

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/zambie-zambian-watchdog-mirror-created-by-19-07-2013,44932.html>

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Africa - Zambia

Online censorship

## Zambian Watchdog mirror created by RWB itself now blocked by government

19 July 2013

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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](http://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](http://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.

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You can download those documents on our website :

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