

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/benin-benin-press-regulators-halt-12-12-2011,41544.html>

Africa - Benin

Newspaper closed

Benin press regulators halt publication of daily *Le Béninois libéré*

12 December 2011

Reporters Without Borders is perplexed at the indefinite closure of the newspaper *Le Béninois Libéré*, ordered by the High Authority for Broadcasting and Communication (HAAC) on 8 December, and warns of the risk of further abuses.

Le Béninois libéré was closed for "violating the ethical and professional rules" of journalism at a special public hearing on 8 December. Its articles were seized and its premises sealed. The paper's manager **Aboubacar Takou** and its publisher **Eric Tchiakpè** were banned from working as journalists and setting up a news organization.

"The decision by the HAAC is an unprecedented violation of press freedom and damages the image of a country previously seen as a model in this area," Reporters Without Borders said.

"What is particularly worrying is the risk that the High Authority may be taking a harder line against critical media outlets. The closure of a newspaper and the ban on journalists practising their profession are in no way an appropriate response."

The newspaper was accused 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!"

Previous closures of the newspaper appear to have been a factor in this drastic decision by the regulatory body headed by Théophile Nata.

At the same time, Reporters Without Borders has learned that eight other newspapers have been temporarily suspended for between a week and one month for a variety of reasons relating to professional ethics.

A weekly sports programme broadcast by the local Cotonou radio station *Radio Tokpa* has been suspended for two weeks.

Photo : logo of *Le Béninois Libéré*
