

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/benin-reporters-without-borders-seeks-06-07-2012,42977.html>

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Africa - Benin

Request for leniency

## Reporters Without Borders seeks lifting of closure order on *Le Béninois Libéré*

6 July 2012

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Reporters Without Borders sent a letter today to Théophile Nata, president of the Benin state High Authority for Broadcasting and Communication (HAAC), asking him to lift the closure order issued last December against the newspaper *Le Béninois Libéré* and to drop sanctions imposed on its managers.

The press freedom organization also wrote to President Thomas Boni Yayi informing him of its action.

"Reporters Without Borders, which criticized the severity of your decision at the time, is concerned about the length of the closure and the consequences for **Aboubacar Takou and Eric Tchiakpè**," it said in the letter.

"By preventing *Le Béninois Libéré* from resuming publication, you are keeping these two journalists out of work and in financial hardship, as well as depriving Benin's newspaper readers of an important title.

"We call upon you today to show leniency and re-examine the case. It appears to us that the *Béninois Libéré* staff have paid enough since last December for the offence of which they were accused. In allowing the newspaper and its managers to resume publication, you would be making a firm and commendable gesture."

The HAAC ordered the indefinite closure of *Le Béninois Libéré* on 8 December for "violating the ethical and professional rules" of journalism. Its articles were seized and its premises sealed.

Takou, the paper's manager and Tchiakpè, its publisher, were banned from working as journalists and setting up a news organization.

The HAAC accused the newspaper of publishing "inflammatory articles and discourteous comments aimed at destroying the republic and damaging relations between Benin and the other members of the Conseil de l'Entente", as well as a "particularly serious" headline and expressions that were "vulgar, offensive and foul" towards the heads of state of the Conseil de l'Entente in an earlier edition.

The newspaper had derided a meeting of the heads of state of the regional grouping in Cotonou in an article headlined: "Conseil de l'Entente: Watch out for wind!"

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