

CPJ welcomes Malawi's repeal of news censorship law

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) welcomes last week's vote in the Malawi parliament that [repealed an amendment to the country's Penal Code](#) which allowed the government to ban any news "not in the public interest."

The amendment to Article 46 of the Penal Code was first introduced in November 2010 under the late president Bingu Wa Mutharika, and passed last year, but was never implemented, according to news reports.

The law would have allowed the information minister to ban any publication it deemed contrary to public interest for an unspecified period of time, news reports said. Its implementation was suspended pending constitutional review after it was challenged by local and international press freedom and civil society groups.

Local journalists told CPJ that all of the parliament members except one had supported the repeal - even former information minister Symon Vuwa, who had been one of the principal proponents of the law.

"We applaud parliament's decision to repeal this draconian legislation, which would have institutionalized censorship," said CPJ East Africa consultant Tom Rhodes. "We urge the government to build on this by ensuring the press can work freely and without fear of reprisal."

Press freedom conditions deteriorated under former president Mutharika's leadership, according to CPJ research. In March, Albert Mungomo, a former government spokesman, issued a statement warning journalists that the government would use a colonial-era law to imprison and fine them for any material it found insulting to the president, according to news reports.

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