

PRESS STATEMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MCK CONDEMS EJECTION OF MEDIA FROM SENATE HEARING Regulator Calls On Speaker To Defend Media Freedom and Access to Information

The Media Council of Kenya (MCK) takes great exception at the ejection of journalists from the proceedings of the Senate's Committee on National Security, Defence & Foreign Relations on Wednesday 19th August, 2020.

The treatment meted out on journalists by the Committee's Chair, Hon. Yusuf Haji, the Senator for Garissa, was not only unacceptable, but representative of a worrying trend where journalists in the course of duty, are barred from crucial proceedings of legislative bodies both at national and county levels, without justifiable reasons.

Accordingly, the MCK calls upon the Speaker of the Senate, Hon. Kenneth Lusaka alongside the Clerk of the Senate, Dr. Jeremiah Nyengenyne, to urgently address this practice, with a view to protecting the freedom and access of journalists to crucial information on the work this important legislative body, in the public interest.

Denying journalists access to proceedings of the Senate, without justifiable reasons as provided for by constitutional limitations, violates the principles of public participation, access to information and freedom of the media as provided for in Articles 118(1)(b), 34 and 35 of the Constitution of Kenya. Furthermore, such action also violates Section 243 of the Senate's own Standing Orders.

While appreciating the Ministry of Health's guidelines on COVID-19 and Parliament's own guidelines and protocols on the same, we note that the journalists covering the proceedings were not in violation of the same before their ejection and that alternative channels for coverage and media presence should have been provided in line with the transparency and public accountability expected of the Senate.

The Senate should be the beacon of constitutionalism in protecting and providing a strong example for county governments in general and the county assemblies in particular. The actions of the Senate Committee fly in the face of this.

The MCK expects the Speaker and Clerk of the Senate, to address this matter urgently and defend the right of the media to cover Senate proceedings without fear or favour, as the purveyor of crucial information to the public.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Omwoyo Omwoyo". The signature is stylized with loops and flourishes.

David Omwoyo Omwoyo
Chief Executive Officer & Secretary to the Council

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