

Two TV stations ordered off the air in DRC

The Committee to Protect Journalists condemns the decision by the Democratic Republic of Congo's government to close two privately owned news channels, and urges officials to allow the channels to resume broadcasting immediately.



[123RF](#)

Lambert Mende, the Congolese minister of communication and media, released a statement on January 20 saying that Nyota TV, and Radio TV Mapendo, both part of a news group based in Lubumbashi, Haut-Katanga province, had been ordered off air effective January 28, for allegedly failing to pay taxes and licensing fees, according to reports. Though the transmissions were cut, the TV Nyota website has continued to operate.

Olivier Tuta, the director general of both stations, said the outstanding payments of USD\$40,000 had been made on January 25 and 26, according to the press freedom group Journaliste en Danger and a statement from the local press freedom group OLPA.

Both stations are owned by Moïse Katumbi, a businessman and politician who left the ruling party in September 2015 and later joined an opposition party, according to reports and the statement by Journaliste en Danger. Katumbi, who was formerly the governor of Haut-Katanga province, has been rumored in reports as a potential opposition candidate ahead of the presidential elections due to take place later this year.

"The Congolese authorities should allow Nyota TV and Radio TV Mapendo to resume broadcasting immediately," said CPJ deputy executive director Robert Mahoney. "Broadcasting is a public service and governments cannot use the pretext of non-payment of licensing fees to hastily shutter those stations whose views they may not like."

CPJ attempted to reach the Minister of Information and Communication for comment but its calls went unanswered. It is not clear when the stations will be allowed to reopen.

Over the past 12 months CPJ has documented several attacks on the press in the Democratic Republic of Congo, from

blocking Internet and cell phone access and banning the screening of a critical documentary, to arbitrary arrests and physical attacks on journalists.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>