

Malawi

	2014	2015		
Internet Freedom Status	Partly Free	Partly Free	Population:	16.8 million
Obstacles to Access (0-25)	16	15	Internet Penetration 2014:	6 percent
Limits on Content (0-35)	11	12	Social Media/ICT Apps Blocked:	No
Violations of User Rights (0-40)	15	13	Political/Social Content Blocked:	No
TOTAL* (0-100)	42	40	Bloggers/ICT Users Arrested:	No
			Press Freedom 2015 Status:	Partly Free

* 0=most free, 100=least free

Key Developments: June 2014 – May 2015

- In May 2015, the Malawian parliament implemented a 10 percent excise duty on mobile phone text messages and data transfers through both internet and mobile services (see **Availability and Ease of Access**).
- Anecdotal reports suggest that government officials regularly require editors of online news websites take down certain objectionable content (see **Content Removal**).
- Suspected government sponsored trolls quieted down under the new government elected in May 2014, suggesting that the strategic pattern of infiltration observed under former presidents was no longer practiced (see **Media, Diversity, and Content Manipulation**).
- There were no arrests or prosecutions for online activities during the coverage period, compared to Malawi's former leadership when online journalists were periodically detained and prosecuted for critical articles posted on news websites (see **Prosecutions and Detentions for Online Activities**).
- The Consolidated ICT Regulatory Management System (CIRMS)—known locally as the “spy machine”—was implemented in March 2015, enabling the communications regulator to access subscriber’s data and communications without judicial oversight (see **Surveillance, Privacy, and Anonymity**).

Introduction

Access to the internet remained the greatest obstacle to internet freedom in Malawi during the coverage period, as low internet and mobile phone penetration rates lagged significantly behind most countries in the region and the world. High costs continued to hinder access to information and communication technologies (ICTs), which were partly due to hefty value-added taxes on both internet and mobile phone services that make access prohibitively expensive for a large majority of Malawians. Prices are likely to increase further under a new tax policy announced in May 2015 that levies a 10 percent excise duty on mobile phone text messages and data transfers through both internet and mobile services. The highly criticized internet tax also threatens to increase the costs of banking and mobile money services.

Arthur Peter Mutharika, the younger brother of and close advisor to the former president Bingu Wa Mutharika (who died in April 2012) was elected president in May 2014. Citizens and observers were concerned the new president would take after his late brother and unleash a repressive campaign against the media and civil society while in office, but to date, such concerns have not materialized. And in contrast to former President Joyce Banda, Mutharika has not targeted internet users or online journalists for critical commentary, though anecdotal reports suggest that government officials regularly require editors of online news websites take down certain objectionable content.

Apart from the new regressive tax on ICTs, the new government under President Mutharika has enacted a number of positive ICT development policies in its first year. The launch of the Malawi Internet Government Forum in July 2014 connected various stakeholders in the development of Malawi's internet policies and infrastructure. The government also announced plans to set up a Universal Access Fund (UAF) to help telecommunication operators provide services to rural areas characterized as difficult and economically unviable. Nevertheless, the controversial regulatory system first introduced under the late President Mutharika in 2011, critically known as the "spy machine," was implemented in March 2015, leading to concerns of potential government access to user data on mobile phone networks without judicial oversight.

Obstacles to Access

High taxes, poor infrastructure, and the lack of a local internet exchange point, among other obstacles, make access to ICTS prohibitively expensive for the majority of Malawians, resulting in low access rates across the country. A 10 percent excise duty on mobile messaging and data transfers introduced in May 2015 will further impede access.

Availability and Ease of Access

As a landlocked and densely populated country that suffers from widespread poverty, Malawi has one of the lowest rates of internet access in the world. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), internet penetration stood at less than 6 percent in 2014, up slightly from 5 percent in 2013.¹ Fixed broadband subscriptions are extremely rare in the country, reaching only 0.05

¹ International Telecommunication Union (ITU), "Percentage of Individuals Using the Internet, 2000-2014," <http://bit.ly/1FDwW9w>.

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percent of the population in 2014,² while mobile phone penetration in Malawi is also relatively low at 31 percent,³ compared to an average of 72 percent across the continent.⁴

Low rates of internet and mobile phone access in Malawi are largely a result of high costs, which include expensive value-added taxes (VAT) of 17.5 percent on mobile phones and services, and a VAT of 16.5 percent on internet services, the costs of which are borne by consumers.⁵ In May 2015, the Malawian parliament implemented an additional 10 percent excise duty on mobile phone text messages and data transfers through both internet and mobile services.⁶ Local economists and critics argue that this will also lead to increases in banking and mobile money services, discouraging further uptake of these important digital services.⁷

Consequently, mobile phone use is extremely expensive for average Malawians, who use over 56 percent of their average monthly earnings on mobile phone services, according to the ITU.⁸ By contrast, Kenyans and South Africans spend less than 5 percent of their monthly earnings.⁹ As of mid-2015, the monthly price of fixed-line internet access cost US\$16.50, while a monthly mobile 3G data plan cost about US\$24 for 1.5GB of data, prices that are beyond the reach of the majority of Malawians.

Very few households have computers with access to the internet at home, thus most users log on at cybercafes, which charge a minimum of MWK 15 per minute, or about US\$2.00 per hour, and close at 6pm. However, patronage at local cybercafes has declined because of increased mobile internet access with the introduction of 3G and 3.75G mobile broadband services. DSL and WiMAX wireless broadband services are available, while competition between private ISPs has further enabled wireless internet access through Wi-Fi hotspots, particularly in urban areas. Nonetheless, broadband speeds are still slow at 1.90 Mbps (compared to a global average of 3.9 Mbps), according to May 2015 data from Akamai's *State of the Internet* report.¹⁰

A low literacy rate of 64 percent and a significant digital gender divide also hinders access to ICTs, while unreliable electricity and the high cost of generator power in the country strain ICT use. Less than 9 percent of the country has access to electricity, giving Malawi one of the lowest electrification rates in the world, according to the World Bank.¹¹ The electricity grid is concentrated in urban centers, but only 25 percent of urban households have access, compared to a mere 1 percent of rural households. Half of formal sector enterprises in Malawi rely on backup generators. Meanwhile, the high costs of infrastructural development in rural areas has led to an unwillingness to invest in the

2 ITU, "Fixed (Wired) -broadband Subscriptions, 2000-2014," <http://bit.ly/1FDwW9w>.

3 ITU, "Mobile-cellular Telephone Subscriptions, 2000-2014," <http://bit.ly/1FDwW9w>.

4 ITU, "Key 2005-2015 ICT data," <http://bit.ly/1cblxxY>.

5 Frontier Economics, *Taxation and the Growth of Mobile Services in Sub-Saharan Africa*, GSMA, 2008, <http://bit.ly/1Pk9rVc>; Gregory Gondwe, "Internet VAT bites consumers," *Biztech Africa*, July 24, 2013, <http://bit.ly/1Zim7Ai>.

6 WangaGwede, "Malawi hikes tax on internet, duty on SMS: Goodall says local resources to finance 2015/16 budget," *Nyasa Times*, May 23, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1Mh08jG>.

7 "J-Lu takes a swipe at Malawi's SMS and internet tax, labels it 'Retrogressive and anti-democratic,'" *Malawian Watchdog*, May 25, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1OoNle5>.

8 Emmanuel Igunza, "Malawi's expensive mobile phone habit," *BBC*, February 20, 2015, <http://bbc.in/1vkTJ4E>; International Telecommunication Union, *Measuring the Information Society Report 2014*, <http://bit.ly/1FIOBFf>.

9 Igunza, "Malawi's expensive mobile phone habit."

10 Akamai, "Average Connection Speed," map visualization, *The State of the Internet*, 2015, accessed May 29, 2015, <http://akamai.me/1LiS6KD>.

11 Latest available data is from 2010. World Bank, "Access to electricity (% of population)," accessed May 29, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1zN9Eaf>.

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country's remote regions, though the regulatory authority is looking to subsidize fees to encourage operators to deploy ICT services in the country's less profitable yet neediest areas.

To address the country's access issues, the government launched the Malawi Internet Government Forum in July 2014 to connect various stakeholders in the development of Malawi's internet policies and infrastructure.¹² Moreover, the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) announced in September 2014 plans to set up a Universal Access Fund (UAF) to help telecommunication operators provide services to rural areas characterized as difficult and economically unviable.¹³

Restrictions on Connectivity

The country's ICT backbone is entirely national in nature, with no regional integration yet in place. Due to Malawi's landlocked location, the country's connection to the international fiber network runs through Mozambique, Zambia, South Africa, and Tanzania through the SEACOM and EASSy networks.¹⁴ Three new submarine cables are currently competing to be the first to start service in Malawi as the country plans to extend a fiber-optic backbone through Tanzania to the coast.¹⁵ If a suitable regulatory regime is also put in place, the new cables should bring down the cost of international bandwidth and boost the broadband market.

The government of Malawi does not have centralized control over the international gateway, which the ITU characterizes as fully competitive.¹⁶ ISPs have their own gateways through the SEACOM and EASSy networks and operate internet exchange points. The state-owned Malawi Sustainable Development Network Programme (SDNP), a fully licensed ISP, oversees the local traffic hub that connects all ISPs in the country but does not have the capacity to block content or restrict connectivity.¹⁷

ICT Market

Although Malawi is categorized as a least developed country, it has experienced strong economic growth over the recent years, reaching nearly 6 percent in 2014. According to a government source, the ICT sector contributed nearly 4 percentage points to the country's GDP in 2014, up from 3.5 percentage points in 2010.¹⁸

There are 22 licensed ISPs in Malawi, all of which are privately owned, with the exception of the Malawi Sustainable Development Network Programme (SDNP).¹⁹ One ISP, Malawi Telecommunications Limited (MTL), also serves as the country's telecommunication backbone, leasing its infrastructure to most ISPs and mobile phone service providers in the country.²⁰ Previously a government-owned entity, MTL was privatized in 2005; at present, the government retains 20 percent of MTL's shares while Telecomm Holdings Limited holds the other 80 percent.

12 Gregory Gondwe, "Malawi forms Internet Governance Forum," *Times Media Group*, July 25, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1NqMD6Z>.

13 "Malawi to set up universal access fund," *TeleGeography*, October 10, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1L9TprG>.

14 "Video: Internet Service Prices Still High in Malawi," *OAfrica*, December 8, 2011, <http://bit.ly/1L9xxwF>.

15 Beatrice Philemon, "Malawi Keen on Submarine Cable Connection with Tanzania," *Ippmedia*, March 18, 2012, <http://bit.ly/1Mi6Bz2>.

16 ITU, "Malawi Profile (Latest data available: 2013)," ICT EYE, accessed May 29, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1Pk9X5I>.

17 Author interview with IT engineer for a local mobile phone company on March 25, 2015.

18 Gondwe, "Malawi forms Internet Governance Forum."

19 Henry Lancaster, *Malawi - Telecoms, Mobile and Broadband - Market Insights and Statistics, Executive Summary*, BuddeComm, last updated January 21, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1OoQUOx>.

20 "Fibre optic backbone yielding fruits - MTL," *Mkali Journalist* (blog), June 11, 2013, <http://bit.ly/1JeMOpm>.

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Market competition for mobile phone providers expanded with the introduction of a converged licensing regime in 2010, which enabled the country's two fixed-line operators, MTL and Access Communications, to enter the mobile market, giving Malawi a total of four mobile phone providers.²¹ Airtel Malawi and Telecom Networks Malawi are the other two mobile providers and together command a mobile teledensity of 18 percent. A third mobile operator, G-Mobile, was licensed in 2008, but the rollout of the new network experienced delays. As of 2015, G-Mobile is still in court appealing the revocation of its license due to a failure to start services on time.²² A fourth license was awarded to Celcom in 2011, and although the launch of its services was expected in 2013, it asked the regulator MACRA in September 2013 to extend its rollout period for another three years.²³

The high cost of internet access in Malawi is also a result of the many challenges that ISPs face, one being the lack of a local internet exchange point, which forces telecoms to rely on upstream service providers that are usually based outside of Africa. As a result, data that should be exchanged locally within Malawi or regionally must pass through Europe or North America where upstream providers are based, leading to an unnecessary and expensive waste of upstream bandwidth. Furthermore, currency devaluation amid a weak economy since 2012 has prevented telecoms from upgrading their networks.²⁴

Regulatory Bodies

The Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) is the country's sole communications regulator, established under the 2008 Communication Act to ensure reliable and affordable ICT service provision throughout Malawi. Its mandate is to regulate the entire communications sector and issue operating licenses for mobile and fixed-line phone service providers, ISPs, and cybercafes.

Political connections are often necessary to receive such licenses. Moreover, the institutional structure of MACRA is subject to political interference, with its board comprised of a chairman and six other members appointed by the president and two ex-officio members—the secretary to the Office of the President and Cabinet and the Information Ministry secretary.²⁵ The director general of MACRA, whose appointment also passes through the president's scrutiny, heads the authority's management and supports the board of directors in the execution of its mandate.

Limits on Content

The common pattern of progovernment infiltration on social media and in online news outlets seemed to subside under the new president elected in May 2014, though anecdotal reports suggest that government officials regularly required editors of online news websites take down certain objectionable content.

Blocking and Filtering

21 Henry Lancaster, *Malawi - Telecoms, Mobile and Broadband - Market Insights and Statistics, Executive Summary*.

22 Frank Jomo, "Malawi Court Halts Regulator Canceling G-Mobile's License, Times Reports," *Bloomberg Business*, May 25, 2011, <http://bloom.bg/1V1AGf>.

23 Chikondi Chiyembekeza, "Celcom proposes 3-year extension," *The Nation*, September 3, 2013, <http://bit.ly/1jRJDnl>.

24 Henry Lancaster, *Malawi - Telecoms, Mobile and Broadband - Market Insights and Statistics, Executive Summary*.

25 International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX), "Malawi," *Media Sustainability Index 2012*, <http://bit.ly/1Gz5PHM>.

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The current government of Malawi does not block or filter internet content aside from pornography, which ISPs block at internet exchange points in the country. Social media platforms are freely available in Malawi. Governments under former presidential regimes, however, have censored internet content in the past.²⁶

Content Removal

There is a strong sense that the government forces editors of online news websites to take down certain content deemed objectionable, though the extent of the practice is widely underreported in Malawi. One case anecdotally documented in 2015 involved an article on *Nyasa Times* that accused President Peter Mutharika's Special Aide Ben Phiri of corruption and bribery, which disappeared from the news website within 30 minutes of publication. Observers believed the takedown was in keeping with the media's common practice of yielding to government pressure exerted behind the scenes.

Media, Diversity, and Content Manipulation

Malawi's online media landscape does not reflect a wide diversity of viewpoints, primarily due to the low level of internet users in the country. Economic conditions in the country have also made it difficult for journalists and media groups to launch online outlets alongside the high cost of using the .mw domain—currently administered by the Malawi SNDP on behalf of the Malawian government—make it expensive to provide locally-produced content. According to an official at the SDNP, the cost of using the .mw domain is US\$100 per month for the first two months after registering for the domain, and US\$50 per month thereafter. Furthermore, online advertising is low due to a limited understanding of the internet among businesses and their hesitancy to advertise with independent media outlets.

Nevertheless, the growing blogosphere is regarded as an important aspect of journalism in Malawi, with Malawian journalists frequently winning the Media Institute of Southern Africa's annual blogging award. Media publishers such as Blantyre Newspapers Limited often host bloggers on their websites to enhance their image as independent news sources.

Online users and commentators practice a degree of self-censorship but are generally more open to discussing topics of controversial nature. In contrast, online journalists usually exhibit caution when handling news associated with ethnic, racial, or religious minorities.

There was little to no government or partisan manipulation of online content during the coverage period. Since the new government was elected in May 2014, progovernment trolls have quieted down, suggesting that the strategic pattern of progovernment infiltration on social media and online news websites to attack commentary that was critical of the government is no longer being practiced. Even the government's news website *MANA Online*, which was launched in August 2012 to compete with dissenting online news outlets in the country,²⁷ simmered down its progovernment line since the election. The *Banthu Times*—another propaganda online news outlet established by the Presidential Press Secretariat under President Joyce Banda to counter dissenting news online—

26 During violent anti-government protests in July 2011, MACRA reportedly ordered ISPs to block certain news websites and social media networks, including Facebook and Twitter, in a supposed effort to quell the spread of violence. See, Michael Malakata, "Malawi blocks social media networks to quell protests," *Computer World*, July 22, 2011, <http://bit.ly/1L9Bn93>.

27 Gregory Gondwe, "MANA launches online service," *Biz Community*, August 15, 2012, <http://bit.ly/1OofDMA>.

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no longer publishes content that is aligned with the government. The current press secretariat has not replaced the outlet, preferring instead to publish news on the State House website.

Digital Activism

The most influential ICT tool in Malawi is the mobile phone through which SMS messages are used to organize demonstrations, garner political support, and conduct opinion polls. The positive impact of mobile phones and new communication applications was particularly pronounced in the lead-up to the May 2014 tripartite elections, as candidates vying for the presidency, parliament, and local councils made extensive use of SMS and social media platforms to engage with voters. In addition, citizens were able to verify their voter registration on their mobile devices for free, encouraging high voter turnout.²⁸

Significant social media commentary and activism erupted following the government's May 2015 announcement that internet and text messaging services would be subject to a 10 percent excise duty (see "Availability and Ease of Access"), though at the time of writing, digital activism had not elicited a response from the government.²⁹

Violations of User Rights

A mobile phone monitoring system, known locally as the "spy machine," was implemented in May 2015, despite repeated concerns over the system's surveillance capabilities. SIM card registration requirements announced in June 2014 further threatened to violate user anonymity, though the requirements had not been enacted as of mid-2015.

Legal Environment

Malawi has strong constitutional guarantees for freedom of the press and expression, though there are several laws that restrict these freedoms in practice, such as the 1967 Protected Flag, Emblems and Names Act and the 1947 Printed Publications Act, both of which restrict the media from reporting on the president, among other limitations.³⁰ Libel is a criminal and civil offense in Malawi, punishable with up to two years imprisonment if prosecuted as a criminal charge, though most libel cases are processed as civil offences or settled out of court. Otherwise, Malawi's judiciary is generally regarded as independent and has rendered several significant decisions against the government in recent years, such as its injunction on the implementation of the CIRMS mobile phone surveillance system in 2012 (see "Surveillance, Privacy, and Anonymity").

While existing legislation pertains primarily to traditional media, the previous administration introduced the draft Electronic Transactions and Management Bill in October 2013 aimed at providing a regulatory framework for the development of ICTs in Malawi, which the current government plans to consider in parliament before the end of 2015. The 2013 draft bill explicitly provides freedom for

28 The 2014 presidential elections had a voter turn-out rate of 70.16 percent. See, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, "Voter turnout data for Malawi," accessed September 16, 2014, <http://www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?CountryCode=MW>.

29 Thom Khanje, "Consumers scorn SMS/internet tax," *The Times Group*, May 25, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1L2z365>.

30 "Malawi 2012," in *African Media Barometer*, Friedrich-Bert-Stiftung, 2012, 15 and 17, <http://bit.ly/1L2zdu5>.

online public communications but has been criticized for its potential to limit internet freedom.³¹ For example, the bill would require editors of online public communications services to make their personal information—including names, addresses, telephone and registration numbers—available to the public.³² The bill would also allow the government to appoint so-called cyber inspectors to “monitor and inspect” websites and report “unlawful activity” to the regulator,³³ as well as prohibit all types of pornography and penalize offenses with a fine and imprisonment of up to ten years.³⁴ There is also a provision that enables the minister of information, in consultation with the regulatory authority, to create any further regulations to support the bill, which some analysts believe is a blank check that can be used to restrict internet freedom in the future.

Prosecutions and Detentions for Online Activities

Under Malawi’s former leadership, online journalists were periodically detained and prosecuted for critical articles posted on news websites. Under the new president, there have been no arrests or prosecutions for online activities reported to date.

The last arrest occurred in November 2013 when journalist Justice Mponda, who at the time was correspondent for the online publication *Malawi Voice*,³⁵ was arrested for allegedly “intimidating the royal family” in an investigative story about former President Joyce Banda’s connection to the theft of millions of Malawian kwacha from government coffers in a scandal known as “Cashgate.”³⁶ Before his arrest, a ruling party official contacted Mponda to take down the story in exchange for MWK 500,000 (US\$1,300) but instead had Mponda arrested for extortion when they met for the payment. He was held in detention for four days before being released and charged with “intimidating the royal family,” which was subsequently changed to extortion.³⁷ Mponda was later acquitted of all charges in February 2014 due to a lack of reliable evidence.³⁸ He had previously been arrested and charged with criminal libel in October 2012 for allegedly insulting former President Banda and publishing false information,³⁹ but was acquitted of all charges in February 2013 due to a lack of evidence.⁴⁰ Following the May 2014 elections, current President Peter Mutharika drafted Mponda into his press team, which was seen by some analysts as move to silence him given his history of criticizing presidents.

31 Chapter 1: Illegal or restricted content, art.17, Electronic Transactions and Management Bill 2013.

32 Chapter 3: Obligations of editors of online contents, art. 24, Electronic Transactions and Management Bill 2013.

33 Chapter 2: Cyber-criminality, art. 43, Section 7(a), Electronic Transactions and Management Bill 2013.

34 Ten years imprisonment proposed in draft bill, using Zambia’s penalty for such offenses as an example. The draft bill also cites Uganda’s 15-year sentence as an example. See, Chapter 2: Cyber-criminality, art. 45, Electronic Transactions and Management Bill 2013.

35 *Malawi Voice* was a frequent target of former President Banda, who reportedly criticized the publication for its “misleading and unbalanced” stories.

36 Jacey Fortin, “Cashgate: Malawi faces ticking time bomb; international aid dries over pervasive corruption,” *International Business Times*, November 19, 2013, <http://bit.ly/1Hxk6tA>.

37 Media Institute of Southern Africa, “Malawi: Voice Editor Justice Mponda Arrested for Extortion,” press release, <http://bit.ly/1N2spkx>.

38 Maurice Nkawihe, “Court acquits Malawi online journalist on extortion charge,” *Nyasa Times*, February 18, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1ZiFol9>.

39 Media Institute of Southern Africa, “Malawi online journalist arrested,” IFEX, October 16, 2012, <http://bit.ly/1FVwN1H>.

40 Nkawihe, “Court acquits Malawi online journalist on extortion charge.”

Surveillance, Privacy, and Anonymity

Government surveillance of ICT activities is suspected in Malawi, in large part due to the regulatory authority's efforts to implement technology known as the Consolidated ICT Regulatory Management System (CIRMS), locally labeled the "spy machine." Purchased from the U.S.-based company Agilis International for US\$6.8 million in 2011, the system was marketed as a tool for MACRA to monitor the performance of mobile phone companies and improve quality of service. Reports, however, indicated that the machine would also allow MACRA to obtain data from telephone operators, including the time, duration, and location of calls, SMS messages sent and received, the type of handset used, and other subscriber details, without judicial oversight.⁴¹ In October 2011, a court issued an injunction against MACRA's plan to rollout CIRMS,⁴² and in September 2012, Malawi's High Court issued a ruling that banned the implementation of the system altogether.⁴³ MACRA subsequently appealed the ban at the Supreme Court, which ruled in MACRA's favor in September 2014, granting the regulator the right to install the system in accordance with the Communications Act.⁴⁴ MACRA disclosed that the implementation of CIRMS began in March 2015,⁴⁵ which was confirmed by a MACRA official in May 2015.⁴⁶ As of mid-2015, no abuses of user privacy have been reported.

By law, service providers are required to hand over user information when presented with a court-issued warrant; however, such legal safeguards have failed to prevent police abuse in the past, particularly under the late-Mutharika regime. For example, in early 2012, when the former Mutharika government suspected a group led by then-Vice President Joyce Banda of scheming to overthrow it, the authorities demanded mobile phone companies hand over transcripts of the group's mobile phone and SMS communications, which Mutharika apparently planned to use against Banda before his death. No such abuses were reported during the subsequent Banda presidency, and none have been reported under the current President Arthur Peter Mutharika during the coverage period.

Potential restrictions on anonymous communication include SIM card registration requirements announced in June 2014, which were to be implemented by January of 2015, though as of mid-2015, the new requirements have not been enforced.⁴⁷

Intimidation and Violence

Under Malawi's new leadership, there have been no physical assaults, extralegal detentions, or technical attacks against opposition activists, bloggers, or ordinary users.

Technical Attacks

There were no technical attacks against independent news websites, opposition activists, or ordinary users during the period under review.

41 Gregory Gondwe, "'Spy Machine' brings telecoms fears," *Biztech Africa*, November 14, 2011, <http://bit.ly/1Mhgs3V>.

42 "Ready, steady, spy machine! Malawi to roll out CIRMS in Jan 2016 – MACRA," *NyasaTimes*, October 7, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1VHYxsi>.

43 "Ready, steady, spy machine! Malawi to roll out CIRMS in Jan 2016 – MACRA," *NyasaTimes*, October 7, 2015.

44 Tikondane Vega, "MACRA gets Supreme Court nod to use CIRMS 'spy' machine," *Mana Online*, September 15, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1Nr9aAo>.

45 Gregory Gondwe, "'Spy machine' to roll out this month," *BiztechAfrica*, March 4, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1LCT5HC>.

46 Interview by Freedom House consultant, May 2015.

47 Wanga Gwede, "Malawi to start mandatory SIM card registration," *Nyasa Times*, January 11, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1NrjecG>.