MEDIA COUNCIL OF KENYA

Promoting Media Freedom and Responsible Journalism



QUARTER ONE 2026/2027

PRESS FREEDOM VIOLATIONS SITUATION REPORT

BACKGROUND



The Media Council of Kenya (MCK) is a national institution established under Section 5 of the Media Council Act, 2013, for purposes of regulating, developing and promoting the media sector as envisaged under Article 34(5) of the Constitution of Kenya.

The Media Council of Kenya is responsible for promoting and protecting media freedom and ensuring the protection of the rights and privileges of journalists in the performance of their duties through monitoring and documentation of press freedom violations. During the first quarter of the financial year 2026/2027, the Media Council of Kenya monitored and documented incidents affecting the safety, protection and working environment of journalists across the country.

During this quarter, the Media Council of Kenya documented 47 cases involving various forms of press freedom violations, including physical attacks, arrests, threats, intimidation, harassment and other incidents that interfered with journalists' ability to carry out their professional duties. Of the 47 cases, 36 involved male journalists, nine involved female journalists and two involved journalists of both genders, for whom individual gender identities were not available.

During this quarter, the Media Council of Kenya documented

47 CASES

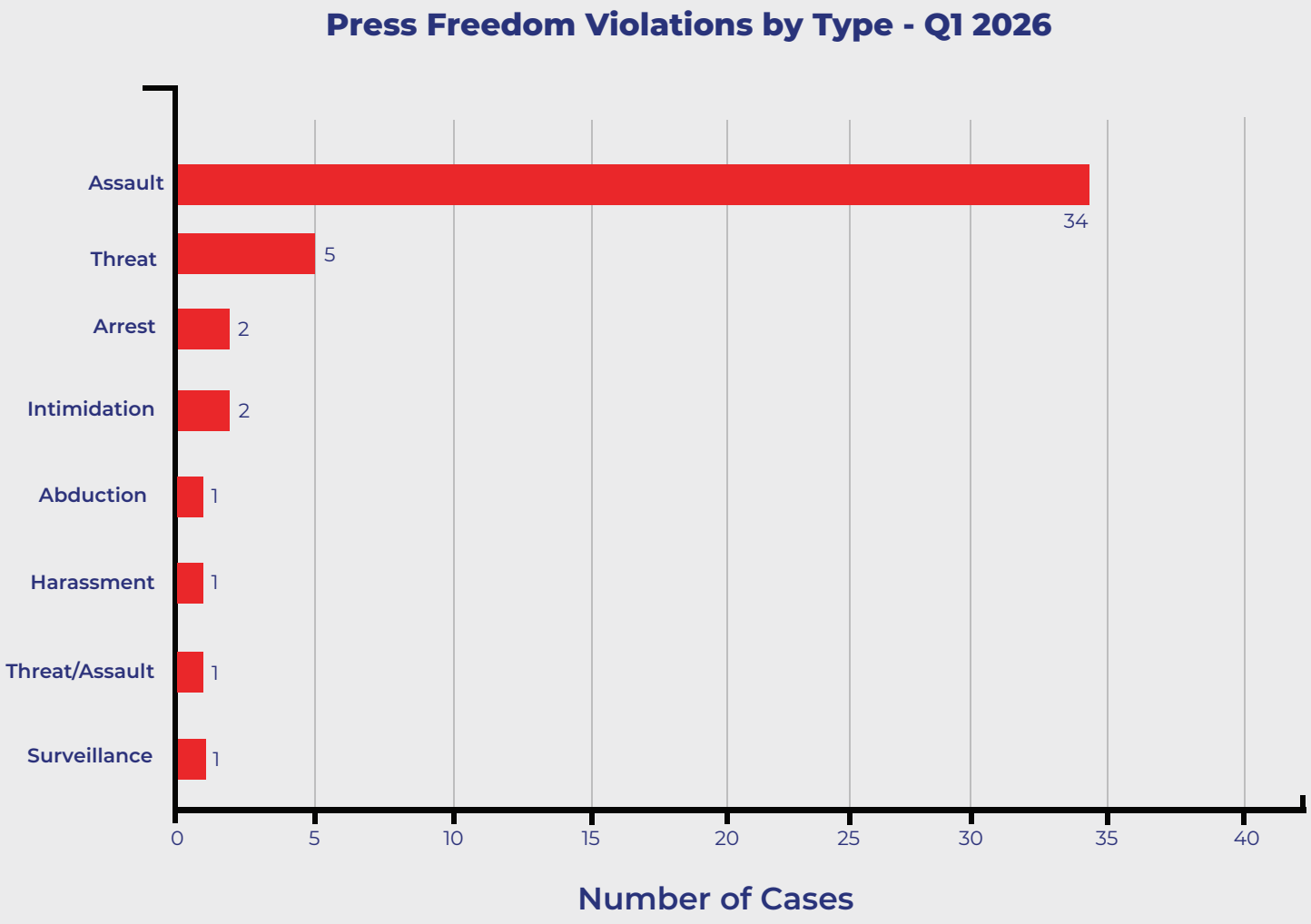
involving various forms of press freedom violations, including physical attacks, arrests, threats, intimidation, harassment and other incidents that interfered with journalists' ability to carry out their professional duties.

1. Case Details

Total violations: 47

The documented cases comprised:

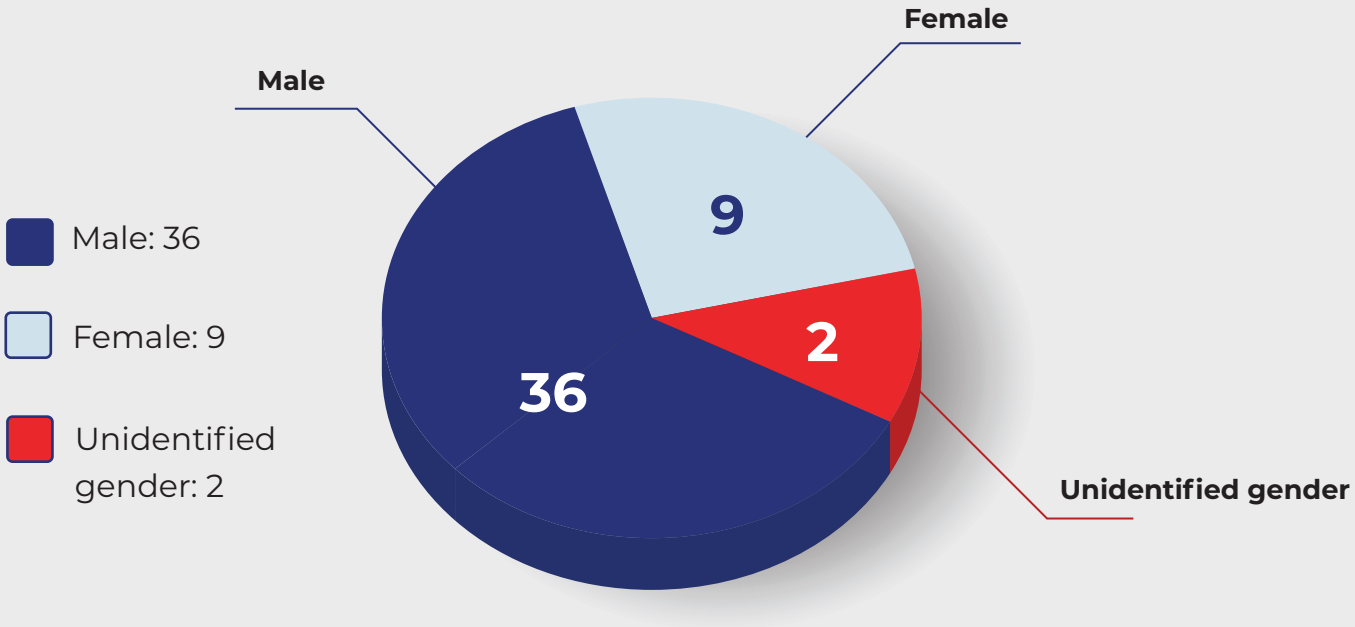
- Assault - 34 cases
- Threat - 5 cases
- Arrest - 2 cases
- Intimidation - 2 cases
- Abduction - 1 case
- Harassment - 1 case
- Threat/Assault - 1 case
- Surveillance - 1 case



2. Gender

Data collected indicates that male journalists experienced most of the documented cases. However, this does not imply that female journalists face a lower risk. This trend partly reflects the deployment patterns in newsrooms, where male journalists are more often assigned high-risk stories than their female counterparts.

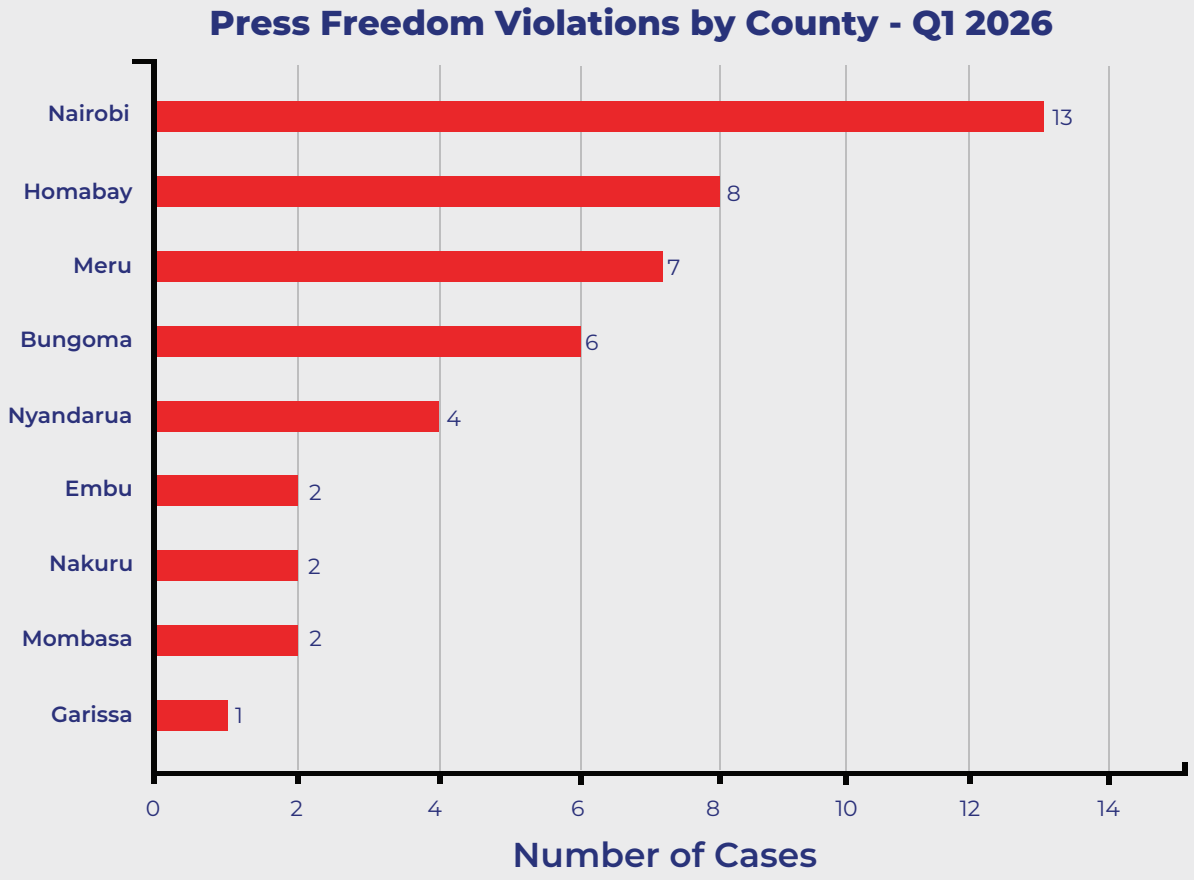
Gender Analysis



3. County Breakdown

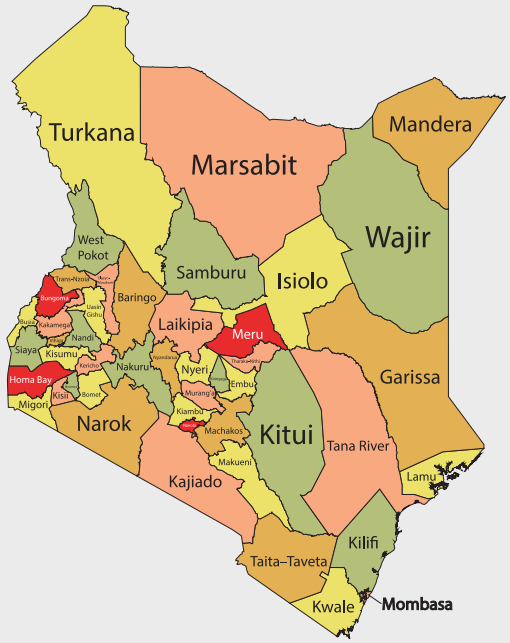
The documented cases were reported across the following counties:

- Nairobi - 13 cases
- Homa Bay - 8 cases
- Meru - 7 cases
- Bungoma - 6 cases
- Nyandarua - 4 cases
- Embu - 2 cases
- Nakuru - 2 cases
- Mombasa - 2 cases
- Garissa - 1 case



Assaults accounted for **34 of the 47 cases, or 72.3 per cent,** indicating that the main risk journalists faced in the reporting period was physical violence. Threats were the second-largest category at **10.6 per cent,** with arrests, intimidation, abductions, harassment and surveillance following in that order.

Geographically, Nairobi recorded the largest number of cases, followed by Homa Bay, Meru and Bungoma. These four counties accounted for **34 reported cases,** or approximately 72 per cent of the national total. The escalation of press freedom violations in Kenya occurred against a backdrop of heightened political activity as the country gears up for the 2027 General Election. Some of the major attacks documented in the reporting period included an attack on four journalists covering the Ol Kalou by-election in July 2026, an assault on eight journalists during the Linda Mwananchi rally in Homa Bay in August 2026 and the abduction of a senior editor with the Standard Group in September 2026. This indicates that many violations occurred in political settings rather than in the context of ordinary criminal activity.



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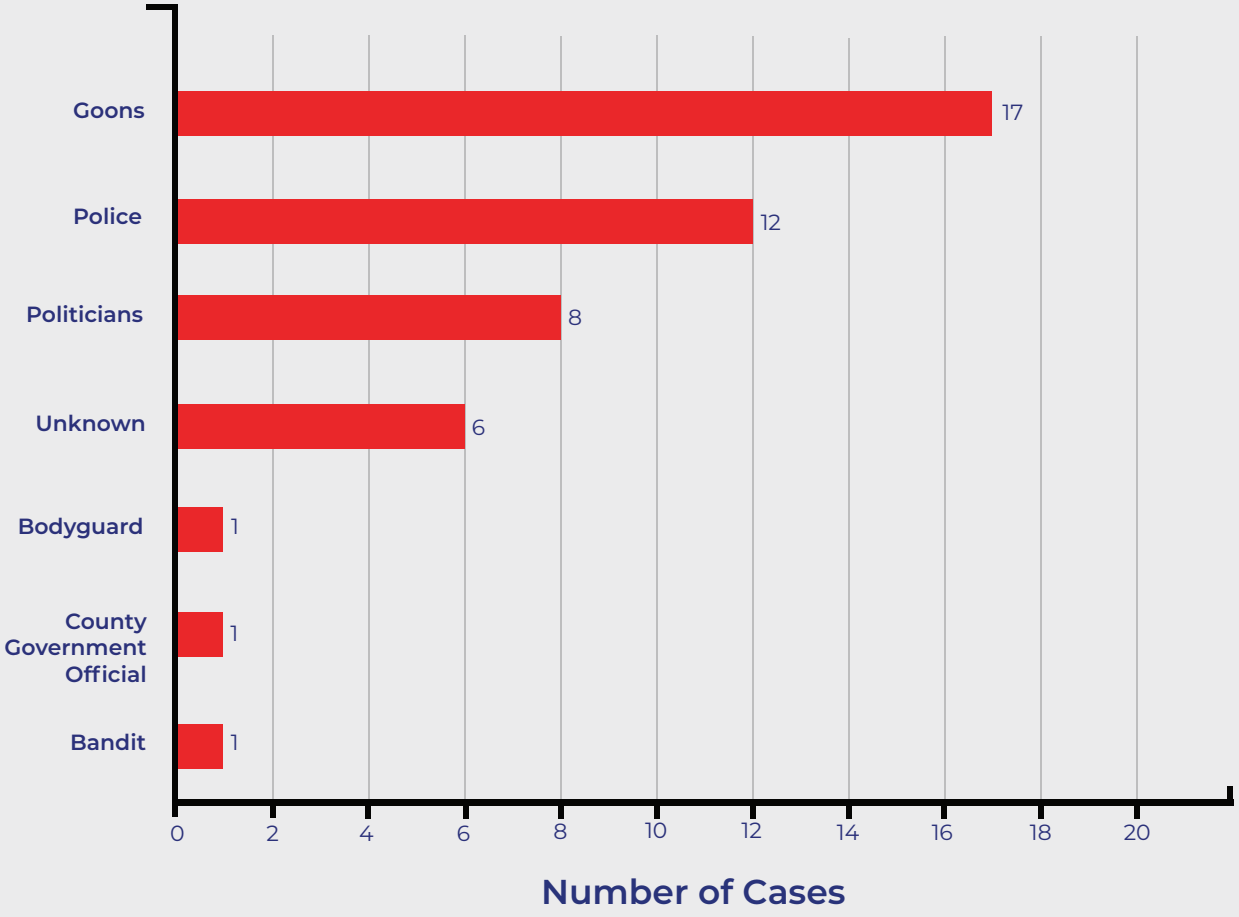
These four counties accounted for **34 CASES** approximately **72%** of the national total.

4. Perpetrator Categories

The perpetrator categories recorded across the 47 cases were:

- Criminal gangs/political activists - 17 cases
- Police - 12 cases
- Politicians - 8 cases
- Unknown - 6 cases
- Bodyguard - 1 case
- County Government Official - 1 case
- Bandit - 1 case

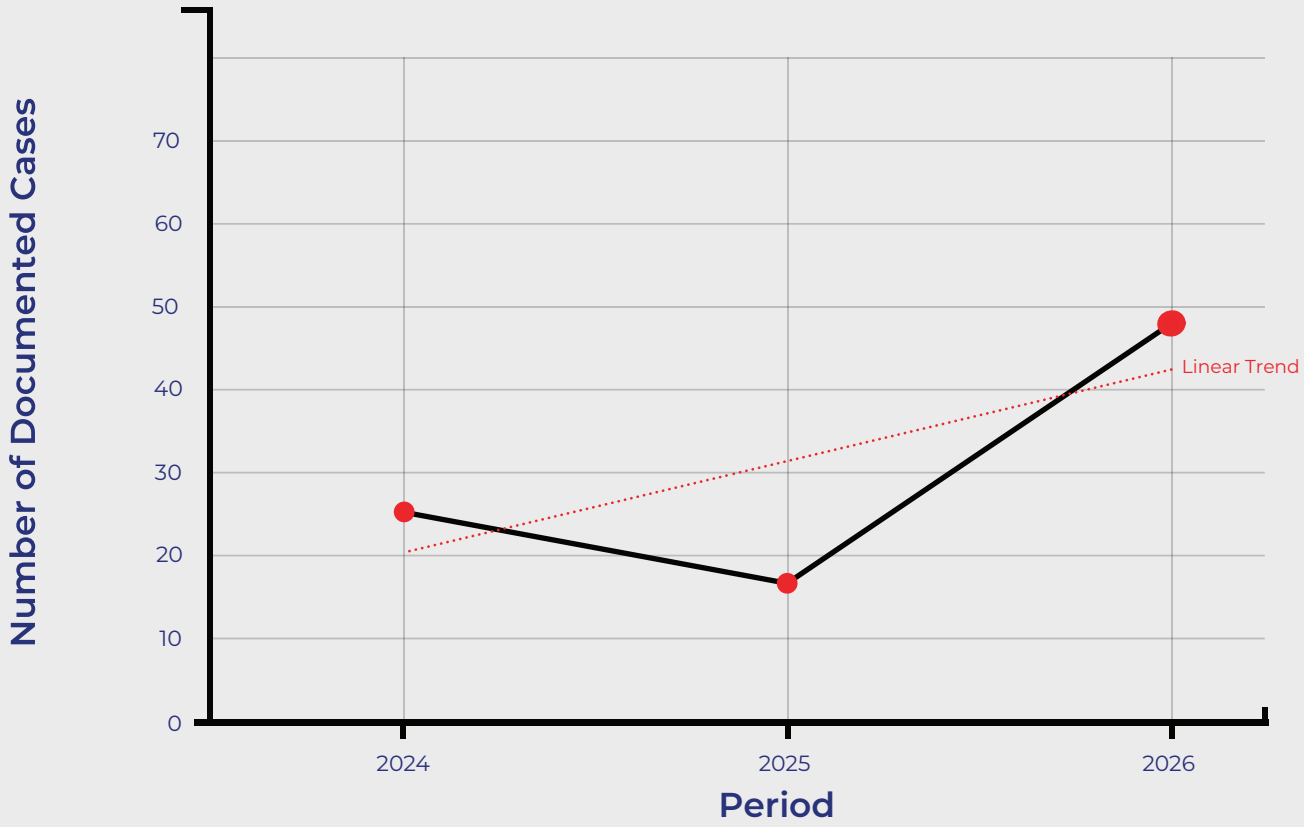
Press Freedom Violations by Perpetrator Category - Q1 2026



Comparative analysis of press freedom violations for Quarter One (three-year trend)

Period	Cases
2024 Q1 (July-September)	24
2025 Q1 (July-September)	17
2026 Q1 (July-September)	47

Trend in Press Freedom Violations, Q1 (July - September), 2024 - 2026



Overall trend: upward, despite a decline in 2025

The data shows a sharp deterioration in journalists' safety in Quarter One of the financial year 2026/2027. The 2026 data shows that attacks against journalists almost doubled and were 95.8 per cent higher than in 2024. Cases were also 176.5 per cent higher than in 2025, nearly three times the previous year's level. At the same time, the period accounted for more than half (53.4 per cent) of all the 88 cases recorded across the three comparative periods, which suggests that 2026 was not simply a return to the 2024 level but a significant escalation.

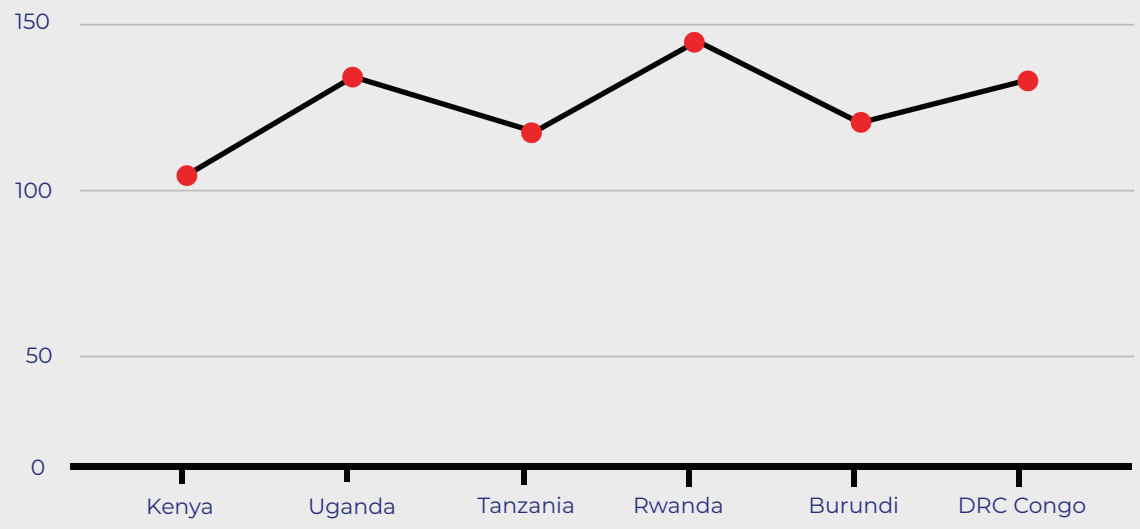
Global and regional context

In the global context, the state of press freedom in Kenya is strained, based on the World Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders (RSF). Kenya was ranked 106th in 2026, an improvement from 117th in 2025. However, Kenya's ranking has remained in the "difficult" tier for more than four years, pointing to the significant challenges facing the media industry in Kenya. In the East African region, Kenya's position on the World Press Freedom Index is favourable compared to its counterparts.

Ranking of East African Countries in the 2026 World Press Freedom Index

Country	Position
Kenya	106
Uganda	131
Tanzania	117
Rwanda	139
Burundi	119
DR Congo	130

Ranking of East Africa Countries in the Press Freedom Index 2026 Position



5. MCK Interventions

MCK undertook targeted interventions in selected cases of press freedom and journalist safety violations, depending on the circumstances and nature of each incident.

Among the interventions undertaken, MCK issued public statements on selected cases, drawing attention to reported violations and reaffirming the Media Council of Kenya's commitment to the protection of journalists and press freedom.

In one case, MCK facilitated the release of a journalist who had been detained in connection with their work.

In another case involving criminal charges against a journalist, MCK engaged the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP). Following the engagement, the charges were withdrawn after the parties opted for an out-of-court settlement.

MCK also followed selected cases through relevant accountability and investigative mechanisms, including cases handled by the Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA).

MEDIA
COUNCIL OF KENYA

Ground Floor, Britam Centre,
Mara /Ragati Road Junction, Upper hill,
P.O.BOX 43132 00100 Nairobi, Kenya

Tel(Office)
0111019200

Cell(Office)
0727735252 | 0702558233 | 0702558234 | 0702558453

- **Mombasa**: 0111019220
- **Kisumu**: 0111019230
- **Meru**: 0111019250
- **Nakuru**: 0111019240

Email :info@mediacouncil.or.ke
www.mediacouncil.or.ke
Media Council of Kenya
@MediaCouncilK