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Examining the right to Freedom of Expression and Media in South Sudan

By

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2014/HD03/2298X

A Dissertation submitted to the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Journalism and Communication, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of a Master of Arts Degree in Journalism and Communication of Makerere University

January 2017

Abstract

This study seeks to establish the extent to which the right to freedom of expression and media is observed in South Sudan. The study's central focus is to discuss in details the media freedom and the factors that are seen as limiting the functional roles of journalists in South Sudan. This study further seeks to analyze the effects of the existing constitutional legislations and assess whether they enhance or hinder freedom of expression and media in South Sudan. This study also examines how the new media laws introduced in September 2014 will facilitate the respect for freedom of expression and media in South Sudan.

This study takes a qualitative and quantitative approach and employs survey questionnaires, key informant interviews and document analysis as data collection methods to probe 54 respondents and 16 key informant interviewees with specific focus on journalists, editors, civil society and human rights organizations.

The findings of this study reveal that the environment in South Sudan is hostile to the media; journalists work under constant self-censorship amid continued threats, intimidation, arbitrary arrest and sometimes death. For instance, the findings reveal that at least seven journalists were killed in 2015 alone and the circumstances surrounding their killing remain unclear since nobody has ever been held to account. The main finding of this study points to fact that the media in South Sudan operates in a legal void and the government is seen as the only threat to freedom of expression and media. The findings further show that there is willingness on the part of the media industry to establish an independent media regulator in South Sudan but there is lack of willingness from the part of government who wants to politicize such body.

This study strongly recommends that laws need to be harmonized to create a conducive atmosphere for freedom of expression and media in South Sudan. In terms of policy, this study recommends that there is need for implementation of the Broadcasting Cooperation Act (2013).

Key words: *Freedom of expression, media, South Sudan*