



Defending free expression and the right to know

MMPZ statement on the occasion of the coalition government's first anniversary

MMPZ is disappointed to note that the Zimbabwean Coalition Government, being a transitional authority charged with implementing certain reforms as contemplated in the Global Political Agreement (GPA), has to date failed to implement any meaningful or tangible reforms in fulfillment of its obligations to Zimbabweans.

On the media front, Zimbabwe's restricted media landscape has remained virtually unchanged. The dominant state-controlled public media continue to provide a distorted and biased news service. They portray a false picture of the reason for the power-sharing government. They continue to be used as messengers of hate language, particularly against the former political opposition, despite them being equal partners in the coalition government. No independent daily papers or alternative domestic radio and television broadcasters have yet emerged and repressive media laws remain substantially in place. Journalists also continue to be harassed, arrested and prosecuted under the country's repressive media laws. As a result, ordinary citizens continue to be excluded from understanding the work of the coalition government, and are unable to express their opinions freely about the course of transitional events unfolding in Zimbabwe.

MMPZ therefore urges the coalition government to:

- 1) Stop the ongoing abuse of the public media by the present authorities;
- 2) Wholeheartedly embrace the spirit of the power-sharing agreement that envisages a free and diverse media environment by abolishing all those laws abridging freedom of expression and the right to be informed.
- 3) Specifically, repeal AIPPA in its entirety and those sections of the Public Order and Security Act that unreasonably constrain freedom of expression, association and assembly.
- 4) Remove the restrictive provisions of the Broadcasting Services Act and to establish, as a matter of urgency, an independent, representative Broadcasting Authority responsible for the issuing of broadcasting licences to regulate the airwaves fairly and without political interference.
- 5) completely reform the public service broadcaster, ZBC and re-establish it under an independent, representative body that will safeguard its editorial independence and ensure that it fulfills its public mandate to report events accurately and impartially and reflect fairly the opinions of all sections of Zimbabwean society.

**MMPZ is an independent trust that seeks to promote the ideals of freedom of expression and responsible journalistic practice in Zimbabwe. It holds official observer status at the African Commission for Human and People's Rights.*

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