

## Malawi: Mutharika to arrest 'lying' journalists

Malawi's President Bingu wa Mutharika has warned that he will start arresting journalists that are writing false articles that are aimed at ridiculing his government.

 By Gregory Gondwe 27 Aug 2010

Mutharika made this declaration when he opened an agriculture show in Blantyre on Thursday, 26 August 2010.

He was reacting to an article that was carried in the weekly *Malawi News* of 21 August 2010 which quoted Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) food security update that a million Malawians need food aid following a dry spell that hit the country's southern region.

### Journalists threatened with arrest

"From now onwards all journalists especially from newspapers that write lies to intimidate my government or tarnish its image will be arrested; and do not complain if this happens," warned Mutharika who justified this stand by saying that even in the US where democracy is well entrenched, journalists do not write anything that they want.

"If journalists have nothing to write then they better just be going out there and take pictures of cattle and publish," he said.

However, the journalist for the newspaper, Charles Mpaka indicated in the story that he got his story material from data released on 4 August 2010 by SADC headquarters in Botswana which stated that despite a surplus of 1.12 million metric tonnes, Malawi will still require assistance to feed some of its citizens.

### Ignoring SADC source

"President Mutharika surprisingly did not pick up an issue with the SADC report but with the newspaper which did exactly what newspapers are there for which is very unfortunate," said a statement issued by northern region based media grouping Nyika Media Club.

One of the editors from Blantyre Newspapers Limited which published *The Malawi News* said some of the reports released by institutions like SADC are endorsed by the government before they are released and include input from government offices.

### Food insecurity

In the disputed story Mpaka also quoted the Malawi government's report, called the Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC) May Outcome, which predicted that the number of people to be affected by food insecurity would rise to one million in October this year from the 718,000 recorded in that month of May.

Mutharika, however, called the SADC a donor who is backing "silly" newspaper reports which to him aim at "castigating and undermining strides chalked by his government since 2004".

"I am tired. This country is not run by you donors or the newspapers; this country is run by me and my

cabinet ministers and those who support it.

He was adamant that he will be forced to close down newspapers and "if any donor dares say something they [newspapers] can go away with their donors".

## 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 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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