



2007 Annual Report

AFRICA

UNDER THE STIGMA OF CONTEMPT

Contempt towards journalists and towards the treaties they have signed up to was a constant factor in many African states in 2006. Governance by contempt and crackdown is, especially since 2001, how the authorities do things in Eritrea, which is secretly holding at least 17 journalists in a variety of appalling prisons scattered around the country. After credible reports filtered out of the probable death of three of them, the reaction of the authorities in one of the world's most closed countries was a terse, "no comment". Many of the few remaining journalists to have escaped arrest tried to flee the country, for which some of them had fought during the war of independence and which today treats them as enemies. In neighbouring Ethiopia, around 20 newspaper publishers and editors are still imprisoned, accused of "high treason" for having backed an opposition challenge to the May 2005 election results. Neither the international outcry nor the protests of its western allies have been heeded by the government of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, which has put out callous statements about the prisoners, one of whom gave birth to a baby boy in the prison infirmary. In Somalia, journalists have been embarrassing witnesses to a war shot through with disinformation and lies. They have been arrested, beaten up or murdered without hesitation. The Islamic courts and the transitional government prided themselves on respecting press freedom while inflicting particularly brutal treatment on the media with a disdain that nothing can shake.

Even in Kenya, East Africa's foremost democracy, a newspaper was the target of contempt by a hard-pressed government, undergoing a terrifying raid and hostile statements from several officials. In Uganda, at the start of the year, Yoweri Museveni's government was prompted by the fight to hold on to power to maintain tight control of news during the election period, going so far as to expel a foreign correspondent, which saw as nothing less than a "threat to the state". The contempt for news also pushed the government in Sudan to twice accuse foreign journalists reporting on massacres in Darfur of being spies. Both were held hostage for several weeks and only released after intense political negotiations putting the state under pressure from the international community, proving the absurdity of the initial accusations. Finally, Zimbabwe is still one of the countries where the profession of journalist is an extremely tough one. Because, not content with insisting that all journalists must be registered, filed and kept under surveillance by an Orwellian commission, the Zimbabwean government does its utmost to silence media which fail to sing its praises.

Press freedom is sometimes, as in Chad, a gain that the government has no hesitation in calling into question, when it considers national security to be at stake. Faced with rebel movements with little inclination for openness, Chadian press barons are also forced under a state of emergency to bring out papers disfigured by black strips imposed by the censorship bureau, according to the whim of a few dutiful officials.

Contempt also makes itself felt in how little importance political or financial authorities accord to the press. Thus, the election campaign proved a painful episode for the press in the Democratic Republic of Congo, already regularly hit in the past by aberrant legislation applied with zeal by police and a justice system eaten through with corruption. Some journalists in Kinshasa are not exempt from criticism however, readily doing the bidding of a few generous donors anxious to smear their adversaries or turning themselves into the little foot soldiers of political heavyweights. Easily manipulated or vulnerable, the reporter can fall prey to politicians avid for power. This sad evidence was still the rule in Nigeria in 2006, where police and intelligence services, or more generally all those in uniform, took a sly pleasure in physically attacking journalists who displease them.

PERSISTENT IMPUNITY

On the west of the continent, for the 12th successive year, president of the tiny country of Gambia, Yahya Jammeh, continued to treat journalists with aggressive condescension. His all-powerful intelligence services arrested and ill-treated at least ten journalists, forcibly closed two newspapers and threatened all those who in any way embarrassed their absolute leader, the president of the Republic. This meant added humiliation for the Gambian press, which has to live and work with the memory of the still unpunished murder of its doyen, Deyda Hydara, killed in 2004 in disturbing circumstances. Journalists in Burkina Faso have for eight years now mourned the death of Norbert Zongo, murdered with three companions in 1998. While many have accused the presidential guard and the brother of head of state, François Compaore, the Burkinabe justice system, evidently very easy to influence, dared to dismiss the case

against the chief suspect, virtually sneaking the news out in the middle of summer, in a clear indication of the indifference of the authorities for the journalist's family's thirst for justice. In Cote d'Ivoire, journalists who chose not to give allegiance to one of the belligerents become their favourite target. In January, for the second time in two years, the "Young Patriots" seized control of public media, to back up and organise their riots in the streets of Abidjan. Kebe Yacouba, who tried to make state radio and television an example of public service journalism, had insults and threats heaped on him before being abruptly sacked by President Laurent Gbagbo. The family of French-Canadian journalist Guy-André Kieffer, kidnapped in Abidjan in 2004 and missing ever since, have to live with this particularly unpromising climate for the progress of the French judicial investigation, which has implicated the first circle of the presidency. For Deyda Hydera, Norbert Zongo and Guy-André Kieffer, denial of justice is also a form of contempt.

Governments which insist in keeping prison sentences for press offences in their legislation can show their disdain for journalists at their leisure. The easy pretext of citing media "responsibility", even if sometimes used advisedly, has sent more than one journalist to a prison cell for having questioned the integrity of the powerful. The most striking example of this unequal struggle between a newspaper and the government occurred this year in Niger, when the publisher and editor of an opposition paper spent more than four months in prison for having criticised the prime minister's policies. When governments backed by the police, the justice system and the prison administration attacks journalists there is a clear imbalance of power. In Burundi, in 2006, the head of the presidential party, Hussein Radjabu, a dominant and controversial figure did not hide his hatred of privately-owned radio stations, guilty in his eyes of criticising his abuses and manoeuvring. Several journalists chose to leave the country for their own protection. Four, on the other hand, did not have the time to realise that the authorities would graduate from verbal hostility to action and as a result spend several months in prison before being acquitted.

Most of these countries are however signatories of a raft of treaties guaranteeing civil and political freedoms. Almost all of them base their authority on constitutions protecting freedom of expression. But, as in Equatorial Guinea or the kingdom of Swaziland, where the head of state is considered to be a demigod, these promises have very little value for governments who clearly despise not just journalists but their own signatures.

SOME PROMISES KEPT

For all these reasons, Reporters Without Borders can only welcome the fact that there is one African government which kept its promises. The military junta in power in Mauritania since 2005 had promised to guarantee press freedom, legislative reform, to respect the balance of political forces during elections, to free the state-owned press from too much government control and to treat the independent press as a development partner. In 2006 it did all this.

For all that, it should not be imagined that the African continent is a collection of tyrannies and makeshift democracies. In the South African zone of influence, for example, Namibia and Botswana guarantee a satisfactory level of press freedom, with many deficiencies but nevertheless comparable to western democracies. The same goes for the African islands and archipelagos such as Mauritius, São Tomé and Príncipe or Cape Verde, which appear havens of freedom off the coast of a troubled continent. The Comoros is also gradually recovering from its dark years. This is also the case of Mozambique where, in an outcome rare enough in Africa to be highlighted, the killers of journalist Carlos Cardoso, who was murdered in 2000 while investigating a wide-ranging financial scandal, received heavy sentences.

The best weapon against contempt is patience. In Africa, governments who despise journalists and who place no value on promises they have given, have to live on the defensive. Their power ends up by crumbling. Support gets scarcer. The blows are getting harder. Sooner or later, a solution has to be found. Dictatorships end up by falling and journalists by coming out of prison. A country which is being stifled must have press freedom to be able to breathe again.

Léonard Vincent
Head of Africa desk

BÉNIN

*Area: 112,620 sq. km.
Population: 8,439,000.
Language: French.
Head of state: Boni Yayi.*

Traditionally an example of good practice in West Africa, Benin however went through a year in which much was called into question, mainly because of excesses by a section of the press which flourished in Cotonou, in the wake of presidential elections.

For several years, Benin has been seen as a model of modern democracy in West Africa, guaranteeing a satisfactory level of press freedom, despite its poverty. The year 2006 being a presidential election year, there was a risk that the country could fall into the classic trap of emerging countries which can be destabilised by political violence. But this did not happen and this was to the advantage of all, particularly its journalists.

The election as head of state of Boni Yayi, a man with a technical background rather than a political heavyweight, was achieved with respect for democratic rules. Unusually, problems were not to be found in flagrant imbalances in airtime allowed to different candidates or in appeals to violence by partisan publications. Before and during the election campaign, irregular publications, headed by non-professional journalists, flourished in Cotonou. They were sometimes working in the interests of a politician, sometimes an influential figure. Indeed, this dubious practise is commonplace in Africa and its impact on the campaign was minimal. But once the election was over these publications continued to appear and were put to the service of other masters. And the new government, which decided to clean up this jumble of "local rags", had no hesitation in using the law - one which had not been strictly applied since 2004 and still provided for prison sentences for press offences.

RESORTING TO IMPRISONMENT

As a result, Virgile Linkpon and Richard Couao-Zotti, respectively publisher and editor of the sporadic and sensationalist *La Diaspora de Sabbat*, were arrested on 15 September. Action was taken against the two journalists following publication

the previous day of an article headlined: "An ill wind blows through the head of state's entourage: Boni Yayi's older son is suffering from insanity". In another case, Cyrille Saizonou, publisher of the daily *Djakpata*, was arrested by judicial police on 18 September and was questioned for 24 hours about the publication, on 20 June 2006, of several articles alleging embezzlement within the national police. All three were released on 19 September, after being interviewed then cleared by the prosecutor for the Republic. On the other hand, Clément Adéchian and Cécil Adjévi, respectively publisher and editor of the daily *L'Informateur*, were sentenced on 1st December to six months in prison and fined 500,000 CFA francs (752 euros) for "defamation" after a court bailiff sued them for accusing him without proof of rape, in one edition of the newspaper.

Reporters Without Borders explained to the Benin government, as it does with all states which retain illiberal legislation, that imprisonment does not constitute a fair and appropriate response to journalistic error. On the contrary, it represents a real threat to democracy. Also it had broken the general rule in Benin until now of a de facto suspension of imprisonment of journalists for the past two years. In the absence of a real decriminalisation, this moratorium had at least allowed renewal of more positive relations between the authorities and the press. Moreover, Reporters Without Borders believed that to circumvent media regulatory bodies, despite their good work in recent years, was to risk stripping them of all their power. So that when journalists working in a democracy make mistakes, press regulation should not be left to the police. Finally, the use of imprisonment lays political overtones onto cases which should remain strictly within the bounds of civil law.

BURKINA FASO

*Area: 274,200 sq. km.
Population: 13,228,000.
Language: French.
Head of state: Blaise Compaore.*

Political obstruction preventing the solving of the 1998 murder of Norbert Zongo continued to poison the atmosphere in this “country of honest men”, as the country’s name is translated. Even if criticism is tolerated, any challenge to the head of state, Blaise Compaoré and his closest allies, remains a high-risk exercise.

The year 2006 began like the seven previous ones: in the expectation of justice for Norbert Zongo and his three companions, murdered by unknown assailants while driving along a country road, on 13 December 1998. It ended in scandal and shame, after the justice system, obviously for political reasons, shelved the fragile legal procedure which had led to a member of the presidential guard being charged.

The courts, on 16 August upheld the 19 July decision to dismiss the case for lack of evidence against Sgt Marcel Kafando, the only person who had been charged in connection with the murder. This decision, condemned by all local and international human rights and press freedom organisations, allowed the courts to send the file back to the court clerk’s office for ten years, after which it will be definitively closed. Under the criminal procedure code, the investigation can only be reopened in the event of “new charges” capable of “strengthening charges already found too weak” or “contributing new developments useful in establishing the truth”.

IMPUNITY MADE SACROSANCT

Norbert Zongo was the editor of the weekly *L’Indépendant*. He was found dead in his burned out vehicle along with his three companions, on 13 December 1998. This date marked the start of a wave of protest across the country. Several dozen demonstrations were held in Ouagadougou and in the principal cities. On 7 May 1999, an independent commission of inquiry (CEI), tasked with “determining the causes of death” of the journalist Norbert Zongo, presented its report to the prime minister. This investigation set up at the initiative of the authorities, concluded after hearing more than 200 witnesses, that “to find the motives for this quadruple murder (...) they should be looked for in the investigations carried out by the journalist

over several years and in particular his recent investigations into the death of David Ouedraogo, the driver of presidential advisor François Compaoré,” and brother of the head of state. The report also named six “serious suspects” in the case, all members of the Presidential Security Regiment. Only one of them, Marcel Kafando, was charged in 2001 with “arson” and “murder”. Sgt Kafando, who was also convicted in 2000 of having “held captive and tortured to death” David Ouédraogo, has however been living peacefully at his home in the capital and still receiving his military pay.

During a visit to Ouagadougou, in October 2006, Reporters Without Borders provided the prosecutor’s office with “new elements”, as a result of which it called for the case to be reopened. As a member of the independent commission of inquiry (CEI) set up after the murder, the organisation’s secretary-general, Robert Ménard, provided the justice system with its full report before it could be watered down by the two members representing the government. This version handed over by Reporters Without Borders, more clearly implicated François Compaoré and a rich businessman close to the government, Oumarou Kanazoé. Some passages, detailing contradictions in the statement given by François Compaoré and the role played by Oumarou Kanazoé to try to silence Norbert Zongo, were completely removed from the final report. Information in the document handed over to the Faso prosecutor also proved that François Compaoré and Oumarou Kanazoé had both lied to the CEI. It showed that the David Ouedraogo and Norbert Zongo cases were directly linked and revealed how and why the businessman and Dramane Yaméogo, Faso chief prosecutor at the time, tried to silence the journalist before his murder.

The justice system, which took an extraordinarily long time to investigate the murder, took less than

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24 hours to give its verdict. The day after receiving the Reporters Without Borders' file, the Faso prosecutor and the prosecutor of the Republic called a press conference to announce that the elements in their possession were "not new" and it was essential to do nothing. At the same time, they launched a torrent of attacks against Reporters Without Borders, going so far as to threaten that the arrest of its representatives currently in Burkina Faso "would not displease their embassy". These attacks were picked up and continued in the pro-government press for several further weeks.

This case therefore has for eight years continued to poison the life of the Burkinabé people, while press freedom is a reality in the country, despite a

few persistent taboos. Even if criticism is allowed and the disturbing investigations largely already published, challenging the head of state, his family or his closest allies remains a high risk exercise.

The privately-owned bi-monthly *L'Événement* found this out when, at the end of the year, François Compaoré lodged a "defamation" suit against it." The offending article referred to the procedure begun by Reporters Without Borders to reopen the Norbert Zongo case. The complaint objected to the paper's splash headline, opposite a photo of the brother of the head of state, which read: "Norbert Zongo case. So it is him then! Until now, one thought of him without daring to name him. Reporters Without Borders has just taken this step..."

BURUNDI

Area: 27,830 sq. km.

Population: 7,548,000.

Languages: French, Kirundi, Swahili.

Head of state: Pierre Nkurunziza.

The fairly-won election victory in 2005 of a former Hutu rebel movement changed the landscape for journalists. In 2006 privately-owned radio stations became the *bête noire* of the new ruling party, particularly after they cast doubt on the authenticity of a coup attempt allegedly foiled by the security services.

However much President Pierre Nkurunziza, elected head of state in 2005, may have vaunted his commitment to freedom of the press, nothing was done in practice. Journalists in Burundi entered a period of threats and uncertainty in 2006. Four of them were imprisoned. Several others left the country, for fear of falling in their turn into a trap set for those working in the media by the security services who viewed them as "trouble-makers". The government went in for denial, while the presidential press crowed over the misfortunes of their colleagues.

It all began in Bujumbura on 17 April, when a dissident deputy in the ruling coalition, Mathias Basabose, the former presidential campaign manager, called a press conference at his home to give his version of events about a dispute within the party. At 3.30 pm when around 20 journalists had gathered at his home, some 50 police officers toting assault rifles surrounded the house and kept the journalists inside hostage, without explanation, until 11pm.

Some who tried to leave the house despite the cordon were struck with rifle butts. The journalists were only allowed to leave following the intervention of the Bujumbura police chief, after the incident had provoked an outcry in the profession and international radio correspondents had reported live on their plight with the help of mobile phones. Basabose had been expelled two days earlier from the ruling National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Front for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) in a row with the powerful party leader, Hussein Radjabu, about embezzlement of funds and political manoeuvring aimed at perverting the course of justice.

A few days later, Aloys Kabura, correspondent in Kayanza, northern Burundi for the state-run news

agency *Agence burundaise de presse (ABP)*, was arrested for making critical remarks in a bar about the government and the presidential party's actions in this case. The powerful intelligence services laid a complaint against him for "rebellion". He was sent to the Ngozi central prison and though in poor health he was sentenced to five months in prison, on 18 September, three and a half months after his arrest and without his lawyers or family being informed of the hearing. A magistrate came to announce the verdict to him within the prison on the following day. He was released on 31 October, after completing his sentence.

INVESTIGATIVE WORK LEADS TO PRISON

During the summer, the alleged foiling of a supposed coup attempt, plotted by former president Domitien Ndayizeye, the truth of which was challenged by many of the independent media, gave a new twist to the downward spiral. Head of the privately-owned *Radio publique africaine (RPA)*, Alexis Sinduhije, publicly condemned what he termed a "set up job" by the "hard-liners" of the CNDD-FDD, on the authority of Hussein Radjabu.

From the start of the foiled coup episode, Alexis Sinduhije and those who quoted him - that is most of Bujumbura's privately-owned radio stations - began to be targeted by the presidential party and its media as "hate radio" and as "manipulators" seeking to bring down "democratically elected institutions". To punish the *RPA* for its stance, the authorities, on 18 August, ordered the closure of its station in Ngozi, the day after a statement by the president warned against "some radios and some journalists who have set themselves up as judge and jury". Rumours of imminent arrests, anonymous threats and verbal attacks became the daily lot of journalists over several weeks,

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including condemnations made in person by Hussein Radjabu, in front of thousands of CNDD-FDD activists who rallied at the Bujumbura stadium on 3 September.

The threats turned into reality on 21 November when Serge Nibizi, chief editor at *RPA* and Domitile Kiramvu, a star presenter at the station were placed in detention at Mpimba central prison after appearing before the Bujumbura prosecutor. They were charged with “broadcasting news damaging to state security” and “violating the confidentiality of investigation”. They were joined, on 29 November, by Mathias Manirakiza, head of the privately-owned radio *Isanganiro*. Corneille Nibaruta, director of privately-owned *Bonesha FM*,

escaped imprisonment, on 1st December, by fleeing the country. They were all accused in connection with the dissemination of a news report in August that the army had allegedly planned the attack on the presidential palace and on the home of the leader of the presidential party with the aim of using it as evidence of the alleged coup, the existence of which had been contested by the independent media.

The news that got them thrown in prison had however appeared in the bi-monthly *Intumwa (The Messenger)*, the organ of the presidential party, when the file had not yet been sent before the courts. No journalist on this publication has ever been questioned.

CAMEROON

Area: 475,440 sq. km.

Population: 16,322,000.

Languages: French, English.

Head of state: Paul Biya.

Press freedom began to turn into a reality in this country ruled by President Paul Biya since 1982, even though it remained fragile. Numerous taboos were still in place and anyone who broke them suffered the consequences. But the year 2006 was difficult for the Cameroon press chiefly because of the actions of some unscrupulous editors.

Certainly, Cameroon is no longer the tense and brutal place it was in the first few years after 2000, when journalists were imprisoned even for poking fun. But it is still dangerous to be a journalist in a country in which the army, secessionist impulses on the part of the English-speaking region and corruption are still sensitive subjects. In addition, in common with other countries on the continent, poverty has fostered a press which is easily corrupted, exploited by business and political clans to outdo their rivals. In these conditions, press freedom is a precarious quality in Cameroon.

The year 2006 has been one in which the Cameroon press has been put in every shade of bad light. From the start of January, it was badly shaken by the case of the "homosexuals of the Republic", which caused rifts and provoked disgust within the profession. On the pretext of serving "public health" in a country where homosexuality is a crime, low circulation newspapers chose to splash an alleged list of "deviant" public figures, appointed to positions of responsibility as a result of alleged "favours". Quoting "reliable sources" (but always anonymous) and "concurring accounts" (but above all exaggerated), the alleged news put out by these papers was essentially a collection of rumours and vilification in extremely bad taste. If the objective of the editors was to bring in revenue for their companies, then the success was total. But unsurprisingly, several people targeted in this way took legal action against *La Météo*, *l'Anecdote* and *Nouvelle Afrique*.

Since the law in Cameroon provides for prison sentences for such ethical lapses, it is therefore likely that these unprincipled journalists will serve time in prison. Reporters Without Borders's position, expressed in a comment piece carried by the privately-owned daily *Le Messager* and the privately-owned weekly *Le Jeune Observateur*, was quite

clear: While unreservedly condemning this kind of journalism, tinged with hatred, as have a large majority of Cameroon's journalists, the organisation above all stresses that prison is not a reply to these abuses. On the contrary, these mercenaries of journalism, once sentenced, will serve their sentences and come out crowned with all the glory of press freedom martyrs. Reporters Without Borders has therefore proposed to the Cameroon government that it reforms not only its press law but also its mechanisms for regulating the media. The Communications Minister, Pierre Moukoko Mbonjo, attempted to introduce reform but it was clumsy and inadequate, proposing administrative police powers for the ministry which would allow it to order the seizure of newspapers. This was rejected by parliament and the minister finished by resigning his post in the autumn without having pushed through this reform.

THE PRESS STILL UNDER THREAT

In September and November, two incidents served as a reminder that journalists in Cameroon are not fully guaranteed the right to inform the public. Duke Atangana Etotogo, editor of the privately-owned weekly *L'Afrique centrale*, was held by military security in Yaoundé from 3-7 September. He was only released after writing a letter of apology to the defence minister and the head of state. The former editor of the weekly *La Nouvelle presse* and *La Météo*, two papers with a provocative approach, had just launched a new monthly paper. In its first edition on 28 August, it carried a report exposing mismanagement and corruption with the army. It also closely examined several incidents involving the management style of Defence Minister, Rémy Ze Meka, quoting anonymous sources.

Overnight on 6-7 November, three hooded men broke into the home of Agnès Taïle, presenter of

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an open microphone programme on privately-owned *Sweet FM* radio in Douala. They dragged her outside and savagely beat her. Taile had since June 2005 moderated a broadcast called "it's your turn to speak" in which listeners phoned in on news subjects. Three weeks before the assault, she

had received several anonymous telephone calls telling her to stop her "pursuit". She had said publicly at the time that she was not frightened by these attempts to intimidate her. As often in this type of case, the subsequent police investigation went nowhere.

CHAD

Area: 1,284,200 sq. km.
Population: 9,749,000.
Language: French.
Head of state: Idriss Deby Itno.

Following a crisis between the press and the government in 2005, the situation appeared to improve in N'Djamena. But the resumption in fighting, a state of war with Sudan and the government's intolerance dealt a serious blow to freedoms in Chad. A state of emergency was declared at the end of the year. And with this came censorship.

The year started well, with the resolution of the crisis of the summer of 2005, which saw four journalists imprisoned in N'Djamena. Dialogue was restarted between the press and the government. Negotiations were even begun on law reform in line with President Idriss Deby Itno's promises made to Reporters Without Borders, in September 2005. But fast-moving political events, particularly the resumption of clashes between rebels and government forces at the Sudanese border then into the capital itself, pushed the government into taking the absurd and pointless decision to reinstate censorship.

Tension started worsening in autumn 2006, when fighting resumed and the president openly accused neighbour Sudan, the rear base of armed movements, of having declared war on Chad. Against this background, on 27 October, Evariste Ngaralbaye, a journalist on the privately-owned weekly *Notre Temps*, was arrested and imprisoned for four days along with common-law prisoners. His arrest was linked to the publication of an article he wrote about child soldiers.

STATE OF EMERGENCY

Two weeks later, when blood was shed in inter-communal clashes and rebel columns were advancing from the border with Darfur in Sudan, the government decided, on 13 November, to declare a state of emergency in six regions and in the capital. This step included restoring advance censorship on the written press, as well as a ban on privately-owned radios from covering sensitive subjects. The independent press - reduced to a handful of weeklies appearing only in N'Djamena and a few private and community radios - found itself at the end of 2006 under strict government surveillance, while fighting continued with very little news filtering out. Forced to appear from 23 November onwards, with whole passages cut out

and criss-crossed with black bands, the written press, certain that it was now seen as an enemy of the state, joined in the resistance, in its own fashion.

After producing several defaced editions, five newspapers belonging to the Chadian Association of Private Newspaper Editors (AEPT), *N'Djamena Bi-hebdo*, *Notre Temps*, *Le Temps*, *Sarh Tribune* and *Le Messenger*, decided to suspend publication for two weeks, from 6 December. The only publication which continued to appear normally was the pro-government privately-owned *Le Progrès*. An attempt was also made to challenge the censorship decree through the courts.

CONFLICT ZONE

Chad had however escaped a first news blackout in April, when rebels mounted a surprise attack on N'Djamena. During their advance they also took the view that journalists were in their way. Eliakim Vanambyl, a reporter on privately-owned *FM Liberté* radio was kidnapped by a rebel column, in Mongo, central Chad on 11 April 2006. He managed to escape a few hours later with the help of one of the rebels and reached the town, where he was hidden by protestant monks until he could return to the capital.

On the government side, the army also kept a close watch on the press. Several foreign correspondents reported suffering threats and harassment. On 15 April, René Dillah Yombirim, a journalist on public radio and correspondent for the French service of the *BBC*, was viciously beaten by soldiers while he was interviewing residents in the capital, before being released a few hours later.

Finally, the regular harassment of Changuiz Vatankhah, editor of the community station *Radio Brakoss* and president of the Chad Private Radio

CHAD

Union (URPT) had an epilogue which Reporters Without Borders hopes is short-lived. The Iranian refugee, who has lived in Chad for several decades, was arrested on 28 April and placed under an order to be expelled from the country. He was only released on 19 May after international pressure and mediation by human rights minister, Abderaman Djasnabaille. The journalist, who was already regularly threatened for his local anti-cor-

ruption campaign and arrested once before, in September 2005, on the grounds that his radio "revived animosity between different rural communities in conflict", had signed a URPT release calling for postponement of 3 May presidential elections. Forced to resign all his duties, he was however allowed to remain in Chad, with his family, which was in itself an achievement, given the Public Security Ministry hounding unleashed against him.



CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Area: 322,460 sq. km.
Population: 18,154,000.
Language: French.
Head of state: Laurent Gbagbo.

The Cote d'Ivoire, divided in two since September 2002, has a pluralistic press, mechanisms for democratic regulation and no longer legally imprisons journalists. But it is one of Africa's most dangerous countries for both local and foreign media. The year began with a new outbreak of violence from the "Young Patriots", placed by Reporters Without Borders on its list of "press freedom predators".

At dawn on 16 January 2006, barricades began to go up all around Abidjan. Checkpoints were set up by young demonstrators in response to an appeal from the several organisations for the defence of President Laurent Gbagbo. Groups began to mass in front of several strategic sites in the economic capital with the aim of forcing out the UN mandated forces. Several hundred Young Patriots rallied in front of the building housing the state-run media, particularly *Radiotélévision ivoirienne (RTI)*. They used force to get the staff to broadcast news of their action in the 1pm news bulletin and threatened several journalists, calling them "rebels with cushy jobs", and then withdrew from the building. But overnight on 17-18 January there was a further dramatic development. Soldiers guarding the entrance to the building opened the gates and the Young Patriots who were waiting outside rushed through and forced their way into the studios. They threatened the technicians to get them to broadcast a message from one of their leaders calling for "all young people to take to the streets to demand the departure of impartial forces and to fully liberate the country". They also claimed to have "taken" the television. From then on, leaders of the various groups claiming to support President Laurent Gbagbo occupied the *RTI* premises, calling for rallies against the "symbols of occupation". Local bands of Young Patriots in Daloa, a city in central Cote d'Ivoire, stormed and ransacked the premises of community radio *Radio Tchato-Daloa* after the management refused to broadcast a call from the demonstrators to attack the local UN base.

Over the next two days, journalists in Abidjan not belonging to the pro-presidential camp, lay low. The offices of opposition newspapers were deserted, for fear of Young Patriot raids as had happened in November 2004. Demonstrators at the barricades roughly interrogated journalists, saying

they were looking for staff from the daily *Patriote*, linked to the Rally for the Republicans (RDR), the party of former prime minister Alassane Ouattara, or other dailies close to the opposition. A team of journalists from the Olympe group, owner of the dailies *L'Inter* and *Soir Info*, were held up at a barricade manned by Young Patriots brandishing swords, knives and clubs. Journalist for *Soir Info* Konan N'Bra, photographer Abdoul Karim Koné and their driver were threatened with death, beaten up and robbed of their money and reporting equipment.

Negotiations in Abidjan between the Prime Minister Charles Konan Banny and President Laurent Gbagbo led to a return to normality on 20 January.

The presidential camp was not ready to yield however. On 28 November, *RTI's* director general, Kébé Yacouba, was sacked by presidential decree and replaced by Pierre Brou Amessan, who read the TV news during the period that the Young Patriots had seized control in January, and the channel's board of governors was dissolved. Laurent Gbagbo had seen as "seditious" the airing on *RTI*, on 27 November, of Prime Minister Charles Konan Banny's statement that it was "urgent to delay implementation" of decrees reinstating officials suspended for their part in the toxic waste scandal in Abidjan. The move confirmed the bringing to heel of the public media, a crucial element in controlling news and information throughout the country.

AN UNASSAILABLE PRESIDENCY

The year 2006 therefore saw a return to the control of news by force. It was also the third year of uncertainty about the fate of French-Canadian journalist Guy-André Kieffer, who was



CÔTE D'IVOIRE

kidnapped by a commando from a parking lot of an Abidjan supermarket on 16 April 2004, after being lured into an ambush set by Michel Legré, brother-in-law of the president's wife, Simone Gbagbo. French examining magistrate Patrick Ramaël opened an investigation into Legré on 21 October 2004 for "abduction and a holding a hostage". He is currently under house arrest in Abidjan, after 18 months in detention. Jean-Tony Oulai, an Ivorian calling himself an army "ex-cap-

tain", and accused by some witnesses of having organised the kidnapping of the journalist, was also put under investigation for "abduction and holding a hostage" in January 2006 in France and put on probation. But the investigation has been hamstrung by the appalling state of relations between France and Cote d'Ivoire, the difficulties of investigating on the spot and the law of silence kept by those involved in the case, all close to the president.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Area: 2,344,860 sq. km.

Population: 57,549,000.

Language: French.

Head of state: Joseph Kabila.

In this country the size of western Europe, the press is buffeted by the violence of political militants and their leaders, the anarchy which reigns in some regions and the endemic poverty which can push them into allowing themselves to be corrupted. The UN's biggest mission in the world was launched in 2006 to organise and oversee a historic presidential election. While several journalists fell victim to political hatred, others played a dangerous role, which could have tipped the country into a new civil war.

The vastness of the former Zaire reflects the scale of the problems faced by journalists in this country. In the capital Kinshasa, where the press is profuse, polemical, and unruly, death threats, unfair arrests and police brutality are commonplace. During 2006, up to 15 publishers, editors and journalists working in the capital were, as in previous years, sent to languish in the cells of the sinister Kinshasa Penitentiary and Re-education Centre (CPRK), frequently on the basis of a single complaint from a politician or businessman, or a phone call from the police chief. Reporters Without Borders and its partner organisation, Journalist in Danger (JED) have over several years been calling on the government to reform the defamation law, which provides for prison terms and allows journalists to be put in preventive detention, so far in vain. The authorities have not yet given up using and abusing an article punishing a "damaging accusation", under which judges need not rule on the truth of the incriminating news but only on the fact of whether or not it "harms the reputation or standing" of the complainant. Given, on top of this, the corruption at the heart of the judicial system, injustices are frequent.

PARTISAN MEDIA

Indeed, there is also a corruption problem with the Congolese press. Many journalists sell their columns in their papers to the highest bidder, putting themselves in the position of master blackmailers or mouthpieces of unscrupulous politicians. Hate speech also regularly finds its way into newspaper columns or on the airwaves of some Congolese media, made use of by political or ethnic clans. The recent presidential electoral campaign was the occasion for public and privately-

owned media to noisily declare their allegiance for one candidate or another, frequently with no regard for ethics. As a result, partisan media, particularly those of Joseph Kabila and his rival Jean-Pierre Bemba, were the target of attacks from their opponents, who had no hesitation in sending their militia or militants to silence the voice of "the other".

In another sign of the times, the day after the declaration of the first round results in the presidential elections, on 20 August, fighting broke out around the TV building owned by Jean-Pierre Bemba between the praetorian guards of the two candidates. One month later, on 18 September, a suspicious fire destroyed the offices and studios of *Canal Congo télévision (CCTV)*, *Canal Kin télévision (CKTV)* and *Radio liberté Kinshasa (Ralik)*, leaving the channels' director general, Stéphane Kitutu with second degree burns.

THREATS AND SHADOWY AREAS

Many other journalists do their best to carry out their work honestly, but pay a high price — in their safety, freedom or their lives — for challenging those who embezzle public funds. One such journalist, Kazadi Mukendi, on the weekly *Lubilanji Expansion*, spent a month and a half in prison for exposing a corruption case, despite the fact that the prosecutor had ordered his release one and a half months earlier. Bapuwa Mwamba, an opposition editorialist newly returned from exile, was murdered at his home on 8 July, probably by soldiers looking for easy money.

Less than a year earlier, political journalist Franck Ngyke and his wife Hélène Mpaka, were murdered

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

in dubious circumstances at their home in Kinshasa. Under pressure from Congolese journalists and international organisations, for the first time in the country's recent history, an investigation was opened to shed light on the double killing. This led to a somewhat muddled trial of three alleged culprits, three former soldiers whose motives were unclear. JED carried out its own independent inquiry, with the aim of exploring the political lead, despite pronounced disregard for this hypothesis on the part of the authorities. The conclusions have never been confirmed or disproved. However repeated death threats against Donat M'Baya Tshimanga, president of the organisation and its secretary general Tshivis Tshivuadi, suggests that the questions they raised in their investigation, particularly about the role played by people close to the interior ministry, were too close for comfort for some.

To confront all these challenges, in March, Reporters Without Borders sent a delegation to Kinshasa, to meet President Joseph Kabila, several ministers and ambassadors, the local UN mission and the leading media executives. While the organisation was able to secure the release of three imprisoned journalists, it was also able to establish the inadequacy of regulation and self-regulation. The High Authority on Media (HAM), is headed by Modeste Mutinga, a respected journalist subjected to such pressure that he finds it difficult to work normally. At the same time as finding it impossible not to condemn abuses by the propaganda media, the authority has to cope with constant charges of "partiality". It was against this background that its offices were ransacked on 27 July by supporters of Jean-Pierre Bemba returning from one of his political meetings.

PERMANENT HOSTILITY

Political militants are not the only ones to show no respect for this important institution of modern democracy. The information ministry, under Henri Mova Sanakyi, a "hardliner" in Joseph Kabila's party, has no hesitation in by-passing it regularly, as it did at the end of August, when he ordered an unceremonious blackout of Jean-Pierre Bemba's channels. The minister also demonstrated his lack of regard for democratic rules on several occasions during the year. On 3 July, a foreign correspondent for *RFI*, Ghislaine Dupont, was expelled from the country at his initiative. The minister had launched a virulent attack on her in the preceding months and a hate campaign with xenophobic overtones was directed at her by the pro-Kabila daily *L'Avenir*.

The situation is little better in the provinces, with local leaders regularly sending their henchmen to beat up journalists showing too much curiosity. In one case, on 18 May, Ricky Nzuzi, cameraman with *Radio télévision nationale congolaise (RTNC)* in Lubumbashi, was kidnapped, brutally beaten and thrown into a ditch by unknown assailants. In areas infested by private armies with vague political objectives, journalists work in complete insecurity. A local *AFP*, correspondent Acquitté Kisémbé, went missing in Ituri in 2003 and everything points to the conclusion that he was murdered by local militiamen. Reporters Without Borders has moreover called on the International Criminal Court to extend its investigations into warlord Thomas Lubanga, transferred to The Hague during the year, to include this unsolved disappearance.



ERITREA

Area: 117,600 sq. km.
Population: 4,401,000.
Language: Tigrinya.
Head of state: Issaias Afeworki.

Africa's newest country, independent since 1993, has become a kind of open-air prison guarded by an ultra-nationalist sole party which sees the least democratic claim as a threat to national security. Among the hundreds of political prisoners, at least 13 journalists have just spent their sixth year in jail. Three of them may well have died as a result of conditions reminiscent of a penal colony.

Eritrea has just completed a fifth year of terror and silence. The army command and the sole party, the Popular Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), continue to exert total control and to hand down severe punishment to the least tendency to criticism in this small country squeezed between Ethiopia, Sudan and the Red Sea, independent only since 1993.

Under the leadership of Information Minister, Ali Abdu, the state media continues to sing the praises of President Issaias Afeworki. Journalists who dissent from the authoritarianism of the masters of this open-air prison had no choice but to obey orders. When the pressure became too great, they left. In 2006, around a score of them fled into exile abroad, including star presenter of the English-language service of the public channel *Eri-TV*, Temesghen Debesai. The former correspondent of the *Voice of America (VOA)*, Aklilu Solomon, crossed the Ethiopian border secretly at the beginning of December. He had been arrested in July 2003 for a report on the grief felt by families of soldiers learning of the death in combat of their loved ones. The journalist was released in poor health after being held for 18 months in a metal container and then spent several weeks in a barracks to complete his "patriotic re-education".

OPEN CONTEMPT FOR THE PRESS

The Eritrean government responded to repeated defections in its usual way - with a crackdown. From 12 November, security forces agents turned up daily at the offices of the information ministry, where state-run media are based and arrested staff without explanation. Journalists picked up in these swoops were: Ahmed "Bahja" Idris, of *Eri-TV*, Senait Tesfay, presenter of a Tigrinya-language service on *Eri-TV*, Paulos Kidane, of the Amharic-language service of *Eri-TV* and public *Radio Dimtsi*

Hafash (Voice of the Broad Masses), Daniel Mussie, of the Oromo-language service of Radio Dimtsi Hafash, Temesghen Abay, of the Tigrinya-language service of *Radio Dimtsi Hafash*, Yemane Haile, of the state-run *Eritrean News Agency (ENA)*, Fathia Khaled, presenter on the Arabic-language service of *Eri-TV*, and Amir Ibrahim, journalist on the same service, who suffers from diabetes. They are reportedly held in the capital, Asmara, in a police-run complex known as "Agip", in reference to the oil company which previously stood at that spot. This detention centre is "where police take prisoners to torture them before transferring them to their final destination", as a former prisoner told Reporters Without Borders.

INHUMAN PRISON CONDITIONS

But it also seems that the irreparable may have been done in one of the country's many detention centres. Credible sources reported at the end of 2006 that three of the 13 journalists secretly imprisoned for the past five years had died in the army-run prison of Eiraeiro, situated in a remote north-eastern desert. Said Abdulkader, Medhane Haile and Yusuf Mohamed Ali were among journalists and opposition figures rounded up in the week of 18-23 September 2001, in the aftermath of President Issaias Afeworki's "suspension" of privately-owned media and the arrest of the ruling party's reformist fringe. Questioned about this report by Reporters Without Borders and several international media, the Eritrean government gave only the curt reply. "We are not prepared to make any comment". The extremely harsh conditions in Eiraeiro prison could have been responsible for these presumed deaths.

Other prisoners were referred to in this report, all working for the privately-owned press. They were Seyoum Tsehaye (or Fsehaye), a freelance



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journalist, Dawit Habtemichael, editor and co-founder of *Meqaleh*, Temesghen Gebreyesus, journalist and member of the board of *Keste Debera* and Emanuel Asrat, editor of *Zemen* and all reportedly held in Eiraeiro.

Reporters Without Borders also obtained news of the co-founder of *Selit*, the country's top-selling weekly prior to 2001, the poet and dramatist

Fessehaye Yohannes, known as "Joshua". He is reportedly being held in Cell 18 at Eiraeiro prison, after being held previously in Dongolo jail in the south, in an underground cell 1.5 metres wide and 2.50 metres high, lit round the clock by electric light.



ETHIOPIA

Area: 1,104,300 sq. km.
Population: 77,431,000.
Language: Amharic.
Head of government: Meles Zenawi.

The international community might have believed that legislative elections in May 2005 would mark the end of “authoritarian democracy” and the beginning of a genuine openness. But the polling fiasco and the riots which followed them dashed this hope. Around 15 journalists have been in prison since November 2005 after being picked up in a crackdown on the opposition coalition.

After a disastrous year, 2006 in Ethiopia was a static one. Some 20 journalists spent it in cells in Addis Ababa, part of a group of at least 76 members of the opposition, civil society and the private press prosecuted for “treason”, “conspiracy” to overthrow the government and “genocide”. Their trials before the federal high court opened on 2 May. The general disapproval, including from Ethiopia’s traditional allies, failed to get Prime Minister Meles Zenawi to budge. For him, there was no doubt that the opposition wanted to engineer a coup and to take revenge on ethnic Tigrans like himself.

Fourteen newspaper editors or publishers were rounded up in the space of one month in November 2005. From December onwards, other journalists were arrested and sentenced in defamation cases. All were still detained as of 1st January 2007.

Since 1st January 2006, two other journalists were added to the list of the “November prisoners”. Solomon Aregawi, of *Hadar*, arrested in November 2005, was charged on 21 March 2006 with “insulting the Constitution” and “genocide”, along with 32 other prisoners, members or supposed members of the CUD, Goshu Moges, of the weekly *Lisane Hezeb*, arrested on 19 February was charged with “treason” on 19 April. A number of other journalists and opposition figures or organisations, were charged while out of the country and tried in absentia.

It is against this tense background, aggravated by the war with Somalia and the standoff at the

Eritrean border, that several privately-owned newspapers are continuing to appear in Addis Ababa. Self-censorship is commonplace, particularly on military issues. Ethiopian journalists are held to an imposed patriotism and foreign correspondents closely watched. Anthony Mitchell, working for the *Associated Press (AP)*, was forced to leave the country on 22 January for having allegedly “tarnished the image of the country”. Foreign media have great difficulty in obtaining accreditation from the Information Ministry, which is essential to be allowed to work legally in Ethiopia.

Reporters Without Borders has been worried since 2004, about the plight of two journalists working for the Oromo service of public television *ETV*. They were arrested in April of that year, along with other *ETV* staff, since released, following a violent crackdown on an Oromo student demonstration on the Addis Ababa University campus, on 4 January 2004. The two journalists were accused of being informers for the separatist Oromo Liberation Front (OLF).

For the first time in its history, the Ethiopian government appears to have launched itself into web censorship. From May to June 2006, most blogs and opposition websites were inaccessible in the country. The government denied being behind it. However, at the end of November, these online publications against mysteriously disappeared, which makes the hypothesis of political censorship appear more plausible.



GAMBIA

Area: 11,300 sq. km.
Population: 1,517,000.
Language: English.
Head of state: Yahya Jammeh.

Ten journalists arrested, one missing, many others in exile, countless unsolved murders for which supporters of the president are suspected of responsibility or complicity, the memory of a murdered journalist besmirched by the government and a permanent climate of fear: this is the terrible track record of President Yahya Jammeh's as far as press freedom is concerned.

President Jammeh held a lavish investiture ceremony on 15 and 16 December 2006 to celebrate his re-election for a new five-year term. Many heads of state and government, including the prime minister of the very generous Republic of Taiwan, attended what the one-time coup leader, re-elected in dubious circumstances with 67.4% of the vote in September 2006, called a "big victory celebration and an opportunity for Gambia's youth to develop its musical talents".

This major "musical" festival was perhaps intended to mask another more dreadful event: the commemoration of the murder of one of the country's greatest journalists two years earlier. Deyda Hydara, co-founder and editor of the privately-owned daily *The Point*, correspondent for *Agence France-Presse (AFP)* and Reporters Without Borders in Banjul, was gunned down on 16 December 2004, while he was driving two employees home in his car. He had previously been threatened by the intelligence services, who had him under surveillance minutes before the killing, carried out in a street running alongside a police barracks, as shown by two investigative missions carried out by Reporters Without Borders. No serious investigation was held to identify the killers or the instigators. The only official statement made by the Gambian investigators, six months after the murder, produced the trumped-up suggestion that Hydara, who was referred to as a "provocateur", could have been killed because of some kind of sex case. But in a country like Gambia, where the president boasts of his contempt for journalists and human rights activists, one could hardly expect anything else.

AREA WITHOUT RULE OF LAW

Questioned about the killing in September, Yahya Jammeh replied: "I do not believe in murder.

I believe in imprisonment for the rest of your life. Then perhaps, at some point, we will say, 'Oh he is too old to be fed by the state'. We release him and leave him to sink into a decline. Then everyone will learn a lesson from it." To a journalist who challenged him about the frequent unfair arrests of journalists and the closure of the privately-owned bi-weekly *The Independent* by an elite police unit, Yahya Jammeh replied: "Everyone should get lost. If I have good reasons to close a newspaper's offices, I will do it."

The Independent, which had its printing press torched in 2004 by men identified by an opposition parliamentarian as members of the National Guard, has been sealed off and illegally prevented from appearing since 28 March 2006. An interminable trial has been started against one of its journalists, Lamin Fatty, who has been held for more than a month by the intelligence services with no access to a lawyer, just a few hundred metres from the luxury tourist complexes on Banjul beach. He is being tried under a draconian law providing for heavy prison sentences, adopted by parliament two days before the murder of Deyda Hydara. The managing director of the newspaper, Madi Ceasay, who is also president of the journalists' union, Gambia Press Union (GPU), and his editor Musa Saikyhan were secretly held for nearly three weeks between 28 March and 20 April, in defiance of all legal procedure. Like them at least ten journalists were arrested during 2006 and detained in similar conditions. "Chief" Ebrima Manneh, of the private pro-government *Daily Observer* has been missing since 7 July. Reporters Without Borders learned in early 2007 that he had been held in a provincial police station since that date, but no charges had been made against him.

This appalling record has not prevented the African Union (AU), the continental organisation,



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presided over by former Malian head of state Alpha Oumar Konaré, from continuing to offer unconditional support for the government. The annual heads of state and government summit

was held in Banjul and the Gambian capital is the headquarters of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights. This body also avoids discussing the actions of its hosts on this issue.

KENYA

Area: 580,370 sq. km.
Population: 34,256,000.
Language: English.
Head of state: Mwai Kibaki.

Kenyans woke on 2 March 2006 to learn that police had overnight carried out a brutal raid against *The Standard* newspaper and a television station. Footage of police officers burning copies of one of the country's most respected newspapers were relayed around the world. The incident was revealing of the appalling relations between the government and the privately-owned media, in one of the continent's most developed democracies.

For Kenyan journalists, the year 2006 will be remembered chiefly for the raid which came at 1am on 2 March, when police made coordinated onslaughts on the HQ of the privately-owned *Kenya Television Network (KTN)* and at the printers of the daily *The Standard*, in a Nairobi industrial zone. After beating the watchmen, numbers of police officers armed with AK-47s, triggered panic at the TV station. They forced staff to lie on the floor as they wrecked broadcast equipment, which took the station off air until early afternoon of the following day. Police stormed the film production unit, seizing equipment, including a number of computers, arrested and then quickly released four staff members. Simultaneously police officers seized copies of the 2 March edition of the *The Standard* at the printers and burned them in front of the television cameras in scenes which were shown around the world.

The government, through its Internal Security Minister, John Michuki, acknowledged it had ordered the police operation. It came after months of mounting hostility between the government of President Mwai Kibaki and the privately-owned press, in particular the powerful Nation Media Group and Standard Newspapers. This time it was an article which appeared on 25 February in the weekend edition of the *The Standard*, which unleashed the government's ire. The article referred to a meeting two days earlier, between President Kibaki and the former environment minister Kalonzo Musyoka, to discuss a possible political alliance. Mr. Musyoka had left the government in November 2005 and campaigned with the opposition, against the draft constitution proposed by the head of state and finally rejected by the Kenyan people. The press offices of both President Kibaki and Kalonzo Musyoka denied that such a meeting had ever taken place. *The Standard* repor-

ted these denials but also referred to its own suspicions of a plot on the part of the coalition to which Musyoka belonged, with the aim of discrediting him.

But that was not enough to placate the government. In the first stage of its punitive operation, on 28 February, managing editor of *The Standard*, Chaacha Mwita, editor, Dennis Onyango, and journalist, Ayub Savula, were arrested and taken to a police station in Kileleshwa, in Nairobi. The storming of the newspaper came three days later. They were not released until the day after the raid. They were charged with "publication of false rumours with the intention of panicking the public" and were released on bail of 50,000 shillings (580 euros).

Far from solving whatever problems there were, this police raid and its consequences poisoned Kenya's political and media life for the rest of the year. Who knew what? Who gave the orders? Why such brutality? These questions continued to nourish the debate, proving that physical attacks on the media are totally counter-productive for the government of a fully functioning democracy like Kenya.

VIOLENCE

Police are still often sent to settle scores with media, who, in the eyes of the government, have "overstepped the mark". A police unit, led by head of operations for Nairobi, Julius Ndegwa, and deputy chief of the provincial criminal brigade, Isaiah Osugo, carried out a major search at the offices of the tabloid *The Weekly Citizen* and at several printers in the capital on 20 February. During this operation, journalist Johnstone Matio, graphic designer, Ken Teyie, receptionist, Catherine Oyando, printer Paul Kimani, and distribution assistant Austin Alwaka, were arrested. Several

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street vendors were also picked up. They were all released a few days later.

The weekly, which specialises in sex cases, had carried several articles criticising Mwai Kibaki's presidency. It had reported that the head of state, incapable of running the country, had delegated his powers to a special advisor, Stanley Murage, and that a power struggle was going on between a woman presented as his second wife, Mary Wambui, and "first lady" Lucy Kibaki.

Another problem confronting journalists in Kenya is the endemic violence that exists in one of the

continent's most troubled regions. The Nairobi offices of privately-owned *Radio Hope*, of the protestant evangelical Pentecostal Church was stormed during the night of 12 May by a band of nine assailants, two of whom opened fire on a night watchman killing him instantly, then injuring another member of the security staff and a presenter before fire-bombing studios and taking the station of air. A passer-by was also injured as the gang fled after the raid.

The attack, which the radio blamed on Muslim extremists, followed a Swahili-language broadcast of a programme called, "Jesus is the way", which promoted conversion to Christianity for Muslims.

MAURITANIA

Area: 1,025,520 sq. km.
Population: 3,069,000.
Languages: Arabic, French.
Head of state: Ely Ould Mohamed Vall.

In two years, there have been spectacular gains for press freedom in the former “private fiefdom” of ousted president Maaouiya Ould Taya, now living in exile. After his forced departure, in August 2005, a military junta began a process of transition to democracy which should culminate in a presidential election in March 2007. Among the promises kept so far by the country’s new rulers has been the abolition of censorship.

If proof was needed that international pressure can produce positive results for civil and political freedoms, the case of Mauritania provides an instructive example. Following the “palace revolution” of August 2005, the military junta which overthrew President Maaouiya Ould Taya promised to restore democracy and in particular press freedom. At the end of 2006, this promise was kept.

A new law, decriminalising press offences and setting up mechanisms for democratic regulation, was drawn up by a special commission made up of independent journalists in Nouakchott, jurists and top officials, in collaboration with Reporters Without Borders. Completed in March, slightly amended by the profession after its public release, the new law was promulgated at the beginning of October by the Military Council for Justice and Democracy (CMJD). Censorship was thus abolished through negotiation and with the watchful support of the international community. A High Authority of Press and Broadcasting (HAPA) was appointed to regulate the sector. Mauritanian journalists can finally breathe easily again, after 20 years of oppression, constant surveillance and police tyranny.

Certainly, the broadcast landscape is still under state control and the CMJD’s promises of liberalisation are taking time to firm up. But the major public media have been entrusted to responsible journalists who have opened their airwaves and their columns to the country’s entire political spectrum. Likewise, the June constitutional referendum and November municipal and legislative elections went off in favourable conditions, guaranteeing diversity in public discourse and access to the greatest number possible to hear the speeches. As for the presidential elections due in March 2007, these polls were preceded by consultations between the government and political movements

so as to satisfy everyone involved, including the most radical elements. Moreover, broadcasts in the capital by French public station *Radio France International (RFI)*, suspended by the former regime in November 2000, were resumed and negotiations opened with the channel’s management to extend its service to Nouadhibou in the west.

NEW OBJECTIVES

A number of challenges remain however for Mauritanian journalists, particularly in overcoming clan and tribal pressures. Khalil Ould Idoud, editor of the Arabic-language daily *alAkhbar*, was attacked in Nouakchott on 15 February 2006. A score of armed men, under the orders of ex Colonel Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Deh, a prominent figure under the former regime turned businessman, burst into the offices of his newspaper looking for him. On the same day, the journalist was driving his car when he was hit by a four-wheel drive vehicle in the centre of the capital. He succeeded in getting away from the scene without injury, reported the incident and then immediately went into hiding, fearing for his safety. Government intervention allowed those responsible to be punished but the journalist withdrew his complaint for reasons which remained unclear.

Elsewhere, the phenomena of the “peshmerga” press — irregular publications of dubious professionalism and treated favourably under the previous regime to discredit the independent press — continue to cause problems. Chasers after “little presents” and keen to sell their services to the highest bidder, those responsible for these newspapers continue to be invited to press conferences and official events, angering journalists committed to respecting the ethical rules of the job. But the experience of 15 years of censorship has provided them with optimism which allows them

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to face up to the challenge. "We have already stood up to the authorities which had all the power. I don't see why we should give way to others. The only threat to the press now comes from within. It must organise itself, become profes-

sional, unite, and show solidarity to confront its new predators," Ahmed Ould Sheikh told Reporters Without Borders. He is managing editor of *Calame*, one of the newspapers which suffered most from censorship prior to 2005.

MOZAMBIQUE

*Area: 801,590 sq. km.
Population: 19,792,000.
Language: Portuguese.
Head of state: Armando Emilio Guebuza.*

Six years after the murder of journalist Carlos Cardoso, the leader of the commando which killed him was definitively sentenced to a long prison term. Mozambique's public ministry even went further by opening an investigation into the possible complicity of Nyimpine Chissano, son of former president Joachim Chissano.

It is sufficiently rare in Africa for a journalist's killer to be effectively brought to justice, for this kind of verdict to be thoroughly welcomed. This was what happened in Mozambique in 2006, six years after the murder of Carlos Cardoso, editor of the daily *Metical*, who was killed in November 2000 while he was investigating the country's biggest financial scandal since independence.

On 20 January, Anibal Antonio dos Santos Junior, known as "Anibalzinho", the leader of the commando who killed the journalist, was sentenced to nearly 30 years in prison. Anibalzinho was also ordered to pay damages to Cardoso's family of 14 billion meticals (about 490,000 euros), and 1.5 billion meticals (51 000-52,000 euros) to the journalist's driver who was injured in the ambush. The judge said that after serving the entirety of his sentence, Portuguese-national Anibalzinho should be deported to his home country. Certainly, key areas of doubt still exist in the case and neither the circumstances of the defendant's two spectacular escapes, probably with help from within the police, nor accusations of complicity against the son of the former president, Nyimpine Chissano, accused of having ordered the killing, have been ever been fully cleared up.

However, on 9 May, Mozambique's public ministry opened an investigation into the accusation that Nyimpine Chissano was allegedly the "moral author" behind the murder of Carlos Cardoso. He was being investigated for "complicity" and "various economic crimes". The prosecutor-general's offices sent the file to the High Court in Maputo. A judge will now have to interview all parties before deciding whether the son of the former head of state should be brought before a court.

Cardoso was murdered on 22 November 2000, on Avenue Martires de Machava in Maputo. He

was travelling in his car with his driver when two men blocked their route and opened fire on them. Cardoso, who was hit by several bullets in the head, died instantly and his driver was very badly injured. The journalist was at the time investigating the embezzlement of the equivalent of 14 million euros from the Commercial Bank of Mozambique (BCM). In his articles he had particularly cited the names of three very powerful businessmen, the two Satar brothers and Vicente Ramaya.

ABUSE OF POWER

The case sent shock waves across the country and forced the government to give more respect to the press. Even if prison terms still exist as a penalty for defamation, in practice the courts never impose them. There had been no arrests recorded of journalists since 2003, when the editor of the daily *Imparcial*, José Armando Chitula, was arrested at Maputo airport and held for 24 hours before being released. The imprisonment of the editor, news editor and a reporter from the community newspaper *Mabarwe*, on 3 May, therefore provoked surprise in 2006, and was particularly revealing of the abuse of power by small-time local despots, with police complicity. Editor Sebastião Canjera, news editor João Mascarenhas, and journalist Patreque Francisco, were arrested in the provincial capital, Chimoio, on the orders of the deputy prosecutor, Jose Abede. The three journalists were imprisoned on the basis of a "defamation" suit lodged by an influential business in Barue district, Tiago Pangaia. The newspaper had reported that he had recently been arrested after being accused of stealing 70 head of cattle, and then released for lack of evidence by the office of the deputy prosecutor. The three men were freed after a week of being held illegally, following the personal intervention of the deputy prosecutor's superior.

NIGER

Area: 1,267,000 sq. km.
Population: 13,957,000.
Language: French.
Head of state: Mamadou Tandja.

The crisis prompted by the imprisonment, at the end of 2003, of the management of the weekly *Le Républicain*, which had been highly-critical of the government, pushed President Mamadou Tandja to promise reform of the press law. In 2006, this promise has not been kept and the *Républicain* management went back to jail.

On 1st September 2006, the high court in Niamey sentenced Maman Abou and Oumarou Keita, respectively publisher and editor of the privately-owned weekly *Le Républicain*, to 18 months in prison, 5 million CFA francs (7,600 euros) damages and a 300,000 CFA francs (about 460 euros) fine for "spreading false news" and "defamation". The prison sentences reflected the penalty called for by the prosecutor, while the fine was 100 times what the public ministry had asked for against Oumarou Keita. The two men were arrested on 4 August, on the basis of a complaint lodged by the state of Niger against an article in the *Républicain* published on 28 July. The story, headlined "Hama drops the West for Iran", accused the Prime Minister Hama Amadou of "strenuously wooing the Iranians", risking a split with "Western foreign ministries and liquidating all businesses belong to Whites". Maman Abou, told Reporters Without Borders from custody that he believed their arrests were intended to punish *Le Républicain* for publication in April of a report into embezzlement of funds within the administration. This investigation led to an audit by Niger's international donors.

The government did not give way in the face of the outcry provoked by this case and in particular the prime minister remained immovable despite multiple appeals from press freedom organisations.

The journalists had to wait for their appeal, on 27 November, before they were finally released. The prosecutor ruled that the sentence imposed by the lower court was too harsh. He called for nine months imprisonment, six of them suspended. Since the two journalists had already spent nearly four months in prison they were released at the end of the hearing.

Apart from these two journalists, for whom this was not their first brush with the authorities, three other highly-placed journalists went to prison in Niger in 2006. But these cases were different and much less political. These three journalists got on the wrong side of the law mostly after departing from the elementary rules of journalism by publishing sensationalist, unchecked or exaggerated reports.



NIGERIA

Area: 923,770 sq. km.
Population: 131,530,000.
Language: English.
Head of state: Olusegun Obasanjo.

Journalists in this "West African giant", the continent's biggest oil producer, are trapped between public violence, endemic corruption and the belligerence of politicians ready for anything to protect their privileges. Beatings, arrests, abusive trials and death threats are the daily lot of journalists in Lagos and the state capitals, where powerful governors lay down the law.

Nigerian journalists yet again lived through an appalling year in 2006. They have had to face police brutality, arrests in certain cases for the least article that annoyed local authorities and corruption in the military, among politicians and businessmen. Undoubtedly, the Nigerian press is pluralist, vigorous and irreverent, buoyed up by the support of the people and a long tradition of resistance to different military juntas and dictatorships which have bled the country since independence. But as Reporters Without Borders stressed in March, "journalists suffer from the daily violence which reigns in Nigeria". It made this comment after recording over a three-month period: three physical assaults, one censorship order, one abusive sacking, one unfair arrest and one case of intimidation. They are also routinely the punch bags for the powerful, military figures, governors, ministers and businessmen, who enjoy complete impunity and have no respect for the right to news and information. For this reason, Nigerian journalists deserve high praise for enduring the oppression of military juntas and for now working in the face of the contempt and brutality of the authorities and their protégés.

In a country in which power struggles are generally carried out against a backdrop of violence and corruption, journalists are the targets of choice. The editor of the newspaper *Ebonyi Voice*, Imo Eze, and one of his journalists, Oluwole Elenyinmile, spent more than two months in prison, from 14 June to 25 August, after carrying an article, on 16 April, headlined, "Is Ebonyi A Failed State ?" The two journalists were charged by a court in Abakaliki, capital of Ebonyi state, with "conspiracy", "sedition" and "defamation" of the governor, Sam Ominyi Egwu.

A TELEVISION STATION IN THE FIRING LINE

The government also used abusive judicial procedures when journalists challenged President

Olusegun Obasanjo. Accordingly, Mike Gbenga Aruleba, presenter of a popular political TV programme, and Rotimi Durojaiye, reporter on the *Daily Independent*, spent two days in prison and were charged with "sedition" under a law which had been annulled by a 1983 appeal court ruling, in connection with their comments on the purchase of a new presidential jet. Durojaiye wrote an article in the *Daily Independent* on 12 June, headlined, "Controversy Over Age, Cost of Presidential Jet", in which he speculated about the details and timing of the acquisition of a new presidential plane. In his programme, "Focus Nigeria", broadcast the next day on *African Independent Television (AIT)*, presenter Mike Gbenga Aruleba also raised the subject, which provoked a huge controversy in the Nigerian press. Internal intelligence State Security Service (SSS) agents arrested Aruleba on 14 June and released him the following day on condition of reporting his movements, for using the pejorative word "tokunbo" about the plane, suggesting it was second-hand. The following day, when he left Abuja for Lagos in connection with his work, Aruleba was arrested again but he was acquitted on 10 October. As for Rotimi Durojaiye, he was arrested on 25 June, but his trial was adjourned.

The *AIT* channel also had a brush with the authorities the previous month. On 14 May, SSS agents burst into its offices and seized the tape of a documentary about failed attempts by previous Nigerian leaders to hold on to power. *AIT*, the country's oldest private channel, had been in the authorities' sights since it broadcast national assembly debates live on the controversial issue of an amendment to the 1999 constitution, presented by supporters of President Obasanjo, which would have allowed, among other things, the president and the federal state governors to remain in power for four further years. Parliament rejected



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it a few days after the raid on the newspaper. The SSS, which often launches commando operations against the privately-owned press, has been placed on Reporters Without Borders' list of "Predator of Press Freedom".

TWO JOURNALISTS KILLED

As if the climate of permanent hostility weighing on the Nigerian press was not enough, the end of the year was marked by two murders. Both victims were well-known journalists in Lagos and the circumstances of their death, even if there is no proof the killings were linked to their work, reveal the kind of violent universe in which journalists have to operate. Omololu Falobi, a former journalist on the privately-owned daily *The Punch*, founder and executive director of Journalists Against AIDS (JAAIDS), was killed on 5 October at around 10pm, when he had just left the headquarters of the association, in the Ogba district of Lagos. His killers fired several bullets into his forehead when he was at the wheel of his car. The first conclusions of the investigation, passed on by JAAIDS and several Nigerian journalists, suggested that Falobi

was killed for criminal reasons, but no suspect has been arrested.

Godwin Agbroko, chairman of the editorial board of the privately-owned daily *This Day*, was found dead at the wheel of his car, on 22 December, by a roadside in the Isolo district, just after he had left his office. None of his personal effects had been stolen. On the same night, three police officers and two passers-by were also shot dead in the same district. Police said they were working on the theory that Agbroko was killed for criminal reasons. His son, Tobor Agbroko, nevertheless told the Nigerian press that the family believed it was an assassination. "He had a telephone which was worth several thousand Nairas, which was left untouched. His cash, wrist watch and other things were also not touched." He dismissed the police theory, saying that one should not "fool people by saying the killers were robbers". Godwin Agbroko was a well-known journalist, who regularly had by-lined articles in *This Day*. A former editor of several newspapers under the military dictatorship (1993-1999), he continued to provide an ironic and uncompromising take on political life.



RWANDA

Area: 26,340 sq. km.
Population: 9,038,000.
Languages: Kinyarwanda, French, English, Swahili.
Head of state: Paul Kagame.

Huge challenges have been met in the reconstruction of a country left deeply traumatised by the 1994 genocide. But freedom of press is in no way guaranteed and Rwandan journalists suffer permanent hostility from their government and surveillance by the security services.

A country terribly scarred by the genocide against the Tutsis in 1994, Rwanda has struggled to emerge from these dark years. The country's infrastructure has been rebuilt and a system put in place to bring to trial those responsible for "neighbourhood genocide". But President Paul Kagame and his government have never accepted that the press should be guaranteed genuine freedom. Journalists are made to pay the price for annoying the government or revealing the shadowy side of its policies.

The year 2006 moreover began with an assault on the editor of one of the rare independent newspapers still appearing in Kigali. Bonaventure Bizumuremyi, then editor of the privately-owned weekly *Umuco* was woken at 3am on 15 January by four men brandishing clubs and knives who banged on the door of his home in a poor suburb of the capital. Once inside, they began ransacking the house and threatened the journalist, warning him to stop publishing articles unfavourable to the ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). After neighbours intervened the four men calmly left the house. The previous evening, Bizumuremyi had been followed home by a police vehicle. He also received threats by telephone. In the latest edition of *Umuco*, he had condemned the lack of separation of powers in Rwanda and criticised the RPF, which he said was incapable of running the country.

The newspaper is used to government machinations. One of its journalists, Jean-Léonard Rugabage, spent 11 months in prison in Gitarama, under various pretexts, all more or less linked to the 1994 genocide. He had been arrested in September 2005, ten days after publication of the first issue of *Umuco* in which he exposed corruption on the part of certain gacaca (people's courts) judges in the Ruyumba district and the use of the courts to settle personal scores. He has

been sentenced to one year in prison on 23 November for "contempt of court", after casting doubt on the impartiality of the president of the court appointed to try him and was still under threat of a completely unsubstantiated murder charge. He was finally acquitted of these two charges on 26 and 28 July 2006 and released. Since then he has resumed his post as editor of *Umuco*.

CONDEMNED FOR POLITICAL ANALYSIS

The other newspaper which has frequently felt the anger of the government is *Umuseso*, a weekly in the Kinyarwanda language, respected for its political analyses. On 3 August, the High Court of Rwanda, the country's highest jurisdiction, confirmed a "public offence" conviction against Charles Kabonero, editor of the weekly, and a one-year suspended prison sentence and a fine of one million Rwandan francs (about 1450 euros) for having published a series of articles critical of how the government was run. The publisher of *Umuseso* was sued by Denis Polisi, deputy speaker of parliament and secretary general of the RPF, over an article which appeared in August 2004, headlined: "Between Kagame and Polisi, who is really in charge?" The article sized up, among other things Polisi's political weight in terms of his position as party secretary general and former member of the Tutsi diaspora which sought refuge in Burundi. Kabonero also revealed that Polisi rented out office space to several para-state institutions in a building he owned.

In April, Kabonero was also the target of a vicious campaign of denigration, including in the pro-government bi-monthly *Focus*. On the basis of a faked letter, the newspaper accused him of conspiring with Lieutenant Abdul Ruzibiza, a former officer in the RPF's special services, now living in exile abroad, to launch a wave of bombings in Kigali to bring down the government.



RWANDA

Every year, several journalists decide to go into exile rather than continue to live with an atmosphere of tension and surveillance by the security services. Bosco Gasasira, editor of the weekly *Umuvugizi*, told Reporters Without Borders that in August 2006 he was the target of repeated phone threats and was followed everywhere by military intelligence agents. He had refused to reveal to the authorities information about Bonaventure Bizumuremyi, who had decided to leave the country because of serious threats against his person. The newspaper *Umuvugizi* was also targeted by the Rwandan authorities for having dared, along with other independent publications, to criticise the management of the minister of economy and finance, James Musoni. Gasasira had in particular published an article headlined, "transfer of the maisonette from President Habyarimana's time to the RPF", condemning favouritism in the distribution of strategic posts and "influence-peddling" which

the minister was allegedly involved in to control the country's economy.

RFI IN THE LINE OF FIRE

Finally, the international press, regularly accused, with press freedom and human right organisations of "disinformation" about the situation in Rwanda, drew government fury in 2006. Sonia Rolley, accredited correspondent for *Radio France International (RFI)* in Kigali, was ordered to leave the country on 10 June for failing to renew her visa. And when in November, the French judge Jean-Louis Bruguière issued nine international arrest warrants against Paul Kagame and his aides for alleged involvement in the shooting down of the plane that killed former president Juvénal Habyarimana, in April 1994, Rwanda not only broke off its diplomatic relations with France, but also shut down the *RFI* transmitter.

SOMALIA

Area: 637, 660 sq. km.

Population: 8,228,000.

Language: Somali.

Head of state: Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed.

The return of the war in 2006 made it one of the most violent years for the press for a long time. One foreign correspondent was killed in Mogadishu in broad daylight, while some 30 Somali journalists, embarrassing witnesses to a conflict of lies and disinformation, were arrested by one of the belligerents.

Somalia, which at the start of 2006 was a chaotic archipelago of territories controlled by warlords, became in the space of just a few months the scene of clashes between a fundamentalist political-military movement and a fragile transitional government. Somali journalists therefore found themselves facing new challenges. When the country was divided into fiefdoms of the warlords, protected by adolescent mercenary militia, they were already the favourite targets of the powerful, businessmen or self-proclaimed governors. In 2006, as embarrassing witnesses to a war in which disinformation and lies were a major weapon, they have had to cope on one side with the devout, nationalist Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) and on the other with a federal transitional government, irritable and worried about its image on the international scene.

REPEATED ARRESTS

As a result, some 30 journalists were arrested during the year both in Mogadishu in the south-east of the country, the UIC base, as well as in the regions taken by the Islamic Courts, such as Baidoa in the south-west, the headquarters of the government, as well as in semi-autonomous Puntland in the north-east.

Fahad Mohammed Abukar, journalist working for *Radio Warsan*, Mohammed Adawe Adam, of *Radio Shabelle*, and Muktar Mohammed Atosh, of privately-owned *HornAfrik* radio station were arrested by government militia on 24 October in the village of Daynunay, 15 kms from Baidoa. The three journalists were found in possession of a digital film camera on which there was footage of an Ethiopian soldier of Somali origin killed in Burhakaba, as well as of Ethiopian troops on Somali territory. They were held for one week before being released. The footage which they had taken was never broadcast. Likewise,

Abdullahi Yasin Jama, journalist on *Radio Warsan*, fell into a trap set by transitional government militia in Baidoa, on 24 November. He was seized after being invited to a fake press conference and kept captive for three days by militiamen who mal-treated him, punishing him for reporting on the "massive presence" of Ethiopian soldiers in Somalia, which the governments in Baidoa and Addis Ababa had spent half the year denying, but without really convincing anyone.

UIC militia in Kismayo in the south-east arrested three journalists from *HornAfrik* radio on 29 September. Sahro Abdi Ahmed, Layla Sheik Ismail and Adam Mohammed Salad were released a few hours later after being ordered to stop reporting on the Islamic Courts. Moreover, on 17 December, the secretary general of the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ), Omar Faruk Osman, and the organisation's co-ordinator, Ali Moalim Isak, were arrested at Mogadishu airport before starting on a business trip. They were first transferred to a police station at the airport before being taken blindfolded to the police station in Waberi district. Police confiscated Osman's computer and documents he was carrying, and both men's passports and mobile phones. A police officer interrogated them in the cell and forced them to reveal the password so they could read the journalist's emails. They were released the same evening but their property was never returned to them. Following this, for fear of reprisals, several NUSOJ officials went into exile.

OBSTRUCTIONS FACED BY THE NUSOJ

Reporters Without Borders' partner organisation in Somalia also experienced numerous setbacks during the year as its reputation grew as an organisation defending press freedom. Militiamen in the pay of a rival expelled the NUSOJ management from its Mogadishu offices, on 3 July, forcing

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the organisation to find new premises elsewhere. In October, after negotiations with the UIC leadership, the organisation managed to avert the imposition of a draconian “code of conduct” on the press, preventing them from putting out news “likely to create conflicts between the people and the Islamic Courts”.

This country is still one of the most dangerous in the world. A car in which NUSOJ officials were travelling was ambushed on the road between Baidoa and Mogadishu on 4 August, and

their driver, Madey Garas, was killed. And 18 months after the still unpunished murder of BBC reporter Kate Peyton, a Swedish journalist was killed in the capital in broad daylight during a rally in support of the Islamic Courts. A freelance reporter accustomed to working in conflict zones, Martin Adler, was killed by a hooded man who fired a bullet into his chest, while he was filming a group of demonstrators on 23 June. The Islamic Courts, which condemned the murder, said it had made a number of arrests, but gave no further details.

SUDAN

Area: 2,505,810 sq. km.

Population: 36,233,000.

Languages: Arabic, English.

Head of state: Omar Hassan al-Bashir.

Sudanese journalists are easy prey for a government which uses and abuses draconian legislation and nationalism tinged with religion and also exploits the region's conflicts to justify repression. Some 15 journalists were arrested in 2006, as well as two foreign reporters, embarrassing witnesses to massacres in Darfur.

The massacres in Darfur are an open wound for Sudan, and one which the government does not want anyone to touch. Two foreign journalists and their assistants paid the price for this extreme sensitivity in 2006, when they were thrown in prison for having taken too close an interest in the catastrophe in the huge border region on the border with Chad.

Slovenian photographer and human rights activist, Tomo Kriznar, who is also an advisor to his country's president, was arrested in North Darfur on 19 July. He was sentenced on 14 August to two years in prison by the criminal court of al Fashir, the state capital, for "spying", "publication of false news" and "entering Sudan without a visa". At this court hearing on 1st August, Kriznar admitted entering Sudan via Chad without a visa at the invitation of the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM), but denied the charge of espionage. The Sudanese embassy in Vienna, Austria, had refused to grant him a visa because of his articles seen as "negative". He has written several articles for Slovenian newspapers and posted on his website, www.tomokriznar.com, on the situation in Darfur. Kriznar was finally given a presidential amnesty on 2 September after negotiations.

A few weeks after the arrest of the Slovenian journalist, on 6 August, an American journalist, Paul Salopek, who was reporting on the Sahel region for the US monthly *National Geographic*, was arrested by government security forces along with two assistants. He was in possession of two US passports, a common practice for journalists covering conflict areas, and satellite photos of the region which are available on the Internet. He was charged with "spying" and "illegally disseminating information" as well as entering Sudanese territory without a visa. Salopek, who is also correspondent for the daily *Chicago Tribune*, his interpreter Suleiman Abakar Moussa and driver Idriss

Abdulraman Anu, both Chadian nationals, were only released, on 9 September, thanks to the persistent intervention of New Mexico state governor, Bill Richardson.

The mistake these two journalists made was above all to have arrived, despite administrative and political obstacles, to cover news that the Sudanese government wanted to keep hidden. There have been a number of incidents of intimidation and barely-veiled threats directed against foreign reporters in Darfur and Khartoum.

EASY PREY

Sudanese journalists are easy prey for the government. More than 15 of them were arrested during 2006, despite the official lifting of censorship and a state of emergency, in July 2005. One of them was even murdered, traumatising the whole profession, which was already living in fear of government crackdowns. The decapitated body of Mohamed Taha, editor of the privately-owned Sudanese daily *al-Wifaq*, was found by police in a street in Khartoum's southern suburbs on 6 September after several masked men had snatched him from his home in the east of the capital the evening before. His family called police to report the abduction immediately after he was bundled into a car and driven away to an unknown destination.

Mohamed Taha had been tried for "blasphemy" in 2005 after a law suit was brought by a fundamentalist group, Ansar al-Sunnah. The offending article, written by the journalist, himself a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, referred to a more than five-century old Islamic manuscript which apparently cast doubt on the prophet's genealogy. After the articles appeared, imams in Khartoum organised major demonstrations to demand that the journalist be killed. His paper was suspended for two months.

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Suspicion immediately fell on Islamist radicals, but also on rebels in Darfur, for whom Mohamed Taha was one of their openly-stated enemies. Abu Obeida Abdallah, a journalist on the privately-owned *al-Rai al-Aam*, was held in custody from 29 September to 15 October, officially in connection

with the investigation into Taha's murder. He had covered the Abuja summit in May between the government and rebel groups in Darfur. Nothing filtered out about his interrogation. At the end of the year, Sudanese investigators had not reached any satisfactory conclusion about the murder.



ZIMBABWE

Area: 390,760 sq. km.
Population: 13,010,000.
Languages: English, Shona, Ndebele.
Head of state: Robert Mugabe.

The country headed since 1980 by the now octogenarian Robert Mugabe is one of most vicious on the continent in its treatment of journalists. Surveillance, threats, imprisonment, censorship blackmail, abuse of power and denial of justice are all brought to bear to keep firm control over the news. Things have got so bad that the Zimbabwean justice system, zealously guarding its prerogatives and tired of not being respected, has started to disavow the government and its agencies.

Keeping absolute control over the news, whatever the cost, is an obvious obsession of Zimbabwean president, Robert Mugabe. Ever since 2002, when the government pushed through one of the most Kafkaesque press laws on the continent, closed down the leading daily in the country and jammed opposition radio, it has never let up pressure against the few surviving independent voices in the country. Thanks to the dreaded Media and Information Commission (MIC), it was able to crackdown in 2006 on privately-owned weeklies *Zimbabwe Independent*, *Financial Gazette (FinGaz)* and the *Voice of the People (VOP)*. The intelligence services made themselves responsible for all other forms of injustice meted out to Zimbabwe's journalists.

RELENTLESS STRUGGLE

In line with its statutory responsibility, the media regulation body, the MIC, which tightly controls the media for the government, every year sets about re-examining newspaper licences and accreditations for journalists. Ready to use blackmail, from the first week of January 2006, the MIC suspended the publication licence of *FinGaz*, unless it carried a denial of an article which it published the previous week about how the commission, after deciding to award a licence to the owner of the defunct *Daily News*, finally gave way to pressure from the intelligence services and reversed its decision. Likewise, on 2 February, the MIC finally renewed the accreditation of journalists on the *Zimbabwe Independent*, only after forcing the newspaper to publish a correction of an article which had appeared the previous week.

The major preoccupation of the MIC, chaired for life by Tafataona Mahoso, an old comrade of the head of state, is clearly not the publication of the truth or the protection of journalists. His stance is

common knowledge. Besides, the Zimbabwean justice system has recognised that the Commission is incapable of judging certain cases fairly. Accordingly, on 8 February the Harare High Court, quashed an MIC decision to refuse a licence to the publishing house of the *Daily News* and its supplement the *Daily News on Sunday*, banned since 2003. The paper's lawyers had gone to court, arguing that the MIC chairman had refused to withdraw in despite of a 2005 decision by the Supreme Court which had ruled, for the first time, that he was biased. The High Court judge in Harare said that the MIC decision had effectively been biased, under the influence of the intelligence services, and that the Commission should consequently review the licence application. Boosted by these two legal decisions in its favour, the newspaper's publishing house on 28 March challenged the information and publicity minister Tichaona Jokonya, so as to force the government to decide on allowing publication, in the place of the disqualified MIC. But the Zimbabwean government used every means from legal quibbles to law breaking with impunity to delay making a decision. And, in fact, no decision has yet been made.

The MIC has therefore calmly continued its surveillance and punishment of discordant voices. Its weapons of choice are: "calls for investigation" into a particular journalist, threats to revoke licences or accreditation and denouncing journalists to the police. Police raided one of the distribution points in Harare of the privately-owned daily *The Zimbabwean* on 3 October. Police took away a copy of the paper's import authorisation as well as copies of the previous week's paper. The paper, one of the country's last independent dailies is published in the UK and printed in South Africa, to get round draconian legislation on the private press, of which the MIC is the tireless watchdog.



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The previous week, the paper carried an article in which military sources spoke out against corruption within the Zimbabwean police. A few days earlier, on 1st October, Tafataona Mahoso called on the information minister to investigate the Zimbabwean Union of Journalists (ZUJ), on the grounds that it was fomenting an "anti-Zimbabwe lobby". He claimed to be in possession of a document drawn up by the ZUJ, asking for funds from the Netherlands embassy and from UNESCO. At the same time, Mahoso also made an order for an investigation of the ZUJ secretary in Mashonaland West province, Nunurai Jena, accused of working for US public radio *Voice of America (VOA)*, based in Washington, without obtaining permission from the MIC. On 28 September, the Commission virulently attacked the Zimbabwean branch of the press freedom organisation the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA-Zimbabwe), which he said, was backing "regime change".

RESISTANCE FROM THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

But the Zimbabwean justice system is increasingly resisting the abuse of power by the government. On 25 September, the president of the Harare court decided to refuse the prosecution a third adjournment in the trial of privately-owned radio *VOP*. "This is turning into a circus", he said, before deciding to drop charges against the radio's ten

defendants. Board members Arnold Tsunga, Millie Phiri, Isabella Matambanadzo, David Masunda, Nhlanhla Ngwenya, Lawrence Chibwe and John Masuku, had been arrested in January 2006 for "possessing and using broadcast equipment without permission". Radio staffers Maria Nyanyiwa, Takunda Chigwanda and Nyasha Boshu, were held for four days in December 2005 after a police search of the radio's offices in the centre of the capital.

As a result, when legal recourse will not answer, the Zimbabwean government calls on the army and in particular the powerful Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO). Unable to have foreign-based staff arrested, from the second half of June the government ordered jamming of the *VOA* programme Studio 7 beamed into Zimbabwe. They are now blocked with a rattling sound, identical to that which has been jamming shortwave programmes since February 2005 on privately-owned *SW Radio Africa* based in London and of Amsterdam-based *VOP*, since September 2005. According to information obtained by Reporters Without Borders this jamming has been made possible by the presence in Harare of Chinese experts invited to train their Zimbabwean telecommunications and radio-communications counterparts under an economic and technical cooperation agreement signed between the two countries.