

New bill would reduce protection of journalistic sources in Burundi

Reporters Without Borders condemn the Burundian national assembly's adoption last week, 4 April 2013, of a bill that would rein in press freedom by reducing protection for sources, increasing fines and requiring all journalists to have a university degree regardless of their work experience.

If approved by the senate, the proposed modification of Burundi's 2003 media law is likely to deal a major setback to freedom of information in this central African country.

"We urge the senate not to pass this bill, which bears the fingerprints of the ruling party's most hard-line wing and would considerably reduce the freedom of Burundi's journalists and media," Reporters Without Borders said. "What with this law and the impact of the recent Ruvakuki case, the Burundian media could be prevented from playing its role in the democratic debate."

....Passed by a big majority in the national assembly (82 votes for, 15 against and two abstentions), the proposed new law needs the senate's approval.

The president of the Union of Burundian Journalists (UBJ), Alexandre Niyungeko, said its aim is to "close independent media."

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