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Chad: Journalists freed

"Our institution is overjoyed to learn that these journalists have been freed," said Nassour Guelndouksia Ouaidou, president of Chad's National Assembly, during his opening speech for the new budget session on 5 October. He went on to ask the government to send deputies "a draft revision to laws controlling the press, with a view to decriminalising press offences, without delay."

On 26 September 2005, the Court of Appeal in N'Djamena ordered the release of three journalists (Sy Koumbo Singa Gali, Michaël Didama and Samoryngar Ngaradoundé) and a stringer, Garondé Djarma, all of whom had been prosecuted by the State for libel, incitement to tribal hatred and dissemination of false information. They had each been given heavy prison sentences and stiff fines. But, because a number of errors had been made in pursuing the case, which also did not follow the correct procedure, the Court of Appeal decided to release the four prisoners.

The releases also followed considerable pressure from both inside and outside the country, including by the Congolese association *Journalistes en Danger* (JED). Since arriving in N'Djamena early in September, JED's legal adviser, Charles Mugagga Mushizi, had met with various government authorities to call for the release of the four journalists. As early as 9 August JED had sent President Déby a letter deploring what it called "the dangerous deterioration of press freedoms in Chad".

And, in a joint declaration, the Cameroon Union of Journalists and the Union of Press Publishers of Central Africa (UEPAC) also protested against the incarceration of the journalists, calling for "the immediate release of these colleagues".

Meanwhile, the American NGO, Human Rights Watch, represented by its deputy director, Reed Brody, who was in Chad in September, said that it was "incredible that a journalist should find himself in prison a few days after being accused of libel".

Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) also joined the protests, when its Secretary General, Robert Ménard, met with President Déby. Following this meeting the President of the Republic issued a statement saying that: "the three Chad journalists imprisoned for press offences would be released within 72 hours".

The Swiss-based association, *Etre femme aujourd'hui*, and the International League for Human Rights, also protested against the arrests.

The internal protests were also highly united. Twenty-seven opposition political parties, civil society associations, professional media organisations, and the Chad teachers' union all demonstrated against the imprisonment of the journalists. And, from 22 to 26 September, the independent press held a "week without newspapers" in protest.

1. DIARY

DRC: Training at 3Tamis centre

From 7 - 21 November, the five members of the Bukavu-based participatory video production centre *3Tamis*, will receive training in new digital editing and broadcasting techniques. The training will be given by Thierry Carton, a professor at the Science And Technical University of Lille, France.

The team will also look at ways of establishing the *3Tamis* network, linking studios in Bukavu, Kalemie and another that might be set up in Kalima, in Maniema province.

DM / IPP

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DRC: Second independent radio support hub launched in Kisangani

The second independent radio support hub (PARI) will be set up in Kingali (Eastern Province) on 5 November, following the Bukavu hub, which was created in May this year. These hubs offer various services, such as training programmes, equipment purchase and maintenance, and wireless Internet connection via VSAT antennae, in an effort to end the isolation of provincial media in the network.

Setting up the Kisangani PARI hub is part of the *Media in DRC for transition and peace processes* project, which was launched in November 2004 by Institut Panos Paris with support from UK department for international development (DFID).

AB / IPP

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2. PRINT MEDIA NEWS

Gabon: Libreville's new weekly, *La Une*

The first issue of *La Une*, Gabon's new, 8-page, satirical weekly devoted to debate and investigative journalism, appeared on 21 September. With a circulation of 5000 copies, *La Une* is printed in two colours by Macacos in Cameroon, and sold for 500 FCFA (0.76 euros). It is distributed by Sogapress.

The paper's editorial line and presentation are similar to Libreville's existing satirical paper, *Crocodile*, which was created in 2004. According to *La Une's* editorial director, Maximin Mezui, this is because the new weekly's editorial staff is made up of the hard core of journalists who set up and worked on *Crocodile* until March 2005.

AN / IPP

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DRC: *Journal du Citoyen's* first issue

The "*Journal du Citoyen*" (JDC), which was launched at a ceremony at Kinshasa's Wallonie-Bruxelles centre on 30 September, is the fruit of an idea that germinated in a number of the city's publications. Modeste Mutinga, president of the Higher Media Authority (HAM), chaired the ceremony. He has been interested by the project since its inception, and has always supported it.

The JDC is not a new newspaper, but an independent supplement publishing news on the elections that is inserted in each of the partner publications. Its articles are written by journalists from *La Tempête des Tropiques*, *Le Phare*, *La Référence Plus*, *The Post*, *Agence Presse Associée*, *L'Observateur*, and *Le Potentiel*. JDC is directed by Philippe De Boeck, while Yves Kalikat is editor-in-chief, although editorial responsibility lies with the HAM. A steering committee including donors and partners monitors the project's progress.

The JDC project is run jointly by Institut Panos Paris and *Association pour la promotion de l'éducation à l'étranger* (APEFE), with support from DFID, the French community in Belgium, the Belgian government - via *Direction Générale de la Coopération au Développement* (DGCD) - and Canadian development aid.

FB / IPP

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3. RADIO AND TV NEWS

Burundi: New religious station approved

A new radio station, *Ijwi ry'amahoro* (which means The Voice of Peace in kirundi), owned by the Conference of Catholic Bishops of Burundi, was approved on 6 October by the National Communication Council (CNC).

This is the 11th radio station to be approved in Burundi and the country's second Catholic station. The first, *Radio Maria*, belongs to the diocese of Gitega (central Burundi).

DaN / IPP

Congo: *Radio Moka* suspended indefinitely

Radio Moka, a community radio station broadcasting out of Impfondo, in the department of Likouala, was suspended on 2 September for an indefinite period.

Likouala's Prefect took the decision on 1 September on the basis of accusations that the station had shown "a lack of impartiality in the handling of information, disregard for journalistic codes of conduct and failure to abide by legal requirements for setting up a press publishing business".

Alain Moka, the station's owner, claims that "the accusations are empty pretexes".

The association, *Journalistes en Danger*, which has taken an interest in the affair, has pointed out that the accusations confuse fundamentally different issues. According to JED, the Higher Media and Communication Council (CSIC) should deal with the administrative issues, while the Media Observatory should be handling questions of professional misconduct.

AMK / IPP

4. STRUCTURING AND PROFESSIONALISATION OF THE MEDIA

Central Africa: Workshop for RNC correspondents

From 6 to 8 October in Bangui, the sixteen regional correspondents of Central African national radio took part in a seminar to train them to become regional station delegates. This involves raising awareness, educating and informing various strata of the public on issues dealing with national reconciliation, community involvement, and citizen's rights and duties, as laid out in national and international agreements.

To do this, the regional correspondents will need to support the station in its various awareness-raising activities and efforts to promote a culture of democracy and civic-mindedness.

It should be recalled that representatives of the regional stations have to be models of moral behaviour and may not belong to any political party.

SJB / IPP

Chad: Média Excel training for journalists

From 12 – 16 September, thirty-five journalists from independent and public sector media in Chad, all fluent speakers of literary Arabic and local languages, received training on the treatment of news in a workshop entitled: *How to distinguish information from comment*.

Média Excel Formation provided the training, enabling participants to discover and master different writing and editorial techniques, such as the 'inverted pyramid', reporting angle, the lead, development and 'punch-line' of an article. "These tools will enable the journalists to improve their technique and thus provide better quality information for the Chad public, most of whom do not speak French", said Média Excel's secretary-general.

Média Excel Formation comprises journalists from the Chad branch of *Groupe de recherches et d'échanges technologiques* (GRET), a French NGO, with help from journalists from the Superior School of Journalism (ESJ) in Lille (France).

The training of the 35 journalists was supported by the cultural service of the US embassy in a Chad.

LG / IPP

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Chad: Laoro Gondjé

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