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FEDERATION OF AFRICAN JOURNALISTS
FÉDÉRATION DES JOURNALISTES AFRICAINS



Letter to 15th African Union Summit, 19-27 July, Kampala, Uganda

22 July 2010

To: African Heads of State and Government

Cc: H.E. Jean Ping, Chairperson of the African Union Commission

Your Excellencies,

We, the undersigned members of the Federation of African Journalists, the Pan-African regional organisation of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), trade union organisations, media organisations and representatives of civil society organisations, welcome the declaration by African Heads of State and Government to designate 2010 as the “Year of Peace and Security in Africa”. We believe that this timely declaration must be taken forward with practical, pragmatic and prompt actions.

It is a sad and incontrovertible fact that, many decades after the achievement of political independence, so many Africans continue to lose their lives as a result of armed and non-armed conflicts, much of it driven by unscrupulous politics, intolerance and rivalries whether based upon ethnic, religious or cultural divisions. The wanton violence suffered by African communities continues to be an obstacle to social progress and economic development.

Among the many victims are African journalists who are routinely targeted, often injured, killed, displaced or mentally scarred. Their only crime is their defence of African peoples’ right to know, their determination to expose all forms of corruption and their conviction that everyone should enjoy the right to free expression.

Last year 13 African journalists were murdered in Africa, nine of them in Somalia. This year six journalists have already been murdered – three in Nigeria, one in Somalia, one in Rwanda and one in Angola. It will almost be inevitable that other journalists will continue to be the victims of grave human rights violations and fall to assassins’ bullets as they strive to carry out their legitimate job to inform their fellow citizens, whether on unravelling corruption or lawlessness, reporting civil insurgencies, or exposing drug trafficking. In many cases, journalists find themselves in the firing line, facing death but also arrest and torture which make journalism today one of the most perilous professions. There are also those killed in crossfire in the many armed conflicts in Africa. Most of these killings go unpunished and many of the perpetrators enjoy complete impunity.



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Last March, the continental congress of the Federation of African Journalists held in Harare, Zimbabwe, adopted a strong resolution on safety of journalists and called for an end of the culture of impunity against media workers in Africa. A few months later, delegates from over 100 countries assembled at the IFJ world congress of journalists held in Spain pledged their solidarity with their African colleagues and called on African governments to bring this safety crisis to an end.

Excellencies,

As you gather to measure the progress made during this Year of Peace and Security in Africa, we believe that, in the spirit of your Declaration, it is incumbent upon you to make the safety and security of African journalists one of the priorities for the African Union.

The loss of media lives should remind all African citizens of the sacrifices that journalists and media staff make in the cause of the right to know. Whatever the future brings, journalists will continue to strive to be the pillar of democracy, providing invaluable journalism as a public good often under difficult and dangerous conditions. If the Year of Peace and Security is to have a lasting meaning, African leaders should do more to make journalism safer and bring to an end the injustice of impunity.

Sincerely,

SIGNED

1.	Association des Journalistes de Guinée (AJG)	Guinée Conakry
2.	Association des Journalistes Djiboutiens (AJD)	Djibouti
3.	Association des Journalistes du Burkina (AJB)	Burkina Faso
4.	Eastern Africa Journalists Association (EAJA)	Djibouti
5.	Ethiopian National Journalists Union (ENJU)	Ethiopia
6.	Federation of African Journalists (FAJ)	Senegal
7.	Ghana Journalists Association (GJA)	Ghana
8.	Inter Africa Network for women, Media, Gender Equity and Development (FAMEDEV)	Senegal
9.	International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)	Belgium
10.	Kenya Correspondents Association (KCA)	Kenya
11.	Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA)	Namibia
12.	Media Workers' Association of South Africa (MWASA)	South Africa
13.	National Syndicate Mozambican Journalists	Mozambique



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14.	National Union of Journalists - UK & Ireland (NUJ)	UK & Ireland
15.	National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ)	Somalia
16.	Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ)	Nigeria
17.	Rwanda Journalists Union (RJU)	Rwanda
18.	Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ)	Sierra Leone
19.	Sindicato dos Jornalistas Angolanos (SJA)	Angola
20.	Southern Africa Journalists Association (SAJA)	South Africa
21.	Sudan Journalists Union (SJU)	Sudan
22.	Syndicat de Journalistes Mauritaniens (SJM)	Mauritania
23.	Syndicat des Agents de l'Information (SAINFO)	Republic of Niger
24.	Syndicat des journalistes et techniciens de la communication sociale (SINJOTECS)	Guinea-Bissau
25.	Syndicat des Professionnels de l'Information et de la Communication du Sénégal (SYNPICS)	Senegal
26.	Syndicat National de Presse Marocain (SNPM)	Morocco
27.	Syndicat National des Journalistes du Cameroun (SNJC)	Cameroon
28.	Syndicat National des Journalistes Tunisiens (SNJT)	Tunisia
29.	Syndicat National des Professionnels de la Presse (SNPP)	DR Congo
30.	The Gambia Press Union (GPU)	The Gambia
31.	Uganda Journalists Union (UJU)	Uganda
32.	Union Burundaise des Journalistes (UBJ)	Burundi
33.	Union des Professionnels des Medias du Benin (UPMB)	Benin
34.	Union Nationale de la Presse du Congo (UNPC)	DR Congo
35.	Union nationale des journalistes de Côte d'Ivoire (UNJCI)	Côte d'Ivoire
36.	West African Journalists Association (WAJA)	Senegal
37.	Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ)	Zimbabwe