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<http://www.rsf.org/rwanda-rwanda-s-media-self-regulator-07-11-2014,47214.html>

Africa - Rwanda

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Rwanda's media self-regulator subjected to intimidation campaign

7 November 2014

Reporters Without Borders calls on the Rwandan authorities to defend the Rwanda Media Commission (RMC), the media self-regulatory body, against all the attacks it has received for objecting to the [suspension of the BBC's Kinyarwanda-language broadcasts on 25 October](#).

The attacks began in earnest yesterday, with dozen of tweets in the space of a few hours lambasting the RMC, the legality of its mandate, and its president, **Fred Muvunyi**.

Muvunyi [dared argue](#) that, as a broadcast frequency regulator, the Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority (RURA), the government agency that suspended the BBC's broadcasts, did not have the authority to rule on a question of content without consulting the RMC.

The RURA suspended the BBC's Gahuzamiryango (Great Lakes) radio service in reaction to a documentary entitled "Rwanda, The Untold Story" that BBC 2 television broadcast in mid-October.

On 5 November - again without consulting the RMC - the RURA announced the creation of an ad hoc commission to investigate allegations that the documentary was guilty of denying the 1994 genocide of the Tutsis.

Some of the tweets were anonymous, some were by journalists and some were by people close to government, including Arthur Asiimwe, the head of *Rwanda Broadcasting Agency* (the public broadcaster).

Asiimwe, who has already [criticized](#) the principle of media self-regulation, vilified the RMC in an [article](#) published today in *The New Times* newspaper. It is not the first time a [smear Twitter campaign](#) are used in Rwanda.

"The RMC is the victim of an attempt to undermine its credibility and deny it any legitimacy", said Cléa Kahn-Sriber, the head of Reporters Without Borders Africa desk.

"If the RMC disappears or is stripped of its powers, the government will have even more liberty to censor any content it doesn't like. We call for the RMC's mandate to be respected and for an immediate end to the threats against its president."

The RMC, which took office in September 2013, was created in response to the government's then desire to end state regulation of the media. In June 2011, the government has announced a new media policy based on self-regulation.

It was set up under the 2013 media law, which authorized it to issue press accreditations and regulate media content on the basis of a code of ethics. Since then, the RMC has always taken very measured positions regarding the government's behaviour towards the media.

The RURA is a government agency with a wide range of responsibilities including postal services, transport and sanitation. Its responsibilities regarding the media are [vaguely defined](#) and include "protecting the public against deceptive information".

Nonetheless, under an agreement signed by the RURA and RMC in September 2013, the RURA's functions are strictly technical and it can only address matters of content in consultation with the RMC.

Rwanda is ranked 162nd out of 180 countries in the [2014 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).
