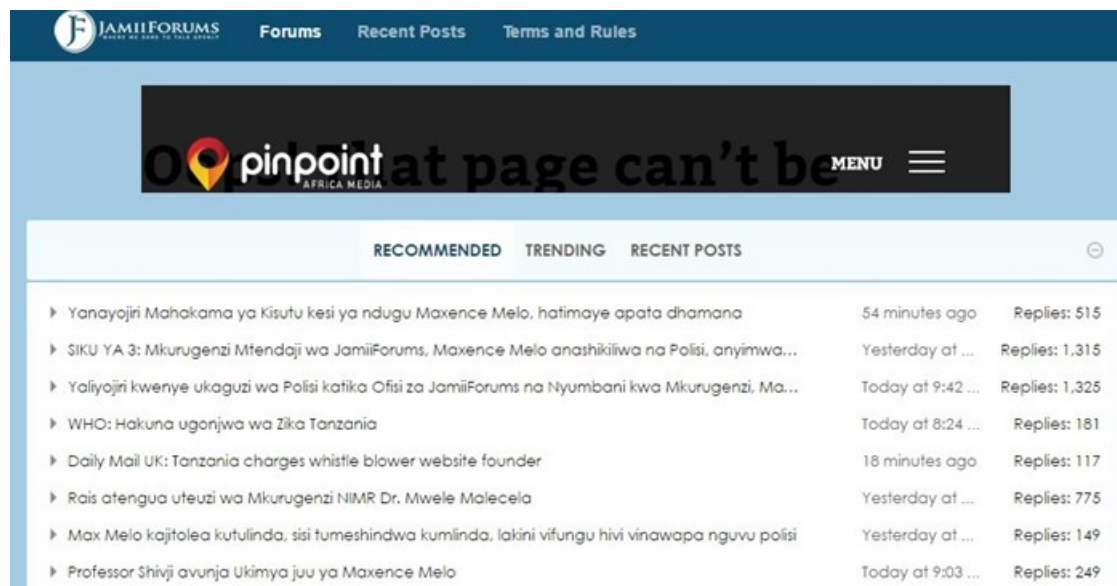


Tanzania charges editor of whistle-blowing website

Tanzanian authorities have charged the editor of a whistle-blowing website for failing to reveal the identity of contributors to the site, court documents revealed.



Screengrab from Jamii Forums.

Maxence Melo, who co-founded the website Jamii Forums, was charged with operating a website without a local domain, obstructing a police investigation and failing to comply with a police order to disclose data.

The website said earlier this week that police were attempting to discover the identities of Jamii Forums' contributors and users, under a recently-passed cyber crimes law, but that their efforts had been thwarted.

"We would like to assure our users that their personal information is safe," Jamii Forums said, adding that its servers were located outside Tanzania.

Melo was detained on Tuesday, and Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemned what they called an "arbitrary arrest".

"Judicial issues are being used for political purposes with the aim of gagging the government's critics. (President) John Magufuli has said a great deal about combatting corruption ever since he became president, but it is the people who exposed corruption who are now being harassed!," read the statement released Thursday.

The website has challenged the constitutionality of the controversial Cybercrimes Act which was enacted in 2015, notably an article on disclosing the identity of sources and another allowing interrogations in camera.

In March, Jamii Forums filed a lawsuit at the High Court seeking to prevent police from knowing the names of users who have posted information on corruption and tax evasion suspects.

At least five people have been charged with insulting Magufuli since the passing of the CyberCrimes Act in 2015.

RSF said that under Magufuli, who took office in November 2015, Tanzanian authorities have taken a tougher line on the media, shutting down several radio stations and prosecuting at least 10 people for their posts on social networks.

Melo has been remanded in prison until a bail hearing on Monday.

Source: AFP

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