



EASTERN AFRICA EDITORS FORUM

Resolutions 08062020

RESOLUTIONS ON JOURNALISM SAFETY FOLLOWING SERIES OF WEBINARS

Reaffirming that the Eastern Africa Editors Forum is committed to the promotion of professional and credible journalism in the region by engaging in several projects that contribute to professionalism and independence of the media and journalism to serve public interest.

Acknowledging the current political, social and economic challenges that face media and journalism in Eastern Africa. Which challenges have especially affected media performance, and survival or sustainability.

Concerned that the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the level of threats facing not only the media and its survival but journalists whose sources of livelihood are now under serious threat. Forcing some media houses in the region to close shop, and others to scale down operations through workforce reduction or downsizing (permanent or temporary termination of employment, mandatory furlough or layoffs, etc.), reduced salaries or remuneration, and reduced investment in some typologies of journalism, particularly investigative journalism.

Alarmed that the media is fighting to perform its obligation of providing information critical to the wellbeing of society, promoting democracy and associated tenets like accountability and transparency in the management of public affairs (and governments), holding leaders to account, checking excesses (corruption, poor or bad governance, human rights abuses), etc.



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We, the Eastern Africa Editors Forum, propose the following to sustain media work, ensure enhanced professionalism and performance, and safeguard the public interest:

1. **Promote Fundamental Rights:** East Africa Editors need EAEF now more than ever before to promote the fundamental rights of the freedom of expression/access to information, which facilitates other rights in our countries.
2. **Solidarity-** We need to unite and speak with a common voice on matters affecting journalism and journalists across the Eastern Africa region.
3. **Update Media Laws:** We have to find a way of starting a campaign that will help to update media laws in our countries to meet the international standards.
4. **Strengthen regional Networks:** We need to facilitate national editors organisations to bring together editors at regular intervals to discuss matters that impact on the profession in their countries.
5. **Familiarization with media laws:** We need sensitization training for editors and journalists across the bloc to acclimatize them with existing laws and how to work with them effectively. The training has to take cognizant of the fact that journalists' security is paramount.
6. **Strategies:** Different EA countries face varying challenges. There is need to pay a special attention to emerging challenges in the Eastern Africa region to create an enabling environment for freedom of expression, media freedom, access to information and the safety of journalists, by putting in place a mechanism that will help the journalists and other media workers to operate in professionally.
7. **Collaboration with the RECs:** We need to have a strategy on how we can break the barriers between us and heads of states in our bloc. East Africa



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Community (EAC) might be the right door to this destination. It is much easier for EAEF to access our heads of states to discuss matters affecting journalism, rather than attempting the course in isolation.

8. **Centres of Excellence:** We need to start the process of establishing country media centers of excellence, which will be used to mentor and train upcoming journalists to become professionals.
9. **Capacity training:** Enhance capacity building and training to ensure journalists are ready to handle threats posed by the pandemic and crises. This includes support online capacity building initiatives and strengthening of our journalism training institutions to conduct in-service training for journalists
10. **Investigative journalism grants.** It is clear that media houses do not currently have resources to invest in investigative journalism. Yet the levels of corruption, human rights abuse, and other malpractices continue. A fund to support investigative journalism in the region would be critical to the advancement of the role of the media and journalism to check governments, and hold leaders to account.
11. **Strengthen community media.** Community media is key in many parts of eastern Africa. It is clear, however, that in the current situation, many of these have ceased operations. Those still in operation will find it difficult to survive in the coming months. A fund to support their work is important.
12. **Advocacy.** It is important to ensure the media and its stakeholders engage to push governments and international agencies to promote media freedom, and the freedom of expression. It is clear that the levels of media freedom in some countries in eastern Africa is dropping not only as a result of government but also economic pressures. Advocacy is thus needed to ensure governments and political actors respect and promote media freedom as an important element in the consolidation of democracy and constitutionalism. The advocacy should also include lobbying governments to recognise media as



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offering essential services and thus worthy of support through, for example, tax holidays, financial and other support, etc.

13. **Research.** It is important for the media and journalists to regularly conduct research whose findings and recommendations would inform future sustainability strategies. This includes providing models to support financial sustainability that is necessary to support media operations.

14. **Coordination:** Support the national, regional and continental coordination mechanisms for safety of journalists that brings together duty and right bearers to promote journalism and protect journalists' safety at all levels.

Concrete Follow-up Actions:

- a) Eastern Africa Journalism Review special edition on protecting journalism to further assess the issues identified during this training and recommendations reinforced by current data.
- b) EAEF to compose proposals for implementation of the recommendations with support from partners.



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Signed:

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**THE OPEN SOCIETY INITIATIVE
FOR EASTERN AFRICA** 

About the Eastern Africa Editors Forum

The EAEF is the umbrella body bringing together editor organisations in Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya.

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