

Kenya hostile to journalists - CPJ

Kenya is continuously becoming hostile for journalists, Committee to Protect Journalist has said. In a report released in Nairobi, CPJ said journalists face both legal and physical harassment, making it "increasingly difficult" for them to work freely.

The report titled *Broken Promises: How Kenya is failing to uphold its commitment to Free Press*, says attacks on journalists in the country happen with "complete impunity".



It said the Kenyan press faces "hostile ministry (of information), a hostile regulator (Communications Authority of Kenya), a hostile Presidency and a hostile National Assembly that "seek to block the media through separate pieces of legislation". "Freedom of the press is guaranteed in the Kenyan constitution, but President Uhuru Kenyatta's Jubilee coalition is actively introducing bills that threaten to counteract those guarantees," Sue Valentine, CPJ Africa programmes coordinator, said yesterday.

"Given the legal challenge by media houses and civil society to laws passed in 2013, President Uhuru Kenyatta should publicly reaffirm his government's commitment to the role of an independent and robust press as a cornerstone of Kenya's democracy and a vital part of its socio-economic and political development," the report says. The release of the report comes ahead of President Barack Obama's visit to Kenya later this month.

The controversial security bill was particularly repressive for press freedom, it said.

"Instead of passing new legislation in keeping with the new constitution's guarantees for press freedom, the government has introduced a series of laws that undermine self-regulation and allow for harsh fines and even jail terms for journalists who commit perceived transgressions," the report reads.

CPJ's East Africa representative Tom Rhodes said at least 19 journalists were attacked by government agents since May this year. The report cites security operations, anti-terror operations, the ICC case, state spending, land deals and corruption as the most sensitive topics most likely to get journalists in trouble.