

Kenyan president rejects controversial media bill

Kenya's president on Wednesday rejected a controversial media bill passed by parliament that critics have slammed as an attempt to muzzle the press.



Uhuru Kenyatta. Image source: Nation.co.ke via Forbes

Last month, MPs voted to set up a special quasi-government body to police the media, with the power to slap huge fines on journalists and outlets if they violate a code of conduct.

The bill provoked a furious reaction from Kenya's vibrant independent media, with front pages declaring that democracy and free speech were under attack.

Bill sent back

A statement from the presidency said Uhuru Kenyatta used his veto power and sent the bill back to parliament.

It said Kenyatta concluded that "many provisions of the Bill go against the constitutional requirement that the tribunal proposed should be independent of commercial, political and government interests".

It also said the president had noted the hefty fines proposed by the bill -- up to 20 million Kenyan shillings (173,000 euros, \$234,000) -- and "recommended that some of the sections be deleted". The press have said such fines were enough to put many outlets out of business.

Curtailing independence of the media

He also found other parts of the bill "may be viewed as curtailing the independence of the media as guaranteed by the Constitution," the statement said.

Kenyatta had already promised to review the bill, promising not to "gag" journalists, while vice president William Ruto had assured the press that the issues would be "ironed out".

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>