

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/tanzanie-media-up-in-arms-11-10-2013,45319.html>

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Africa - Tanzania

## Boycott Media up in arms

11 October 2013

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Reporters Without Borders supports the privately-owned media's decision on 9 October to stop covering the activities of two government officials indefinitely in protest against a newly-imposed ban on two Swahili-language dailies, *Mwananchi* (The Citizen) and *Mtanzania* (The Tanzanian).

The two officials hit by the coverage blackout are Fennela Mukangana, the information minister, and Assah Mwambene, head of the Tanzania Information Services (Maelezo).

The authorities announced on 27 September that *Mwananchi* would be suspended for 14 days and *Mtanzania* would be suspended for 90 days for "publishing articles inciting hostility (...) and thereby endangering peace and social cohesion." A third Swahili-language paper, *Mwanahalisi*, has been suspended since July 2012.

"These suspensions are totally illegitimate, and the unusual reaction by the privately-owned media associations has confronted the government with the consequences of its media-gagging policies," Reporters Without Borders said.

"It is now absolutely essential that the Tanzanian parliament should repeal and replace the Newspaper Act of 1976, which gives the information ministry draconian powers and is used to carry out freedom of information violations."

Reporters Without Borders added: "In the meantime, it will be interesting to see how the information minister does without coverage in the privately-owned media, which constitute most Tanzania's print and broadcast media."

The groups that issued the coverage boycott call on 9 October in Dar es Salaam were the Media Owners Association, the Tanzania Editors Forum, the Media Institute of Southern Africa Tanzania Chapter, the Media Council of Tanzania and the Union of Tanzania Press Club.

They expressed dismay at the government's refusal to lift the newspaper bans and called for a "modern law on the right to information" and other up-to-date legislation to replace the Newspaper Act, which allows the authorities to suspend any publication unilaterally.

Tanzania fell 30 place in the latest [Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#) and is now ranked 70th out of 179 countries.

[More information on Tanzania](#)

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