

Zambian police gag radio station

Police prohibit radio station from covering demonstration.

Lusaka - Police in Lusaka prevented Q-FM, a private radio station, from mounting their Outside Broadcasting (OB) equipment to cover live a July 19 demonstration organised by the OASIS forum and Collaborative Group on the Constitution outside the gates of Parliament.

Police said that the permit issued to the conveners of the demonstration did not include mounting the OB unit for live coverage of the event.

In a telephone interview with MISA Zambia, Q-FM director Moses Nyama said the police ordered the Q-FM OB team to clear the area and stopped reporter Mutuna Chanda from conducting live coverage.

Nyama told MISA Zambia that when Chanda asked the police why his team was being barred from using the OB van, he was told that the organisers of the event did not indicate that there would be such equipment used at the demonstration.

A MISA Zambia team that went to the scene found Chanda using his cell phone to cover the event after police officers prohibited the mounting of the OB equipment.

In a statement to MISA Zambia on 18 July, Q-FM Radio's managing director, Assan Nyama, expressed sadness at the police action, saying it was illogical for the police to expect the organisers of any public event to ask permission for the media to cover such the event.

Police action 'primitive'

"We regret this episode and hope that in future the police will refrain from intimidating the media outside the law. The law should be respected at all times and we challenge the police to produce the law that stipulates that the conveners should have included our live coverage in their application for the permit," he said.

MISA Zambia Chairperson Fr. Frank Bwalya described the police action as "unprofessional" and "primitive" in a democratic society. "The retrogressive action of the police was an attempt to prevent the public from receiving information through the radio station. This violates the constitutional right of our people to receive information," he said.

The demonstration was held to picket Parliament on the need to adopt the Constitution through the Constituent Assembly as opposed to a Constituent Conference through the Zambia Inter-party Dialogue (ZIPD).

During the run-up to the 26 September 2006 general elections, Q-FM radio was visited by police in an attempt to prevent them from conducting live broadcasts of the elections.

Source: [MISA](#)