Bemba's media staff in hiding

A number of media employees working for broadcasters owned by Senator Jean-Pierre Bemba, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, have gone into hiding after three stations were forced to close on 21 March 2007.

The broadcast signals of Canal Kin Télévision (CKTV), Canal Congo Television (CCTV) and Radio Liberté Kinshasa (Ralik) were cut after Bemba claimed, in a Lingala-language interview, that the army's high command was embezzling 500 million Congolese francs (approx. US$900,000) from the military payroll each month.

Following this, clashes between Bemba's military force and government troops broke out in Kinshasa, lasting for two days. CKTV and CCTV's studios were ransacked during this time, although there have been no eyewitness reports as to who was responsible for the damage.

In a meeting with Journalist in Danger (JED - Reporters Without Borders' partner organisation), Information Minister Toussaint Tshilombo Send claimed the stations' signals were suspended by the company that manages Kinshasa's broadcast signals, due to non-payment of debts. Although a representative of this company confirmed that CCTV had fallen behind with payments, apparently there was "never any question of turning off its signal".

Staff, including those of other Bemba-owned stations, have been in hiding since the closure, with Abou Zanga of CCTV, Solange Kwale, Antenne A TV station journalist, Basile Olongo of Radio Lisanga Télévision (RLTV) reportedly having received death threats.

Reporters Without Borders has voiced its concern over the matter. "Whatever the grievances against Bemba, it is up to Prime Minister Antoine Gizenga to ensure that his government and the army respect the rule of law," the press freedom organisation said. "It would incomprehensible if the new prime minister were to allow the security forces a free rein in such a sensitive matter as the closure of privately-owned news media and were to be unconcerned about the safety of journalists."

Source: [RSF](#)