



Petition to the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, Honourable Morgan Tsvangirai , Co-Ministers of Home Affairs Hon. Kembo Mohadi and Hon Teresa Makone, Speaker of the Seventh Parliament of Zimbabwe, Honourable Lovemore Moyo, The Honourable President of the Senate, Honourable Edna Madzongwe, on the urgent need to stop the arrests and intimidation of journalists.

Cc: Honourable Seiso Moyo, Chairman of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Media, Information and Technology.

All members of Parliament.

Minister of Media, Information and Publicity

Minister of Information and Communication Technologies

Representative negotiators of the Global Political Agreement

The SADC Executive Secretary Dr Tomáz Augusto Salomão

The SADC facilitator, His Excellency President Jacob Zuma.

We, the undersigned journalists and media practitioners, concerned with the continued intimidation and harassment of members of our profession, cognisant of the continued lack of diversity in Zimbabwe's electronic media, acknowledging the commitments by the three political parties, ZANU PF and the two (2) Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) formations to media reforms in the Global Political Agreement (GPA) as well as the continued statutory regulation of the media, hereby petition the afore-stated to undertake, on behalf of the media fraternity in Zimbabwe the following interim and long term measures for democratic media law reforms;

Interim Measures.

- a) Pressure the inclusive government to ensure a cessation of all harassment, intimidation, illegal detention and criminalisation of the work of journalists, media practitioners and media houses. This is especially urgent given the continued detention of *The Standard* journalist Nqobani Ndlovu, detained at Khami Remand Prison. This development comes against the arrest of freelance journalists Andrison Manyere and Nkosana Dhlamini on the 30th of October 2010 while covering the constitution making process in Harare.
- b) To reconstitute the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) in terms of the amendments to the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA) of January 2008 with the full knowledge that the measures are transitional to facilitate the registration of new players in the broadcasting industry. The stakeholders should, however, actively pursue the need for the establishment of an Independent Communications Authority to replace the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) as well as the Postal and Telecommunications Act as the lasting solution to the broadcasting crisis in Zimbabwe.
- d) To actively pursue the need to transform the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation into a truly independent public service broadcaster, that is free of undue political or editorial interference.
- e) To actively monitor the state controlled print media to ensure equal, equitable and fair coverage of all political views to enable citizens access to diverse views and opinions.

Long Term Measures.

The undersigned persons and organisations would also want to reiterate as well as bring your esteemed attention to the resolutions of the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe (MAZ) at the end of an all stakeholders media conference held in Harare on 28 May 2010. MAZ is a media advocacy alliance consisting of Zimbabwe National Editors' Forum (Zinef) , the Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe (MMPZ), the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) – Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ) and Federation of African Media Women in Zimbabwe (FAWMZ). It is our humble plea and submission that the Parliament of Zimbabwe should take a leading role and act as a catalyst towards implementation of some of the resolutions stated below:

1. The Zimbabwe constitution must guarantee freedom of expression, including clear and specific clauses on media freedom, access to public information, academic freedom and artistic activity.
2. We urge the government of Zimbabwe to immediately repeal all repressive laws affecting media practice such as AIPPA, POSA, the Interception of Communications Act, Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act and The Official Secrets Act.
3. We do not agree with plans to replace the repressive AIPPA with a Media Practitioners Bill and a Freedom of Information Act that attempt to control media freedom and diminish citizens' rights to access information.
4. There should be no compulsory registration of journalists or prescriptive qualifications. Any accreditation of journalists should be a simple administrative exercise that does not carry the option of rejection but should only be undertaken purposes of professional identification.
5. Zimbabwe media stakeholders will only support a Freedom of Information Act that provides for easy access to information held by public bodies with clearly but narrowly defined limitations subject to appeal to an independent body.
6. We reluctantly recognise the Zimbabwe Media Commission as a transitional mechanism towards self-regulation of the media, and urge all stakeholders to commit themselves to this goal.
7. We urge all media stakeholders to resist any attempts to co-opt the Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe into the Zimbabwe Media Council to implement repellent and repressive legislation.

8. We acknowledge the licensing of new newspapers by the Zimbabwe Media Commission but are seriously concerned with the deafening silence on the need to establish an independent and effective body to issue new licences in the broadcasting media sector.
9. While we are obliged to recognise the legal existence of the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe as a transitional entity, we consider the appointment of the present board to be null and void. In addition, we demand the immediate establishment of an independent and professional broadcasting authority and urge it to consider applications for broadcasting licences immediately upon being established.
10. We call upon all media stakeholders to give maximum support to strengthen the Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe so that it becomes truly representative and effective in its operations.
11. Registration of any print media should be a simple administrative exercise that does not carry the option of rejection, and that any media business should not be subjected to any special levies beyond those imposed on other businesses.