

Banda appoints Steve Nhlane as press secretary

By Gregory Gondwe: @Kalipochi

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Malawian president Joyce Banda has engaged Steve Nhlane, editor of the *Malawi News* as her press secretary. The country's media fraternity has hailed his appointment, saying he will bring sanity into the president's office because of his level headedness.



Steve Nhlane

Leonard Chikadya, managing director of Times Group, Nhlane's former employer told *The Daily Times* that the president has chosen a seasoned journalist who knows the media industry better.

"The position of press secretary is a very serious although in the past, it has sometimes been abused. As a country, we went into our lowest ebb and the first citizen wants to recover what we have lost. Therefore, she needs sober minds of advisors. Steve therefore is crucial as he is the bridge between the first citizen and the people," Chikadya is quoted as saying.

As press secretary, it reported that Nhlane will also take up the role of presidential spokesperson previously held by politician Dr. Heatherwick Ntaba, under late president Bingu wa Mutharika.

Nhlane, who holds a Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Malawi, also said that he was excited with his new job. He would create space for journalists to work in an environment where they are not intimidated or harassed.

"I cannot comment on what was happening in the past during the presidential press conferences at the open grounds, but journalists will not be harassed now for asking questions to the president," Nhlane, who also has an MBA from Columbia Commonwealth University, is quoted as saying.

In [November 2011](#) journalists suffered hostility that was full of scorn and intimidation from the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) cohorts in the presence of the former president, who returned from vacation in Hong Kong.

Every time Mutharika returned from a foreign trip he would organise a press conference, dubbed 'Press Rallies', in the presence of political party cohorts who heckled journalists whenever they ask questions they deemed were in bad taste.

Nhlane says his taking up of this post signals an end to such practice.

Nhlane has worked for 24 years as editor for *Malawi News*, a weekly for five years, *Weekend Nation* for six years, the defunct *Star* newspaper for three years and the Malawi News Agency for eight years.

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Gregory Gondwe is a Malawian journalist who started writing in 1993. He is also a media consultant assisting several international journalists pursuing assignments in Malawi. He holds a Diploma and an Intermediate Certificate in Journalism among other media-related certificates. He can be contacted on gregorygondwe@gmail.com. Follow him on Twitter at @Kalipochi.

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