

WAN-IFRA raises press freedom concerns in Zim

The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) and the World Editors Forum have addressed a letter to Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe protesting against the latest series of journalist arrests in Zimbabwe and condemning the increasing climate of intimidation for the country's critical media.



In the latest incident, reporter Nqobani Ndlovu from *The Standard* newspaper was arrested on 17 November, held overnight, and later charged for an article that allegedly made defamatory statements. His colleague Dumisani Sibanda was questioned in the same case but later released.

Intimidating journalists

The article appeared in the 14 November edition of *The Standard*, published by the independent media group Alpha Media Holdings, and alleged that the police were recruiting war veterans loyal to the ZANU-PF party of President Robert Mugabe to take over senior posts ahead of next year's elections.

"The arrest of Nqobani Ndlovu is a big blow against the return of confidence in Zimbabwe as far as press freedom and freedom of expression is concerned," said Trevor Ncube, chairman of the Alpha Media Holdings Group, in a statement to WAN-IFRA.

"Keeping Nqobani in public detention overnight without charges is a form of punishment that sends a chilli message to other Zimbabwean journalists. However, we are not intimidated but emboldened to continue informing the public in a professional and ethical manner."

Other arrests

This latest case follows the 30 October arrests of freelance journalists Andriison Manyere and Nkosana Dlamini who were charged and fined for "criminal nuisance". An arrest warrant has also been issued for W Mbanga, who edits *The Zimbabwean Independent* from exile in the UK, for a story that allegedly "undermined President Robert Mugabe". Mbanga claims his paper did not even publish the article.

In a letter sent to Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe condemning the recent pattern of intimidation, WAN-IFRA called on him "to provide constitutional guarantees of freedom of the press." The organisation called on the president "to take all necessary steps to halt the campaign of intimidation of critical media so that the press is able to report free from government pressure."

Read the [full letter](#).

For information on the Declaration of Table Mountain, WAN-IFRA's campaign to abolish insult and criminal defamation laws throughout Africa, go to www.declarationoftablemountain.org.

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