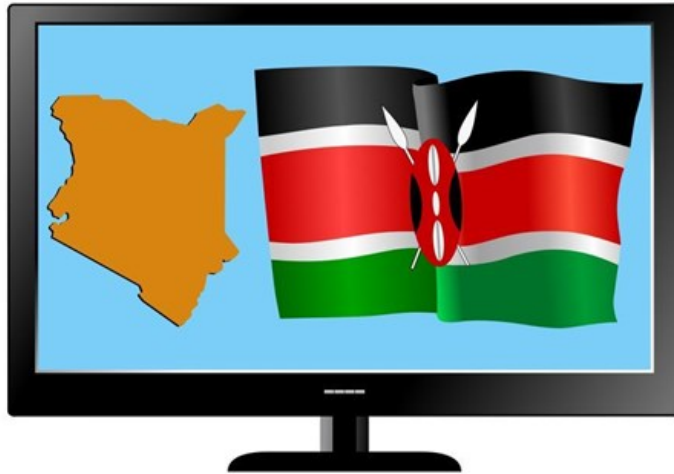


Kenya cuts TV transmissions over live coverage of opposition's Odinga

NAIROBI, Kenya - Authorities in Kenya should immediately allow four privately owned television stations to resume broadcasting, the Committee to Protect Journalists said yesterday.



©Alexandr Kovalenko via [123RF](#)

Officials from the broadcast regulator the Communications Authority, accompanied by police, [switched off transmitters](#) today while the stations were broadcasting live coverage of an opposition party event in the capital, Nairobi, according to news reports.

The order affects four national stations: Citizen TV and Inooro TV, owned by the Royal Media Services; Nation Media Group's NTV, and the Standard Group's KTN News, according to reports and three senior managers from the stations who spoke with CPJ. All stations were still unable to broadcast as of late Tuesday.

The order came after President Uhuru Kenyatta and other senior government officials [summoned media managers and editors](#) on January 26 and threatened to shut their stations down and revoke their licenses if they broadcast live an event in which Kenya's opposition leader, Raila Odinga, took an oath as the "people president" in protest of the disputed elections last year, according to a [statement](#) from the Kenya Editors Guild.

Kenya's attorney general said that the swearing in ceremony could be "[treasonous](#)" and may lead to criminal charges against Odinga, according to reports.

Joseph Odindo, editorial director of the Standard Group, told CPJ the government gave no indication of how long the order would remain in effect. After the shutdown, the stations continued streaming their content online, according to Odindo, Wachira Waruru, managing director of Royal Media Services, and Linus Kaikai, who heads the Nation Media broadcast division.

"Kenya should be a beacon on the continent for media freedom and the public's right to access information yet government censorship continues to erode Kenya's status as a leader on African press freedom," said

CPJ Africa program coordinator, Angela Quintal, from New York. "Kenyans deserve diverse media and these stations should be allowed back on air immediately."

A letter from the state media regulator, the Communications Authority of Kenya, sent to Lancia Digital Broadcast, which owns the signal distribution platform used by KTN News, cited the station's "defiance" of government "ban on live coverage of the events" related to the opposition "swearing in," as reason for the cut in transmission, according to [a report by privately owned newspaper *The Star*](#). The letter was sent an hour after KTN News was shut down, according to the report.

The Communications Authority's acting director general, Christopher Kemei, confirmed to CPJ the authenticity of the letter and that it had been sent after Lancia asked for an explanation for the shutdown. Kemei said that it had not been the state regulator's decision to shut down the stations and referred CPJ to the "government" for further comment.

The spokesperson for the Ministry of Interior, Mwenda Njoka, said that the stations' transmissions were cut due to "security concerns," which he said, the government was not obliged to explain. "There is no responsible government that would allow media to broadcast anything, more so live, which might incite people to violence. It would become an unmanageable situation," said Njoka, adding that freedom of the press was not absolute.

The government in November last year warned the media not to provide live coverage of events by Odinga National Super Alliance (NASA) political group, according to [media reports](#).

Odinga challenged the results of Kenya's presidential elections in August 2017 elections. His political coalition boycotted a repeat election, ordered by Kenya's courts, in October 2017, and instead said it would establish a "people's assembly" to carry out protests and boycotts while seeking [changes to the constitution](#) according to reports.

Kenya has experienced unrest and violence in previous elections. Violence after a disputed result in 2007 left about 1,400 people dead, according to [news reports](#).