

1. In this issue: Strengthening Civil Society Dialogue and Democratic Discourse in SADC

The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) and the European Commission (EC) in Namibia launched the *Strengthening the basis for civil society dialogue and democratic discourse: Freedom of Expression* programme on 11 June 2008 in Windhoek Namibia.

Targeted at media practitioners, civil society and government, the project is aimed at creating an environment which promotes and protects media freedom and freedom of expression as well as strengthening and supporting the development of a vibrant, professional and participatory media sector as an essential part in deepening of democracy in southern Africa.

Speaking at the ceremony, the Head of Delegation of the European Commission Delegation to Namibia Ambassador Elisabeth Pape, pointed out that the right to information and freedom of expression are at the heart of an effective media as a central actor for development and democracy.

This initiative aims to promote the values of respect for human rights and democratic processes globally, as these are key values on which the European Union was founded 50 years ago. The support provided to MISA aims to benefit all 11 SADC countries, most of which are still young and sometimes fragile democracies.

She also argued that the media has the responsibility to inform, question, enable and stimulate debate and include all voices and perspectives, making it a key element in the public sphere at national and international levels.

“A pluralistic media is an essential component of good governance,” Pape added.

MISA Regional Director Kaitira Kandjii noted that the project launch comes at a time when the protection of media freedom and freedom of expression in the region remains a huge challenge in some countries.

“At present the most worrying situation is in Zimbabwe where after the March elections there has been a rapid closing up of space for dialogue, engagement and serious repression of alternative voices,” said Kandjii.

The programme will undertake a number of information, education, awareness, advocacy and lobbying activities in order to create a public culture that supports media freedom and freedom of expression issues and therefore raise the bar in the fight for these rights.

Through this project, MISA also hopes civil society and the public at large will realise that a free media is essential to the democracy process and that civil society needs a free media for their voices to be heard and have an influence in the adoption of laws and policies in their countries.

Representatives from Namibia’s Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, Parliament, diplomatic community, civil society and members of MISA attended the launch.

Ends

2. Summary of media alerts: Month of May 2008

Victim/ Concerned Party	Violation/ Event/issue	Date	Status of matter
Frank Chikowore, freelance journalist	Chikowore and his co-accused who include Movement for Democratic Change director of information and publicity Luke Tamborinyoka are being charged with public violence.	2 May 2008	High Court judge Justice Ben Hlatshwayo granted Chikowore and his co-accused Z\$5 billion bail and ordered them to report Harare Central Police Station Law and Order Section.
Frank Chikowore, freelance journalist	Chikowore and his co-accused who include Movement for Democratic Change director of information and publicity Luke Tamborinyoka are being charged with public violence.	5 May 2008	Case is deferred to 8 May 2008 to allow a new prosecutor to familiarise himself with the case. The charge against Chikowore arises from the torching of a bus in Harare's suburb of Warren Park on 15 April 2008.
Davison Maruziva, editor of the privately owned weekly, The Standard.	Police from the Law and Order Section picked Maruziva from his offices in Harare and detained him at Harare Central Police Station for questioning over an opinion piece written by Professor Arthur Mutambara leader of the other faction of the Movement for Democratic Change.	8 May 2008	The article in question appeared on 20 April 2008 under the headline: A shameful betrayal of national independence.
Harrison Nkomo, leading media lawyer.	Arrested and detained at Harare Central Police Station over an allegedly insulting statement he made against the President on 2 May 2008.	7 May 2008	His lawyer Beatrice Mtetwa indicated that he was likely to be charged under Section 33 of the Criminal Law

	He is accused of having made the statement to Michael Mugabe who is a law officer in the Attorney-General's Office on 2 April 2008 by allegedly saying: "Go and tell your father that he must vacate office because he has failed to rule."		(Codification and Reform) Act which deals with undermining the authority or insulting the president.
Frank Chikowore, freelance journalist.	Chikowore and his co-accused who include Movement for Democratic Change director of information and publicity Luke Tamborinyoka are charged with public violence.	8 May 2008	Trial date is set for 11 June 2008.
Blessed Mhlanga, James Muonwa and Wycliff Nyarota journalists employed by the Network Guardian.	Charged with contravening the Supreme Court-nullified Section 80 (1) (A) (2) of the repressive Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) which used to prohibit publication of falsehoods. The state alleges that on 26 March 2006, the three or one of them, unlawfully and intentionally and recklessly falsified information that is injurious to the reputation, rights and freedoms of others and published a story that George Muvhimi and Tatenda Munhanga were caught with their pants down while having sexual intercourse in a vehicle at Mbizo Shopping Centre in Kwekwe.	6 May 2008	Trial postponed tafter one of the state witnesses failed to turn up.
Howard Burditt photographer with Reuters news agency.	Arrested and spent three nights at Harare Central Police Station and accused of illegally using a satellite phone to send pictures.	9 May 2008	Burditt who was arrested on 5 May 2008 was released on 9 May 2008.
Davison Maruziva, editor of the privately owned weekly, The Standard.	Police from the Law and Order Section picked Maruziva from his offices in Harare and detained him at Harare Central Police Station for questioning over an opinion piece written by Professor Arthur Mutambara leader of the	9 May 2008	Was released on Z\$10 billion bail after spending a night in custody on charges of contravening the Criminal Law (Codification and

	other faction of the Movement for Democratic Change		Reform Act).
Harrison Nkomo, leading media lawyer	Charged under Section 33 of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act for allegedly making an insulting statement against the President on 2 May 2008.	9 May 2008	Released on Z\$5 billion bail and ordered to surrender his passport and report to Harare Central Police's Law and Order Section every Friday. Bail was granted by Harare magistrate Jarabini at Parirenyatwa Hospital where he had briefly been admitted under detention for hypertension.
Henry Muradzikwa, chief executive officer of the state-controlled Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation.	Muradzikwa was fired for defying orders by the Minister of Information and Publicity Dr Sikhanyiso Ndlovu and his permanent secretary George Charamba to deny the opposition Movement for Democratic Change favorable coverage in the run-up to the 29 March 2008 elections.	14 May 2008.	Muradzikwa said he had religiously stuck to the statutes governing the ZBC operations as a broadcaster as stipulated under the amended Broadcasting Services Act (BSA). "Nobody had the right to instruct me on how to act as this was outside the law. We made sure we stuck to the laws and I believe I was right in that approach.
Sydney Saize, freelance journalist	Assaulted by unknown assailants in the eastern border town of Mutare after being accused of being a sellout. The incident occurred after his assailants had given him what was supposed to have been an innocent lift home. The four assailants were driving in an unmarked Nissan double cab vehicle.	16 May 2008	He sustained a swollen lip following the assault.
Bright Chibvuri, editor of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade	Convicted on 29 April 2008 of contravening Section 83 (1) of AIPPA which criminalised practicing	22 May 2008	His lawyer engaged by MISA-Zimbabwe under its Media Defence Fund

Unions' The Worker magazine.	journalism without accreditation.		facility, filed an appeal against both conviction and sentence with the High Court on 15 May 2008.
Davison Maruziva, editor of the privately owned weekly, The Standard.	Charged with publishing or communicating a statement prejudicial to the state in contravention of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act. The alleged offence arises from an opinion piece that appeared in the weekly edition of 20 April 2008 which was written by Professor Arthur Mutambara leader of the other formation of the Movement for Democratic Change.	23 May 2008	Trial date set for 5 June 2008 by Harare magistrate Dorris Shomwe.
Harrison Nkomo, leading media lawyer	Charged under Section 33 or alternatively Section 41 of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act for allegedly making an insulting statement against the President on 2 May 2008	23 May 2008	His lawyer Beatrice Mtetwa applies for him to be removed from remand arguing that there was no reasonable suspicion that he committed the offence. Harare magistrate Dorris Shomwe said she would deliver her ruling on 30 May 2008.
The Zimbabwean on Sunday.	Unknown assailants waylaid and set ablaze a truck-load of 60 000 copies of the weekly and assaulted its driver Christmas Ramabulana, a South African citizen and distribution assistant Tapfumaneyi Kancheta.	23 May 2008	No one has been arrested in connection with the offence. <i>The Zimbabwean on Sunday</i> and its stablemate, The Zimbabwean is published by Wilf Mbanga who is exiled in the United Kingdom.
Peter Godwin freelance journalist and writer.	Arrested at the Anglican Christ Church in Borrowdale, Harare after being accused of taking pictures of the graves of his parents without the permission of the priest in charge Reverend Harry	25 May 2008	He was released without charges.

	Mambo Rinashe.		
Holy Name Catholic Church.	Mabelreign police bared parishioners of the church permission to conduct a traditional procession in commemoration of Corpus Christi which is a Catholic feast day commemorating the supreme gift of the institution by Jesus Christ.	25 May 2008	Religious gatherings are exempted from notification to the police in terms of the Public Order and Security Act (POSA). No reasons were given for the ban.
War veterans	War veterans in Matabeleland South Province ordered villagers in the area to remove satellite television receivers from their homes. The war veterans told the villagers that the dishes were misleading them into voting against Zanu PF.	27 May 2008	Most villagers in the area can only watch and listen to South African and Botswana television and radio stations because of poor transmission signals from the state controlled Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation.
Bennet Hasen Sono, Resemate Chauke and Simon Maodi employed by Sky News.	Arrested in Esigodini in Matabeleland South province and were still in custody five days after their arrest.	28 May 2008	The state applied for their further detention without any charges being preferred against them. Sky News, BBC and CNN are among some of the foreign news organisations banned from reporting in Zimbabwe.
Blessed Mhlanga, James Muonwa and Wycliff Nyarota journalists employed by the Network Guardian.	Charged with contravening the Supreme Court-nullified Section 80 (1) (A) (2) of the repressive Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) which used to prohibit publication of falsehoods. The state alleges that on 26 March 2006, the three or one of them, unlawfully and intentionally and recklessly falsified information that is injurious to the reputation,	28 May 2008	The trio applied for discharge after the State closed its case with the defence arguing that the State had failed to prove its case against them.

	rights and freedoms of others and published a story that George Muvhimi and Tatenda Munhanga were caught with their pants down while having sexual intercourse in a vehicle at Mbizo Shopping Centre in Kwekwe.		
Bennet Hasen Sono, Resemate Chauke and Simon Maodi employed by Sky News and Bulawayo resident Craig Mark Ram Edy	The three finally appeared in court in Bulawayo on charges of contravening provisions of the Posts and Telecommunications Act after being found in possession of broadcasting equipment. The equipment was allegedly found at Edy house.	29 May 2008	Remanded in custody to 30 May 2008.
Bennet Hasen Sono, Resemate Chauke and Simon Maodi employed by Sky News and Bulawayo resident Craig Mark Ram Edy	Convicted on their own plea on charges contravening section 33 of the Posts and Telecommunications Act which deals with possession of broadcasting equipment without authority. Edy was granted Z\$40 billion bail but the state launched an appeal and Edy remains in custody.	30 May 2008	The three Sky News employees were Sentenced to six months imprisonment on 2 June 2008.Somo and Musimani were also convicted of contravening the Immigration Act

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