

EAJA and UJU clash over funds

The East African Journalist Association (EAJA) and Uganda Journalist Union (UJU) are entangled in a war of words arising from the alleged embezzlement of funds meant for dead journalists and their beneficiaries.

 By [Walter Wafula](#) 22 May 2012

At the center of the dispute is Omar Faruk, the secretary general of EAJA who is based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and Stephen Ouma, the general secretary of UJU in Kampala, Uganda.

Their fight was reawakened last week after Dr Muheldin Ahmed Idris, the president of EAJA allegedly issued a statement expelling UJU from EAJA's membership for breach of the organisation's constitution by insulting and making unsubstantiated statements against leaders of EAJA; the International Federation of Journalists, the National Union of Somali Journalists and Federation of African Journalists (FAJ).

"UJU and its officials have become a tool used to disturb the unity, solidarity and mutual cooperation of our unions through a vicious, negative and distractive campaign aiming to bring the IFJ and its organisations in Africa into disrepute, give a bad name to Africans as easy to manipulate and divide, which is in breach of article 3, paragraph 9, of the EAJA constitution," reads part of the communiqué which was sent to the press in East Africa last week.

According to the notice, the EAJA executive committee resolved to unanimously expel UJU from its membership in line with article 7, of the EAJA constitution.

It also agreed to take legal action against those who have been making "slanderous and violent defamation against its leadership."

Idris said the decisions were arrived at the Extraordinary General Meeting of the EAJA which took place on 16 May 2012 in Addis Ababa, to review the membership status of UJU.

EAJA also claims that UJU's suspension comes on the back of its suspension by the IFJ in March for non-payment of membership fees, FAJ on 5 May, and the suspension of Ouma from his membership on the EAJA Executive Committee and from all the association's activities, on 28 February 2011.

In response to the claims, Ouma described the EAJA expulsion notice as a "pack of lies" which has been engineered by Faruk. He also challenged Faruk to authenticate the expulsion.

"Let him email minutes of a fully-constituted EAJA governing council which convened and resolved as he claims," Ouma said.

"Secondly, Uganda Journalists Union does not owe IFJ dues as he claims, and has not been expelled by IFJ," he added.

Information on the IFJ website indicates that UJU is still its member as opposed to the EAJA claims.

Ouma further noted that Faruk's problem with UJU, and in particular him, stems from a probe into corruption.

in EAJA which he led in 2010.

"In the report we unearthed how Omar received funds on behalf of dead Somali journalists widows and orphans, and he embezzled the funds. The IFJ acknowledged the report and so were the donors."

UJU claims that Faruk has embezzled over US\$200 000 meant for Somali journalists, and US\$50 000 for the deceased's families.

"He was voted out for corruption and abuse of office, after the widows and orphans scam. The same Omar Osman, embezzled money meant for Press Freedom Monitors including UJU vice president Norman Katende's money. Omar Faruk, has embezzled money meant for EAJA affiliates projects, and each time y question him he engineers his threats of suspension and expulsion," Ouma explained.

His problem, he added, is that all donors who used to give him funds have stopped and he thinks UJU officials have had a hand. "That's how he engineered and stole a slot meant for UJU delegate, misled FES Addis officials and gave to John Oprong."

But EAJA said the claims are unsubstantiated and aimed at defaming its leadership.

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