

ZIMBABWE ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK (ZESN)



World Press Freedom Day Statement May 3, 2012.

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) joins the rest of the world in commemorating World Press Freedom day. This year's celebrations run under the theme "Media Freedom has the Power to Transform Societies".

ZESN notes that this day comes against the background of continued calls for media freedom, plurality and diversity in Zimbabwe. The media in Zimbabwe remains highly polarized despite provisions under the Global Political Agreement to bring to an end media biased reportage and allow more players in both the Print and Broadcast media. Though a number of publications and radio stations have been given the green light to operate, ZESN believes that more still needs to be done to open the media environment.

Repressive media legislation continues to exist in Zimbabwe, for instance such laws as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) and the Broadcasting Services Act as well as provisions that oppress media freedom, free association and assembly in the Public Order and Security Act and the Criminal Law Codification and Reform Act. ZESN also notes with concern the continued harassment of journalists especially those from the private media as an attempt to muzzle divergent and dissenting voices in the media space.

The media has a vital role to play in the transformation of societies through education, citizen awareness programmes and provision of important political, social, cultural and economic information. ZESN reiterates that for the media to be able to play this role effectively measures must be put in place to ensure that the media operating space is free of interference from other arms of the state.

As the world celebrates World Press Freedom Day, ZESN calls for the opening up of the media environment, repeal of restrictive and oppressive media legislation and depoliticization of all media outlets. /ENDS//