



Committee to Protect Journalists

April 23, 2026

His Excellency
Hakainde Hichilema
President of the Republic of Zambia
Plot 1, Independence Avenue
Lusaka, Zambia

Hand-delivered and sent via email.

Dear President Hichilema,

I write to you from the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), an independent, nonprofit organization that champions press freedom worldwide, to urge your government to guarantee media freedom and the safety of journalists ahead of the global commemoration of World Press Freedom Day (WPFJ) in Lusaka and Zambia's upcoming August 2026 elections.

Your Excellency, we acknowledge your stated commitments to press freedom, including in your 2021 [inauguration speech](#). We also recall your [remarks](#) during the 2025 WPFJ, in which you affirmed that "press freedom stands as the cornerstone of society" and that it is "not only a right; it is an essential part of our daily lives." We share these convictions. However, we are concerned by legislative developments and documented violations over the past five years that appear inconsistent with these commitments and with protections enshrined in Zambia's constitution.

CPJ has joined local and international civil society organizations in raising concerns about Zambia's cyber laws enacted last year. The vague regulation of speech and overbroad surveillance powers granted under these laws risk undermining freedom of expression and press freedom. We are similarly concerned about the [Zambia Institute of Journalism Bill](#), whose provisions on the licensing of journalists are incompatible with regional and international human rights standards. We reviewed with apprehension the Closed-Circuit Television Public Protection Bill, which proposes to establish a comprehensive legal framework for the installation, operation, and regulation of closed-circuit television. We were encouraged by [your decision](#) to send this bill back to parliament for revisions, and we continue to call on legislators to safeguard freedom of expression and privacy rights in its review.

We have closely monitored judicial proceedings against Zambian Whistleblower journalist [Thomas Allan Zgambo](#), who has been arrested at

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least [three times](#) since 2023 on charges including sedition and criminal libel. Two cases against Zgambo remain ongoing, with court dates scheduled for mid- and late May. We view his case as emblematic of how unduly restrictive laws can be misused to intimidate and silence journalists.

Since 2022, CPJ has documented multiple incidents in which supporters of the ruling United Party for National Development (UPND) have harassed and assaulted journalists. For example, in late December 2022 and early January 2023, UPND supporters [raided two radio stations](#), preventing them from hosting an opposition politician. In March 2025, radio journalist Hope Chooma was [attacked](#) by UPND supporters in Mazabuka, while covering a charity event. And in April this year, our organization [documented](#) two other incidents in which suspected UPND supporters disrupted a Radio Mpongwe broadcast and assaulted Power FM journalist Alfonso Kasongo at a campaign event, even after he identified himself as a journalist. Police officers have also been [implicated](#) in [violations](#) against journalists, including harassment and arrests of those covering opposition activities or protests.

As Zambia approaches the election season, it is essential that journalists are allowed to do their jobs freely – informing voters on matters of public interest and providing the scrutiny necessary to ensure credible polls. As journalists from around the world gather in Lusaka for World Press Freedom Day, we respectfully urge your government to create a safe and enabling environment for the press, including by:

- Publicly affirming the role of independent journalism in free and fair elections, and clearly communicating to all political actors, both ruling and opposition, that violations against the journalists will not be tolerated.
- Promptly and credibly investigating all attacks, threats, and harassment against journalists, including online abuse, and ensuring accountability regardless of the perpetrators.
- Pending reform of problematic laws, refraining from arbitrary detention and criminal proceedings against journalists in connection with their work.
- Refraining from frivolous or strategic litigation designed to obstruct the work of journalists, also known as Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation (SLAPPs).
- Ensuring timely and substantive access to information, including by responding to media inquiries and granting journalists access to official briefings.



Committee to Protect Journalists

- Ensuring that accreditation processes are transparent, fair, and not used to restrict access for domestic or international media covering the elections.
- Promoting editorial independence and media pluralism by rejecting actions that pressure journalists to adopt particular political positions or that restrict investigative journalism.
- Considering targeted measures to protect women journalists who may face heightened risks of harassment and abuse.

Implementing these recommendations would reaffirm your government's stated commitments to press freedom and strengthen Zambia's democratic credentials. Members of our team will be in Zambia for World Press Freedom Day, and we would welcome the opportunity to engage with your office and relevant government representatives to discuss these issues further.

Sincerely,

Muthoki Mumo
Africa Program Coordinator
Committee to Protect Journalists

Cc:

Honorable Cornelius Mweetwa, Minister of Information and Media
Mr Graphel Musamba, Inspector General of the Zambia Police Service
Honorable Jacob Jack Mwiimbu, Minister of Home Affairs and Internal Security
Mrs Mwangala Zaloumis, Chairperson, Electoral Commission of Zambia
Honorable Princess Kasune, Minister of Justice
Mr Mulilo Kabesha, SC, Attorney General
Mr Gilbert Phiri, SC, Director of Public Prosecutions