

DAILY NATION

MPs want to cripple NGOs: Don't let them

The mood and tone in Parliament yesterday indicates that the House is determined to ram through laws against the free and independent media despite President Kenyatta's assurance that no unconstitutional Bills will get his assent.

The Kenya Information and Communications (Amendment) Bill has already won passage in Parliament. All that is required now is the President's signature for the most oppressive anti-media laws in Kenya's history to come into effect.

The equally oppressive Media Council Bill is in the House business pipeline and is still being pushed through despite universal alarm and official assurances that the government has no intention of gagging the media.

And not content with silencing probably the most vibrant and responsible media in the whole of Africa, the authorities want to cripple another key independent voice that over the past two decades played a pivotal role in the fight for democracy, human rights and good governance. The move to amend the Public Benefits Organisations is a clear attempt to neutralise NGOs.

The fight against the dictatorial one-party rule in the early 1990s, onwards to the realisation of a progressive new Constitution in 2010, succeeded in no small measure due to the contribution of NGOs.

By plotting to starve NGOs of foreign donations and directing that all such donations be routed through a State-controlled organ, the government intends to cripple yet another independent voice crucial to holding it to public scrutiny.

Trying to gag media and civil society at the same time cannot be a coincidence. It can only be part of a well-orchestrated scheme to silence all dissenting voices as prelude to something more sinister.

Kenyans must rise up as one and say NO to any threat of a return to totalitarianism.

YESTERDAY'S QUESTION

Should NGOs foreign funding be capped at 15 per cent of their budget?

GITHUKU MUNGAI: Money is money! If the NGO is carrying out its mandate and it is not involved in activities meant to undermine the government, the fears are not founded on any ground. Let even 100 per cent of the NGOs funds come from overseas.

BRUNO MP MWIRIGI: No, this would limit their operations in development issues. These organisations are non-profit making unless somebody wants them to go into business to sustain their works and compete with other institutions.

ENOCK MICHIEKA: No, it should not

be capped at 15 per cent. This will affect the development they make in society.

OTIENO JARED: Perhaps the government should also cap its external borrowing at 15 per cent and see how it feels. Why cripple the NGOs when the government cannot provide all services?