

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/equatorial-guinea-in-wave-of-censorship-authorities-04-03-2011,39678.html>

Africa - Equatorial Guinea

Censorship

## In wave of censorship, authorities suspend state radio broadcasts, journalist

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Reporters Without Borders condemns a wave of government censorship in the past few days at *Radio-Télévision Nationale de Guinée Équatoriale (RTVGE)*, a state-owned broadcaster that is kept under very close surveillance by information minister Jeronimo Osa Osa.



*Jeronimo Osa Osa*

Yesterday, the state radio's French-language broadcasts were "temporarily suspended on the orders of a higher authority," the head of the station, José Esono Bacale, said in a statement that gave no explanation for the decision. His communiqué added that both "news broadcasts and entertainment programmes" were affected.

French was adopted as Equatorial Guinea's second official language, after Spanish, in 1998 and the state radio has a French-language section.

Earlier in the week, **Juan Pedro Mendene** was "suspended" as the host of the *RTVGE* French-language radio programme "Détente" because he referred briefly to Libya in apparent violation of a ban on any reference on the air to the ongoing unrest in a number of Arab countries.

"I have been suspended because I said I was the guide of Détente and not the Libyan guide," Mendene said. A few seconds after Mendene made this comment, the secretary of state for radio and television information, Federico Abaga, came and "told the studio technician to turn off the microphone," Mendene said. "He asked me to leave not just the studio but also the station."

Mendene added that he was hit by Abaga's bodyguard as he left the radio. This was confirmed by several other people speaking on condition of anonymity.

Reporters Without Borders is appalled by the way government officials censor public media journalists and programmes. The suspensions are not only unjust but also absurd as the

government cannot continue indefinitely to cover up political events that are shaking the world.

Reporters Without Borders already condemned the news blackout on unrest in the Arab world on 15 February, when writer, blogger and magazine editor [Juan Tomás Ávila Laurel went on hunger strike](#). "Information minister Jeronimo Osa Osa, who is also the government's spokesman, issued clear directives to the staff of the state radio and TV broadcaster, *RTVGE*, not to cover the unrest in Tunisia and Egypt," the organization said at the time.

Reporters Without Borders has learned that *Afrol News* ([afrol.com](http://afrol.com)), an international news website that is critical of Equatorial Guinea's government, has experienced a sharp fall in the number of online visits by people based in Equatorial Guinea. It is unclear if this is just a technical problem or if the government is trying to block the site, but it is becoming more and more difficult to access from inside Equatorial Guinea.

Equatorial Guinea is ranked 167th out of 178 countries in the 2010 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index while its president, [Teodoro Obiang Nguema, has been on the Reporters Without Borders list of "Predators of Press Freedom" for years](#).

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