

Zimbabwe: Police raid on newsroom condemned

Media organisations have condemned the recent police raid on *The Standard* newspaper's offices, saying such actions were detrimental to the development and growth of press freedom in Zimbabwe.

Five plain clothes police details raided the newspaper's offices on Friday [11 November 2011] morning with a search warrant claiming that they were looking for stolen documents belonging to Green Card Medical Aid Society, owned by Munyaradzi Kereke.

The policemen, led by detective assistant inspector J Mukandi searched through desk drawers belonging to deputy editor, Walter Marwizi, proofreader Chipso Masara and reporters, Nqaba Matshazi and Kudzai Chimhangwa.

They then went through to the editor, Nevanji Madanhire's office. All they found was Kereke's response to allegations that his company's financial expenditure outweighed its income position.

Nqaba Matshazi wrote the story based on sources' information that revealed the unstable financial situation prevailing at the company. Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ) secretary general, Foster Dongozi said the arbitrary police action was a big public relations disaster for a country which is trying to improve its image on the international scene.

"Journalists are usually accused of tarnishing the image of the country. The latest action by police is an indication that there are some individual police officers who are bent on tarnishing the image of Zimbabwe by engaging in acts of harassment or abuse of journalists, which will naturally attract the attention of the international community," said Dongozi.

"We will always encourage organisations and individuals who perceive themselves to have been wronged, to use peaceful means, such as using the VMCZ (Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe) or the ZMC (Zimbabwe Media Commission)," he said.

VMCZ director Takura Zhangazha urged people with complaints against the media to seek recourse through the council's media complaints committee rather than pursuing criminal proceedings.

"The VMCZ condemns in the strongest terms, the arbitrary actions of the ZRP (Zimbabwe Republic Police) in pursuing matters that are not within their specific mandate," said Zhangazha.

"The ZRP is not a regulatory body, it is a law enforcement agent and should not be found getting involved in matters that relate to disputes over media stories," he said.

Source: allAfrica.com

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