouagadougou court for libelling President Blaise Campaore's brother, Francois, by linking him in an article in the monthly paper L'Evenement with the murder in 1998 of prominent investigative journalist Norbert Zongo. They were also fined each CFA fr 300,000 (Euros 450 or US \$590).

In **RDC**, Rigobert Kakwala Kash, the editor of the privately-owned weekly "Le Moniteur", was sentenced to 11-months' imprisonment for libelling the governor of the western province of Bas-Congo, the first journalist to be imprisoned since Joseph Kabila's election as president. The actual charge was that he libelled, insulted and spread false rumours.

**Ethiopia** Supreme Court rejected an appeal by journalist Abraham Reta of the privately-owned weekly ``Addis Admas" and sent him back to prison to complete the remaining nine months of a one-year sentence he received in April 2006 for allegedly libelling three senior officials when he was editor of the now-defunct weekly ``Ruh".

In **Ivory Coast**, Soir Info reporter Claude Dasse was held incommunicado for five days over a story critical of the state prosecutor.

In **Morocco**, the Casablanca-based weekly ``Journal Hebdomadaire's" managing director Aboubakr Jaman, faced with punitive damages awarded against it in a libel action brought by the European Strategic Intelligence and Security Centre (ESISC) resigned to prevent the authorities seizing the paper's assets to pay for the damages. This would have resulted in its closure.

A Casablanca court handed down suspended sentences of three years' imprisonment and fines of Dirhams 80,000 (Euros 7,200) on Arabic language weekly Nichane editor Driss Ksikes and one of his journalists Sanaa Elaji for attacking Islam and traditional morals in a feature about Moroccan humour. The court also ordered ``Nichane" to be closed for two months.