

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/ouganda-two-newspapers-reopen-after-31-05-2013,44687.html>

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Africa - Uganda

Blockade lifted

## Two newspapers reopen after negotiating with government

31 May 2013

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Two Kampala-based dailies, the *Daily Monitor* and *Red Pepper*, and two radio stations – *KFM Radio* and *Ddembe FM* – that broadcast from the headquarters of the company that owns the *Daily Monitor*, Monitor Publications Limited (MPL), resumed operating yesterday after being closed and occupied by the police for 11 days.

The resumption of operations was the result of negotiations between MPL representatives and government officials that began on 26 May. The police will nonetheless continue to have a presence at the *Daily Monitor's* offices in order to ["pursue their investigation"](#) into the source of an article it published on 7 May.

MPL was allowed to reopen its media in return for accepting limits and restrictions on the *Daily Monitor's* editorial operations. Under the agreement, it must ensure that its articles are "properly sourced, verified and factual" and that they do not create "tension," incite "ethnic hatred," "cause insecurity" or "disturb law and order."

"We are relieved that these media have been able to go back to work but we have deep reservations about what has been given in return," Reporters Without Borders said.

"After a forced 11-day closure and the very serious financial losses that ensued, MPL seems to have had no choice but to accept the government's demands. However, these demands will just encourage the *Daily Monitor's* journalists and all their colleagues with other Ugandan media to censor themselves.

"At a time of political tension and with three years to go to a presidential election in 2016, the occupation of one of Uganda's leading publications, the intimidations and the government's manifest desire to control news and information are all very disturbing."

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### **29.05.2013 - Two Kampala newspapers unable to publish for past ten days**

Reporters Without Borders is very worried by the fact that two Kampala-based newspapers have been forcibly occupied by the police and prevented from publishing since 20 May.

Declaring them to be "crime scenes," the police continue to block access to the offices of Pepper Publications, owner of the *Red Pepper* newspaper, and Monitor Publication Limited (MPL), owner of the *Daily Monitor*. Two radio stations – *KFM Radio* and *Ddembe FM* – that are housed on the same block as MPL's headquarters, also remain closed.

"The blocking for the past ten days of media that are important sources of news and information for the Ugandan public is a grave violation of freedom of expression," Reporters Without Borders said.

"We urge President Yoweri Museveni to guarantee respect for the rights of the Ugandan media, which are protected by the country's Constitution, and to order the immediate withdrawal of the police from the headquarters of MPL and Pepper Publications."

When journalists and activists responded to a call from Human Rights Network for Journalists-Uganda (HRNJ-U) for a peaceful protest outside MPL headquarters, on Tuesday, May 28, the

police used tear gas and water canon to break up the demonstration.

In the course of dispersing the peaceful demonstrators, police armed with batons beat Wavah Broadcasting Services cameraman **Williams Ntege** and confiscated his camera. HRNJ-U national coordinator Geoffrey Wokulira Ssebagala was briefly detained and then released on the orders of police chief Michael Mugabe. Three other journalists were also taken into custody, but released on bail shortly after.

The protest was organized after police inspector general Kale Kayihura said the newspapers would not reopen in the near future.

MPL managing director Alex Asimwe told Reporters Without Borders: "We are not happy with the government's reaction. It is outside of the law. We hope that the authorities will respect the law in engaging with us to end this soon, and that reason will prevail."

The police closed the offices of the MPL and Pepper Publications on 20 May after the *Daily Monitor* published a leaked letter about the so-called "[Muhoozi Project](#)," triggering a wave of panic within the government. *Red Pepper* also defied a prohibition on covering the affair.

More information about media freedom in [Uganda](#).

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