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Independent Online Journalists Association of Uganda

PRESS RELEASE

Kampala, June 20, 2024

RE: DEMAND FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF GRAPEVINE JOURNALISTS DICKSON MUBIRU AND ARIRABAKI SENGOOBA

Independent Online Journalists Association-Uganda (indoja-U) has noted with concern, increased targeted arrests of journalists with an intent to clamp down on the freedom of the press, the latest being Dickson Mubiru and Arirabaki Sengooba both of whom work with Grace publications Ltd, who were arrested on Tuesday and remanded to Luzira prisons on Thursday.

Whereas the issue being fronted as the cause for their arrest is illegal operation without license, two story publications have been quoted as having been run to the detriment of the affected in which one of them insinuates that there's corruption in some government Agencies. The charge sheet clearly quotes; “ **inside story; how top legislators shared \$5million vitol oil deal bribe**” and “**Lawyer Kalali, justice Nkonge clash over court case file.**” In our opinion, emphasis should be put more on fighting the suspected corruption which has impoverished the country and denied citizens better services than arresting/intimidating the journalists whose only 'crime' is writing about the same. The fact that out of all the stories on Grapevine about various issues in society in the same scoop of time, it's only Vitol oil-SNOOC corruption allegations story being as quoted as the 'climax' of their writing is suspicious enough, in itself. President Museveni should be applauded for allowing press freedom in Uganda. With all his satire about Daily Monitor, he hasn't used an upper hand against them. Those in powerful positions using their offices to clamp down online media should take a leaf from the president.

If indeed it's about license, we demand UCC to share the license number for CBS FM for the last atleast 5yrs, or arrest the Managing Director.

indoja-U, an association that brings together online media in Uganda takes this as a serious attack on the independence and freedoms of expression, not only for the media fraternity, but the general public, because journalists shoulder a pivotal, social contract with the public to collect, filter and feed them with information, for the greater good. Because we all know, that an informed society is an empowered one.

We beseech and call on court to release the duo unconditionally. We also urge UCC to instead work with the online leadership harmoniously rather than witch-hunt. We also appeal to all security agencies in Uganda to respect the Rights and Freedoms of journalists in Uganda.

Africa, Don't Agonize, Organize!

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