

Three journalists arrested in the space of a week

Reporters Without Borders condemns the arrests of three journalists in the space of a week in Kigali. Two were released yesterday morning [16 November 2011] but the third one is still detained.

"This series of arrests has again highlighted the extreme vulnerability of journalists in Rwanda," Reporters Without Borders said. "We call on the authorities to publicly explain why these journalists have been held, and to release the third one immediately. We also urge the government to move forward with its proposed reform of the press law, which hopefully will protect journalists from arbitrary arrest and detention.

"Ironically, these three arrests took place just as the Third Annual National Dialogue on Media was about to begin in Kigali. Organised by the Media High Council, this two-day conference is supposed to promote an environment that favours press freedom and allows the media to operate in a free, independent and professional manner."

The latest journalist to be arrested was Joseph Bideri, the editor of the *New Times*, a privately-owned daily that supports the ruling party. He was arrested by the Kigali police on 14 November and was freed yesterday morning.

A recent series of articles in the newspaper described a case of embezzlement in the construction of the Rukarara hydro-electric dam in the west of the country. A report about Bideri's arrest was posted on the *New Times* website yesterday morning and was then quickly removed.

Jean Gualbert Burasa, the editor of the independent bimonthly *Rushyashya*, was arrested by the Kigali police on 11 November. According to the police, he was arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol. But his arrest may have been prompted by the publication of an article about the desecration of former social affairs minister Christine Nyatanyi's grave. The journalist was freed on 15 November.

The third journalist is René Anthère Rwanyange, who has also been held since last week. The police say he was arrested for the theft of a laptop computer but he has not yet been charged.

Source: allAfrica.com