Threats to media after Uganda parliamentary brawl

Amnesty International had cautioned the Ugandan authorities over threats to media outlets a day after a brawl between MPs in Uganda's parliament was broadcast live by media outlets in the country.



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They must stop threatening to close media outlets simply for doing their job, said Amnesty International, yesterday, after the country's media regulator vowed to close down media houses for broadcasting live.

"It is unacceptable that Uganda's media regulator is threatening to close down media houses simply for doing their job and broadcasting live news events. Ugandans have a right to know what their elected representatives are doing, a right the authorities must facilitate rather than hinder," said Michelle Kagari, Amnesty International's deputy regional director for East Africa, the Horn and the Great Lakes.

> ***Freedom of the press must not be sacrificed at the altar of politics***.
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> "These threats, harassment and intimidation are an attempt to gag the media, and have no place in any society that respects human rights. The media must be left alone to independently inform and educate the public, including on the ongoing debates about the proposed constitutional amendment."

In a statement, which has been widely shared on social media, the Uganda Communications Commission threatened to revoke or suspend the licenses of media houses that carry live broadcasts, accusing them of promoting a culture of violence.

“The Ugandan authorities must live up to their obligations and commitments to uphold freedom of expression, by facilitating debate among Ugandans on the proposed constitutional amendment. Freedom of the press must not be sacrificed at the altar of politics,” said Michelle Kagari.

“They must also stop arbitrary arrests of opposition politicians and supporters, journalists, and human rights defenders.”

Ruling party MPs want to remove the age cap of 75 so that President Yoweri Museveni, who has ruled the East African country for 31 years, can stand for re-election in 2021.

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