

CPJ urges Tanzania lawmakers to revise proposed legislative amendments

The Committee to Protect Journalists has urged Tanzanian lawmakers to revise a set of proposed legislative amendments, some of which would pose undue restrictions on freedom of expression.



A newspaper stand is seen in Mwanza, Tanzania, on September 19, 2015. Tanzania is currently considering legal amendments that could negatively affect press freedom. Credit: CPJ/AFP/Daniel Hayduk.

The amendments, bundled into a bill that was made public on June 19, would affect eight pieces of legislation, according to CPJ's review of the bill. One proposed amendment would remove the current ban on publishing information that could "discredit official statistics," but would add an onerous approval process for those wishing to challenge government data or publish "non-official" statistics, with criminal penalties for noncompliance. The bill also establishes a statutory film board, which has the power to censor films exhibited in the country, and adds a requirement that all foreign companies shooting films in Tanzania, including documentaries, submit raw footage of their work to the board.

"These proposed amendments, if passed, will harden the already punitive legal restrictions that journalists in Tanzania confront every day on the job," said CPJ's Sub-Saharan Africa representative, Muthoki Mumo. "We urge lawmakers to reconsider these amendments and to make room for inclusive consultations with members of the public, including civil society and the press."

The bill, formally known as the Written Laws (Miscellaneous Amendments) (No.3) Act, 2019, is dated May 30, but was not released for public review until June 19, according to two civil society representatives who spoke to CPJ on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal. Members of the public and civil society organizations can submit comments on the bill through June 22, according to those representatives.

The bill was filed under a certificate of urgency, meaning its approval process through parliament will be fast-tracked, according to the Tanzanian parliament's [standing orders](#).