

## **PRESS STATEMENT**

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Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2024

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **THE MEDIA COUNCIL OF KENYA ADVISORY ON GOVERNMENT-MEDIA RELATIONS**

1. The Media Council of Kenya (MCK) is deeply concerned about the adverse working relationship between the Media and Government that has degenerated into accusations and counter accusations especially regarding the coverage of the ongoing public demonstrations.
2. The ongoing accusations bring to the fore a simmering tension between the Government and the media, leading to tension and confusion across the country. What started as a perception about biased media coverage of the 2022 General Election has now escalated into full blown conflict pitting the Government against the media; resulting in unwarranted threats, blame games coercion, intimidation and bad blood.
3. Despite the Government employing the largest ever number of communications and media advisors, including many editors, journalists and communication consultants, the only visible result from the investment largely remains resources spent crafting communications strategies and plans and minimum mostly conflicting messaging.
4. It is regrettable that despite all this investment, the media are complaining about a lack of clear government narratives, too many viewpoints from the same Government and far too many mouths purporting to speak for Government.
5. It is worth noting that the political class, who were in opposing camps during the elections have found many reasons to work together, while media and government haven't found a common ground yet. The media is still looked at as an opponent.
6. Both the Government and the media have a common public interest, including a commercial and editorial relationship. Using commercial interests to get back at editorial misgivings is no better than utilising editorial position to revenge for unmet commercial expectations.
7. The Constitution of Kenya guarantees a free, fair and independent media whose focus is public interest. Government and the media are under no obligation to like each other, and this historical and global, but they must agree to exist and identify common principles and values on which to engage including duty to the nation.
8. While a section of senior government officials has exercised the right to freedom of expression through levelling accusations against certain media houses, open expletives and threats against the media and selected journalists, such approach is not the way to go.
9. Media has been accused of bias in the guests invited to broadcast programmes and framing of national conversations, while on the other hand the media claim lack of credible Government voices and poor consistent messaging show by officials when given a chance.
10. Kenyans are caught between a 'good' Government that believes the media is bad and irresponsible on one side and a good media whose actions portray Government as bad and out of touch that hates the media.
11. The Media Council of Kenya believes that the same way a bad Government is way better than no Government at all, bad media is a million times better than no media at all.

12. The debate at hand is the coverage of the demonstrations especially live coverage of conflict situations against provisions of the Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism in Kenya which demands reasonable delays in cases of active conflict. Instantaneous live broadcasting of violence and active combat is unprofessional as it is unethical.
13. Beyond the provisions in the Code of Conduct, supported by in-house editorial policies, it is a professional obligation on the part of editors to ask themselves if broadcasting live images of protestors looting and destroying property, is not glorifying violence and encouraging lawlessness.
14. If the protestors have clearly laid down their demands, isn't it the work of the media to sieve out and critically analyse the same and create a conversation around the practicalities and timeliness and related consequences informed by global and historical trends or merely report?
15. It is time the Government and editors found a common ground and prioritise the unity of the country by way of creating a framework of communicating critical national issues while respecting each other's independence and duty.
16. A good example and urgent matter is the Government ordering the police to stop harassing journalists and depersonalising media and Government relations while the media exercising professionalism in covering the conflicts by way of not escalating the violence. There is need for an urgent media and Government dialogue on engagement on national public interest issues without compromising the independence of the other. This has happened before in this country.
17. All media houses and outlets, both online and offline, are therefore called upon to strictly apply the provisions of the Code.

Issued in Nairobi on 22 July 2024  
For and on behalf of the Media Council of Kenya

**DAVID OMWOYO OMWOYO, MBS**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER & SECRETARY TO THE COUNCIL

**About Media Council of Kenya**

The Media Council of Kenya (MCK) is the principal body mandated to develop and regulate the media industry in Kenya in order to promote media freedom, professionalism and independence. It is established by law under the Media Council Act of 2013 to fulfill Article 34 (5) of the Constitution of Kenya which enshrines media freedom.