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Zambia Free Press Initiative Statement on World Press Freedom Day

Lusaka, May 3, 2026 - As the world commemorates World Press Freedom Day, we recognise the central role of a free and independent press in any democratic society. This day serves as a reminder that freedom of expression, access to information, and open public dialogue are essential rights that must be protected.

We, however, commemorate this day with heavy hearts as the Zambian government decided to postpone RightsCon, an event which was part of the broader programme linked to the UNESCO-led Global World Press Freedom Day commemoration.

Organizers of RightsCon have confirmed that the decision to postpone the global event was due to foreign interference by China, which was uncomfortable with expected participation of Taiwanese rights activists.

This has disrupted the planned programme of this global commemoration and raises serious questions about Zambia's commitment to platforms that promote dialogue on fundamental freedoms.

Events such as RightsCon bring together different stakeholders such as journalists, civil society members and policymakers to engage on issues that directly affect the protection and advancement of rights.

The decision to halt such a gathering therefore reflects a failure to recognise the value of forums centered on freedoms that are already guaranteed under Zambia's Constitution. Freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and freedom of assembly are not optional principles; they are legal protections that form the foundation of democratic governance.

On this World Press Freedom Day, it is important to underscore that limiting spaces for dialogue on rights weakens the very principles this day seeks to uphold. A commitment to press freedom must be reflected not only in statements, but also in actions that support openness, engagement, and the free exchange of ideas.

Issued by:

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