



International radio workshop on criminal justice held in Nairobi

Dec 22, 2009

Germany continues to support Kenya in its journey of seeking justice, restoring peace and healing her citizens following the 2007/2008 post-election violence that left 1,500 people dead and 650,000 others displaced.

The media is a powerful force, capable of pressuring a country's leadership into establishing mechanisms to end impunity. Germany, in collaboration with the International Criminal Law Services, organized a two-week training workshop for 13 radio journalists in Nairobi from November 30-December 11 to address the intricacies of reporting on criminal justice from both a local and international perspective.

Course Director Bettina Ambach chose to conduct the workshop in Kenya due to the prevailing circumstances. "This is the right time to [hold this workshop] in Africa. There is a double objective; one is to give journalists skills and knowledge on the International Criminal Court (ICC) and other transitional justice mechanisms. It is also in line with Germany's strong stance and commitment to fighting impunity, with media as an important tool."

Ms. Ambach took the journalists through an intensive theoretical and practical training that resulted in the participants eventually producing professional and top-quality radio programmes on the themes of the workshop.



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Participants at the Media Training Workshop in Nairobi

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They discussed their role in promoting peace and avoiding hate speech in their programmes, aided by United Nations Mission (Liberia) Chief of Radio Joseph Roberts-Mensah's 12 years of rich experience in peace journalism.

Experts in international criminal and transitional justice familiarized the journalists with information on the Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC), the concept and structure of a local tribunal and the ICC, all very topical subjects in Kenya.

ICC Associate Analyst Claus Molitor and ICC Media Liaison Officer (Office of the Prosecutor) Nicola Fletcher explained the ICC processes to the eager journalists, who bombarded them with numerous questions. The group strongly expects that ICC Prosecutor Moreno Ocampo will gain approval from the pre-trial judges to open a case against the Kenyan perpetrators.

The experts also used the opportunity to correct misconceptions in the Kenyan media about the ICC.

Lawyer and legislator Gitobu Imanyara updated the journalists on the progress of a bill he introduced in the Kenyan Parliament to establish a local tribunal in Kenya. He indicated that, despite pressure from the local and international community, it was unlikely that Members of Parliament would support it.

“Mr. Ocampo said Kenya will be an example of a three-tiered approach which will involve the ICC process, TJRC and formation of a local tribunal to achieve justice, punish perpetrators and heal the country. It is mandatory that Parliament supports this Bill. You, the media, should sensitize the country on this,” Mr. Imanyara asserted.

Kenya has been urged to set up a local tribunal. Unfortunately the political leadership has not as yet shown the commitment to do so.

TJRC Vice Chair Betty Murungi, together with Kenyan lawyers from the civil society, clarified the mandate of the three systems and their importance in restoring the country and preventing a recurrence of violence in future elections.



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Glimpse into the Media Training Workshop

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With examples from Uganda, Sudan, Congo and Rwanda, Field Outreach Coordinator for Uganda Maria Kamara, illustrated how the ICC works.

During the training the participants were reminded of their role in presenting facts, remaining impartial, fighting negative ethnicity, shunning violence and ensuring they are not used as tools of incitement.

“The media was used in 2007. We were divided along political and tribal lines, and that is why we were biased in our reporting. In a way, we take blame for the violence, but now we will be keen not to incite Kenyans again,” says Mac Otani of Ghetto Radio.

For Thomas Bwire of Pamoja Radio (Kibera) “The training comes at a very important time when the media is charged with the heavy task of pushing for reforms. It is a testing time. How will the media handle its coverage if the ICC starts to investigate Kenya? At least we now understand all the processes and with facts we will be able to handle everything professionally.”

At the end of the training, the journalists were issued certificates on International Criminal and Transitional Justice.

Waweru Mburu of Radio Citizen is confident that he and other participants can handle the complicated and important justice issues from an informed point of view. He hopes similar training opportunities will be offered in the future.

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Media training in Kenya



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