

## **Zim government now wants \$30 000 per foreign journalist**

Written by reporter

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The Zimbabwe government Wednesday announced restrictive new licensing fees of up to 30,000 US dollars on journalists working for foreign media in Zimbabwe, prompting complaints that the government is trying to drive journalists out of the country.

The new guidelines would further require Zimbabweans working for foreign media outlets to pay a staggering 4,000 US dollars to practice journalism in Zimbabwe for one year.

Harare would demand 30,000 dollars for foreign media houses that want to work in Zimbabwe. According to the government-controlled Media and Information Commission (MIC), that would break down to 10,000 US dollars for the application and 20,000 US dollars for accreditation, payable only in foreign currency.

Journalists can also opt to pay a fee of 1,500 US dollars for permission for each individual journalism project within Zimbabwe.

Journalists who work for state-controlled media only have to pay a fee of 1 million Zimbabwean dollars, worth less than 1 US dollar at current exchange rates.

Human rights lawyers and African media groups like the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) have already questioned the legality of the edict.

The new guidelines "smack of machinations to frustrate and make it difficult to operate in Zimbabwe," said MISA in a statement.

Zimbabwe has some of the harshest conditions for journalists in

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world, since it introduced Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) legislation in 2002.

Several foreign and local journalists have been arrested in Zimbabwe for practicing without accreditation since then.

Last month President Robert Mugabe's spokesman George Charamba threatened to ban foreign news bureaus in Zimbabwe, saying they quoted his boss out of context.

Mugabe also said the country had "arrested" the cholera outbreak which has since claimed over 1,700 lives so far since August last year.