

## With media plan, ANC copies Nigeria's military rulers

While South Africa's ruling African National Congress (ANC) discusses the party's proposal for a media appeals tribunal, delegates should take note of a landmark ruling in Nigeria this year in which a High Court judge declared a government-dominated press council unconstitutional.

By Mariama Keita, Mbhamed Keita/CPJ Africa Staff <sup>27 Sep 2010</sup>



Five months before the ANC's release of a discussion document referencing a special tribunal for the media, Justice A.M. Liman, a judge of Nigeria's Federal High Court ruled in favor of a petition challenging the constitutionality of the Nigerian Press Council, set up by decree during military rule in 1992. The press council membership of 19 included representatives from the media, the public, and the government. "In theory this is fine, but in practice the majority of these posts are appointed by the government, including the current chairman who is not a journalist. He is an accountant," said Newspapers' Proprietors Association of Nigeria President Ajibola Ogunsola.

In Nigeria, government pursuit of a statutory press council dates as far back as 1978, according to CPJ research, and has continued under the country's various military and civilian rulers. Gen. Ibrahim Babaginda who is currently running as a civilian candidate in presidential elections scheduled for next year, issued the Nigerian Press Council Decree 85 of 1992 among other repressive edicts such as the Offensive Publications (Proscription) Decree and the Newspaper Registration Board Decree No. 43 of 1993.

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