

Kenyan politicians threaten media

NAIROBI, Kenya - Dinah Ondari and Anthony Mwangi, journalists with Kenya's *People Daily* newspaper, were 1 week criticised during a parliamentary session, threatened with being barred from covering parliament, and summoned by a legislative committee, according to the July 31 Hansard, a verbatim report of proceedings in parliament, and Ken Bosire, the newspaper's managing editor.



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Parliamentarians in Kenya should stop [harassing](#) journalists and allow them to report on the legislature without fear of reprisal, the Committee to Protect Journalists said.

These events followed the publication in *People Daily* on [July 30](#) and July 31 of articles alleging that members of parliament were taking and soliciting bribes from organisations and individuals they were supposed to be investigating. The *People Daily* newspaper is privately owned, but [associated](#) with the family of President Uhuru Kenyatta.

"If members of the Kenyan parliament are serious about fighting corruption, then attempts to intimidate journalists into silence must be abandoned immediately," said CPJ sub-Saharan Africa Representative Muthoki Mumo. "We urge the parliamentarians to stop trying to intimidate Dinah Ondari, Anthony Mwangi, and their colleagues with threats and investigations and instead allow them to freely do their work of covering the legislature."

On July 31 in the National Assembly, one of the two houses of parliament, MP Robert Pukose, a member of the ruling Jubilee Party, accused the *People Daily* of committing an "affront" to the assembly and said its reporting was a blanket condemnation of MPs, according to the Hansard proceedings report.

According to the Hansard report, Pukose asked the National Assembly speaker, Justin Muturi, to "take action" against the *People Daily* and have the newspaper investigated by a parliamentary committee in relation to its reporting. Pukose's calls were backed by other MPs including Majority Leader Aden Duale and Minority Leader John Mbadi, according to the Hansard.

In response, Muturi directed the house's Powers and Privileges Committee to investigate these claims, according to the Hansard. Muturi said that no decision would be made to ban the journalists or the media house "until such time as the Committee will make a recommendation one way or other", according to the Hansard.

Incidents

Ondari told her employer that two legislators on August 1 in separate incidents threatened to bar her and Mwangi from parliament unless they apologized for their reporting, according to Bosire and a [report](#) from the *People Daily*. Speaking to CPJ, Bosire declined to name the two MPs, but said he gave their names to Muturi, who asked Bosire to file a formal complaint.

In a letter seen by CPJ, the National Assembly clerk on August 1 invited Peter Opondo, the editor-in-chief of Mediamax, the *People Daily's* parent company, to appear the next day to "assist" with "investigations" into allegations of misconduct in the house.

Bosire told CPJ that this letter was sent after *People Daily* complained during a call on August 1 with Muturi.

A team of five Mediamax employees, including Bosire and Mwangi, appeared in front of the committee yesterday as directed, according to Bosire. The editor told CPJ that they requested - and were granted - 10 days to prepare a submission for the Powers and Privileges Committee.

In exchanges with CPJ over text message on July 31 and August 1, Muturi said that reports the journalists had been summoned were false and said they had been invited to "shed light on the matter which relates to ethics" of MPs and that he considered them "whistle-blowers". Muturi said that the journalists would not be required to reveal their sources during the hearings.

During a media gala today in Nairobi, Muturi said that *People Daily* journalists, Ondari and Mwangi, should be praised for exposing corruption in the National Assembly, according to [a report](#) by the *Daily Nation*.

CPJ's repeated attempts to reach Pukose, Duale and Mbadi over their mobile phones on August 1 and August 3 were unsuccessful.

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