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Killing the Messenger: attacks on press freedom in South Sudan

By Paul Jimbo

Despite the general feeling that all is well in South Sudan with regards to press freedom, the truth is, that the media in the world's youngest nation is under attack. A closer scrutiny of the media situation in the country paints a grim and gloomy picture of press freedom.

"It is a picture of a desperate sector struggling to overcome unending turbulence. It is a sector crying out for the right to access information and disseminate information," says Oliver Modi, Chairperson of the Union of Journalists of South Sudan (UJOSS). Modi observes that due to lack of media laws in South Sudan, journalists have had their cameras or equipment confiscated or damaged by plain-clothed security operatives, who either demand an official permit from the journalists or label them as spies without proof. David de Daa, the Executive Director



People's Voice editor, Paul Jimbo, & another journalist are escorted away at government function.

accused of hosting opposition leaders in programmes that were allegedly aimed at discrediting the government. In all three cases, according to security intelligence Station Manager, Sister Paula, confirmed that arrested, harassed and detained for more than three days only to be released without charge. In Unity state, another journalist was arrested, beaten and tortured in detention. In Western Equatoria, a female journalist was intimidated and reportedly sexually abused. In all three cases, according to security intelligence Station Manager, Sister Paula, a journalist was arrested, harassed and detained for two days. In April 2010, Bamfacio Taban Kiich, a colleague, Sister Ceccelia, was arrested and beaten before being picked up and detained for thirteen days in Upper Nile's Bentiu town. Bamfacio was also accused of spying for the Khartoum regime by allegedly pretending to be a journalist. n Lakes state a journalist was taken from his house and locked up after publishing a story that seemed to implicate state authorities in

In this Special Edition of *The People's Voice* we take stock of press freedom in South Sudan and reveal that the media in the world's youngest nation is under attack.

Over the last couple of years, which have been dominated by elections, the referendum on independence, and the recent establishment of South Sudan as the world's newest state, there have been numerous and continuing infringements of press freedom, including intimidation, arrest and imprisonment of journalists, as well as the closure of media organizations.

At this key point in the history of South Sudan, press freedom is an essential part of the process of democratic development and state-building, and therefore, *The People's Voice* team have joined forces with UNESCO, who have sponsored this special edition, in order to highlight the importance of the freedom of the press in South Sudan.

Articles in this edition include examples of attacks on the media, the phenomena of self-censorship by journalists, a report on World Press Freedom Day & the anniversary of the Windhoek Declaration, as well as an interview with the Government of South Sudan's Minister of Information. In addition, there is the first UJOSS Press Freedom Observatory (PFO) Report. The UJOSS PFO will regularly and continually record threats to press freedom and attacks on individual reporters and media outlets throughout South Sudan, and produce monthly reports on the situation.

[Click here](#) to see the People's Voice as published.

To see all the articles in the August-September Edition [click here](#)