

Regulator suspends four independent newspapers

Reporters Without Borders condemns a decision on 1 June by the High Council for Freedom of Communication (CLSC), the Republic of Congo's media regulator, to suspend three independent Brazzaville-based newspapers - L'Observateur, Talassa and Le Trottoir - for four months for publishing "seditious articles."

A fourth, Le Glaive, has been suspended for two months.

"The simultaneous suspension of four newspapers that are well-known for keeping their distance from the government is particularly disturbing for pluralism in the Republic of Congo," Reporters Without Borders said.

"After keeping a low profile for a long time, the CSLC now seems to be focusing on censorship and intimidation instead of doing its job, which is to guarantee freedom of communication. Philippe Mwouo's takeover as head of the CSLC has coincided with a decline in freedom of expression. We call for these arbitrary suspensions to be lifted immediately."

The four newspapers were suspended on Mwouo's direct orders for reprinting an article from the pan-African magazine Afrique Education that referred to a letter by former defence minister Justin Lekoundzou about President Marien Ngouabi's 1977 assassination.

In a televised hearing, CSLC official Gertrude Hobain Mongo read out the charges against the three newspapers that were suspended for four months. She said they were accused of "manipulating opinion," "disseminating false news," "inciting violence and divisions" and "defaming (...) certain state officials."

Le Glaive was accused of "repeatedly refusing to comply with and respond to the Council's instructions."

The Republic of Congo is ranked 76th out of 179 countries in the 2013 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index.

For more information about media freedom and the climate for journalists in the Republic of Congo, read the RWB country file.

Source: [allAfrica](#)