

In Zimbabwe, break-in at newspaper targets photos

NEW YORK: The Committee to Protect Journalists has called on Zimbabwean authorities to thoroughly investigate a suspicious break-in at a newspaper's office on Thursday, 16 June 2011.



The offices of *The Mirror*, a private weekly newspaper in the southeastern town of Masvingo were ransacked by unknown assailants early Thursday morning. The only missing items were a memory card and some office keys, acting editor Garikai Mafirekureva told CPJ.

The memory card contained photographs of a recent meeting, covered by the paper, of traditional chiefs who discussed wanting to remove from office local ruling Zanu-PF officials for what they said was interference in tribal affairs. Mafirekureva said cameras, laptops, and other equipment were tampered with but not taken. An office safe was pried open but no cash was stolen, he said.

Censoring critical reporting

"We condemn this attack against *The Mirror*, which is a crude attempt to censor and intimidate the newspaper from reporting views critical of the government," said CPJ Africa advocacy coordinator Mohamed Keita. "The authorities must conduct a full investigation and bring the culprits to justice."

Mafirekureva said he suspected the culprits behind the break-in were members of the state spy agency, the Central Intelligence Office, and that he believed the motive was to intimidate the newspaper and its journalists. "Such actions actually have the opposite effect, in that it makes us even more determined to report the truth to our readers and to be heard," he said. Mafirekureva said he planned to have the offices swept for bugs that may have been planted in the raid.

Foster Dongozi, the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists' secretary general, said the union strongly condemned such acts of aggression against journalists and newspapers in Zimbabwe, and that they were not uncommon. *The Mirror* was the second newspaper to be the target of a break-in in recent months; assailants stole computer hard drives of senior editorial staff at the daily *NewsDay* in April, according to CPJ research.

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