

PUBLIC STATEMENT

14 April 2020

Index: AFR 63/2140/2020

ZAMBIA: AUTHORITIES MUST IMMEDIATELY REINSTATE BROADCASTING LICENSE OF PRIME TV AND STOP TARGETING THE STATION

Zambian authorities must immediately reinstate the broadcasting license of independent television news channel, Prime TV, and allow it to resume its broadcasting work, Amnesty International said today.

“The ‘cancellation’ of the broadcasting license of independent television news channel, Prime TV, by the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) is a sinister ploy to muzzle and weaken independent media voices in Zambia. It is designed to silence any voice perceived to be critical of the authorities.” said Deprose Muchena, Amnesty International’s Director for East and Southern Africa.

“Zambian authorities have targeted Prime TV for some time now. This is the second time they have suspended the station in a period of one year.”

The chairperson of the board of the IBA of Zambia, Josephine Mapoma, announced the suspension of the license of Prime TV through a vaguely worded statement citing “public safety, security peace welfare or good order” concerns.

However, the statement does not explain how the station threatened public safety and security nor provide any legal justifications for the cancellation of the license.

“If Zambia is still a place where the right to freedom of expression and media freedom are still cherished, the IBA board cannot arbitrarily cancel the broadcasting license of Prime TV. The authorities must fully and effectively respect, protect, promote and fulfil the right to freedom of expression and media freedom. There must be tolerance of the plurality of media voices,” said Deprose Muchena.

Background

Prime TV’s broadcasting license cancellation was announced through a statement by the IBA dated 9 April. The suspension follows alleged refusal by the station to air government’s COVID-19 public awareness campaigns because the station is owed money for airing previous state advertisements. Prime TV, as an independent station, depends on advertising revenue to pay salaries of its staff and operational costs.

It is not the first time that the station is targeted by Zambian authorities. The station was [suspended](#) for 30 days last year for its critical coverage of political violence in the country.

The right to freedom of expression and media freedom have been under attack in Zambia in recent years. In 2016, authorities sanctioned the [closure](#) of the *The Post* newspaper, one of the country’s

longest serving independent newspapers. Its owner, Fred M'embe, and news editor, Joseph Mwenda, had been previously brutalized by the police for the newspaper's critical reporting.

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