

# Uganda president publicly criticises the press

NEW YORK: The Committee to Protect Journalists condemns President Yoweri Museveni for publically criticising local and foreign media outlets. Museveni expressed anger over the outlets' coverage of protests by the opposition over rising fuel prices. In a letter published Tuesday, 17 May 2011, in the state-owned daily *New Vision*, Museveni accused Al-Jazeera, the BBC, the Kenyan broadcaster NTV, and the local independent *Daily Monitor* of being supporters of recent opposition protests and "enemies of Uganda's recovery."



Last week, Museveni also accused journalists of "biased and malicious" reporting of the opposition protests during a press conference, local journalists told CPJ. The inspector general of police, Maj. Gen. Kale Kayihura, chimed similar accusations in another press conference on Sunday, even referring to NTV as "a propaganda mouth-piece of certain forces in this country."

Accusing the protestors and their supporters of purposely destroying the nation's economy, Museveni told the press that a constitutional amendment will be made to prohibit bail for charges of economic sabotage, according to local reports.

"These public accusations against the press and plans to amend the constitution are designed for one purpose only: to silence the press from covering the opposition," said CPJ East Africa consultant Tom Rhodes. "Such statements will further encourage the president's supporters to continue intimidating and attacking journalists carrying out their professional duties. These statements must be retracted immediately."

Since the opposition led protests against rising fuel prices began on April 11, police and security officials have beaten at least 20 local and foreign journalists for covering the protests, according to CPJ. Violence against the press was particularly brutal on May 12, during the swearing-in ceremony of Museveni and a protest march by the Forum for Democratic Change opposition leader, Kizza Besigye where authorities beat at least 10 journalists and confiscated equipment, local journalists told CPJ.

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