



## Southern African journalists send solidarity delegation to Botswana to protest new Bill

In a show of solidarity, media and journalism organisations from across Southern Africa are sending a delegation to Gaborone to investigate the Botswana government's decision to rush through parliament a law that will threaten the country's media freedom.

The Media Institute of Southern Africa, the Southern African Editors' Forum and the Campaign for Free Expression are joining with the Botswana Editors' Forum and the Press Council of Botswana to protest the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Bill currently before parliament. The government has indicated that they propose to rush this Bill – which was published only a few weeks ago - through parliament and have it signed this week.

The Bill allows for search, seizure and surveillance without a warrant, which would undermine many of Botswana's established rights, undermine the work of journalists and threaten their sources.

The delegation has written to Botswana's President, Parliamentary Speaker and Chief Whip of the ruling party to ask for meetings, expressing serious concern about the impact this Bill will have on Botswana and the whole SADC region. They are asking the Botswana parliament not to rush the Bill, but to open it up for proper discussion and consultation that will help avoid any unintended harm.

"This is a fact-finding and solidarity mission. We want to understand exactly what is going on and support our Botswana colleagues in trying to stop this Bill. We believe it will impact not just on Botswana's democracy and economy, but the whole region," said Anton Harber of the Campaign for Free Expression.

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