



STATE OF THE MEDIA IN ZAMBIA

Quarter 4
October-December 2019

With Support from

**FRIEDRICH
EBERT
STIFTUNG**



**BBC
MEDIA ACTION**
TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH MEDIA
AROUND THE WORLD

Published 2020 by MISA Zambia

Contact

The National Director

MISA Zambia

Plot 3814 Martin Mwamba Road, Olympia Park

P O Box 32295

Lusaka, Zambia

Tel: +260 211 294285/6

Email: info@misazambia.org.uk

Website: www.zambia.misa.org

Researched and compiled by:

Brenda Bukowa

Lecturer, Researcher and Media Consultant

Department of Media and Communication Studies

University of Zambia

Edited by:

Thomas Zulu

Programmes Officer – MISA Zambia

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abbreviations and Acronyms	3
1.0 Introduction	4
2.0 Methodology	4
3.0 Executive Summary of Media Events During The Second Quarter	4
4.0 Findings – Overview	5
4.1 Policy and Statutory Framework	5
4.1.1. Social Media Regulation	7
4.1.2. Access to Information (ATI) Bill	8
4.1.3. Media Regulation	10
4.2. Economical and Technological Environment	14
4.2.1 Digital Migration	14
4.3. Legal and Political Environment	17
4.3.1 Media Licensing	20
4.3.2. Censorship	23
4.3.3 Harassment/Attacks	24
4.3.4. Lawsuits	30
5.0. Freedom of expression – mainstream media/cyber space	32
6.0. Other developments	34
7.0. Conclusion	34
8.0. Recommendations	35
9.0 Appendix – 2019 MISA Alerts Trends	36

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ATI	Access to Information
DN	Daily Nation newspaper
IBA	Independent Broadcasting Authority
IDC	Industrial Development Corporation
PF	Patriotic Front
ToZ	Times of Zambia newspaper
UPND	United Party for National Development
ZDM	Zambia Daily Mail newspaper
ZICTA	Zambia Information, Communication and Technology Authority
ZNBC	Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation

1.0 Introduction

The State of the Media in Zambia is a quarterly report based on the assessment of events touching on the environment under which the media operated during the period under review. The report summarises the conditions under which the media houses and media practitioners operated, but more specifically in respect of the economic, technological, legal and political environments as well as any other pertinent major issues that affect the media industry in Zambia.

In addition, the report reflects the main topical national issues that arose during the period and how the media reported these in its role of ensuring that the public was fully informed.

This quarterly report is prepared by MISA Zambia. It helps to cumulatively document major developments in the media industry in Zambia and to flag off any negative trends requiring remedial measures by MISA Zambia and other major stakeholders.

2.0 Methodology

The quarterly report of the State of the Media in Zambia is essentially based on careful review and analysis of materials that were available during the said quarter containing information that had an impact and influenced the operations of the media in Zambia. The materials reviewed included news reports in the media related to the media fraternity, reports, press statements, and MISA Zambia media alerts published during the period under review. Further, an analysis of the media houses with presence online was conducted, with particular attention to their online presence and level of activity.

Broadcast media, including radio and television news reports and other programmes were monitored.

Many other media houses were engaged for more information on their operations in relation to their political and economic environments.

3.0 Executive Summary of Media Events During the Second Quarter

The Media in Zambia in the fourth quarter of 2019 was dominated by a number of issues; restructuring of Times PrintPak Limited, the debate on social media regulation, continued delay

in enacting the Access to Information Bill, the push for statutory media regulation, the debate on the expansion of the spread of ZNBC to all provincial centres in lieu of the digital migration process and the appointment and termination of contracts for the Board of Directors at ZNBC, IBA and the Times of Zambia (TOZ).

In the period under review, Press Freedom and freedom of expression were under threat with political party cadres attacking radio stations by storming into studios. There were also threats by government officials and other politically connected individuals on journalists.

It should be noted that the fourth quarter of the year 2019 also scored some victories.

Arguably one of the biggest news received during the period under review were calls by the Minister of Information and Broadcasting Services to support the media in its mandate of information dissemination and the gesture by the Speaker of the National Assembly to support Daily Nation newspaper in a case where UPND MPs reported the newspaper to the speaker after a story depicting the MPs not to care about climate change was published.

4.0 Findings – Overview

The media in the period under review was dominated by debates around the welfare of journalists; the attacks, harassment and how to improve their conditions of service.

Top on the agenda for the fourth quarter were debates on the restructuring of Times PrintPak Limited, the debate on social media regulation, the debate on the expansion of the spread of ZNBC to all provincial centres in lieu of the digital migration process and the appointment and termination of contracts for the Board of Directors at ZNBC, IBA and the Times of Zambia (TOZ).

Also making news in the period under review were calls for regulation of social media and issues surrounding the Access to Information (ATI) Bill.

4.1 Policy and Statutory Framework

One of the biggest occurrence in the period under review was the restructuring of Times Printpak Limited by dissolving the Board of Directors and making changes at management level.

On 28th December 2019, the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) issued a press statement with a heading, "IDC Restructures Times Printpak." In the statement, it was noted that IDC had directed the Zambia Daily Mail Limited Board of Directors to oversee the affairs of both companies (Times of Zambia and Zambia Daily Mail) and appointed the Managing Director at the Zambia Daily Mail Limited, Mr. Nebat Mbewe, to oversee the day to day operations of Times Printpak Limited, in an acting capacity, in addition to his responsibilities at Zambia Daily Mail.

The statement further stated that other functions like Finance, Legal, Human Resource, Production and Marketing in both companies will be overseen by a single management team.

It was further noted that the Editorial team of Times Printpak Zambia Limited will continue to oversee the publication of the Times of Zambia so as to maintain the editorial independence of both the Times of Zambia and the Zambia Daily Mail Newspapers.

In terms of reasons advanced for the restructuring, it was interesting to note that the deteriorating financial situation at Times Printpak Zambia Limited, rendered the publisher of Times of Zambia Newspaper, unable to meet its key obligations as they fell due. Top on the reasons advanced, were that Times PrintPak had deteriorated to an extent of having outstanding statutory liabilities and letting its workers go unpaid for an extended period of time, in some cases up to 11 months in arrears.

It was also stated that during the first nine (9) months of 2019 Times Printpak recorded an operating loss of K41.7m and had a Return On Assets (ROA) in the negatives of -49%.

As regards the process of restructuring, it was noted that it would be done in phases with the medium-term objective of creating a consolidated media and newspaper publishing company under the IDC Group. It was stated that the first phase of restructuring would involve three strategic processes: the first being the recapitalisation of the Times PrintPak business to ensure it has the resources to undertake emergency reforms, the second being the making of changes at board and management level as well as liquidating all unpaid salary arrears owed to the workers.

It must be stated that the process of recapitalisation of the Times PrintPak Limited, is a welcome move and must be supported. However, emphasis and caution should be made and exercised on the process of termination of employment contracts for staff and the Board. The process of termination must be followed in a systematic manner to pave way for continuity and a smooth handover. In the case of the management of Times of Zambia PrintPak, because their employment contract termination were immediate, so many administrative processes were left hanging which brought in a number of challenges.

4.1.1 Social Media Regulation

The regulation of social media is a subject of debate appearing in all the quarters under review in 2019. The media in the period under review was dominated by debates around the regulation of digital media platforms.

For example, on 20th October, 2019 the Lusaka Times Online Newspaper carried a heading “Lusambo Wants ZICTA To Arrest People Scandalizing President Lungu On Social Media” It was reported by the paper that; Lusaka Province Minister, Mr. Bowman Lusambo had urged the Zambia Information and Communications Technology Authority (ZICTA) and the Zambia Police to bring to book people using social media to scandalize President Edgar Lungu and other government officials.

The paper reported that Mr. Lusambo had wondered why the institutions had taken long to arrest people abusing social media when they had the capacity to do so.

The Minister was also quoted saying that he had invited ZICTA and the Lusaka Province Police Commissioner to discuss how they can curb social media abuse which he termed as rampant.

It should be stated here that efforts aimed at regulating social media have been made, but so far there have been no tangible results. It must also be noted that the best measure at having sanity online is to have a robust sensitisation plan aimed at educating people on the responsible use of social media.

4.1.2 Access To Information

The ATI has been a subject of debate since the year 2002. Throughout the year 2019, declarations were made as regards the enactment of the ATI bill.

Just to recap, in the first quarter of 2019, the Zambia Daily Mail publication carried a heading, “Access To Information Bill Approved.” It was reported that cabinet had approved the Access to Information Bill. This was announced through a tweet from Minister of Information and Broadcasting Services, Hon. Dora Siliya. In the tweet, Ms. Siliya said, the bill was meant to promote proactive and organised dissemination of information to the public.

She tweeted:

I am happy to announce that finally Cabinet has approved the Access to Information (ATI) Bill aimed at proactive and organised dissemination of information. This is a new beginning!

In the fourth quarter of 2019, it is surprising that the ATI Bill has not been presented to Parliament for enactment after so much hype as witnessed in the first quarter of 2019. As a result, various stakeholders have expressed worry at the non-disclosure of the contents of the piece of legislation.

As stated already, the debate on enactment of the ATI bill has been ongoing since the year 2002. Before the Patriotic Front (PF) government came into power, a promise was made to enact the Access to Information (ATI) Bill. For more than seven years, the debate on the enactment of the bill has raged on. In November 2011, shortly after assuming power, the then Minister of Information and Broadcasting Services, Mr. Given Lubinda mentioned that government was committed to enacting the bill into law. In February 2012, the then Permanent Secretary in the same Ministry, Mr. Amos Malupenga said the bill would be presented to Parliament. In July 2013, the then Minister of Information, Mr. Kennedy Sakeni, also assured the nation that the bill would be presented to parliament. To date, the bill has only gone up to the Cabinet approval stage.

Despite scoring on the approval of the bill by Cabinet, government has been taken to task on the publication of the contents of the bill. Stakeholders have argued that the contents of the bill should be publicised so that the public is kept in the know.

Meanwhile, MISA Zambia in the period under review was quoted by The New Vision Newspaper publication under the heading: “do not be troubled over Access To Information (ATI) Bill, MISA urges citizens.”

The MISA Zambia National Director Mr. Austin Kayanda assured citizens saying: “citizens [should] not to be troubled because the Access to information Bill, which is yet to be presented to Parliament for enactment, has not been doctored and will be tabled in the House in its original draft form.”

The MISA National Director Mr. Kayanda argued that the media body was pleased with the contents of the Bill because nothing had been tempered with other than updating what was originally drafted. He was quoted saying:

I cannot disclose its contents at this stage, but from what I was given and deliberated upon, as MISA we are happy with the bill because it has not been doctored. I can assure the nation that if what I saw is the same content that is going to be presented in parliament then we are happy with it.

As regards the continued delay in the enactment of the Bill, the MISA National Director noted that there is urgent need to ensure that the bill is enacted into law as its benefits are for the betterment of all Zambians - journalists and ordinary citizens alike. “Just like other bills of national importance have been enacted at supersonic speed, we need the same political will towards the Access to Information Bill,” he said. He made an appeal to government through the ministries of Justice and Information and Broadcasting to ensure the long awaited Access to Information Bill is enacted into law.

It has been argued that stakeholders are casting doubts on the authenticity of the content of the draft bill owing to the fact that there has been a lot of back and forth pronouncements on the bill. For example, in the first quarter of 2019, the Lusaka Times online publication carried a headline, “Access To Information Bill will not be presented in the next sitting of Parliament” and attributed the statement to Information and Broadcasting Permanent Secretary, Mr. Chanda Kasolo, saying that the Access to Information Bill will not be presented in the next sitting of Parliament which opens on Tuesday 14th February, 2019.

His justification for the move was that government wanted to ensure that caution is taken especially on security matters before the bill is enacted into law. Mr. Kasolo added that the bill will adequately be prepared so that there are no lacunas. The PS's statement came before the Bill was presented to Cabinet and stakeholders cast doubt on the process owing to the flip-flopping stance taken by government.

The year 2020, closed minus having the enactment of the bill into law even though on 15th April 2019, The Times of Zambia publication carried a headline, "Government to table ATI Bill soon." It was reported that government had assured the public that the long awaited Access to Information (ATI) Bill was to be tabled in the next sitting of parliament which was scheduled to resume in June, 2020.

The sentiments covered in the newspaper were attributed to Information and Broadcasting Services Minister Dora Siliya who said the ATI bill, which had been approved by cabinet, was currently undergoing refinement before presentation to parliament.

The Minister further stated that there were misconceptions about the ATI Bill as some sections of society thought the proposed law was meant for journalists when in reality it would cater for the general public.

Meanwhile, rhetoric from the government side has continued with top government officials passing pronouncements for the enactment of the bill into law with no enactment in sight.

4.1.3. Media Regulation

The media in the period under review was dominated by debates around the statutory self-media regulation. Earlier in the year 2019, calls to regulate the media rung strong with government calling upon the media to consider a law to allow for the fraternity to regulate itself for professional recognition. The calls came at a time when the media in Zambia was said to have a lot of media practitioners without a media background. These views were shared by the then Information Permanent Secretary Mr. Chanda Kasolo on 18th March who was quoted in the Zambia Daily Mail newspaper saying, "quacks undermining journalism." The Permanent Secretary (PS) further stated that, "we have professions like accountants and lawyers whom we respect, so why should the case be different for the journalists? We need to bring sanity to the profession."

In the period under review however, like earlier in the year, the media in the period under review was dominated by debates around the statutory self-media regulation with the Lusaka Times publication on the 4th November, 2019 carrying a headline: “Dora pushes media regulation, as Nkombo questions airing of ZNBC programmes on Prime TV”.

It was reported that the Minister of Information and Broadcasting Services, Hon. Dora Siliya said government had resolved to formulate a statutory self-regulatory framework for journalists, as failure by the media practitioners to do so was hampering progress on the enactment of the Access to Information Bill.

The paper reported that the Information and Broadcasting Minister noted that the media had failed to come up with its own regulatory framework despite being given the chance to do so.

She was quoted saying:

“The ministry requested the media practitioners, journalists in particular to formulate a statutory self-regulatory framework... as a prerequisite to the enactment of the Access to Information Bill. Mr. Chairman, I regret to report that it has been eight months since the media practitioners, the journalists in particular reaffirmed their commitment to develop a self-regulatory framework but with no tangible progress made so far. Consequently, my ministry has resolved to formulate a self-regulatory framework for media practitioners because their lack of progress is holding back a very important national bill such as the Access to Information Bill (ATI). Mr. Chairman, as a ministry, we have met our corresponding targets to facilitate enactment of the bill. We have developed a government communication policy and we have developed a government communication strategy.”

It is interesting to note that the Minister’s sentiments that the enactment of the Access to Information bill is tied to the success or failure of the statutory self-regulatory framework for the media. Making this more interesting, is the fact that the ATI bill is not a preserve of the journalists alone but a law that will have influence and improve the way people access and/or demand for information. It must be noted therefore that to achieve better results the ATI and the media regulation pieces of legislation must stand clear of each other as regards enactment.

In a related development and as follow-up to the Minister's threat of coming up with government's own version of media regulation, on 12th December, 2019 the Times of Zambia and The Mast publication carried a headline "don't make changes to the ZAMEC draft bill – MLC."

It was reported in the two papers that the Media Liaison Committee (MLC) had appealed to government not to make changes to the Zambia Media Council (ZAMEC) draft Bill on media self-regulation because the document reflected the will of journalists.

The papers further reported that MLC Chairperson Mr. Enock Ngoma said the MLC did not want the draft to be changed by any state organ saying the document should only be improved on and only if there is absolute need for improvements to be made by Government.

The paper further reported that, Mr. Ngoma said the document was trying to cure quack journalism, fake news, and promote professional journalists that adhere to the code of ethics.

He said when ZAMEC comes into operation it would not only regulate the media it would also promote freedom of the media.

Mr. Ngoma was further quoted saying that MLC did not want journalists to be taken to court when they erred instead they should be put back on track by the media regulator.

In a twist, The Information Minister Ms. Dora Siliya said journalism was important in any society and Government wanted the media to be recognised and respected for what it was.

She said Zambian journalists should be professional enough to be trusted by international media that they were capable of doing work at an international standard but in the absence of the professional body, they could not verify the competences of Zambian journalists which was not good for the development of the journalism fraternity in the country.

The papers reported that the Minister said Government was concerned because it believed that the role of journalists was important.

She said there was need for the journalism profession to distinguish itself through ethical conduct and professionalism.

It was interesting to note the quick U-Turn by the Information Minister after threatening and almost starting a completely fresh process of drafting another media regulation framework at the insinuation that the group of journalists tasked with the role had abandoned the process when in fact not.

However, in re-affirming their commitment towards the operationalisation of ZAMEC the forerunners of the process of self-statutory regulation on 29th November, 2019, the Technical Working Group issued a communique saying:

Following the mandate given to the Technical Working Group on media self-regulation at the first Insaka held on May 10, 2019 at Golden Peacock Hotel in Lusaka, and as part of its continued consultations over a statutory self-regulatory mechanism to provide impartial, expeditious and cost-effective arbitration to settle complaints against the media and other professional matters, the Committee with the support of various stakeholders developed a Draft Bill on media self-regulation which was validated and approved by members on November 29, 2019 at Lusaka's Golden Peacock hotel.

It was reported that the Technical Working Group is pleased to announce that about 203 media stakeholders drawn from government, civil society representatives and media practitioners from public, online, private and community media, have successfully held a second Insaka where the ZAMEC draft Bill was adopted.

The adopted ZAMEC draft Bill would soon be submitted to Information and Broadcasting Services Minister for purposes of facilitating the Bill's enactment by Parliament.

With this adoption, we assure members of the public that unprofessionalism in the media which has been at the centre of public concern will be addressed once this Bill is enacted into law as it creates an opportunity for public redress, rights to reply and correction of erring journalists and/or media houses.

This Bill is also part of our quest to get rid of individuals masquerading as journalists within the profession. Time is up for the quack journalists and masquerades who have dented our much cherished profession with impunity.

As media practitioners we shall remain resolute towards promoting professionalism, media freedom and are determined to regain the lost public confidence. We stand ready to work closely with Ministry of information and Broadcasting Services in the process of enacting this Bill into law.

We urge members of public to take keen interest in this process and the bill that media has just adopted and ensure that this Bill is enacted into law as soon as possible and in the manner that the media have today unanimously adopted.

The media is desirous to work with the government and the members of the public to ensure that freedom of expression, freedom of the media is protected and that there is informed free flow of information in Zambia.

4.2 Economical and Technological Environment

The state of the media in the fourth quarter was dominated by reports on the advancement of technologies in the media industry. Top on the agenda for the quarter were debates on the digital migration and the ICT development recorded in the quarter.

4.2.1 Digital Migration

In the first quarter of 2019 it was reported that the monetisation of digital technologies was a subject of great interest and government was investing heavily in realising that it taps into the potential.

Just a brief on digital migration, it can be stated that analogue terrestrial television has been in existence since the 1940's. The advancement in technology has rendered analogue television obsolete due to its inefficient use of the frequency spectrum which is a limited resource. Whereas Analogue Terrestrial Television uses one frequency to carry one programme channel, Digital Terrestrial Television can use one frequency to carry multiple programme channels thereby allowing for transmission of many television programmes using one frequency channel and at a lower cost.

With digital migration comes a need to extend the services of the national broadcaster to all provincial centres. In this regard, on 26th November, 2019, the Zambia Daily Mail publication carried a headline “Kasolo wants North-West switched on.”

It was reported that the then Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services Permanent Secretary Mr. Chanda Kasolo stated that Government will spend about US\$8 million to set up a provincial broadcasting studio in North-Western Province under the digital migration programme.

The paper further reported that Mr. Kasolo said Government is saddened that the site where the provincial broadcasting studio was being constructed in the province had been vandalized after the contractor abandoned the project due to some technicalities. He said in the meantime Government has identified a building where the provincial broadcasting studio will be established to ensure that the region is not left behind.

The paper further quoted the then Permanent Secretary saying: “We are in a hurry to make sure this studio is ready and our target is that by March 31 next year, all the eight provincial studios will be switched on,”

He said the establishment of the provincial television studios will help create employment for many Zambians such as actors, actresses, producers, writers and editors among others, through producing local content.

Mr. Kasolo said the province has a lot of wonderful stories to tell such as being the source of the Zambezi River, historical sites as well as the cultural heritage.

Meanwhile on 3rd November 2019 in line with the developments in the ICT field, the Ministry of Transport and Communication was quoted by the Lusaka Times online newspaper under the heading: “Transformation Of The ICTs Sector Will Help Meet Zambia’s Development Aspirations-Communications Minister”.

It was reported that the Minister of Transport and Communications Mutotwe Kafwaya had called for an enhanced approach towards exploring new innovations aimed at accelerating digital transformation in the country.

The paper reported that Mr. Kafwaya said there was need for the country to strengthen the invention and use of ICTs in the transformational agenda of technological advancements.

It was further reported that the Minister added that the transformation of the ICT sector would help meet the country's development aspirations to be a middle income country by 2030.

It was reported that government recognized the role the ICT sector plays in the transformation of the country's economic sector.

The Minister said government remains resolved to improving the communication sector through initiating programmes such as the ongoing policy review in the postal sector, the construction of communication towers and the connecting of districts to high fibre networks.

It must be noted that as the country continues to advocate for accelerated digital transformation, it is important that we pay close attention to managing the risks associated with increased uptake and usage of ICTs. Cyber related risks and crimes represent a grave, immediate and growing threat to the benefits associated with digital transformation. The magnitude and pace of change in digital innovations mean that those that are slow or are poor in the adoptions of current innovations risk adverse effects on their industries, governments and nations. The failure to adopt to new innovations render most organisations to be uncompetitive at both local and global level. At individual level digital innovations have disrupted the way people live, work and play. Buyer behaviour has drastically changed, and companies have to constantly find new ways of not only selling goods and products but new ways of engaging and communicating to customers and general public. As a country we can't not remain behind and let the world pass us by. We need to move with the times.

The need to move with the digital times is of great essence to the development of the nation. As reported in the 1st quarter by the Zambia Daily Mail newspaper on 19th March 2019, attributed to the then Minister of Transport and Communication, Dr. Brian Mushimba, "The future of Zambia is a smart Zambia; the future of Zambia is the ability to deliver services on the back of the ICT. The future of Zambia is increasing productivity on the back of ICTs."

4.3 Legal and Political Environment

The state of the media in the fourth quarter of 2019 was dominated by the happenings as regards the appointment and expulsion of the Board Chairperson for the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) and the appointment of Chibamba Kanyama as the Board Chairperson for Money FM Radio.

To begin with, it was reported by the Zambia Daily Mail on 18th of December, 2019 under the headline, “ZNBC Board Chairperson Dropped.”

The paper reported that:

Government has with immediate effect nullified the appointment of Mulenga Kapwepwe as Chairperson of the Board of Directors for Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC). In a statement issued yesterday by Minister of Information and Broadcasting Services, Dora Siliya, who is also Chief Government Spokesperson, the nullification is pursuant to Article 270 of the Constitution of Zambia, as amended in Act number 2 of 2016.

The paper quoted Ms. Siliya saying that, “Government has deemed it to be in the public interest to nullify the appointment of Ms. Kapwepwe, who was, until her removal from the Board, Chairperson of the ZNBC Board. The government has thanked Ms. Kapwepwe for her service as the Board Chairperson and wished her God’s blessings in her future endeavors,” Ms. Siliya said.

The following day on 19th December, 2019, The News Diggers Newspaper publication carried a headline “Parley Approves Appointment of Auditor General” where it was reported that in addition to the approval of the Auditor General, Parliament had also ratified the appointment of the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) Board members.

It was reported that those to serve on the ZNBC Board were Simon Bota, Sarah Kaulule, Patricia Mwase and Mary Kazilimani.

A close look at the names ratified suggests that the Board Members whose names were approved are all female. It was proposed that a male should have been appointed on the position of Board Chairperson. The sentiments were also echoed by a number of Members of Parliament (MP), who also urged government to consider employing a man for the remaining position on the ZNBC

board. It was reported in the newspaper that; “The committee urges the appointing authority to consider making an appointment that will represent all regions of the country to promote regional diversity,’ she said.

In addition to calling for a gender balance as regards the appointment of the ZNBC Board members it was also reported that the Monze Central MP Jack Mwiimbu (UPND) called on the government to allow it [the Board] to be more accommodating and accord all stakeholders regardless of the political inclination the necessary media coverage.

Meanwhile, the Minister of Information and Broadcasting Services, Ms. Dora Siliya was reported in the same newspaper saying “ZNBC has remained the most popular television station in the country with over 640,000 households accessing it”.

It must be noted that in as much as ZNBC may seem to be a popular broadcast channel of choice, it is important that efforts aimed at maintaining its viability are encouraged in order to keep it afloat in the wake of private media channels.

Talking about the viability of a media body, Money FM may seem to have followed the viability agenda to the latter with the appointment of Mr. Chibamba Kanyama a prolific Economist and Consultant to the Board as Chairperson.

On 20th December, 2019, Mwebantu Online publication reported that Money FM had appointed Mr. Chibamba Kanyama as Board Chairman to further the growth of the Radio Station.

According the Mwebantu online publication, the radio station had made some changes at Board level to spur the growth and development of the radio station.

In similar circumstances, on 11th December, 2019 the Zambia Daily Mail publication carried a headline “Board Members Urged To Know IBA Rules”

It was reported by the paper that “Government had urged the Independent Broadcasting Authority’s (IBA) new Board members to acquaint themselves with the IBA rules so that they operate in a fair and honest manner.

The members appointed were Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services Permanent Secretary Chanda Kasolo now replaced by Amos Malupenga, Beatrice Mwansa, Claire Limbwamba and Margret Siwale. Others are Siphon Phiri, Chalimba Phiri and Enita Hamatumbika.

The paper quoted Ms. Siliya saying there is need to educate the public on IBA's operations and the procedure to be followed when engaging the authority. She said Government is committed to promoting business in the media industry, while providing regulation that offers a conducive environment for various players.

Meanwhile, the paper further reported that Ms. Siliya has urged the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) Board, Management and workers to come up with sustainable strategies to keep the institution financially afloat.

The paper reported that:

“Government is concerned about the situation at Zambia National Broadcasting Services where workers have not yet received their November salaries. “ZNBC needs to think outside the box to avoid the same problems re-occurring each time they have to pay their workers,” she said.

In similar circumstances, the quarter under review recorded an instance of Times of Zambia employees being suspended from duty. On the 10th October, 2019, The Mast Newspaper Publication carried a heading ‘Lift Suspensions Of Times Journalist, ZIIMA demands’.

It was reported by the newspaper that, The Zambia Institute of Independent Media Alliance (ZIIMA) had demanded the lifting of suspension of the five Times of Zambia journalists namely; Samuel Lukanda, Joseph Banda, Moses Chimfwembe, Allan Makoba and Jacob Sikamba, all from the newspaper's Ndola Office.

In a statement published by the Times of Zambia, ZIIMA noted that:

“Times of Zambia workers have gone up to 10 months without salaries, a situation that is aggravating poverty among the workers at the government-owned Newspaper. ZIIMA is saddened that the Industrial Development Cooperation (IDC), the umbrella of all parastatals, has not yet given money to the Times of Zambia for the Newspaper to settle its

arrears, in spite of empty assurances. “We note that every professional journalist’s mandate is to serve the public. But how do starving journalists serve the public when they cannot manage to put food on the table as a result of not being paid?”

Therefore, we demand for the unconditional lifting of the suspension of the five affected workers. We further urge employers to think beyond the faces they see every day working, breaking their backs just so that they can disseminate information of which they are denied their rights to receive money they work for. It is sad that the same little salaries that journalists receive are delayed,”

To normalise the situation the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) has embarked on a company restructuring exercise of Times Printpak the publishers of the Times of Zambia and Sunday Times newspapers. So far the Board and Management of the Zambia Daily Mail publication has been tasked with overseeing the running of Times Printpak Limited.

4.3.1 Media Licensing

In a bid to understand the role of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), it can be stated that the IBA was established through an Act of Parliament No. 17 of 2002, which was amended through the IBA (Amendment) Act No. 26 of 2010. The IBA became operational in July 2013. According to the website, the IBA is responsible for regulating the broadcasting industry in Zambia, by ensuring the promotion of a pluralistic and diverse broadcasting industry. The information on its website further states that the functions of the IBA includes among others, to grant, renew, suspend and cancel radio and television broadcast licences.

In line with granting and termination of operating licenses, on the 17th November, 2019, the Mast Newspaper publication carried a headline “IBA suspends Lutanda Radio Over Tribal Sentiments Against HH, UPND.”

The paper reported that the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) had appealed to members of the public and guests of stations to be mindful of their speech on air, as not doing so may have serious consequences for broadcast stations. This was necessitated following IBA’s move to suspend the broadcasting licence for Lutanda Radio of Northern Province for 30 days.

According to the Mast Newspaper, the

IBA Director General, Ms. Josephine Mapoma emphasised that the action against the radio stations followed the unprofessional conduct in which Lutanda Radio conducted itself which posed a risk to national peace and security.

Ms. Mapoma said the decision to suspend the licence was made following an emergency board meeting held at the IBA offices on Friday.

The Mast further reported that:

“Prior to this, the radio station was given an opportunity to be heard during a hearing held on 15th November 2019, in which it admitted its unprofessional conduct. On 12th November 2019, the Authority followed a breaking story that alleged that Lutanda radio in Kasama was promoting tribalism on air. This prompted the Authority to investigate the matter further and obtained soundbites of the programme,” she said.

“After conducting its investigations and analysing the recordings, the authority found a number of breaches: airing a programme deemed to promote tribalism and hate speech. The guests together with the presenter of the programme were mentioning individual names (Hakainde Hichilema) and a particular ethnic group (Tongas) by passing derogatory, demeaning and tribal remarks likely to result into disorder and disrupt the peace of the public. This was in breach of Section 33 of the Principal IBA Act of 2002 which stipulates that ‘every licensed broadcasting service shall develop a code of professional standards which shall have respect for human dignity, rights and freedoms, and contribute to the tolerance of different opinions and belief...”

The decision to suspend the radio station’s licence was however lifted a month later. It was reported in a communique on the 19th December 2019 that “IBA lifts suspension on Lutanda radio station’s broadcasting licence.” The IBA in the communique stated that:

The Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) Board wishes to announce that it has with immediate effect lifted the suspension of the broadcast licence for Lutanda Radio Station of Kasama in Northern Province.

The lifting of the suspension of Lutanda Radio Station's licence comes after the station willingly met the conditions set by the Authority when the licence was suspended. These conditions included; conducting in - house training on basic journalism ethics, programme moderation skills, script writing and ethical broadcasting.

Prior to the lifting of the suspension, the IBA had been monitoring Lutanda Radio for one month to see whether the conditions set were being met.

The Authority is pleased to inform members of the general public that during the period, Lutanda Radio Station was serving its suspension, the station engaged BBC Media Action and MISA Zambia to train the members of staff and the Board in basic journalism skills, script writing and ethical broadcasting including the Penal Code Chapter 87 of the Laws of Zambia.

Furthermore, Lutanda Radio invited the IBA to train members of staff and the Board in provisions of the IBA Act related to ethical reporting, factors that can lead to suspension, cancellation and revocation of a broadcast licence and complaints procedure.

As a background, on 15th November, 2019, the IBA Board suspended the broadcast licence of Lutanda Radio Station for 30 days following the unprofessional conduct in which the station posed a risk to national peace and security. The Authority found that Lutanda Radio Station had breached the IBA Act by airing a programme deemed to promote tribalism and hate speech, failure to moderate a programme and failure to follow guidelines provided for a religious broadcasting station.

Meanwhile, on 12th December 2019 the IBA also lifted the suspension of the Kafue FM radio broadcasting licence. As a background, the IBA cancelled the operating licence for Kafue

community radio station due to lack of content to broadcast, non-payment of licence fees, being irregularly on and off air and dilapidated studios and other infrastructure challenges.

It was noted by the Information and Broadcasting Services Minister Ms. Dora Siliya that government had reconsidered re-issuing the licence because the radio station had adhered to all the recommendations that were made by IBA when cancelling the operating licence in March this 2019.

She noted that government considered the appeal by the Kafue Community Radio Station to reinstate its broadcasting licence for the latter to serve the people of Kafue and enhance democracy. She said government, the IBA and Kafue community radio station are all interested in serving the people of Zambia.

On its part, Kafue FM has endeavoured to adhere to the guidelines from the IBA by investing about K189,000 to rehabilitate the studio infrastructure. It must be noted that the radio station has also bought modern studio equipment as guided by the IBA when the licence was cancelled.

4.3.2 Censorship

In a case that may seem like a case of censorship and an infringement of the freedom of expression, on 21st October, 2019, The News Diggers Newspaper Publication carried a heading “Chingola Police Nab Man for Calling President Edgar Lungu A Dog”

It was reported that the Police in Chingola had arrested and detained a 48year old man who allegedly defamed President Edgar Lungu by calling him a “a dog and a goat”. The man was identified as Simon Malasha of house number 133 Nyati road in Chingola’s Chiwempala Township.

The paper reported that the man accused President Lungu of causing misery to the Zambian People through load shedding and high mealie meal prices.

Meanwhile, the same newspaper reported that Copperbelt Police Commissioner Charity Katanga confirmed this in an interview. She said police arrested the suspect on October 8, 2019 around 16:00 hours.

It was reported that:

“Police received the report from Stella Kunda aged 47 of Dominic Moomba road in Lulamba Township who reported the matter on behalf of the state. Particulars of the offence are that the suspect went to Stella Kunda’s stand at Lulamba market who was having a nap whilst laying on the floor and using PF Chitenge material which had a portrait of President Edgar Lungu as a pillow,” Katanga said.

She said the accused, who supplies lipstick, had gone to collect debt from the complainant and after seeing the Chitenge material, he grabbed it and started uttering insults whilst pointing at the portrait of the head of state.

“The suspect uttered words like ‘President Lungu is a dog and a goat who has caused misery to the Zambian people through load shedding and hiking of mealie meal prices ‘in full view of other marketeers,’ narrated Katanga.

This case is an interesting case to follow especially that it involves word of mouth with an absence of an audio or video evidence to prove that the words were spoken.

4.3.3. Harassment/Attacks

The quarter under review recorded acts of harassment of media that included threats on a journalist for writing on the disappearance of the black lechwe, the threats on a journalist’s life by MMD cadres, and the disruption of a radio programme by seven masked assailants which happened at Pasme radio station in Petauke district.

As regards the harassment of Radio Phoenix journalist, Logic Lukwanda, The Lusaka Times online publication on the 5th November, 2019 carried a headline “Zambia Police summon Phoenix Journalist for writing stories on disappearance of Black Lechwe”.

It was reported that the Zambia Police in Lusaka had summoned Phoenix FM Journalist, Logic Lukwanda to appear for questioning at the Police Headquarters in Lusaka.

On the same day, it was reported that the journalist had been warned and cautioned over a story he had done on the disappearance of the Black Lechwe in the Bangweulu plains.

The Lusaka Times publication reported that the Police in Lusaka had recorded a warn and caution statement from Phoenix FM Journalist Logic Lukwanda regarding a story he published over the purported eighty (80) missing Black Lechwes.

It was reported by the same paper that:

Speaking to Journalists at Police Headquarters, Phoenix FM Managing Director, Muzaza Musulwe described the whole incident as intimidating to the media house. “Yes, it can be very intimidating because to find yourself here and being questioned like that, it is not very good but I think it is part of our profession,” said Musulwe.

Logic Lukwanda, the journalist in the centre of the case, was accompanied to Police Headquarters by Phoenix FM News Editor Patricia Mbewe, a MISA representative including Lusaka Lawyer Gilbert Phiri.

Facts of the matter were that, during the last quarter of 2019, a conservationist working in the northern circuit, Nsama Musonda-Learns reported that 80 Black Lechwes had gone missing in the Bangweulu Wetlands in Luapula Province.

Ms. Learns said the animals were captured from the Bangweulu Wetlands during the banned exercise where the Department for National Parks and Wildlife began capturing wildlife species from their natural habitats to private ranches.

She appealed to all concerned Zambians, Civil Society Organisations, Media and Human Rights activists to help locate the Black Lechwes which are endemic to the Bangweulu Wetlands.

Meanwhile, Minister of Tourism and Arts, Ronald Chitotela on 2nd October 2019 announced the suspension in the movement of animals from National Parks to Private ranches.

The suspension came a few days after controversy surrounded the movement of animals in Mfuwe where trucks were turned back by residents.

He said it was alleged that one of the Directors at the Ministry of Tourism and Arts, signed a certificate of movement of live animals from one national park to a private ranch.

Meanwhile, the Radio Phoenix Journalist was found wanting because of highlighting the disappearance of the animals and giving space to Ms. Nsama Learns on Radio Phoenix news bulletins.

In other news, the quarter under review also witnessed cases of harassment from political party cadres. On 7th November 2019, Kalemba publication carried a headline “Journalist reports MMD Cadres To Police For Threats and Harassment.” It was reported that a journalist by the name of Arthur Davies Sikopo had reported MMD cadres to Woodlands Police Station in Lusaka for threats and harassment.

The newspaper reported that Davies Sikopo was attacked after covering a press briefing addressed by the party's president Dr. Nevers Mumba. It was further reported that Sikopo was accosted by cadres who attempted to drag him out for unknown reasons.

Kalemba further reported that:

The Zambezi FM reporter, however acted quickly and ran to where Dr. Mumba was standing and reported the cadres. Dr. Mumba and other party officials assured Sikopo that he was safe and welcome to cover the MMD any time.

But as he headed out of the premises of the party headquarters in Lusaka's Kabulonga area, the cadres charged at him again, warning him that they would "sort him out" wherever they found him alone. Fearing to be attacked, Sikopo remained in a hidden corner within the party offices until he was whisked out in a vehicle by fellow journalists.

Sikopo has confirmed that he has since reported the matter to Woodlands Police Station and as of 20th February 2020, nothing has been done about the threats on the journalist's life.

In similar circumstances, on the 15th November, 2019 it was reported that a journalist working with Prime TV had been threatened with verbal and physical abuse if he continues to ask provocative questions to the Provincial administration.

Jubilee Malambo a journalist with Prime TV in a letter to MISA Zambia expressed the following worries;

MISA Zambia, I would like to report the harassment and threats by Luapula Provincial Minister Mr. Nickson Chilangwa who threatened that he would deal with me if I continue asking provocative questions which he feels are disturbing Luapula province.

In the same letter to MISA Zambia, Mr. Malambo further claimed that the words uttered by the Provincial Minister also bordered on tribal remarks, and were spoken in the presence of senior government officials that included Health Minister Dr. Chitalu Chilufya, Mrs. Mumbi Phiri, Milenge candidate Mr. Chanda Masheke and Mr. Anthony Kasandwe among other senior party officials.

In another development, the quarter under review also recorded cases of attacks on radio stations. It was reported that on the 10th October, 2019, The News Diggers Newspaper Publication carried a headline MISA condemns ‘masked assailants’ for storming Pasmé Radio in Petauke’.

It was reported that seven masked assailants had stormed Pasmé Radio Station in Petauke district and disrupted a programme which was supposed to feature UPND officials.

Further to the reports of attacks at Pasmé radio, it was also reported that some Livingstone City Council Police officers attacked a Prime TV reporter who was filming them as they confiscated food items from vendors. Facts of the matter were that Elias Limwanya, a Journalist from Prime TV based in Livingstone was attacked and his camera damaged by some officers from the Livingstone City Council Police.

The incident happened on 7th October 2019 when the Mr. Limwanya was attacked by some officers from the Livingstone City Council Police whilst filming the officers confiscate food items from suspected vendor.

In a show of concern, MISA Zambia, reacted strongly to the attacks. In a statement, MISA Zambia Chairperson Ms. Helen Mwale, expressed sadness at the happenings. She stated that:

“We are saddened by reports of harassment. We understand that in an attempt to stop the journalists from filming, the officers tried to grab the camera and in the process led to its damage,” read the statement. “Another incident of concern was the harassment of Joseph Tembo, a presenter at Pasmé radio station in Petauke district. This occurred on Saturday, 5th October 2019 during the airing of the live radio programme dubbed ‘Let the people

Talk.’ We are gravely concerned that about seven masked assailants stormed the radio station and disrupted the airing of the radio Programme just when it was about to feature United Party for National Development (UPND) officials. We therefore call on authorities to address the security of the media and ensure that no assailant and media freedom violator is allowed to go unpunished.”

“Needless to say, media freedom and freedom of expression are cardinal to the functioning of democracy and reports of assailants and law enforcers violating these rights and freedoms have no regard for the Zambian constitution which the Zambian people gave themselves as the supreme law of the land. Devoid of media freedom and freedom of speech, political parties cannot market their manifesto whilst media will not hold government accountable and play their informative role. This will lead to citizens making uninformed decisions and unable to participate in the governance process and choose leaders of their choice,” stated Mwale.

“We wish to reiterate that no party in Zambia must impose its leadership on the Zambian people. We further wish to remind all media houses to be vigilant and make sure they identify culprits of media freedom violations and report such cases to both police and MISA Zambia in order to bring such culprits to book.”

Further to the harassments on journalists, it was reported on the 16th November, 2019 in the News Diggers Newspaper publication under the heading “Cop Threatens To Shoot Journalist During Kambwili Interrogation”.

It was reported that in the process of questioning the NDC leader, Mr. Chishimba Kambwili in connection with a ‘breach of the Public Order Act’ after he toured Chisokone Market, a police officer cocked his AK47 rifle and pointed it at the News Diggers! journalist and threatened to shoot for documenting Kambwili’s extraction from Lunte Lodge.

The News Diggers! narrated that:

After holding a rally in Luanshya, Kambwili went to Lunte Lodge in Kitwe where his entourage had set camp. But around 18:40 hours, about 20 police officers in riot gear

arrived and demanded that Kambwili follows them to Kitwe Central Police for questioning over his Chisokone Market tour earlier in the day.

In his defence, Kambwili said he had only gone to buy Fish from Chisokone Market and did not see anything wrong with it. But police insisted that he follows them and whilst pulling Kambwili away, a News Diggers! journalist by the name of Julia Malunga was spotted taking some notes and a police officer cocked and pointed his rifle at her, threatening to shoot.

The said officer told her he did not care whatever she would do about the incident.

In response, MISA Zambia on the 20th November, 2019 condemned the action by the police that involved cocking and pointing an AK47 gun at News Diggers reporter Julia Malunga as she was documenting Mr. Kambwili's extraction from Lunte Lodge.

The News Diggers! reported that;

In a statement, MISA Zambia Chairperson Hellen Mwale said it was saddening that attacks on the media by police had continued. "MISA Zambia condemns in the strongest terms the death threat on News Diggers Journalist Julia Malunga by a police officer in Kitwe yesterday while on assignment".

According to the reports reaching MISA Zambia, an unidentified police officer cocked and pointed his rifle at Malunga, threatening to shoot her for documenting Mr. Kambwili's extraction from Lunte Lodge. As MISA Zambia, we are saddened by such continued attacks on the media by police officers because it has barely been three days when a similar incident happened in which iWave Station Manager Lucy Kaonga was picked up by the police in Chingola for questioning following a radio programme that was aired after news broke out that Konkola Copper Mines (KCM) had allegedly discharged sulphur dioxide which left 42 employees and several pupils from KCM Nchanga Trust Secondary School hospitalized. As if not enough, the police officers went further to disrupt a program on air.

We would like to urge the police and the public at large that a free and independent media is crucial to the development of democracy in the country and holding power to account.

The police must not protect the powerful who harm the poor and voiceless people but protect the lives of the poor and voiceless people.

Further, MISA wishes to reiterate that without a vibrant media, the public's right to receive information on matters of public interest from a variety of sources cannot be fulfilled. Further, MISA Zambia would like urge the police to protect lives as it is its core mandate to do so in the country. "We are calling upon the Inspector-General of Police Mr. Kakoma Kanganja and Police Commissioner on the Copperbelt Mrs. Charity Katanga to curb this lawlessness by the police. They should not view the media as an enemy but rather a stakeholder in defending the lives and rights of citizens in Zambia.

Nevertheless, MISA Zambia calls on Journalists to remain strong as they continue to carry out their duties of defending the poor and helpless from the powerful in our society who see the poor as objects that do not deserve the right to life and protection.

The MISA Chairperson further emphasised that, MISA Zambia shall always stand with the media in all situations because the media is the watchdog of society. This was an important statement that shows a commitment to defending the journalism fraternity in Zambia on the part of MISA Zambia.

4.3.4 Lawsuits

The quarter under review recorded cases of threats of court action. Of note was the case involving the report published by the US based Environmental Investigation Agency and picked up by News Diggers!

On the 6th of December, 2019 the News Diggers Newspaper publication carried a headline “Kapata To Sue News Diggers For Publishing Mukula Smuggling Cartel,” it was reported that:

Lands Minister Jean Kapata says she will sue News Diggers newspaper for publishing an investigative report released by a US based Environmental Investigation Agency, which implicates her in the mukula smuggling cartel.

Speaking at a press briefing, Kapata said government was under siege from its enemies who were using the media.

“I am deeply upset by the contents of a so called report that has been maliciously circulated by an organisation calling itself Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA). I am even more appalled that a Zambian newspaper can go all the way in defaming the President and his ministers without verification. I presume News Diggers is supposed to be a professional publication whose core virtue must be to seek the truth which is a value for all professional journalists. I do not want to believe that journalists do not know their ethics. I believe they threw their ethics out of the window to please their sponsors. This is very sad. We hear daily submissions from the media asking for press freedom. I am personally an advocate for press freedom but I do not support press freedom based on hurting innocent Zambians,” Kapata said.

“Government is under siege from its enemies, local and foreign, you are going to see more of this gutter journalism. You are going to see fake reports, you are going to see malicious videos like the one you have seen today, provocative videos and so on. All these are fake. Government will not be detracted by enemies of the state, local and international, as we pursue our development agenda. Let me conclude by saying, I am going to sue News Diggers. I know the reporter who wrote this story and she will be receiving some summons from myself.”

The paper further reported that when asked by a News Diggers! reporter if the report by the EIA was false, Kapata said the newspaper would explain in court. The paper quoted the Lands Minister saying:

You are coming from News Diggers, your paper wrote that article so you are supposed to give me those answers yourself! exclaimed Kapata.

First of all, I would like to mention that we don't know who these EIA are so the News Diggers should be able to tell us who they are and once we know who they are they will be equally be part and parcel of the suing, she said.

As a follow up, asked if government was struggling to control illegal Mukula trade, Kapata said it was controlled.

5.0 Freedom of Expression Online – Mainstream Media/Cyber Space

On a note of victory, the quarter under review recorded an instance of media freedom protection coming from the Speaker of the National Assembly. On the 9th October, 2019, The Daily Nation Newspaper publication carried a heading “Speaker Rules In Favour Of Daily Nation.”

It was reported that the Speaker of the National Assembly yesterday ruled in favour of the Daily Nation Newspaper in a point of order raised by Katombola Member of Parliament Derick Livune against the tabloid for publishing a cartoon which portrayed that UPND MP’s do not care about climate change.

On 24th September, 2019, Mr Livune rose on a point of order and expressed displeasure on the cartoon published in the newspaper on September 21, 2019, suggesting that the UPND MPs were being unreasonable on the issue of climate change in their debates in Parliament.

The paper reported that the Mr. Livune had accused the Daily Nation of trying to dent the name of UPND and interfering with its MP’s abilities of providing checks and balances on Government.

It was reported that the cartoon depicted persons in other countries making exhortations: “Let us all fight climate change; “Climate change is killing the earth;” and “Climate change is real”. In contrast, UPND MP’s were depicted as stating in Parliament that: “Climate change is not an issue.”

The paper further reported that the MP said:

Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order on the Managing Editor of the Daily Nation Newspaper. As the custodian of our Privileges and rights, we seek your Protection, because on Pages 8 of the Daily Nation, Dated Saturday, 21st September 2019, there is an article to do with Climate change. It is telling the world that climate change is not an issue.

“Mr, Speaker, the subject of the matter is that, as UPND MPs and it is on record that none of us under played the importance of climate change. However, all we have refused is for members of Parliament on the right to mislead the nation and hide their inefficiencies in Climate change issues.

“Sir, I seek your serious ruling as regards the protection of our rights to provide checks and balances on the Government’s failure to properly Plan for the nation. Is the Daily

Nation Newspaper in order to mislead the world and cast aspersions and put us in bad light to the nation? Mr Livune asked.

But in his ruling, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Dr. Patrick Matibini said the Daily Nation had a constitutional right to comment on topical issues which were a subject of constant debate in the House.

He said climate change was a topical issue throughout the world including Zambia, thus it had been a subject of constant comments, discussions and opinions of the public on social media, print and electronic media.

He ruled that the expression of opinion in form of a cartoon by the Daily Nation did not in any way interfere with the exercise of checks and balances on the executive by UPND MPs.

This was a very important decision made by the Speaker as it sets precedence for future occurrences.

In a twist, it was reported in the Times of Zambia of 28th November, 2019 in a story titled “Criticism Govt Constructively-Kasolo” that the then Ministry of Information Permanent Secretary Mr. Chanda Kasolo has urged the media to criticise Government constructively by also highlighting the good things happening in the country.

Of note is that Mr Kasolo stated that while criticising Government was allowed, persistent negative reports on radio stations and other media platforms had the potential to incite public anger against authorities.

The paper reported that the then PS stated that:

... I urge broadcasting stations in the country to aspire for the highest ethical and professional standards to avoid running into conflict with the law... uphold the fundamental tents of journalism namely truth, objectivity, fairness and balance.

I am urging radio stations to avoid programmes and people that promote hate speech, tribalism, division and disunity in the country because people in communities believed what they heard on radio.

Mr Kasolo said radio stations should be responsible because they had power to inform, transform lives and contribute to fostering peace, unity and development while enhancing freedom of expression for Zambia's thriving democracy.

He said the Government would continue creating an enabling environment for the continued growth and contribution of radio to national development by allowing more radio stations to be established by local communities in every part of the country.

Of note here is that the media's mandate is to report truthfully regardless of who or what is being reported on. Therefore, Mr. Kasolo's plea may not apply.

6.0 Other Developments

It was refreshing to note that during the quarter under review, the Minister of Information and Broadcasting services had pledged to support the media in their effort to creating an informed society.

On the 29th of October, 2019, Lusaka Times Online Newspaper publication reported that Information and Broadcasting Services Minister Dora Siliya says Government will do everything possible to support the media in their effort to create an informed society.

Ms Siliya was quoted saying Government remains resolved and committed to ensuring that the aspirations and needs of the people are effectively met. This she stated could only be achieved with the support of the media. This was a powerful statement made in support of the role that media plays in the development agenda of the country.

7.0 Conclusion

There is an urgent need to get the Access to Information Bill tabled in parliament and its enactment accelerated. The current status quo is not healthy as there is no law compelling public office bearers to release information to the media and the public at large. It is argued that the increase in the usage of self-publishing platforms like social media has culminated into an increase in publishing of information that is usually laden with rumours and hearsay and by the time public office bearers come to clear the air, information released via social media and other self-publishing platforms is inconsistent with the information already in the public domain. The solution to sorting the

inconsistence in information access and dissemination is to enact the Access to Information Bill to grant the media and the public access to credible information. Further to this, there is an urgent need to divorce the ATI from the statutory media regulation process as the two are not related.

Further, there is need for increased advocacy by stakeholders on the need to compel government to make public the contents of the ATI bill. This is important as it will allow for public scrutiny and debate.

The MISA Zambia's campaign to ensure that the journalism and media fraternity is protected must be supported by stakeholders in order to promote the protection and editorial independence of the media.

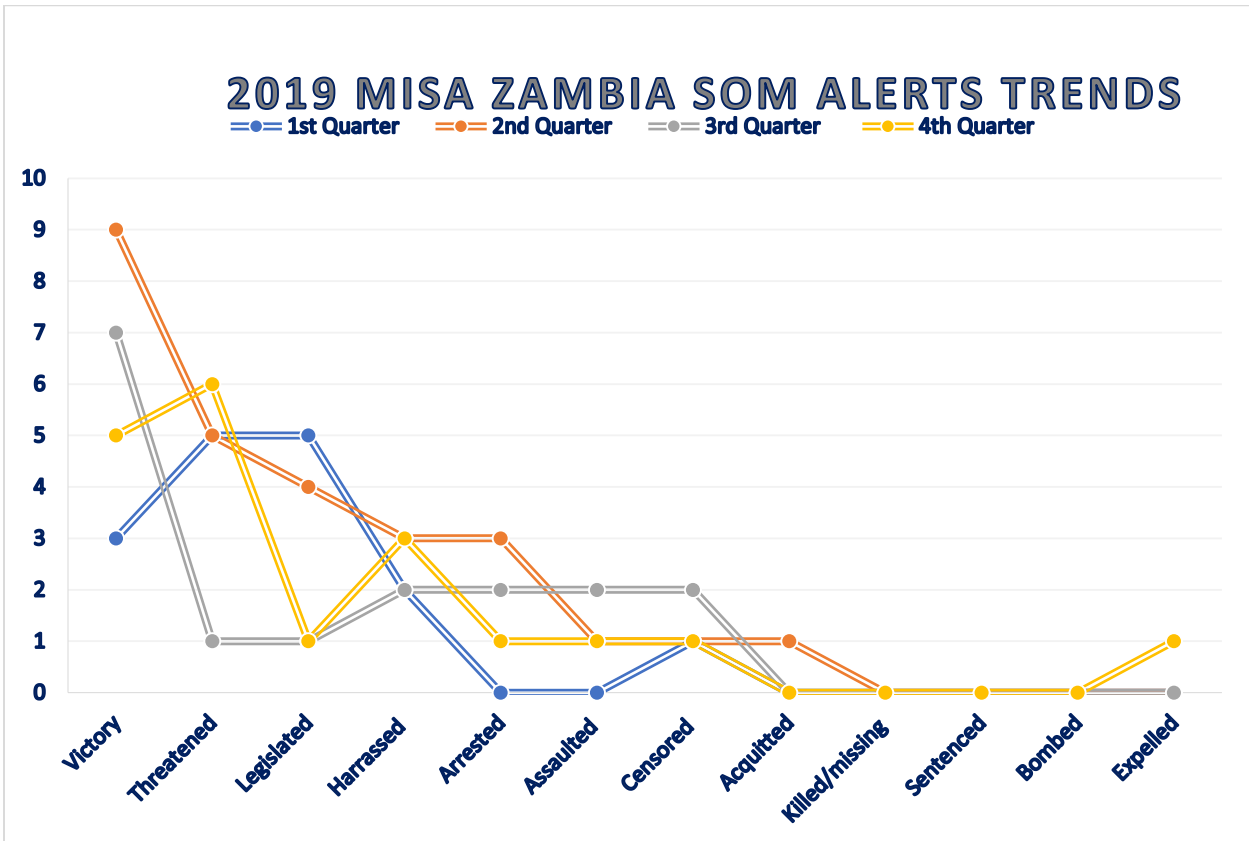
Further, increased law suits and attacks on journalists by political party cadres and other government officials is worrying. This hostile environment is a recipe for making the operating environment for journalists difficult.

8.0 Recommendations

Based on the information made available in this report, the following are the recommendations:

- There is need to increase news coverage relating to ATI to increase advocacy for its enactment.
- There is need for government agencies to adopt a culture of dialogue before resorting to harsh decisions like the attack on Prime TV, News Diggers and other media organisation's journalists.
- There is need for the media to ensure they uphold high standards of professionalism.

9.0. Appendix - 2019 MISA Zambia alerts trend



copyright 2020

Published by MISA Zambia

Plot No; 3814 Martin Mwamb Rd Olympia Park

Great East Road

P.o Box 32295,

Lusaka,Zambia.

Tel : +260-211-294285/6