

PRESS STATEMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE ALLEGED POLICE RAID AT FORMER CABINET SECRETARY DR MATIANGI'S HOUSE FAILED KENYANS

On February 11, 2023, the Media Council of Kenya (MCK) wrote letters and sent a public request to media houses to provide videos and/or photos relevant to the alleged forced entry into former Interior and Coordination of National Government Cabinet Secretary Dr Fred Matiangi's house by Kenyan government's security agents.

Following widespread condemnation of the media and denial by public agencies, MCK needed facts to defend media from attacks and accusations and to protect press freedom as envisaged in the Constitution.

The request was an opportunity for the media to not only show its professionalism and responsibility on public interest matters but specifically to disapprove the government agencies which had put the credibility of the media on the spot.

Unfortunately, despite the MCK media monitoring system capturing 26 news articles by mainstream media on the event, none showed either Dr Matiangi himself or his home or even the alleged security officials. The media have failed to provide any photos or videos.

Aware that the matter was putting the credibility of the media at stake and being questioned in the court of public opinion, the Council sought facts to defend the media. In the absence of the information requested by the Council, apologies and/retractions or corrections, the media remains accused of misleading the public and failing to adhere to their own Code of Conduct.

While the Council is committed to fearlessly defending media freedom, safety of journalists and ensuring the government entities leave media to operate freely, MCK has a duty to protect Kenyans from unfair coverage and media practice.

The Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism in Kenya was developed by the media fraternity themselves and recognised by parliament as a law. MCK monitors the media adherence to the same and exercises regulatory oversight.

By failing to adhere to their own Code of Conduct and rejecting any form of peer review or established regulations and practice, the media becomes a threat to democracy and press freedom and instead become agents of impunity who are resisting any form of accountability.

While some sections of the media resorted to accusing the Council of joining hands with forces bent on threatening press freedom in Kenya, MCK reiterates that being reminded of your ethical responsibility and professional obligation to adhere to the code of ethics is not a threat to press freedom but protecting public interest and citizen exposure to misleading media content.

The Council respects journalistic privileges including protection of sources and routine due diligence and verification of information on public interest issues is a basic exercise that takes place regularly and meant to shield the media against unwarranted attacks while the same time protecting the public.

We believe that media accountability is a critical part of achieving an independent, responsible, and professional media that citizens are in dire need of. Access to quality information by the public is the minimum the media can do to citizens even as they deal with other professional challenges.



David Omwoyo Omwoyo, MBS

Chief Executive Officer & Secretary to the Council