

Tanzania media laws violate press freedom

The Committee to Protect Journalists welcomed a ruling today by the East African Court of Justice (EACJ) that multiple sections of Tanzania's Media Services Act restrict press freedom and freedom of expression, and called on the Tanzanian government to repeal the act.



A Tanzanian shoe-shiner conducts his business underneath an election poster for then ruling party presidential candidate, and later president, John Magufuli, in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on October 27, 2015. On March 28, 2019, the East African Court of Justice found that multiple sections of Tanzania's Media Services Act restrict press freedom. Credit: CPJ/APPhoto/Khalfan Said.

In a judgment on an application filed by three Tanzanian nongovernmental organisations, the Arusha-based EACJ found that multiple sections of Tanzania's 2016 [Media Services Act](#), including those on sedition, criminal defamation, and false news publication, [restrict press freedom](#) and freedom of expression, and thereby breach the constitutive treaty of the East African Community, a regional economic bloc of which Tanzania is a member.

The EACJ [directed](#) Tanzania to "take such measures as are necessary" to bring the law into compliance with the treaty, according to the judgment, which was seen by CPJ.

"We welcome the East African Court of Justice's ruling as an important bulwark against the erosion of press freedom in Tanzania and the East African region," said CPJ's sub-Saharan Africa representative, Muthoki Mumo.

"We now urge the government to repeal the controversial Media Services Act, and through an inclusive reform process, promulgate a law that safeguards freedom of the press."

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