

Foreign newspapers to be banned in Zimbabwe

The Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC) has reportedly enlisted the service of the police in a bid to stop foreign newspapers without local offices from circulating. Publications that might be affected include: *The Sunday Times*, *Mail & Guardian*, *Business Day* and *The Zimbabwean*.

ZMC chairperson, Godfrey Majonga said affected newspapers should register in Zimbabwe as soon as possible before the titles are banned from entering the country.

According to Section 66(1) of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), a mass media shall carry on the activities of a mass media service only after registering and receiving a certificate of registration in terms of the act. The only exception is where such a mass media owner has set up representative office of a mass media service permitted to operate in Zimbabwe in terms of Section 90.

In terms of Section 90 (1) of the Act, a representative foreign office of a mass media service shall not be set up in Zimbabwe except with the permission of the Commission.

MISA Zimbabwe position

The Zimbabwe Chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) insists that the law used to regulate the media is undemocratic and meant to restrict the free flow of information rather than encourage free exchange of ideas. This clearly gives credence to the argument on the need for self-regulation of the media through the Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe (VMCZ).

According to the Banjul Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression, effective self-regulation is the best system for promoting high standards in the media.