

**WAN-IFRA is the World
Association of Newspapers
and News Publishers**

Its mission is to protect the rights of journalists across the world to operate free media, and provide its members with professional services to help their business prosper in a digital world and perform their crucial role in open societies.

With formal representative status at the United Nations, UNESCO and the Council of Europe, it derives its authority from its global network of leading news publishing companies and technology entrepreneurs, and its legitimacy from its 80 national association members representing 18,000 publications in 120 countries.

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His Excellency President Yoweri Museveni
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State House P.O. Box 25497
Kampala, Uganda
Via email.

CC: General Kale Kayihura
Inspector General of Police

4 December, 2017

Your Excellency

We are writing on behalf of the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) and the World Editors Forum, which represent 18,000 publications, 15,000 online sites and over 3,000 companies in more than 120 countries, to register our concern over the recent treatment and detention of media professionals representing Red Pepper.

On 21 November, police operatives removed eight directors and editors from their offices at Pepper Publications Group and detained them at Nalufenya Police Detention Centre in Jinja. The eight included Richard Tusiime, Johnson Musinguzi, Patrick Mugumya, Arinatiwe Rugyendo, Richard Kintu, Ben Byarabaha, Francis Tumusiime, and James Mujuni.

The following day, the editors were forced to reveal computer passwords to police detectives who were attempting to establish the source of a story published by Red Pepper on 20 November concerning an alleged plot to overthrow the government of neighbouring Rwanda.

The editors have since appeared in court charged with publication of information prejudicial to security, libel, and offensive communication.

We write to express our condemnation of the handling of this case. If the government believes that the editors indeed committed a crime in publishing details of this story, then we respectfully remind the relevant authorities that the rule of law exists in Uganda and that due procedure therefore should have been followed.

Furthermore, detaining the eight at Nalufenya Police Detention Centre, a location used by the police to hold individuals suspected of capital offences such as terrorism and treason, would appear to serve no other purpose than to intimidate the Red Pepper staff. Such actions risk unleashing a chilling effect throughout the media profession in Uganda.

We take this opportunity to express our growing unease at the way media is being treated in Uganda. Editors from media houses such as Monitor Publications Ltd. and Vision Group have recently been summoned to the Criminal Investigations and Intelligence Directorate regarding stories they have published. Although they have not been officially charged in court, this trend of summoning and interrogating editors is likely to instil further concern among journalists across the country. Such actions will likely lead to an increase in self-censorship and an understandable reluctance to pursue future stories for fear of recrimination or legal harassment.

For journalists already struggling under what is a difficult climate for professional journalism, the actions of the security forces - and apparent willingness of the government to pursue legal action against media as a means of stifling reporting into issues of clear public interest and national importance – severely infringes on the freedom of the press to carry out its essential watchdog role. In the interests of a free and democratic Uganda, we therefore call on your office to cease such methods of intimidation, to reprimand the tactics of intimidation deployed by the police, and to do everything in your power to show civic leadership in calling for greater respect for the profession of journalism.

We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,



Michael Golden
President
World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers



David Callaway
President
World Editors Forum

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