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<http://www.rsf.org/congolese-government-shows-double-22-05-2014,46325.html>

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Africa - Congo

Biased treatment

## Congolese government shows double standard over media concentration

22 May 2014

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Reporters Without Borders is alarmed at the Congolese authorities' biased treatment of media groups that are critical of the government.

On 5 May, the chairman of the *Talassa* group, which includes a business newspaper, a bi-weekly, a monthly, a website and a printing plant, as well as an communication agency, was informed that its "certificate of declaration", granted by the High Council for Freedom of Communication (CSLC) in November 2001, had been withdrawn.

The decision, based on a 2011 law on freedom of information and communication which bans concentration of ownership in the communication and information business, could lead to the group's closure.

*"Reporters Without Borders is astonished that such an offence appears to target only groups whose publications are critical of the government,"* said Cléa Kahn-Sriber, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Africa desk.

*"Similar groups headed by people close to the Congolese government have not been punished. Is this meant to silence critical voices on the eve of the planned referendum on the amendment of the 2002 constitution which could allow President Denis Sassou-Nguesso, in office since 1997, to serve another term?"*

For example, the group Bassin du Congo-SA, which is led by a close ally of the president, owns the *Adiac* news agency, which is mostly financed by the government, as well as a daily newspaper, a website and a printing plant. The group *DRTV*, owned by a senior government official, General Norbert Dabira, has a radio station and two television stations.

The dismantling of the *Talassa* media group follows its publication in March of several articles that shed light on strange goings-on, such as a huge increase in the numbers of voters in regions that were sympathetic to the president, and the lack of a judicial investigation into the deaths of some 20 people in Brazzaville when the army arrested Colonel Marcel Ntsourou in December last year.

Last year, the biweekly newspaper *Talassa* was twice banned from publishing, first [in June along with three other](#) known for keeping their distance from the government, on grounds of "publishing seditious articles, disseminating false news, manipulating opinion and inciting violence, and defamation", and then for four months in February this year for repeatedly failing to respect the council.

In December, three newspapers, *La Griffé*, *Le Nouveau Regard* and *La Vérité*, were also banned from publishing indefinitely for "undermining national security and a repeat offence of misrepresenting and distorting facts in order to abuse people's good faith".

The Republic of Congo is ranked 82nd of 180 countries in the [2014 World Press Freedom Index](#) compiled by Reporters Without Borders.

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