February 02, 2026

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE PRESIDENCY'S MEDIA RELEASE AND THE TREATMENT OF JOURNALISTS

Commitment to Press Freedom Requires Accountability

WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA: The NMT Media Foundation notes the statement issued by the Presidency on February 2, 2026, reaffirming its commitment to media freedom and professionalism. Public affirmation of constitutional protections for the media is important and welcomed.

However, commitment to press freedom must be reflected through conduct and accountability. The treatment of Jemima Beukes, a freelance journalist and founder of *The Whistle*, an independent online newsletter, at State House remains a matter of serious concern. Physical manhandling, threats of arrest, and interference with journalistic equipment fall outside acceptable security or protocol management and require clear consequences for those responsible.

Respect for media freedom extends beyond public statements. It requires public officials and security personnel to act within the limits of their authority and in line with constitutional obligations and democratic norms.

The Foundation recalls the recent case involving journalist Tracy Tafirenyika, where xenophobic attacks and public hostility followed legitimate reporting. Such conduct by public officials or political actors represents a failure to uphold constitutional values and undermines stated commitments to media freedom. These actions require firm leadership and accountability.

As a freelance journalist, Beukes faces heightened vulnerability due to the absence of institutional protection and the direct link between access, livelihood, and safety. Intimidation and uncertainty place severe psychological strain on journalists and increase risks to their wellbeing. Women journalists face disproportionate exposure to intimidation, harassment, and threats, which contribute to fear, stress, and withdrawal from public discourse.

We urge the Presidency to ensure that its commitment to press freedom is reinforced through accountability for misconduct, protection of journalist safety, and clear signals that intimidation, abuse, and xenophobic attacks against journalists will not be tolerated.

Press freedom is protected through practice, not proclamation.

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