

S.Sudan security given key role in new media regulation bodies

JUBA: South Sudan formed two new media regulation bodies Thursday placing national intelligence officials on the boards of both, a decree on state radio said.

The government-backed Media Authority and Broadcasting Corporation will regulate operations of both public and private media in the war-torn country where critics see a tightening of media restrictions and stifling of dissent.



Rights groups have repeatedly warned that security forces have cracked down on journalists, suffocating debate on how to end a civil war in which tens of thousands of people have been killed in the past 17 months.

The leadership of the two bodies include government media, academic and legal representatives, as well security officers, said the presidential decree.

Professor William Haisasa from the University of Juba was named as Broadcasting Corporation chairman, while lawyer Kiir Chol Deng was named as Media Authority chairman.

But the Union of Journalists of South Sudan (UJOSS) chairman Oliver Modi said putting security officers on the boards was a "mistake", saying several journalists have been killed, threatened or detained by security forces in the past year.

"What is the security man going to do?" Modi said.

"Let the security come on their own if they want to monitor what the media authority or the public broadcasting corporation

is doing."

Reporters Without Borders ranks South Sudan as the 125th worst nation out of 180. Fighting broke out in December 2013 when President Salva Kiir accused his former deputy Riek Machar of attempting a coup, setting off a cycle of retaliatory killings across the country.

War continues despite numerous ceasefire deals.

Source: AFP

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