



International Center for Policy and Conflict

Sunday May 17, 2009

Press Statement on

Call to Facilitate Journalists Acquire Skills on Reporting Justice; Reforms

International Center for Policy and Conflict (ICPC) is challenging media owners, civil society and development partners in Kenya to facilitate journalists acquire skills aimed at providing sustainable accurate, responsible and balanced coverage of the various transitional Justice mechanisms being implemented in Kenya; as much as practical experience as possible to help them develop coping strategies.

Transitional justice mechanisms include trials and other judicial proceedings against individuals alleged to have committed gross violations of human rights; truth commission designed to establish a factual historical record of past wrongdoing; reparations to victims of past abuses; vetting and lustrations of individuals to determine if their past activities or affiliations render them ineligible for public office, law enforcement or other key roles; and institutional and legal reforms.

Media, both as a medium and stakeholder, is very critical in catalyzing informed public discussion and debate over the desirability and effectiveness of transitional justice as a means of consolidating peace, promoting human rights and democracy, and healing the effects of past wrongs. Communication and development are intertwined; one cannot properly succeed without support from the other, hence to ensure that media institutions effectively are at the vanguard of post violence development of Kenya, journalists must be supported to acquire the necessary reporting skills. ICPC is stressing that bringing perpetrators of gross violations of human rights to justice is the first step in coming to terms with the past. It is necessary in promoting accountability and facilitates regaining trust in public institutions. This is only possible when there is existence of sustainable correct media engagement and reporting.

Journalists have a pivotal role to play in the development and democratization of violence-wrecked country, and as such, they must be fully trained to delve into digging the truth from falsehood for the betterment of the Kenyan society. Working in partnership with civil society, media owners can conduct successful trainings of media professionals to raise public awareness, facilitate understanding and debate about the mechanisms of transitional justice.

The failure to address impunity is establishing an inherently unstable peace process with long lasting repercussions, effectively allowing for an unrestrained rise in violence and insecurity. Because well known perpetrators hold high positions in the current government and enjoy ethnic support, serious human rights abuses continue to be tolerated. Mediation agreements did succeed in establishing commissions responsible for transitional justice and reform of the judicial, police and civil service systems. Progress in implementation would require informed media practitioners who can competently engage public in robust discourse and hence remove political ping pong on reforms.

Media managers, editors, and heads of media associations need to conduct trainings focused on helping journalists to effectively report and cover transitional justice issues and to do so in a way that brings healing rather than polarization, or blame. The media is currently faced with the task of reporting very crucial processes that certainly underpins national healing, recovery and development. It must be able to report the processes responsibly bearing in mind the implications and potential fallouts negative coverage could cause the processes and by extension the country's national recovery efforts.

While freedom of the press is essential to the cultivation of a democratic culture, it is only fair for the media to labor in overcoming obstacles to fair, independent, balanced and accurate presentation of news and information. Media reports must not be misleading and journalists should strive to live by standards set by the profession, regardless of the economic condition under which they must work. Mostly, the media has simply been describing happenings of events while providing limited background details and literally not finding other analysis angles. Civil society and development partners should partner in assisting the broader media community in conducting in-process training for the media on transitional justice processes.

Signed by

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