

Kenya journalists hold protest after death of colleagues

NAIROBI, Kenya - Kenyan journalists angered by the suspicious deaths of two colleagues within a fortnight turned out to protest in several cities including Nairobi, saying they faced an increasingly hostile environment.



Image by 123RF

Waving placards reading "JournalistsUnderSiege" and "Reporters deserve to return safely to their loved ones", around 100 people rallied in downtown Nairobi while smaller groups protested in western Kitale, Eldoret and southwestern Nakuru.

The demonstrations came a day after Kitale-based freelance photojournalist Dennis Otieno was shot dead by three men armed with Kalashnikovs in what colleagues said was a killing linked to his job. "Journalists will not relent until justice is done for the departed colleague," Simon Ngure, a journalist with Royal Media Services said in Kitale.

Last week a journalist with the Standard Media Group, John Masha, collapsed and died in what his family and colleagues said was due to poisoning.

"We are tired of being harassed and intimidated in the course of our work," said a protester in Nairobi. "Journalism is becoming too dangerous a profession."

The secretary-general of the Kenya Union of Journalists, Eric Oduor, has linked Masha's killing to earlier complaints by a local politician over a story by the reporter. "The suspicious death of Standard journalist John Masha is a culmination of the increasingly hostile environment journalists in Kenya are working in," said Victor Bwire, deputy head of Kenya's Media Council. The attacks against and the harassment of journalists call for urgent attention."

He said that a number of journalists had faced serious harassment from national and local government officials as well as from political activists, business people and organised gangs. "The most worrying thing that there has never been a conviction of a person involved in harassing journalists in Kenya, even in obvious cases."

Kenya, which has a history of political assassinations, is ranked 95th of 180 nations for press freedom by press watchdog Reporters Without Borders.

Source: [AFP](#).

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