

# Germany freeze aid due to repressive media law

 By [Gregory Gondwe](#)

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The German government has frozen aid money to the Malawi government because of concerns regarding the recently endorsed repressive media law and human rights abuses. Federal Development Minister of Germany Dirk Niebel announced the aid freeze in a letter to the Malawian Minister of Finance Ken Kandodo.



Malawi's President Bingu wa Mutharika on 28 January 2011 assented to a media repressive bill, effectively making it a law that now empowers the minister of information to ban publications he deems contrary to public interest.

## Germany concerned with desire to suppress media

Niebel said in the letter made available to Bizcommunity that the German government was concerned with President Mutharika's desire to suppress the media describing the control of the state through the media as "inappropriate."

"The amendments to the penal laws of Malawi's young democracy will suffer a severe setback," said the German minister. He further said his government was becoming increasingly concerned with the adopted amendments to the Criminal Code in Malawi which includes criminalising same-sex liaisons.

Before the proposed amendment, the section only prohibited importation of seditious publication.

Now the amended Section 46 of the Penal Code reads: "If the minister has reasonable grounds to believe that the publication or importation of any publication would be contrary to the public interest, he may, by order published in the Gazette, prohibit the publication or importation of such publication."

## New law in conflict with Constitution

This new law is contrary to Section 36 of the Constitution which stipulates that "the press shall have the right to report and

publish freely, within Malawi and abroad, and to be accorded the fullest possible facilities for access to public information."

"Respect for human rights and good governance are fundamental principles of development cooperation," Niebel said. Pending clarification of these concerns, the half of the planned budget support payments to Malawi is reset.

The German government pledged budgetary support of K5bn towards Malawi's 2010-2011 financial year. The government of Malawi has expressed surprise by the decision of German government.

"There is no formal communication on that issue," said a surprised secretary to the treasury Joseph Mwanamveka in an interview with Malawi's weekly *Malawi News*.

## ABOUT GREGORY GONDWE

Gregory Gondwe is a Malawian journalist who started writing in 1993. He is also a media consultant assisting several international journalists pursuing assignments in Malawi. He holds a Diploma and an Intermediate Certificate in Journalism among other media-related certificates. He can be contacted on [gregorygondwe@gmail.com](mailto:gregorygondwe@gmail.com). Follow him on Twitter at @Kalipochi.

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