



Embassy of the United States of America Bujumbura, Burundi

World Press Freedom Day

May 3, 2014

As we mark World Press Freedom Day, the U.S. Embassy joins in affirming: “Freedom of expression and the press is not just a slogan – and it’s not only for journalists. The right to receive and impart information is a universal one.”

One of the important values that Burundi has shared with the United States is ensuring the integrity of its free media to protect democratic principles and freedoms. Until now, we have been pleased to see Burundi’s openness to public discussion and debate, both in terms of assembly and a vibrant press. Especially during the crucial period before the elections in 2015, freedom of the press must be valued and protected.

We are concerned that the proposed media bill recently passed by the National Assembly and the Senate may be inconsistent with Burundi’s international human rights obligations. We are deeply concerned that the bill, if signed into law, would sharply restrict the freedom of the press in Burundi. We urge the Government of Burundi to revise the bill and ensure that it upholds freedom of the press as enshrined in international human rights agreements to which Burundi is a party.

Freedom of the press is a critical component of democratic societies, helping to foster debate, inform the public, and hold public and private institutions and officials accountable. The proposed bill risks undermining and tarnishing Burundi’s reputation for respecting and protecting press freedoms.

We value our partnership with Burundi and look forward to working with you as you endeavor to strengthen Burundi’s democracy.