

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/zambie-rwb-publishes-articles-censored-by-02-08-2013,44932.html>

Africa - Zambia

Under attack

RWB publishes articles censored by Zambian government

2 August 2013

WeFightCensorship.org, the special Reporters Without Borders website for censored content, received its first Zambian content yesterday – two articles from [Zambia Reports](#), a website that has been blocked in Zambia since 16 July. One of them is an open letter to the Zambian information minister. [Read the article and consult these documents by visiting **wefightcensorship.org**.](#)

Michael Sata promised greater freedom of expression when he was in opposition, but ever since he became president in 2011, freedom of information has been under attack. *Zambia Reports* and *Zambian Watchdog*, both independent news sites critical of his government, are now two of its leading targets.

Journalists suspected of working for *Zambian Watchdog* have been arrested arbitrarily and various charges have been brought against them. They include **Clayson Hamasaka**, who was arrested for the second time on 29 July and was charged with possession of obscene material. He has been released on bail.

23.07.2013 - Another news website blocked, detained journalist hospitalized

After *Zambian Watchdog* (www.zambianwatchdog.com) and the mirror of that site created by Reporters Without Borders, *Zambia Reports* (www.zambiareports.com) has become the latest independent news website to be blocked by the Zambian government.

Like *Zambian Watchdog*, *Zambia Reports* is based abroad but uses anonymous correspondents working inside Zambia. To circumvent the government's censorship, Reporters Without Borders has created another mirror site: zambiareports.rsf.org.

The authorities are meanwhile continuing to persecute suspected *Zambian Watchdog* reporters who were arrested earlier this month.

Wilson Pondamali, a former reporter for *The Post* newspaper who was detained on 16 July and was transferred to a prison in the northeastern city of Kabwe on 19 July, was finally brought before a judge yesterday and charged with various criminal offences.

His lawyer, Mulilo Kabesha, requested his release during the hearing and the judge agreed. But the police refused to free him. After being returned to his cell, Pondamali fell ill and was taken to hospital.

Thomas Zyambo, another journalist suspected of working for *Zambian Watchdog*, is due to appear before a judge on 26 July. He is charged with possessing seditious material with the intention of publishing it. **Clayson Hamasaka**, the third journalist to have been arrested, has not yet been charged.

[More information about the mirror sites created by Reporters Without Borders.](#)



- Photo: Wilson Pondamali with his family in 2012

19.07.2013 - *Zambian Watchdog* mirror created by RWB itself now blocked by government

Access from within Zambia to the mirror of the *Zambian Watchdog* news website that Reporters Without Borders created yesterday to help circumvent government censorship was itself blocked within hours.

Internet users in Zambia have confirmed to Reporters Without Borders that the mirror site is now being blocked.

Reporters Without Borders is offering a complete archive of the *Zambian Watchdog* website to Internet users who would like to create their own mirror. It is available at <http://zambianwatchdog.rsf.org/arch...>

To create and host a copy of the site, download the 407 Mb archive, transfer it to an online server and decompress the files in their own folder.

Then send us the newly-created mirror's address and we will add it to the list of mirror sites: <http://en.rsf.org/rwb-mirror-censor...>

18.07.2013 - Authorities block independent news site, arrest journalists

Reporters Without Borders is appalled by the Zambian government's blocking of access to *Zambian Watchdog* (www.zambianwatchdog.com), an independent news website based abroad, and by a wave of arrests and charges against journalists suspected of collaborating with the site.

To help circumvent the censorship and enable the Zambian public to recover access to this news outlet, Reporters Without Borders today created a mirror of the website at <http://zambianwatchdog.rsf.org>. If Internet users go to this address, they will find an exact copy of the original.

"The harassment of *Zambian Watchdog's* presumed reporters and contributors constitutes a campaign of intimidation aimed at silencing critics," Reporters Without Borders said. "We urge the Zambian authorities to stop this persecution."

"We also demand journalist **Wilson Pondamali's** immediate and unconditional release, the withdrawal of all the charges against him and his colleague **Thomas Zyambo**, and an immediate end to the censorship of this website."

Thomas Zyambo, a former reporter for the Lusaka-based *Daily Mail*, and **Clayson Hamasaka**, a former head of a journalism school, were arrested on the morning of 9 July and were held at national police headquarters in Lusaka without being told what charges were being brought against them for more than 24 hours.

Hamasaka was released provisionally without charge on 10 July while Zyambo was held for nearly 48 hours before being released provisionally on 11 July. He is facing a possible seven-year jail sentence on charges of "sedition" and "being in possession of seditious material with intent to publish."

Wilson Pondamali, a former reporter for *The Post*, a Lusaka independent daily, was seized by security personnel on 16 July while on the road from Lusaka to Kabwe, a town 140 km to the north where he now works as a freelancer. Currently held at Kabwe's main police station, he is facing a possible two-year jail sentence on a charge of "unlawful possession of a restricted military pamphlet."

All three were arrested in connection with recent news reports on the *Zambian Watchdog* website, which is operated by Zambian journalists based abroad using material supplied by anonymous correspondents inside the country. Very critical of the ruling Patriotic Front (PF), it often carries reports about alleged government corruption and, as a result, is closely monitored by the authorities.

The site's editor, Lloyd Himaambo, told Reporters Without Borders: "*Zambian Watchdog* has committed no crime. The only thing we are guilty of is providing the Zambian people with free access to independent information in a country where the state exercises a heavy control over the media."

Himaambo added: "These recent attempts by the government to silence our organization represent a serious regression for Zambia and demonstrate the ruling party's contempt for independent opinion."

Access to the site from within Zambia was blocked for the second time in nine months on the night of 24 June. *Zambian Watchdog's* technicians responded by creating a secure ("https") version of the site, which was also blocked on 16 July.

Zambian Watchdog then gave the site a new domain name, zwd.cums.in, but the government reacted immediately by blocking the new address. Its content remained inaccessible from within Zambia until Reporters Without Borders created its [mirror site](#).

Continuing their investigation, the police searched the homes of Hamasaka, Zyambo and Pondamali while they were being interrogated, seizing journalistic material, their phones and their laptops.

"This is just the beginning," Zyambo told Reporters Without Borders. "I foresee hard times ahead for journalists in Zambia. The government has much to hide."

The Patriotic Front government already used sedition charges as a way to intimidate and gag outspoken journalists. In [January 2011, Reporters Without Borders condemned the arrests](#) of *Radio Lyambai* deputy director **Nyambe Muyumbana** and two reporters for *The Post* on charges of seditious intent.

Zambia was ranked 72nd out of 179 countries in the [2013 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#), having risen from 86th position in 2012 and 104th 11 years ago. The recent developments will almost certainly reverse this progress.

You can download those documents on our website :

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