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## **Zambia president's supporters attack journalists for 'collaborating to take down government'**

### **Прихильники президента Замбії напали на журналістів за «сприяння поваленню уряду»**

*Прихильники президента Замбії Хакаінде Хічілеми напали на журналістів, яких вони звинувачують у негативному висвітленні правлячої партії. І це попри те, що Х. Хічілема закликав до свободи ЗМІ у Замбії. За даними Комітету захисту журналістів (КЗЖ) на журналістів було скоєно два окремі напади. Координатор програми КЗЖ в Африці А. Квінтал закликала владу розслідувати ці справи, бо не можна допускати безкарності за злочини проти журналістів у країні, президент якої зобов'язався забезпечити свободу преси. Х. Хічілема пообіцяв, що його уряд не збирається придушувати свободу вираження думок та асоціацій. Міжнародна недержавна організація захисту прав людини, яка оберігає свободу слова в усьому світі «Репортери без кордонів» повідомила, що після обрання Х. Хічілеми президентом у серпні 2021 року свобода ЗМІ покращилася після кількох важких років. Однак законодавча база, як і раніше, потребує вдосконалення, а економічні проблеми країни, як і раніше, стримують журналістську незалежність.*

<https://www.news24.com/news24/africa/news/zambia-presidents-supporters-attack-journalists-for-collaborating-to-take-down-government-20230419>

Three journalists were attacked by supporters of Zambia's ruling party.

The journalists were accused of collaborating to take down the government.

Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema promised a free media when he came to power.

Supporters of Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema have attacked journalists they accuse of giving the ruling party negative publicity.

This is despite Hichilema having called for media freedom in Zambia.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), there were two separate attacks on journalists on 8 April.

In the eastern district of Petauke, six supporters of the ruling United Party for National Development (UPND) went to the offices of Radio Explorer, an independent broadcaster.

When they got there, they assaulted reporter Charles Chimwemwe Banda.

He said they accused him of "collaborating to take down the government", and kicked him in the face and head and punched him.

"They started beating me up with their fists all over the body, my face, and head," Banda said.

He didn't report the matter to the police after the local leadership of the UPND said they would address the matter internally and promised to issue a public apology. However, they had not done so by Tuesday.

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Male Kapema, the station manager at the privately owned broadcaster Serenje Radio, reporter Sheila Kalunga and accountant Enoch Kile Champo were also beaten up by at least 20 ruling party supporters.

The journalists had earlier recorded a standoff between an estimated 40 UPND and Socialist Party members. This was after allegations that a Socialist Party leader had shot a UPND member.

"I sought medical attention... but I'm still in pain. My back was hurt from the kicks they unleashed on me," Kalunga told CPJ.

Angela Quintal, CPJ's Africa programme coordinator, challenged authorities to investigate the matters, especially after Hichilema publicly spoke about media and press freedom.

Quintal said:

Politically motivated violence against journalists in Zambia is a serious concern, and United Party for National Development leaders must condemn the recent attacks on three members of the press by the party's supporters. Authorities must thoroughly investigate these attacks. Impunity for crimes against journalists should not be tolerated in a country whose president has committed to ensuring press freedom.

Speaking in March at the Lusaka leg of the Democracy Summit, Hichilema promised that his government was not going to oppress freedom of expression and association.

"On our part as Zambia, we are committed to ensuring a free media, protecting freedom of assembly and association, as well as ensuring an independent electoral commission," he said.

Reporters Without Borders say since Hichilema's election as president in August 2021, media freedom has improved after some difficult years.

However, the legislative framework still needs improving and the country's economic problems continue to hold back journalistic independence.