

# World's press welcomes African Parliament Resolution to promote press freedom

The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) has welcomed a pan-African Parliament resolution to protect media freedoms, calling it a tool for African governments to dismantle criminal defamation and 'insult' laws that remain widespread on the continent.

The resolution encourages all African leaders to sign the [Declaration of Table Mountain](#), a continent-wide campaign to repeal criminal defamation laws and put press freedom higher on the African agenda.

"The resolution is a major step to securing freedom of expression in Africa," said Alison Meston, director of press freedom for WAN-IFRA. "The Declaration of Table Mountain has been gaining steady influence and raising press freedom to the top of the discussion, and with the parliament's endorsement we hope to see a number of heads of state committing to the principles of a free press."

The declaration, drawn up by African editors during WAN-IFRA's World Newspaper Congress in Cape Town, South Africa, in 2007, is a response to measures including the jailing and persecution of journalists and the widespread scourge of 'insult laws' and criminal defamation, used by repressive governments to stifle critical reporting.

"Such laws are regularly used to punish journalists and deter investigative reporting into corruption and abuse of power," said Meston.

"As a means of guaranteeing a more transparent, open society, repealing defamation will encourage the development of free and independent journalism - an essential element of any democracy."

The parliament's resolution, approved earlier this year but communicated just last week, comes at a time when African media are growing but press freedom remains under threat.

Article 21 of the resolution, entitled "Press Freedom for Development and Governance: Need for Reform," encourages African Union member states to sign the Declaration of Table Mountain. Only two African countries - Liberia and Niger - have so far signed the Declaration, despite wide support from media rights groups and civil society organisations across the continent and around the globe.

WAN-IFRA joins with the parliament to encourage all African leaders to sign the declaration and commit to repealing criminal defamation and 'insult' laws.

View the full [Pan-African Parliament Resolution to Protect Media Freedom](#).

For more, go to [www.declarationoftablemountain.org](http://www.declarationoftablemountain.org).

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