

Oppah to get radio licence?

The ruling Zanu (PF) party has allegedly given top party officials operating licenses for radio stations following last year's African Commission (AC) ruling that the government should allow independent players in the media industry.

Harare - An official with the Media Institute of Southern Africa who chose to remain unnamed for security reasons said, two senior party officials resident in Manicaland province were likely to get licenses.

Former Manicaland Governor, Oppah Muchinguri, has reportedly expressed interest in owning a radio station. She is also tipped to succeed Joice Mujuru as Mugabe's favoured successor soon after the 2008 elections.

Prominent human rights lawyer and Zimbabwe exiles forum director, Gabriel Shumba says the government should be objective in issuing broadcaster licences, as this would help with balanced media coverage for the 2008 polls.

"In order for an election to be called free and fair, all players should be given equal media space and that is not possible with present government monopoly of the media. An alternative would be offering licences to independent players without any political affiliation," said Shumba.

The African Commission last year ruled that the government should amend media laws to allow more independent media players in the country before June this year as a way of allowing diversity.

The partisan Media and Information Commission, responsible for accrediting scribes and media houses, demands huge application fees, non-refundable if one does not qualify for a licence. This has led to the MIC to claim that no applications are forthcoming.

A freelance journalist, formerly with *The Daily News*, Ntandoyenkosi Ncube, said it would be highly unlikely that anti-government voices would be given operating licences from the MIC.

"With the 2008 polls around the corner, it is very unlikely that government will consider independent voices being allowed media space. Instead the government will embark on a massive move to clamp down on local and foreign correspondents. We have already seen Gift Phiri being tortured and Edward Chikomba being killed," said Ncube.

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