

Probe as CIO boss obtains unpublished *Independent* story

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27 Mar 2008

The Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ) said Tuesday, 25 March 2008, it has launched an investigation into allegations that the organisation was used by the country's intelligence services to intercept an article which a local weekly newspaper intended to publish.

Last Friday, the *Zimbabwe Independent* reported that Central intelligence Organisation (CIO) boss Happyton Bonyongwe had gone to court in an attempt to stop the paper from publishing a story about him, claiming that it was defamatory and false.

In an alarming development, the *Independent* said attached to Bonyongwe's court papers was a print-out of the unedited version of its unpublished story.

It remained a mystery how Bonyongwe had obtained the story, with the newspaper insisting that it had not even contacted him for a comment for it.

"The *Independent* is still trying to establish how (the story) ended up with the CIO before the paper had been published. However, the annexures to the application show that the article appeared to have been routed through the address admin@zuj.org.zw," the paper reported.

In an interview Tuesday, ZUJ president Mathew Takaona said the association had launched an investigation to establish whether or not any of its members had been involved in the interception.

"I am shocked by the development. In fact it is shattering that ZUJ can be embroiled in that kind of allegation. We have started our investigations. If it is proved that anyone [at ZUJ] was involved, we will act swiftly and decisively," Takaona said.

As part of their investigations, the ZUJ leadership met Tuesday with *Zimbabwe Independent* editors. Takaona said they should have concluded their investigations by Thursday.

He declined to comment on allegations that a ZUJ executive member has been implicated in the case.

The *Independent* did not publish its story after Bonyongwe went to court, but has said it will fight the attempt to gag it.

Bonyongwe gave an interview to the Herald newspaper over the weekend in which he pledged his allegiance to President Robert Mugabe amid swelling speculation that his loyalty lay with presidential challenger, Simba Makoni.

Bonyongwe sought the gag order, charging that the *Independent's* story “involves state security”.

“Publication of a detailed version would cause irreversible harm, loss of cohesion, alarm and despondency, indiscipline and multiplicity of adverse consequences, which have the potential of militating against the operation and effectiveness of the security organisation,” Central Intelligence Organisation lawyers said in the High Court papers.

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