

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/cote-d-ivoire-call-to-avoid-media-vengeance-by-19-04-2011,40061.html>

Africa - Côte d'Ivoire

Manhunt

Call to avoid media vengeance by civil war victors

19 April 2011

Reporters Without Borders warned today against "unacceptable and disgraceful" attempts by supporters of new President Alassane Ouattara to take physical revenge on several journalists who were close to ousted President Laurent Gbagbo and have been forced to go into hiding.

"We are very concerned that the new government may not be able to control their supporters and we call on Mr Ouattara to publicly urge them to desist and to respect people with different views," the media freedom organisation's secretary-general, Jean-François Julliard, said. "He will be held responsible for their actions."

Manhunt victims

Journalists from all sides in the country's four-month civil war have been threatened, harassed and prevented from doing their job, but for the past week Ouattara supporters have been hunting down pro-Gbagbo journalists.

Reporters Without Borders learns that a hit-list of eight journalists to be killed is circulating in Abidjan, including staff of the government daily *Fraternité Matin*, *Radio-Télévision Ivoirienne (RTI)* and the pro-Gbagbo media. Some members of the pro-Gbagbo National Press Council (CNP) have also gone underground.

New government wants to prosecute journalists

The Ouattara government has said it will prosecute some journalists for their part in the Gbagbo regime's propaganda operation. Reporters Without Borders approves of punishing those who seriously went beyond acceptable limits but is concerned about how those limits are defined.

Nearly all media outlets behaved badly during and since last October and November's election campaign, according to the press freedom organisation. The CNP, still chaired by Eugène Dié Kacou, has condemned abuses by each side and Reporters Without Borders, which criticised the behaviour during the campaign of *Notre Voie* (pro-Gbagbo), *Le Nouveau Réveil* (supporting ex-President Henri Konan Bédié) and *Le Patriote* (pro-Ouattara), said today that media outlets close to the new regime "must be subject as well to criticism and the law."

"The government must concern itself only with justice, not score-settling," it said. If it was necessary to punish those, notably at *RTI*, who preached hatred, it would be "dangerous" to conduct a purge that would seem like revenge, it said. "The new authorities must avoid repeating the past mistake of trampling on the opposition media and tolerating the excesses of pro-government media outlets."

Pro-Gbagbo newspapers not yet back on sale

Le Patriote was the first national daily to reappear, on 15 April, and others, including *Fraternité Matin*, pro-Ouattara papers *Nord-Sud* and *Le Mandat* and independent papers *L'Intelligent d'Abidjan* and *L'Inter* were back on sale three days later.

However, the offices of the pro-Gbagbo dailies *Notre Voie* and *Le Temps* were ransacked, their equipment destroyed and the homes of some of their journalists visited by Ouattara supporters, and these papers have not yet reappeared.

