



**27 JANUARY 2022**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **TAEF STATEMENT ON MEDIA FREEDOM IN BOTSWANA**

The African Editors Forum is horrified at the contents of a draconian piece of legislation which is being rushed through parliament by the government of Botswana. The planned legislation will have a chilling impact on media freedom as well as other civil liberties.

TAEF strongly calls on the government of Botswana generally, and the President of Botswana Mokgweetsi Masisi to withdraw the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Bill from Parliament and continue to build and deepen the country's democracy by introducing instead, among others, the Freedom of Information Act.

The Criminal Procedure and Evidence Bill will empower the law enforcement agencies of Botswana to, among others:

- Intercept communication of journalists and other citizens.
- Force journalists and ordinary citizens to disclose information.
- Allow intelligence agents to use fake identities and be immune from prosecution.

The Bill will allow the government to spy on citizens without a warrant and supervision from the courts. This is a direct move to subvert democracy and violate the rights of the media to do its work freely and the rights of Botswana to freely receive information.

TAEF stands in solidarity with the Editors Forum of Botswana and shares concerns that the Bill will jeopardize freedom of expression and is a direct threat to the work of journalists, trade unionists and other social activists.

“This is by far the worst piece of legislation to have emerged in Botswana, the Southern African region and the rest of the continent in recent history. The government of Botswana must hang its head in shame and withdraw the Bill immediately,” said TAEF chairperson Jovial Rantao.

Media freedom is not merely the freedom of journalists to work and provide credible, verified and reliable information to the public, but is in fact the freedom of the people of any country to impart and receive information that helps them make decisions about their lives and their country.

It is for this reason that TAEF calls on Botswana to roundly reject this draconian Bill and on the Commission for Human and People's Rights, through the Office of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information and indeed the African Union Commission to take a stand and sanction Botswana.

Media freedom is a measure of any country's democracy and the regression underway in Botswana means the erosion of the democratic space. It also means the noble goals of building the Africa we want as envisaged in Agenda 2063 will remain a pipedream.

For more information

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