

DRC broadcaster closed after angering governor

Authorities in the central diamond mining town of Mbuji-Mayi, DRC, closed down a private broadcaster on Sunday, 27 May, in connection with comments critical of the provincial governor that aired on two programs last week, according to local journalists and press freedom group Journaliste en Danger (JED).

Kinshasa - Police sealed the studios of Radiotélévision Debout Kasai (RTDK), based in the Eastern Kasai province, 585 miles (940km) southeast of the capital Kinshasa, on orders of Gov. Ngoyi Kasanji and DRC High Authority on Media (HAM), according to the same sources. In its ruling, HAM suspended the station for seven days on charges of "contempt, threats, and bullying toward the authorities," according to a press release obtained by CPJ. The station denied the allegations, and CPJ research did not find any basis to support them.

HAM's own status is uncertain. Information Minister Toussaint Tshilombo Send last week declared HAM, a public agency created under the former transitional government, "currently inexistent" and its rulings since the election of a new parliament this year "null and without effect," according to an official statement reprinted in the local press. DRC conducted historic presidential and general elections earlier this year, concluding a transition period begun in 2002 after four years of civil war. HAM officials have refused to recognize Send's statement, according to local media reports.

"The suspension of RTDK further undermines official assertions that press freedom is respected in the DRC, and it apparently challenges the authority of DRC's newly-elected government," CPJ Executive Director Joel Simon said. "We call on authorities to immediately rescind this suspension."

Allegedly a target of personal insults

The suspension was linked to a May 15 radio program and a May 16 television news show, RTDK reporter Boniface Beya told CPJ. In the radio program, RTDK owner and influential diamond trader Auguy Ilunga complained that he had been the target of personal insults by Kasanji, a rival diamond trader and owner of local broadcaster Radiotélévision Océan Pacifique, according to JED and local journalists. Ilunga lost to Kasanji in last January's gubernatorial election, journalists said. In the television program, an anonymous caller criticized unspecified officials for not delivering on a campaign promise of providing drinking water, according to Beya.

HAM also accused the station of refusing to provide tape recordings of the programs. HAM had requested the tapes in an undated letter obtained by CPJ, but the correspondence did not reach the station until near three hours after its stated deadline on Saturday, according to Beya.

Authorities have harassed RTDK before. In May 2005, the then-governor shuttered the station for two days during antigovernment protests. In June 2003, intelligence agents detained a RTDK reporter for 13 hours in connection with the broadcast of a local rebel leader's statement. In 2002, the station was banned from covering news about an opposition leader.

RTDK is the fifth Congolese broadcaster this year to be censored for its coverage, following the Goma and Butembo affiliates of public broadcaster RTNC and the private stations Radio Liberté and Radio ODL,

according to CPJ research.

This month, CPJ named the DRC one of the world's worst backsliders on press freedom.

Source: [CPJ](#)

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